Sweet Potato Season in Japan

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Seasonality in Food

Living in Japan, I've noticed how much the seasons show up in everyday food. Convenience stores and supermarkets are always rotating their limited-edition products. In spring it was Sakura, in summer it was peach, lemon, and other refreshing fruit flavours everywhere. Then autumn comes and suddenly it's chestnut, pumpkin, and above all, sweet potato.

Sweet Potato Dessert

Since September, sweet potato has been in almost everything. It's not just traditional Japanese sweets or a bag of yaki-imo (焼き芋), either. It turns up in products we already know, just with an autumn version. However, since Japanese sweet potatoes are quite different from the varieties commonly found in Western countries, it can also be fun to try them in their simplest form. They are naturally sweet and dense. You can easily find yaki-imo at supermarkets or Don Quijote during the colder months.



FamilyMart has a sweet potato croissant right now, filled with sweet potato whipped cream and caramel cream. I also tried Häagen-Dazs' limited Nou Mitsu Imo (濃蜜いも), which is sweet potato ice cream with a thick sweet potato sauce running through it. Even the packaging, all deep purple and gold, looks like autumn.

It sounds like a small thing, but it means a trip to the convenience store never feels quite the same from one month to the next. I've actually started checking the shelves to see what's new. Food here keeps track of the seasons in a way I didn't really expect before I came.