



Matsumoto “Itadakimasu” Guide



Matsumoto is blessed with food and water nurtured through the four seasons. In this town cradled by mountains such as the Northern Alps, clear water and air help grow flavorful *soba*, fruits and vegetables. Wisdom for enduring harsh winters gave rise to preserved foods. With this guidebook in hand, find the history and experience culture in Matsumoto through its food and water.



Culture City of East Asia 2026 Matsumoto

“Culture City of East Asia” is an international project. One representative city from each of Japan, China, and Korea hosts cultural exchange programs over the course of a year. Matsumoto will be the Japan’s host city for 2026. Under the theme “ARTS & PEACE”, the city will share the charm of community-rooted culture and our aspirations for peace with the world.

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Culture City of East Asia 2026 Matsumoto



Come experience
Matsumoto's land
and culture through
its food!



Point 1. Get to know the natural feature of Matsumoto

Matsumoto lies in a highland basin. Clear air and many sunny days create striking views of mountains, foothills, and blue sky. Living in harmony with the natural environment has nurtured Matsumoto's unique food culture.

Point 2. Get to know the area

Matsumoto Castle and the former Kaichi School are the National treasures of Japan. Historical buildings are scattered throughout town. Traditional Japanese warehouses along Naka-machi Street and townhouses along Nawate Streets maintains atmosphere of the old castle town. Step a little outside and you can enjoy world-class natural environment such as Utsukushigahara Highland and Kamikochi.

Soba noodle



Soba has taken root in Matsumoto because the lean soils and cool climate suited the crop, and pure snowmelt water brings out its aroma. Since making and eating *soba* noodle was established in Edo period, *soba* cooks in Matsumoto have been honing their skills in how quickly they serve excellent *soba* noodle; grind buckwheat, knead *soba* noodle using the flour, and soon after that, boil it. *Soba* is a pride of *Shinshu* (Nagano Prefecture), raised by nature and human ingenuity.



Point 3. Learn the tastes of each season

Spring brings edible wild mountain vegetables. Summer offers watermelon and river trout from clear streams. Autumn is for matsutake mushrooms and apples. Winter is for tōji-soba (hotpot soba noodle). Enjoy local foods closely lined with seasonal events. Ingenuity in utilizing the blessings of mountains and fields has been passed down because Matsumoto is far from the sea. You can also savor regional specialties like Matsumoto Ippon Negi (single-stem green onions) and Inekoki-na vegetables.

Point 4. Savor history and culture through food

Behind Matsumoto's food lies a deep layer of history and culture. Through the local food, you can learn the history, climate, customs, traditional festivals, wisdom handed down through generations, and livelihoods that make use of the natural environment in Matsumoto.

Four steps to deeply enjoy Soba

There's so much more to enjoy
soba noodles than just slurping.
These four simple steps reveal
its deeper charms- an elegant,
insider's way to savor this beloved dish.



1. Firstly, eat *soba* noodle without dipping in the sauce to enjoy the pure flavor of the *soba*.

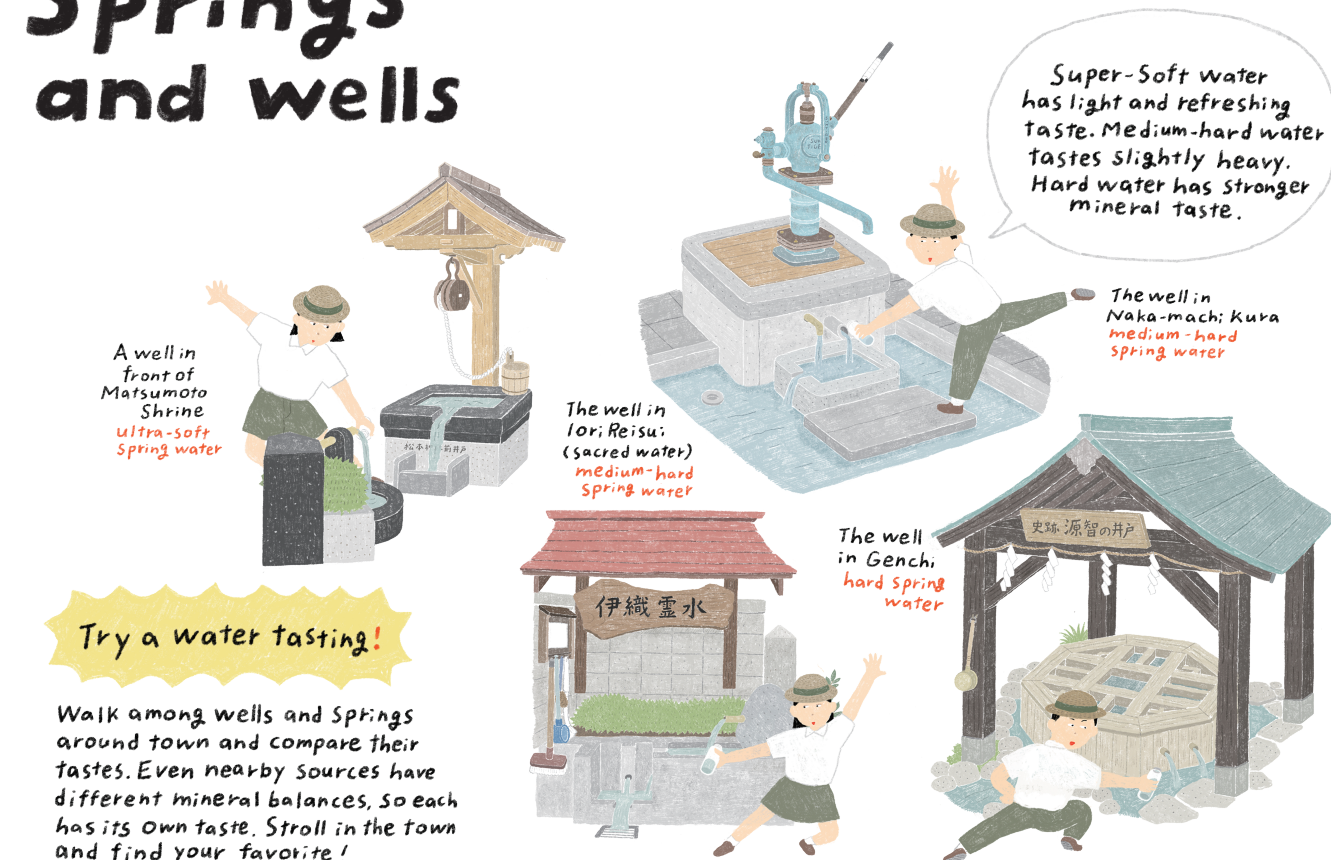


2. Put some condiments on *soba* noodle, dip them lightly into the sauce, and then eat.

3. Slurp the noodle with a pleasant “zuzu” sound. If the dipping sauce runs low, add a little more.

4. After finishing *soba*, if you like, pour some hot *soba-yu* (hot water in which *soba* noodle was boiled) into the remaining sauce and enjoy it.

Springs and wells



Do you know that you can drink natural spring water right in downtown Matsumoto? Snowmelt and rain that fall on the mountains surrounding the Matsumoto Basin slowly seep underground over many years, become subterranean water and then, spring up in various places across the basin. When you walk around the city, you will come across small wells and springs. The water is clear and cold. Its temperature is almost unchanged throughout the year. These springs appear in many locations, for example, beside stone walls or old

Japanese-style storehouses, or are installed at street corners with a wooden bucket nearby. Long ago, the springs and wells served as essential household water for cooking and preparation for restaurants, and were also social meeting places for neighbors. Even today, locals come to fill their water bottles and travelers quench their thirst. Exploring these springs is a way to experience daily life in this town. With just a sip of clear water, you can feel the deep connection between nature's blessings and the lives of the people who live here.

Miso



It is said that the origin of *Shinshu miso* dates back about 770 years when Kaku shin, a monk from Matsumoto, learned the method of making fermented black beans in China and brought the technique back to Japan. *Shinshu miso* is a rice-based miso made from rice *koji* and soybeans, known for its light and pleasantly sharp flavor. The pure local water gives it a rich aroma and a deep, rounded taste. In Matsumoto, some miso breweries still preserve a *miso-dama zukuri*, a traditional method of forming miso into balls for fermentation. *Miso* pairs well with vegetables and meat, and also harmonizes beautifully with other fermented foods such as cheese and butter. Some *miso* breweries offer tours and hands-on experiences, allowing visitors to feel the tradition up close.

Miso culture in East Asia

The food culture of miso, a fermented food, has taken roots in Japan, Korea and China!



Miso in Korea
The most common type is *doenjang* (fermented soybean paste) used for soups, stir-fries and stews. Deep umami is drawn out when simmered.

Miso in China
Made not only from soybeans but also wheat, broad beans, chili peppers and more. Deep umami and flavor of Chinese miso are drawn out when stir-fried.

Japanese Sake



Sake from Matsumoto is made from abundant, crystal-clear water and high-quality rice. The cool climate at elevation of around 600 meters helps a clean and refined fermentation, and thus gives crisp and refreshing flavor. While some of *sake* breweries in the city have long history, some of them were recently established by young chief brewers. *Sake* brewed by each of them has its unique character. Soft water used by most of breweries gives their *sake* a gentle aroma and a smooth taste. These *sake* match food beautifully. Some breweries use natural wind caves in Azumi district to slowly mature their *sake* at low temperatures and to produce exceptionally mellow and rounded flavor.

Pickles



Pickles in Matsumoto originally developed as preserved foods to help people get through the long, harsh winter. The rich produce grown in the Matsumoto Plain, such as *Hodaira* turnips, *Bandokoro* cucumbers and the local *Kireba daikon*, has long been used to make a wide variety of traditional pickles. Matsumoto *Shiro-uri* (white melon) and *Inekoki-na* pickles also offer flavors unique to this region. These pickles are lightly salted and known for the deep umami and aroma created through lactic fermentation. They are an essential part of the local food in Matsumoto.

Legend
 ... A festival praying for Gokoku Hojo, abundant harvests
 ... Matsumoto City Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property



< Spring at Mount Kōbō > Mount Kōbō, an ancient burial mound, with about 4,000 cherry trees, is entirely tinted pink in spring. Enjoy sweeping view of the Matsumoto Basin and Japan Alps from its summit.



Susuki Shrine's "Ofune Festival"
 Held every year on May 5. Nice splendidly decorated boats - designated a cultural treasure of Nagano - are carried along the shrine approach in a powerful procession.



Craft Fair Matsumoto in every May
 Japan's first outdoor craft exhibition, begun in 1985. At Agatanomori Park, handmade work, food, and creative content from all over Japan are showcased.



Hard cider Wine



Otecca, a local food
 A local dish of seasonal eggplant stir-fried with sweet miso glaze



Hadaka Matsuri (naked festival) in Horigome, Shimadachi
 Every July, boys wearing only loincloths used to visit Tsushima Shrine to pray for abundant harvests and other blessings. Today, children are wearing regular clothing to attend the festival.



< Utsukushigahara Highland in summer > At this 2,000-meter-high plateau, cool breeze blows and a field of wildflowers are blooming in summer. Grazing cattle and blue sky create a refreshing highland scene.



Nomugi Pass Festival
 Held every May. A memorial event honoring the young girls who once crossed the mountain pass to work.



Buri (Yellowtail) Road
 The route over the Nomugi Pass was called "Buri Road" because salted yellowtail was once transported from Gifu Prefecture.



Torii Fire on Shimauchi
 A Shinto ritual held annually for three days, from April 14 to 16. Participants carry torches and light a fire shaped like a torii gate on Torii Mountain.



Entomophagy
 Insects have been an important protein source and a traditional practice in Matsumoto.



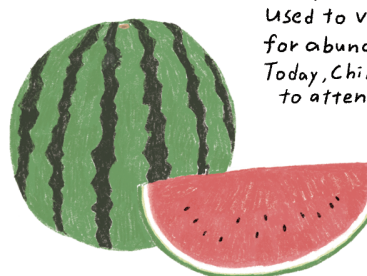
Honey



Iwana (char)
 River fish raised in the clear streams and cold spring water of the Northern Alps.



Wasabi
 Matsumoto is known for its wasabi pickles. In neighboring Azumino, the Daio Wasabi Farm is a popular tourist attraction.



Watermelons in Hata district
 Hata district is famous for watermelons - large, juicy, and wonderfully sweet!



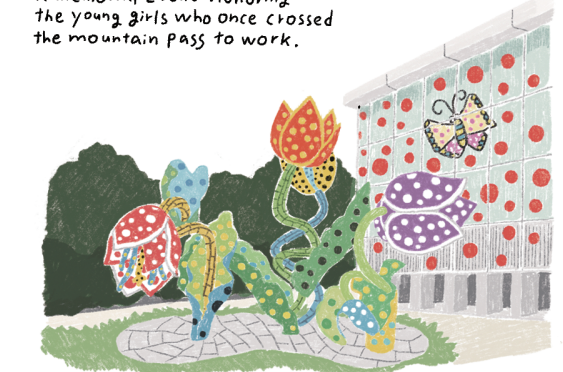
Norikura Hill Climb Bicycle Race



Susukigawa Fireworks Festival

Spring

Summer



Matsumoto City Museum of Art
 At the museum entrance, you are greeted by Yayoi Kusama's striking large-scale sculpture "Phantom Flower."



Mountain-Opening Festival in Kamikochi



Miso bread is often offered at local events.
 Miso bread
 A simple, nostalgic sweet roll cherished in Matsumoto, where miso culture runs deep.



Sanzoku-yaki (Matsumoto-style) fried chicken
 Large pieces of deep fried chicken breast thigh originating in Matsumoto.

4 April 5 May 6 June 7 July

Matsumoto Itadakimasu Calendar



Hana-mame (Flower Beans)
 A rare type of bean that grows only in cool, high-altitude regions.



Tanabata Festival
 A unique summer tradition in which Tanabata dolls are displayed along shopping streets and under the eaves of old houses. People offer vegetables and hontou noodles as prayers for abundant harvests. Those foods are even served in school lunches.



Matsumoto Bon-Bon
 Every August, people in Matsumoto dance in town. It is one of Nagano's largest community festivals. It is said to have started from the "neri-aruki" (a parade in a festival) in the Edo period.



Craft Beer Festival in Matsumoto



Matsutake mushrooms
 Shiga district is well-known for producing matsutake mushroom, which is a symbol of autumn in Japan!

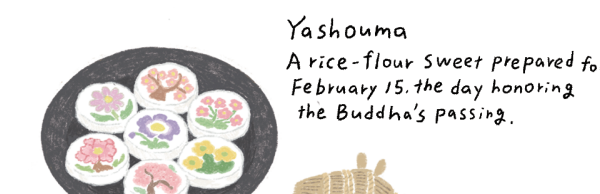


Asama Onsen Torch Festival
 Held in every October to pray for peace in daily life and abundant harvests. With powerful sound of taiko drums, participants parade through flames and smoke of giant torches, creating a grand spectacle.



Seiji Ozawa Matsumoto Festival

Grapes of the Matsumoto Basin
 Thanks to well-drained soil and many crisp, sunny days, this region produces exceptional grapes.



Yashouma
 A rice-flour sweet prepared for February 15, the day honoring the Buddha's passing.



Wild vegetables
 Surrounded by mountains on all sides, Matsumoto is a treasure trove of wild vegetables!



Candy in Matsumoto
 Matsumoto has long been known for candy-making, with some shops operating for more than 300 years. In January, candy is sold at Matsumoto Candy Market.



Onbashira (sacred pillars) Festival
 Decorated poles are erected around Dosojin, roadside guardian deities to pray for abundant harvests as a new year's event.

1 January 2 February 3 March 9 September 10 October 11 November 12 December

Winter

Autumn



Sankuro Festival in January New Year
 A traditional event where New Year decorations and daruma dolls are burned to pray for health and safety. Eating mayudama, rice treats, is said to prevent colds.



< Matsumoto Castle in winter > In winter, the striking contrast of white snow, black castle towers and clear blue sky are beautiful. Enjoy the illuminated castle in the long winter nights as well.



Salted yellowtail zoni (rice cake soup)
 Zoni (rice cake soup) with salted yellowtail is a traditional New Year's dish in Matsumoto.



Tōji Soba
 A local specialty from Nagawa, a soba-producing region. Dip soba noodle in a bamboo basket briefly into soup filled with vegetables and mushrooms, and enjoy it while it's hot.



Horse Meat
 Has long been a part of Nagano's food culture. Many restaurants in Matsumoto serve it.



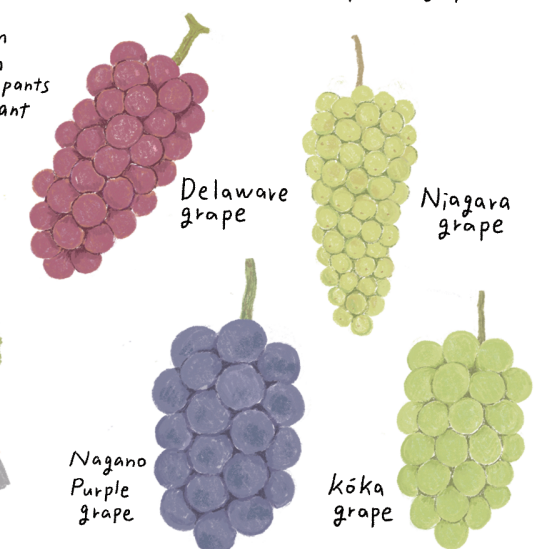
Matsumoto Ippon Negi (single-stem green onions)
 This traditional vegetable is thick, gently sweet and charmingly curved.



Shinano Gold Shinano Sweet Sun Tsugaru Sun Fuji Akibae
 Nagano Prefecture is a major apple producer. A large temperature swing in Matsumoto brings out rich flavor and sweetness.



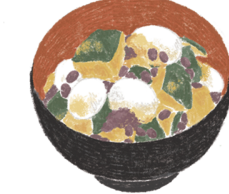
Ringo (apple) Music Festival



Delaware grape Niagara grape Nagano Purple grape kōka grape



< Autumn at Kappa Bridge > In autumn, you can see Hotaka Mountain Range with vibrant autumn foliage from Kappa Bridge, the icon of Kamikochi. The flow of the Azusa River is beautiful. Trees turning red sway gently in the autumn breeze.



Pumpkin dumplings
 A sweet simmered dish traditionally eaten on the winter solstice to help prevent colds.



Nozawa-na (Pickled Leaf Greens)



Hot Springs

Shira-hone, Asama, Norikura, Utsukushigahara - Matsumoto has many famous hot springs.



Ice Sculpture Festival (January)



Kamikochi Mountain-Closing Festival (November 15)