

# *Okinawan Health Secrets Revealed*

HEALTH SECRETS FROM THE LAND OF IMMORTALS



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## Introduction

“You are what you eat” may seem like an all-too-familiar reminder to eat healthy in order to be healthy. And like most people, you’ve probably heard or read about this many times before.

But knowing is different from doing, and unfortunately a lot of people don’t take this advice seriously.

In the United States, an unhealthy diet is still one of the leading causes of death, contributing to more than 670,000 deaths per year, according to a [study](#) published in the Journal of the American Medical Association (JAMA).

Poor eating habits along with a sedentary lifestyle increase the risk not only of obesity but also of serious and potentially fatal diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, high blood pressure, and even certain kinds of cancer.

And alarmingly, in the last three decades, obesity rates have steadily increased for children, adolescents and adults, reports the [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#).

As worrisome as these numbers are, it is not surprising if you take a look at what Americans consume on a daily basis.

A typical American diet is loaded with fat, sodium, calories and artificial sugars. On top of this, most Americans don’t eat enough fruits, vegetables, fiber and whole grains, which has already been identified as one of the main drivers behind the high mortality rate in this part of the world.

Now if you want to live a full, happy and healthy life, don’t take these facts and figures lightly.

Instead treat them as a wake-up call and start making small but significant changes in your diet. As you’ll soon discover, turning over a healthier leaf will definitely benefit you as well as your family in the long run.

You can take your cue from the inhabitants of Japan’s southernmost point, Okinawa, where the longest lifespan has been recorded. The island is also said to be home to the world’s longest living people, with residents normally reaching the age of 100!

In the United States and many other countries, people often only get to live up to their 60s to 80s. So how do the Okinawans do it?

You don't have to pack your bags and move to Japan just to find out their secret to living a long life. The good news is you can learn about and adopt the Okinawan lifestyle from where you are right now.

All you need to get started is this practical guide.

This guide will walk you through the remarkable and inspiring lifestyle of the Okinawans. We'll discuss not only their diet but also their way of living. In addition, we'll tackle some of their ancient traditional remedies that work effectively up to this day.

Once you've mastered all these, you should be well along your journey to a healthier, happier and more fulfilled you.

## Chapter 1 – Getting to Know the Okinawan Lifestyle

### An Overview of the Okinawan Lifestyle

Also known as the Nansei Islands, the Ryukyu Islands is a chain of islands in the southwestern part of Japan. The largest of these is Okinawa. Many people have heard about World War II's [Battle of Okinawa](#), one of bloodiest battles recorded in history.

But this is not the only thing that Okinawa is known for.

The island's other claim to fame is the fact that most of its residents live very long lives. In the United States, the average life expectancy is 78.8 years, according to the [CDC](#). But in Japan, most people live up to 84 years, with the average lifespan even longer in Okinawa. Here the number of people who live up to 100 years is five times more than in any other part of the country.

This astonishing phenomenon has prompted many researchers to study the Okinawans' way of living. What they've learned is that the Okinawans' long lifespan is strongly linked to their lifestyle, attitude and eating habits.

Not only do Okinawans live longer, they also lead better and healthier lives. In a [study](#) conducted in the University of the Ryukyus, it was reported that the prevalence of dementia among Okinawans is only 6.7 percent.

Other bodies of research support this discovery, showing that the elderly adults in Okinawa have significantly lower rates of dementia and other aging-related memory problems than those in Western countries.

That's not all. Their risk for heart disease is also 80 percent lower than it is for Americans. Okinawans are also less prone to bone fractures. Interestingly, a few of Okinawa's centenarian residents still engage in sexual intercourse without the need for any intervention.

Chances are these findings gave rise to the term "Okinawan lifestyle," which simply refers to the way of living of the residents of Okinawa Island, encompassing nutritional diet, physical activity, stress management, and overall attitude and perspective on life.

This is what we're going to cover as we delve deeper into the subject. But before we learn how we can practice the Okinawan lifestyle, let's take a look first at how it helps increase one's lifespan and promote healthy aging.



## Okinawan Lifestyle Linked to Longevity and Healthy Aging

It was in the 1970s when the remarkable lifespan of Okinawans captured the attention of the international science and medical community.

It was discovered that Okinawans not only looked younger but were also highly energetic. Plus, they were less susceptible to heart disease and other ailments, even stomach cancer, a disease prevalent in mainland Japan.

And so in 1975, a group of researchers led by Dr. Suzuki started the [Okinawa Centenarian Study](#), an extensive research on the centenarian and elderly residents of Okinawa.

The primary goal of the study was to identify and investigate the genetic and lifestyle factors that contribute to the longevity and healthy-aging processes of the people living in the island.

In order to do this, researchers had to conduct careful validation of the residents' ages as well as perform full geriatric examination, which included a physical exam and an analysis of the person's daily activities.

Findings from the research, which involved more than 900 Okinawan centenarians and selected elderly members, provided solid evidence that their way of living and long lifespan are indeed directly connected.

It was also confirmed that apart from lifestyle, genetics played a role in the Okinawans' long life and healthy aging.

Here are the key findings of the Okinawan Centenarian Study that would be of interest to those thinking about adopting this way of living.

### **Genetics**

One of the main priorities of the Okinawan Centenarian Study was to identify the factors contributing to the Okinawans' healthy and disability-free aging. Two studies that provided useful information were the [HapMap Project](#) and the [Human Genome Project](#).

According to these studies, about one-third of the human lifespan may be due to genetic factors. [Phenotypes](#), which are believed to have significant genetic basis, can possibly slow down the process of aging and increase the survival rate for people who are over 90 years old.

It was also discovered that the [apolipoprotein E \(ApoE\) gene](#) plays a role in human life longevity. The gene is present in many of the centenarians and elderly members of the Okinawan population.

Moreover, the research group discovered that Okinawans possess the human [leukocyte antigen genetic polymorphisms](#), which lower the risk of autoimmune, inflammatory and many other chronic diseases.

Although there's sufficient scientific evidence proving the crucial role of genetics in human longevity, we can't overlook the fact that external factors also greatly influence people's lifespan. For instance, lifestyle factors such as caloric restriction have been found to be just as influential as genetic factors.

### **Caloric Restriction**

In the study of the aging process, the [free radical theory](#) is always an important aspect to consider. The proponents of this theory believe that free radical damage, which occurs as a result of energy metabolism from food, causes gradual but significant damage in the cells and tissues of the body. And, as you can imagine, this harms your health over time.

Okinawans are known to consume fewer calories than Westerners. Therefore, they are subjected to less free radical damage, which is one of the major reasons they live longer than other people in the world.

Scientific studies support this claim, showing that Okinawans have lower free radicals in their bloodstream. Their levels of [lipid peroxide](#) are also lower, a sign that they have less free-radical-induced cellular and tissue damage.

### **Cardiovascular Health**

Compared to Americans, Okinawan residents have been reported to have lower levels of cholesterol and homocysteine. Cholesterol, a waxy substance that can be found in various parts of the body, can clog the arteries and cause serious ailments. [Homocysteine](#), on the other hand, is a non-protein amino acid that can damage the arterial walls of the heart.

Lower levels of both cholesterol and homocysteine not only indicate that the heart's arteries are functioning properly, these also help reduce the risk of heart disease by up to 80 percent.

Researchers note that Okinawans' low cholesterol and homocysteine is largely thanks to their lifestyle, which includes a proper diet, regular physical activity, and avoidance of unhealthy habits such as alcohol drinking and smoking.



It has also been discovered that homocysteine levels are lower in people who consume sufficient amounts of folate and other B vitamins, nutrients abundant in the diet of Okinawans.

## **Cancer**

There are very few cases of cancers in Okinawa, especially those that are related to hormones such as cancers of the ovaries, colon, prostate and breast. In fact, Okinawans have 80 percent lower rates of breast and prostate cancers, and 50 percent fewer cases of colon and ovarian cancers than North Americans.

According to experts, this is attributed largely to Okinawans' restricted caloric intake and high consumption of nutrient-dense foods such as fruits and vegetables. It also helps that Okinawans have low body fat and exercise regularly.

## **Osteoporosis**

When it comes to bone health, Japanese are known to be 40 percent less prone to hip fractures than Americans. The rate is even lower for Okinawans, with 20 percent fewer bone fracture cases in Okinawa than in mainland Japan.

The bone density of Okinawans is similar to Americans. The difference lies in the process of bone loss. It has been found that Okinawans have a much slower bone-loss process than Americans. This means they are able to preserve higher bone density levels for a much longer period of time.

There are four possible reasons for this: higher intake of calcium, higher vitamin D levels, higher intake of dietary flavonoids, and a more physically active lifestyle.

## **Cognitive Aging and Dementia**

Cognitive decline is common among the elderly. So it's not surprising that many senior citizens all over the world suffer from aging-related mental health problems such as [dementia](#) and [Alzheimer's disease](#).

This is not the case for Okinawans though. It's actually very rare for Okinawans to be debilitated by such conditions. Even after reaching the age of 90, most of them are still in top cognitive shape and have no problem focusing and remembering things.

## **Women's Health**

The elderly women members of the Okinawan population do not complain of the same symptoms as their Western counterparts. Menopause, for one, is much easier and less stressful on them.

One possible reason for this is their high intake of soy, which contains natural estrogens. In a [2000 study](#) featured in the American Society for Clinical Nutrition, it was reported that the isoflavones in soy help in slowing down menopausal bone loss. In another [clinical trial](#) performed in the University of Ferrara in Italy, it was revealed that soy products alleviate menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes.

## **Principles of the Okinawan Lifestyle: How to Live the Okinawan Way**

Now that you've learned about the many health benefits of the Okinawan way of life, you're probably dying to find out the answer to this: How do I live like an Okinawan?

Here's a quick rundown of the basic principles that you should begin to adopt and follow.

### **Healthy Diet**

The Okinawan diet is to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2. But for the meantime, here's a glimpse into what Okinawans normally eat.

The typical daily diet of an Okinawa resident is composed of the following:

- Ten servings of whole grains (Each serving is equivalent to one ounce)
- Ten servings of vegetables and fruits (Each serving is equivalent to one cup)
- Two servings of soy and soy products (Each serving is equivalent to one cup)
- Six glasses of water

Okinawans also eat fatty fish such as tuna, salmon and mackerel at least three times a week. They don't drink usual caffeinated beverages like coffee or black tea, as they prefer antioxidant-rich green tea.

In addition, Okinawans don't consume pork and other meat dishes as well as dairy products often. When they do eat pork, they make it a point to remove the fat first.

And it's not just what they eat that's worth noting, but also how they eat. Okinawans are known to eat very slowly. They chew their food well. Plus, they don't wait to feel full before they stop eating.

### **Regular Physical Activity**

Okinawans are far from sedentary and in fact lead very active lifestyles. This is one of the reasons they manage to look lean and healthy even at age 100. Some might even surprise you with physical feats that others their age wouldn't be able to pull off.

Take, for instance, martial artist Seikichi Uehara. At 96, he defeated a former boxing champion who was more than 60 years younger than him. After the nationally televised match, he said his opponent “has not yet matured enough to beat me.”

Then there’s local legend Nabi Kinjo, who was 105 when she used a fly swatter to kill a poisonous snake that she had been hunting down.

The physical prowess of Okinawans is attributed in large part to the regular-moderate to intense activities included in their daily routine.

Many of them do household chores (e.g., cleaning, washing the dishes), spend time gardening, take long walks, engage in physical labor, practice martial arts, and perform the traditional Okinawan dance.

Okinawans also work out and thus enjoy the many benefits of regular exercise, which increases muscle mass, promotes the production of the growth hormone, regulates oxygen and nutrient distribution in the body, reduces the risk of obesity and other serious ailments, and slows down the aging process.

Among their favorites is tai-chi, a low-impact exercise that provides aerobic, flexibility and anaerobic benefits.

So if you want to fully live the Okinawan way, you need to become more physically active.

Start by incorporating easy and simple exercises into your routine. When you wake up in the morning, stretch your arms and legs, and do a few jumping jacks. Instead of using the elevator, take the stairs. Park your car a few blocks away from your office and walk all the way there. Engage in a physically stimulating hobby like gardening or hiking. And make sure to spend at least 30 minutes of your day on a physical activity.

Once you get used to a more active lifestyle, try any sport or fitness program. Jogging, swimming, tennis, working out at the gym, yoga, Pilates, Zumba and cycling are just a few of your many options. Just remember to choose a program that you’ll enjoy so it won’t feel like a chore that just needs to get done. You can eventually make it part of your workout regimen, in the same way that Okinawans make room for exercise in their day-to-day life.

## **Stress Management**

About 75 percent of adults in the United States experience chronic stress ranging from moderate to high levels, according to the [American Psychological Association \(APA\)](#).

How does this affect you?

[Research](#) has shown that chronic stress can lead to numerous health problems including diabetes, ulcer, heart disease, high blood pressure, and depression, among others. The [APA](#) also reports that two out of five adults who are stressed succumb to emotional eating and unhealthy eating habits.

Sources of stress can be anything from money problems, relationship conflicts, family responsibilities, and work-related issues.

And this is another remarkable thing about the Okinawans—they manage stress so efficiently that they don't let it affect their health.

Compared to the residents of mainland Japan, Okinawans live a much lower stressful lifestyle. Experts believe that there's a strong correlation between low stress and longevity.

Most people inhabiting this island practice [Taoism](#) and [Confucianism](#), both of which offer significant stress relief through positive perspective, social connection and meditative practices.

Should you want to live a stress-free lifestyle, make meditation a part of your daily life. Whenever the tough gets going, go to a quiet and peaceful place, and empty your mind.

Get rid of all negative thoughts and worries. Focus on your breathing. Think about relaxing images and all the positive that you have in your life. It may be difficult to achieve this at first, but it gets better with practice.

Other relaxation techniques that can work for you but are not necessarily practiced by the Okinawans include: massage therapy, listening to soothing music, taking warm baths, reading a book, taking a walk, and watching your favorite movie.

Although you might find it effective in calming your nerves, relying on food for stress reduction is never a good idea. It usually results in overeating and may put your health at risk. Keep in mind that Okinawans do not turn to food for comfort or happiness.

## **Good Weather**

If you've heard about the term "winter blues", then you know how the cold winter season can get you down. [Psych Central](#) confirms that the weather indeed has an effect on people's mood and emotional wellbeing. Cold temperature has been known to lower people's moods, and make them feel sad.

In fact, there's a disorder called the [Seasonal Affective Disorder \(SAD\)](#), which is a depressive condition that is linked to fall and winter months.

The Okinawans are blessed with a whole year round of warm weather, which is one of the reasons experts believe that contribute to their positive mood and uplifted aura.

If you find yourself struggling whenever winter sets in, it might be a good idea to go on a vacation at this time of the year. Seek out a place such as a tropical country where the weather is warm and nice, and you can have a more relaxing time.

If you end up loving it so much that you'd want to relocate, think things through first, as moving to a new place is not really that easy. There are many other things to consider such as your work and family.

## **Community**

In Okinawa, people are inclined to practice “yuimaru”, which translates to “helping out each other”.

This is another aspect of the Okinawan lifestyle that contributes to people's good health and increased lifespan. It has been well-established in [scientific research](#) that social support is a key in maintaining physical, mental and emotional health.

Scientists explain that support from family and friends can lighten up the problems whether due to genetics or environment, and minimize stress levels by working on the following systems: noradrenergic, central oxytocin, and hypothalamic-pituitary-adrenocortical (HPA).

Okinawans do not only have a caring community, they also make sure that they support and care for their elderly members. They do not isolate them or put them in nursing homes.

It's no surprise that results from a survey featured in the [USA Today](#) indicate that only less than a third of the Okinawan seniors report of loneliness. It's also important to note that Okinawans have the lowest suicidal rate in all of East Asia.

It's always important to keep in mind that people need people. Getting social support is never a sign of weakness. If you are having problems with anything, instead of bearing the whole weight yourself, go and find people who care enough to listen to what you're going through. It makes a lot of difference.

## **Spirituality**

Here's something that not too many people are aware of: spirituality has a positive effect on people's health. This claim is not without scientific proof.

A [2000 study](#) published in the Journal of Athletic Training reveals that there is a positive relationship between spirituality and lower risk of chronic diseases. People who participate in spiritual-related activities and who believe in higher beings as source of comfort and strength are generally healthier and easier to heal.

Another way faith benefits the health is that it diverts people away from unhealthy habits such as drinking alcohol, smoking and using illegal drugs.

Spiritual worship is widely practiced in Okinawa with the elderly women in charge of performing rituals and prayers for the dead. This practice has helped them greatly in dealing with emotional stress.

Spiritual activities also pave the way for stronger social connections with other members of the community. This is another way spirituality helps in preserving their good health.

There's no need to go and seek a new religion. But it helps if you practice spirituality and believe that a higher being can help you by providing you the strength that you need in times of adversity.

### **Positive Attitude**

Okinawans are also generally optimistic people, and this kind of attitude helps them in various ways.

[Mayo Clinic](#) explains that positive thinking provides the following benefits: longer life span, lower risk of depression, lower stress levels, stronger immunity, better emotional and physical wellbeing, and reduced risk of heart disease.

If optimism is not your natural trait, here are some things you can do to change the way you look at things and become more positive like the Okinawans:

- Write a list of things you should be happy about. Each night before going to sleep, write down four to five things that happened during the day that you should be thankful for. Focusing on positive experiences instead of negative ones has a lasting positive effect not only on your mood but also on your overall perspective.
- Look at the bright side in every situation. This is easier said than done. But once you've mastered it, even the most stressful situations become so much lighter. Whenever something bad happens, no matter how difficult it could be, think about the good thing about it, and how it could have been worse.
- Learn from your mistakes and failures. If you don't see the lesson in mistakes that you've committed, you'll end up regretting your actions. Regret is a negative



emotion that can take a toll on your wellbeing, especially if you carry it with you for a very long time.

Adopting the ways of the Okinawans is actually easier than some people think. It's all about having a positive perspective, supporting and helping out other people, managing stress more efficiently, and practicing healthy habits.

## **Chapter 2 - The Basics of the Okinawan Diet**

Did you know that the term “diet” comes from an ancient French word “diète”, which means “daily allowance for food”? It is also derived from the Greek word “diaita”, which translates to “a way of living”.

At present, diet refers to the type and amount of food that people consume for a specific reason. A diet can be designed for weight loss, treatment of a certain condition, or lifestyle changes and so on.

There are many diet programs available in the market today. We have South Beach Diet, Paleo Diet, Mediterranean Diet, the Zone Diet, Atkins Diet, and Vegetarian or Vegan to name a few. With all the options, some people find it confusing as to which one to follow.

To make it easier for you, it helps to identify your purpose. For example, if you have been diagnosed with Celiac disease, it makes sense to follow a gluten-free diet. If you want to promote animal rights, a vegetarian or vegan diet is suitable for you. If you want to lose weight, Paleo or South Beach diet might work for you.

Now, if you simply want to live a healthier and longer life, the Okinawan Diet is the first diet that you should consider. It's perfect for those who prefer not to undergo drastic changes in their diet.

With the Okinawan Diet, you only have to make small gradual changes in the foods that you eat. And there's no need to completely remove a certain food group from your daily diet.

Let's get to know more about this diet plan and how it can benefit you in the long run.

### **What is the Okinawan Diet?**

As mentioned in the previous chapter, one of the main reasons Okinawans have long life expectancy is the food that they eat. But what makes their diet special?

Here's a close look at the primary features of the Okinawan Diet.

## **Fewer Calories**

The Okinawan Diet contains 20 percent fewer calories than the typical Japanese diet. It averages not more than one calorie per gram. Because of this, Okinawans have an average body mass index (BMI) of 20, a rate significantly lower than those of their western counterparts.

It was discussed earlier that calorie restriction is beneficial to people's health. The fewer calories a person consumes, the lower the free radical damage in the body is. Fact is, consumption of food requires energy metabolism, which produces more free radicals than external agents like viruses and bacteria.

By lowering consumption of calories, one can improve the health, and at the same time, slow down the process of aging. As you know, free radicals not only cause cellular damage but also premature aging. This is one of the reasons Okinawans look and feel young even in their elderly years.

In the book titled *The Okinawa Diet Plan* written by Dr. Bradley Wilcox, Dr. Craig Wilcox and Dr. Makoto Suzuki, food is divided into four categories based on caloric density.

### **Featherweight foods**

Foods under this category contain only 0.8 calories per gram or less. Examples are spinach, celery, arugula, watercress, cucumber, radish, zucchini, and citrus oranges. You are free to eat as many servings of featherweight foods as you'd like in a day.

### **Lightweight foods**

Lightweight foods have a caloric density between 0.8 and 1.5 per gram. Plum, grapefruit, honeydew melon, blackberries, bananas and potatoes are some examples of lightweight foods, which are recommended to be consumed in moderation.

### **Middleweight foods**

In the middleweight category, you'll find wheat, rice cakes, noodles, lean meat, legumes, chicken breast, mussels, and other food items that contain 1.5 to 3 calories per gram. It's best to eat only one or two servings of middleweight foods a day.

### **Heavyweight foods**

Then we have the heavyweight foods, or those that supply 3 to 9 calories per gram. Those that belong to this category are nuts, oil, seeds, chocolate, avocados, dairy products, and red meat. Monitor your intake of heavyweight foods, and consume them sparingly.

## **Nutritional Composition and Portions**

Apart from calories, one should also look into the nutrients and portions of the food to be consumed. Some of the key characteristics of the Okinawan Diet that you should always keep in mind include:

- The Okinawan diet contains 30 percent more green and yellow vegetables than mainland Japanese diet. As you know, these are loaded with beneficial nutrients and antioxidants such as vitamin A, vitamin C, calcium, iron, potassium, zinc, iron, beta-carotene, lutein, polyphenols and xanthins, among many others.
- Fish is a common ingredient in Japanese dishes, commonly used in sushi and maki. Okinawans also eat fish to get their needed omega 3 essential fatty acids such as eicosapentaenoic acid (EPA), alpha-linolenic acid (ALA), and docosahexaenoic acid (DHA).
- Soy, usually in the form of tofu, is a popular ingredient in Okinawan recipes. It is an excellent source of protein as well as sterols, tannins and other health beneficial compounds. Regular consumption of tofu offers ample protection against stroke, heart disease, and prostate cancer.
- Okinawan islanders consume small quantities of rice. In lieu of rice, their staple food is sweet potato. Not only are sweet potatoes rich in vitamin C, they're also a great source of B vitamins, vitamin C, copper, potassium, phosphorus and dietary fiber.
- The Okinawan Diet is low in sugar and grains. In fact, Okinawans consume only 30 percent of the sugar and 15 percent of the grains that mainland Japanese eat. As you know, sugar shoots up the risk of diabetes, as well as many other serious conditions like fatty liver disease and dyslipidemia. Refined grains, meanwhile, increase abdominal fat as well as the risk for heart disease and diabetes.
- The inhabitants of Okinawa do not consume meat, eggs and dairy products often. Although these foods provide protein and dairy products supply calcium, these are also known to increase levels of cholesterol and saturated fat, and can therefore make one more susceptible to high blood pressure, stroke and heart problems.

## **Top Benefits of Okinawan Diet**

With so many good things that you hear about the Okinawan Diet, it's easy to be convinced that it is the right diet for you. Below, you'll find some of the most important benefits of this diet plan that you would want to take advantage of.

## **Lower risk of heart disease**

The [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#) states that heart disease remains the top leading cause of death in the world, claiming as many as 17.5 million lives each year. According to [researchers](#) from the Osaka University, mortality due to heart disease is much lower in Japan than in western countries.

The rate is even lower in Okinawa, where people eat heart-healthy foods that center on fruits, vegetables, fish and soy. The fact that Okinawans consume less meat and other cholesterol-promoting foods also helps.

## **Protection against cancer**

Next to heart disease, cancer is another leading cause of death anywhere in the world. This condition, which comes in over 100 types, is characterized by uncontrollable growth and spread of cells. It can occur in various parts of the body—skin, muscles, bones, internal organs and so on.

In the United States, cancer accounts for the 40 percent of deaths among middle-aged adults. In Okinawa, the rate is much lower at only 4 percent. This was documented in a [2014 study](#) featured in the Medical Science Monitor Journal.

One of the ways the Okinawan Diet protects against cancer is by reducing free radical damage on cells and tissues with its low caloric intake. As you might have heard, free radical damage increases the risk of cancer.

## **Obesity prevention**

By this time, people should already have realized that obesity is not simply a cosmetic problem. Yes, it can reduce self-confidence and self-esteem, but more alarming than that, it also has serious negative repercussions on one's health.

Obesity causes numerous problems to the health, and it's a good thing that this can be prevented with the Okinawan Diet. This diet is low in calories, fat, sugar, and cholesterol, and can therefore help you lose those unwanted pounds.

## **Better cognitive performance**

[Reports](#) show that almost 44 million people worldwide suffer from Alzheimer's disease and dementia. These two conditions are most prevalent in Western Europe and North America. In the United States, it has been declared by the CDC as the sixth leading cause of death.

In Okinawan, these aging-related ailments are not common at all. Since fish is widely consumed all over Japan, people benefit from its omega 3 essential fatty acids. DHA,

ALA and EPA are known to ward off Alzheimer's disease and dementia, and at the same time, boost cognitive performance, memory and problem-solving skills.

### **Stronger immunity**

The body's immune system is the primary defense against pathogenic microorganisms such as bacteria and viruses that cause infections. The Okinawan Diet with its numerous vitamins, minerals and antioxidants is capable of powering up the immune system enough to keep diseases at bay. It's no wonder even minor illnesses like colds and flu are uncommon in this part of Japan.

### **Better Digestion**

Another way the Okinawan diet benefits the body is by promoting digestion. Since this diet plan is high in fiber, the foods that people consume are much easier to digest. Digestion-related problems like bloating, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and constipation don't happen frequently in Okinawa. People can enjoy their food without having to worry about indigestion and other various problems.

### **Younger Looking Skin**

The antioxidants that can be found in the Okinawan diet fight off free radicals inside the body, which cause premature aging. Signs of premature aging include wrinkles, fine lines, age spots and so on. Not to mention, the fruits and vegetables that Okinawans consume are rich in vitamin C, a nutrient that promotes the production of skin collagen and repair of skin cells. This is why the Okinawans are known for their youthful appearance.

## **Is the Okinawan Diet Right for You?**

With all the benefits listed in the previous section, it's easy to be convinced that the Okinawan Diet is the right diet for you. And most likely, it is.

It's the right diet for you if:

- You want to lose weight
- You want to increase your lifespan
- You want to live healthier and age gracefully
- You want to look younger than your actual age
- You want to reduce the risk of ailments

But of course, as with any other diet plan, it's also a must to consider your personal circumstances before you get on with it.

For example, do you have any medical condition that should be taken into account? If you have been diagnosed with hypertension or high blood pressure, you have to know that the Okinawan diet is quite high in sodium. But fortunately, this can be resolved by opting for low-sodium food products.

To be on the safe side, consult your doctor first before starting with this diet plan.

## **A Quick Guide to the Okinawan Diet Pyramid**

A food pyramid is a visual diagram that makes it easier for people to follow healthy eating guidelines. For those who want to start following the Okinawan diet, the Okinawan food pyramid is a convenient guide that's very easy to understand. It is based on extensive research conducted for the last 25 years. It best reflects the nutritional intake and eating patterns of the Okinawans, or the world's longest living people.

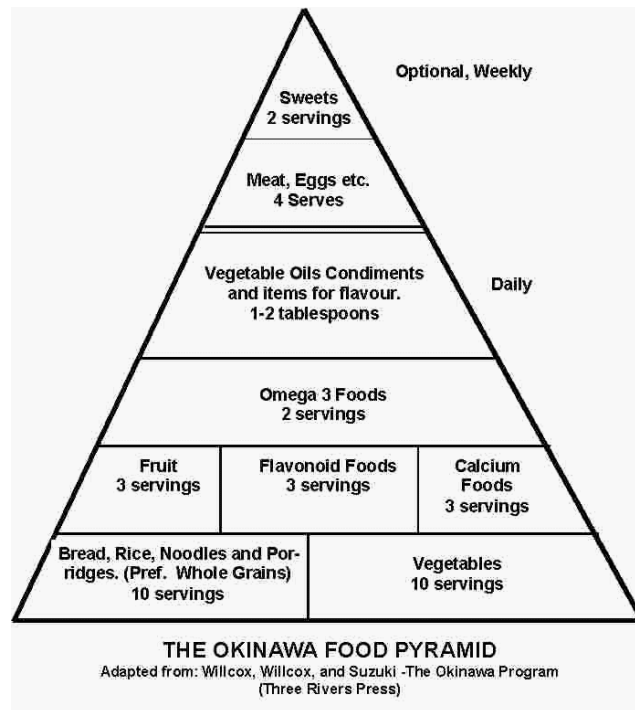
Before we get to the Okinawan food pyramid, let's first remember the first food pyramid that we learned in school—the one formulated by the [U.S. Department of Agriculture \(USDA\)](#). Many experts claim that some of the nutritional advice given by the USDA pyramid is outdated. Because of this, the USDA announced that it will be releasing a revised version soon.

For now, let's examine the main differences between the two pyramids:

- Compared to the USDA food pyramid, the Okinawan food pyramid provides a clearer guideline as to how foods are divided into daily and weekly categories. This will allow you to determine which ones should be eaten often and not so often.
- The Okinawan food pyramid has made distinction among the different types of fat while the other one has not.
- In the dairy food section, the Okinawan food pyramid promotes low-fat options. In the grain sections, it emphasizes the consumption of whole grains.
- In the USDA food pyramid, red meat and seafood are placed in the same group, which would make people think that these two protein sources should be consumed in the same amount.



## What the Okinawan Food Pyramid Looks Like



So we can understand it more easily, let's break it up into sections:

### Section 1: 10 Daily Servings of Whole Grains

Food	Serving Size	Number of Servings
Brown rice	1/3 cup	3
Whole grain bread	1 slice	4
Oat bran	2/3 cup	3

*Note: Candy bars, cookies, instant cereals and food products made from refined grains are not recommended.*

### Section 2: 10 Daily Servings of Vegetables

Food	Serving Size	Number of Servings
Green leafy vegetables (broccoli, spinach, kale)	1 cup	2

Yellow vegetables (pumpkin, sweet potato, carrot)	1 cup	3
Starchy vegetables (potato)	1/2 cup	3
Other vegetables (beans, asparagus, cabbage, tomatoes, cauliflower, lettuce)	1/2	2

### Section 3: 3 Daily Servings of Fruits

Food	Serving Size	Number of Servings
Citrus fruits (oranges, grapefruit, pomelo)	1 cup	1
Common fruits (apples, banana, mangoes)	1 cup	1
Berries (strawberries, blueberries, blackberries)	1 cup	1

### Section 4: 3 Daily Servings of Foods Rich in Flavonoids

Food	Serving Size	Number of Servings
Soy (soybeans, soy sprouts, tofu, vegetable protein, miso), beans and lentils	1/2 cup	1
Celery, onions, flaxseed, cherries, cranberries, lettuce, plums	1/2 cup	1
Green tea	1 cup	1

**Section 5: 3 Daily Servings of Foods Rich in Calcium**

<b>Food</b>	<b>Serving Size</b>	<b>Number of Servings</b>
Low fat milk or low fat yogurt	1 cup	1
Or low fat cheese	40 grams	
Vegetables (broccoli, spinach)	3/4 cup	1
Fish (sardines, salmon)	70 grams	1

**Section 6: 3 Daily Servings of Foods Rich in Omega 3**

<b>Food</b>	<b>Serving Size</b>	<b>Number of Servings</b>
Cold water fish (salmon, sardines, tuna, mackerel)	90 grams	1
Nuts and seeds (walnuts, flaxseed, almonds, peanuts, pumpkin seeds)	40 grams	1
Healthy oils (olive oil, flaxseed oil)	15 grams	1

**Section 7: 2 Daily Servings of Foods for Flavoring/ Condiments**

<b>Food</b>	<b>Serving Size</b>	<b>Number of Servings</b>
Vegetable oils (olive oil, flaxseed oil)	15 grams	1
Low sodium sauces and toppings	30 grams	1
Herbs and spices	15 grams	

**Section 8: 3 Weekly Servings of Meat and Eggs**

Food	Serving Size	Number of Servings
Meat (red meat, offal)	60 to 70 grams	2
Poultry (lean chicken)	70 grams	1
Egg	1 piece	

**Section 9: 2 Weekly Servings of Sweets and Candies**

Food	Serving Size	Number of Servings
Chocolates, cookies, pastries and other sugary treats	30 grams	2

**A Thorough Food List for Beginners**

Looking at the Okinawan Food Pyramid, you already have an idea of what to consume to follow this diet plan. Below, you'll find list of other foods that you should also include in your menu, and those that you should try to avoid.

**What to Consume Often**

- Sweet Potatoes – Sweet potatoes are a healthy alternative to rice. These root crops are loaded with vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin E, calcium, potassium and dietary fiber. You can boil or fry sweet potatoes, and include it in stews and main dishes.
- Soy – Tofu and miso paste are the most popular soy products consumed in the traditional Okinawan diet. Since Okinawans don't eat meat often, they get their protein from this source. Apart from supplying enough protein, soy is also rich in antioxidants such as flavonoids. Tofu can be eaten fried or boiled. It's so versatile you can incorporate it in many dishes.

- Bitter Melon – One of the most widely used fruits in Okinawa is bitter melon, which is known locally as goya. This gourd is a typical addition in salads and stir-fried dishes. Some Okinawans also brew it into a tea or drink its juice.
- Shiitake Mushrooms – A common ingredient in Asian cuisine, Shiitake mushrooms are abundant in selenium, pantothenic acid, copper, B vitamins, vitamin D and zinc. Okinawans love to add sautéed shiitake mushrooms to their daily menu.
- Seaweed – There are various kinds of seaweed that you can include in your diet: mozuku, kombu and hijiki. Rich in iodine, folate, magnesium, calcium and iron, seaweed can be added to salads, vegetable dishes, stir-fries, and noodles. Mozuku in particular is loaded with a carotenoid called fucoxanthin, which helps the body burn fat more easily.
- Soba noodles – Made with buckwheat flour, soba noodles are a good source of fiber, carbohydrates, protein, iron, B vitamins and manganese. Use soba noodles in your ramen to enjoy its nutritional perks.
- Luffa – Also called nebera, luffa is often used in making miso soup and tempura. It also complements tofu well. It's packed with vitamin K, folate and other beneficial nutrients.
- Fruits and vegetables – There's a long list of fruits and vegetables that you can eat in the Okinawan diet. Okinawan fruit favorites include papaya, mango, passion fruit, guava, banana and pineapple. As for vegetables, they love dark leafy greens, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, onions, and garlic.
- Herbs and spices – Okinawans use herbs and spices in their cooking not only to improve flavor but also to increase nutritional content. Some of the healthiest herbs and spices that Okinawans love include fennel, turmeric, mugwort and peppers.
- Jasmine tea - Regular consumption of jasmine tea can help protect you against various forms of cancer. That's because it contains many types of polyphenols including the same one that green tea has, epigallocatechin gallate (EGCG). EGCG has anti-tumor and anti-cancer properties.

### **What to Consume Moderately**

- Fish – While fish as well as other types of seafood are widely consumed in most parts of Japan, it is only eaten moderately by Okinawans. The best way to cook fish is to steam it as this cooking method preserves most of its nutrients,

particularly its omega 3 fatty acids that can help reduce risk of aging-related mental ailments.

- Sugary treats – Sweet treats such as pastries, candies and cakes are not completely eliminated from the Okinawan diet, but should be consumed only once in a while. This is to make sure you don't feel deprived but at the same time, you don't ruin your health with too much sugar.
- Rice – Like people from mainland Japan, Okinawans also eat rice but not as often. When they do, they prefer brown rice over the refined white rice.
- Dairy products – Milk, yogurt, cheese and other dairy products can be consumed under the Okinawan diet, but only in moderation. Plus, you have to opt for low-fat versions of these food items.
- Pork and red meat – Okinawans get most of the protein they need from soy, beans and other non-meat sources. But they also include pork and red meat in their diet but only once in a while.

### **What to Avoid**

- Alcohol – Okinawans don't drink too much alcohol. As much as possible, avoid drinking alcoholic beverages particularly those that are high in calories such as beer.
- Refined grains – Instead of refined grains, make it a point to eat only whole grains. Use brown rice instead of white rice. Use whole wheat products instead of refined wheat.
- Fried snacks – French fries, potato chips and other similar food products contain too much sodium and fat. If you buy them in fast food restaurants, they're usually loaded with unhealthy preservatives and chemicals.

### **Simple and Easy-to-Prepare Okinawan Recipes**

Seeing Japanese chef meticulously prepare dishes makes you think that this cuisine is too complicated for you. But in Okinawa, you'll find many simple recipes that are easy enough even for beginners. Here are some of those that you would want to try:

#### **Breakfast**

##### **Delicious Okinawan Pancakes**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 10 to 15 minutes



Serves: 2 to 3

**Ingredients:**

- 50 grams whole wheat flour
- 1 egg
- 100 ml Dashi stock
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 can tuna flakes in water, drained
- 1/3 bunch Chinese chives, finely chopped
- 1 slice melting cheese, shredded

**Procedure:**

- Combine all ingredients in a bowl. Mix well.
- Fry batter in a pan over medium heat.
- When the batter starts to bubble, flip to cook the other side.
- Serve while warm.

**Nutritional Facts:**

- Calories: 121
- Total Fat 4.8g or 7%
- Saturated Fat 2.5g or 12%
- Cholesterol 64mg or 21%
- Sodium 380mg or 16%
- Potassium 49mg or 1%
- Total Carbohydrates 13.0g or 4%
- Protein 6.0g
- Vitamin A 3%
- Calcium 8%
- Iron 6%

--

## **Specialty Hira Yachi Pancakes**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 10 to 15 minutes

Serves: 4

### **Ingredients:**

- 200 grams all purpose flour
- 150 ml Japanese Dashi stock
- 200 ml water
- 80 grams tuna flakes
- 1 egg
- 2 tablespoons Bonito flakes
- 1 pinch of salt
- 1 bunch garlic chives, chopped
- 3 tablespoons sesame oil
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- Lettuce leaves

### **Procedure:**

- Mix all ingredients in a bowl.
- Add water to adjust consistency.
- Heat oil in a pan.
- Fry the pancake.
- Flip and cook the other side.
- Slice the pancake.
- Serve each slice on top of a lettuce leaf.

### **Nutritional Facts:**

- Calories: 164
- Total Fat 6.7g or 10%
- Saturated Fat 1.1g or 6%
- Cholesterol 24mg or 8%
- Sodium 41mg or 2%
- Potassium 69mg or 2%
- Total Carbohydrates 19.2g or 6%
- Dietary Fiber 0.7g or 3%
- Protein 6.0g

- Vitamin A 1%
- Calcium 1%
- Iron 7%

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## **Lunch Recipes**

### **Okinawa Sweet Potatoes**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 1 hour

Serves: 10 to 12

#### **Ingredients:**

- 4 pounds sweet potatoes
- 2 limes
- 1/4 cup butter
- 30 grams sea salt

#### **Procedure:**

- Use a fork to prick sweet potatoes.
- Boil water in a pot.
- Add sweet potatoes.
- Boil for 35 minutes.
- While waiting, grate zest from lime peel.
- Squeeze the juice from the limes, and set aside.
- Take out the sweet potatoes from the pot.
- Peel and slice.
- Lay the slices on a baking pan and cover with foil.
- Put inside the oven and keep warm in 200 degrees C.
- Meanwhile, melt butter in a pan.
- Add zest and cook for one minute.
- Add lime juice.
- Drizzle mixture on top of the sweet potatoes.
- Sprinkle sea salt on top.

#### **Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 136
- Calories from fat 29 %

- Protein 2.6 g
- Fat 4.3 g
- Saturated fat 2.6 g
- Carbohydrate 23 g
- Fiber 2.1 g
- Sodium 50 mg
- Cholesterol 11 mg

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## **Savory Okinawan Goya Stir Fry**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 1 hour

Serves: 5 to 6

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 piece bitter melon
- 1 block tofu
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- Bonito flakes to taste
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 teaspoon Dashi stock powder

### **Procedure:**

- Slice bitter melon into half moons and scoop out the seeds.
- Remove the pith if you like.
- Season with salt.
- Cover tofu in paper towel.
- Heat in the microwave for one to two minutes, and then drain.
- Mix Dashi stock and eggs in a bowl.
- In a frying pan, heat oil and cook tofu until brown.
- Use a wooden spatula to crumble the tofu into small pieces.
- Add bitter melon slices into the mixture.
- Drizzle sesame oil.
- Cook for one to two minutes.

- Add egg mixture into the pan.
- Stir in soy sauce and oyster sauce.
- Top with Bonito flakes before serving.

**Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 93
- Total Fat 9.0g or 14%
- Saturated Fat 1.6g or 8%
- Cholesterol 55mg or 18%
- Sodium 478mg or 20%
- Potassium 45mg or 1%
- Total Carbohydrates 0.5g
- Protein 3.2g
- Vitamin A 1%
- Calcium 4%
- Iron 3%

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**Goya Champuruu/ Bitter Melon with Somen Noodles**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 2

**Ingredients:**

- 2 packs somen noodles
- 1/2 piece bitter melon
- 1/2 piece carrot
- 1/4 teaspoon sesame oil
- 1 tablespoon sake
- 2/3 teaspoon salt

**Procedure:**

- Slice bitter melon in half lengthwise.
- Remove seeds and pith.
- Cut into pieces, each measuring about 5 mm wide.
- Season with salt.
- Julienne the carrot.

- Boil water in a pot and cook somen noodles according to package instructions.
- In a pan, stir fry vegetables in sesame oil
- Add cooked noodles to the pan.
- Stir fry for 20 to 30 seconds.
- Add sake.
- Serve in a bowl.

**Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 154
- Total Fat 3.7g or 6%
- Saturated Fat 1.1g or 5%
- Cholesterol 62mg or 21%
- Sodium 832mg or 35%
- Potassium 383mg or 11%
- Total Carbohydrates 8.1g or 3%
- Dietary Fiber 0.7g or 3%
- Sugars 1.0g
- Protein 20.9g
- Vitamin A 60%
- Vitamin C 2%
- Calcium 1%
- Iron 6%
- Calories 12
- Total Fat 0.6g or 1%
- Sodium 788mg or 33%
- Potassium 58mg or 2%
- Total Carbohydrates 1.8g or 1%
- Sugars 0.9g
- Protein 0.1g
- Vitamin A 60%
- Vitamin C 2%
- Calcium 1%

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## Quick and Simple Spinach and Tofu Stir Fry

Preparation and Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 2

### Ingredients:

- 1 block firm tofu, cut into big cubes
- 3 bunches spinach, sliced
- 2 eggs
- 1 tablespoon low fat mayonnaise
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon oyster sauce
- 1/8 teaspoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil

### Procedure:

- Cover tofu with tea towel.
- Heat in the microwave for three minutes.
- Press spatula onto the towel to get rid of excess moisture.
- Beat the egg in a bowl and add mayonnaise.
- In a pan, sauté spinach in sesame oil until brown.
- Sprinkle with salt and pepper for flavoring.
- Move spinach to one side of the pan.
- In the center, fry the tofu until brown and mix in spinach and pork.
- Drizzle with soy sauce and oyster sauce.
- Add egg and mayo mix.
- Mix well before serving.

### Nutritional Content:

- Calories 119
- Total Fat 7.0g or 11%
- Saturated Fat 1.3g or 7%
- Cholesterol 66mg or 22%
- Sodium 245mg or 10%
- Potassium 1190mg or 34%
- Total Carbohydrates 8.2g or 3%
- Dietary Fiber 4.7g or 19%

- Sugars 1.1g
- Protein 9.6g
- Vitamin A 84%
- Vitamin C 96%
- Calcium 25%
- Iron 34%

--

## **Egg, Tofu, Chicken and Miso Stir Fry**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 2 to 3

### **Ingredients:**

- 80 grams chicken breast
- 1 piece bitter melon
- 300 grams firm tofu
- 1 large egg
- 1/4 teaspoon Dashi stock granules
- 1 teaspoon miso
- 2 teaspoons cooking sake
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- Bonito flakes to taste

### **Procedure:**

- Slice bitter ground into half moon pieces.
- Remove seeds and pith.
- Put water in a pot and boil.
- Boil the bitter melon until it's half cooked.
- Drain the bitter melon.
- Warm oil in a pan and add chicken.
- Before it is completely cook, add bitter melon.
- Stir fry.
- Add miso, tofu and sake.
- Add beaten egg and season with soy sauce and Dashi stock granules.
- Top with Bonito flakes before serving.

**Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 145
- Total Fat 7.7g or 12%
- Saturated Fat 1.9g or 9%
- Cholesterol 82mg or 27%
- Sodium 427mg or 18%
- Potassium 254mg or 7%
- Total Carbohydrates 2.7g or 1%
- Dietary Fiber 1.0g or 4%
- Sugars 0.9g
- Protein 17.5g
- Vitamin A 2%
- Vitamin C 0%
- Calcium 25%
- Iron 12%

**Dinner Recipes**

**Rafute**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 3 hours

Serves: 4

**Ingredients:**

- 1 kilogram boneless pork belly without skin
- 1 cup cooking sake
- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 100 grams brown sugar
- 1/2 cup mirin
- 6 ginger slices
- Mustard
- Fresh daikon, sliced into sticks

**Procedure:**

- Put the pork belly in a saucepan.
- Add cold water, and bring to a boil.
- Remove pork from the pan.
- Get rid of fat and rinse the pan.

- Put the pork back into the pan and cover again with cold water.
- Simmer for one hour.
- Slice pork into cubes.
- Put in another saucepan.
- Season with sake, soy sauce, sugar and mirin.
- Add ginger slices.
- Serve while warm.

**Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 162
- Total Fat 7.8 g or 12%
- Sodium 206mg or 8.6%
- Potassium 102mg or 3%
- Total Carbohydrates 41.0g or 14%
- Sugars 32.8g
- Protein 2.0g
- Calcium 3%
- Iron 4%

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**Quick Seafood and Bean Sprouts Stir Fry**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 2

**Ingredients:**

- 200 grams salmon fillet
- 100 grams shrimp, peeled and deveined
- 50 grams bean sprouts
- 1 block tofu
- 1 tablespoon scallions, chopped
- 1 tablespoon cooking sake
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil

**Procedure:**

- Slice salmon fillet into bite-sized pieces.

- Cube the tofu and drain.
- Warm vegetable oil in a pan.
- Cook the salmon and shrimp.
- Pour in the sake.
- Turn the heat high to evaporate the alcohol.
- Flavor with salt and pepper.
- Add the bean sprouts and tofu.
- Cook for 5 to 10 minutes, stirring frequently.
- Season with soy sauce.
- Top with scallions before serving.

**Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 293
- Total Fat 15.9g or 24%
- Saturated Fat 2.5g or 13%
- Cholesterol 149mg or 50%
- Sodium 323mg or 13%
- Potassium 597mg or 17%
- Total Carbohydrates 3.0g or 1%
- Dietary Fiber 0.5g or 2%
- Protein 35.8g
- Vitamin A 5%
- Vitamin C 17%
- Calcium 18%
- Iron 10%

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**Vegetable Taco Rice**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 2

**Ingredients:**

- 1 block tofu, cubed
- 100 grams carrot
- 1/2 onion
- 1 green pepper
- 2 to 3 lettuce leaves, cut into strips

- 5 cherry tomatoes, sliced
- 1/2 avocado, chopped
- 1/4 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1/4 cup water
- 3 tablespoons ketchup
- 2 tablespoons Japanese Worcestershire-style sauce
- 2 tablespoons chili powder
- 1 teaspoon soy sauce
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 cups cooked brown rice
- 1 teaspoon soy mayonnaise
- 3 tablespoons low fat cheese
- Tortilla chips

**Procedure:**

- Fry tofu in a pan until crispy brown.
- In another pan, warm olive oil and stir fry all vegetables except avocado.
- Add browned tofu.
- Add water, ketchup, Japanese Worcestershire-style sauce, chilli powder, soy sauce, salt and pepper.
- Cut the avocado and add into the mixture.
- Serve mixture on top of rice and drizzle with cheese and soy mayonnaise.
- Add tortilla chips on the side as garnish.

**Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 145
- Total Fat 7.7g or 12%
- Saturated Fat 1.9g or 9%
- Cholesterol 82mg or 27%
- Sodium 427mg or 18%
- Potassium 254mg or 7%
- Total Carbohydrates 2.7g or 1%
- Dietary Fiber 1.0g or 4%
- Sugars 0.9g
- Protein 17.5g
- Vitamin A 2%

- Vitamin C 0%
- Calcium 25%
- Iron 12%

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## **Spicy Bitter Melon Namul**

Preparation and Cooking Time: 30 minutes

Serves: 1

### **Ingredients:**

- 1 bitter melon
- 1/2 teaspoon salt
- 2 green chili peppers, minced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 teaspoons Dashida
- 3 tablespoons sesame oil

### **Procedure:**

- Cut bittermelon in half.
- Use a spoon to remove seeds and pith.
- Slice bitter melon thinly.
- In a bowl, soak the slices in water with 1/2 teaspoon salt for 10 minutes.
- In a pan, stir fry chili peppers and garlic in sesame oil.
- After a few minutes, add bitter melon.
- Season with salt, pepper and Dashida once the bitter melon has become translucent.

### **Nutritional Content:**

- Calories 368
- Total Fat 40.9g or 63%
- Saturated Fat 5.8g or 29%
- Sodium 1164mg or 49%
- Potassium 31mg or 1%
- Total Carbohydrates 1.7g or 1%
- Protein 0.3g
- Vitamin A 5%

- Vitamin C 2%
- Calcium 1%
- Iron 1%

## **Hara Hachi Bu: A Key Aspect in the Okinawan Diet**

A very important thing to keep in mind about the Okinawan diet is that it's not just about what you eat, but also how you eat.

“Hara Hachi Bu” is a practice derived from the teachings of Confucius, which encourages people to stop eating when they feel 80 percent full. The direct English translation of this phrase is “eat until you are eight parts of 10 full”.

This is also based on the theory that there is a 10 to 20 minute delay in the way the brain processes signals of fullness. By the time your brain realizes that you are 80 percent full, you are already 100 percent full. If you wait until the brain gets the signal that you are 100 percent full, you have already overeaten.

As a result of this method, Okinawans consume fewer calories than most other people. While Americans take in 2,000 or more calories a day, Okinawans only consume 1,200 calories daily. This helps them maintain an ideal weight. Paired with an active lifestyle, this kind of eating habit keeps them in top shape.

While this sounds like a great idea, here's the problem: how are we to know if we are already 80 percent full? What does 80 percent fullness feels like? There's no device that can exactly measure internal satiety, but here are some tips that will help:

- First, eat only half of what you usually eat. Take a moment to check how your stomach feels. Then eat a little bit more, until you feel sensation of pressure on your tummy. It's a sign that you're at the 80 percent full stage. Stop eating before you are completely full.
- Practice this method daily. It may take up to 20 meals before you get used to it. Be consistent so that your body will have enough time to adjust efficiently to this system.
- Eat slowly and mindfully. Relish each bite particularly the food's texture and flavor. Not only will this make eating more pleasurable, it also gives the brain ample time to process the activity and let you know that you're already full.

Here are other tips that can help promote healthy eating habits:



- Focus on your eating. Don't engage in any other activity while you're eating. For example, it's never a good idea to watch TV or use gadgets while you're eating. Eating in front of the television is a major no-no. When you're distracted, you tend to eat more than you should.
- Use smaller plates for lunch and dinner. When you eat on a large plate, the tendency is to fill it up with more food. And because you've been taught to clear up the plate each meal, you'll end up overstuffing yourself.
- Drink a glass of water before each meal. This fills you up more quickly than when you start with the food right away.
- Stock your pantry and kitchen with healthy options. The fewer unhealthy items you have, the less the temptation is.

## **Tips for Getting Started with the Okinawan Diet Plan**

It doesn't matter what diet you're following, more often than not, it's the beginning stage that's the hardest. To help you get started with your Okinawan diet plan, here are some tips that would give you a jumpstart:

- Set your mind for success. If you're confident that you're going to succeed with this diet, then there's a bigger chance that you will. One's mindset plays an important role in healthy eating. If there are times when you feel like you're losing track of your diet plan, re-think about all your goals to get yourself motivated once again.
- Write down a daily menu for one week. Planning the menu makes it easier for you to follow this diet. This way, you don't have to spend more time than necessary thinking about what meal to prepare for the day.
- Go grocery shopping for healthy and high quality ingredients. If you're not familiar with some of the ingredients in the recipes, don't worry. You can easily find them in Asian food stores. Just make sure that you always buy fresh and high quality ingredients.
- Prepare for temptations. There's a possibility that you're going to be tempted to throw your diet out of the window once you see your favorite unhealthy treat. It's perfectly fine to have a "cheat day" once a week to give yourself a treat. A slice of your favorite cake once a week makes sure you don't feel deprived. Just see to it that you don't abuse cheat day.

- Get the whole family into the diet plan. It's easier to get into a new diet plan when everyone's into it. Convince your family to try the Okinawan diet program and cook Okinawan recipes for them. The family that eats healthy together, stays healthy together!

Now that we're done with the chapter on diet, you probably realize that eating the Okinawan way is not as difficult as some people imagine. Once you get the hang of it, you'll be on your way to a healthier and fitter you.

## **Chapter 3 - Okinawan Remedies**

The Okinawans are known all over the world not only for their healthy lifestyle but also for their highly effective herbal treatments that date back to the ancient times. Up to now, many people still use natural remedies to treat and alleviate many minor conditions.

Natural remedies are good alternative to synthetic medications. As you know, antibiotic resistance has become a pressing problem. Overuse of antibiotics has made harmful pathogens such as infection-causing bacteria grow resistant. Because of this, infections have become more difficult to treat.

This shouldn't be a problem if you make use of natural disease fighting substances found in nature, just like what ancient Japanese healers did many centuries ago. Most of these remedies are not only highly effective but also safe even for long-term use.

To be on the safe side however, you should talk to your doctor before using any of these remedies, as some may interfere with medications, if in case you're taking any.

### **Ancient Japanese Holistic Remedies for Various Ailments**

In Okinawa, there are many popular holistic health practices that are still being used in today's modern society. Below, you'll find some of those that you would also want to try if you're looking for a natural way of curing your ailment.

### **Remedy # 1 – Umeboshi for Flu**

Pickled plums are believed to have antipyretic properties, which can come in handy when you're suffering from flu or any condition that shoots up the body temperature.

#### **What You'll Need:**

- 2 to 3 umeboshi or pickled plums

#### **How to Prepare:**

- In a saucepan over low heat, warm pickled plums
- Add to a cup of water
- Drink once or twice a day to cure flu or lower fever

### **Remedy # 2 – Spring Onion for Inflammation**

Inflammation due to injury or illness can be treated with spring onion, which has been documented in scientific research to have antimicrobial and anti-inflammatory properties.

#### **What You'll Need:**

- A few spring onions

#### **How to Prepare:**

- Slice the white part of the spring onion.
- Grill on low heat.
- Wrap gauze and onion around the affected areas.

### **Remedy # 3 – Gingko Biloba for Asthma, Cough and Phlegm**

The herb ginkgo biloba has been proven in research to have anti-allergy, anti-asthma and anti-inflammatory effects. It's what you need if you suffer from cough or asthma.

#### **What You'll Need**

- 1 cup water
- 1 teaspoon dried ginkgo biloba

#### **How to Prepare:**

- Boil water in a pot.
- Add dried ginkgo biloba.

- Remove from heat.
- Strain the tea before drinking.
- Drink twice a day to alleviate asthma or cough.

### **Remedy # 4 – Onion and Ginger for Cold and Stuffy Nose**

Both onion and ginger are medicinal root crops that have been used since the ancient times for a wide array of illnesses. Onion is an antimicrobial that can fight the pathogens causing ailments like the common cold. Ginger, meanwhile, can help soothe nasal congestion and make it easier for you to breathe.

#### **What You'll Need**

- 1 tablespoon onion, grated
- 1 tablespoon ginger, grated
- 1 tablespoon honey
- 1 cup hot water

#### **How to Prepare:**

- Add onion and ginger in hot water.
- Steep for 20 minutes.
- Strain the mixture.
- Stir in honey.
- Drink the concoction two to three times a day until you are relieved.

### **Remedy # 5 – Sesame Oil and Ginger for Headache**

Get fast relief from headache by using a mixture of sesame oil and ginger. Both ingredients have analgesic properties that can provide quick relief from pain.

#### **What You'll Need**

- 1 teaspoon of ginger paste
- 1 tablespoon of sesame oil

#### **How to Prepare:**

- Warm sesame oil in a pan.
- Let it cool a little.
- Add ginger paste.

- Mix well.
- Massage mixture on your forehead and temples.
- Do this once or twice a day until pain subsides.

## Conclusion

Learning about the amazing lifestyle of the Okinawans would certainly make you wish you were born in this part of the world.

But since this is not the case, the next best thing you can do is to get to know more about what they eat and how they live their lives so you can enjoy the perks of the Okinawan lifestyle.

Remember that the health benefits of the Okinawan lifestyle are not without scientific proof. Scientists have dedicated many years in studying the factors that contribute to the healthy aging process of the Okinawans, and to their long lifespan.

The findings of the Okinawan Centenarian Study are an eye-opener to many people. The research emphasizes on the importance of a well-balanced diet and healthy habits that focus also on regular physical activity and avoidance of smoking and drinking alcohol.

If you'd like to live as long as the Okinawans, age gracefully and avoid debilitating illnesses, you'll do your best to follow all the practical pieces of advice that you've read in this book, and incorporate them into your daily life.

Cheers to a healthier and fitter you!

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