

Hiroshima Oysters

Hiroshima oysters are prized for their rich taste and larger-than-average size. Having been cultivated here for almost 500 years, they are central to the region's culinary culture. Unlike elsewhere in Japan and the wider world, Hiroshima oysters have mainly been eaten cooked rather than raw: over the centuries, a variety of local recipes have evolved in which oysters are grilled, deep-fried, or simmered in hot pots. These cooking methods bring a diversity of new flavors and textures to the oysters, and also makes them suitable for children and those who prefer not to eat raw shellfish.

The superior size and flavor of Hiroshima oysters is due to a combination of geographical features and cultivation methods. Here, instead of the usual one-year growing period, some oysters are patiently grown for between one-and-a-half and two years. Multiple rivers bring a constant supply of nutrients into Hiroshima Bay, where around 10,000 oyster-laden rafts (*ikada*), positioned in shallow waters, enable their growing occupants to feed on plankton around the clock. The bay's large area makes farming on this scale possible, while its small and gentle waves ensure the rafts remain safely in place.

Hiroshima oysters are in season each January and February, but are also particularly flavorful from March to April. They are the centerpiece of a satisfying dinner, and also make a delicious accompaniment to Hiroshima-style *okonomiyaki*.