

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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Japanese Men Step into the Kitchen

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Report Highlights:

Japanese consumers are finding more and more reasons to stay in and cook at home and the number of Japanese men who are actively engaged in the kitchen seems to be on the rise. Japanese men are stepping into the kitchen for a variety of reasons including adopting cooking as a hobby after retirement and using cooking classes and their new cooking skills to meet women.

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Japanese consumers are finding more and more reasons to stay in and cook at home and the number of Japanese men who are actively engaged in the kitchen seems to be on the rise. Japanese men are stepping into the kitchen for a variety of reasons including adopting cooking as a hobby after retirement and using cooking classes and their new cooking skills to meet women.

Cooking Becomes the New Retirement Hobby

While a majority of their time was spent at work, many men are finding that when they retire they have nothing to do with their newly acquired freedom. Their wives, if they are married, already have established social circles and activities, whereas men may have to redefine their social group now that they are no longer working. Many men are finding that one of the ways to do this is to join a cooking class. These classes for seniors are promoted on the basis of health, using the idea of learning to cook and engage their mind and hands. The added benefit is that these men are out of the house and that they will have new skills in the kitchen to show off to their wives or friends. The schools also suggest that the couple takes the class together for an enjoyable, beneficial activity.

Cooking as a New Dating Technique

Japanese bachelors, both young and old, have also increased their presence in cooking clubs and classes. In the past, many cooking schools did not allow men to attend and now that that restriction has been lifted, male membership has continuously grown. These schools have even created specialized classes for bachelors, whether it be learning to cook simple meals for themselves at home or looking to impress their female counterparts with their culinary skills. The trend apparently took off after SMAPxSMAP, a variety show hosted by the mega stars of musical group SMAP, did a segment in which SMAP members made and presented dishes to guests. This aided in making male proficiency in the kitchen sexy. Other men claim motives such as using the class to actually find dates through partner work; claiming they already know that they have at least one thing in common, which makes the classroom an ideal place to break the ice and get to know single women around the same age.

Conclusion

Overall, it would appear that men are taking a more active role in the kitchen and enjoying it. Even though most of the younger men (20's and 30's) say that they never saw their fathers in the kitchen, they feel that it has become an important skill to have in a relationship and in life. The older men as well seem to be responding positively to the activity of cooking class/cooking at home and enjoy the new skill set. As men begin to take more interest in cooking, marketing to this new demographic may become more and more important. While women have always been the main target of food marketing efforts, this will change as men step into the apron and take a bigger role.

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