

feature 

# Simple and delicious Nakashoku

**In the past, people in Japan cooked at home from raw ingredients, or they ate out at restaurants, but in recent years there have been changes at the Japanese dinner table. The new style of dining is buying food prepared outside of the home, and bringing it home to eat. The popularity of this kind of meal should be clear to all pizza-lovers, but it is not restricted to simple take-away.**

In Japan, cooking at home is known as *Uchishoku* (inside meal) and going to a restaurant is known as *Gaishoku* (outside meal). In recent years, *Uchishoku* and *Gaishoku* have been up against a rival, *Nakashoku* (Middle meal). *Nakashoku* refers to food prepared elsewhere, and brought home to eat. Some examples are pizza and Sushi delivery, frozen food and delicatessen food. Delicatessen food includes both western and Japanese dishes such as croquettes, Japanese-style fried chicken, simmered dishes, grilled fish, and salad. Delicatessen food is becoming extremely popular amongst *Nakashoku* options.

Pre-prepared food can be purchased at convenience stores, supermarkets, and department stores. Dedicated to foodstuffs, the basement level of Japanese department stores has an extraordinary variety of prepared food for sale, and attracts enormous numbers of customers. Compared to supermarkets, the department stores usually also have gourmet products available, making them attractive to connoisseurs of fine food.

Many food outlets in department store basements nationwide are owned by Rock Field Co. Ltd. At the counters of the company's flagship brand, RF1, salads, fried fish, simmered and meat dishes are



(Left Photo) A nakashoku display comprised of 30 varieties of delicatessen food.

(Right Photo) An RF1 outlet in the basement of a department store.

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arranged in stunning displays. Seasonal produce is utilized to its best advantage, and particularly between five and six p.m., crowds of people on their way home from work wait to choose the evening's meal. Recently *Nakashoku* shops have also been springing up in stations. They are increasingly popular as they allow passengers the convenience of buying food while they wait for their trains.

At present, *Nakashoku* is often preferred over home cooking and eating out. One reason being that compared to cooking at home, *Nakashoku* is far less labour intensive. For busy people, with children and long work days, buying prepared food takes far less time and effort than cooking at home. Another benefit is the abundance of variety to choose from. Specialty dishes are arranged side-by-side, and from the vast array of possibilities you can choose different dishes every day.

You can also purchase just a little bit of various things, which is different from most Australian take-aways. Prepared *Nakashoku* is usually sold by weight, so it's easy to ask for just what you want, without worrying about the rest going mouldy in your fridge, which is particularly good for the elderly, and people who live alone.

Another significant advantage of *Nakashoku* is that you can eat it anywhere and anytime, with next to no preparation time. Restaurants are restricted in their opening hours, but *Nakashoku* is available from station and department stores, many of which, like convenience stores, are open 24-hours. So it doesn't matter if you work shifts or go out till the wee hours, *Nakashoku* is a blessing for busy people. And usually sold at reasonable prices, eating *Nakashoku* daily is not uncommon.

Easing the burden of a busy lifestyle, simple, varied and affordable *Nakashoku* is eaten frequently in Japanese households, and looks set to continue as an essential feature on the Japanese dinner table.