



# OBENTO

## a tasty tradition

It's lunchtime at school and you're heading for the canteen, but what will you have to eat? Will you have a sandwich and an apple, or maybe a hot meal? Things are a little different in Japan.

Children open their lunchboxes to find rice shaped like footballs, eggs that look like rabbits or flower-shaped carrots all packed up in an obento!

An obento, or bento, is one of the oldest food traditions in Japan. Basically, it is lunch served in a box. Obento boxes have been part of the Japanese society since the 5th century when people used to take a packed lunch with them to work. Bentos have become very popular since then and you can buy them almost anywhere nowadays at theatres, airports and even at train stations.

An obento usually consists of four parts rice, three parts meat or fish (fried or grilled), two parts vegetables (pickled, boiled or steamed) and one part fruit. It should be **nourishing** and healthy, but it must be **appealing** too. You often see food shaped like flowers, animals and sometimes even cartoon characters! Mothers **take great pride** in creating 'school-bentos' for their children.

Nursery schools have established regulations for an obento. Food should be easy to eat with chopsticks or the fingers, portions should be small and it should be pleasing to the eye. It should also include food that the child would not normally eat so that they won't become a **fussy eater**.

The Japanese have always looked upon the mother as one of the main influences of a child's success. Taking time to prepare their children's food shows their love for them.

And what happens if a Japanese mum runs out of ideas? There are almost 400 magazines available to get inspired.

**1. What is the text mainly about?**

- A. The history of Japanese cuisine
- B. The popularity of obento boxes in Japan
- C. The different types of food in Japan
- D. The importance of mothers in Japanese culture

**2. What is an obento?**

- A. A type of sandwich
- B. A hot meal
- C. A lunchbox
- D. A type of fruit

**3. When did obento boxes become popular in Japan?**

- A. In the 5th century
- B. In the 20th century
- C. In the 21st century
- D. They have always been popular

**4. What are the four parts of an obento?**

- A. Rice, meat, vegetables, and fruit
- B. Rice, fish, vegetables, and fruit
- C. Bread, meat, vegetables, and fruit
- D. Bread, fish, vegetables, and fruit

**5. What is the purpose of shaping food like flowers or animals in an obento?**

- A. To make it more appealing
- B. To make it easier to eat
- C. To make it more nutritious
- D. To make it more expensive

**6. What is the significance of mothers in Japanese culture?**

- A. They are the main influences on a child's success
- B. They are responsible for preparing all meals
- C. They are not important in Japanese culture
- D. They are only important for their cooking skills

**7. Why do nursery schools have regulations for obento?**

- A. To make sure the food is healthy
- B. To make sure the food is easy to eat
- C. To make sure the food is visually appealing
- D. All of the above

**8. What happens if a Japanese mother runs out of ideas for obento?**

- A. She can buy pre-made obento boxes
- B. She can ask her children what they want
- C. She can make a sandwich instead
- D. She can read one of the 400 available magazines for inspiration

**9. What is the purpose of including food that the child would not normally eat in an obento?**

- A. To make the child try new foods
- B. To make the child eat less
- C. To make the child more picky
- D. To make the child gain weight

**10. Where can you buy obento boxes in Japan?**

- A. Only at school cafeterias
- B. Only at restaurants
- C. Almost anywhere, including theatres, airports, and train stations
- D. Nowhere, they can only be made at home.