

recent concerns about the radioactive wastewater have made customers more willing to accept alternative sources, according to China's business news outlet Yicai.

A staff of the Qing Shan Lan restaurant said ingredients like sea urchin and tuna, previously imported from Japan, can be sourced elsewhere. Sea urchin, for instance, is imported from North Korea and tuna from Spain.

"The taste might have a slight difference, but prices will not change for now because the cost of these products is quite high," he said.

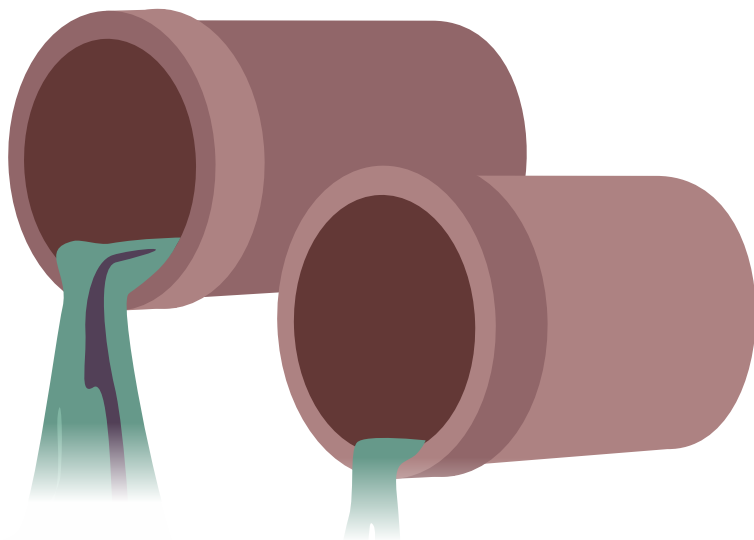
Some Chinese customers flocked to Japanese restaurants earlier this week for a "last supper" before the Fukushima water discharge.

"At present, we believe that seafood in Japanese restaurants remains safe, so we chose to dine here for a final reassuring meal," said a customer surnamed Zhang.

Wasabi, a Japanese restaurant where the average diner pays 786 yuan for a meal, said that most of its ingredients are imported from France or New Zealand.

Another high-end Japanese restaurant, with average per-person tab of 1,029 yuan, said it will import bluefin tuna from Boston, United States, rather than from Japan. "The taste might be slightly inferior to Japanese tuna, but the freshness can be ensured and the prices will remain the same," an employee at the restaurant explained.

Some restaurants have taken steps to reassure consumers by creating posters that indicate the origin of various ingredients.



A poster at the Kobayashi Sashimi restaurant states that menu features scallops and spotted prawns from Canada, sweet shrimp from Russia, salmon from Norway, tuna from Australia, and sea urchin, ark shells and scallops from Dalian in the northeastern province of Liaoning.

The Chinese mainland imported US\$13.8 billion of edible seafood in 2021, mainly from countries like Ecuador, Russia, Canada, the United States, India and Norway. Japan accounted for the lowest proportion of purchases at only 2.8 percent.

Longyangxia, a salmon aquaculture company in the northwestern province of Qinghai, said the company has an increase in orders recently.

The discerning diner may taste the difference between Japanese products and those purchased elsewhere. Chefs sometimes must adapt cooking techniques to compensate for disparities in texture and flavor.

Japan's Nagasaki bluefin tuna, for instance, is known for rich fattiness spread

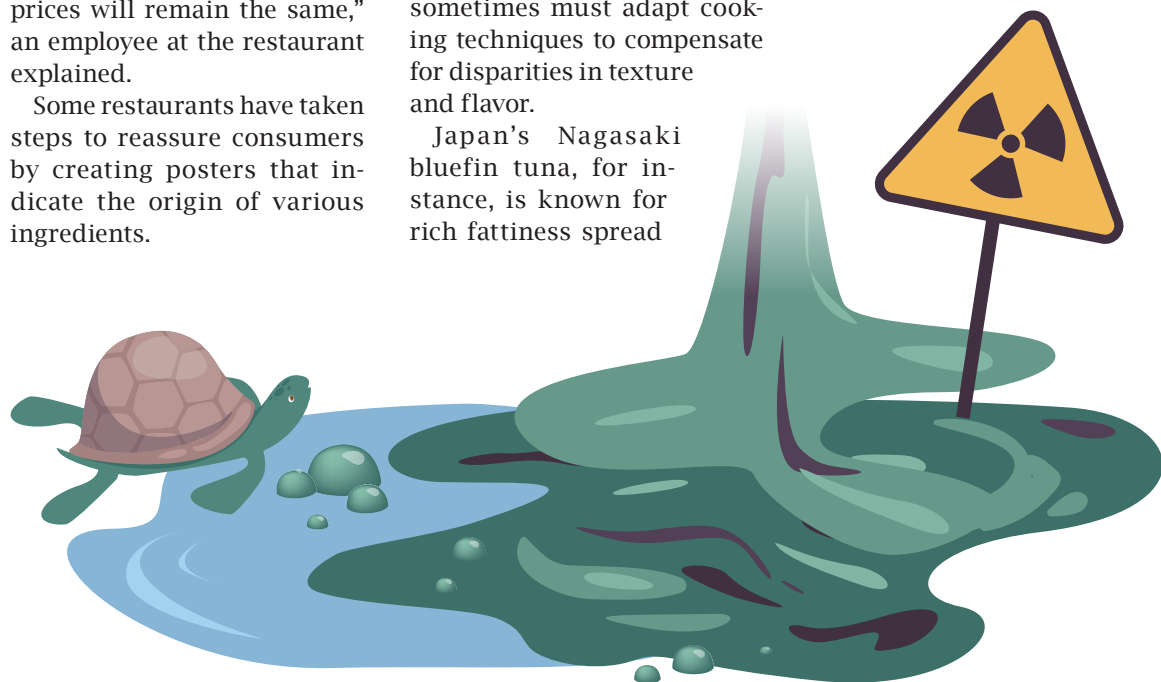
evenly through the fish, but a substitute from Spain has a firmer texture and less fat. That requires a change in the marinating process, according to chefs.

Zhu Zhongjie, a Japanese cuisine chef, said he has to deep-fry domestic mackerel to compensate for the lack of richness compared with Japanese mackerel.

Several market regulatory authorities in Shanghai launched targeted inspections last Thursday, focusing on supermarkets and restaurants that deal with imported Japanese food products.

No issues were identified. All fresh seafood products passed customs inspections and did not violate the ban.

(Jia Fang and Chen Yian also contributed to the story.)



Tourists shun Japan after Fukushima discharge

Hu Min

A SIGN of a reshuffle in China's outbound tourism market for the National Day holiday is being witnessed following Japan's decision to discharge nuclear-contaminated water from the crippled Fukushima nuclear plant into the ocean.

Chinese travel agencies said they had already received cancellation requests from some tourists who had booked tours to Japan.

At the same time, major Chinese online travel operators such as Trip.com, Tongcheng Travel, Tuniu and Lvmama have quickly adjusted their marketing strategies and display pages to remove Japan from prominent positions.

"We have kept receiving cancellation requests on trip orders to Japan in the last two days," said the head of a big travel agency, who declined to be identified. "Some guests planning to travel to Japan during the National Day holiday now hold a wait-and-see attitude."

Amy Wang, a Shanghai resident, planned to travel to Japan with her friends during the holiday, but is having second thoughts. "I originally planned to go there and buy some cosmetic products at the same time, and was already preparing relevant materials for the visa," she said. "But now, we will very likely change our destination."

Japan turned out to be the most popular tourist destination among Chinese travelers for the National Day holiday following the expansion of the list of outbound destinations for Chinese tour groups released in August by China's Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Shanghai-based online travel operator Trip.com announced 2,000 tour products to Japan after the expansion.

Chinese travel operators said they would now make adjustments on marketing plans and had suspended Japanese tourism promotion plans.

Shanghai-based online travel operator Lvmama is now promoting itineraries to Germany, the United Kingdom and Northern European countries for the holiday instead.

The impact may linger for a very long time, according to Zhang Zhining, a tourism industry insider.

