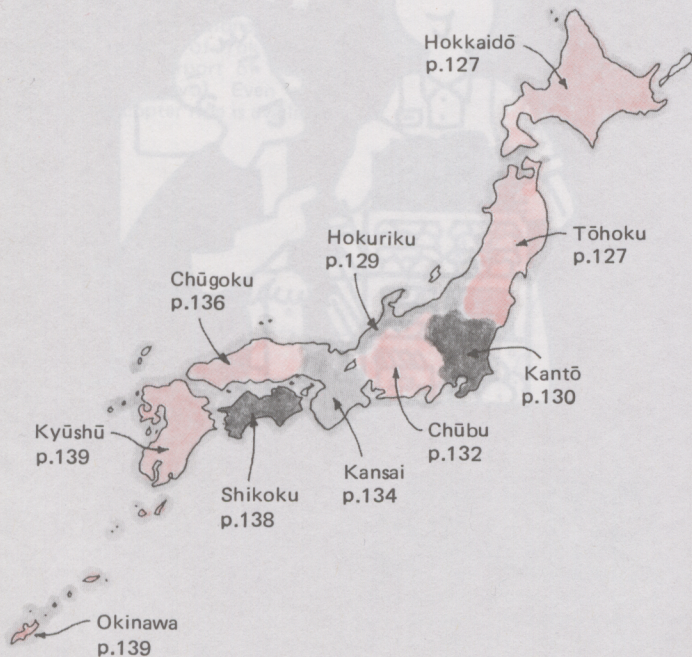


Despite its small size, the Japanese archipelago contains a wide variety of climates and geographical regions. Each locality is proud of special dishes it produces. One of the joys of traveling is tasting local cuisine and bringing back gifts for your friends. Certain train stations have earned wide fame for the delicious *bentō* meals that are sold there. Trains usually stop for a little longer than usual at these stations in order to give passengers a chance to buy a *bentō*.



Local Specialties

Hokkaidō, Tōhoku Districts

Hokkaidō Prefecture, Aomori Prefecture, Iwaté Prefecture, Miyagi Prefecture, Yamagata Prefecture, Fukushima Prefecture, Akita Prefecture

Located in the northern part of Japan, the Hokkaidō and Tōhoku districts are famous for the quality of the fish caught there. In addition, Hokkaidō boasts fine wine vineyards and the *saké* from the Tōhoku districts is considered to be among the best.



Trapist Cookies (Hokkaidō Prefecture, Hakodaté)

The Trapist Monastery was the first institution to introduce dairy farming to Hokkaidō on an organized level. The cookies, butter candies and other dairy products made here are loved throughout Japan.



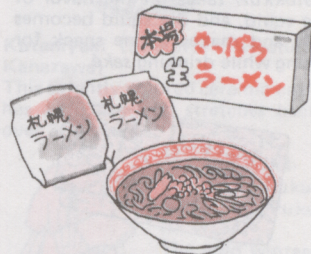
Akabeko (Fukushima Prefecture, Aizu-Wakamatsu)

There is a legend that long ago when a temple was being built in this region, only a single red cow was able to withstand the strenuous work and continue until the temple was completed. For this reason, the red cow has come to be a symbol of health and happiness.



Matsumaé-zuké (Hokkaidō Prefecture, Hakodaté)

This delicious dish is made of local squid, herring roe and kelp that has been marinated and fermented with soy sauce and sweet *saké*.



Sapporo Rāmen

Sapporo is famous for *rāmen*. In addition to plain *rāmen*, dried noodles are also available.



Sasakamaboko (Miyagi Prefecture, Sendai)

This dish is made from boiled fish paste shaped like bamboo grass.



Hato-bué (Pigeon whistle)

(Aomori Prefecture, Hirosaki)

This traditional toy is quite popular in Aomori Prefecture. Made from baked earth, it produces a cooing sound when blown.



Kokeshi (Miyagi Prefecture, Narugo)

This wooden doll is a traditional toy loved by children of the Tōhoku district.

Kokeshi made in Narugo have a chrysanthemum design on the front.



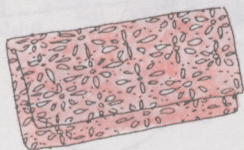
Ikatokkuri (Aomori Prefecture, Hachinohé)

A *tokkuri* (a bottle used to heat Japanese *saké*) is used to smoke *ika* (squid). *Saké* heated in an *ikatokkuri* takes on the flavor of the squid, and the squid becomes soft and makes a fine snack for eating while drinking *saké*.



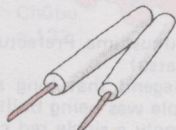
É-rōsoku (Yamagata Prefecture, Tsuruoka)

É (picture) of plants, flowers and children are drawn on *rōsoku* (candles).



Nambu-katazomé (Iwaté Prefecture, Morioka)

This is one type of dyeing design that was used for clothing worn by *samurai* during the *Edo* Period.



Kiritampo (Akita Prefecture, Akita)

Rice is ground and wrapped around a thin stick and grilled on the outside. After broiling it is sliced up and used in *nabé-ryōri*.

The Hokuriku Region

Niigata Prefecture, Ishikawa Prefecture, Toyama Prefecture, Fukui Prefecture

This area lies along the coast of the Japan Sea and is famous for the delicious fish caught there. The winters here are long and the area has one of the highest rates of snowfall in the world. This area is also known for hand-made toys that are still traditionally made.



Sasadango (Niigata Prefecture, Niigata)

This is a special kind of *mochi* (ricecake) made with mugwort and red bean paste and wrapped in bamboo leaves.



Noroma Ningyō (Niigata Prefecture, Sado Island)

These *ningyō* (dolls) are designed based on *ningyō* that appeared in puppet theater during the *Edo* Period.



Hotaruika Sugatazukurī Shiokara (Toyama Prefecture, Toyama)

Hotaruika (three centimeter long squid) which is salted and preserved.



Kutaniyaki (Ishikawa Prefecture, Kanazawa)

This brightly colored ceramic craft has a history that stretches back over 300 years.



Wajimanuri (Ishikawa Prefecture, Wajima)

This is one type of traditional Japanese lacquer ware. Over 100 different processes are involved in the creation of these beautiful pieces, making them very strong and durable.



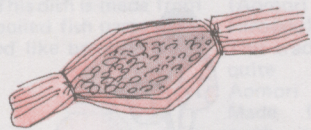
Echizen Také-ningyō (Fukui Prefecture, Fukui)

The cold winters in this area help produce the strong grain of bamboo used to make these elegant dolls.

Kantō Region

Ibaraki Prefecture, Tochigi Prefecture, Gumma Prefecture, Chiba Prefecture, Saitama Prefecture, Tokyo Prefecture, Kanagawa Prefecture

Centered around Tokyo (formerly *Edo*), the Kantō district developed with strong agriculture and fishing industries. Many fine examples of traditional crafts can still be seen in Nikkō (Tochigi Prefecture), Hakoné (Kanagawa Prefecture) and in Asakusa in Tokyo.



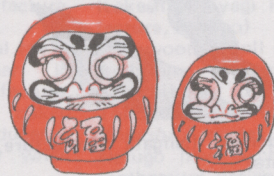
Nattō (Ibaraki Prefecture, Mito) *Nattō*, fermented bean paste, is a popular food in many parts of Japan. The *nattō* made in Mito is fermented after being wrapped in straw, giving it a special flavor.



Mashikoyaki (Tochigi Prefecture, Mashiko)
This is one kind of traditional ceramics ware. *Mashikoyaki* is usually colored in shades of brown, gray or black.



Satomiyaki (Chiba Prefecture, Tateyama)
Fine ceramic pieces are produced with clay gathered from the mountains around Tateyama.

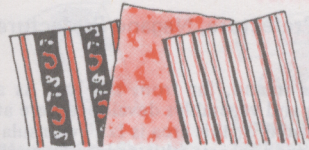


Takasaki Fuku-dharma (Gumma Prefecture, Takasaki)

This Dharma doll is coveted as a charm that ensures success in business and safety at home. When purchased, the Dharma's eyes are not colored in. One makes a wish and fills in a single eye. If the wish comes true the other eye is filled in.



Shirauo (Chiba Prefecture, Chōshi)
Located in the northern part of Chiba Prefecture along the Pacific Coast, Chōshi is well-known for delicious seafood. Boiled salted whitefish is one of the specialties of this area, also known for local production of soy sauce.



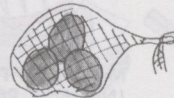
Edo Chiyogami (Tokyo Prefecture, Yanaka)

The colorful designs of this wooden-block dyed paper have been a favorite since the *Edo* Period.



Chūkagashi (Kanagawa Prefecture, Yokohama)

Yokohama's Chinatown is popular among residents of the Tokyo — Yokohama metropolitan area. *Chūka* (Chinese) *gashi* (confectioneries) are quite popular dessert items.



Kurotamago (Kanagawa Prefecture, Hakoné)

Kuro (black) *tamago* (eggs) are made by boiling fresh eggs in the hot spring waters that bubble up in the Owakudani Valley. Eating these black eggs is said to give one a long life.



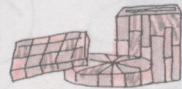
Kaminariokoshi (Tokyo Prefecture, Asakusa)

Made from crushed rice cakes and malt syrup, these delicious confectioneries are a popular specialty of Asakusa, a traditional part of Tokyo.



Kamakura-bori (Kanagawa Prefecture, Kamakura)

Made from Judas trees and other hard woods, these traditional craft pieces are fine works of art that blend impressive carving designs and beautiful painted patterns. Trays and hand mirrors are among the more popular items.



Yosegizaiku (Kanagawa Prefecture, Hakoné)

The Hakoné resort area is well-known for these wooden craft pieces made by assembling the wood of different trees of varying colors into beautiful geometric shapes.

Chūbu District

Shizuoka Prefecture, Yamanashi Prefecture, Nagano Prefecture, Gifu Prefecture, Aichi Prefecture

The majority of the Chūbu district is inland, far from the sea. As a result, preservation techniques for fish and vegetables developed here at an early time. One of the main attractions of this area is Izu Peninsula. Blessed with a wide variety of hot spring resorts, this area is busy all year round with a constant flow of tourists.

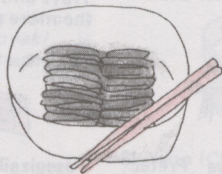


Awabinigai (Yamanashi Prefecture, Kōfu)

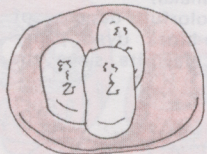
This is one of the local specialties of Yamanashi Prefecture, a mountainous land-locked region. Long ago when *awabi* (abalone) was being transported to the mountains on horseback, it was accidentally mixed with soy sauce. The result was surprisingly delicious. This is how the Kōfu specialty developed.



Wine (Yamanashi Prefecture, Kōfu)
Wine made from the produce of the Yamanashi vineyards is enjoyed throughout Japan.

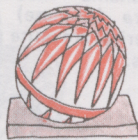


Nozawana (Nagano Prefecture, Nagano)
Made from wild leaves common in Nagano Prefecture, this pickled dish is a local favorite.



Sobamanjū (Nagano Prefecture, Matsumoto)

Nagano Prefecture is famous for the delicious *soba* (buckwheat noodles) made there. *Sobamanjū* is a unique confectionery made from *soba* flour and wheat flour wrapped in bean jam.



Matsumoto Temari (Nagano Prefecture, Matsumoto)

One of the well-known local craft pieces of Nagano Prefecture is this ball with a string sown through it. It is sometimes made with a bell.



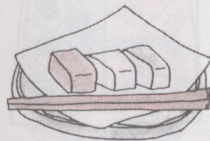
Mamedako (Shizuoka Prefecture, Hamamatsu)

This is a miniature *taiko* (kite) used in the kite flying festivals held in the outskirts around Hamamatsu.



Hida-no-sarubobo (Gifu Prefecture, Hida)

Since long ago there has been a tradition in the Hida district of grandmothers giving their grandchildren *saru* (monkey) dolls. These dolls are believed to bring good fortune and marital bliss.



Uirō (Aichi Prefecture, Nagoya)

A Nagoya specialty, these delicious traditional Japanese confectioneries are made of rice powder and sugar.



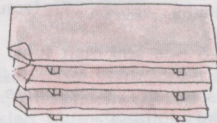
Unagi Pie (Shizuoka Prefecture, Hamamatsu)

Lake Hamana in Hamamatsu is a center of *unagi* (eel) breeding. Made with *unagi* extract, these bite-sized pies are perfect for dessert or as a snack.



Shizuokacha (Shizuoka Prefecture, Shizuoka)

Shizuoka Prefecture is famous for the *o-cha* (Japanese tea) cultivated there. New tea picked in early summer is especially delicious.



Shunkeinuri (Gifu Prefecture, Takayama)

These beautiful varnished lacquer ware pieces are still made with Japanese cypress and other woods in the same way that craftsmen did 400 years ago.



Gifu Chōchin (Gifu Prefecture, Gifu)

These *chōchin* (lanterns) are made from hemp and paper from the Mino district in Gifu Prefecture.



Mishima-mamé (Gifu Prefecture, Takayama)

This Hida district confectionery is made with fried soy beans, sugar, and dried seaweed.

Kansai Region

Shiga Prefecture, Mié Prefecture, Nara Prefecture, Wakayama Prefecture, Kyoto Prefecture, Osaka Prefecture, Hyōgo Prefecture

In ancient times more than 1000 years ago, both Nara and Kyoto were the capitals of Japan. Many ancient ruins have been preserved in this area known for its strong traditions and customs. Visitors here are always careful to bring back presents for their friends. Traditional craftwork, cultural articles and unique foods are popular items. Seafood products from Mié and Wakayama Prefectures are also popular.



Kikusui-amé (Shiga Prefecture, Maibara)

Processed rice and malt sugar are used to make these sucking candies. Placed on a stick, these are eaten like a lollipop.



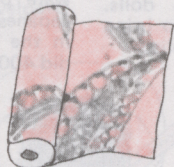
Akafuku (Mié Prefecture, Isé)

These delicious confectioneries have been popular among pilgrims to the Isé Shrine since long ago. They are made from bean jam spread on top of small *mochi* (rice cakes).



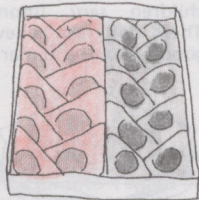
Shibazuké (Kyoto Prefecture, Kyoto)

Eggplant and cucumbers are pickled with mint leaves and allowed to ferment naturally to create one of the most well-known of Kyoto's local specialties.



Nishijin-ori (Kyoto Prefecture, Kyoto)

The bright colors of the silk *kimono* made in Kyoto and Nishijin have made them popular throughout Japan.



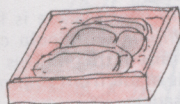
Nama-yatsuhashi (Kyoto Prefecture, Kyoto)

These fresh confectioneries made from bean jam are known for their cinnamon taste.



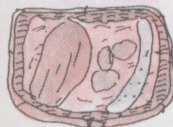
Shio-kombu (Osaka Prefecture, Osaka)

Osaka has been a commercial center for hundreds of years. Ships loaded with fresh fish and kelp from Hokkaidō unloaded at the Osaka docks. *Shio* (salt) was mixed with the *kombu* (kelp) to preserve it and this local specialty became a popular dish.



Gyuniku-misozuke (Hyōgo Prefecture, Kōbē)

Kōbē is famous for its high-grade beef. Preserved with *miso* (fermented soybean paste), this makes a delicious meal when the *miso* is wiped off and the meat grilled.



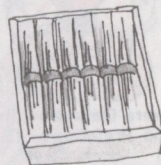
Narazuké (Nara Prefecture, Nara)

Melon cucumbers and other vegetables are pickled in *saké* to give them a sweet *saké* flavor.



Tai-no-hamamushi (Hyōgo Prefecture, Akō)

Tai (sea bream) is salted and smoked to make this delicious local specialty.



Tenobe-sōmen (Hyōgo Prefecture, Himeji)

These thin wheat noodles made from wheat flour are a local favorite in the Kansai District.



Bunraku Ningyō (Osaka Prefecture, Osaka)

Bunraku (Japanese marionette theater) developed in Osaka long ago. Small dolls and masks made in the design of *bunraku ningyō* are popular gift items.



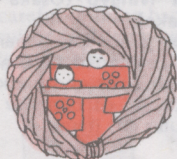
Katsuo-umé (Wakayama Prefecture, Kiishirahama)

Pickled plums made with *katsuo* (bonito) are a specialty of Wakayama Prefecture. The flavor of the dried *katsuo* mixes well and moderates the sour plum taste.

Chūgoku District

Tottori Prefecture, Shimané Prefecture, Okayama Prefecture, Hiroshima Prefecture, Yamaguchi Prefecture

Located in the western part of Honshū, the main island in the Japanese archipelago, the Chūgoku district is famous for its sea and mountain produce. Many of the local areas are favorites among travelers in search of unique folkcrafts.



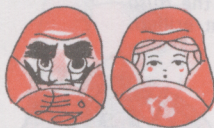
Nagashibina (Tottori Prefecture, Tottori)

This craft piece is based on the *hinaninyō* dolls used in the tradition of praying for happiness and marital bliss for girls in a ceremony where dolls are thrown into a river or sent out to sea by boat. These dolls are thought to be powerful bearers of fortune.



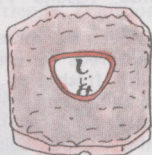
Tawara Daikoku (Shimané Prefecture, Izumo)

This doll is made in the image of the guardian deity of Izumo Shrine — a shrine often visited by young couples planning to wed.



Yonago-dharma (Tottori Prefecture, Yonago)

The male Dharma are said to bring fortune in commerce and the female Dharma are thought to bring happiness.



Shijimi-tsukudani (Tottori Prefecture, Matsue)

Lake Shinji near Matsue is famed for the *shijimi* (corbicula clams) that are raised there. This local specialty is made from *shijimi* boiled in soy sauce.



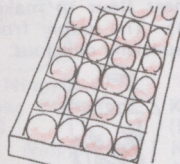
Tsuwano Washi-ninyō (Yamaguchi Prefecture, Tsuwano)

This hand-made doll is crafted with *washi* (Japanese paper), a local product.



Bizen-yaki (Okayama Prefecture, Okayama)

The Bizen style of *yakimono* (pottery) is one of the best in Japan. The subtle images and colors are quite expressive of the profound nuances of Japanese art and philosophy.



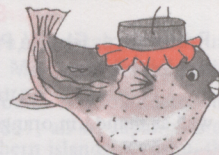
Kibidango (Okayama Prefecture, Okayama)

Okayama Prefecture is known for these delicious rice cakes made from sugar, honey and millet flour.



Kigan-shakushi (Hiroshima Prefecture, Miyajima)

Wishes are written on wooden *shakushi* (a cooking utensil used to scoop rice) and hung on trees and boards in temples as a prayer for success.



Fuku-chōchin (Yamaguchi Prefecture, Shimonoseki)

Shimonoseki is famous for *fugu* (blow fish). These *chōchin* (lanterns) are crafted using dried *fugu*.



Momiji Manjū (Hiroshima Prefecture, Hiroshima)

Manjū (steamed bean jam buns) are shaped like a *momiji* (maple) leaf to make this Hiroshima specialty.



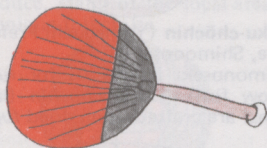
Miyoshi-ningyō (Hiroshima Prefecture, Miyoshi)

Miyoshi ningyō are still made with clay in the same traditional way that was used during the *Edo* Period.

Shikoku

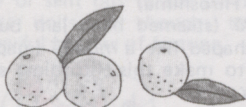
Kagawa Prefecture, Ehimé Prefecture, Kōchi Prefecture, Tokushima Prefecture

The island of Shikoku is famous for seafood and *wakamé* (green seaweed) as well as mandarin oranges and other citrus fruits.



Marugame Uchiwa (Kagawa Prefecture, Marugame)

Uchiwa (round fans) are made by wrapping *washi* (Japanese paper) around a bamboo frame. Designed with subtle shapes and curves, these crafts express a part of the solemn philosophy that guides many Japanese crafts.



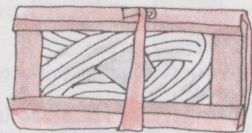
Sudachi (Tokushima Prefecture, Tokushima)

Sudachi (a citrus fruit) is grown here and used as a flavoring in a wide variety of cooking styles.



Ittōbori Tōken (Kōchi Prefecture, Kōchi)

Kōchi Prefecture is known for *tōken* (dog fights for gambling). These specialties are shaped like the dogs used in *tōken*.



Sanuki Udon (Kagawa Prefecture, Takamatsu)

The high-quality water and salt of Kagawa Prefecture are mixed with wheat flour to make *udon* (noodles). The *udon* from this area is especially delicious.



Tobé-yaki (Ehimé Prefecture, Matsuyama)

The *yakimono* (pottery) from this area is easily identifiable by the common design of blue flowers drawn on a white background.



Yaki-chikuwa (Tokushima Prefecture, Komatsushima)

Fish is wrapped around a thin bamboo pole and baked to make this food known as *chikuwa*.

Kyushu / Okinawa

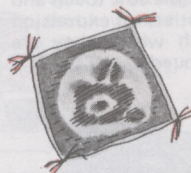
Fukuoka Prefecture, Saga Prefecture, Nagasaki Prefecture, Ōita Prefecture, Kumamoto Prefecture, Miyazaki Prefecture, Kagoshima Prefecture, Okinawa Prefecture

Until the end of the *Edo* Period in 1867, all of Japan was closed to foreign contact except for certain southern islands. Kyūshū, the southernmost of the four major Japanese islands, had extensive contact with Dutch and Portuguese traders and missionaries. It is an area rich in mixed cultural traditions that date back hundreds of years, as well as the rich tastes that southern climates produce.



Hakata Ningyō (Fukuoka Prefecture, Hakata)

Hakata Ningyō are made with puffy cheeks and smooth skin, making them quite unique among Japanese dolls.



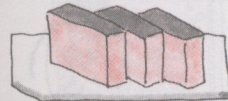
Kurumé-gasuri (Fukuoka Prefecture, Kurumé)

A cotton indigo cloth is splashed with white and red dyes to make this colorful ornamental robe.



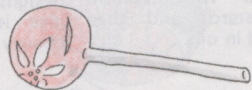
Karashi-mentaiko (Fukuoka Prefecture, Hakata)

This local specialty of Hakata is made with hearty spices, sauce and fish eggs.



Castella (Nagasaki Prefecture, Nagasaki)

Castella (sponge cakes) were first introduced to Nagasaki by Portuguese traders during the *Edo* Period. The rich taste has earned these cakes popularity throughout Japan.



Bīdoro (Nagasaki Prefecture, Nagasaki)

During the *Edo* Period, glass-blowing techniques were introduced to Japan in Nagasaki. Local craftsmen mastered the foreign techniques and soon created masterpieces that rivaled those created in the West.



Shōchū (Ōita Prefecture, Ōita)
Wheat, sweet potatoes, potatoes and buckwheat are used to make *shōchū* (a traditional Japanese alcoholic drink produced widely in Kyūshū). Wheat *shōchū* is a local specialty of Ōita.



Karashi-renkon (Kumamoto Prefecture, Kumamoto)
The hollow part of a *renkon* (lotus root) is filled with *karashi* (mustard) and then fried in oil.



Hoshi-suna (Okinawa Prefecture, Taketomijima)
Rare sand formations in the shape of stars are found on the Taketomijima coast. These make interesting souvenirs of this tropical area.



Arita-yaki (Saga Prefecture, Arita)
Arita-yaki are known among *yakimono* fans for the soft touch and subtlety of expression with which they are imbued.



Ōshima-tsumugi (Kagoshima Prefecture, Kagoshima)
This is one of the highest-grade Japanese textiles. The graceful designs and patterns give it an exquisite beauty.



Satsuma-agé (Kagoshima Prefecture, Kagoshima)
Made from a base of minced fish fried in oil, this local specialty is also sometimes made with vegetables or *tōfu* (bean curd).



Obaké-no-kinta (Kumamoto Prefecture, Kumamoto)
This amusing toy has a string at its back, pull it and his eyes spin and he sticks out his tongue.

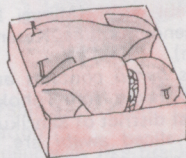


Awamori (Okinawa Prefecture, Naha)
This fine *saké* is a traditional drink of Okinawa. Made from rice, it is distilled to a high degree and has a considerably strong alcoholic content.

Station Bentos

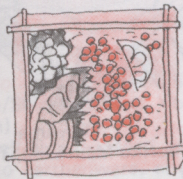
At almost any train station in Japan, one may buy a prepared *bentō*. Very often, special foods of that district are added to create an original taste. It is popular for those making long trips to pick up *bentōs* along the way and then enjoy lunch on the train.

Shiitaké mushrooms *kinshitamago*
(lightly fried eggs that have been sliced into small pieces)



Kani-meshi (Hokkaidō/Hakodate Main Line, Oshamambé Station)
This region is known for the taste of its hairy crabs. It is these crabs that are used to give the *kani-meshi* its exotic taste. The *bentō* is made by seasoning finely cut crab meat and sliced mushrooms with salt and *saké* and then placing it on a bed of rice.

Ika-meshi (Hokkaidō/Hakodate Main Line, Mori Station)
Mori Station's famous *bentō* is made by simmering squid stuffed with rice in sugar and soy sauce.



Ikura Bentō (Hokkaidō/Hakodate Main Line Iwamizawa Station)
This tasty delight consists of rice cooked in chicken flavored soup and covered with delicious sliced salmon and *ikura* (salmon roe).

Uni "wappa" meshi (Aomori Prefecture/Tōhoku Main Line, Hachinohe Station)
First, steamed *uni* (sea urchin) is cooked together with rice. On top of this is placed seasoned *uni*, *shiitake* mushrooms, and *kinshitamago*. The term "*wappa*" refers to the thin wooden box into which the *bentō* is placed.