



INSIDER'S FOOD GUIDE: JAPAN

TRAVEL OFF THE EATEN PATH



WHERE TO EAT IN JAPAN

TOKYO

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KYOTO

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1. RAMEN TAKAHASHI

There are 10 seats at the bar in this true locals spot near Iidabashi train station in Tokyo. The owner and chef takes pride in perfecting every bowl and in the exact ratio of pork broth to chicken broth.

Secret insider's tip: Order chashu ramen and ask for your ramen topped with sara-wonton, a house specialty.

"5 STARS FOR THEIR PORK. IT IS TRULY AMAZING. HOW DO THEY GET IT SO PERFECT?"

- Kristen G. on Yelp





2. TONTA

Another locals spot in a neighborhood on the outskirts of central Tokyo, this small restaurant specializes in and only serves tonkatsu - a Japanese dish not to be missed of meat breaded and fried and served with a tangy sweet and savory sauce. Order the pork or fish - or better yet, both - served alongside a snowy mound of finely shaved cabbage.



3. LEARN HOW TO COOK TRADITIONAL RECIPES

Visit a gorgeous home in Tokyo and enjoy Japanese home cooking with host Eri.

Insider's tip: Amazake is a traditional, sweet, sake-like drink made from fermented rice. The non-alcoholic drink is gaining popularity in Japan for its health and beauty benefits and is popular with both adults and children. Try amazake at Eri's home - she creatively mixes it into rice balls!

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4. TSUKIJI FISH MARKET

Tour Tokyo's iconic Tsukiji Fish Market with a local host. For an added bonus, go back with your host to her home for a cooking class where you will learn to make classic Japanese dishes like tamago (a layered egg dish cooked in a special pan which your host Junko will teach you to master).

Insider's tip: Many guests spend most of their time in the inner fish market, where vendors are selling raw fish and produce, but we love the outer market, where you'll find narrow streets with restaurants and food stalls selling everything from bonito flakes to traditional Japanese knives.

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5. EN BOCA

For an off-the-beaten path, modern take on Japanese cuisine, check out en boca in Kyoto, an Italian-Japanese inspired restaurant which makes nearly all of its menu in its wood-fired oven in the center of the restaurant.

Insider's tip: Try their lotus root pizza.

"ORGANIC AND FARM FRESH. THE CHEF TREATS HIS PIZZA AS AN ART."

- Shaila S. on tripadvisor



6. TAMAKITEI

Bakeries are becoming increasingly popular around Japan and in Kyoto in particular, fusing French traditions with Japanese flavors. Locals as well as travelers from around the country form long lines to try the selection of over 90 breads at Tamakitei, a bakery just south of Kyoto in Uji prefecture.

Insider's tip: Try the Hojicha black bean cream bread, a dark, black-bean flavored bun filled with a moist custard cream, and try to go on a weekday to avoid the long lines.



7. NISHIKI MARKET

Nishiki Market might be our favorite food market in the world. This 500+ year old market is really a collection of stalls and food shops lining a quaint street in central Kyoto. For an insider's glimpse into the market, go on a tour with a local. Midori is a Kyoto local who offers a cooking class at her cooking studio, a six-minute walk from Nishiki, after which she'll take you on a private tour of Nishiki Market, taking you to her favorite vendors and explaining the various ingredients you might not recognize.

Insider's tip: Pick up some fresh furikake seasoning at the furikake stall. This incredible dry seasoning mix is often topped on meat, fish, or just plain rice and makes any dish have an outstanding salty-umami taste that you will be addicted to.

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"MIDORI WAS AN AMAZING HOST - VERY INVITING AND INCREDIBLY HELPFUL."

- Alexa



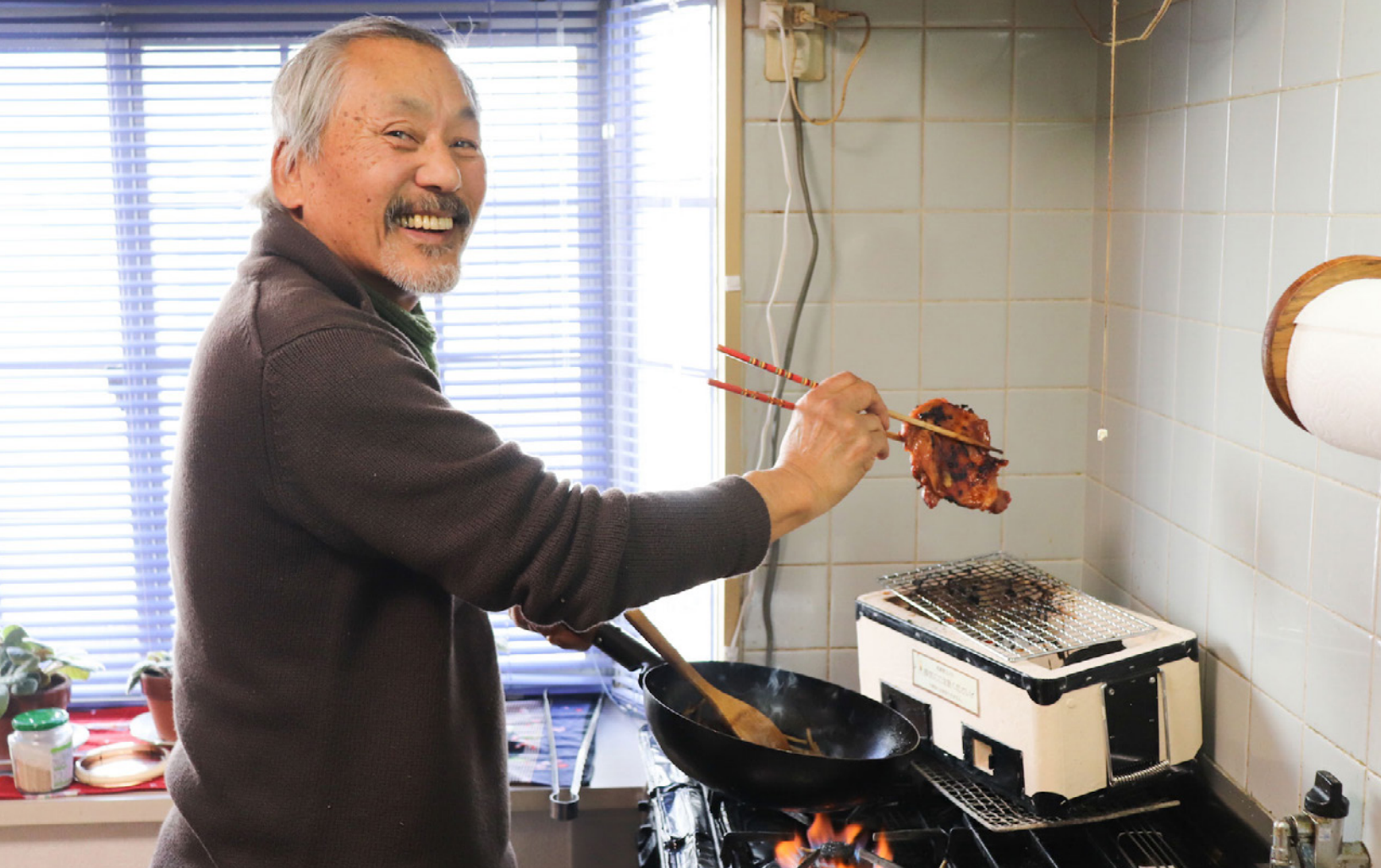


8. LEARN TRADITIONAL COOKING IN KYOTO

Visit a local kitchen filled with beautiful traditional cooking tools and learn to cook from a local.

Insider's tip: Did you know that almost every Japanese home cook uses a kitchen tool called gomashuriki to grind sesame seeds? Your host Aki uses this special mortar and wooden pestle to grind her seeds, which are used in everything from horenso gomaae (a traditional Japanese spinach side) to tofu, steamed vegetables, and a variety of other Japanese dishes.

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9. COOK WITH A PROFESSIONAL CHEF

Join Masao in his kitchen and roll up your sleeves for a hands-on cooking lesson from a professional chef.

Insider's tip: While you're in Nara, be sure to try narazuke, Japanese pickles specific to the Nara region that are made very differently than pickles in other regions. While vegetables such as cucumbers are salt-pickled, the pickles of Nara are pickled repeatedly in sake kasu (fermented rice grounds) until they turn dark brown. Traditional to Nara, these pickles are appealing for their unique aroma and sweetness.

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