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Mount Fuji looms over Lake Kawaguchi amid the autumn morning fog in Yamanashi Prefecture. GETTY IMAGES

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Learn about how to enjoy fall in Japan, must-see events and useful travel tips. For more information, visit www.japantimes.co.jp/ads/the-best-of-japan/



YAMANASHI FOOD

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Top left: Peaches symbolize the vast array of summer fruits in Yamanashi Prefecture. Top center: Shine Muscat grapes are Yamanashi's most grown grape. Top right: Kyoho grapes are popular in much of Asia.

FUJI COHOST RICH IN CULINARY OFFERINGS

Luscious fruit, fine wine, flavorful beef, healthy fish are among the agricultural and livestock items on the menu

Yamanashi Prefecture is blessed with magnificent natural beauty such as Mount Fuji, the Fuji Five Lakes and Shosen Gorge, yet it can be reached in roughly one to two hours from central Tokyo by train, bus and car, making it a convenient sightseeing destination.

The prefecture is also known as a gourmet destination where visitors can enjoy a wide variety of agricultural and livestock products throughout the year, all nurtured by lush nature.

The key to the deliciousness of these products lies in water quality, and Yamanashi, surrounded by the Southern Alps and the Yatsugatake Mountains, boasts pristine, mineral-rich water. The region's abundant sunshine, as well as its significant day and night temperature differences and well-drained soil, are ideal for fruit cultivation. The fruit farming in the Yamanashi's Kyoto region has been recognized as a Globally Important Agricultural Heritage System by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. The region is believed to be where Japanese grape cultivation started.

Yamanashi is Japan's leading producer of grapes, peaches and plums. Beyond fruit, Yamanashi offers diverse culinary appeal, including tender and flavorful Koshu Beef, Fujinosuke, a new kind of locally bred salmon known for its low fat content and rich umami, and flavorful rice that pairs well with these gastronomic delights.

Fruit plays starring role

Peaches symbolize the array of summer fruits cultivated in Yamanashi. There is a wide variety, and some get harvested as early as mid-June. Each variety typically has a harvest period of about a week. Since the prefecture cultivates many varieties with different ripening cycles, fresh peaches can be enjoyed until early September.

The peaches include those with white flesh and those with yellowish flesh. Their texture can range from very soft to firm, and their sweetness levels also differ significantly.

Among these, Yumemizuki peaches are notable for their large size and sweetness. Developed by a prefectural facility that experiments with fruit trees, Yumemizuki peaches have milky-white flesh that contrasts beautifully with its vibrant, deep pink skin. The flesh is low in fiber, making it exceptionally succulent. While delicious eaten fresh, this variety is also used as an ingredient in desserts and other dishes. "You can simply freeze the mashed flesh to enjoy as an exqui-

site sherbet," said Rina Suzuki, a Yamanashi Prefectural Government Marketing and Export Support Division staffer.

Another large, original Yamanashi variety developed by the facility is Yumetoka. It ripens relatively early, from late June to mid-July, and resists softening. In many kinds of fruit, the most intense flavor is found right where the skin meets the flesh. These firm peaches have skin that adheres tightly to the flesh, allowing them to be enjoyed whole with a crisp sensation when bitten. The firm texture makes it less prone to softening, making them relatively long-lasting and well-suited for export.

Plums are another fruit that can be enjoyed in summer. Like the peaches, varieties with different harvest times are cultivated so plums remain available from early June to early September.

One notable variety is Kiyo, harvested from mid-July to early August. These plums are exceptionally large, often weighing over 200 grams, with some well-grown examples even exceeding 300 g. Kiyo stands out for its low acidity and high sweetness compared with regular plums.

"This unique variety completely refreshes the traditional image of plums, making it highly popular as a gift," Suzuki said.

Japan's grape capital

Grapes can be enjoyed over a long period from summer into autumn. Yamanashi Prefecture boasts the largest grape cultivation area and production volume in Japan. There are several theories about the origin of grape cultivation in Yamanashi, one of which suggests that it was introduced by the renowned Buddhist monk Gyoki about 1,300 years ago. The grape believed to have been cultivated at that time is Koshu, which is still grown today as both table and wine grapes. Koshu wine, known for its compatibility with Japanese food, is also exported overseas.

Currently, Shine Muscat is the most produced variety in Yamanashi. Open-field grapes are usually harvested from mid-August to late October. Some are also greenhouse-grown, allowing for earlier harvests starting in late April.

Noted for its edible bright yellow-green skin and large size, its bursting juiciness offers a refreshing sweetness. Grapes with a yellowish tint tend to be sweeter, and the white powdery coating on the skin, called "bloom," protects it from drying out, signaling freshness.

A new variety announced in 2023 is Sunshine Red, characterized by its red skin and distinctive sweetness. This grape was developed by the Yamanashi Fruit Tree Experiment Station over a period of 15 years in response to requests from growers and markets for a red variety that exhibits the excellent characteristics of Shine Muscat and can be eaten with the skin.

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Above: Kiyo plums are known for their large size and exceptional sweetness. Right: Developed by the Yamanashi Prefectural Fruit Tree Experiment Station and introduced in 2023, Sunshine Red is known for its red skin and sweet flavor.



Koshu is a type of grape that has long been cultivated in Yamanashi and is believed to derive from European grapes hybridized with wild species in China. Below: Today, wine made from Koshu grapes is exported to Europe and other regions.



YAMANASHI FOOD

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Above: Yamanashi is known for cultivating premium rice brands. Right: Mount Fuji stands as a backdrop to Yamanashi’s bright agricultural future.



Above: Fujinosuke, developed by crossbreeding rainbow trout and king salmon, offers a rich umami flavor like no other. Right: Yamanashi’s high-quality water nurtures Fujinosuke.



Left: Koshu Beef comes from cattle carefully raised in a natural environment.

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“Another characteristic is the glamorous aroma that spreads throughout the mouth, and right before harvest time, all the Sunshine Red grape farms are enveloped in a fragrance of muscat,” said Masayuki Kobayashi, who works at the Yamanashi Fruit Tree Experiment Station.

Achieving Sunshine Red’s beautiful red color requires precise light control. Growers carefully prune branches to ensure optimal sunlight exposure and cover each cluster with a bag to ward off pests and disease.

Shortly before harvest, the bags are removed, leaving only a paper cap attached to the top of each cluster, with white sheets laid out on the ground. This method allows the grapes to receive an even and appropriate amount of light not just from directly from the sun, but indirectly from light reflected by the sheets and paper caps, helping them to develop their vivid skin color.

“Sunshine Red is the result of years of research and the exceptional skills of Yamanashi’s grape producers,” Kobayashi said.

Producing premium rice

Yamanashi Prefecture is also known for its rice production. Premium brand Rihoku-mai Koshihikari is cultivated in an environment that offers ideal growing conditions, including high-quality water from the Southern Alps, fertile soil and extensive sunshine.

Cultivated with passion by dedicated producers, this rice boasts a perfect balance of flavor, luster and aroma, making it a flagship product of Yamanashi. It received the highest rating in the Japan Grain Inspection Association’s Rice Taste Ranking from 2012 to 2016.

Norin No. 48 is a rare and highly sought-after variety sometimes called “mythical rice.” It is primarily cultivated in the area traditionally called Mukawasuji on the right bank of the Kamanashi River in the cities of Hokuto and Nirasaki, a region considered ideal for rice.

It is known for its luster, pure whiteness, low stickiness, and rapid development of umami when steamed. As a hard-to-find variety available only in the prefecture, it is

traded at premium prices.

Niji no Kirameki is a newer variety registered in 2022. It is resistant to high summer temperatures and maintains its quality well. Its stems are relatively short and less prone to lodging, making it resilient to typhoons and other severe weather events. “Its large, plump and pleasantly chewy grains get sweeter as you eat — it’s truly delicious,” said a prominent chef living in Yamanashi. It remains delicious even when cooled, so it’s suited for bento and rice balls.

Premium wagyu, unique brands

Yamanashi Prefecture is also renowned for its livestock products, particularly Koshu Beef, a brand registered in 1989. Of all the meat produced from the Japanese Black breed of cattle, which are carefully nurtured in Yamanashi’s rich natural environment using refined techniques, only beef designated Grade 4 or 5 on the Japanese wagyu grading system is sold under the Koshu Beef brand.

Koshu Beef is known for its tender texture, vibrant color and rich flavor. It offers a juicy, melt-in-your-mouth feel when grilled as steak, and is also well-suited for cooking methods that highlight the deliciousness of its fat, such as shabu-shabu and sukiyaki.

Koshu Wine Beef is another unique product of Yamanashi, which also happens to be one of Japan’s leading wine regions. This specialty beef comes from cattle that are raised on a mixture of grape pomace (a byproduct of wine-making), corn that is not genetically modified and other ingredients.

The pomace contains high levels of quality fiber and polyphenols. The skins, seeds and enzymes in the pomace contribute to the meat’s exceptionally fine texture, tenderness, subtle sweetness and a rich umami.

Freshwater fish make a splash

Though Yamanashi is one of the eight landlocked prefectures in Japan, it is also a producer of high-quality fish. The Fujinosuke brand was developed by crossbreeding king salmon and rainbow trout under strict criteria.

First, all fish under the brand must originate from eggs produced by the Yamanashi Prefectural Fisheries Technology Center.

Then they must be raised on safe, heat-processed feed and meet standards for preservation and flesh color at the time of shipment. Fujinosuke is the only hybrid variety in Japan that inherits the lineage of king salmon, which is considered the best of the salmon species.

Fujinosuke fish are characterized by a vivid pink color, fine texture, well-balanced fat and rich umami. They are suitable for sushi, sashimi and processed products, such as miso-marinated *saikyo-zuke* and smoked fish.

According to a report by the Yamanashi Prefectural Government’s Department of Agricultural Policy, Fujinosuke tends to have higher protein, less fat and fewer calories than Atlantic salmon. It is also 1.6 times higher in aspartic acid and glutamic acid, which are components of umami, and 1.5 times richer in vitamin D than rainbow trout.

Research shows that Fujinosuke is best eaten raw about 36 to 48 hours after harvested, and that its freshness can be maintained by storing it at 4 degrees if harvested and bled using the method developed by the Yamanashi Prefectural Fisheries Technology Center.

Envisioning a ‘delicious future’

While some of the Yamanashi products mentioned here are available outside the prefecture, enjoying these local treasures right at the source offers a truly special experience.

“To invite more people to savor Yamanashi’s culinary delights, we have created a webpage featuring restaurants where you can taste various agricultural, livestock and fishery products of the prefecture, as well as stores where you can purchase them,” Suzuki said.

The Yamanashi Prefectural Government has launched a promotional campaign under the slogan “Taste the Future! Yamanashi,” accompanied by a logo inspired by Mount Fuji — the source of its abundant natural blessings.

This branding, designed to cultivate a “delicious future,” is permitted for use on products that meet prefectural inspection standards, originate from producers whose excellent practices are recognized, or result from envi-

ronmentally safe and sustainable methods.

Through this initiative, Yamanashi aims to promote the appeal of its safe and sustainable farm, livestock and fisheries products both in Japan and internationally.

The dedicated website for “Taste the Future! Yamanashi” features information on its sustainability initiatives, including animal welfare and decarbonization efforts, articles and videos on local producers, as well as product recommendations and participating stores. Yamanashi’s official social media accounts also share information about the diverse delicacies and tourist attractions of Tokyo’s mountainous neighbor.

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Find local restaurants or shops at: www.pref.yamanashi.jp.e.aao.hp.transer.com/oishii-mirai/yamanashi_stores.html



**TASTE THE FUTURE!
YAMANASHI**

HOTEL SPECIAL

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CORNUCOPIA OF FINE DINING FOR AUTUMN

Now that the hot and sweltering summer is over, it's time to enjoy the cool autumn weather along with one's choice of seasonal cuisine — be it near the sea in Tokyo or Yokohama or amid the hustle and bustle of Osaka.

In Japan, the phrase “*shokuyoku no aki*” is used to describe “the appetite of fall,” when a plethora of fruits, vegetables and fish can be enjoyed during this season. Let's indulge in the autumn harvest with an array of fruit and vegetables from all over Japan in one's meal, together with a choice of fresh meat or fish.

There are many options to enjoy autumn cuisine to the fullest, especially at hotels, where popular foods such as sushi, *yakiniku*

(Korean-style barbecue), tempura and more are available to look forward to by visitors and residents alike.

For example, during a visit to Tokyo's Odaiba waterfront district, one can choose from hotel dinners featuring seasonal delicacies cultivated in the rich soil of Aomori Prefecture or the traditional multicourse meal known as *kaiseki*. On the other hand, one can opt for high-quality sushi with finely selected ingredients in Yokohama or innovative skewers in Osaka.

But it's not just the cuisine that will satisfy the visitors to these fine inns. Paired with a hotel's pick of wine from all over the world or sake from around Japan, there's bound to be a match that can satisfy any gourmand.



GETTY IMAGES

Hilton Tokyo Odaiba

Hilton Tokyo Odaiba's Japanese restaurant Sakura will offer the Kotohira 10-course *kaiseki* dinner from 5:30 to 9 p.m. until Oct. 31. The course is beautifully presented, using an abundance of autumn ingredients carefully selected by the chefs.

From the *sukiya*-style interior, a traditional Japanese architectural style that evolved from the aesthetics of the tea ceremony, visitors can enjoy views of the open landscape of Odaiba, including the Rainbow Bridge and the lush Japanese garden.

The course (¥20,000) starts with walnut tofu, followed by an appetizer of raw salmon roe with grated daikon, sweetfish simmered with roe and Japanese pepper, boiled chestnuts,



crab and grilled eggplant with jelly, and yam dumplings with a hint of sea urchin flavor. Then comes a sashimi dish and Oyama chicken grilled on a magnolia leaf, matsutake and a sweet sea bream hot pot. The main is grilled wagyu, and the course finishes with mackerel rolled in turnip and Pacific saury rice cooked in a clay pot, with pickles and red miso soup and dessert.

A weekday-only lunch starting from ¥3,500 is also available. In September, choose from seafood bowls made with fresh ingredients from Toyosu Market, a hot pot set with black beef cooked on a teppan grill, or a set meal of eel prepared in a variety of ways.



URL: <https://www.hiltonodaiba.jp/restaurants/sakura>
Address: 1-9-1 Daiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo
Tel: 03-5500-5580

Swissotel Nankai Osaka

Located on the sixth floor of Swissotel Nankai Osaka in the city's bustling Namba district, the *kushikatsu* (breaded skewers) restaurant Sh'un Wine & Dine offers innovative dishes inspired by traditional Osaka street food.

Under the “World Travel Series” theme, the hotel sommelier each season makes selections from Wine Spectator magazine's award-winning wine lists to pair with the skewers, taking customers on a culinary journey around the world.

The country of choice this fall is France. From Sept. 3 to Oct. 31 (closed on Mondays and Tuesdays), guests can enjoy creative skewered dishes made from seasonal autumn ingredients inspired by traditional French cuisine, such as an arrangement of *pate de campagne* (country pate) that uses pistachios instead of breadcrumbs for the skewer coating. Other dishes include seared and sliced bonito made by frying frozen bonito, as well as ginkgo leaf ham rolls and persimmon ham rolls that use autumn ingredients.



Lunch courses are ¥5,500, ¥7,500 and ¥9,500, while the dinner courses are ¥8,500, ¥10,500 and ¥12,500, offering guests an unforgettable skewer dish and wine pairing experience this fall.

URL: <https://swissotelnankaiosaka.com/>
Address: 51-60 Namba, Chuo-ku, Osaka
Tel: 06-6646-5122

Grand Nikko Tokyo Daiba

Teppanyaki Icho restaurant and bar on the top floor of the Grand Nikko Tokyo Daiba is offering the Aomori Course, a dinner that features seasonal delicacies cultivated in the rich soil of Aomori Prefecture, until Nov. 30.

The course (¥22,000) has dishes that use only carefully selected ingredients sourced by the chef during visits to Aomori and serious discussions with local producers. Against the backdrop of the sparkling night view of Tokyo Bay, indulge in the exquisite culinary moment woven from Aomori's bounty and the chef's delectable creations.

The course starts with an appetizer that offers a refined taste that satisfies all five senses.

The main dish features wagyu and seafood, as well as vegetables and sauces that highlight the charm of Aomori ingredients. Of special note is the selection of Aomori Kuraishi sirloin from the town of Gonohe, which boasts an exquisite balance of lean and marbled meat, and the Hakkoda sirloin from the foot of the Hakkoda mountains with a mixture of rich sweetness and deep umami flavor.

Pairing the dishes with local sake such as Rokka Shuzo's Torai and Hachinohe Shuzo's Mutsu Hassen, which placed first in the 2021 World Sake Brewery Ranking, is sure to bring excitement to the delectable meal.



URL: <https://www.tokyo.grandnikko.com/eng/restaurant/icho/>
Address: 2-6-1 Daiba, Minato-ku, Tokyo
Tel: 03-5500-4550

InterContinental Yokohama Pier 8

The Sushi Katabami restaurant at The InterContinental Yokohama Pier 8 offers high-quality sushi with finely selected ingredients.

Katabami is a hideaway-like space on the third floor with only nine counter seats, where guests can enjoy delectable Edo-style sushi crafted by skilled chefs using carefully selected fresh ingredients paired with sake from Kanagawa Prefecture. Behind the counter, made from a rare single piece of cypress wood, is a quiet courtyard view.

For lunch, limited servings of the Hanachirashi (¥5,000) and Ayame (¥8,000) sets are newcomers to the menu, delightful additions to the Tsubaki (¥12,000) and Sagami (¥18,500) sets, also offered at dinner.

The Hana Chirashi features tuna, white fish, small fish, squid, snow crab, sea urchin, flying fish roe and salmon roe to name just a few, as well as miso soup. The Ayame offers *chawanmushi* (steamed egg custard), eight pieces of omakase sushi, miso soup and dessert.

Additionally, several upgraded course menus are featured on the dinner menu. Lunch is from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. (last order), with dinner from 5:30 to 9 p.m. (last order).



URL: <https://www.icyokohama-pier8.com/en>
Address: 2-14-1 Shinko Naka-ku, Yokohama, Kanagawa
Tel: 045-307-2228

人と地球に、こころいい。

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鼻 セレブ

領域をこえ 未来へ

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潤いつづく濃厚保湿ティッシュ

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