

Your guide to Eating & Drinking out in Japan



Japanese people are passionate about food - with good reason! Presentation is outstanding, with a huge range of meat and fish dishes to choose from - most of them quite healthy.

A lot of restaurants specialise in specific dishes - like ramen shops and sushi shops - so don't get caught out. Most moderately priced restaurants display plastic replicas of their menu, which is a help - so if in doubt, look for restaurants with picture displays.

You'll find *Izakayas* - Japanese style pub/restaurants - all over Japan, serving a choice of affordable dishes. If possible, get someone local to recommend places to eat. The table below is a useful guide to the dishes you will find most commonly - bring it with you when you come!

Expect to pay ¥2,500 to ¥6,000 per person for a full meal.

A SIMPLE TABLE MADE UP OF TYPICAL JAPANESE FOODS



CIY = cook it yourself; V = vegetarian option available but always request before sitting down

GYOZA



Chinese dumplings wrapped in thin rice paper filled with a mixture of meat and vegetables. Served with a bowl of rice and miso soup.

How to Eat it?

Mix a small amount of soy sauce, sesame oil and rice vinegar into the small dish provided. Dip gyouza before eating.

GYU-DON



Big bowl of rice served with thinly sliced pork in a sweet soy sauce on top and accompanied with pickled ginger. Miso Soup and pickles on the side.

How to Eat it?

Eat it as you see it!

KATSU DON



Deep fried pork fillet cooked in an egg sweet sauce, served in a large bowl on a bed of rice.

How to Eat it?

Eat it as you see it!

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KAISEKI RYOURI



A mixture of all types of small dishes served in succession and presented so artistically you're almost ashamed to eat it. Actual dishes vary according to restaurant, area and season. Kaiseki dining is the most popular style of dining in most ryokan's in Japan.

How to Eat it?

Eat it as you see it. Eat it as it arrives. Rice and miso soup usually come last!!

MISO SOUP



Miso, made from soy beans, is used as a flavouring in a lot of dishes. Miso Soup is part of Japans staple diet and typically includes seaweed, tofu or spring onions.

How to Eat it?

It's usually served in a plastic bowl with a lid. Lift the bowl to your mouth and drink - don't use a spoon!!

OKONOMIYAKI (C.I.Y.) & (V)



This is a Japanese Pizza/Pancake, made with sliced cabbage and a flour/egg based pancake mix. Toppings including pork, onion, mushrooms, cheese, shrimp, scallops, spring onion, etc. can be added. The ingredients will be served raw. It's up to you to cook it. A novel way of dining out!

How to Eat it?

1. Rub oil on the flat cooker in front of you.
2. Mix the egg mix, cabbage & toppings in the bowl provided.
3. Pour all onto the flat cooker and wait to cook on one side.
4. Flip over when golden brown until the other side is done.
5. Brush the brown 'okonomiake' sauce over the pizza. Mayonnaise, nori-seaweed, and fish flakes are optional as extras.
6. 6. As with Italian pizza, you simply slice, serve and eat!

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SHABU-SHABU (C.I.Y.)



Another DIY dish, with mixed vegetables and finely sliced beef presented raw to the table. Cook yourself if the boiling pot provided. Choice of sauces used as your dip.

How to Eat it?

Boil water (stock), add vegetables then swish each slice of meat back and forth in water until it is cooked to your taste. When it's ready, dip it in your choice of sauce before eating.

SOBA NOODLES



Thin, slightly hard buckwheat noodles, served hot or cold with a choice of toppings (vegetable or shrimp tempura, pork, etc.)

How to Eat it?

Eat them as you see them.
If presented with sauce separately (as seen in picture) then you dip the noodles in sauce.

SUKI-YAKI (C.I.Y.)



Mixed vegetables and meat boiled in tasty stock in an iron pot at the table, dipped in sweet or salty sauces.

How to Eat it?

Wait until the food is cooked. Dip into the sauces provided. Most Suki Yaki restaurants will provide a raw egg to dip it in, adding extra flavour. This idea is quite rare for westerners but it is surprisingly good!

SUSHI



Cooked and/or raw fish, and vegetables served on a bed of slightly vinegar flavoured rice, with a hint of Japanese mustard - wasabi. Best tried in kaiten zushi bars (revolving counter bar sushi cafes/bars).

How to Eat it?

Mix small amounts of soy sauce and wasabi in the dish provided. Dip the fish in mixture before placing it back on the rice and eating it all in one.

TEMPURA (V)



Vegetables, shrimp or fish delicately deep fried in light, fluffy batter and served with rice, miso soup & pickles.

How to Eat it?

Eat them as you see them.
If presented with sauce separately (as seen in picture) then you dip the noodles in sauce.

TERIYAKI



Teriyaki is a sweet flavoured sauce that looks a bit like gravy. MacDonalds serves a teriyaki chicken burger - only in Japan!

How to Eat it?

Eat it as you see it!

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O-NABE



O-Nabe is a pot of either vegetables, meat or seafood, cooked at your table in a soup based sauce. It is an essential part of Sumo wrestler's diet, called chanko; Very healthy, very satisfying - a real DIY treat! When soup begins to boil, add the raw ingredients provided, then cook and eat.

How to Eat it?

Once you've finished the vegetables, meat, or seafood, ask the waitress for udon or soba noodles, which you then cook in the remaining soup for three minutes before eating. You may need more soup.

RAMEN NOODLES



Big bowl of Chinese noodles (thin noodles) in chicken broth with vegetables and pork. Interestingly, the Japanese don't drink the soup - it's too high in fat.

How to Eat it?

Eat it as you see it - but not as you hear it! You'll notice Japanese people like to slurp noodles to cool them, which can be a bit of a culture shock!

SASHIMI (RAW FISH)



Finely sliced raw fish served on a bed of shredded raddish (daikon) and Japanese herb (shiso).

How to Eat it?

Mix some soy sauce and wasabi in the mini dish provided, for dipping. Eat it neat or mixed with shiso and daikon.

TON KATSU



Deep fried Pork fillet, shredded raw cabbage on the side, with miso soup, rice, and pickles. Or, if you don't like pork, it usually comes in a chicken version too.

How to Eat it?

Eat it as you see it but it's nicer when you add the brown sauce to it - including the cabbage.

UDON NOODLES



Thick noodles served hot or cold in soup with choice of topping - usually tempura shrimp or vegetables.

How to Eat it?

Eat them as you see them.

Don't feel embarrassed if you slurp - this is normal in Japan!

YAKITORI (V) (C.I.Y.)



Skewered pieces of chicken (tori), meat (niku) or vegetables (yasai) cooked over a BBQ grill. Choice of salt or soy flavour. 'Yaki means grilled.

How to Eat it?

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ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

SAKE



A mixture of all types of small dishes served in succession and presented so artistically you're almost ashamed to eat it. Actual dishes vary according to restaurant, area and season. Kaiseki dining is the most popular style of dining in most ryokan's in Japan.

SHOCHUU



Often described as a mild vodka, is also made from rice and mogi (a type of yeast) and usually served with water or a fruit juice.

NAMA-BIRU



Equivalent to a pint of lager in the Western world. Asahi, Sapporo and Yebisu are the three most popular brands. Usually served in small, medium or large jugs, prices vary from 400JPY to 1000JPY.

NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

GREEN TEA (O-CHA)

Enjoyed hot or cold, has a strong bitter taste - best accompanied with traditional Japanese sweets & food. Traditional Japanese tea ceremonies are common in old style towns today. Definitely worth trying, to experience something authentic.

OOLONG TEA (OO-LONG CHA)

A Chinese black tea drunk hot, or with ice & lemon.

FRUIT JUICES

You will find a variety of juices, including plum, orange, lemon, apple and grape.

WATER

Most restaurants serve filtered water as soon as you sit down - which should be ok to drink.