



- FOODS OF -
JAPAN

Express!



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VeLure Roholt, Christine, author.

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Cooking the Japanese Way



At the heart of Japanese culture is **balance**. Japanese people strive for this in many areas of life and especially at dinnertime. Many follow **Buddhist** practices to find the balance they desire. They use the number five as a guide in their search. To them, it is a **symbol** of perfect balance.



Japanese cooking engages all five senses. It also features five main colors and offers five unique flavors. Plates are colored by white, black, green, red, and yellow foods. Dishes have salty, sweet, sour, bitter, and *umami* flavors. The umami flavor tastes **savory** and is the Japanese word for “yummy.” Foods are boiled, grilled, steamed, fried, or served raw. A meal often includes foods prepared using at least four of these methods.

New Flavor

Kikunae Ikeda discovered the umami flavor while enjoying a bowl of dashi.



Eating the Japanese Way

Japanese people show appreciation for their food. Before they eat, they say, "*Itadakimasu.*" This word means "I gratefully receive." Then they give thanks for a meal again after the last bite. To show respect during a meal, Japanese people have good table manners. These include using chopsticks, or *hashi*, properly. Japanese people never play with or point their chopsticks.





Lift and Sip

It is proper to lift a soup bowl and use it like a cup.

Japanese people also have special places for different foods. A rice bowl sits to the left of a soup bowl.

Pickled vegetables and a side dish are placed behind the bowls. Chopsticks lie in front of the bowls. If noodles are served, they go in the soup's usual spot.

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