

Sushi in Shiogama

Shiogama is said to have the largest number of sushi restaurants per capita of any city in Japan. Each serves its own version of the country's iconic dish.

The Shiogama Fish Market is Japan's top seller of fresh (not frozen) tuna, and the coastal waters abound with sought-after shellfish like sea urchin (*uni*) and abalone (*awabi*). The sea that lies beyond Shiogama's port is the meeting point for the Oyashio and Kuroshio currents. The veritable banquet of plankton brought by these Pacific Ocean currents attracts a wide variety of fish. This biodiversity is reflected in the daily menus at sushi restaurants around the city.

The relationship between sushi chefs and fishermen in Shiogama is much closer than in large cities. Shiogama's sushi shops are an important part of maintaining the area's family-run businesses and community. Rather than buying crates of fish from a major market, many sushi restaurants rely on fishermen who operate small boats, returning with the catch of the day just in time for the chefs to start preparing for lunch.

Diners at the city's sushi restaurants can find both traditional favorites, including tuna purchased at Shiogama City Fish Market's early morning auction, and less common items. Depending on the season, tuna belly, tuna *shirako* (milt) and roe, the sought-after *nishigai* (Asian rapa whelk), or *akamanbo* (moonfish, or opah) may be featured on the menu. When eating at one of Shiogama's many sushi restaurants, adventurous eaters are encouraged to ask the chef about that day's special offerings. No matter the selection, food lovers can expect to taste some of the freshest sushi possible, delivered from ocean to plate in almost no time.

Fish is not the only important ingredient for good sushi. The pillow of vinegar-seasoned rice beneath the fresh fish is also essential, and rice is another local product. Cooking rice in water from the same area is said to yield the best flavor, and so sushi chefs around the city use Sasanishiki or Koshihikari rice from nearby farms.