



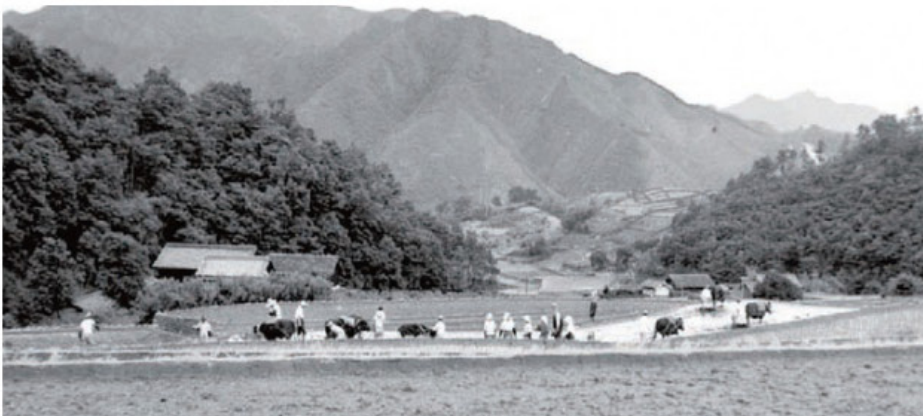
## ◆ Five things you should know about Matsusaka beef

1. Matsusaka beef ranks as one of Japan's top three luxury beefs (alongside Kobe and Omi beef).
2. Due to the fat's low melting point, Matsusaka beef has a superb "melt in your mouth" quality.
3. All Matsusaka cattle are carefully fattened virgin females of the Japanese Black breed. (Male Matsusaka cattle do not exist.)
4. Matsusaka beef offal (organ meat) is a local delicacy that is rarely available outside of Matsusaka.
5. It is the highest valued beef in Japan. A single cow sold for a record-setting 50 million yen in 2002.

## ◆ History

Japanese had long used cattle for their labor, but it was only following the Meiji Restoration in 1868, in which Japan started importing Western ideas, that they started eating beef. Cattle would be retired and fattened after providing 3-4 years of farm work. Even back then, Matsusaka beef received high praise and had established itself as a reputable brand. Every two months, farmers would take over one hundred cattle to the market by walking them all the way to Tokyo because there was no railway at that time. To protect the cows' feet from injury, they were made to wear handmade straw sandals for the laborious three-week march.

After machines largely replaced animal labor in the 1950s, farmers began raising cattle specifically for their meat. Matsusaka beef farmers continue the tradition of tenderly rearing their cows to produce luxury beef.



### ◆How Matsusaka cattle are raised

Matsusaka beef farmers take special care in raising their animals in order to create a superior product. Farmers formulate a mix of straw and grains for each cow according to their health condition. Cattle are fattened gradually in a low-stress environment. Their hooves are trimmed and their coats are brushed. Some farmers play music for their cows and talk to them as if they were family members. Others even feed cows beer to stimulate their appetite, and massage them with the Japanese spirit shochu to improve their blood flow.



### ◆Quality

Matsusaka cattle produce a top-tier beef that is regarded as one of the three best in Japan, along with Kobe and Omi beef. Throughout the red meat is a fine marbling of fat, whose low melting point lends to a divine "melt in your mouth" quality. This also means the meat is tender and easily cut by chopsticks. Matsusaka beef also gives off a sweet scent when heated. The traditional beef dish in Matsusaka is sukiyaki, but Matsusaka beef also makes an exquisite steak, shabu-shabu, yakiniku, sushi, and more.

### ◆Certification of Matsusaka Cattle

A management system ensures the quality and authenticity of Matsusaka beef. Matsusaka cattle are registered in the Matsusaka beef online database using a 10-digit number unique to each animal: A certificate with an ink noseprint and information such as the cow's date of birth, pedigree, and the place it was raised are all recorded in the system under this number. Customers buying Matsusaka beef can check these details by looking up the animal's ID number displayed at restaurants. Stickers displaying it are also attached to Matsusaka beef sold at supermarkets, butchers, and souvenir shops.

Visit this link to search an ID number!

Matsusaka Beef Certificate



Matsusaka Beef Label



## ◆Matsusaka Beef Festival

Every year in November since 1949, beef farmers bring their finest animals to be judged and auctioned off to various butchers, restaurants, and retailers. The winning cow in 2002 fetched a record 50 million yen (about \$400,000). The auction itself is private, but visitors can see the fifty cow contestants and the champion crowned "Queen of Matsusaka Cattle." (Visitors from abroad cannot get very close to or touch cows due to epidemic prevention.)

Visitors are also welcome to a free sample of sukiyaki and free mochi (rice cakes) thrown to the crowd. Various booths sell barbeque and other foods.



## ◆Matsusaka beef offal

Don't miss the chance to try Matsusaka beef offal (organ meats) when you visit Matsusaka. Very few restaurants outside of the city serve Matsusaka beef offal because the distribution channels for meat and offal are different. This is authentic cuisine you'll have a hard time finding anywhere else!



## ◆Various cuisine

### Sukiyaki

There is an eastern and western style of sukiyaki in Japan. In the east beef and vegetables are simmered together in a shallow pot of stock, sugar, soy sauce and sweet sake. Sukiyaki in Matsusaka is made in the western style, where the meat is cooked first in soy sauce and sugar, then dipped in raw egg and eaten.

After the meat is cooked, the vegetables are cooked in the leftover meat juices. (It is still very delicious even if you skip the raw egg.)



## Yakiniku

You can sample various cuts of meat at a yakiniku restaurant. If you can eat organ meats, we recommend ordering some Matsusaka beef offal (called horumon). Depending on the store or type of meat, the meat may be served with sauce already applied. If you want to enjoy the flavor of the meat on its own, ask for the sauce "on the side" (Tare wa betsu de).



## Steak

Steak allows you to enjoy the natural flavor of beef. The beautifully marbled Matsusaka beef steak is surprisingly tender. Be sure to tell the cook how done you want your steak.



## Shabu-shabu

Thinly-sliced shabu-shabu is a healthy choice. First, enjoy the sight of marbled beef artfully arranged on the plate. Then, take one slice at a time submerge it in the boiling water, stirring it until you see the color change: remove it when there's just a tiny bit of pink left.

## Bento, snack and small dishes

Matsusaka beef is a top-class meat, but it can be enjoyed affordably. We recommend buying a beef bento and eating it at the Matsusaka Castle Ruins park while you enjoy the scenery. A hot and fresh beef-and-potato croquette is also exceptional. There are a lot of restaurants and shops which serve Matsusaka beef dishes in Matsusaka, and you can enjoy a variety of cooking ways.

