

The vast majority of lobster is sold to the foodservice sector in Japan, with household consumption accounting for less than 5 percent. Lobster is used at many wedding and banquet halls for special occasions; in high class western-style restaurants; and consumption has grown among family-style restaurants. Red Lobster restaurants is one of the largest end-users of Canadian lobster. Red Lobster's large number of outlets and customer base, has aided the increase in consumption. Live lobster is generally served in 400g-450g sizes, although some are sold in 300g-350g sizes. Frozen lobster is often served in a half size, with the whole lobster weighing about 300-350 grams. There is demand for lobsters 200g-300g and 400g-450g, but overall, serving sizes tend to be smaller. Homarus spp. is served a limited number of ways, quasi-western style. Menu items often include lobster thermidor, lobster with sauce, or lobster salad. Many Japanese chefs and consumers do not have information on how to prepare lobster in other styles. Spiny lobster is sometimes eaten raw {sashimi} style, but not with Homarus spp.. Japanese consumers enjoy the "brown matter" in lobster.

Imports of Homarus spp. began in earnest in 1985 for the Japanese market, following both the strengthening of the Yen, and a decline in supply for spiny lobster. Homarus spp. now has a strong foothold in the Japanese market, and imports continue to grow. Canada is by far the largest exporter of Homarus spp. lobster to Japan, with the United States second, but slipping. Canadian exports of lobster to Japan have grown substantially over the past five years. Canadian export volumes for live lobster have risen 78 percent since 1987, while frozen lobster exports rose 351 percent during the same period. The growth in exports of both live and frozen lobster slowed in 1992-93 with the economic slowdown in Japan, but there is still room for further growth in the Japanese market.

Japanese Imports of Lobster

{Value = US\$,000}

H.S.	1991 {MT}	1991 Value	1992 {MT}	1992 Value	1993 {MT}	1993 Value
0306.1100	12,378	244,301	11,129	218,240	9,231	151,497
0306.1200	2,109	26,273	1,873	24,540	1,407	16,431
0306.2110	—	—	2,439	70,240	2,804	80,445
0306.2111	2,402	70,975	—	—	—	—
0306.2119	1	32	—	—	—	—
0306.2210	1,505	22,662	1,500	25,105	1,466	23,144

Source: Japanese Fish Import Statistics

Spiny lobster commands a premium price in Japan compared to Homarus spp., largely due to its perceived superior taste. Retail prices are in the range of ¥10,000-12,000 for domestic live spiny lobster; ¥5,500-7,000 for imported spiny lobster; and ¥3200-3400 for live Homarus spp.. Lobster prices generally rise sharply in the year-end and New Year's season. Many Japanese buyers in the seafood industry believe Homarus spp. biggest advantage in the Japanese market is low price, but is not competitive if price rises above 50 percent of spiny lobster.

Monthly C.I.F. Prices in Japan for Whole, Cooked Lobster

Origin India {US\$/kg}

Month	1991 {A}	1991 {B}	1992 {A}	1992 {B}	1993 {A}	1993 {B}
Jan	n/a	n/a	9.50	24.30	9.70	18.55
Mar	13.00	20.00	9.10	22.70	10.25	18.80
May	11.50	22.00	n/a	n/a	10.85	19.00
July	n/a	n/a	8.40	21.20	17.30	17.30
Sept	10.00	12.50	8.50	19.90	17.45	17.00
Nov	11.00	25.00	9.20	18.50	19.45	16.20
Dec	9.70	25.80	9.60	18.10	19.30	16.10

Source: ITN. NOTE: {A} = 100-150 gm/pc; {B} = 150-200 gm/pc