

Please enjoy beautiful Japanese confectionery.

One of the best aspects of visiting Japan is to enjoy Japanese cuisine. Japan has not only typical Japanese dishes but also a variety of dishes which had originally come from foreign countries and transferred into somewhat Japanese tastes. This time I would like to tell you something about traditional Japanese confectionery and modern Japanese style sweets.

Characteristics of Japanese confectionery are beautiful-looking, light and soft in tastes and



low in calorific value. You can meet and taste them at tea ceremony and shops specializing these kinds of confectionery. IJCEE offers some guide services of cultural experiences including tea ceremony for people from foreign countries in English and other languages.

Japanese confectionery has a very long history. The origin of Japanese confectionery goes back to ancient

era. At this time people ate cookies made of nuts, though they ate mainly fish and shells. It was the time before Japanese people began to cultivate and eat rice.

Trade with China and visiting of Portuguese and Spaniards in order to spread Christianity in Japan gave great influences on Japanese confectionery. Sugar was brought to Japan and using eggs was new to the Japanese then. As for the confectionery at tea ceremony, very simple kinds were used in early 17th century.

Japan closed its country for more than 200 years. It was the time when a variety of traditional Japanese culture flourished like Kabuki as well as Japanese confectionery.

Japanese style confectionery like today, which is rich in colors and has beautiful shapes, was began to develop in late 17th century under seclusion policy.

Also, due to alternate attendance system, some sweets began to spread among many places. Alternate attendance system required local lords to live in Edo (present Tokyo) every other year so they go back and forth between Edo and local area. (The aim of this system was to weaken the local lords financially.)

Besides, many places where people gather created their own attractive sweets. These sweets became notable examples of the areas. Sweets were enjoyed among not only the upper class people but also the common people by 19th century.

What kinds of confectionery were made in this time of your country? It is sometimes

interesting to think how was like in other countries at the same era and what they did.

Opening the country to the world after 220 years of national isolation brought Japan a lot of changes. Sweets were not the exceptions.

A variety of sweets that were combined two elements, which were western style and Japanese style, were created during this time. “Anpan” represents this style.

“Anpan” is a kind of bread stuffed with sweet bean paste. Bread had come from western world, and “An”, sweet red bean paste, is one of the most popular ingredients of Japanese sweets. Red soybeans which are boiled and smashed and mixed with sugar become “An”.

During world war II, Japanese sweets had a hard time because there wasn't enough sugar and many tools for making sweets which were made of metal were collected to make weapons. At this time, people made simple sweets. People just smashed sweet potatoes, and squeezed into shape in a cloth. Sugar was hardly available.

After the war, people enjoy many kinds of sweets in Japan. Now traditional Japanese confectionary, sweets from foreign countries and sweets of semi-Western style are all available in Japan.

It can be said that new era has just come. You can taste popular western style sweets made by Japanese ingredients and special method called macrobiotic in certain shops in Japan. For example, *tiramisu*, an Italian dessert, can be made from Tofu (soybean curd) without using egg, milk and white sugar. It is better for the health especially for the people who have allergic to milk and eggs and for the people who need to control calories.

Now it might be said that it is the turn for Japan to export its method or technique of making sweets to the world. It's a new collaboration of western style confectionary and Japanese method.

Confectionary is very attractive and plays important roles in communication, too. People enjoy sweets over a cup of coffee with their friends and family and having great time.

I hope you enjoy Japanese traditional sweets as well as Japanese sweets influenced and developed by western sweets and western sweets influenced by Japanese style.

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