



## What's Nikkei?

Nikkei refers to "Japanese emigrants and their descendants who have established communities around the world." Throughout different regions, various terms are used to describe these communities, reflecting their unique histories and cultural integrations. For instance, in the United States and Canada, the term *Nisei* specifically denotes the second-generation Japanese immigrants born in these countries. In Brazil, the largest population of Japanese descendants outside Japan is known as *Nikkei Burajiru-jin*, highlighting the profound impact and longstanding presence they have had in Brazilian society. Similarly, in countries like Peru, Australia, and the Philippines, terms like *Nikkei* or *Nikkei-jin* are used to honor and recognize the contributions of Japanese descendants to the local culture and economy.

When it comes to the cuisine of the Japanese diaspora, *Nikkei* is the most widely recognized term, often associated specifically with the culinary traditions developed by Japanese descendants in Peru. This fusion cuisine masterfully blends traditional Japanese techniques and ingredients with the bold flavors and indigenous products of Peru, resulting in dishes such as ceviche (which was forever changed by Japanese influence), tiradito, and anticucho-style grilled meats infused with soy and miso. These dishes not only showcase the harmonious blend of two rich culinary heritages but have also gained international acclaim, influencing chefs and food enthusiasts around the globe.

Beyond Peru, Nikkei communities worldwide have made significant and diverse culinary contributions by adapting Japanese cooking methods to local tastes and available ingredients. In Brazil, for example, the

integration of Japanese cuisine has led to unique creations like sushi rolls featuring tropical fruits such as mango and papaya, stuffed “pastel” pastries and tempura made with locally sourced vegetables and seafood. In the United States, particularly in Hawaii, the Japanese diaspora has influenced local cuisine through dishes like poke bowls that incorporate Japanese sauces and marinades, pineapple-infused teriyaki and spam musubi, a popular snack that reflects a blend of Japanese rice balls and local Hawaiian flavors. These adaptations not only preserve the essence of Japanese culinary art but also enrich the food culture of their adopted homelands.

Wherever Japanese communities have settled abroad, there is a consistent thread of deep respect for traditional Japanese culinary principles, such as emphasis on freshness, seasonality, and meticulous preparation. At the same time, these communities embrace and incorporate local ingredients and cooking styles, resulting in dynamic and evolving cuisines that tell stories of migration, adaptation, and cultural exchange. These gastronomic traditions serve as a delicious testament to the resilience and creativity of the Nikkei people, bridging cultures and bringing diverse communities together through the universal language of food.