

Background of Some Japanese Expressions about Food (3):

"*Hoku-hoku*" and "*Kokkuri*"

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Summary

Food descriptive terms not only describe food properties; they also provide insights into any given society or culture. The Japanese language has numerous expressions for food properties. In this article, I would like to explain a little about the historical, cultural and social background of some Japanese food descriptive words that are used frequently in the autumn.

"*Hoku-hoku*" is an expression for pleasant softness and warmness. The foods described as "*hoku-hoku*" are neither watery nor sticky. It is applied to baked potato, *yaki-imo* (baked sweet potato) and *amaguri* (sweet roasted chestnuts), etc. The origin of the word could be "*ho*" (fire) or "*ho*" (inside). Japanese traditionally eat "*hoku-hoku*" foods such as potato and chestnuts every autumn. They give thanks to nature for autumnal fruit and enjoy it.

"*Kokkuri*" is used rave about foods. The origin of the word might be "*koi*" (dark). Although it has been used since the Edo era, it described only color at first. Recently, it has come to express taste and flavor as well as color. It is applied to *nimono* seasoned with soy sauce, walnut cake and: rich flavored soup, etc. "*Kokkuri*" might refer to a beautiful dark color and/or rich flavor made by sugar, soy sauce, oils and fats and/or soup stock.