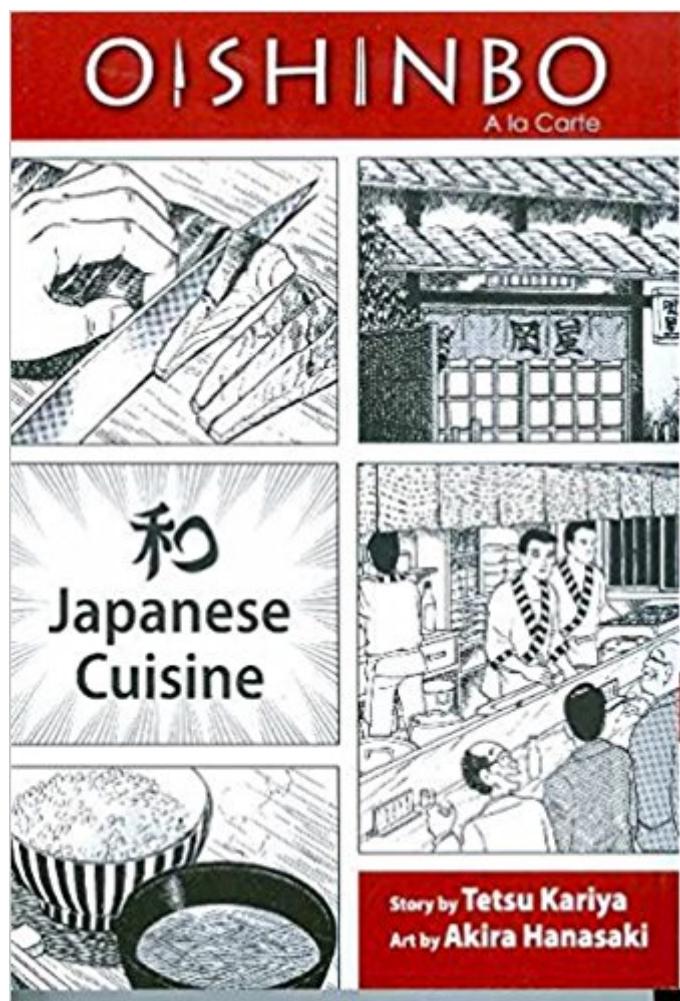


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# OISHINBO: JAPANESE CUISINE: A La Carte



## Synopsis

Follow journalist Yamaoka Shiro on a rich culinary adventure as he hunts for the "ultimate menu". To commemorate its 100th anniversary the heads of newspaper Tozai Shimbun come up with a plan to publish the "Ultimate Menu". The assignment is given to journalist Yamaoka Shiro, the protagonist of the series. With the help of a female coworker, Kurita Yuko, Yamaoka starts off on what can only be termed an epic saga to find the dishes that will go into the "Ultimate Menu". The subject of volume 1 is Nishon ryori, or Japanese cuisine, featuring stories on subjects like how to prepare a proper dashi (broth that is one of the building blocks of Japanese cooking), or matcha (the powdered green tea used in the tea ceremony), or red snapper sashimi. The subjects of the later volumes are: 2) sake, 3) fish, 4) vegetables, 5) rice dishes, 6) udon, and 7) izakaya or "pub" food. To commemorate its 100th anniversary the heads of newspaper Tozai Shimbun come up with a plan to publish the "Ultimate Menu". The assignment is given to journalist Yamaoka Shiro, the protagonist of the series. With the help of a female coworker, Kurita Yuko, Yamaoka starts off on what can only be termed an epic saga to find the dishes that will go into the "Ultimate Menu".

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 10 Up •This is the first title in a manga series that will highlight thematic selections from the more than 100 Oishinbo volumes published since the 1980s in Japan. The premise is that rival newspapers (an almost charmingly outdated notion these days) are competing to create "The

Ultimate Menu," a meal that will embody "the pinnacle of Japanese cuisine." Tension sizzles as the volatile and oft-misunderstood Yamaoka is pitted against his famous bulldozer of a father, Kaibara. Each "course" in this menu features an in-depth exploration of an aspect of Japanese culture and cuisine, from the intricacies of chopstick making and use to the importance of holistic cooking to the integrity of a dish. The artwork is static, with simplistic characterization and expression that does little to add depth to the story. Fluidity between panels is slightly lacking, too. Color recipes and detailed notes on the text are included. All said, clearly the author has a passion for Japanese cooking, and his enthusiasm is contagious. A pinch of Rebel Without a Cause served with a generous spoonful of Iron Chef, this book will be snapped up by the ever-growing ranks of Japanophiles, as well as foodies.  Shannon Peterson, Kitsap Regional Library, WA

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Manga writer and essayist extraordinaire Tetsu Kariya graduated from prestigious Tokyo University. Kariya was employed with a major advertising agency before making his debut as a manga writer in 1974 when he teamed up with legendary manga artist Ryoichi Ikegami to create *Otoko Gumi* (Male Gang). The worlds of food and manga were forever changed in 1983 when Kariya, together with artist Akira Hanasaki, created the immensely popular and critically acclaimed *Oishinbo*.

This comic actually turned out pretty fun to read. You learn quite a lot about Japanese cuisine and culture while also following the main characters solve dilemmas (food related, of course) and their task of making the "Ultimate Menu" articles for their newspaper. The only detractor I have for this comic is about how it's published. It's not presented in chronological order, so you're not reading from the first chapter; instead you're reading chapters picked to fit the theme of the published volume. So you end up with chapters where the art style has improved since it's from a later edition. This also makes it hard to follow the character's personal story arcs. One character for instance is dating a rice cracker maker and then later in the book she's pregnant. The second volume shows the wedding planning for this character, but since that one focuses on saki it's not included in this volume. It's not hard to follow but it is slightly irksome.

The *Oishinbo* 'a la carte' collections are an excellent way to get your Japanese food fix while reading manga. All the major elements of Japanese cuisine are represented along with some classic stylistic devices - the feud between the older traditional father and rebellious son, love interests, and plenty of showdown battles. There reaches a point in your development when you're

no longer just an otaku young adult, and you can get sick of continuous fantasy battles and power beams and magic etc etc... Oishinbo manages to retain the exciting elements of Manga with more real world content - food, drink, opinion and criticism. It's like a lively debate with your friends over the dinner table on the best food and restaurants. This collection covers the 'basics' of Japanese cuisine, including sashimi, tea and table manners as well as giving some background as to the feud between the protagonist and his father. Each book also contains a recipe or menu item that is featured in one of the stories, and a personal article from the writer, both of which add to the context of the stories and add to your enjoyment. This edition contains two intriguing sashimi styles I can't wait to try. Each story informs and entertains. I'm a devoted collector.

Even the most die-hard of literary 'foodies' will find much delight in this first volume of Tetsu Kariya's comic-book "Oishinbo" series. Forget about the characters and meager, unifying storyline for the time being. The beauty of this series is the sheer amount of detail conveyed in its bite-sized, easily digestible, graphic novel format. Concepts such as what comprises the 'essence' of Japanese cuisine oftentimes gets muddled in erudite and pretentious articulations when presented in text-essay format but here, with simplistic illustration and breezy flow from one panel to another the reader quickly absorbs complex and detailed concepts with very little effort. This book will certainly appeal to foodies first and foremost. Whether you have a detailed understanding of Japanese cuisine or are a neophyte curious to learn more there is much to be gleaned within for both parties. Do not be turned off just because of its comic format, at 276 pages this book is information dense and you may be surprised to discover the efficiency of the medium in presenting its subject matter.

Even though this series is written in the manga style, I learn something new about the history of Japanese cuisine with every volume. There are even 1 or 2 recipes included at the end of each book. Even read in order, the back story of the individual characters is still a bit disjointed and hard to follow. The back stories are not that closely interwoven into the culinary stories, so character development comes in second to food. So, if you are looking for a manga story with food thrown in, try elsewhere. If you want to know more about how the Japanese developed their cuisine and a bit of their food culture, this short series may do just fine.

Simply perfect. Important cultural lessons taught in a beautiful culturally significant medium that just happens to be an extraordinarily effective teaching tool. Amazing!

Took me some time to get into the particular rythm of the narration, but once I was in, I loved the characters and the poetic way of describing every day life.

Reading this makes me want to rush out to a Japanese restaurant. Also makes me want to be a better person - to strive for perfection, give more attention to detail, and master my craft (whatever it is).

I came across this through and have thoroughly enjoyed it. I'm only on the second volume now, Sake, and think I'm hooked. I'm not a huge comic / manga reader - nothing against it, just never got into it. Basically it's a graphic novel about food. If you're into eating and good food check this series out.

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