

# *Sushi*

When thinking about Japanese food that is popular among foreign tourists, Sukiyaki, Tempura and Sushi may come to mind. There is a boom of Japanese food all over the world: not only because it is healthy, but also because it is tasty and visually beautiful.

But actually, sushi is not Japanese in origin.



The origin of sushi dates back to the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, BC, in South-East Asia. At that time, sushi was used as a method of preserving fish to provide protein. The cleaned and gutted fish were kept in rice so that the natural fermentation of the rice helped preserve the fish. Dozens of days, or months later, the fish was picked out and eaten, and the rice was thrown away. It was called “Narezushi”.



“Narezushi” spread to mainland China, then came to Japan around the 8<sup>th</sup> Century, AD, during the Heian period.

As time went by, sushi went through several changes in Japan.

The fermentation time was cut down to about seven days, and the rice was eaten together with fish. This was referred to as “Namanarezushi”. Then, the fermentation time was shortened even further. Around 1600, a new kind of sushi appeared with vinegar added to the rice. This was known as “Hayazushi”, which translates to quick sushi: people waited only one night to eat it!

Then, in the 1820s, a great change happened. A sushi chef named Hanaya Yohei pressed vineyard rice into his hand and put a piece of fish on it. People were now able to eat sushi right away. This is the beginning of “Nigirizushi” His business was a great success, and sushi rapidly became popular. After the Great Kanto Earthquake in 1923, a lot of sushi chefs left Tokyo and Nigirizushi spread throughout Japan.

Around the 1980s, a sushi boom hit the United States, and a lot of sushi bars appeared. With the advent of sushi robots which use the technology of skillful sushi chefs, the sushi boom has extended not only to the United States but also around the world.



According to some statistics, the number of Japanese restaurants overseas is estimated to be 20,000 ~ 24,000. North America has approximately 10,000 sushi shops, followed by Asia, with about 6,000-9,000 shops; Europe with about 2,000 shops, Central and South America with about 1,500 shops, Oceania with about 500-1000, Russia with about 500 shops, and the Middle East with about 100 Japanese food restaurants, 60% of which serve sushi.