

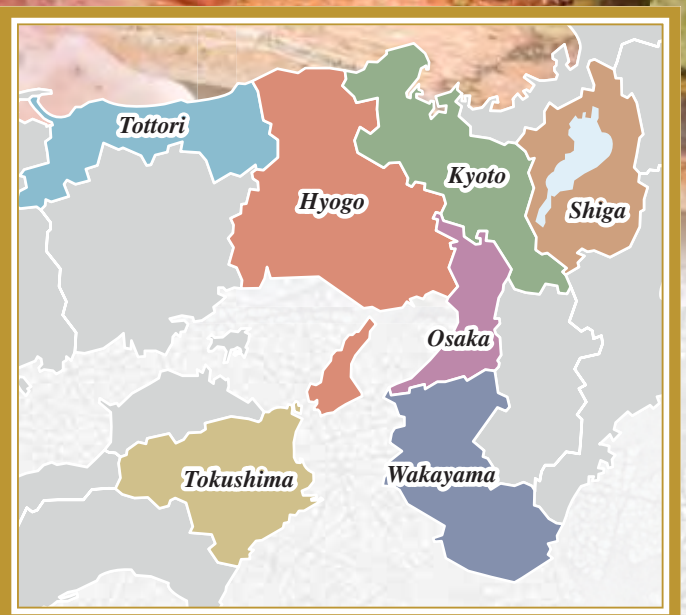
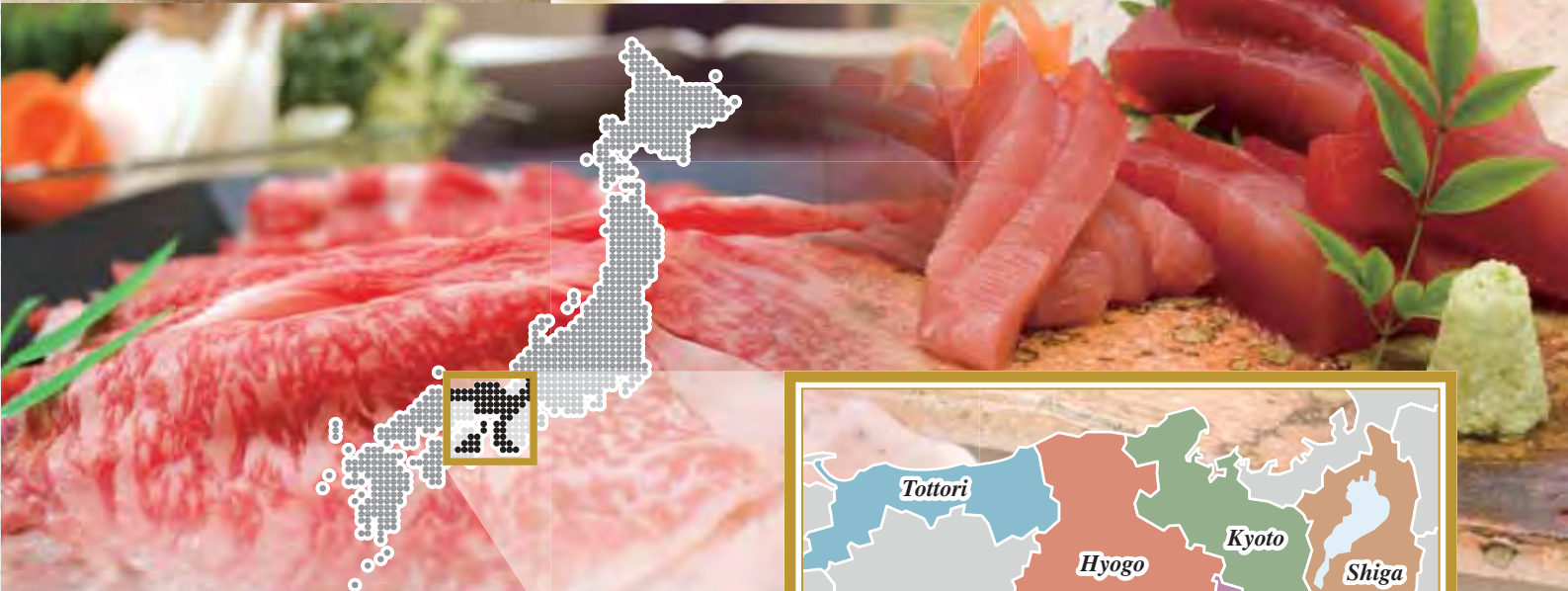
関西・日本

KANSAI, JAPAN VOL.5

For as long as more than a thousand years, Kansai region has been blessed with its history, cultural heritages, abundant nature, and productive industries. Tourists have been attracted to Kansai from all over the world to enjoy Japan's prominent temples and shrines, traditional crafts, hot springs, and delicious food. For many years, the region has abounded with the spirit of creating new fields and is also characterized with the concentration of various industries, from traditional industries to manufacturing industries of the latest products and creative industries, such as comics and animation. In recent years the region has been receiving global attention as an international research hub in the life science field, which is typified by iPS cells research.



Foods



“Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese” was inscribed on the UNESCO ‘Intangible Cultural Heritage’ list in December 2013. Japanese food culture and practices originated from the Kansai Region. The Kansai Region has prospered as the center of Japan for more than a thousand years. This region has gathered various food materials from all over Japan, and developed its unique agricultural and fishery industries. The traditional food culture has been nurtured in this environment. At present, selected agricultural and fishery materials to back up Kansai food culture are produced across the region. The farmers, fishermen, traders, and food processors are intricately linked with each other and trying to develop and provide new products and services using these food materials to meet the needs of the times.

Japanese Delicious "Wagyu" (Japanese beef)

The major type of Wagyu is Kuroge Wagyu (Japanese black breed of cattle). Some of famous Wagyu brands in Kansai are introduced below.①

(1) Kobe Beef and Tajima Beef : These come from purebred Tajima Cattle raised within Hyogo prefecture. While all Tajima Cattle inherit the quality of producing excellent meat, only Tajima Beef from specially bred Tajima Cattle and meeting specific certain standards is certified as "Kobe Beef."

The beautiful, fine-marbled beef offers tender texture. As a representative Wagyu, Kobe Beef delights the palates of people all over the world.

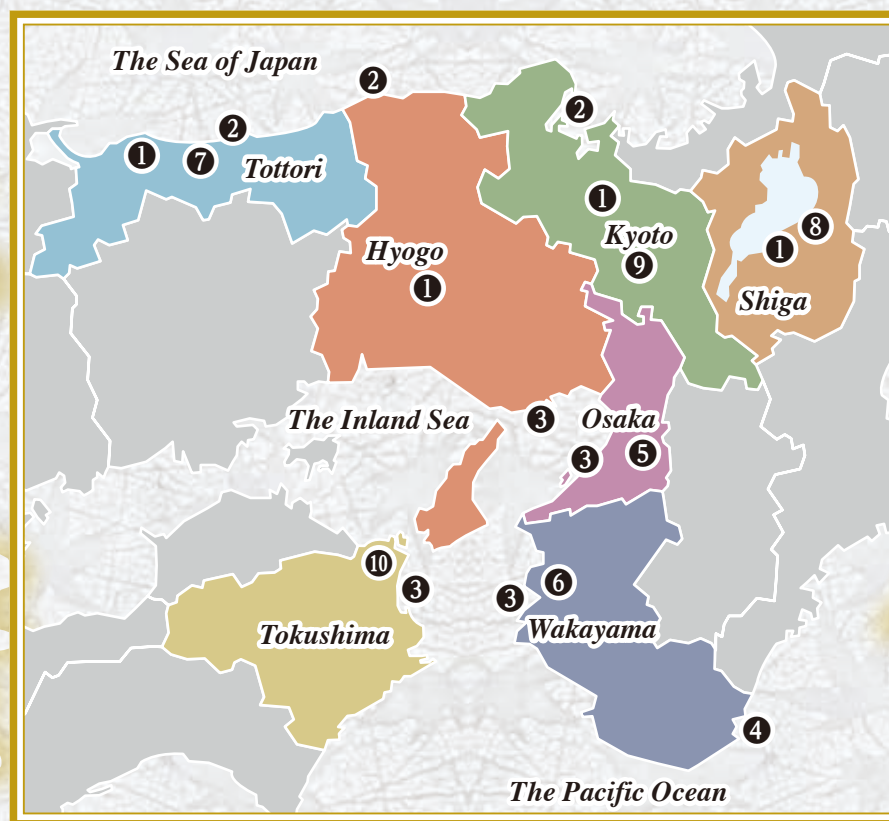
(2) Omi Beef : Omi Beef from Shiga prefecture has a history of more than 400 years. Thanks to the fattening technology supported by the tradition and the efforts to improve quality by the producers, it is highly reputed throughout Japan.

(3) Inpaku beef : It is the founder of the famous brand cattle produced in Tottori prefecture, a breeding center of Kuroge Wagyu from ancient time. The pedigree, referred to as "Tottori Series," is known to contain much oleic acid, one of unsaturated fatty acids. It has a reputation 'melt better in your mouth.'

(4) Kyotonikuushi : Kuroge Wagyu produced in Kyoto prefecture derived from "Tanba cattle." This cattle name appeared in the oldest Japanese cattle book, and its meat has a delicate taste and is soft and pleasant on the tongue.



Wagyu
(Japanese beef)



Fresh Bounty of the Sea

The Kansai area faces three seas: the Sea of Japan, the Inland Sea, and the Pacific Ocean. These seas have different natural conditions. A variety of fisheries are carried out to obtain each unique bounty.

From the Sea of Japan, snow crabs can be caught off the coasts of Tottori, Hyogo, and Kyoto from November to March. The grown large male crabs are shipped under the brand names "Taizagani," "Matsuba Crab," or others. You can enjoy these crabs with various cuisines, baked or raw. They are the delicious 'Kings' of the winter season.②

From the Inland Sea, fishermen catch white baits (young sardines) at the seashores of Hyogo, Osaka, Tokushima, and Wakayama. The landed white baits are simply boiled in factories, or further dried and brought into the markets. They are uniquely flavored food items rich in calcium.③

Tuna fishing boats in the Pacific Ocean gather at Katsura in Wakayama prefecture. It is one of the best raw tuna landing ports in Japan. Many kinds of tunas are landed throughout a year. They are preserved in the frozen state soon after the catch in order to maintain the freshness and quality.

At the south end of Kansai, a fisheries laboratory succeeded in the complete farm-raising of Pacific blue fin tunas. It draws attention from around the world.④



Fresh
seafoods



Fruits

Nurtured by Sunshine

Various types and kinds of fruits are produced throughout Kansai taking advantage of each local climate and land conditions.

Osaka is one of the largest producers of grapes in Japan. Great tasting grapes are shipped after becoming fully ripened on the trees. It is possible because Osaka is blessed with warm climate and located close to the consuming areas.

More than 30 kinds of grapes are cultivated, including small berried Delaware grapes (main variety), large and black berried Kyoho grapes, seedless Pione grapes, and so on.⑤

The warm climate and well-drained sloped lands are good for raising high quality mandarin oranges. Meeting these conditions, Wakayama prefecture has been known as a production center of mandarin oranges for a great many years.

Mandarin oranges have high sugar content and deep taste as well as containing important nutrition including vitamin C, minerals, and dietary fibers. They are easily peeled and eaten, as there are no seeds inside. It is a typical Japanese fruit to supplement nutrition.⑥

Pears are typical autumn fruits from Tottori prefecture. The Twenty-Century Pear (famous Tottori pear brand) has more than 100 years history of cultivation.

The skin is pale green and nearly transparent. You can enjoy sweet and fresh juice of the fruits.

Recently, new kinds of pear "Natsuhime" and "Shinkansen" are appearing.⑦

Gifts from the Fertile Earth

A basic assortment of Japanese food is 'ichiju-sansai' (one soup and three dishes) consisting of one soup, one main dish, and two sub dishes, together with boiled rice.

The food culture of Kansai has been prospered since ancient times. Using the favorable regional conditions and high production skills, farmers have grown rice and traditional vegetables.

Shiga prefecture has been a production center of Omi rice, from the past due to its favorable location close to the large consuming sites of Kyoto and Osaka. A rice growing method friendly to the environment is applied to protect water quality of Lake Biwa, the largest lake in Japan. Safe and trusted culturing methods are used in the area.

Omi rice was developed in the center of Japanese food culture, Kansai. It is very delicious rice resulted from the nature and sincerity of producers.⑧

Kyoto had been the capital of Japan for more than 1000 years and excellent quality vegetables were collected from all over Japan. Kyoto's traditional vegetables such as Mizuna (Potherb Mustard) and Kujonegi (leek from Kujo) have been developed by the food culture of Kyoto. These vegetables, with high quality and distinguished image unlike others, are highly evaluated by famous restaurant chefs inside and outside Japan.⑨

Sweet potato "Naruto Kintoki" is cultured in warm climate in sand fields rich in minerals in Tokushima prefecture. It has brilliant red color, flaky texture, and natural sweetness. It is a masterpiece of sweet potato rich in taste and dietary fiber.⑩



Rice and
vegetables

Cuisine Culture in the Kansai Region

Kyoryori (Kyoto cuisine)

Japanese food culture respectfully preserves traditional cooking methods to make the original flavors of each ingredient remarkable, while using these various materials freshly grown in unique Japanese natural environment.

Kyoryori is a general term referring to the cooking method based on soup stock, typically Kaiseikirori grown through long history of Kyoto, and also the cooking culture to assort foods on dishes, set them on a table, and to serve them with hospitality.

Recently, Shojinryori has gained recognition as a typical healthy food. Shojinryori has been developed initially as dishes for Buddhist priests and is made using only grains, beans, and vegetables, not using animal and fish meats.



Fermentation Food Culture

The process of fermentation makes foods delicious and preservative by using bacteria to create alcohol and other flavors.

This fermentation culture has long been familiarized in Kansai throughout its history. For example, Kansai is the birthplace of both Shoyu (soy sauce) and Sake made using fermentation. Both of them are indispensable in Japanese cuisine.

Shoyu is internationally famous as "soy sauce." It is the universal seasoning that supports Japanese food culture. In Kansai, there are still manufacturers brewing Shoyu manually using traditional methods. Further, a variety of fermentation foods invented by their predecessors' wisdom are still apparent in many sites in Kansai as local dishes.

Funazushi (fermented crucian carp with rice) is an example. It has flavors like cheese and a deep taste with a little sourness. Funazushi has a great number of fans.



Green Tea Culture

Green tea is indispensable in the daily lives of the Japanese. Tea culture, including "Cha No Yu" (tea ceremony) to share green tea between host and visitor as a way to understand each other, was originated from Kansai.

Uji cha boasts an approximately 800-year history. It maintains the best brand of Japanese teas, while closely related to the food culture of Kyoto.

You can choose any tea from a variety of tastes and scents of Uji cha such as Matcha (powdered green tea), Sencha (regular greenleaf tea), and Gyokuro (a special high-quality green tea), produced in cool climates where mist often occurs at the sites. You can enjoy Japanese historical culture by tasting a variety of Uji cha.

In order to complement the taste of green tea, delicate confectioneries are served together at tea ceremonies. Therefore, lots of confectionery manufacturers have grown up in the Kansai region.



Flour-made Foods Culture

"Flour-made foods" is a general term for dishes made from flour such as Okonomiyaki (savory pancake with various ingredients) and Takoyaki (octopus dumpling). These are indispensable when we talk about Kansai food culture.

It is said that "Funoyaki," served as confectionery for tea ceremony, is the root of Okonomiyaki.

There are a variety of foods served by each restaurant and region. Okonomiyaki is favored as popular food made by mixing slices of cabbage and seafood in flour dough and baking on a hot iron plate. They are topped by a salty-sweet sauce, as well as sliced dry bonito.



Union of Kansai Governments <http://www.kouiki-kansai.jp/>

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