

REGIONAL PATTERNS

Although Canadians often regard the Japanese seafood market as one single homogenous market, with one city market much the same as another. It is actually comprised of hundreds of sub-markets, each differing quite distinctly and often dramatically, in character according to historical as well as geographic and demographic factors. Japan consists of an island chain that extends several thousand kilometres from Hokkaido in the cool, temperate north, to sub-tropical Okinawa and other islands in the south. Apart from a densely populated band running from Chiba prefecture (north-east of Tokyo) to Fukuoka in (Kyushu), the country is sparsely settled.

More than 60% of the country is mountainous forest, and populations living in smaller rural and coastal communities are quite different to those living in the major cities in terms of food preferences and buyer behaviour. Unlike Canada, there are also dramatic differences from city to city, and even within the same city. While these differences are now tending to become smaller, they are still important in terms of marketing strategy. If you travel around Japan, you will find that food preparation and cooking styles vary widely from one region to another. For example, Chinese cooking is popular in Nagasaki, and vegetable cooking in Kyoto. Kobe is famous for the production of Kobe beef which is consumed right across Japan.

In western Japan, for example Kyoto and Nara, the cooking style emphasizes natural colours and flavours and less salt, spice, and sauces are used. In Tokyo spicier food and strong sauces are preferred. The types of soy sauce, *shoyu* and *miso* (a paste made from fermented soybeans and used for soup) are different from region to region, varying in colour, flavour, saltiness and method of preparation. For example, in Kyoto and Nara miso is very dark brown and thick, while in western Kyushu is red and salty. The particular foods traditionally associated with each region are reflected in the box lunches (*eki-ben*) available at many railway stations across Japan. There are also distinct ethnic communities living in Japan, such as the Korean and Chinese communities evident in some cities, (for example Kobe-Korean; Nagasaki and Hokohama-Chinese).

JAPANESE REGIONAL SEAFOOD PREFERENCES

Hokkaido	salmon; salmon roe; herring; sandfish
Akita	sandfish
Iwate & Miyagi	sea squirts; salmon roe; bluefin tuna
Tokyo	eel; bluefin tuna; bigeye tuna; shrimp; snapper; bonito; yellowtail
Osaka/Kyoto	conger eel; mackerel; yellowfin tuna
Kanazawa	loaches; snapper
Okayama/Hiroshima	oysters; squid; conger eel
Kochi	bonito; shrimp; yellowfin tuna; bream; mackerel
Nagasaki	shrimp; snapper
Kagoshima	fish paste; sardine; horse mackerel; shark