

# MANUAL

## FOR A STYLISH LIFE

The skills, tips and knowledge every man requires to look and be his best.

### Disclaimer:

Japanophiles are not to be confused with weebos (a subculture referring to anime-crazed individuals). Special thanks to Chikako Shirahama, a Japanese.

## The Esquire guide on how to be a Japanophile

If Anglophiles and Francophiles haven't already conquered the world, we now gladly remind you of the subculture that has surely and steadily infiltrated the masses: Japanophiles.

**Definition:** A Japanophile is someone who loves and admires Japan, often to the point of favouring Japan or Japanese culture over his or her own, sometimes beyond the point of rationality. Sounds like a serious case of cherry-blossom-tinted glasses to us.

### How to be a [classy] Japanophile

As much as you like exclaiming *kawaii!* at the top of your lungs at every single thing, we'd like to think that you still have every bit of charm left in you to understand its glory in the form of literature, fine arts, tea, and yes, fashion.

### First things first, understand the concept of wabi-sabi

This has nothing to do with *wasabi*, but it's a philosophy of living. *Wabi-sabi* is the art of finding beauty in imperfection. Bringing *wabi-sabi* into your life is as simple as appreciating the chipped wood of an antique cupboard or admiring a faded piece of cloth. It is the essence of a simple and fulfilling life of imperfection and impermanence. The bottom line: learning to live in the moment, while enjoying the simplest things in life—which, of course, includes *Dragon Ball Z*.

### Get acquainted with tea ceremonies

The British may lay claim to tea domination, but to the Japanese, tea is everything. If you find yourself confused with Japan's *varie-tea*, start with *matcha* (powdered green tea). Also called The Way of Tea, the Japanese tea ceremony is the cultural act of preparing *matcha* in a choreographed and aesthetic manner. The act of preparing and drinking said tea comes with a lot of spiritual depth, serenity and silence.

### Pay homage like a pilgrim

B-grade Japanophiles may have made trips to Japan, but true Japanophiles are the ones that have found their Zen after criss-crossing the country, whether it's the bustle of Tokyo or the picturesque vistas of Hokkaido (or the geishas of Kyoto), and continue making trips to their sweet spot again and again. They are almost as good as the locals with food recommendations and directions.

### Understand the heart of Japan through food and art

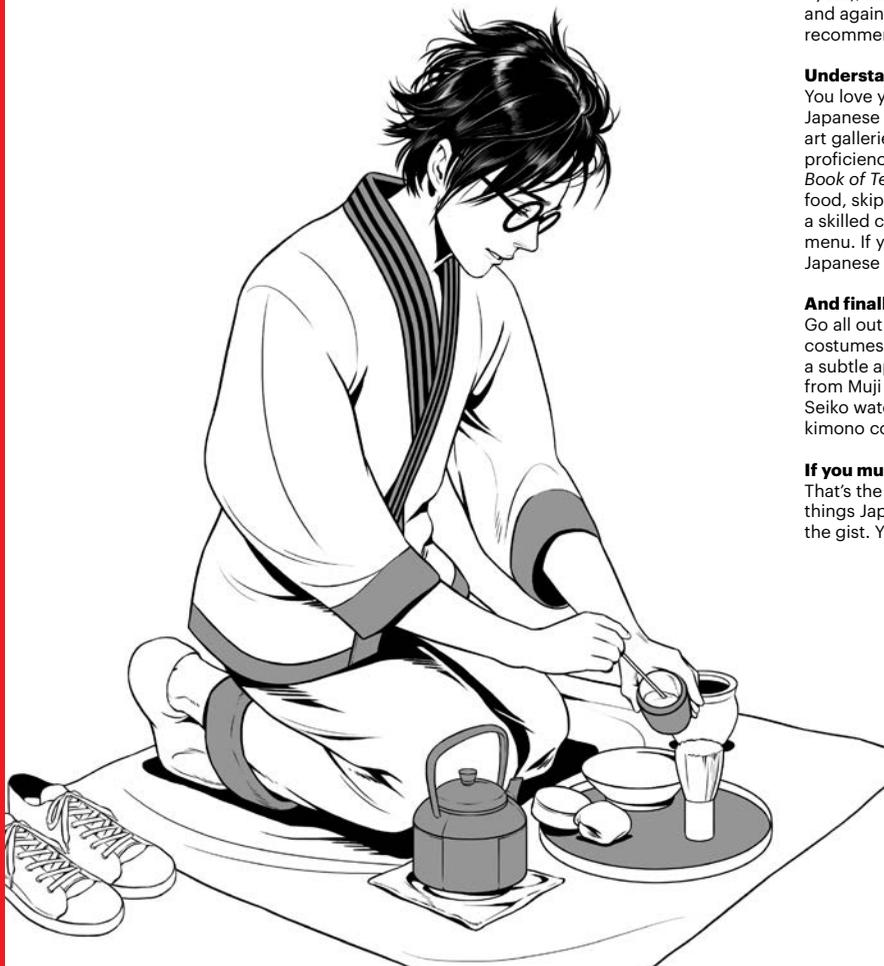
You love your J-pop, but take some time to appreciate Japanese folk songs or peruse Japanese fine art at national art galleries (or the Internet). Though it'll take time to develop proficiency for *haiku*, you can start with Okakura Kakuzō's *The Book of Tea* or Murasaki Shikibu's *The Tale of Genji*. As for the food, skip the regular *sushi* joints and opt for *omakase*, where a skilled chef will prepare an indulgent course-by-course menu. If you're lucky, he'll give you a lesson or two about Japanese food.

### And finally, the fashion

Go all out with the graphic Harajuku-esque prints and cosplay costumes when the season strikes, but if you're looking for a subtle approach, we recommend scoring quality pieces from Muji or Uniqlo. Must-haves include a Sashiko coat, a Seiko watch, keyhole glasses, brogues, white sneakers, and a kimono complete with *tabi* socks and a pair of *zori*.

### If you must, court a Japanese girl

That's the ultimate insider's view to unlocking the amulet of all things Japanese, from rituals to fashion, food and... you get the gist. You might as well apply for citizenship after that.



### Popular Japanese teas

Ryokucha  
Ujicha  
Sencha  
Matcha  
Hojicha  
Bancha

## How to enjoy ramen

It's a huge misconception (a crime, actually) that three-quarters of the world think that *ramen* is a silly hangover cure or "cheapo student food" that one can get from 7-Eleven with loose change. We dissect Japan's perfection in a bowl, strand by strand. Thanks to **Tadashi Ono** and **Harris Salat**, authors of *Japanese Soul Cooking: Ramen, Tonkatsu, Tempura and More from the Streets and Kitchens of Tokyo and Beyond*.



### Main types of ramen

**Shoyu ramen:** This is as original as it gets. Hailing from Yokohama, *shoyu ramen* comes with a soy-sauce-based broth, so expect nuanced salty and sweet flavours. Traditionally paired with chicken- or beef-based broths, it's common to see *tonkotsu* broths flavoured with *shoyu*.

**Shio ramen:** The sea-salt-based broth is clean and light; however, this is what we'd call an "acquired taste". If you're used to something that doesn't require downing endless glasses of water, stay clear. Expect hints of ginger, garlic and *saké* fused into one salty mess.

**Miso ramen:** Known to be the youngest form of *ramen*, this Hokkaido staple gained popularity in the mid-'60s where the heavy and bold flavours of the fermented bean paste came in handy during the cold weather. Probably one of the only

bowls to have unique toppings like corn, shredded crispy pork and shitake mushrooms.

**Tonkotsu ramen:** The most popular of the lot, the Hakata porcine obsession has hogged the spotlight in recent times and we can see why. This robust pork bone broth is boiled for up to 15 hours, resulting in a milky, golden colour that leaves a nice, oily sheen on your lips—something to substitute that ChapStick.

**Kimchi ramen:** With the rise of K-pop, it seems like a no-brainer that a Korean version of this notable noodle dish would find itself a place on the menu eventually. Particularly popular for home-cooked *ramen*, the sour-spicy taste of *kimchi* is what amps the bowl with the kind of crunch that puts those store-bought pretenders to shame.

### How to eat ramen

**1.** Savour the soup while it's hot. You'll most probably burn your tongue, but we reckon that this is what we'd call the good kind of burn. Nurse that burn with a cold beer.

**2.** Slurp loudly. Ono and Salat explain that it cools the noodles before they reach your lips. It also signals to the chef that his tireless labour in the kitchen hasn't been in vain. Tip: ditch the white T-shirt while you're at it.

**3.** Tuck into the toppings **after** spending a considerable amount of time on the soup and the noodles, and slowly alternate between topping-noodle-soup. Repeat.

**4.** Shut up and eat. Authentic *ramen* joints are silent—except for the slurping and the banter between the cooks. Ono and Salat explain that the *ramen* experience lasts for close to 10 minutes before it gets cold; hence, the golden rule of silence. If you're thinking of shooting the bull, head for sushi instead.



### Types of noodles

The type of noodle used in *ramen* is serious business. The two most common ones are **thin and straight**, usually spotted in *tonkotsu* broths, and **thick and wavy**, a signature in *miso* broths. The emphasis is placed on the "QQ" texture—the springy and bouncy texture that comes with a nice chewy feel.

### Common toppings

**Chashu**  
(two to four slices of braised pork belly)

**Eggs**  
(Most common is the *ajiitsuke tamago*, a soft-boiled egg that's been marinated in soy sauce and *mirin*. The outcome is a salty-sweet taste with a liquid golden yolk.)

**Scallions**

**Fresh garlic**

**Enoki mushrooms**

**Nori**  
(sheets of seaweed)