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One Hundred Years of Happiness

By Paola Lizares



Me when I grow up

They say that a short and happy life is better than a long and sad life. But nothing can beat a long and happy life.

It's up to you to decide what makes your life happy. What I can do is give you the best tip ever to make your life longer: emigrate to Japan. Why? Because Japan has the right to be proud of having the world's highest life expectancy. Women reach 85. Men reach 78. And there are more than 20,000 Japanese centenarians.

It is true that Andorra or San Marino have even higher life expectancies than Japan, but I'm not going to compare countries with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants with a country that has almost 130 million¹.

So what are the 'secrets' to Japanese longevity? Most people already know that the Japanese diet is one of the healthiest ones in the world. Poor in saturated fats, it is a very varied diet: the average Japanese eats more than 100 types of food, especially vegetables, in only one week. A key role is played by green tea, rich in antioxidants that prevent cancer and cardiovascular diseases. It is never drunk with milk or sugar. As for meat and fish, the average Japanese eats twice as much fish than meat, while western people eat - hold your breath! - fifty times more meat than fish. We must also bear in mind the *way* meals are eaten. Japanese meals are exquisitely slow rituals. We aren't talking about rushed meals watching television.

However, Japanese longevity cannot only be due to their diet. In the 1930s, the Japanese diet was as healthy as nowadays, but few people reached the age of 50. It is therefore obvious that not only their eating habits influence their long life span. Japan has become a very rich country after World War II, and this has contributed to an excellent health and pension system. Not to mention their high level of education, which keeps the Japanese well-informed in health matters and, most of all, keeps their minds busy, even in old age.

So now you know. If you want to live long, emigrate to Japan. If you can't go so far away, imitate their lifestyle as much as possible. Eat and drink like them, find a country with wonderful social benefits, and keep your brain fit. *Mata raishuu!*²

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¹ From www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook

² See you next week!