

# Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan

Issue No. 8

Chan-chan yaki ◆ Hokkaido

By CGJNYJIC

*Traditional Local Cuisines of Japan* is a series introducing the history and food culture of various Japanese locales through their unique *kyodo-ryori* – timeless regional cuisines made with local ingredients and techniques.

The 8th issue features *chan-chan yaki*, one of Hokkaido's three representative dishes alongside *jingisukan* and *ishikari-nabe*.

## What is Chan-chan yaki?



Hokkaido's *chan-chan yaki* is a simple yet umami-packed combination of fish and vegetables steamed with miso and butter. Now a popular household dish, *chan-chan yaki* is said to have started with fishermen cooking their catch on an iron plate after a day at sea. There are different notions as to how it was named—some say that it came from the onomatopoeic phrase, *cha-cha-to*, meaning “quickly”, in reference to the recipe's simplicity; others point to the *chan* in *otou-chan* (“Dad”), who was always the one to prepare the dish. Still another theory says that the name was derived from the “*chan-chan*” sound of a spatula striking the iron plate that the item was cooked on.

## Hokkaido Prefecture

Situated at the northernmost tip of Japan, Hokkaido is the largest of the 47 prefectures comprising approximately 22% of the country's total land area. Apart from size, it also takes the crown as the nation's “most alluring prefecture”—a public ranking it has won every year since 2009.

The island prefecture's unique geographical position holds an array of advantages, beginning with its surrounding waters which source a thriving fishing industry and rich gourmet food culture. Its northern winters are also perfect for cold-weather sports such as skiing and snowboarding, as well as for hosting the famous “Sapporo Snow Festival”, which annually attracts visitors from all over the world with its awesome snow sculptures.



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### Shiretoko



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Abundant natural territories further add to the appeal. In addition to vast mountains and aromatic lavender fields, Hokkaido lays claim to Shiretoko, one of Japan's four Natural World Heritage Sites. The pristine habitat is a sanctuary for rare species such as the brown bear, sika deer, and red-crowned crane. With its many charm points, the region certainly beckons a visit!



## Japan's Favorite Fish

Different types of fish such as trout and *hokke* (okhotsk atka mackerel) are occasionally used for *chan-chan yaki*, but salmon is usually the star of the show. In fact, salmon is a national favorite! Since the late 1900s, major seafood consumption in Japan has shifted from shrimp and squid to more fish such as tuna and salmon, with a recent 2018 study indicating salmon as the most consumed fish in the country. Its top supplier: none other than Hokkaido.



Salmon has been a prized source of nourishment since olden times. The indigenous people of Hokkaido—the Ainu tribe—refer to salmon as *kamui chep* (lit. “God's fish”) in their dialect, signaling the importance of salmon for sustenance in their nature-centered lives.

From the cold waters of Hokkaido to tables across the nation, salmon has undeniably become an indispensable part of the modern Japanese diet.





## Chan-chan Yaki

This recipe is by Chef Shogo Tsutsumi of the CGJNY Ambassador's Residence.

### Ingredients

makes 1 serving

Salmon	50g
Maitake mushrooms	30g
(May be substituted with other mushrooms)	
Onion	30g
Bean sprouts	30g
Cabbage	40g
Chopped scallions	optional
★Red miso paste	20g
★Cooking sake	15ml
★Mirin	15ml
★Soy sauce	10ml
★Sugar	10g
Salted butter	5g
Salt & Pepper	to taste

### Instructions

1. Slice salmon into medium-small pieces and season with salt and pepper. Preheat oven to 400°F.
2. Thinly slice onions. Chop cabbage and mushrooms into small sizes. Soak bean sprouts in a bowl of water.
3. Stir (★) ingredients together and set aside.
4. Spread half the butter onto a generous amount of aluminum foil.
5. Combine prepared ingredients from steps 1-3 in the buttered aluminum foil. Carefully fold and seal foil, while checking for leakage.
6. Place the foil package into preheated oven and bake for 15 minutes.
7. Remove from oven. Open the foil (caution: hot!) and place the remaining butter on top to melt. Serve with chopped scallions.



### Hokkaido's Signature Dishes

In 2007, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan compiled a list of "100 Local Dishes of Rural Farming and Fishing Villages" with the goal of revitalizing rural areas across the nation. Top local specialties from each prefecture were selected through a combination of popular vote from netizens and expert opinion.

A total of three Hokkaido dishes made the list: *jingisukan*, a mutton barbecue specifically for cooking the meat of sheep from wool farms; *ishikari nabe*, a hot pot of salmon, tofu, cabbage and daikon radishes in miso broth; and of course, this issue's featured *chan-chan yaki*.

Each local dish comes with its own unique history which has come to leave its mark on the region's food culture.

These 3 items are only the tip of the Hokkaido culinary iceberg. There are many more delicious choices awaiting your discovery!



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Among Hokkaido's numerous salmon dishes, *chan-chan yaki* is simple to both prepare and clean up. You can also cook it on a grill or the original hot plate—just be sure to flip the foil package to heat through both sides. We challenge you to give it a shot!