

Cooking a Meal for Your Host Family

Part of sharing culture with your Japanese hosts is cooking for them. You don't have to cook the entire meal, but you can. If you cook a main dish, your host mother will add other items to the meal.

If you are not sure what to cook, think about your favorite foods or foods that are traditional to your family or region. Unfortunately, no wild game meats can be taken to Japan. Commercially-canned or dried fish and smoked salmon are fine, as are commercially-packed jams and jellies.

Please practice cooking the meal before you leave home. This will make sure that your recipe is correct and you know what to do, and that you have packed all the food ingredients which are allowable through customs. Write the recipe and food list in your journal.

In Japan, you will ask your host mother when you can cook for the family and when she can take you shopping for any meats, fruits or vegetables that you need. Please try to cook the first week you are in Japan. Don't wait until the end of the exchange.

Keep in mind that many Japanese homes do not have large ovens. Their oven may be toaster-oven sized and only hold something the size of a 9x9 inch pan.

If possible, come to Japan prepared to cook more than one thing, so that you can cook for your family more than once. For example, maybe you will make grilled-cheese sandwiches and canned soup or macaroni and cheese for a lunch, tacos for a dinner, rice-krispie treats or microwave S'mores for a dessert, pancakes for a breakfast and smoked-salmon dip and crackers for a snack.