

Characteristics of home-cooked dishes eaten all over Japan up to the 1960s

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<Purpose>

Since World War II, the globalization and uniformity of food in Japan has resulted in fewer opportunities to eat traditional foods, thus diminishing regional characteristics of food. This study aims to clarify the characteristics of traditional Japanese home-cooking by analyzing home-cooked dishes eaten all over Japan 60 years ago but now in danger of disappearing, and dishes people in the regions want to pass on to future generations. The results enable discussion of traditional food culture characteristics on a quantitative basis.

<Method>

A comprehensive summary of Japanese home-cooking up to the 1960s was compiled into a cookbook based on interviews and written surveys with 360 researchers from the Japan Society of Cookery Science. By classifying approximately 1380 recipes recorded in the 16 books of Tsutaetsugu Nihon no Katei Ryori by main ingredient, dish style, and cooking method, and analyzing frequency, we were able to identify trends in traditional home-cooked dishes.

<Result>

- The largest group of dishes contained various seasonal vegetables (21.0%), followed by rice dishes (18.1%), and fish and shellfish dishes (14.0% fish, 3.9% other seafood). Very few dishes contained meat as the main ingredient (4.1%).
- Rice, the staple food, was often made into sushi for special events. The variations went beyond nigiri-sushi, with many varieties found in western Japan (2.2 dishes per prefecture), while the Tohoku region and Hokkaido were notable for the lack of such dishes (0.3 per prefecture).
- In terms of cooking method, more than 75% of dishes were water-heated, including rice dishes, simmered dishes (17.0%) and soup dishes (16.0%).
- Traditional Japanese food culture is characterized as rice-based, fish-based, and water-based cooking, and until about 60 years ago, that style was still firmly rooted at the daily table all over Japan.