

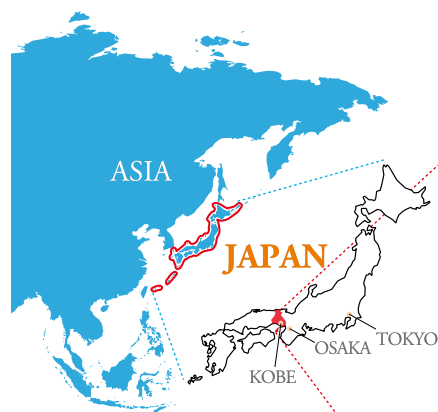
Guide

Hyogo Premium Foods Guidebook
(Japan)

“A Japan in Miniature” Hyogo and Its Terroir

Hyogo Prefecture faces the Sea of Japan in the north and the Seto Inland Sea (Pacific Ocean) in the south, and mountains lie to the east and west of the central area. In its vast area are also diverse landforms including highlands, plains and islands, and many weather conditions such as intense cold, snowfall, and dry or mild climates. Due to its geographical features with a variety of natural environments, Hyogo Prefecture is often called “A Japan in Miniature.”

Hyogo Prefecture is composed of five districts with unique and distinctive cultures formed over its long history: Settsu (Kobe and Hanshin), Harima, Tajima, Tamba and Awaji. In each district, people have been engaged in agriculture, fishery or forestry in various ways fitted to the local climate and culture.



Tajima

Tajima’s local specialty products include Iwatsu green onion, Asakura sansho (Japanese pepper), and rice and soybeans grown using the ecological farming method “stork-friendly farming.” Tajima cattle, the best of which become the world-famous Kobe Beef, are also bred and fattened in Tajima (this region is the hometown of Tajima cattle). Tajima district facing the Sea of Japan boasts Japan’s top-class catches of snow crab and firefly squid.



Harima

Utilizing its clayish soil, this district produces the largest amount of the sake rice Yamadanishiki in all of Japan. The waters extending from the Akashi Strait to the Sea of Harima are known for their harvest of octopus and other fish/shellfish, and as seafood farms. The aquaculture of oysters, clams and other items has also been a major industry over the years.



Awaji

Awaji district, surrounded by the sea on all sides and blessed with a mild climate, is the area of Hyogo with the most prosperous farming industry. Awaji Island Onions are the most well-known local specialty from Awaji. Other major industries include dairy farming (the production of raw milk in Awaji accounts for approximately 40% of the production in Hyogo) and breeding and fattening of Tajima cattle (the number of cattle in Awaji accounts for one third of all cattle raised in Hyogo).



Tamba

Taking advantage of unique local climate conditions such as large temperature fluctuations within a single day, specialty Tamba brand products (Tamba black soybeans, Dainagon adzuki red beans, Japanese yam, chestnut, tea, etc.) are produced in the region. Fattening of Tajima cattle is also a major industry in Sasayama City, and “Tamba Sasayama Beef” is a local specialty there.



Settsu

Vegetables and cereal crops are grown in and around the urban area. In Kobe, the main agricultural products are fruits (peaches, grapes, persimmons, etc.) and dairy products. There are fattening farmers of Tajima cattle who produce special products such as “Sanda Beef.” Sand lance fishery and seaweed aquaculture are also major industries. Nada-gogo, a famous Japanese sake production site, is also located in Settsu.



Healthy and Safe! Foods in Hyogo

What are the 'Certified Foods of Hyogo'?

Hyogo Prefecture established the Hyogo Foods Certification System in order to widely promote among citizens the natural tastiness of agricultural and fishery products and processed foods from Hyogo and to remove any sense of anxiety or distrust toward foods. Under this system, Hyogo Prefecture accredits foods that are safe, trustworthy, unique and possessing special features as Certified Foods of Hyogo.

The marks of Certified Foods

There are two marks that identify Certified Foods of Hyogo according to specific standards: the Hyogo Recommended Brand and the Hyogo Confident Brand.



Hyogo **Recommended** Brand

Hyogo Recommended Brand

Hyogo Recommended Brand foods are produced through environment & health conscious methods, have excellent taste and texture, and have unique and special features. In addition, it signifies that the foods comply with the ordinance and come from a well-established production management system.



Hyogo **Confident** Brand

Hyogo Confident Brand

On top of the Hyogo Recommended Brand screening standard, Hyogo Confident Brand foods must be produced with a 50% reduction of the use of chemical fertilizer and agricultural chemicals, as well as chemical residues, antibiotics and other chemicals limited to 1/10 of the national standard, thus guaranteeing their safety levels remain high. Also the accuracy of their shipment records must be thoroughly maintained to ensure the safety of the foods. The screening standard adopts the concepts of HACCP(*1) and traceability(*2).

*1 HACCP : The internationally recognized Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points is an efficient and effective food hygiene control system that sets hazard monitoring methods to prevent possible hazards during the food manufacturing processes.

*2 Hyogo Prefecture sets a traceability guideline using "lot management" to identify the food being handled.

Beef

The most important factor to the quality of 'world-class' beef is the pedigree behind it. 'Tajima Beef' is a special meat from the Tajima region in the northern part of Hyogo Prefecture. Tajima, an area with sparse flatlands facing the Sea of Japan, is known as the birthplace of Tajima Cattle, a variety of Japanese Black cattle. Of all the pure-bred Tajima Cattle raised there, only a select number achieve the highest-quality criteria that entitles them to be labelled as 'Kobe Beef'. Only since 2012 has Kobe Beef begun to be exported outside of Japan and has earned praise.



Kobe Beef

Characteristics:

The monounsaturated fats contained within the meat are what gives Kobe Beef its sophisticated flavor and aroma. The melting point of the fat is so low, it actually melts on the tongue when eaten. The way in which the red meat and fat is distributed within the beef, the marbling, is extremely fine in Kobe Beef. It is this fine marbling that gives the meat such a smooth texture. Furthermore, so that a certain fineness to the muscle fibers in the meat can be ensured, restrictions are placed on the dressed carcass weights, an approach that demonstrates how quality is always considered more valuable than quantity.

Production Method:

After being born and raised for about 9 months in Hyogo Prefecture the calves of all pure-blood Tajima Cattle are sold at markets within the prefecture to fattening farms, also in Hyogo Prefecture, where they are raised for another 2 years. Their meat is then sent to meat centers where the marbling is evaluated and graded to strict standards. Only the meat achieving the highest standard is crowned with the 'Kobe Beef' certification.

The Brand Management System:

In order to ensure the authenticity and quality of 'Kobe Beef' brand, all production procedures are undergone in Hyogo, and a certification registration system is applied.

The Kobe Beef Marketing and Distribution Promotion Association issues the certifications and it is not only the beef producers who must be certified. Distributors, wholesalers, and even shops and restaurants must all be registered with the Association.

No cow comes into this world and begins its life as Kobe Beef

Even among Tajima Cattle, only the chosen few that satisfy specific quality criteria deserve the title 'Kobe Beef'.

[Breeding & Raising]	Designated producers in Hyogo Prefecture devote a lot of love to breeding and raising pureblood Tajima Cattle.
[Shipment]	The cattle is slaughtered at one of the meat centers in Hyogo Prefecture. Afterwards, all dressed carcasses are inspected and shipped to the meat market.
[Grading]	Only Tajima Cattle having a BMS (Beef Marbling Score or marbling index) of No.6 or higher, meeting other strict criteria such as fine meat texture, and having passed weight limitation can be officially certified 'Kobe beef'.



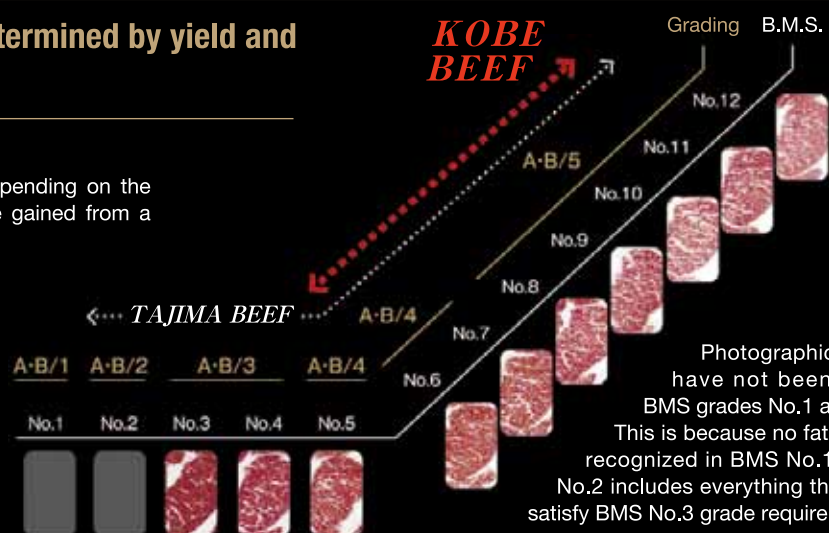
Beef carcass grading is determined by yield and meat quality scores

◎Yield score (A to C)

This is classified into three grades depending on the percentage of edible cuts that can be gained from a single head of cattle.

◎Meat quality score (1 to 5)

This is the overall score based on the degree of marbling (BMS), texture, color, fat quality, and other factors (5 is the highest).



Rice

Hyogo Prefecture is one of the best rice producing areas of Western Japan. As well as the excellent-quality Koshihikari rice, the most popular and famous brand of all, Hyogo grows two other high quality varieties, namely Hinohikari and Kinuhikari. In addition to these 3 hikari types, there are also several other tasty rice varieties grown in Hyogo, such as Kinumusume

Characteristics and Production Method:

Rice that's good for people, and good for the environment!

In Hyogo Prefecture there are many enthusiastic rice farmers practicing safe and secure 'environment-creation' farming. This agricultural method uses pesticides and chemical fertilizers in very limited quantities, thereby causing minimal stress to the environment. For example, 'stork-friendly farming' has been established in areas in and around Toyooka City. By careful management of the field water during winter and spring, the aquatic and other organisms that Oriental White Storks thrive on grow to be plentiful. As this farming also uses no pesticides and fewer chemical fertilizers, such practices have successfully led to the reintroduction of the storks in the wild.

* Environment-creation farming

Due to modern-age needs for high efficiency and high yields, agricultural production has depended heavily on chemical fertilizers and pesticides. However, while productivity has successfully increased, concerns began to grow about damage to the environment. Therefore, Hyogo Prefecture now aims for an agriculture that is both good for people and for the environment through policies promoting sustainable production of safe and healthy food. The name given to agricultural practices discouraging the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides is 'environment-creation farming'. This is the foundation of agriculture in Hyogo Prefecture.

Stork Natrual Rice

Outline:

The symbol of Japanese agriculture and of environment-creation farming in agricultural villages is the Oriental White Stork. Rice grown in 'stork-friendly' environments does not rely on chemical fertilizers, pesticides or similar artificial products. As such, the rice paddies provide an ideal habitat for the various organisms that storks feed on. The rice grown in such fields is good for both people and nature.

In order to recover the ecological richness that storks need, great care and attention is taken to growing the rice naturally. The end product is both chemical-free and delicious.

An environment where storks can feed on creatures that thrive in and around paddy fields and where they can co-exist with people represents nature in its richest sense.

Characteristics:

What is different about stork-friendly rice farming?

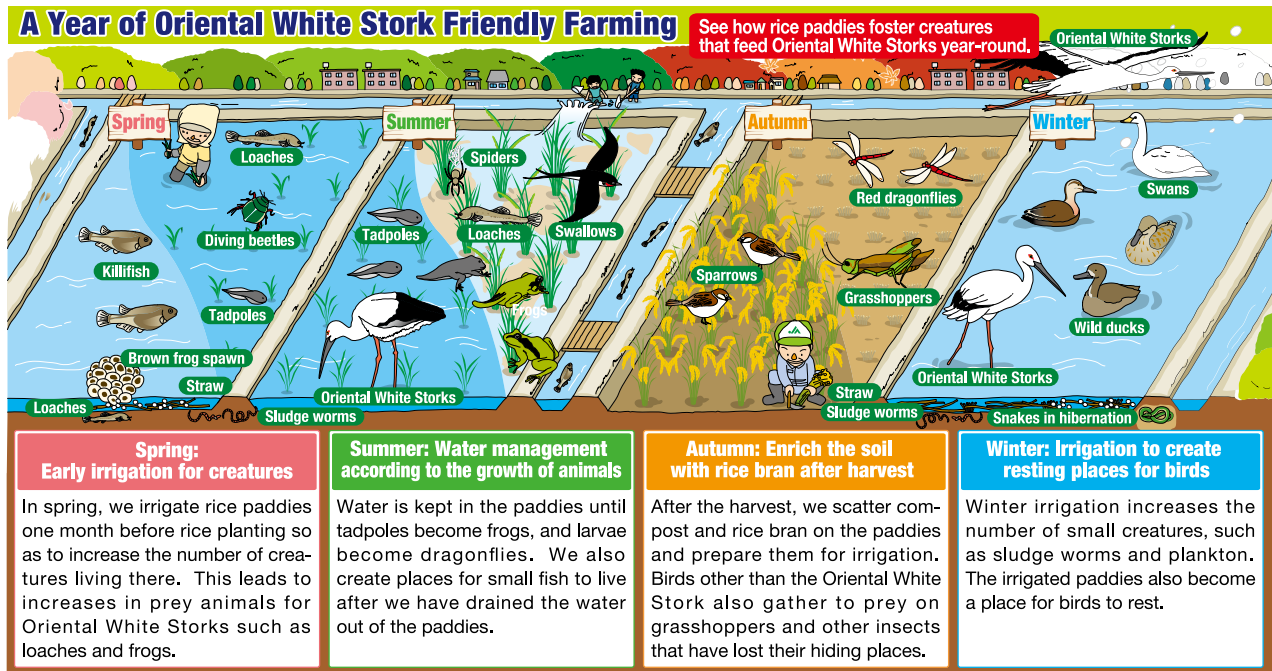


- Pesticide usage reduced by 75% or eliminated completely
- Chemical fertilizers not used at all
- Rice seedlings disinfected using hot-water
- Mid-summer field drainage not performed (the paddy- field water allows tadpoles and dragonfly larvae to mature).
- Fields filled with water one month before planting and during winter
- Water-depth is carefully managed (to discourage weeds but encourage living organisms)

Definition:

Stork-Friendly Farming

A farming method that produces tasty rice while encouraging an ecology of organisms on which storks can feed on and, in so doing, aims to realize an enriched farming culture and improved environment for people.



Spring **Summer**

We have adopted traditional methods of rice growing that require time and effort to produce safe and tasty rice, as well as to make rice paddies a place that Oriental White Storks and many other creatures can inhabit.

Autumn **Winter**

Through reduced use of pesticides, use of organic fertilizers, and water management throughout the year, we work hard to increase creatures living in the soil of the paddies.

Sake Rice

Hyogo Prefecture is Japan's number one producer for the rice used in making Japanese sake. Since ancient times the farmers have been growing sake rice that reflects and matches the diverse natural environment in Hyogo. The leading rice variety is Yamada-nishiki, the so-called "king of sake rice", a cross-bred variety which has also been used to develop several other new cultivars (strains selected for their desirable characteristics) such as Hyogo Yume-nishiki and Hyogo Kita-nishiki. Shipment volumes amount to approximately 30% of Japan's total output, a harvest then distributed to sake brewers all over the country. Sake made from Yamada-nishiki is now exported internationally.

Japanese Sake

Hyogo Prefecture is proud to not only have the most prominent sake brewing companies, but also to be the country's top producer by amount. Itami City within the prefecture is reputedly the birth place of sake and the Nada-gogo (literally, "five districts of Nada") area is famed for its Nada-no ki-ippou (pure, un-mixed Nada sake).

Hyogo Prefecture has the best of everything for making sake – the most suitable rice variety (Yamada-nishiki), the most suitable water (miyamizu) and the excellence of master brewers from the Tajima and Tamba regions.

Types of Premium Sake

Types of Sake	Material	Rice-polishing rate*	Character	Ratio of <i>koji</i> rice**
Honjozo	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt, distilled alcohol	70% or less	Fine aroma Good color with luster	15% or more
Tokubetsu-Honjozo	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt, distilled alcohol	60% or less, or Specially processed	Excellent fine aroma Excellent color with luster	15% or more
Junmai	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt	—	Fine aroma Good color with luster	15% or more
Tokubetsu-Junmai	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt	60% or less, or Specially processed	Excellent fine aroma Excellent color with luster	15% or more
Ginjo	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt, distilled alcohol	60% or less	<i>Ginjo</i> production method Distinctive aroma Good color with luster	15% or more
Junmai-Ginjo	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt	60% or less	<i>Ginjo</i> production method Distinctive aroma Good color with luster	15% or more
Daiginjo	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt, distilled alcohol	50% or less	<i>Ginjo</i> production method Distinctive aroma Excellent color with luster	15% or more
Junmai-Daiginjo	Rice, <i>Koji</i> rice malt	50% or less	<i>Ginjo</i> production method Distinctive aroma Excellent color with luster	15% or more

*How much, by weight, is left after polishing

**How much, by weight, rice in a batch was previously used to produce *koji* rice malt

Yamada-nishiki

Characteristics:

“King of sake rice”

Yamada-nishiki was originally created in 1923 at Hyogo’s agricultural experiment station using artificial pollination techniques. The Yamada-ho variety of rice was crossed, as the mother strain, with the Tankan Wataribune rice as the father. Recognized for its excellence as a cultivar, this new variety was named Yamada-nishiki in 1936, and became the cultivar of choice.

Sake rice usually weighs between 25-29 grams per 1000 kernels but Yamada-nishiki consistently weighs in the higher end of this range. Polishing the rice into smaller grains is therefore possible with less breakage. The individual grains are bigger and, compared to other sake rice varieties, contain less protein and amino acids while the opaque white core of the grain is also larger. All these characteristics make the rice superbly absorbent and easy to dissolve, both important properties in the making of good koji rice malt with a high degree of hazekomi (the growing of koji mold [*Aspergillus oryzae*] on the rice grain cores). Sake made using Yamada-nishiki has a good flavor and a fine, smooth texture, creating a product that has both taste and body. Yamada-nishiki is now the standard variety grown and the most suitable for brewing sake. Since first being introduced it has been consistently rated highly at the national new sake contest (Zenkoku Shinshu Kanpyokai). Most of the Japanese sake brands entered for and winning the Sake Competition of the International Wine Challenge and the International Sake Challenge are made of Yamada-nishiki. This is why Yamada-nishiki is truly “the king of sake rice”.

Production Method:

The height of the Yamada-nishiki stem, including the ear-tip, is approximately 130 cm, which is longer than other rice varieties. This means that it is more susceptible to wind damage as well as vulnerable to disease and pests. A great deal of skill and traditional knowledge is therefore required to grow it. The Yamada-nishiki cultivar is a late-ripening variety which is seeded and cultivated in May, planted in early or mid-June and then harvested in October.

Sake from Hyogo

The Entire Spectrum of Sake within One Prefecture:

Hyogo boasts nine separate brewing associations across all parts of the prefecture, each producing sake with their own distinctive tastes and palates. Within Hyogo you’ll find a full range of sake ranging from sweet to dry and light to heavy. Visit the traditional home of Japanese sake, and trace the history and culture of Japan’s national drink.

Characteristics:

Water is the essence of life, and sake. Many regions of Hyogo are blessed with quality water, which makes them famous as well for the quality of their local sake.

Nada in particular is known for its miyamizu spring water, which is of a semi-hard type rare in the Kansai region. It contains the perfect balance of minerals for producing sake, and has been the key to sake brewing in the Nadagoto area since the late Edo Period.

The head brewers, responsible for overseeing the brewery, its staff and its products, are known as *tōji*. Even as mechanization continues to advance and brewing methods are modernized, *tōji* play the single most important role in maintaining the quality of the sake. Some of Japan’s most skilled and respected *tōji* are based in Hyogo’s Tamba and Tajima regions. The skills and techniques passed down over generations, practiced and preserved by the *tōji* continue to produce the region’s finest sake.



Onions

Awaji Island is the third largest producer of onions in Japan and is blessed with a warm climate and rich soil. The harvested onions are dried by hanging and chilled, a process which brings out the characteristic remarkable sweetness and tenderness. They are a coveted food ingredient that bring an additional and tasty depth to salads, hot pots, stir fry recipes, soups, and many other things.

Black Soybeans

Of the varieties of black soybeans produced in Japan, Tamba Black Soybeans are particularly large and especially delicious. Due to these features they are sometimes called “black diamonds.” Top quality Tamba Black Soybeans have their origin in the Tamba region of Hyogo Prefecture, the number one producing region in terms of both area and volume (as much as 50% market share). As the bean size is relatively large and as the skin does not peel so readily, Tamba soybeans are very easy to cook, resulting in a tender and flavorful product. Due to their visual beauty in size and shape, plus their doughy texture and higher sugar content, they are used to make an expanding variety of food products including confectionary.

Tambaguro

Characteristics:

An unbroken history

The large and round black soybeans originated from the Tamba region and have a wax-like powder when fully matured. The history of black soybean cultivation is very long.

Archives reveal that in Japan's Edo period (1603-1868), the ruling Aoyama family of the Sasayama Domain presented these black beans to the shogunate government as a specialty product of the region. In 1941, the agricultural experimental station of Hyogo selected out some especially excellent specimens from the *Habeguro* soybeans grown in the area since ancient times, naming them *Tambaguro*, and certified them as the recommended variety.

The Tamba region is a basin area between mountains. During the summer growing season, the daytime is very humid and the nights very cold. This unusual daily temperature variation, along with the many misty days and soakings from the rain squalls, provides a climate that, together with Tamba's fertile soil, creates a perfect environment for growing high-quality Tamba Black Soybeans.

Awaji Island Onions



Sweetness and tenderness

According to scientific research the amount of pyruvic acid – an indicator of the pungent piquancy in onions – in Awaji Island Onions achieves a maximum 60% of that of onions grown elsewhere. When sautéed their sugar content measures between 9 to 10%, up to 4% higher than regular onions. Furthermore, the exceptional tenderness has also been proven using specialized stress-testing equipment to see how sections of onion flesh withstands pressure. All in all, Awaji Island Onions have higher levels of both sweetness and tenderness than onions from other regions.

Production Method:

Seeds are pre-planted in beds during September and then transplanted to paddy fields in November and December where they go through the winter. With the climate repeatedly cooling and warming, the onions begin to grow and their nutritious bulbs form. In May or June when the green leaves naturally collapse and draw tighter the onions are ready for harvesting. Part of the harvest is then sent to market while the remaining produce is hung in onion shacks where, with the island wind used to slowly dry them, the characteristic tastiness of the Awaji Island Onion forms. This natural drying method brings out the onion's sweetness, rich coloring and sheen. Those sent to the market after October are put into extended cold storage. This enables long-term shipment until the following February or March.



Edamame

These are actually young Tamba Black Soybeans still in their pods and named 'Tamba Kuro Edamame'. The beans have a completely different texture to that of ordinary edamame. This texture and their taste have earned them a high reputation and they are now enjoyed as a 'must-eat' autumn-time food item. They are harvested from top class black soybeans while still immature.



Tamba Kuro Edamame

Characteristics:

Tamba Kuro Edamame are young Tambaguro. They are sent to market three times during the year – in June, August and early to mid-October. Those harvested across the two weeks in mid-October make for an especially seasonal and delicious product.

Large, tender, and with a doughy texture, the beans have their own distinct and original flavor. This top class edamame requires a great deal of time and effort to grow but has been gaining much popularity in recent years.



Figs



Figs grown in Hyogo Prefecture are especially sweet, refreshing and soft, often described as “the lady of fruits”. The main kind of figs grown in Hyogo are called ‘Masui Dauphine,’ after Mitsujiro Masui of Hiroshima Prefecture who was the first to bring figs from the USA for commercial growing in Japan. From 1925, he initially grew his figs in Kawanishi City (Hyogo). After that, the figs were cultivated in orchards in Kobe and then all over the country.

The figs are often eaten as processed items such as jams as well as a fresh fruit. They have variety of uses as ingredients for breads and cakes, soup and sauce, and wine and vinegar.

Chestnuts



Tamba Chestnuts are said to be Japan’s number-one chestnut due to their high-quality, size, tenderness and sweetness.

Chestnuts have always represented the quintessential taste of autumn with their sweet, homely and warm taste. They are most commonly enjoyed boiled or roasted to retain their natural flavor but they can also be grilled, steamed with rice, or even used in dessert, for example, stewed in syrup. While the Tamba Chestnuts from Hyogo Prefecture are Japan’s most popular, Hyogo also produces the well-known Settsu Chestnut. Both varieties are mentioned in Japan’s most ancient books on customs and law (called the Engishiki) dating back to the mid-Heian era (circa 927 AD).

Tamba Chestnuts

Characteristics:

Chestnuts as tributes

Tamba Chestnuts are primarily characterized for being large, tender and sweet. They make an appearance in Japan’s early history within the *Nihon Shoki* (‘The Chronicles of Japan’). In other moments of classical history there are several examples of feudal lords presenting Tamba Chestnuts to the Shogunate and Imperial Court. These and other stories created a high-status reputation for these special chestnuts all over Japan. As such they are treasured as gifts for celebratory occasions.

As the chestnuts grow larger, and as their color and sheen turns even more beautiful, so too the delicious taste of the inner nut appears. Because of such features Tamba Chestnuts are often used in confectionary and breads. The nuts are high in vitamins B1 and C, good for digestion and for their nutrients.

Production Method:

Chestnut trees favor sunny places with good drainage, airflow, and organic soil. One tree requires a space of about 30 to 40 m². The Tamba region has a lot of woodland areas highly suitable for chestnuts and where the trees can expand their roots deep underground. The big temperature differences between Tamba’s day-time and night-time increases the sugar content in the nut, thereby providing the sweet taste and a pleasing texture. If the nuts are to grow large and sweet enough, diligent pruning is also essential during the winter time and so in the Tamba and Hokusetsu regions there are various pruning courses offered during winter months.

Hyogo Figs

Production Method:

“The lady of fruits”

Figs are grown in areas with a lot of sun, but because the roots of the tree run across the ground surface they are vulnerable to excessively dry or humid environments. Only ground with good moisture content and good drainage is used. Furthermore, because the fig fruits are already fully ripe when harvested they are difficult to transport and store. The bulk of the harvest is therefore sent only for distribution across the nearby Kansai Region – to cities such as Kobe and Osaka. However, new technologies are being developed that will keep these delightful fruits fresh enough for nationwide distribution and overseas export.



Adzuki Red Beans

Tamba Dainagon Adzuki premium red beans grown in Hyogo Prefecture are rated as the best adzuki in Japan owing to their larger size, attractive shine, and also because they do not disintegrate when cooked. Historical documents record that they were presented to Japan's shogunate government in olden times. Nowadays, these red beans are the most exclusive and expensive brand in the world. The *ogura-an* paste made from *Tamba Dainagon Adzuki* has an exquisite color, sophisticated sweetness and great depth of flavor. Adzuki red beans also have a delicate fragrance when processed and are a popular ingredient in high-quality Japanese cakes.

Tamba Dainagon Adzuki

Characteristics:

Tamba Dainagon Adzuki red beans are relatively heavy and do not break down easily when used in cooking. As such they can be prepared in several ways, for example, as a mashed bean paste (called *tsubu-an*), or a sweet red bean soup (*zenzai*). They can also be cooked in rice for serving a celebration meal on special occasions. The *ogura-an* paste made from Tamba Dainagon Adzuki has an outstanding sweetness and depth of taste much prized among the manufacturers of up-market Japanese sweets produced in traditional Kyoto.

Production Method:

The adzuki bean vines are planted in mid- to late-July and flowering occurs at the end of August. The pods start to change color, ready for harvesting, from October onwards. As they are not all ready at the same time, the harvesting (with the pods picked by hand) is carried out in stages until late November. After harvesting, the beans are dried, selected and then given a final drying before being distributed to market in early December.



Asakura Sansho (Japanese Pepper)

Asakura *Sansho* Japanese pepper is gaining a reputation overseas as a “miracle spice”. The berries of Asakura *Sansho* are particularly famous for their large size and flavor. Historically, it was presented to the shogunate government each year and valued as an outstandingly superior spice.

Even today, Asakura *Sansho* is the very best among the peppers from Japan. *Sansho* berries pack a strong punch in a small package and are used in Japanese cooking to accent the main ingredients. Simmering the peppers in soy sauce after harvesting allows them to be stored for a long time.

Characteristics:

Asakura Sansho originates from a place called Asakura in Yoka-cho, Yabu City of Hyogo Prefecture. The pepper berries were mainly grown wild in the surrounding woodlands and regarded as a much-prized gift, worthy of presentation to the shogunate government. Up until around 1965, they were only consumed as a spring-time taste by the locals. Then, over the next 10 years there was a big increase in demand for sansho in medicines and spices. Production outputs in Asakura increased from that time.

Production Method:

The characteristics of Asakura Sansho are the large size and milder bitterness. The powdered pepper is smooth with an invigorating hotness and fragrance. The berries are harvested from late May until mid-June.



Somen Noodles

Ibo-no-ito is one of Japan's most representative and much-loved somen noodles. Craftsmen manufacture the somen according to traditional methods. This involves hand-stretching the flour dough into long, fine strands similar to vermicelli and using a repeated rising/fermenting process.

In addition to somen noodles, the prefecture also grows buckwheat for making soba (buckwheat) noodles – such as *Yume-soba*, *Kisumi-no-soba*, and *Haruki-soba* – and also grows *Fukuhonoka* wheat for making udon noodles. As such, noodle production using local ingredients is an active part of food culture in Hyogo.

Ibo-no-ito somen noodles

Characteristics:

Ibo-no-ito handmade somen noodles are made using all local ingredients. The wheat is a high-quality variety grown in Hyogo's Banshu region, the water is from the Ibo River, and the sea salt is from Ako. Then the local craftsmen carefully apply traditional methods that use a repeated process of letting it rise and stretching the dough.

Historical Background:

The manufacture of somen is even recorded in archives from the Muromachi Period (1336-1573). Manufacturing of somen in the Banshu region apparently became more intensified during the An'ei era (1772-1780). Then production was more formally organized under the Tatsuno Clan, who sought protection and development of local products during Japan's Bunka era (1804 - 1818). Later in the Meiji Era, a manufacturer's union was established which still exists today.

Nata Mame

(Sword bean Jack bean)

Jackbean... have you heard the story of "Jack and the Beanstalk?" This bean is nicknamed after the story. The people in the village of Tamba in Hyogo-prefecture, Japan also call it "NATA MAME" which directly translates as "farmers' cutting knife (NATA) shaped like a bean." Jackbean is an annual plant that can be bushy or climbing. It usually grows 200 cm tall but can become up to 10 meters long when climbing, its stems support themselves by twining around other plants. Remember that Jack was to use this Jackbean plant to climb up to the sky.

Characteristics:

The Jackbean's flowers are pink, mauve or white with red and white seeds. Pods are up to 30-50 cm long and contain 3 cm long, ellipsoid seed and it weights approximately 300-400 grams. Pods and seeds are edible and used for food, the young pods being cooked as a vegetable and pickles like FUKUJINZUKE (very popular Japanese red colored pickles normally served with Japanese curry rice dish). Jackbean contains urease, canavanine, concanavalin A.

The people in Tamba area dry and roast the Jackbean and drink it as a family detoxing tea for many years from generation to generation. This tea has a lightly sweet taste and is caffeine free. The farmers in Tamba area still cultivate the Jackbean and they grow it organically. In these days there are many people who love Tamba Jackbean tea not only in Japan but also people in the world. This is a one of a kind detoxing caffeine free tea for your health!



Soy Sauce

Usukuchi Soy Sauce

Characteristics:

Soy sauce is the original Japanese condiment that is essential to so much of Japanese cuisine. Hyogo is one of the three major producers of all types of soy sauce (actually No.2), and is the home of usukuchi (light) soy sauce. Compared to the stronger regular soy sauce, usukuchi soy sauce has a milder color, taste, and fragrance and brings out the original color and taste of the ingredients. From olden times, production of usukuchi soy sauce has been most active in the Tatsuno region of Hyogo. The soy sauce is popular in more delicate cuisine, for example, with Kyoto's heirloom vegetables (kyo-yasai) and white-fleshed fish.

Nori Seaweed

Hyogo Prefecture is one of the top producers of *nori*, an edible black seaweed that is toasted to create *yakinori* (toasted seaweed). Of all the *yakinori* sheets eaten in Japan one in five or six of them comes from Hyogo. *Yakinori* contains as much as 30-40 grams of high-quality protein per 100 grams of *nori*. The seaweed harvested is so rich in this high-quality protein that they are sometimes known as “the soybeans of the sea”. *Nori* is already well-regarded as a health food, which is a positive reputation that continues to increase.

Sea Bream

The red sea bream (*tai*) from Hyogo swim in strong currents and thrive within the nutrition-rich waters. Red sea bream caught in the Akashi Strait are called Akashi Sea Bream and from ancient times have been hailed as the very best sea bream in Japanese waters. In the best season, the flesh of the fish is almost transparent with light amber tints. After they are caught, the fish undergo two humane preparation processes called *ike-koshi* and *ikejime*. *Ike-koshi* is putting the fish into a feedless and stress free environment to calm the fish and empty the stomach, which improves the flavor and lowers mortality during transport. *Ikejime* is a quick and humane method of paralyzation that prevents the creation of lactic acid, which would sour the fish. The result is an improved flesh quality and an exceptional, more enhanced taste.

It is the sophisticated, delicate flavors, mild fragrance, and optimal fat-levels that make the fish a premium variety. Akashi Sea Bream is Japan's most famous sea bream.

Hyogo Nori Seaweed

Characteristics:

Seaweed packed with flavor

Hyogo *Nori*, grown and harvested just off the coast in and around the Akashi Strait, has been shaped and adapted by centuries of strong currents and cold winter winds. As a consequence, the seaweed has a dark color, a glossy look, and is full of flavor. Nurtured by a rich and biodiverse sea environment the *nori* is packed with nutrition and there is, for example, more vitamin A within one sheet of Hyogo seaweed than in a whole egg.

Toasting *nori* produces an appetizing smell and a crispy texture that adds even more flavor. The *nori* sheets are especially popular for wrapping mouthfuls of sushi.



Production Method:

As one of the top producers in the country, Hyogo's *nori* production is its core fishing business, accounting for nearly 40% of total fishery revenues from the Seto Inland Sea area. Floating farms are used with the nets being suspended during the autumn and the harvests taking place between December and April. Most of the harvested *nori* is dried into sheets. After being classified and separated into many grades, these sheets are bought by trading or processing companies that process them into *yakinori* and seasoned *nori*.



Akashi Sea Bream

Characteristics:

Akashi Sea Bream, the top class sea bream, is nurtured in the fast-flowing currents and abundant food-rich waters of the Seto Inland Sea. The bream caught in the spring are called *sakura-dai* (cherry blossom bream), the flesh being a refreshing pink in color and beautiful to look at. These features indicate that the fish are waiting to spawn and, when eaten, the taste is especially subtle and delicate. Later, in the autumn, the fish are called *momiji-dai* (colored maple leaves sea bream). The flavor at this time is stronger due to the greater amounts of fat within the flesh.




Fishing Methods:

The live fish are caught by the traditional Japanese methods of pulling in fishing nets by hand, pole and line fishing and pulling small drag-nets. However, what really makes the fish taste so different is the way they are handled after being caught. The experienced and skilled local fishermen employ methods known as *ike-koshi* and *ikejime* to calm the captured fish. Such fishing techniques and the abundance of food in the sea waters together are what make Akashi Sea Bream so special and tasty.




Octopus

A whole cooked octopus, likely Akashi Octopus, is presented on a traditional woven bamboo tray. The octopus has a dark, mottled brown skin and its tentacles are curled. The tray is made of light-colored bamboo with a distinct woven pattern.

When it comes to the common octopus, Hyogo Prefecture is proud of being number one in Japan in terms of both taste and catch volumes. In particular, the Akashi Octopus caught in the Akashi Strait thrives in waters with ample nutrition and fast ocean currents, factors which give the octopus a sweet flavor and tender texture. Akashi Octopus is traded at high prices. The meat is thick with good elasticity and the flavors grow bolder the longer it is chewed. Octopus is widely served as sashimi, tempura and as vinegar-dressed dishes.

Snow Crab

A close-up of a cooked snow crab, showing its reddish-brown shell and white meat. A small white tag with red Japanese text is attached to one of its legs. The crab is garnished with a sprig of green leafy herbs. The background is blurred, showing other crabs and a wooden surface.

Hyogo Prefecture also holds the number one position in Japan for its bountiful catch of snow crabs from the Sea of Japan. The snow crab is called "the king of winter delicacies." The male crabs in particular are given the prestigious name Matsuba Crab ('pine needle crab'). People from all over Japan travel to Hyogo just to enjoy the taste and, as such, the snow crab has become an important tourism asset.

Akashi Octopus

Characteristics:

Japan's best quality common octopus

The common octopus tends to live along the coasts south of the Tohoku region. They can grow up to 60 cm in length and weigh as much as 5 kilograms. Common octopus caught in Japan accounts for just over 10% of the domestic consumption. Among that, Akashi Octopus is traded as a top-class octopus brand.



Fishing Methods:

Around Akashi, the common octopus is mainly caught by using dragnets as well as by octopus traps and fishing rods. Common octopi reproduce in a year so the catch amount is always relatively stable.

Most of the catch is distributed alive but some is processed (salted, vacuum-packed and frozen), or made into ready tako-shabu dishes or stewed octopus.



Matsuba Crab

Characteristics:

On the Sea of Japan side of Hyogo Prefecture the crabs are called Matsuba Crab. Delightful when fresh, the fishermen will often boil them immediately upon reaching shore. Each specimen is a magnificent creation to look at and the meat inside is rich and delicious with a delightful subtle sweetness. The crabmeat can be enjoyed either boiled, eaten raw as sashimi or grilled. Matsuba Crab hotpot and shabu-shabu are famous local dishes that are thoroughly recommended.



Fishing Method:

Matsuba Crabs live deep in the Sea of Japan and are caught by dragnet. Once on the boat the crabs are placed in a tank that maintains them in good condition.

Once at port, crabs achieving the satisfactory standard are tagged with the name of the boat. In the Tajima region, there are five port communities which fish the crabs and different colored and shaped tags are used for each.

Brand Management System:

Matsuba Crabs are controlled as a brand under a strict quality management system. After the crabs come into port, they are carefully selected for their size, weight and appearance. They are put into tanks according to their grade and then auctioned off and, in some ports, as many as 100 different grades are used.



Oysters

The Nishi-Harima region of Hyogo Prefecture is one of Japan's leading centers of oyster production. Well known for their large size and tender flesh and their delicious flavor, the oysters grown here are highly regarded as masterpieces.

Oysters are so rich in minerals and nutrients that they are known as "the milk of the sea". They possess such an excellent flavor due to the presence of delicious flavoring elements including all the essential amino acids such as glycogen, as well a wealth of nutrients including proteins, calcium, zinc, and other minerals.

Nishi-Harima Oysters

Characteristics:

The largest oyster production volume in Japan

The oysters produced in Nishi-Harima are Pacific oysters, which are commonly seen along the Japanese coast. Full-scale production of these oysters began here around 1987, and since then, the number of production locations has steadily expanded. In terms of size, these oysters' shells measure about 4 cm in length and 7 cm in height.

Large-sized one-year oysters

Nishi-Harima oysters are cultivated by means of a hanging system cultivation in an aquaculture area fed by nutrients from inland forests carried by the waters of the Chikusa and Ibo Rivers. Nurtured in an excellent environment for cultivation, they grow into large-sized oysters with flesh that is tender and delicious to eat. Moreover, because their flesh is rich in glycogen, it does not shrink upon heating, so Nishi-Harima oysters can be harvested after only one year, in contrast to most other oysters which take two or three years before shipping. For this reason, they are highly regarded as "large-sized one-year oysters".



Wakame Seaweed

The *wakame* seaweed produced along the coasts of southern Awaji Island in Hyogo Prefecture and nearby Tokushima Prefecture is famous as 'Naruto *Wakame* Seaweed'. Nurtured by the rich nutrition and fast flowing tidal current of the Naruto Strait, this seaweed has a tender and chewy texture. Naruto *Wakame* Seaweed is a classic top-class Japanese delicacy that combines reliability with high quality in terms of flavor, aroma and texture.

Naruto *Wakame* Seaweed

Characteristics:

Naruto *Wakame* Seaweed has a range of different flavors and textures that can be enjoyed according to the season. For example, in the early spring this seaweed is particularly tender and possesses a distinct sweetness, while in the late spring it has a mature texture.

Production Method:

Harvested *wakame* is divided into the blades, stipes and holdfast, each of which are put through various processes and then sold. Around March, scenes of Naruto *Wakame* Seaweed undergoing processing steps such as drying, ash coating, boiling and salting can be seen in various places on Awaji Island. Such scenes are a seasonal tradition that provides people with a visible indication of the changing of the seasons.

Tiger Pufferfish

Among the several different species of pufferfish (also known as 'fugu') traded as food, the tiger pufferfish is regarded as the highest-class specimen. Due to its unique flavor and texture, it is known in Japan, along with crab, as "the kings of winter delicacies."

Nurtured with the utmost care for three years in the waters of the Naruto Strait, Awaji Three-year Tiger Puffer are exquisitely fine pufferfish of the highest class with ample amounts of firm flesh and a rich flavor.

The flesh, which is white and extremely tasty, is used in a variety of superb dishes including sashimi, hotpot and fried.

Awaji Three-year Tiger Puffer

Characteristics:

The best three-year-old pufferfish

Tiger pufferfish are nurtured in the Naruto Strait for three years. Due to the strong tidal current that characterizes this channel, the flesh of the fish becomes firm and this contributes to its rich flavor. When fully grown, a three-year tiger puffer weighs over 1.2 kg, and their flesh is of the same quality regardless of whether they are wild or cultivated. The black lines characteristic of cultivated pufferfish disappear as these fish grow into extremely tasty tiger pufferfish that are indistinguishable from their natural wild cousins. Moreover, their milt (*shirako*) grow to a large size that would be hard to imagine from a two-year-old tiger puffer.

Production Method:

The temperature of the water in Awaji Island's Fukura Bay is among the lowest in Japan, while the tidal current of the Naruto Strait is the fastest moving in the country. Cultivated in this environment, the Awaji Three-year Tiger Puffers produce firm flesh of an outstanding quality. These fish are carefully nurtured for three years with particular attention paid to adjusting the water temperature within the large tanks in which they swim freely.

Cooking Method:

In coastal areas of Hyogo Prefecture, a style of cooking Japanese sand lance called kugi-ni (boiled in soy sauce) is popular, with each household seasoning the fish in their own favorite way. Kugi-ni is a home cooking style traditionally practiced by the fishing people of Komagabayashi in Nagata Ward, Kobe. The method spread with the local fishermen's association's efforts towards popularization of their products. It is called kugi-ni (literally 'simmering nails') because the cooked sand lance become brown and bent, an appearance resembling rusty nails.

In addition to kugi-ni, sand lance are processed as kama-age (boiled) and kanagi chirimen (boiled and dried).























































































































































































































Japanese Sand Lance

Hyogo Prefecture's catch of Japanese sand lance (ikanago) is among the largest in Japan. Fishing aimed at catching juvenile fish that hatch around the end of December and early January is a seasonal tradition heralding the arrival of spring in the Seto Inland Sea region. The Japanese sand lance is fished off various coasts around Japan, and the juveniles of the species, known as ikanago on the coasts of the Seto Inland Sea, ko-onago in the Kanto Region, and kamasugo in Osaka, are a familiar food to the Japanese people.

Food season calendar

Each food has its season. Check the calendar to enjoy the best taste!

		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Rice (Koshihikari)													
Rice (Hinohikari)													
Sake rice (Yamada-nishiki)													
Leafy/Stem Vegetables	Onion												
	Cabbage												
	Chinese cabbage												
	Spinach / Crown daisy												
	Japanese mustard spinach / Green bok choy												
	Green onion												
	Iwatsu green onion												
	Lettuce												
	Broccoli												
	Basil												
Fruit Vegetables	Tomato												
	Green bell pepper												
	Eggplant												
Accessory Fruit	Strawberry												
Root Vegetables	Japanese radish												
	Carrot												
	Japanese yam												

		January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December
Beans	Edamame (Black soybeans)										Black soybeans (October)		
	Adzuki Red Beans												
Fruit	Grape												
	Pear												
	Fig												
	Chestnut												
	Sansho (Japanese pepper)												
The Sea of Japan	Snow crab												
	Red snow crab												
	Flatfish												
	Sandfish												
	Pacific flying squid												
	Firefly squid												
Seto Inland Sea	Red sea bream												
	Conger eel												
	Japanese sand lance												
	Flatfish												
	Common octopus												
	Wakame seaweed (farmed)												
	Nori seaweed (farmed)												
	Oyster (farmed)												

Hyogo Foods Promotion Council

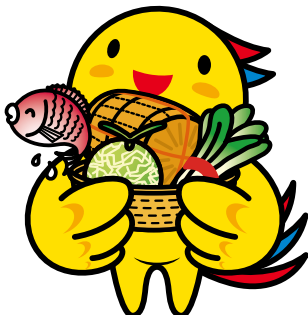
Hyogo Foods Promotion Council is a council of producers, distributors, consumers, media, and local administration that comes together in order to expand the production, distribution and consumption of delicious food from both the land and sea as well as processed products from Hyogo.

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Habatan: the mascot of Hyogo Prefecture

