

## **Key Points for Japanese Food's Spread in Thailand**

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Over the past 40 years, Japanese food has been enjoyed by a lot of people all over the world. It is often called “wasyoku” and is famous for its artistic beauty and arrangement. Since the economy has started growing in Japan, it was became more and more popular and many Japanese food restaurants have opened around the world. They are relatively more expensive than local food and this is putting a brake on the spread of them. \*\* Japanese food has the disadvantage of being difficult for foreign people to be in close contact with it easily because of having the image that it's a luxury food, following the example of Thailand, a country where Japanese food is so popular that there is a large company that deals in Japanese food, it is possible to make Japanese food more widespread in daily meals of foreign countries. \*\*

In Thailand, the number of Japanese food restaurants has increased by about 2000 a year.

From 2013, the Japanese government exempted Thai people from the temporary visitor visa, which caused an increase of Thai people visiting Japan. Due to this, Japanese restaurants have and continue to spread in Thailand. According to JETRO research (2019), the number of Japanese restaurants in Thailand is 3637 stores, that's an increase of 21% from the previous year. Thailand's capital city, Bangkok has 1993 stores, up from 1718 stores the previous year. Even suburbs have 1644 stores, up a lot from 1286 stores. Bangkok ranks first in terms of the

number of stores, the next highest is Chonburi Province, but this is due to a lot of Japanese people living there the top 3 and 4 spots are, Nonthaburi Province, a suburb of Bangkok and Chiang Mai Province which is a northern tourist site. There are only two provinces where there are no Japanese restaurants, Nong Bua Lamphu Province and Yasothon Province, the other seventy-five provinces have them (p.7). The types of management are various, for example, there are corporate management and a private management. The restaurant menus are diverse; many styles of Japanese food are provided depending on the restaurants.

In Thailand, Japanese food has an atmosphere of not “Traditional Japan” but “Modern Japan”. According to Mr. Toyoshima, most restaurants of Japanese companies open with completely same interior decoration and the atmosphere as stores in Japan. The image that Japanese food is healthy had spread broadly years before and now some companies have used this idea for their advertisements. However, in modern Thailand, the younger Thai generation go to Japanese restaurants not only to eat, but also to feel atmosphere of modern Japanese culture (2019). They enjoy Japanese culture through eating meals that are the same as the Japanese culture they have watched in Japanese TV dramas. There is a big effect of Japanese pop culture on Thai Japanese food market. Recently, Japanese pop culture like anime, manga and TV drama is popular around the world as well as in Thailand. Thai Japanese food market was among the first to set their eyes on them and was able to gain a large popularity from the general public. Now, on the side of the ease to be accepted into Thai people’ daily

meals, there is a one more key point.

Thailand has a big company "OISHI" (Puangkanok 2001, December 13), which manages Japanese restaurants and sells Japanese food products, the founder is a Thai businessman and the head office is located in Thailand (Mary, 2020). It's not a Japanese-owned company. In 1999, the company opened its first Japanese food restaurant, and in 2004, launched green tea's market, which had never existed in Thailand until then (Wikipedia, 2021). These days, Japanese fast foods like ramen and beef bowl also have been popular products of OISHI (OISHI group website). OISHI group's products are sold in not only Thailand but also many countries. OISHI group has gotten a lot of popularity and been able to make Thai people accepted the products because of the group's policy to provide "seasoning which suits Thai people" rather than "seasoning which suits Japanese people" not to mention prices which suit Thai economy (Toyoshima, 2019, p. 6). OISHI's target audience are Thai teenagers and the group offers localized Japanese foods with OISHI's original eating out styles of all-you-can-eat, a packaged style and a delivery style. The group captured the hearts of Thai young people using Japanese foods which are localized for Thai seasoning but still remain stylistically of Japanese food.

In foreign countries, Japanese food often are treated as if it were a luxury food and some foreign people feel the difficulty to be in close contact with Japanese food easily. This situation prevents Japanese food's spread to be a daily meal of foreign people. The Japanese foods of these days do not necessarily have

a characteristic to be healthy because these diversified in comparison from the old days. From the information presented in this paper, it was uncovered that Thailand has some key points for Japanese food's spread. The key points are that setting eyes on Japanese pop culture and Localizing according to the taste of foreigners while retaining the goodness of Japanese food. The research about characteristic of some Japanese food's restaurants shows that an atmosphere of modern Japanese culture is popular for younger generations. In addition, the big Japanese food company shows that providing Japanese food by using the foreign country's own style is a good way to getting across Japanese food to foreign people. Through doing these may be possible to make foreign people's daily meal accepted Japanese food.

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