

***Kasube-ni* (Simmered Skate Fish)**

The appearance of *kasube-ni* (simmered skate) on menus and tables signals the approach of the Tsuchizaki Minato Hikiyama Matsuri Festival.

Kasube-ni is prepared by rehydrating dried skate (a flat-bodied fish) in water before slowly simmering it in soy sauce, sugar, and mirin. The rehydrated fish has a distinct umami flavor that pairs well with local sake.

The practice of drying and rehydrating originated from the need to preserve the fish for transport before modern refrigeration. Because it is time-consuming to prepare, *kasube-ni* is now primarily served in restaurants as a special dish during the Tsuchizaki Minato Hikiyama Matsuri Festival, although it was once an everyday household dish.

***Fugu* (Pufferfish)**

Fugu, or pufferfish, grow especially slowly in the cold waters off the coast of Akita Prefecture. This slow growth produces firmer meat with a chewy texture. Local fishermen began to catch more pufferfish around 1992 as

part of a strategy to survive a ban on one of their most popular catches, *hatahata* (Japanese sandfish); the consumption of sandfish was banned for three years to help the population recover from overfishing. In response, local restaurants promoted the unique taste of Akita pufferfish and created a new local culinary specialty. *Fugu* is a delicacy that can only be prepared and served by licensed chefs, as some parts of the fish are extremely poisonous.