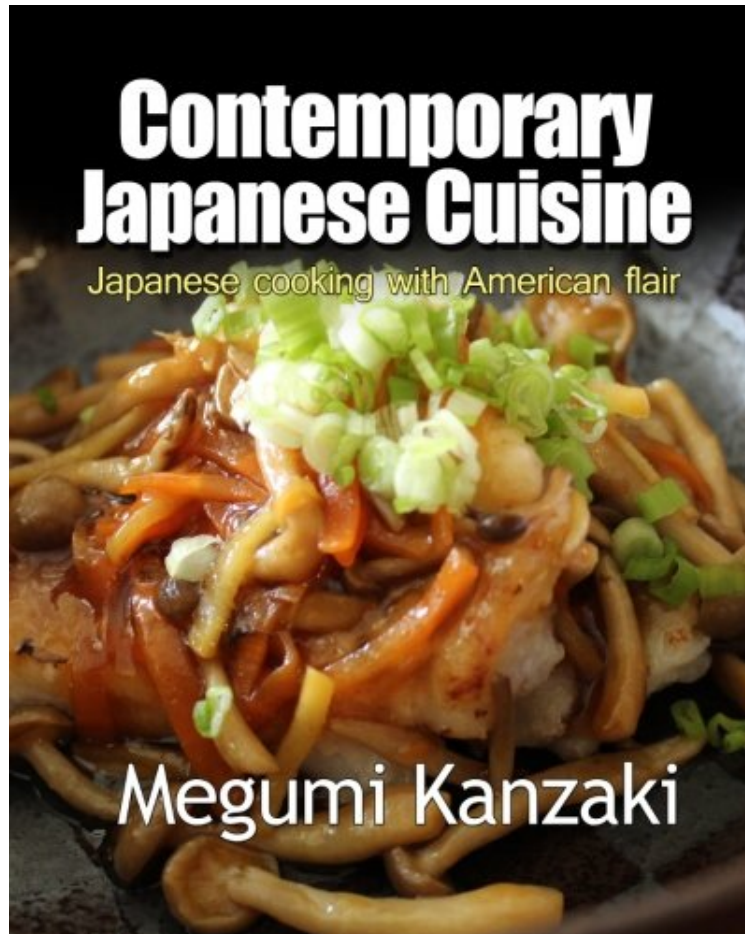


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## Contemporary Japanese cuisine: Easy Japanese food with American flair

*Megumi Kanzaki*

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My recipes are inspired by the food that I grew up with in Japan. I was raised in a small town in southern Japan on the island of Kyushu, where farmers grew their own rice and vegetables, and made their own soba noodles and miso. My mother bought fresh fish from her favorite seafood store and meat from a butcher. She used vegetables that she or our

neighbors grew, so I grew up eating fresh vegetables and fruits in season. I remember not how people used to talk about how expensive cantaloupes were in Japan (they still are) and how only the rich could afford to eat them. But we always had them in our fridge because we had neighbors who grew cantaloupes and gave us lots of them when they had little tiny scratches; the farmers used to say that those tasted better than the ones that they took to the market to sell. However, I didn't really appreciate the quality of the food that we ate until I spent a week when I was sixteen visiting my uncle in the city of Osaka. After my trip, I realized for the first time in my life that fresh vegetables and homemade miso tasted so much better than the store-bought kind. Since then I learned that there are many vegetables and meats in my hometown that are ranked among the best in Japan, such as napa cabbage, daikon, satsuma imo (sweet potato) and eel. I have been living in the United States over 20 years, and I go back to Japan twice a year. My mother always asks me what I want to eat—what she means is which restaurant I want to go to. But I always say I want her potato salad, her daikon and fish stew, and her vegetable tempura. When you have fresh and delicious food, you don't have to season that much—just add a few ingredients to bring up the flavor, that is all you want, and you will have a delicious meal. These recipes offer contemporary Japanese cuisine with an American flair so that people can enjoy cooking with and eating the ingredients that they are familiar with. I hope that you will enjoy these recipes and find them easy and useful.