

# JAPANESE SCHOOL LUNCHES

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[Carrying and serving food together]

Pupils on school lunch duty carry food to their classroom to serve it. Photo: Kodaira 6th Elementary School, Kodaira, Tokyo



## Japanese school lunches

School lunches serve as a source of learning for Japanese children. The daily meals at school provide them with opportunities to learn about nutrition, hygiene, culinary culture, local produce, food distribution, as well as the importance of good manners, sharing food fairly with their classmates, making sound judgment about diet, and being grateful for food.

School lunches made significant contributions toward the improvement of Japanese's nutrition intake and physical development and strength.

## Japanese school lunches are legislated

The School Lunch Program Act sets objectives of school lunches in light of *Shokuiku* (education on food and dietary practices).

## The gist of aims of the Japanese school lunch program

1. To maintain and enhance the wellbeing of schoolchildren through appropriate nutrition intake.
2. To provide schoolchildren with opportunities to learn appropriate diets, develop the ability to make sound judgment about a healthy diet, and adopt desirable dietary habits.
3. To foster sociability and cooperative spirits in children.
4. To facilitate the understanding of the natural providence, thereby fostering a respect for life and nature and a positive attitude toward environmental conservation.
5. To facilitate the understanding that a dietary practice is supported by many people engaging in food production, thereby fostering a sense of appreciation for their labor.
6. To facilitate deep understanding of varied culinary cultures.
7. To facilitate appropriate understanding about production, distribution, and consumption of food.

## School lunch program participation rate

Almost 100 percent of elementary schools and about 80 percent of junior high schools participate in the school lunch program.

## School lunch fees

Local governments cover personnel expenses, and children's guardians pay for food.

Costs of food: About ¥250 (\$2.2) per elementary school lunch, and about ¥300 (\$2.6) per junior high school lunch.

## Standards of intake through school lunches

The program has nutritional standards for necessary intake.



[Thanks for the meal !]

Children express gratitude for food before starting to eat.



[A day's lunch]

Rice, milk, teriyaki salmon, miso soup (tofu, *komatsuna* (Japanese mustard spinach), scallions), boiled spinach and turnip, mandarin orange

Photo: Kodaira 6th Elementary School, Kodaira, Tokyo



[Shokuiku class by a team of teachers]

Children learn about “3 nutrition colors” for a balanced diet. Photo: Kawajiri Elementary School, Kure, Hiroshima

## Diet and nutrition teacher system

Diet and nutrition teachers promote *Shokuiku* at school by providing “dietary guidance through the school lunch program.”

Fixed numbers of school nutritionists are allocated to public schools, and 42 percent of these nutritionists are assigned as diet and nutrition teachers at the discretion of the municipality or supervisors. Employing diet and nutrition teachers is not mandatory.

## Diet and nutrition teachers' functions

### Provide dietary guidance as part of daily school lunch management.

1. Work with classroom teachers to provide dietary guidance.
2. Provide pupils with individualized guidance on how to prevent or overcome obesity, unbalanced dietary habits, and food allergies.
3. Work with other teachers, pupils' families, and the local community to coordinate efforts toward enhanced dietary guidance.
4. Conduct nutrition, hygiene, and supply management.

\* **School nutritionists also perform these functions.**

### [Growing vegetables]

She has grown and harvested tomatoes. She did not like tomatoes before, but now she does.

Photo: Akiyoshi Elementary School, Mine, Yamaguchi



### [Rice reaping]

Children grow and harvest rice, which has been important to the Japanese people from time immemorial.

Hands-on farming in an agricultural village

Photo: Toho-mura, Asakura District, Fukuoka

## Hygiene control

School lunches are prepared in accordance with strict hygiene control standards to ensure food safety.



[Vegetables are prepared in the dry system]



[Temperatures are strictly controlled]

The school cook measures center temperatures of broiled fish.



[Hygiene control for school cooks]

School cooks dress themselves in cooking attire and conduct a health check every morning. They have their stools tested twice a month.

Photos of on-site hygiene control have been provided by the Fukuroi Chubu School Lunch Center