

Seafood

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THE CHANGES BETWEEN THE JAPANESE HOUSEHOLDS AND FISH,
AND EFFORTS BY FISHERIES INDUSTRY (LAST HALF)

2 years have passed since great earthquake and tsunami which hit Japan in March 2011. The situation of the domestic fisheries industry continues to advance and retreat. Since last year, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries has been proposing a campaign called "fast fish." This is a campaign that promotes fish that is easy to cook or have its bones taken out so that more people would be able to eat fish easily. This campaign works together with the changes in lifestyles such as greater opportunities for women in the workplace, growing number of nuclear families, and increasing single-person households. The standards of fast fish are as follows.

Easy: Shorter cooking and shopping time

Reasonable: Affordable price and moderate volume

Others: The product must have the potential for consumption expansion in the future and uses special ingredients.

The present situation about consumption of marine products based on the research results of Japan Fisheries Association will be discussed below.

"Salmon" has been ranking first for the most commonly purchased fish from 2004 to 2011. The most frequently eaten cuisine using fish was "sashimi" and "sushi" followed by "grilled fish" in 2011. The results of interview survey targeting consumers reveal that consumers choose the fish they eat based on reasons such as, "my 4th grade daughter is willing to eat salmon, which has less bones." From 2004, the frequency of eating cuisines using fish for dinner began to drop. The number of families with elementary and middle school children who prefer fish over meat is small, and families with infants / preschool children to elementary school children have low frequency to eat fish.

The reason why fish cuisines are avoided is because "children do not like fish" or "the family do not like fish," "it is more expensive than meat." Children do not like fish because of the "bones" and "it is hard to eat." Also, children prefer western taste such as "curry" or "mayonnaise." From a 2007 survey, those who answered "like meat cuisine better" accounted for 49.1%, and this number rose up to 59.5% in 2009. On the other hand, those who "like fish cuisine better" dropped from 8.7% to 8.4%.

The most common seafood cooking skills of housewives were "peeling shells" (39%)

followed by "cutting fish" and "cutting squid and octopus." Cooking skills that are time consuming such as "simmering fish" ranked lower than 7th.

As for the type of seafood purchased, 96% answered, "cut seafood, and followed by "sashimi." Those who answered that they purchase "whole fish" were 28.6%. Also, the most common point that consumers consider when they purchase fish were "freshness" in 2004, while "price" ranked 1st in 2011. According to the research conducted by the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications, the expenditure on seafood of households with two persons or more in 2004 was 7363 yen, while meat was 6011 yen. In 2011, seafood dropped to 6200 yen, and meat rose to 6145 yen. In order to resolve the problem of falling fish consumption by using research results, here are some possible solutions: setting a price that is inexpensive, selling fish in a form that is easy for children to eat, recipe development, easy cooking techniques and ways to take out the bones, and making preparation easy.

This campaign succeeded in involving companies outside of the fishery industry after being introduced on TV and newspapers, gathering interest from the general public and influencing a wide range of consumers. This year, the campaign is aiming to stop consumers from distancing from fish by informing the importance of the traditional fish eating culture.

Cook it Frozen

~Sales promotion is making a good start in Japan~

Currently, "frozen fish" are gathering attention in the retail and distribution industry. Alaska Seafood Marketing Institute (ASMI) is promoting "frozen" seafood as a selling point. By quick-freezing freshly caught fish, it makes it possible to maintain the freshness to the dinner table. "Cook it Frozen" is a promotion activity that started in the United States in 2001, using frozen salmon and Alaska Pollock that cooks easily and quickly. The Japanese version of this promotion activity started in 2012.

In the United States, sampling and cooking demonstrations at volume sellers are done repeatedly, and there have been various other promotion activities such as advertisements, PR for consumers, online recipes, and apps.

As a result, fish can be preserved in the home freezer for months. You can take out the needed amount at the needed time and grill or steam in only a few minutes. Since you can cook delicious fish dishes very easily, frozen fish became recognized and spread around the US market as a healthy fast food.

ASMI is making an attempt to introduce this idea to Japan. The Japanese version uses the translations of the English tagline. In March 2012, cooking producers developed



Example: Sockeye salmon from "COOK IT FROZEN"
Photo by ASMI

Japanese recipes that match the Japanese taste using salmon, cod, and rock flatfish. In August, two more fish types were added. A new recipe is uploaded on the Japanese website every month. In the future, ASMI Japan will continue to add new recipes, cooperate with frozen seafood makers, tie up with consumer electronics, and introduce "Cook it Frozen" using different tools.

The Popular Non-defrost Series from DAIREI

DAIREI sells multiple business use products that could be cooked without defrosting. Since it could be cooked right after it is taken out of the freezer, these products are getting high evaluation from hospitals and welfare facilities that suffer from shortage of



Can be cooked right after it is taken out of the freezer.
Photo by Sui-Kei

workers, and businesses that want to cut losses. From the large advantages of these non-defrost products, more users are switching from the ordinary "boneless fish" series that must be defrosted before cooking. DAIREI's main products such as "Raku-raku cook series (Easy-to-cook series)" are expanding its share up to 70% in the "boneless" category and this proves its popularity. In addition to the fact that this product can be cooked frozen, it has characteristics that other products don't have such as moist texture, no lye, shrinks little, and has no strong smell. Also, in the case of other products, the sauce is packed with the unflavored frozen fish. This must be heated with boiling water to make simmered fish. Since it takes time to cook fish, there were needs from consumers, but it was difficult to create an actual product. This fish product is expanding its field to places such as senior citizens' homes where the number of workers is limited. In February, DAIREI announced a salt flavored fish product that defrosts naturally and does not have to be cooked. They are developing more fish menus that could be used easily. The usage of seafood will grow further with products targeting breakfast buffets for hotels that does not take time and work.