

Hidaka: The Origin of Japanese Cuisine

Access



🚆 Train: 2 hours from Osaka

🚗 Car: 2 hours from Osaka



Hidaka: The Origin of Japanese Cuisine
[Official Website (English)]





Hidaka: The Origin of Japanese Cuisine

A typical Japanese meal is composed of *Ichiju Sansai*, literally “one soup and three dishes,” making a balanced meal. Hidaka is a birthplace of its key elements such as *shoyu*, soy sauce, and *katsuobushi*, dried bonito flakes. The high-quality products of *wasabi* and *umeboshi*, pickled ume plums, which are the unique flavors in Japanese cuisine, are also said to have originated in the Hidaka area. These ingredients serve as the basis of regional food cultures based on the climate and conditions of the area.



movie

Shoyu (Soy Sauce)



Soy sauce, the iconic seasoning of Japanese cuisine, is said to hail from Yura Town in the Hidaka area. During the Kamakura period, the monk Kakushin of Kokoku-ji Temple is said to have brought back the method of making *Kinzanji miso* from China. The liquid produced in the process of making *Kinzanji miso* is said to be the origin of *shoyu*, considered the foundation of Japanese flavor.

Soy sauce spread from Yura Town throughout Japan and continues to enrich our dining tables to this day.



movie

Katsuobushi (Dried Bonito Flakes)



An essential source of *umami* in Japanese cuisine, *katsuobushi*, dried bonito flakes, were invented in the 17th century by the fisherman Jintaro Kadoya and his son in Inami Town in the Hidaka area. The first-generation Jintaro developed the smoking method, and the second-generation Jintaro established the production method of *katsuobushi*.

The method has been passed down unchanged to this day, even to the current Reiwa era.



movie

Nanko Ume, Umeboshi (Pickled Ume Plums)



Nanko ume, the top brand of domestically grown Japanese plums, originated in Minabe Town in the Hidaka area. The teachers and students of Minabe High School played a central role in selecting *Takada ume* as the superior variety of plum from many options. To honor the efforts of the students, the plum was named *Nanko ume*, after their school name.

Nanko ume is characterized by its thin skin and soft flesh, making it highly regarded as a premium choice for *umeboshi*, *umeshu*, plum wine, and other processed products.



movie

Mazuma Wasabi



Mazuma wasabi, a premium variety of *wasabi*, originated in Inami Town of the Hidaka area. It is often referred to as the “phantom *wasabi*,” due to its challenging cultivation requirements. Its appeal lies in the exquisite balance of stickiness, aroma, pungency, sweetness, and bitterness.

Although the number of farmers has declined as a result of changes in the growing environment, such as reduced water availability, farmers in its place of origin continue to uphold the tradition with pride.



movie

Learn about the local cuisine of the Hidaka Area



movie

Food Culture

Kakimade Gohan

(Rice Mixed with Fish and Vegetables)



The dish *kakimade gohan* is a specialty traditionally served during celebrations and events. It is prepared by simmering seasonal vegetables in a broth made from grilled fish bones, then mixing them with freshly cooked rice. *Kakimade* means to mix in the local dialect.



movie

Chagayu

(Rice Porridge with Tea)



In Wakayama Prefecture, *Chagayu* is affectionately known as *Okai-san*. It became popular as a clever way to make the most of the limited rice resources in areas with scarce farmland. Even today, it is often prepared for breakfast and continues to be a beloved dish among the local community.



movie

Kinzanji Miso

(Side Dish Miso)



Kinzanji miso is a traditional food made by fermenting vegetables such as gourd and eggplant with soybeans, ginger, barley, and rice *koji* malt. It can be eaten after about a month of fermentation, and its flavor deepens further when aged for a year. Known for its high preservation quality, it is a beloved staple in many households.



movie

Haya-Narezushi

(Mackerel Sushi)



Haya-narezushi is a local dish that simplifies *narezushi*, a traditional preserved *sushi*. Instead of relying on fermentation, it is prepared using vinegar, making it less pungent and more accessible to enjoy. This adaptation has become a beloved variation of the traditional dish.



movie

Imo Mochi

(Sweet Potato and Rice Dumplings)



In the southern part of the Hidaka area, sweet potatoes were traditionally used as a substitute for rice (which is typically the only ingredient in *mochi*). *Imo mochi* was born out of an idea of using sweet potatoes to make *mochi* with a smaller amount of rice. Today, it is enjoyed as a snack.



movie

Sanma Zushi

(Pacific Saury Sushi)



Sanma zushi, made with Pacific saury that migrate south to the Kumano-nada Sea around late October, originated as a preserved food combining rice and fish. Over time, it evolved into a beloved delicacy served during gatherings, such as autumn festivals and New Year celebrations.



movie

Wakame Zushi

(Wakame Seaweed Rolled Sushi)



Wakame zushi is a type of rolled *sushi* made with *hari-wakame*, a soft part of the *wakame* seaweed that is pressed into sheets and used instead of *nori*, a different kind of seaweed typically used with *sushi*. It has been enjoyed as a celebratory dish during seasonal festivals as a traditional flavor.



movie

Bokkake

(Rice Cooked with Fish and Vegetables)



Bokkake is a traditional rice dish passed down in fishing villages of the Hidaka area, made with seasonal fish such as mackerel. It became a staple on daily tables due to its simplicity and ease of preparation, especially during the busy fishing seasons. It remains a beloved local dish.



movie

Mackerel Takitaki

(Mackerel Sukiyaki)



Takitaki is a winter hot pot dish from the Ena community of the Hidaka area. It is a *sukiyaki*-style dish of mackerel, *tofu*, and vegetables cooked in sweet soy-based broth. It has been enjoyed during the mackerel fishing season, from October to December, as a traditional home-cooked meal served on the tables of fishers.



movie

Mame Gohan

(Rice Cooked with Green Peas)



Mame gohan, a springtime local dish, features *Usui* green peas, a variety of peas special to the Hidaka area. These peas are large, with thin skins, offering a flakey texture and luxurious sweetness. Taking advantage of the area's warm climate, Hidaka boasts the highest production of green peas in Japan.



movie

Gonpachi

(Japanese Knotweed)



Known locally in the Hidaka area as *Gonpachi*, Japanese knotweed, is a wild vegetable from the buckwheat family harvested in spring from mountains and riverbanks. Collected between March and mid-May, it is preserved in salt and used in dishes like stews and stir-fries. Its subtle tangy flavor makes it a cherished taste of spring.



movie

Kue Cuisine

(Longtooth Grouper)



A winter specialty of the Hidaka area is *kue* cuisine. *Kue*, a high-end fish from the grouper family, is found off the coast of Wakayama Prefecture. It is not caught in great numbers and is famed for its rarity. Known for its rich, fatty texture, *kue* offers a deep, refined flavor that makes it a prized delicacy.



movie

Kakimade Gohan

(Rice Mixed with Fish and Vegetables)



Ingredients (for 2-3 people):

- Rice: 1.5gou (225g)
- Sake: 1tablespoon
- Carrot: 1/6piece
- Koya tofu (freeze-dried tofu): 1/2piece
- Grilled mackerel: Half fillet
- Shiitake mushroom: 1piece
- Abura-age (fried tofu): 1/4piece
- Chikuwa (fish cake): 1/4piece
- Konjac: 1/6block
- Bamboo shoot: 15g
- Soy sauce: 2tablespoons
- Sugar: 3.5tablespoons

1. Cook the rice with some sake, making it slightly firmer than usual.
2. Remove the bones from the grilled mackerel and break it into pieces.
3. Place the mackerel bones in water, bring it to a boil, and extract the broth (100ml).
4. Prepare the other ingredients by trimming them and slicing them thinly.
5. Add the mackerel pieces and sliced ingredients into the broth from step 3, then add soy sauce and sugar. Simmer everything together.
6. Mix the hot rice from step 1 with the ingredients from step 5.

Mame Gohan

(Rice Cooked with Green Peas)



Ingredients (for 3-4 people):

- Rice: 2gou (300g)
- Usui green peas (approximately 200g with pods): 100g
- Sake: 1 tablespoon
- Salt: 1 teaspoon

1. Take the Usui green peas out of the pods and gently wash them.
2. Put all the ingredients in a rice cooker and cook as usual.

Chagayu

(Rice Porridge with Tea)



Ingredients (for 2-3 people):

- Rice: 1gou (150g)
- Water: 1200ml
- Hojicha (roasted tea): 2tablespoons
- Salt: A pinch (optional)

1. Bring the water to a boil in a pot. Place the hojicha tea leaves in a tea bag and brew until the tea develops a good color.
 2. Remove the tea bag, add the washed rice, and cook over high heat.
 3. Stir gently by scooping with a ladle or spatula.
 4. Once the rice has expanded, turn off the heat.
- * Add a pinch of salt if desired.

Mackerel Takitaki

(Mackerel Sukiyaki)



Ingredients (for 3-4 people):

Warishita (Seasoning Broth)

- Dashi stock: 600ml
- Sugar: 5tablespoons
- Soy sauce: 120ml
- Sake: 150ml
- Mirin (sweet rice wine): 150ml

Main Ingredients

- Mackerel: 1fish
- Vegetables of your choice: Napa cabbage, green onions, enoki mushrooms, tofu, shirataki noodles, etc.

1. Add warishita, the seasoning broth to a pot.
2. When it starts to boil, add the mackerel.
3. Add your preferred vegetables, and it's ready to serve.

Discover local flavors in the Hidaka Area

Spots

Dining



Mazegohan (Mixed Rice) Set Meal

Enjoy the nostalgic flavors of mixed rice, a beloved dish among locals.

Sutebusuton

📍 841 Mio, Mihama-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0738-20-1420
🕒 11:00 – 15:00 (Last Order: 14:00)
📅 Tuesdays and Wednesdays (Open on public holidays)



Dining



Kishu Specialty: Haya-Narezushi

Prepared with vinegar and non-fermented, making it delicious and enjoyable for everyone.

Maruai Zushi

📍 992 Yoshihara, Mihama-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0738-23-3712
🕒 9:00 – 17:00
📅 Mondays



Dining



Sanma Zushi

Marinated briefly with rice vinegar infused with orange and yuzu.
*Advance reservation required
(Seasonal product available from autumn to winter)

Azuma Zushi

📍 258 Kitamichi, Minabe-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0739-72-2174
🕒 16:00 – 21:00 (Only takeaway during lunch hours)
📅 Wednesdays



Dining



Natural Kue Full Course

Known for its refined flavor, delicious both raw and in hot pot dishes.
*Advance reservation required

Minshuku Hamayoshi

📍 3960-1 Shiga, Hidaka-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0738-64-2390
🕒 11:00 – 21:00
📅 –



Dining



Ise Ebi (Japanese Spiny Lobster) Hot Pot

Enjoy Ise ebi, firm and succulent, served raw and in a hot pot.
*Advance reservation required

Hamanoya

📍 41 Katakui, Hidaka-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0738-64-2024
🕒 By consultation
📅 During New Year's holidays



Dining



Hamo (Pike Conger) Hot Pot Full Course

Savor the light, delicate flavor of hamo, which is in season during the summer.
*Advance reservation required

Hirasakan

📍 715 Fukei, Yura-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0738-65-1023
🕒 By consultation
📅 Irregular



Experience



Making Ume (Japanese plum) Juice

Enjoy making ume juice using Nanko ume, the finest brand of ume plums, an activity suitable for young children and adults alike.
*Advance reservation required

Kishu Umeboshikan

📍 1339 Yamauchi, Minabe-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0739-72-2151
🕒 8:30 – 17:00
📅 January 1, during maintenance period (TBD)



Experience



Haya-Narezushi Making

Experience making Haya-narezushi and take home one bar per person.
*Advance reservation required

Kishu Experience Exchange Yume Club

📍 2F Youth Center, Nanzan Sports Park, 1030-90 Wasa, Hidakagawa-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama
☎ 0738-70-4333
🕒 8:30 – 17:15
📅 Saturdays, Sundays, and public holidays



Discover local flavors in the Hidaka Area

Spots

Experience



Fish Filleting and *Wakame Zushi* Cooking

Experience fish filleting with local fishers at a Showa-era retro fishing port, and enjoy making *wakame zushi*.

*Advance reservation required

Kishu no Wa, Wayo Shokudo Shirashou

64 Obiki, Yura-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama (Former Shirasaki Elementary School)

Tel 0738-65-1123

Store: 10:00 – 15:30

Dining: 11:00 – 15:30 (Last order 14:30)

Tuesdays



Souvenir



Mitsuboshi Shoyu (Soy Sauce)

A rich and aromatic naturally brewed soy sauce made using a method that has been passed down since the Edo period.

Horikawayu Nomura

743 Sono, Gobo-shi, Wakayama

Tel 0738-22-0063

Weekdays: 9:00 – 17:00

Weekends and holidays: 10:00 – 17:00

Irregular (call before visiting)



Souvenir



Kakimade Gohan Base

Simply mix with rice for an easy, delicious meal, popular among people of all ages.

Kaeru no Minato

4485-38 Inami, Inami-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama

Tel 0738-20-9028

9:00 – 17:00

Irregular



Souvenir



Kishu Kinzanji Miso

Known for its refreshing aftertaste and timeless flavor.

Amadaya

664-6 Takara, Yukawacho, Gobo-shi, Wakayama

Tel 0738-22-0455

10:00 – 17:00

Irregular



Souvenir



Imo Mochi

A specialty sweet made with fluffy steamed sweet potatoes kneaded into *mochi* and filled with mildly sweet red bean paste.

Katsurado

257 Kitado, Minabe-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama

Tel 0739-72-2215

8:00 – 18:00

Irregular



Souvenir



Kishu Usui (Green Peas)

A seasonal ingredient available from early October to late May, known for its large size and flaky texture.

Fresh Mart Specialty Products Direct Sales Store

261-1 Inami, Inami-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama

Tel 0738-42-1356

9:00 – 17:00

During New Year's holidays



Souvenir



Gon-chan, Miyama no Zei

A product made by salt-pickling *gonpachi*, Japanese knotweed, and then preparing it with a unique method to create a rich flavor and a satisfying texture.

Michi no Hot Station Miyama no Sato

197-5 Ubuyugawa, Hidakagawa-cho, Hidaka-gun, Wakayama

Tel 0738-57-0113

9:00 – 16:00

Tuesdays and during New Year's holidays



For information on other dining options, experiences, and souvenir, please refer to the following:



Tourist Information for the Hidaka Area

Official Website

Instagram



Issued by: Hidaka Regional Tourism Promotion Council
651 Takara, Yukawacho, Gobo-shi, Wakayama Phone: 0738-24-2911
*The information in this booklet is current as of January 2025.