



Culinary Institute  
of America

# Asian Cuisine



# Learning Objectives

- List the culinary regions within China, Thailand, Vietnam, South Korea, Japan, and India.
- Explain the elements of taste in each Asian country.
- List the key ingredients used in each Asian country.
- Explain the common cooking techniques used in each Asian country.
- Describe the popular dishes representative of each Asian country.
- Prepare a variety of dishes representative of these Asian countries using standardized recipes.

# China: Culinary Regions

## Xin Jiang

- Muslim influence
- Stewed lamb dishes
- Kebabs
- Millet

## Sichuan

- Hot/spicy food
- Szechwan "fagara" peppercorns
- Foo Young-Hibiscus Egg

## North

- Wheat
- Corn
- Millet

## Beijing

- Steamed buns
- Peking duck
- Table bbq
- Mongolian fire-pot

## Shanghai

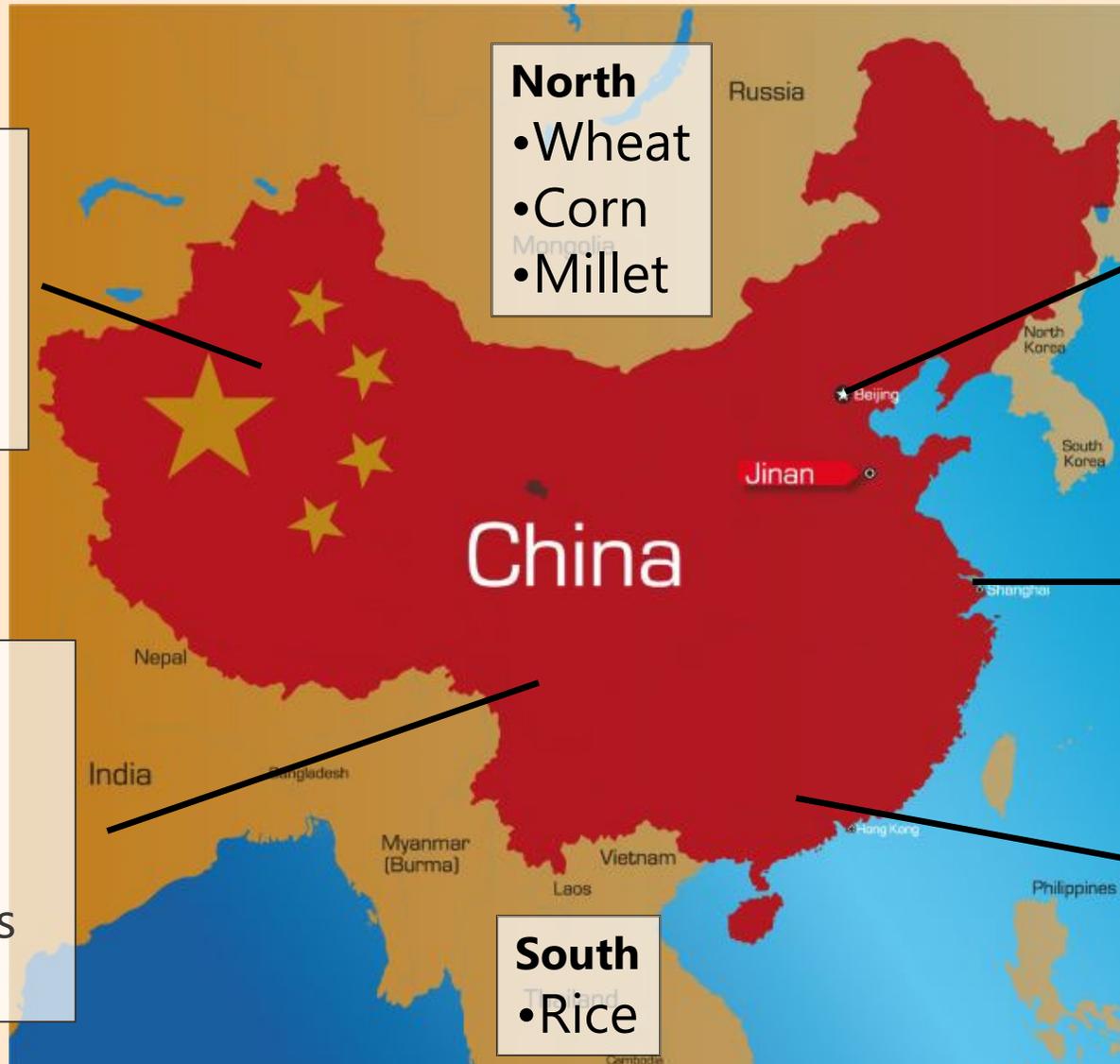
- Red cooking
- Bird's nest soup
- Chingkiang vinegar

## GuangDon (Canton)

- Lacquer roasting
- Cha shiu "cha shao"
- Fruits in cooking "Sweet and sour"
- Black bean sauces

## South

- Rice



# Elements of Taste

**Aroma:** 4 key ingredients: green onions, ginger, garlic, wine

## **Key aromatic pairings:**

- Ginger + garlic + green onion
- Green & red chiles
- Hot chili paste + fermented soybeans
- Five spice powder: star anise, Szechwan pepper, cinnamon, clove, fennel
- Fermented black beans

**Flavors:** sweet, sour, salty, bitter, pungent/spicy

**Textures:** each dish offers one or several



# Key Ingredients

**Tofu:** can be fresh or processed; varying softness levels

**Vegetables:** bok choy, broccoli, cabbage, string beans, water spinach, Chrysanthemum leaves (*Tong hao*), shitake mushrooms, dried lily buds, pickled vegetables

**Noodles:** various types/uses, enjoyed at all meals

**Spices:** Sichuan peppercorns, white pepper

**Condiments:** soy, oyster, hoisin sauces

**Other:** sesame oil, sesame seeds, peanut oil, black vinegar, Shaoxing rice wine



# Cooking Techniques

**Stir-frying:** quick cooking, food cut into small uniform pieces

**Velveting:** marinating & gentle cooking, tenderizes proteins

**Steaming:** delicate foods, no stirring, locks in flavor/moisture

- Types: bamboo & wok

**Hot pot:** cooking various ingredients in a pot of broth at the dining table

**Common daily techniques:** deep-frying, simmering, boiling, smoking, roasting



# Popular Dishes



**Biang Biang noodles:**  
thick, broad, hand-pulled noodles seasoned with chili, garlic, Sichuan pepper



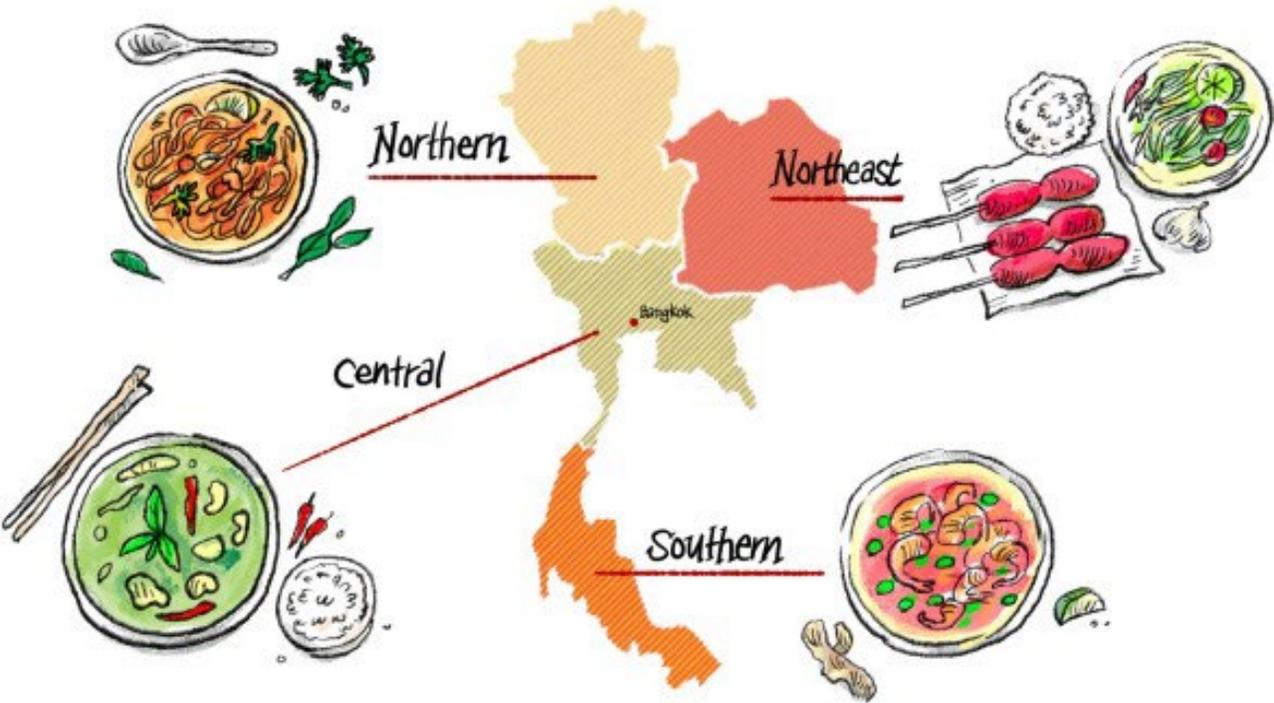
**Dim Sum:**  
a variety of small, steamed or fried dishes, including dumplings, buns, pastries



**Peking duck:**  
crispy-skinned duck served with thin pancakes, scallions, and a sweet bean sauce

# Thailand: Culinary Regions

## Thailand's Regional Cuisines



Regional variations correlate to neighboring countries, climate, geography

**Northern:** cool valleys/ forested mountains; shares dishes with Burma, Laos, Yunnan China

**Northeast:** arid plateau; influenced by Laos, Cambodia, Vietnam

**Central:** flat, wet, rice-growing plains; coconut milk

**Southern:** bordered by seas; curries, chiles, spices; elements of India, Malaysia, Indonesia

# Elements of Taste

## Flavors

- **Sweet:** mild contrast to bold flavors (palm sugar, coconut milk, fruit)
- **Sour:** tangy, adds depth (lime, unripe fruit)
- **Salty:** balances sweetness, acidity (fish/soy sauce)
- **Spicy:** adds intensity; Thai chilies

**Textures:** varied; crispy, soft, chewy

**Colors:** vibrant, from chilies, basil, turmeric

**Aroma:** lemongrass, galangal, garlic, coriander, basil, cardamom, nutmeg



# Key Ingredients

**Noodles:** egg (*bah mee*), glass (*woon sen*), rice

**Rice:** basmati, Jasmine, long/short, broken, black, sticky

**Proteins:** tofu, chicken, shrimp

**Thai Bird's Eye Chili:** fruity taste, mellow, lasting heat (50k-100k Scoville)

**Galangal:** peppery, spicy rhizome with a zesty bite and hint of pine

**Herbs:** lemongrass, cilantro, chives, Makrut lime leaves

**Spices:** tamarind

**Condiments:** fish/shrimp paste



# Cooking Techniques

**Stir-frying:** in a wok, quick cooking

**Grilling:** charcoal fired

**Steaming:** often wrapped in banana/bamboo leaves, locks in moisture/flavors

**Simmering:** soups, develops flavors

**Common daily techniques:** deep frying, pan-frying



# Popular Dishes



## **Pad Thai:**

Stir fry with rice noodles, eggs, tofu (or other protein) and a sweet and savory sauce



## **Thai Curry:**

Spiced coconut milk-based sauce with vegetables and meat



## **Mee Krob:**

Deep fried rice noodles with sweet and sour sauce

# Vietnam: Culinary Regions

## Northern

- Less spicy, sour flavors: tamarind, limes
- Light + balanced flavors highlight natural taste of ingredients

## Central

- Intensely spicy: chili peppers, shrimp sauces

## Southern/ Mekong Delta

- Pronounced sweetness: palm sugar, coconut milk
- Melting pot of regional, foreign flavors



# Elements of Taste

## Flavors

- **Sweet:** balance sour/bitter (sugar, fruits, certain vegetables)
- **Sour:** tangy (vinegar, tamarind, unripe mangoes)
- **Salty:** depth, enhances flavors; fish/soy sauce
- **Spicy:** pungency (chili peppers, ginger, garlic)
- **Bitter:** cleanses the palate (cilantro, bitter melon, dark chocolate)

**Textures:** contrasting in a single dish

**Colors:** vibrant hues from turmeric, pandan, beetroot, ramie leaves



# Key Ingredients

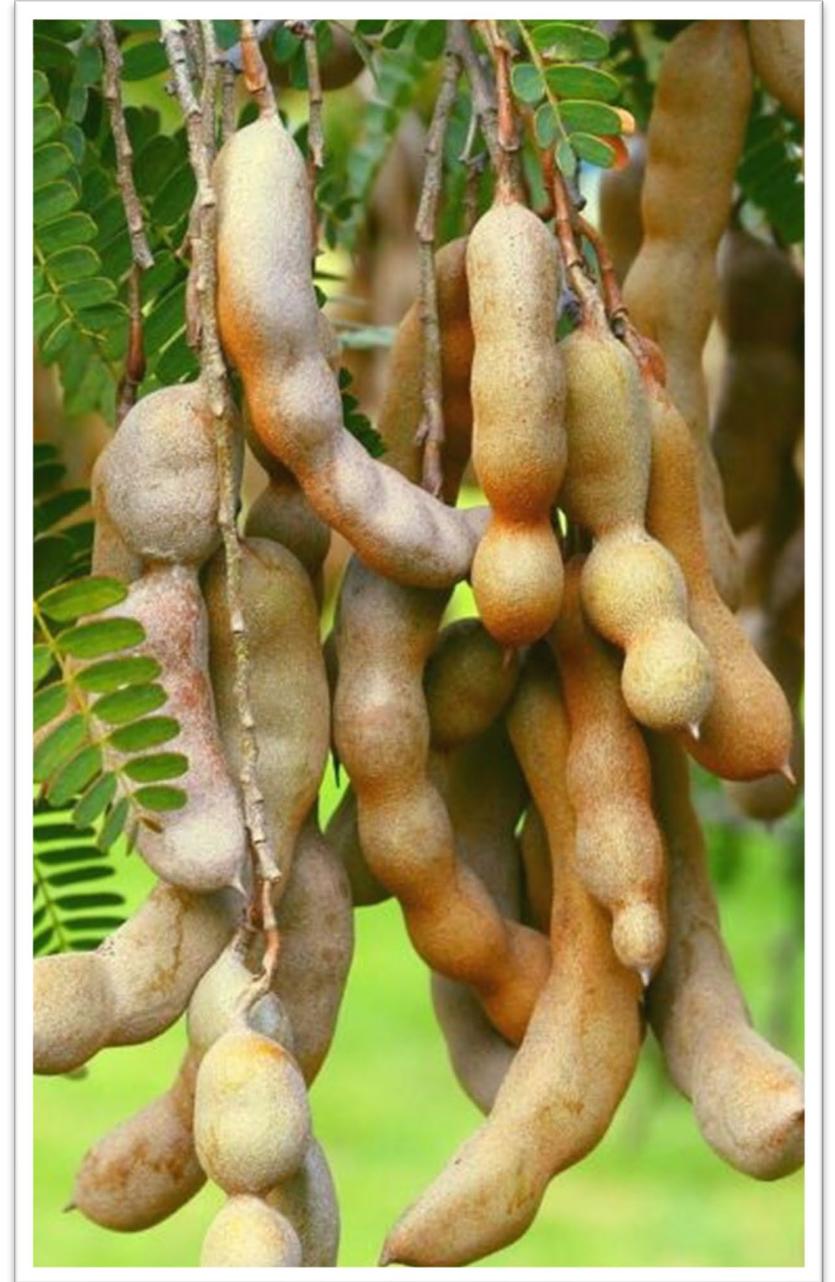
- Banana blossoms
- Tamarind fruit
- Salted black beans
- Peanuts

**Herbs:** Vietnamese coriander, Thai basil, perilla leaf, lemongrass, sawtooth, fish mint

**Rice:** Jasmine, sticky, brown, purple, red cargo

**Noodles:** rice vermicelli, rice sticks, yellow/wheat/egg, glass, tapioca

**Sauce:** fish (*Nước Mắm*), oyster, hoisin, soybean, light soy



# Cooking Techniques

**Grilling:** over open flame; adds smoky flavors, creates crispy edges

- Grilled pork with rice noodles (*bun cha*)

**Stir-frying:** quick cooking of vegetables, seafood, meat

**Simmering:** cooked in broth to develop flavors

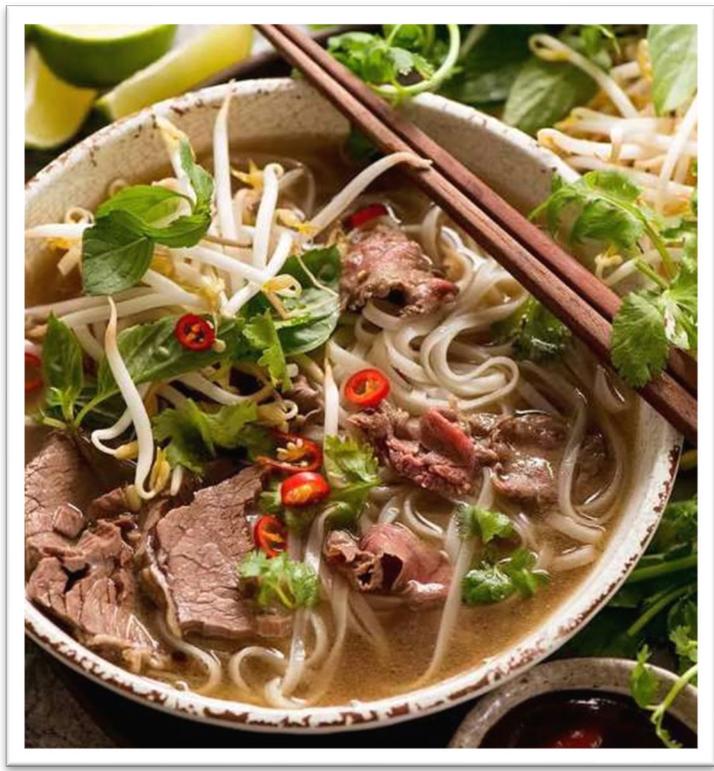
- Noodle soup (*Pho*)

**Pan-frying:** common for meats and vegetables

**Blanching:** quick cooking of vegetables; preserves color and texture



# Popular Dishes



## **Pho:**

salty broth with rice noodles, herbs, meat



## **Cha Ca:**

Firm white fish marinated in galangal, turmeric, fish sauce, lemon juice



## **Summer Rolls**

(*Gỏi cuốn, Nem cuốn*): rice paper wrappers filled with fresh herbs, vegetables, protein, vermicelli noodles

# South Korea: Culinary Regions

**Gyeonggi:** balance of sweet, salty, spicy flavors

- *Bibimbap*, noodles with Korean black bean sauce (*jajangmyeon*)

**Jeolla:** rich, savory, earthy flavors

- *Jeon*, *kimchi*, *banchan*

**Gyeongsang:** bold, spicy, seafood-centric

- Cabbage soup (*Haejangguk*), *Milmyeon* (from Busan)

**Chungcheong:** light, mild, clean flavors

- Pond loach soup (*Chueotang*)

**Jeju:** smoky, savory, slightly sweet flavors

- Black pork, fresh seafood



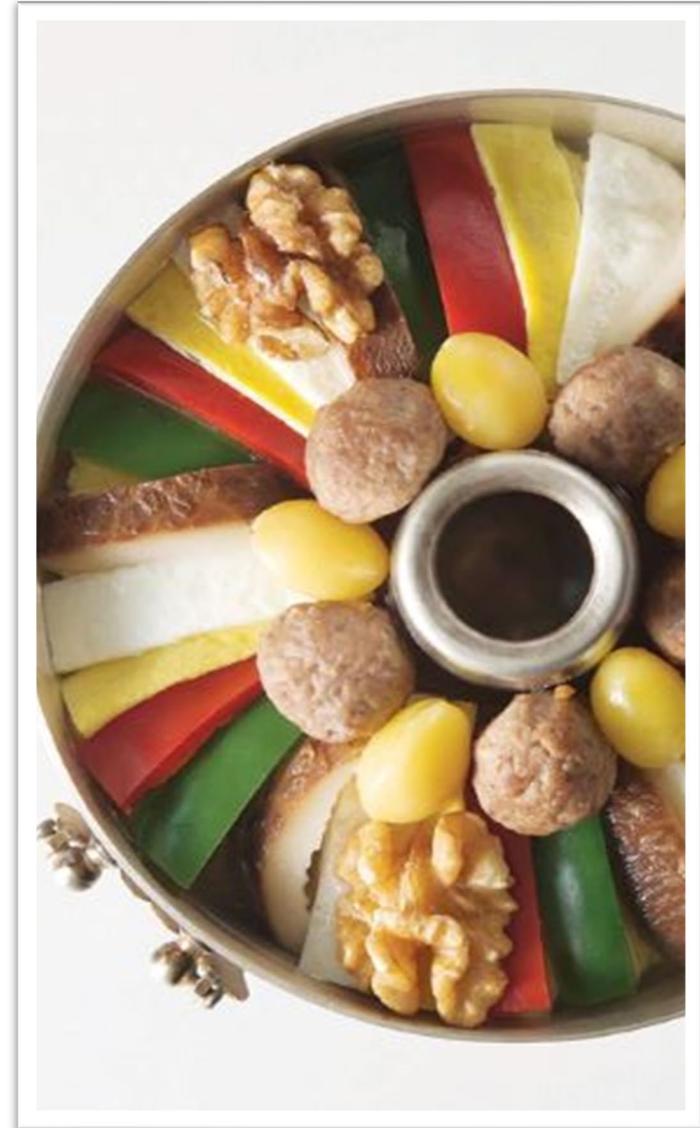
# Elements of Taste

## Flavors

- **Savory:** provides depth (fermented ingredients)
- **Spicy:** bold heat (chili pepper flakes & paste)
- **Subtly sweet:** balance/enhances savory flavors (honey, Asian pear, Mirin)
- **Sour:** cleanses the palate (vinegar)
- **Salty:** enhances flavors (soy sauce, fermented paste (*doenjang*))
- **Aroma:** ginger, garlic, scallions

**Textures:** diverse range

**Colors:** 5 directions (red, yellow, white, green, black)



# Key Ingredients

- Red chili powder (*gochugaru*)
- Sesame seeds, ginkgo nuts (*eunhaeng*)

**Starch:** glass noodles, rice

**Protein:** beef, pork, seafood, eggs

**Vegetables:** cabbage, radishes, spinach, mushrooms, carrots, onions, bell peppers, bean sprouts

- Kimchi: fermented vegetables

**Condiments:** soy sauce (*ganjang*), fermented red pepper paste (*gochujang*), fermented soybean paste (*doenjang*), fermented fish paste (*jeot*), rice wine (*mirin*), sesame oil



# Cooking Techniques

**Fermenting:** preserves vegetables, develops depth

**Simmering:** for stews, soups, broths

**Steaming** (*jjim*): seals in flavor, nutrients

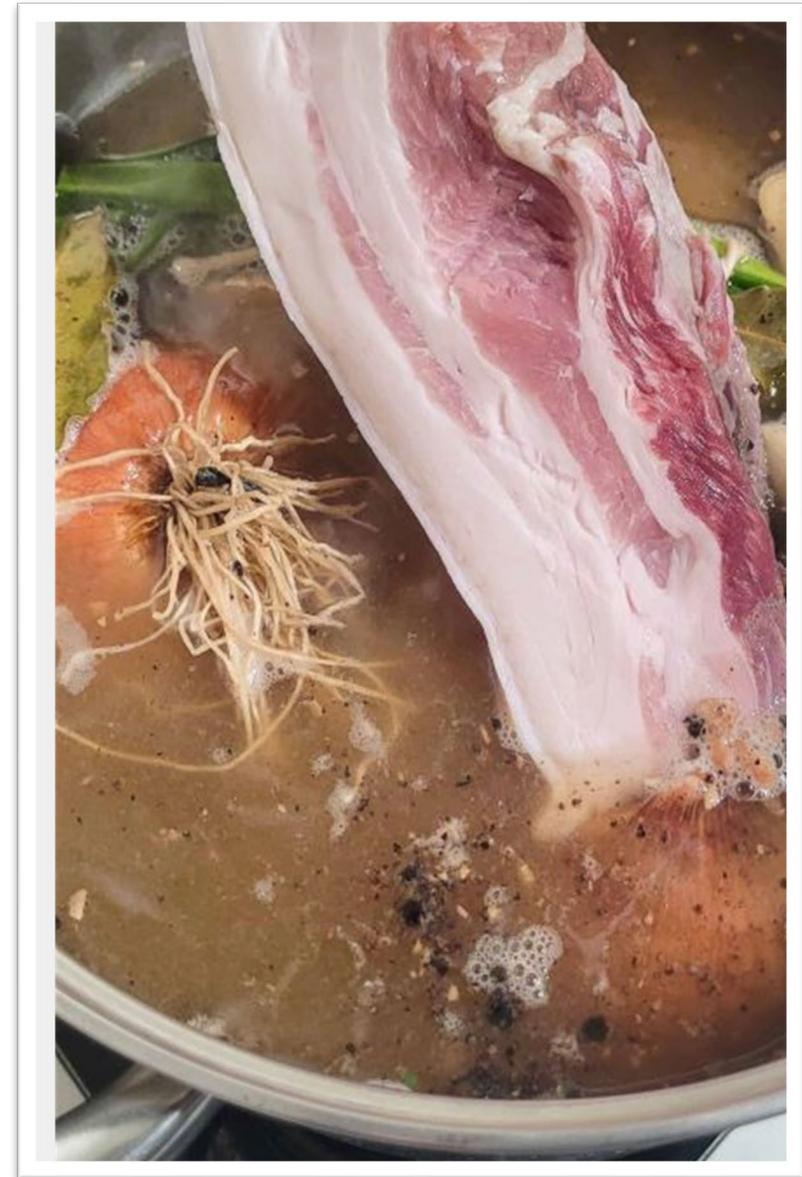
**Braising:** slow-cooks tough meats, veggies

**Stir-frying:** quick, high heat for tender ingredients

**Roasting:** gentle heat for large/tough cuts

**Grilling:** flame-cooked, ideal for thin, tender cuts

**Boiling** (*suyuk*): tenderizes meat in seasoned brine



# Popular Dishes



**Bibimbap:**  
rice topped with  
vegetables, meat,  
*gochujang* sauce



**Kalbi:**  
grilled beef short-  
ribs in a sweet soy  
sauce marinade



**Jap Chae:**  
sweet potato-based  
glass noodles stir-fried  
with meat and  
vegetables

# Japan: Culinary Regions

**Northern regions:** hearty, seafood dishes

- Hokkaido: sapporo ramen, crab, uni
- Tohoku: rice skewers, sweet edamame paste

**Central regions:** light, savory dishes

- Kanto: sushi, tempura
- Chubu: misu, soba
- Shikoku: udon

**Southern regions:** bold, umami-rich dishes

- Kansai: kobe beef
- Kyushu: tonkotsu ramen
- Okinawa: tropical flavors with goya, rafute



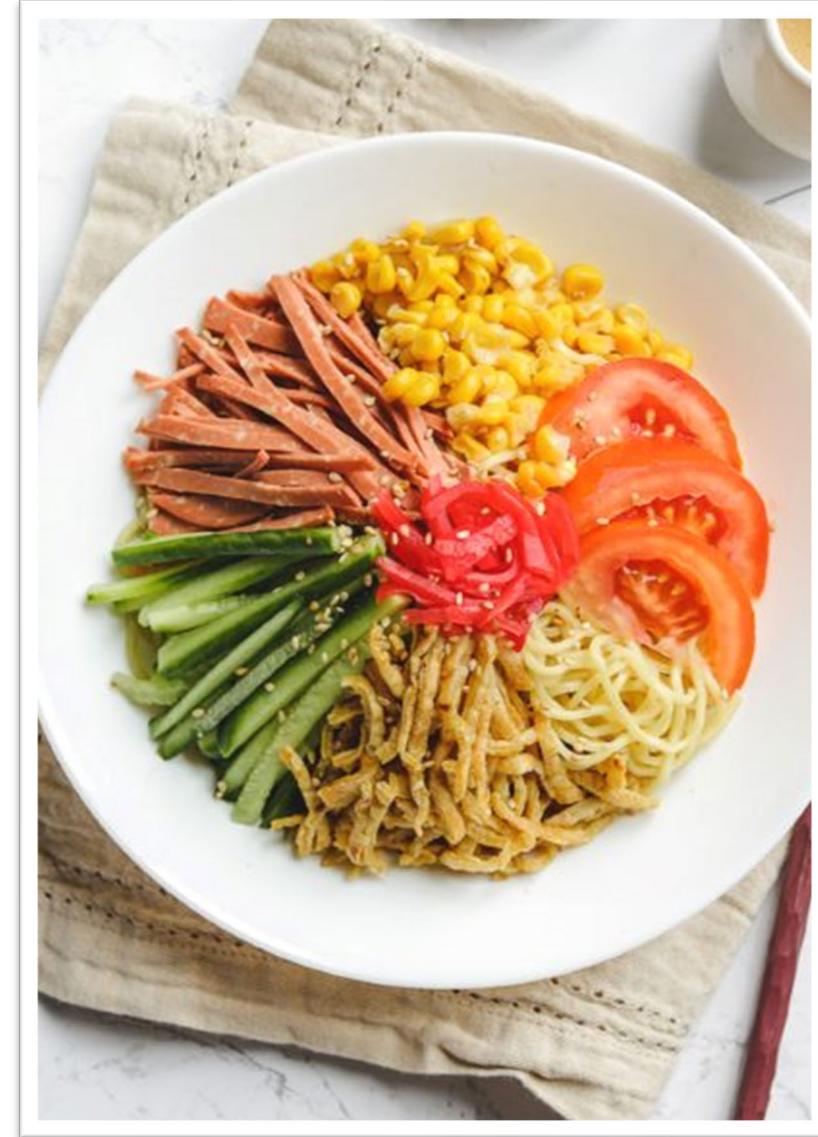
# Elements of Taste

## Favors

- **Savory:** adds richness, depth (fermented ingredients)
- **Subtly sweet:** balances savory, salty; (honey, fruits, sugar)
- **Sour:** refreshing tanginess; contrasts rich flavors (vinegar, yuzu, ponzu)
- **Salty:** enhances flavor in broths, dressings, pickled vegetables (soy sauce, miso)
- **Bitter:** earthy notes (herbs, vegetables)

**Textures:** contrasting combinations

**Colors (*Goshiki*):** red, yellow, green, white, black



# Key Ingredients

**Dashi:** basic soup stock; rich, savory flavor

**Miso:** fermented soybean paste (up to 3 years); used in soups, dressings, sauces, marinades

**Noodles:** *Soba, Udon, Somen, Ramen*

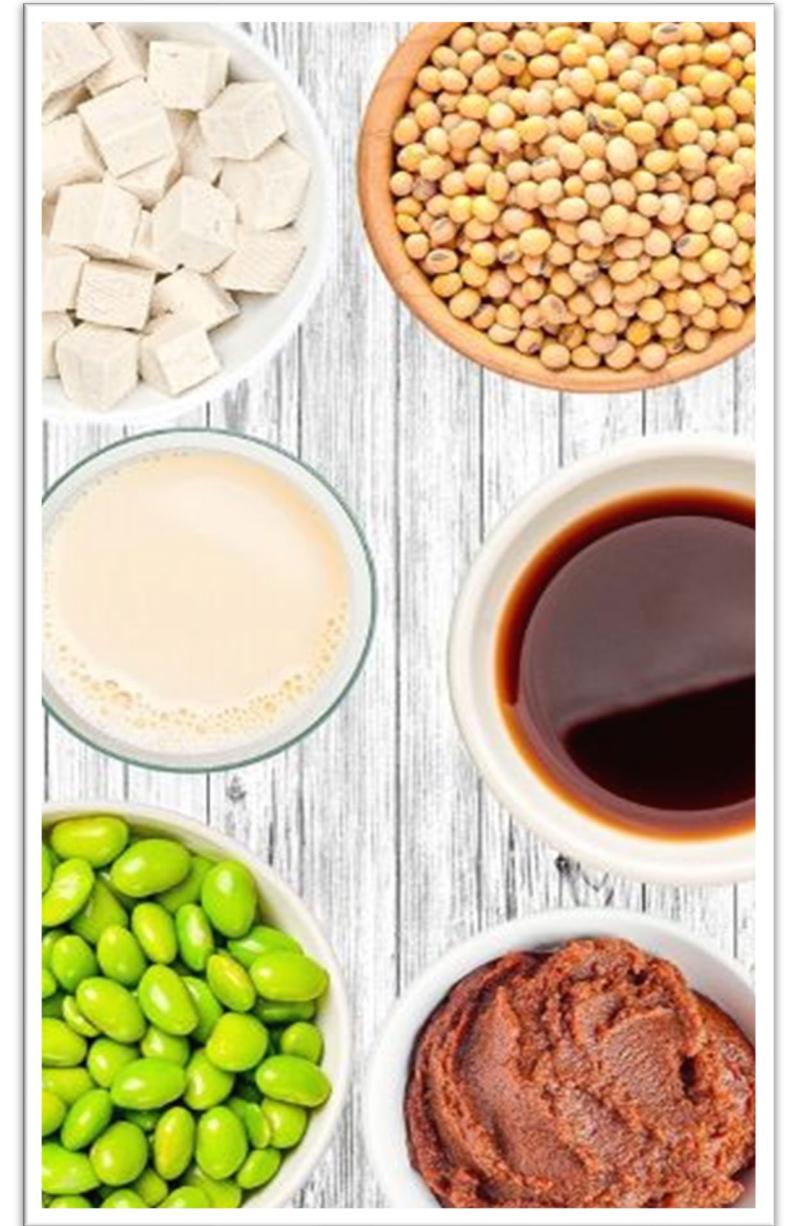
**Seaweed:** *Hijiki, Kombu, Nori, Wakame*

**Roots:** lotus root, white radish, burdock root

**Soy:** beans, sauce, tofu, milk, paste

**Herbs:** perilla leaf (*Shiso*), parsley (*Mistuba*)

**Other:** Sichuan pepper (*Sansho*)



# Cooking Techniques

**Grilling** (*yakimono*): used for beef, fish, chicken, vinegar-soaked vegetables

**Steaming** (*mushimono*): used for egg custards, meats, vegetables

**Simmering** (*nimono*): used for stews

**Deep-frying** (*agemono*): used for tempura, croquettes

**One-pot cooking** (*nabemono*): also known as Japanese hotpot

**Slicing, serving** (*sashimi*): used for sushi, raw fish



# Popular Dishes

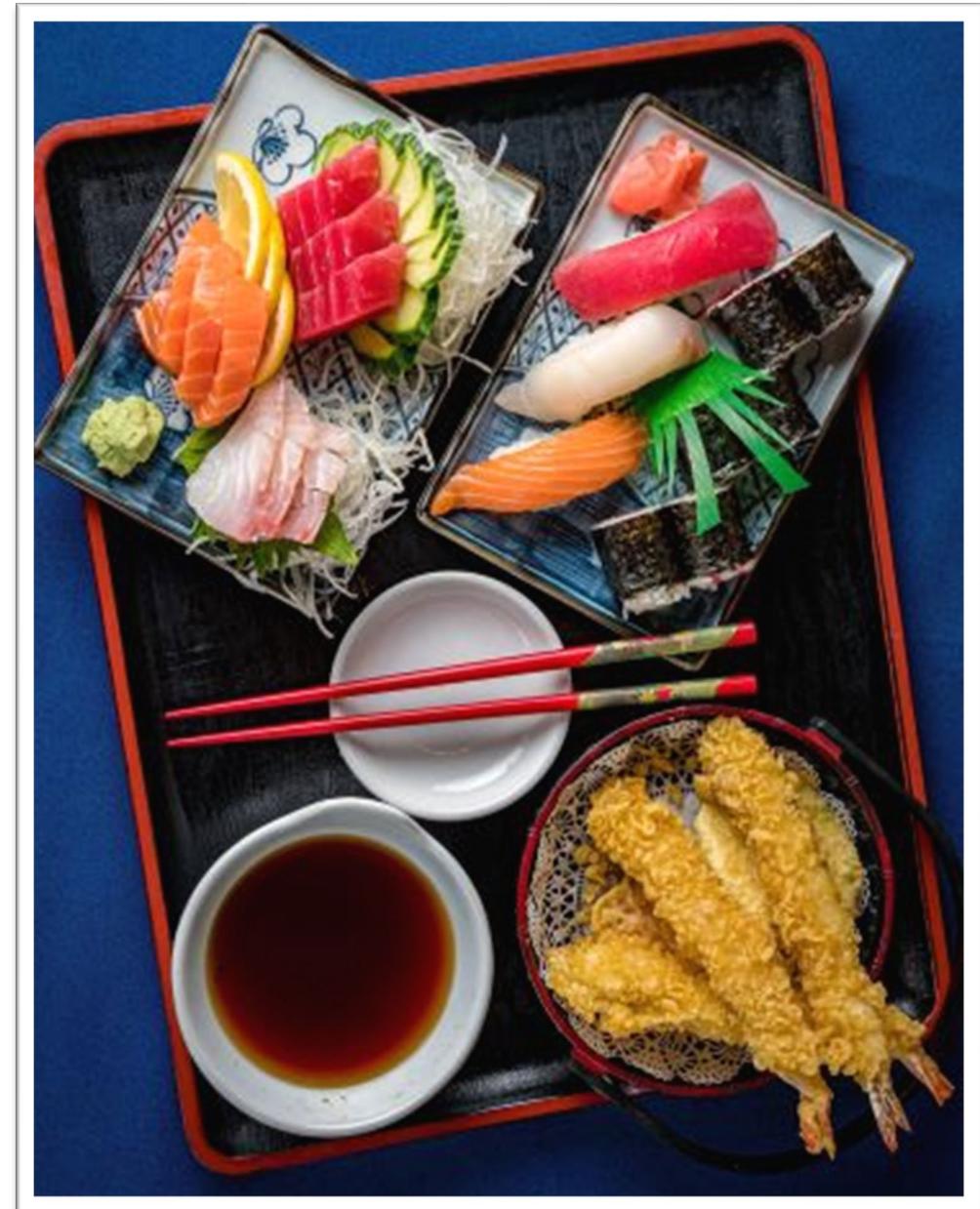
**Sushi:** cold rice dressed with vinegar, garnished especially with bits of raw seafood or vegetables

- **Shapes:** rolled (*Maki*), finger (*Nigiri*), pressed (*Battera*), scattered (*Chirashi*)

**Sashimi:** sliced, raw seafood

- **Slicing styles:** rectangles (*Hira-zukuri*), thin strips (*Usu-zukuri*), squares (*Kaku-zukuri*), triangles (*Sogi-sukuri*)

**Tempura:** deep-fried seafood/vegetable with a thin, crispy crust



# India: Culinary Regions

## North

- Central Asian Influence
- Dairy
- Tandoor breads
- Creamy curries
- Meat
- Garam masala
- Amchoor (dried unripe mango)

## West

- Wheat Breads
- Legumes
- Fiery hot curries
- Coconut milk



## East

- Rice
- Seafood
- White wheat flour

## South

- Portuguese influence (Goa)
- Tropical appearance
- Oil not ghee
- Steamed food
- Rice
- Lentils
- Stews

# Elements of Taste

## Flavors

- **Sweet:** natural (jaggery, palm sugars, honey, rose)
- **Salty:** balances bitter/sour, enhances sweet/savory
- **Sour:** acidity (tamarind, lime, palm vinegar)
- **Spicy:** heat/intensity (chiles, garam masala)
- **Savory:** complex/rich (onions, garlic, turmeric)
- **Bitter:** dimension (fenugreek, mustard greens)

**Textures:** creamy, rich (North); drier, stews (South)

**Colors:** vibrant; from turmeric, saffron, spinach, annatto



# Key Ingredients

**Flatbread:** North—milled wheat; South—fermented rice & dal

- **Naan:** milk/yogurt-based flatbread

**Curry:** vibrant, spiced sauce base for many dishes

**Basmati rice:** white, brown; pairs with curries

**Dal:** lentils, peas, beans—dried, split, cooked

- **Forms:** unhulled, split & hulled, split & unhulled

**Condiments:** raita (yogurt + herbs), chutney

**Spices:** *ajowan, amchur, asafoetida, fenugreek, anardana*

- **Masalas:** mix of dried spices, herbs



# Cooking Techniques

## For Dishes

- **Tandoor oven:** flatbreads slapped to sides, meats on skewers
- **Bhuna:** sautéing at low heat to reduce moisture/caramelize
- **Dum:** slow cooking with steam in sealed vessel
- **Dhungar:** smoking with live coal and ghee
- **Bhapa:** pot-in-pot steaming
- **Balchao:** pickling in vinegar and spices
- **Talna:** deep-frying

## For Spices

- **Toasting:** cooked gently over medium-low heat until fragrant
- **Popping:** whole spices will “pop” after heat is applied
- **Tempering (*Tadka*):** whole or ground spices heated in hot oil or ghee

# Popular Dishes



**Butter Chicken:**  
chicken in a creamy,  
tomato-based sauce  
with butter and cream



**Chicken Tikka Masala:**  
yogurt and spice  
marinated chicken in a  
spicy tomato sauce



**Malai Kofta:**  
vegetable dumplings  
cooked in creamy  
gravy



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Any Questions?