



Japanese Farm Food

Nancy Singleton Hachisu, Kenji Miura

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Japanese Farm Food offers a unique look into life on a Japanese farm through 165 simple, clear-flavored recipes along with personal stories and over 350 stunning photographs. It is a book about love, community, and life in rural Japan. Nancy Singleton Hachisu's second book, *Preserving the Japanese Way*, takes a deeper look into the techniques, recipes, and local producers associated with Japanese preserving.

Gourmand World Cookbook Awards 2012: USA Winner, Best Japanese Cuisine Book

"Our life centers on the farm and the field. We eat what we grow." --Nancy Singleton Hachisu,

Japanese Farm Food offers a unique window into life on a Japanese farm through the simple, clear-flavored recipes cooked from family crops and other local, organic products. The multitude of vibrant images by Kenji Miura of green fields, a traditional farmhouse, antique baskets, and ceramic bowls filled with beautiful, simple dishes are interwoven with Japanese indigo fabrics to convey an intimate, authentic portrait of life and food on a Japanese farm. With a focus on fresh and thoughtfully sourced ingredients, the recipes in *Japanese Farm Food* are perfect for fans of farmers' markets, and for home cooks looking for accessible Japanese dishes. Personal stories about family and farm life complete this incredible volume.

American born and raised, Nancy Singleton Hachisu lives with her husband and teenage sons on a rural Japanese farm, where they prepare these 165 bright, seasonal dishes. The recipes are organized logically with the intention of reassuring you how easy it is to cook Japanese food. Not just a book about Japanese food, *Japanese Farm Food* is a book about love, life on the farm, and community. Covering everything from pickles and soups to noodles, rice, and dipping sauces, with a special emphasis on vegetables, Hachisu demystifies the rural Japanese kitchen, laying bare the essential ingredients, equipment, and techniques needed for Japanese home cooking.

"Nancy Hachisu is...intrepid. Outrageously creative. Intensely passionate. Committed. True and real. I urge you to cook from this book with abandon, but first read it like a memoir, chapter by chapter, and you will share in the story of a modern-day family, a totally unique and extraordinary one." --Patricia Wells

"This book is both an intimate portrait of Nancy's life on the farm, and an important work that shows the universality of an authentic food culture." --Alice Waters

"The modest title *Japanese Farm Food* turns out to be large, embracing and perhaps surprising. Unlike the farm-to-table life as we know it here, where precious farm foods are cooked with recipes, often with some elaboration, real farm food means eating the same thing day after day when it's plentiful, putting it up for when it's not, and cooking it very, very simply because the farm demands so much more time in the field than in the kitchen. This beautiful, touching, and ultimately common sense book is about a life that's balanced between the idea that a life chooses you and that you in turn choose it and then live it wholeheartedly and largely. Thank you, Nancy, for sharing your rich, intentional and truly inspiring life." --Deborah Madison

"Nancy Hachisu's amazing depth of knowledge of Japanese food and culture shines through in every part of this book. You will feel as if you live next door to her...savoring and learning her down-to-earth approach to cooking and to loving food." --Hiroko Shimbo

"Taking a peek into Nancy Hachisu's stunning *Japanese Farm Food* is like entering a magical world. It's a Japan that used to be, not the modern Japan defined by the busyness of Tokyo, but a more timeless place, a place whose rhythms are set by seasons and traditions and the work of the farm. *Japanese Farm Food* is so much more than a cookbook. This book has soul. Every vegetable, every tool has a story. Who grew this eggplant? Who made this soy sauce? Nancy doesn't have to ask, "Where does my food come from?" She knows. Here's a woman who grows and harvests her own rice, grain by grain. Not that she asks or expects us to do the same at all. What she does offer is a glimpse into her life in rural Japan, with its shoji screens and filtered light, and recipes from her farm kitchen that you can't wait to try." --Elise Bauer, SimplyRecipes.com

"Japanese Farm Food is a lovely book about the culture, landscape, and food of Japan, a true insider's view of the Japanese kitchen, from farm to table, by a passionate and talented writer." --Michael Ruhlman

Japanese Farm Food Details

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From Reader Review Japanese Farm Food for online ebook

Eustacia Tan says

Now that I have to find my own meals, I realised that cooking isn't as easy as it seems. But it's also quite fun. So, when I saw this book on NetGalley, I jumped at the chance to find a way to cook more Japanese food.

And wow, I would really buy this book. Next year. When I have a better kitchen (maybe with an oven?) and the ability to get a part-time job because ingredients are expensive (ever since I started buying meat to cook, my grocery bills have shot up).

But nonetheless, I took a lot of notes. I can't afford a lot of the ingredients (I can't even afford good quality basics!), but I'll probably try substituting my own (cheaper) ingredients inside.

This is a very comprehensive book. I'll actually say that with regards to Japanese farm food, this is probably the only book you'll need for a while if you're a beginner. There is a glossary, and introduction (a very helpful introduction to the ingredients) and lots and lots of recipes. The book is divided into ten chapters, with the first chapter about the Japanese Farmhouse Kitchen and nine chapters about the different foods (like "Pickles and Soups", "Fish and Seafood", "Desserts and Sweets" etc). Each section contains quite a fair bit of recipes.

Even if you're not planning to cook many of the recipes, it's still a lot of fun reading this book. She adds in a lot of her personal experience between the chapters, and before each recipe. It sounds as though she's just sharing her experiences instead of writing a cookbook.

But this book does tend to be starry-eyed about organic farm food. And tradition. This is really good, but not very applicable to a student with only one stove (and only an electric stove at that!). I do all my shopping at the local supermarket and I have only seen one "specialty store" (the tofu shop, although I haven't bought from there yet). Basically, there aren't many recipes that I can carry out from the book. I think this book is more applicable to someone with a well-equipped kitchen and the money (and time) to buy good quality ingredients.

In conclusion, if you want to start cooking seriously, this is the book for you. But if you're looking for food on a budget, you'll still want to read this book, but the recipes may be out of your price range... (unless you live very near a farm).

Disclaimer: I got a free copy of this book from NetGalley in exchange for a free and honest review.

First posted at Inside the mind of a Bibliophile (Book Review Blog) With Love from Japan, Eustacia (my blog on my life in Japan)

Karina says

I don't generally read books about food, but the description of this from some forgotten internet review made it seem like something I'd enjoy--life on a Japanese farm. With food. When I read the review, the author was listed just as Nancy Hachisu, so I thought that the author was at least partially Asian, and not fully

Caucasian; I don't know if this actually makes a difference, but this book is definitely geared towards a Western/mainland US audience, and I couldn't really "see" through the author's eyes. Nor could I get comfortable with her writing style--some of the anecdotes are filled with pointless information that does nothing to help nor entertain, there are overly florid descriptions of things that I believe are meant to romanticize but made me roll my eyes (I couldn't read a story about her husband's pecans--described as "dusky nuts"--without wincing). Still, I am no expert on Japanese food, so I appreciated the glossary and the descriptions given of key Japanese culinary items, although some ingredients were described thoroughly and others seemed dashed off and left me still in the dark as to what it actually is. The book makes a point that ratios are more important than actual measurements, but the recipes are done with actual measurements, not ratios.

I have yet to try any of the recipes but they look interesting and not entirely bog-standard. They may be good enough for me to change this to a better rated book

Felicia says

Purchased this book in 2013. I used this book as a guide to plan my garden; the resource section is great. I do not regularly reference this book as the techniques are easy to incorporate in to your kitchen routine, which I appreciate. The photography and design is excellent!

Angela says

Enjoyed the setting.

liz says

the recipes are excellent. i checked this out to learn some simple vegetable preparations, and i got that in spades. the cucumber and garlic tsukemono recipe made this whole book worthwhile, but the sake steamed broiled salmon was also excellent. the physical book is a very nice object and feels good in the hands. hachisu's commentary is absolutely awful, tho. half the point of her books is to get a feel for life in the japanese countryside, but she's so unrelated that most of her stories are either pointless or mildly insulting. still 4 stars for how much i enjoyed the recipes. just skim or don't read any of the asides or stories.

Stephanie Weaver says

Wow... far more than a cookbook... this is a diary, travelogue, love letter... and a work of art. One of the most beautiful books/cookbooks I have ever seen.

Sharon Flynn says

I loved this book as an escape back to the years I lived out in Takao, Japan. The pictures are honest and the stories and recipes are her voice and very easy to put together. It was one of my favourite books for a while. I'm a fan of Nancy!

Netts says

Though ostensibly a cookbook, it is really more of a lifestyle biography, both interesting and irritating for that very reason. Interesting for the context of an American living an experiment in which she, together with her Japanese husband, aims to revive the waning traditions of a foreign culture. Irritating because her tone often veers into pretension. She judges Japanese people who don't eat local and have forsaken old traditions (fools who have jobs that don't involve just faffing about on a hobby farm), bemoaning their departure from the simple life connected to the land, and then turns around and promotes mail order macrobiotic exotic ingredient purveyors, the irony of getting organic ingredients flown to your table being completely lost on her.

There were points at which I found her insensitivity (mostly cultural, sometimes plain human) really insufferable. She talks about the Tohoku earthquake by describing her own hardships that day which included being cold, having to wait in a line and not being able to get a cab. Luckily the ordeal ended with "a flute of champagne in hand, my iPhone charging, [heaving] a huge sigh of relief". I'm only surprised she didn't wax on about the calloused feet of the good honest wench who squished the biodynamic grapes that made her champagne before remembering that quite a few people died and lost their homes. Ugh...

Recipes are so basic that they serve simply as inspiration to use good seasonal vegetables with more Japanese ingredients. I love to cook and eat that way but it does beg the question whether one needs to write (or read) a cookbook explaining how to toss some veggies in a soy vinaigrette. She helpfully gives ratios for some recipes but watch out because some seem off if you have well functioning taste buds (ex. her miso vinaigrette is twice as acidic as it needs to be, possibly due to my rice vinegar which is shamefully not produced in my own rice fields).

In short, I started off very excited but ended up feeling more browbeaten and exasperated than inspired, which is a shame because the photography is very beautiful and the recipes are simple and accessible (if you ignore the less practical advice about cooking things on charcoal grills and making your own tofu).

Eling says

I really want to give this 3.5 stars. This is a tough one for me to review, because it was SO well received by EVERYONE. And I genuinely thought the photography was gorgeous, the stories were lovely, and that the recipes seem unusual and delicious. However, I really felt that this book was written with a certain reader in mind (foodie/japanophile with decent access to obscure/pricey ingredients), and even though I am pretty much that reader and I appreciated so much of the content, I found myself frustrated by a number of things.

First: the photographs, while lovely, are mostly unlabeled and often not useful to the recipe they appear with. For instance: there might be many beautiful photographs of an ingredient growing on the farm, being harvested by some (unknown) people. But no photographs of the actual recipe in process or what the finished dish is supposed to look like. Also, the personal stories of the author & the farm, while full of interesting

information and really beautiful details, are sometimes a bit condescending in tone and full of name-dropping, assuming knowledge of people who are well-known in certain foodie/slow-food circles. I knew (and respect/am interested in) almost all the names mentioned & still found the references unnecessary and off-putting. And finally, both the free-standing (no recipe attached) personal stories and the little anecdotes at the beginning of each recipe are written in a style I found to be a little jarring. Beginnings/endings/transitions felt a bit unfinished/uncared about, which I found made the reading oddly-paced.

Maybe it was just how I was reading the book; if it was meant to be picked up & flipped to randomly, or only to be index-guided to a recipe that suits your ingredients, then it is perfect. And let me emphasize that the recipes & stories & photography are really quite lovely, and not something I've seen elsewhere. The author's story is clearly an interesting one. I just ended up wishing it was two books; a memoir and then a recipe book. Or at least organized in a way where I felt both parts of the book were more appealing to me. Still a very beautiful book, and one I hope to eventually have the time & resources to cook from.

Pamela says

I found this book to have some interesting recipes, but if your aim is to read all of it, it gets repetitive fast. Besides, it is as pretentious as it gets. If you read a book like this you are likely a local-organic-obscure ingredient fan or are at least used to them. However, phrases like this one try even the most understanding of us: "My gentle hands tossed Suka-san's butter lettuce leaves with a few tendrils of shiso chiffonade as I drizzled in a bit of my Japanese organic rapeseed oil, local Yamaki soy sauce, and organic rice vinegar." Dear god, we are on page 900, we already got you only use organic local heirloom stuff. There is no need to list every ingredient with the organic descriptor first.

Maybe if the book had been shorter I would not have minded this so much, but by the final chapters it was tiresome.

Michelle says

I love the simplicity and clean taste of the recipes in this book. While there are some ingredients that may be difficult to find if you live outside of a major city, those ingredients are mostly produce and so can be replaced with similar vegetables. All the condiments mentioned can be found at most normal well-stocked supermarkets or at your local Asian market (or on Amazon). Once you have the basics (soy sauce, mirin, rice vinegar, konbu and katsuobushi [or dashi powder]) you can make almost anything in the book. The recipes are easy to make and most use very few ingredients. If you're looking for interesting ways to add more vegetables to your diet, this is a great book to try. I'm normally rather unexcited by veggie dishes, but these ones are easy, flavorful, don't overcook the produce, and really remind me of a vacation I took to Tokyo. The photos and stories are also very interesting, there is a handy chart of ways to cook different veggies, and the rundown of Japanese foods that are uncommon in the US is helpful. It's true that not every recipe has a corresponding photo, but many older cookbooks have no photos at all, so I don't have any issue with that. I give it 4 instead of 5 stars because, while the recipes are very good, I haven't been as wowed with them as I am with, say, the recipes in The Splendid Table cookbook, and because, while the charts and glossaries are helpful, they could be better--photos of each of the uncommon food items would be helpful. Also, certain recipes, like for dashi, aren't very specific. When I make dashi, I use the recipe in Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art (a truly 5 star book).

So in summary, if you're looking for a comprehensive book on Japanese cooking (including knife skills, helpful drawings, and tons of recipes), get Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art. If you're looking for simple recipes you really will cook, beautiful photos, and a look inside a Japanese farm, or you're looking to expand your cooking into Japanese food and you want a simple intro, get Japanese Farm Food.

Trang says

At the very beginning, I consider this book is for leisure reading. The book content is not only about Japanese food, but also the Japanese life. If you're looking for a straightforward recipe book, this maybe not the best. On the contrary, the book is on cultural immerse. Read it on a lazy slow day, whether it's rainy or sunny outside, with a cup of your favorite drink and tune in your fav song. The book is a treasure for those who have longed to know about a Japanese countryside lifestyle, besides flashy Tokyo you have always heard of.

Darren says

Wow! Here is one of those books that helps cheer up the sometimes sceptical professional reviewer who sees so many books that are a theme on a theme on a theme on a theme... Beautiful photography, a privileged insight into a still relatively closed culture, many recipes that utilise great ingredients and the chance to attempt to replicate these at home. What more might you want?

Here in this thick book that could double as a sturdy chopping board if it would not be sacrilege, the reader is given a westerner's view into a rural Japanese family farm, its culture, its foods and much more. The author's informal, approachable writing style is intermingled with a plethora of useful facts and background information that really does begin to immerse you with knowledge without trying.

For example, the section describing items found in the typical Japanese pantry is written in a matter-of-fact, clear and open style. No magic or hyperbole necessary and the author's own opinions are cleverly interwoven (guidance is given later on in the book where, in the United States, one might acquire many ingredients). Similar clarity is noticeable when reading about the different tools used in the typical Japanese kitchen. Many books detailing other cultures and cuisines might learn a trick or two here.

Later on, the flood of direct knowledge starts to abate and the actual recipes begin – yet by reading them even if you are not planning to cook each and every one, you will still discover useful things. The recipes are split into several chapters – small bites with drinks; pickles & soups; soybeans & eggs; noodles & rice; vegetables; fish & seafood; meat; dressings & dipping sauces and then desserts & sweets. In all 135 bright, seasonal, traditional, inspirational recipes are provided for your culinary pleasure and production.

What is particularly pleasing to see is just how enthusiastic and proud the author is of her adopted culture (she is, by birth, an American who married a Japanese farmer many years ago). Introductions and explanations to the recipes are not just a few words but more like miniature portraits. Whole information panels just appear, in context, to give even more relevant, contextual background information. The recipes themselves are well laid out, often illustrated, with both English and Japanese titles. The text is carefully written in a 'matter-of-fact' style so you start to think how you had got the impression that Japanese food was complicated. Different ingredients, for sure, at times but often the implementation of the recipe is not necessarily more complex than Western food. On the contrary, quite often.

Whilst it would be a great shame, there is so much good information in this book that you could almost forget the recipes and any plan of making Japanese food and just indulge yourself with the cultural, culinary knowledge on offer.

The rear of the book brings matters to a close, with a great glossary of Japanese produce, tables of ingredients sorted by cooking method, a useful resource guide and a wonderfully detailed index. A concise bibliography is also provided for those who welcome further reading suggestions and based on the overall standard of this book you should be reassured about the quality of the author's reading suggestions. So, a wonderful, open, accessible, informative, knowledgeable book that can really become an 'eye-opener' and a regular kitchen companion.

Japanese Farm Food, written by Nancy Singleton Hachisu and published by Andrews McMeel Publishing. ISBN 9781449418298, 400 pages. Typical price: GBP25. YYYYY.

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Cay says

I'm a huge fan of Asian kitchen -especially love Japanese foods- so when I saw Japanese Farm Food I immediately wanted to check it out. Thanks to Netgalley and Andrews McMeel Publishing I was able to get it as an advanced copy.

I have a great time with this book and even tried out two recipes (Japanese potato salad page, dashi maki tamago) Both were great success and I'll definitely going to make them again.

I don't like recipe books that contain only recipes. I like to know a little about the chef, the author. I also appreciate beautiful photos - I like to see what the dish is going to look like on my plate. Japanese Farm Food has it all: great recipes, with stories and beautiful photos. And a very useful glossary of all the special Japanese ingredients the recipes use. Like miso, nori, natto, mirin, sake, goma and many more.

I'd definitely recommend Japanese Farm Food to anyone who wants to try their hand at cooking traditional Japanese food.

Bossy Acres says

Truly sublime food writing tends to incorporate numerous elements, from practical preparation tips to graceful ingredient description to memories and historical detail. In her sumptuous exploration of Japanese dishes, Nancy Singleton Hachisu expertly blends all of these, creating a memorable collection that will appeal not just to cooks but also to anyone who appreciates a simple, lovingly prepared meal.

The bulk of the book involves recipes, but Hachisu provides much more than a conventional cookbook. Instead, she weaves insights about certain vegetables, fruits, and meats together with small stories about each dish.

In terms of the recipes themselves, there are some ingredients that may require a trip to an Asian grocery, but Hachisu is adept at suggesting alternatives (for example, a cook can substitute cilantro for mitsuba leaves), and best of all, she concentrates mainly on ingredients that are easily obtainable in North America.

-Reviewed by Bossy E
