

Japanese school lunches and shokuiku

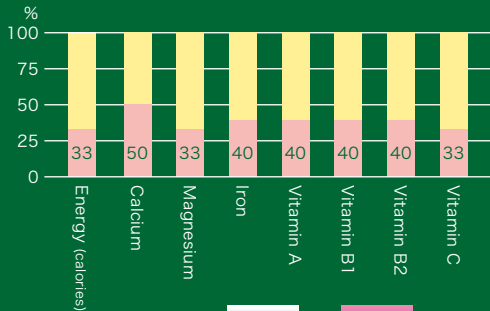
(Good and nutrition education)

The School Lunch Program Act demands that safe and nutritionally balanced school meals are served at schools.

Achieving outstanding nutritional balance

Based on generally accepted standards for school lunches, menus are created daily to deliver the required nutritional balance in accordance with the children's stage of development.

Dietary intake for school lunches to recommended daily allowances (elementary school age, 6-11 years)



Strict hygiene and sanitation management

Based on School Lunch Hygiene and Sanitation Management Standards, school lunches are managed on all aspects—from food selection to the serving of school lunches to the children—ensuring that the entire process is free of incidents including such problems as food poisoning.

Example of criteria noted in School Lunch Hygiene and Sanitation Management Standards



Left: Fresh, clean foods selected



Right: Lever-driven faucet that is not touched directly

School lunches serve as a “living textbook”

School lunches can be thought of as a “living textbook,” because they involve regional culture and cuisine, along with concepts such as gratitude for everyone involved in the food sector—as well as production, distribution, and consumption. A variety of initiatives are implemented with a view to a safe-and-healthy lifestyle.

Diet and nutrition teachers

Leadership on diet and nutrition is provided for children and management of school lunches implemented. See page 4 for details.

Goals of the Japanese school lunch program: the gist

1. Maintain and enhance the well-being of schoolchildren through appropriate nutritional intake.
2. Provide schoolchildren with opportunities to learn about appropriate diet, develop the ability to make sound judgments about a healthy diet, and to adopt positive dietary habits.
3. Foster a happier society and a spirit of cooperation in children.
4. Facilitate understanding of the gifts of the natural world, thereby fostering a respect for life and nature and a positive attitude toward environmental conservation.
5. Facilitate the understanding that a dietary practice is supported by many people engaging in food production, thereby fostering a sense of appreciation for the work of these people.
6. Facilitate better understanding of varied culinary cultures.
7. Facilitate appropriate understanding of production, distribution, and consumption of food.

Local governments cover personnel and facility expenses, while parents/guardians pay primarily for food.

The secret behind school lunch costs



Left: Experiencing harvest of the local cabbage used in school lunches



School lunches with cabbage harvested by the schoolchildren

History of school lunches

School lunches are believed to have begun in 1889 in Tsuruoka-cho (currently Tsuruoka City), Yamagata Prefecture for children of poor families attending private elementary schools. Though school lunches were temporarily halted during World War II, they were reinstated in 1954 with the School Lunch Program Act, becoming more widespread and of better quality as time went on, and continuing through the present day as a key component of school education.



1889	School lunches are first served in Tsuruoka-cho, Yamagata Prefecture (currently Tsuruoka City) <i>Constitution of the Empire of Japan promulgated</i>
1932	Government assistance for school lunches launched
1941 1945	World War II breaks out World War II ends
1946	The ministries of Education; Health, Labour, and Education; as well as Agriculture and Forestry together issue a directive establishing the government's postwar policy on school lunches including optimal daily nutritional intake. The school lunch program is re-launched following World War II with relief supplies provided by private organizations in the U.S. <i>Constitution of Japan promulgated</i>
1947	School lunches are provided to children in urban areas around the nation (2.9 million)
1954	School Lunch Program Act established
1958	Guidance for elementary and junior high schools revised Guidance on school lunches is re-categorized as a "school activity."
1964	<i>Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics held</i>
1968-69	Guidelines for elementary and junior high schools revised Guidance on school lunches is re-categorized as a "special activity."
2004	The School Lunch Program Act is partially revised, diet and nutrition teacher system established
2005	Diet and nutrition teacher system launched Basic Law of Shokuiku established
2008	The School Lunch Program Act is partially revised, clarifying approaches to boosting shokuiku in schools.

Though serving of school lunches had increased steadily around the nation, they are temporarily halted during the war.



Some examples of foods served in school lunches in 1889
Rice balls, salt salmon, pickled vegetables



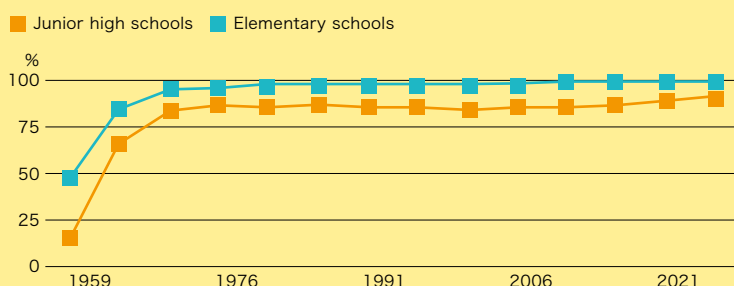
Some examples of foods served in postwar school lunches
Bun bread, powdered skim milk, deep-fried whale meat, Brussels sprouts, jam



Some examples of foods served in current school lunches
Rice infused with healthy purple rice, fried Wakasa flatfish, dried ume plums, vinegared tofu, taro root, soft adzuki-bean jelly

Photo Credit: JAPAN SPORT COUNCIL, All-Japan School Lunch Koshien

School lunches at elementary and junior high schools today



Currently, the percentage of elementary schools serving school lunch is approximately 100%, while that of junior high schools serving lunch is more than 90%.

Source: Survey on School Lunches
Survey targets: Public and private elementary and junior high schools

Shokuiku (food and nutrition education) in schools

Goals of shokuiku

In Japan, in order to clarify the future direction of the nation's basic approach to shokuiku, and to comprehensively and systematically implement policy on shokuiku, the Fundamental Shokuiku Plan--rooted in the Basic Law of Shokuiku--was devised to promote various policies.

At schools, as children acquire knowledge of food and meals, they are trained to make appropriate decisions regarding food. Children are also encouraged to take the lead in achieving a healthy diet for themselves and others as part of shokuiku initiatives.

Overview of leadership initiatives on diet and nutrition

Leadership on diet and nutrition at schools is provided through all school activities, including:
Work with textbooks
School lunch time
Individualized consultations/guidance



① Leadership on diet and nutrition Guidance on meals through textbooks

By providing guidance on food and meals through textbooks, children not only learn more about shokuiku, but also are better able to achieve the goals of the texts. Specifically, by incorporating ingredients mentioned in the textbooks, or by using school lunch menus as texts, the children learn more about a healthy diet, as well as production, distribution, and consumption of meals and meal products. They also develop the ability to choose foods, and to understand the importance of not wasting food.

Further, through hands-on experience exposing them to the people that produce food, children come to see everything related to food in a more familiar way.



② Leadership on diet and nutrition at school lunch time

Through daily school meals, children learn about and integrate concepts such as manners, eating a healthy diet, preparation and cleanup with safety and proper hygiene in mind, etc.

They also learn about how the nutritional elements work in the foods contained in school lunches, about local products, and more, taking the knowledge they learn from textbooks and verifying it through the school lunches they eat.



③ Individualized consultations/guidance

Individualized consultations are implemented with a view to improving individual situations where health issues cannot be resolved through general guidance such as in class and school activities.

These consultations are provided for children who tend to be obese or too thin, for those with food allergies, etc. They are held regularly and continuously to encourage behavior modification, improvement, and/or habits leading to a better lifestyle.



Diet and nutrition teachers

Diet and nutrition teacher system

This system, established in FY2005, employs school diet and nutrition teachers to provide guidance on childhood nutrition and management.

These individuals take the lead in effectively utilizing school lunches as “living” hands-on educational material, an initiative that should facilitate shokuiku in schools.



Tasks of school diet and nutrition teachers

School diet and nutrition teachers use their specialized knowledge of education, nutrition, and nutritional qualities to provide leadership on diet and nutrition together with daily school lunch management. In this connection, they are required to collaborate and coordinate with staff, families of the children, and regional entities.



Leadership on diet and nutrition

① Guidance on meals found in textbooks

Guidance on diet and nutrition given through textbooks

② Guidance on meals provided at mealtime

Leadership on diet and nutrition at school lunch time

③ Individual consultations/guidance

Individual consultation and guidance for children with health problems pertaining to food

Implemented as an integrated system

School lunch management

① Nutritional management

Appropriate nutritional management based on accepted standards for school lunches (menu preparation)

② Hygiene and sanitation management

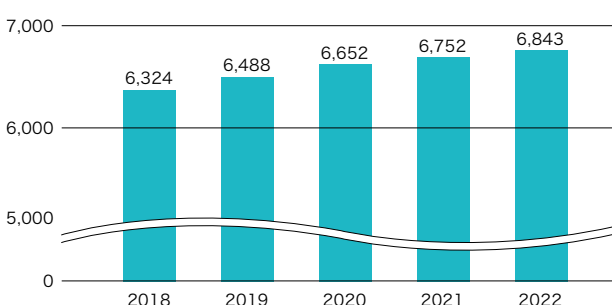
Hygiene and sanitation (management, analysis, verification, and guidance/advice) in accordance with School Lunch Hygiene and Sanitation Management Standards

Placement of Diet and nutrition teachers

Work with other teachers, children's families, and the local community to coordinate enhanced dietary guidance

School diet and nutrition teachers are hired and assigned by prefectural education committees, selected from licensed Diet and nutrition teachers in accordance with regional needs.

As of May 1st, 2022, there were 6,843 school diet and nutrition teachers placed in all of the nation's prefectures, and that number is increasing annually. Meanwhile, regional discrepancies can be observed in the placement of these individuals, amongst other problems, indicating the need for more effective placement.



Source: Fundamental Surveys on Schools

