

Fukutsu Sea Bream Chazuke

Chazuke is a dish of cooked rice topped with slices of fish, served with broth poured over top. Wild sea bream (*tai*) is a major catch in Fukutsu and is often served in *chazuke*. Diners can customize *chazuke* by adding extra toppings, such as wasabi, dried seaweed (nori), scallions, and sesame seeds. The sea bream is served as sashimi, often lightly marinated in a mixture of soy sauce, sake, and sesame oil. The hot broth (made of green tea or *dashi* fish stock) lightly cooks the fish and changes the texture of the flesh. Diners can try the fish raw before adding the broth.

The main seasons for sea bream are late spring and autumn. Fukutsu usually holds a Tai Chazuke Fair from mid-May through the end of June. Local restaurants produce their own variations on the dish, ranging from traditional to European fusion.

In Japanese culture, sea bream is often served for special occasions, as its red color and rounded shape signify good luck. The name “tai” also sounds like the word “medetai,” which means “celebration.” Sea bream is eaten at New Year’s and at weddings, and a whole sea bream is often presented to winning sumo wrestlers.