

Handing down Japanese food culture to future generations Mackerel is “Japan’s Dish of 2018”!

■ “Japan’s Dish of the year” official website <https://gri.gnavi.co.jp/dishoftheyear/>

Gurunavi Research Institute Inc. (GRI; Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo; Hisao Taki, President), which conducts a variety of surveys and research efforts primarily on food-related themes, selected mackerel as the “Japan’s Dish of 2018”, designating it as the food or drink that serves as a symbol of the times, reflecting the year in Japanese society.

Japan’s Dish of 2018

Mackerel



Reasons for selection

Attention focused on canned mackerel reconfirms the merits of seafood culture

- 2018 was a year fraught with many natural disasters, and a heightened awareness of disaster prevention made us take note of the importance of stocking emergency provisions such as canned food, dried goods, and freeze-dried food. Among these, canned mackerel is highly convenient as it does not require preparation. Containing large quantities of essential fatty acids such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA) and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA), as well as beneficial health effects, the value of mackerel was widely recognized anew. In particular, "fancy canned mackerel" with sophisticated designs and "premium canned mackerel" using high-quality ingredients changed the traditional image of the canned food, especially garnering attention from women. With mackerel being arranged and incorporated into home cooking, it also created an opportunity for people to rediscover the deliciousness of mackerel and greatness of Japan's seafood culture. At the same time, it even triggered a social boom that saw mackerel disappear from store shelves temporarily.

Improved recognition of brand mackerel and expectations for its increased popularity in restaurants

- There are about 20 types of "brand mackerel" in various places around Japan, and activities to revitalize towns using mackerel are catching on. We expect that the value and appeal of brand mackerel with their respective characteristics will be widely disseminated within Japan and overseas, along with each region's culture. We also expect further popularization in restaurants.

Promotion of sustainable fishing and development of seafood culture

- The Pacific bluefin tuna and Japanese eel were both designated as endangered species in 2014, increasing interest in the sustainable use of aquatic resources. This year, the Tsukiji Wholesale Fish Market that supported Japan's food culture for 83 years, moved to Toyosu, making it a milestone year to think about Japan's seafood culture for the next era. The annual mackerel catch is about 500,000 tons* and while it can be said to be a relatively ample resource at present, it is important to promote sustainable fishing as well as to stimulate Japan's seafood culture in the future.

*From the 2017 annual total results of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan's marine fisheries production statistics survey.

Runner Up

Asian Pepper Dishes

The general term for dishes using Sichuan pepper grown in China that provide a refreshing aftertaste.



Reasons for selection

- As Japan has been recording continually higher numbers of foreign visitors each year for the past six consecutive years, Japanese people understand the diverse cultures of each country more than ever before and incorporate positive elements, thus greatly evolving Japan's food culture. Especially *mapo* tofu and *tantan* noodles have become popular, boasting the authentic taste of Sichuan cuisine, and greater numbers of people are becoming enthralled by the new flavor and stimulation that Sichuan pepper provides.
- Boosted by the scorching summer heat, there was a spike in restaurants registering dishes with Sichuan pepper on the restaurant information site Gurunavi as well, with their number almost doubling compared to last year. Keywords such as *ma-katsu** and *shibi-katsu* (spicy) emerged, describing the joy of eating Sichuan pepper dishes and further giving rise to their popularity.

*In Chinese, "spicy" is expressed as "*ma*."

Nominee

Luxurious White Bread

High-quality, expensive bread loaves baked by artisans using unique methods as well as carefully selected ingredients from carefully selected areas.

Reasons for selection

- Overturning the traditional concept of "toasting before eating," these bread loaves that you "eat as they are" gathered popularity. Baked by artisans using carefully selected ingredients and original methods, luxurious white bread has been widely popular among people seeking to savor luxury in their daily lives, forming every day at specialty bakeries.



Nominee

Domestic Lemons

Grown mainly in western Japan, in prefectures including Hiroshima – the top production area for domestic lemons – and Ehime .

Reasons for selection

- Due to the popularity of "lemon sour" drinks in recent years, people started paying attention to domestic lemons that can be used whole, including the pith and peel, depending on how they were grown. Additionally, many confectionaries using such lemons have been commercialized and became more famous.



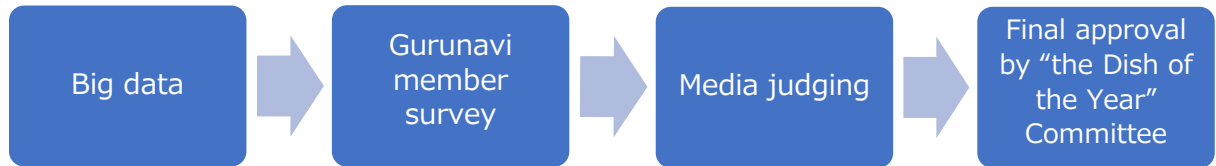
Selection of the “Japan’s Dish of the year”

Gurunavi has held the annual “Japan’s Dish of the Year” event since 2014 with the aim of preserving the best of Japan's food culture as part of humanity's shared heritage. This year marks our fifth “Japan’s Dish of the year” event. Gurunavi Inc. (Gurunavi; Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo; Seiichiro Kubo, President) possesses Big Data that combines and analyzes primary information from a total of about 500,000 restaurants on the Gurunavi restaurant information website, including 151,000 restaurants that post detailed information, together with the search and behavior history of 16.43 million Gurunavi members and 65 million unique users. For the “Japan’s Dish of 2018”, 40 keywords were extracted from this Big Data; they fulfilled certain conditions such as the number of searches and rate of increase. Using these keywords as options, a questionnaire was issued to Gurunavi members and the selection was narrowed to 30 keywords. Adding the number of votes from media stakeholders* who conducted the judging, four of them were nominated as the final selection. From among the nominees, upon confirming that they fulfilled the three conditions of (1) being a trend or topical in that year, (2) being deeply relevant to societal developments and reflecting the changes in society of that year, and (3) being worthy of being a record of food culture to hand down to posterity, mackerel was approved and selected as the “Japan’s Dish of the 2018”.

Gurunavi hopes to share Japan's outstanding food culture throughout Japan and overseas and contribute to its further development through the announcement of the “Japan’s Dish of the Year”. We further aim to contribute to the development of food culture through Big Data, food research, and education.

■ Judging Process

*See Page 3 for details on media stakeholders.



■ Japan’s Dish of 2018

Sponsor: Gurunavi Research Institute Inc., Dish of the Year Committee

Co-sponsor: Gurunavi Inc.

Endorsement: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries; Agency for Cultural Affairs;
Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism;
Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO)



* “Japan’s Dish of the year” is certified by the beyond2020 program.

Signs of the Times in 2018

● Record high number of international visitors to Japan for six consecutive years

Understanding and accepting the differences of diverse nations has had a major impact on Japan's food culture. Even regional dishes of various countries that were not known in Japan before and dishes using striking spices became topical and widespread.

● Occurrence of many natural disasters such as earthquakes, typhoons, and torrential rain

Along with feeling the threat of nature, we recognized anew that humans coexist with nature and reap its benefits.

● The relocation of Tsukiji fish market to Toyosu

Tsukiji Wholesale Fish Market, which supported Japan's food culture for 83 years, moved to Toyosu, an event that gathered much attention; thus 2018 became a year to think about the future of Japan's food culture.

Japan's food culture has continuously evolved by incorporating aspects of diverse food cultures. It was a year that made us realize the necessity of paying even more consideration to our natural environment and thinking about sustainable resource management while fostering our food culture.

Judging cooperation: 75 companies, 122 media titles, 156 individuals

The Asahi Shimbun Business News Department/ Business Development Department/ City News Department/ Culture and Livings News Department, The Mainichi Newspapers Living News Department/ Science and Environment Department, West Headquarters, The Yomiuri Shimbun Daily Living Department/ Business News Department, The Nihon Keizai Shimbun, Sankei Shimbun Culture Department/ Osaka Headquarters Business News Department, The Nikkei Sangyo Shimbun, Nikkei Marketing Journal, Tokyo Shimbun, The Saitama Shimbun, The Shizuoka Shimbun, The Kyoto Shimbun, The Sanyo Shimbun, Minami-Nippon Shimbun, Daily Sports, Kyodo News Culture Department/ Business News Department, Jiji Press, NHK Educational Kyo no Ryori, Nippon TV <NTV> News Department, TV Asahi <EX> Wide! Scramble, Tokyo Broadcasting System Television <TBS> News Department, TV Tokyo <TX> Hirumeshi Tabi/ World Business Satellite, Fuji Television <CX> News Department/ Mezamashi TV/ Non-stop!, Yomiuri Telecasting <YTV> News Department, Mainichi Broadcasting System <MBS> VOICE, Kansai Television <KTV>, Hodo Runner, Hokkaido Television Broadcasting <HTB>, Okayama Broadcasting <OHK> Nanshon?, Ehime Asahi Television <eat>, Fukuoka Broadcasting <FBS> Bari Haya! ZIP, AERA, Otoko no Kakurega, Zaikai, Weekly Diamond, GetNavi,, DIME, Nikkei Trendy, Josei Jishin, with, Nikkei WOMAN, ESSE, Orange Page, Thank you!, Hanako, ELLE Gourmet, CAFERES, Kindai Shokudo, Monthly Shokudo, Monthly Senmon Ryori, Cuisine Kingdom, The Cuisine Press, Nikkei Health, The Japan Agricultural News, Gaishoku Restaurant Newspaper, Quarterly travel magazine, City Living, Tokyo edition, Digital Mainichi, OTEKOMACHI, nikkansports.com (Nikkan Sports News), Nishinippon Shimbun WEB, Daily SPA!/women, SPA!, GQ JAPAN, ananweb, Croissant-online, ESSE online, Lettuce Club news, Walkerplus, Ascii Gourmet, Mynavi News, freelancers, and others

(The Public Relations Society of Japan's PR and mass media handbook (PR notebook) 2018 was referred to for the order of the media titles.)

Reference materials

Past Winners

2017: Chicken breast dishes



- ✓ Focus on high protein, low fat chicken breast
- ✓ Fatigue-fighting imidazole dipeptide
- ✓ Demand for salads featuring chicken breast

2015: Onigirazu



- ✓ Expanded the potential of rice
- ✓ Brand-name rice

2016: Pakchee (coriander) cuisine



- ✓ From condiment to lead role
- ✓ Appearance of *pakuchisuto* (pakchee enthusiasts)
- ✓ Domestic pakchee

2014: *Gibier* (wild game) cuisine

- ✓ Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare "Guidelines for Hygiene Control Concerning Wild Game and Fowl"
- ✓ Appearance of venison even in convenience stores and fast-food dishes

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