

Obanazawa Watermelon

Watermelon is a popular summertime snack in Japan. Obanazawa City is the largest producer of summer watermelon, and melons grown in the area are valued for their size, sweetness, and crunchy texture.

Obanazawa is in a basin surrounded by mountains, and its climate is uniquely suited to watermelon cultivation. It is one of Japan's snowiest regions, typically covered in snow for four months each year. Summers are hot and sunny, with significantly cooler temperatures at night. Watermelons are planted in April or May, when the snow has mostly melted away, and are ready to harvest by July or August. The vines are carefully arranged into rows in the field, ensuring there is sufficient space for the fruit to grow. The melons are rotated for even exposure to the sun and sometimes covered in straw to prevent overexposure. The sunshine, as well as the temperature difference in summer, increases the sugar content of the melons, enhancing their sweetness.

Obanazawa hosts annual community-led contests for its farmers in summer, where winners compete to see who can grow the largest or best-tasting watermelons. While average melon varieties grow up to 10 kilograms, contest winners have weighed as much as 26 kilograms.

Obanazawa watermelons can be pre-ordered or purchased online and are shipped throughout Japan.