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TAI FISH

The tai, or sea bream, is considered the king among fishes in Japan. Out of the many types of tai, the madai, or 'genuine tai', is the most sought-after species. It is highly valued for the bright red colour and rich flavour; the Japanese believe that the succulent texture of the flesh comes from having to swim against the currents. Tai fish can be found in local wet markets, but note that these cannot be used for sashimi. Local tai is sold for approximately RM20 per kg while Japanese wild tai costs about RM70 per kg.

The tai is a highly valued luxury commodity in Japan and the best season to have it is between March and April, coinciding with cherry blossom season, which is why it's also known as 'cherry blossom bream'. It is consumed during the New Year and on special occasions such as weddings or after the birth of a baby as it is believed to bring good luck. Japanese households also hang a pair of tai at the entrance of their homes to ward off evil. Sumo wrestlers and sometimes politicians also show off a large catch as the word tai is similar to the word for joyous and auspicious. Tai is commonly served raw as sashimi, Carpaccio, salt-grilled or steamed.

Try: Tai Kamameshi or Tai Sashimi
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