



The SAVOR JAPAN certification logo

## SAWAJI OSAMU

WITH a mild climate and abundant nature, Japan is blessed with a variety of food ingredients, including agricultural products and seafood. There are many regional cuisines throughout Japan that make use of locally sourced ingredients. The Japanese government's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (hereinafter, MAFF) is promoting “*nouhaku*,” a type of tourism in which travelers can enjoy not only local food but also traditional life experiences and interactions with



Top page of “Our Regional Cuisines”

## Bringing Japan's Regional Cuisines to the World

# SAVOR JAPAN

We introduce five of Japan's certified “SAVOR JAPAN” farming, mountain, and fishing communities and the regional cuisines nurtured there.

people in farm, mountain, and fishing communities that nurture these diverse regional cuisines. As part of this initiative, MAFF certifies SAVOR JAPAN areas (<https://savorjp.info>).

In a SAVOR JAPAN area, efforts are being made to utilize regional cuisines, the agriculture, forestry and fishery industries that produce essential ingredients for these cuisines, as well as distinctive local landscapes and history as tourism resources, with the government promoting the all-Japan brand of “SAVOR JAPAN” and utilizing that brand to centrally disseminate information both in Japan and internationally. As of May 2022, 37 areas have been certified as SAVOR JAPAN areas.

Further, to inherit and disseminate the traditions of regional cuisines, MAFF has launched “Our Regional Cuisines,” a website that introduces regional cuisines from Japan's 47 prefectures ([https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/market/k\\_ryouri/index.html](https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/market/k_ryouri/index.html)). This website introduces the origins, history, and recipes of about 1,300 kinds of regional cuisine from all over Japan (in Japanese). Some recipes also include cooking videos.

The following are five SAVOR JAPAN areas and some of their representative regional cuisines.

### ODATE, AKITA PREFECTURE

Akita Prefecture is one of the foremost rice-producing areas in Japan. In the past, hunting animals such as bears was popular in mountainous areas, and there were many people called “*matagi*” who made a living from hunting. The Akita Inu dog, which is now very popular worldwide, was originally a dog that the *matagi* kept for hunting.

**Regional cuisine:** *Kiritampo-nabe*  
hotpot is a chicken-broth hotpot made

*Kiritampo-nabe**Akita Inu puppies*

with chicken, vegetables, and other ingredients as well as *kiritampo*, which is ground cooked rice wrapped around a wooden skewer and grilled over a charcoal fire. It is said to have originated from what the *matagi* ate in the mountains, which included simmering ground rice and mountain birds in a pot.

### TOKAMACHI CITY, NIIGATA PREFECTURE

Tokamachi City is one of the snowiest areas in Japan, with more than 3 meters of snow accumulating in mountainous areas in winter. In the past, during the snowy off-season of farming, many farmers made a living by weaving. Those techniques have been passed on, and Tokamachi City remains one of the leading kimono producing areas in Japan.



Hegi soba noodles



A craftsman makes a kimono

**Regional cuisine:** *Hegi soba* noodles are soba noodles that use seaweed called *funori* as a binding agent and which are served in a wooden vessel called a *hegi*. It is thought that *funori* was originally used as glue to increase the strength of the thread used to weave kimonos, and eventually was also used to make soba noodles.

## NORTHERN KYOTO, KYOTO PREFECTURE

The northern parts of Kyoto Prefecture, facing the Sea of Japan, are blessed with a variety of food ingredients nurtured by its sea, mountains, and fields. In the past, mackerel and other seafood caught in the Sea of Japan were transported to central Kyoto. Along the coast, there are many scenic locations such as Amanohashidate, which is one of the Three Views of Japan, and the *funaya* (boathouses) in



Tango-barazushi

**Note:** This article has been created on the basis of materials published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries.



Funaya (boathouses) in Ine

Ine, which has been recognized as one of “Japan’s most beautiful villages.”

**Regional cuisine:** *Tango-barazushi* is a dish in which ingredients such as sweet and spicy boiled minced mackerel and dried *shiitake* mushrooms are spread on top of a thin layer of vinegared rice in a wooden box called a *matsubuta*. It has become a standard dish at festivals, weddings, birthdays, and other celebrations.

## YAWATAHAMA CITY, EHIME PREFECTURE

Yawatahama City, which faces the Seto Inland Sea, has been cultivating *mikan* mandarins since the end of the nineteenth century. A distinctive landscape is formed by the terraced fields with stone walls built on steep slopes near the coastline. In the sea, fish farming of sea bream and other fishes is also flourishing.

**Regional cuisine:** *Satsuma* is a dish in which the grilled flesh of sea bream



Satsuma (the soup at bottom left)



Terraced fields of *mikan* mandarins

or other fish is broken into small pieces and mixed with barley miso in a mortar then combined with *dashi* stock to make a soup, which is poured on top of warm rice. *Mikan* peel and leeks are used as condiments.

## SHIMABARA PENINSULA, NAGASAKI PREFECTURE


There are many hot springs on the Shimabara Peninsula, at the center of which are volcanoes such as Mt. Unzen. High-temperature hot spring steam is also used to steam vegetables and seafood. Since the Shimabara Peninsula is also rich in spring water, many dishes such as *tenobe somen* noodles, which have a history of about 400 years, make use of the spring water.



Kanzarashi



Rice paddies at the foot of the mountains in central Shimabara Peninsula

**Regional cuisine:** *Kanzarashi* is a sweet of rice-flour dumplings chilled in spring water and sprinkled with sugar and honey. In the past, farmers used to make rice flour for long-term storage, but it rotted easily in the summer. It is said that the origin of *kanzarashi* is that people started making rice flour into dumplings to be stored in spring water. 

i *Nouhaku* means “overnight travel to a farming, mountain, and fishing community” where you stay in and enjoy food, experiences, and so forth that make use of rich local resources in a farm, mountain, and fishing community <https://countrysidestays-japan.com>