

Japanese Foods Near You

— Summer Vegetables —

Eat plenty and be healthy—The benefits of summer vegetables

Typical summer vegetables in Japan include tomatoes, eggplants, green peppers, okra, corn, green chives, pumpkins, and zucchinis, among many others. These sun-ripened vegetables are lush and juicy, and taste as delicious as they look.

“When tomatoes turn red, doctors turn blue.” This is said to be an old saying from Europe, but it is also used in Japan. Tomatoes relieve fatigue and help beat the summer heat by reducing the ingestion of salt and lowering blood pressure.

When your body is flushed from the summer heat, eating summer vegetables will cool your body. Contrarily, when your body feels chilled from air conditioning in a room, eating summer vegetables with myoga (ginger blossoms), ginger, garlic, red pepper, and other such condiment vegetables will warm you.

Here are some simple recipes that will help you enjoy summer in good health.

<Recipes>

- Use a mixer to mix tomatoes and bananas or other fruits together into a juice. Even if you are not too fond of tomatoes, you will probably find this juice delicious. It is even more refreshing when chilled.
- Cucumbers are best eaten raw. The Japanese people often eat cucumber sticks with Kinzanji miso, a unique miso made by fermenting vegetables. The chomping sound when eating crisp cucumbers is also associated with images of summer.
- Cut a cucumber into thin slices, rub them in salt, and squeeze out the excess water. Cut boiled octopus or squid into bite-sized pieces, add the cucumber slices, and marinate them in *sanbaizu* (sweet-sour vinegar dressing). This dish, called *sunomono*, will stimulate your appetite. It is often eaten garnished with slivers of myoga.
- Grill an eggplant with its skin still on. Then, peel off the skin and dress the eggplant with grated ginger and soy sauce.

Shoryo-uma—Summer vegetable decoration for the Bon period

In the countryside, people use summer vegetables to make *shoryo-uma*, or “spirit horses,” which transport ancestral spirits to and from this world and the other world during the Bon period. Horses and cows are made by sticking four matches or chopsticks broken into smaller lengths into a cucumber or eggplant as the legs of those animals, and are placed in front of the family altar or at the front door.

身近にある日本の食物

— 夏野菜 —

夏野菜の効能 食べて元気いっぱい
日本の夏野菜の代表的なものには、トマト・なす・ピーマン・オクラ・とうもろこし・にら・かぼちゃ・ズッキーニ等があります。太陽をいっぱい浴びて育った夏の野菜は、艶があり、みずみずしくて見るからにおいそうです。

「トマトが赤くなると、医者が青くなる」。ヨーロッパのことわざですが、日本でもそう言います。実際、トマトは体の塩分を取り除き血圧を下げたり、疲労回復や夏バテを防いでくれます。

夏野菜の多くが、食べると夏の暑さでほてった体を冷やしてくれます。逆に、みょうが・しょうが・にんにく・唐辛子等と一緒に食べれば、室内の冷房で冷え切った体を温めてくれます。

元気でこの夏を乗り切ってください。簡単なレシピを紹介します。



<レシピ>

- トマトをバナナなどと一緒にミキサーでジュースにする。トマト嫌いでもおいしく飲める。冷たくするとさらにおいしい。
- きゅうりは生で食べるのがおすすめ。日本人はよく“金山寺みそ”をつけて食べる。がりがりという噛む音もいい。
- きゅうりを刻んで、塩もみにした後よくしぼり、ゆでたタコやイカを小さく切り、一緒に三杯酢であえる。酢の物は食欲をそそる。みょうがのせん切りを添えてもいい。
- なすは皮のついたまま焼いた後、皮をむき、おろししょうが醤油で食べる。

夏野菜でお盆飾り “精霊馬(しょうりょううま)”

地方によっては、お盆に霊魂がこの世とあの世を行き来するための乗り物“精霊馬”と呼ばれる動物を作ります。きゅうりやなすにマッチ棒や折った割り箸などを4本差し込んで足し、馬や牛を作って仏壇の前や玄関などに置きます。

