

The Japanese vocabulary of texture

Twenty-one words for what food does in the mouth — and what chocolate borrows from them.

TERM	KANA	SENSORY CORE	JAPANESE EXAMPLES	WESTERN EXAMPLES
Shaki-shaki	シャキシヤキ	Crisp, watery crunch; cell-wall fracture	Bean sprouts, daikon	Cucumber, crisp apple
Shari-shari	シャリシャリ	Light, grainy, crystalline; icy or sandy	Kakigōri, nashi pear	Ripe pear, granita
Pari-pari	バリバリ	Thin, brittle, ringing crispness	Nori, senbei	Filo pastry, thin wafer
Saku-saku	サクサク	Dry, airy, friable; low resistance	Tempura batter, karintō	Shortbread, digestive biscuit
Kari-kari	カリカリ	Harder, drier crunch than saku-saku	Karaage, hard senbei	Hard caramel, croutons
Gari-gari	ガリガリ	Hard, dry crunch through dense resistance	Raw carrot, ice bars	Hard ice cubes, roasted almonds
Kori-kori	コリコリ	Firm, cartilaginous, springy crunch	Octopus, chicken cartilage	Calamari, water chestnut
Puri-puri	ブリブリ	Plump, springy, juicy bounce	Fresh shrimp, plump gyoza	A firm, ripe grape
Mochi-mochi	もちもち	Springy, elastic, dense rebound	Mochi, fresh udon	Fresh bagel, mozzarella
Fuwa-fuwa	ふわふわ	Soft, pillowy, near-zero resistance	Soufflé pancake, chiffon cake	Marshmallow, candy floss
Toro-toro	とろとろ	Thick, slow-flowing, viscous	Nikujaga stew, ankake sauce	Fondue, runny egg yolk
Nameraka	なめらか	Smooth, flowing, silky	Silken tofu, goma-dōfu	Crème anglaise, silky ice cream
Shittori	しっとり	Moist, tender, supple — not wet	Castella cake, yōkan	Pound cake, brownie
Puru-puru	ぶるぶる	Soft, elastic, gently wobbling	Kanten jelly, custard pudding	Panna cotta, soft gummy
Zarazara	ざらざら	Rough, gritty; undissolved particles	Kurozatō sugar, gritty matcha	Sandy nut butter, coarse polenta
Neba-neba	ねばねば	Sticky, stringy, cohesive pull	Nattō, okra, grated yam	Honey, melted marshmallow
Baki	バキッ	Heavy, dense, resonant crack	Hard senbei, frozen mochi	Thick cracker, peanut brittle
Funya-funya	ふにゃふにゃ	Limp, floppy; lacking firmness	Wilted vegetables, overcooked udon	Limp fries, stale liquorice
Jari-jari	ジャリジャリ	Unwanted grit; sand-like	Sand in shellfish, gritty spinach	Grit in mussels, undissolved sugar
Beta-beta	べたべた	Sticky, greasy, clammy film	Old tempura oil, over-glazed yakitori	Greasy cold pizza
Pasa-pasa	パサパサ	Dry, lifeless, lost moisture	Cold leftover rice, stale mochi	Stale bread, overcooked chicken

The snap. The melt. The finish.

A Japanese vocabulary for the texture of craft chocolate.

+ WHAT DELIGHTS

- WHAT DISAPPOINTS

PHASE 01

The snap

The break happens before you savour — heard and felt.

+ Baki バキッ

A dense, resonant crack

Snapping a thick wheat cracker or a hard breadstick

+ Pari-pari パリパリ

A thin, ringing snap

The shatter of a crisp poppadom

- Saku-saku サクサク

Crumbles instead of a clean break

A stale shortbread that crumbles in your fingers

- Funya-funya ふにやふにや

Limp and bendy — flops, not breaks

A bar half-melted in a warm car

PHASE 02

First contact

The first five seconds — the chocolate meets your tongue and the melt begins.

+ Nameraka なめらか

Velvety, instantly yielding, no drag

The first lick of soft-serve ice cream

+ Shari-shari シャリシャリ

A light, pleasant granularity

A good sorbet with fine ice crystals

- Jari-jari ジャリジャリ

Unwanted grit — shari-shari's evil twin

Sand in an under-rinsed mussel

- Beta-beta ベタベタ

Sticky, greasy, slightly clammy

A bar melted and reset, tacky to the touch

PHASE 03

The melt

Speed, viscosity, and how it coats the mouth.

+ Toro-toro とろとろ

Thick, slow, progressively coating

Warm caramel sauce poured over ice cream

+ Fuwa-fuwa ふわふわ

Light, rapid, near-instant melt

Candy floss dissolving on the tongue

+ Shittori しっとり

Moist and subtle, not too flowing

A good pound cake — moist but not wet

- Pasa-pasa パサパサ

Dry, chalky, little to no coating

Stale bread

- Neba-neba ねばねば

Gluey, stringy resistance

An overworked, gummy fondant

PHASE 04

The finish

What remains, long after the melt.

+ Shittori しっとり

A soft, gently clinging coating

The lingering richness of a classic custard

+ Shari-shari シャリシャリ

A pleasing, sandy dissolution

Demerara crystals lingering on a crème brûlée

+ Puru-puru ぷるぷる

A soft, jiggling yield

The wobble of a panna cotta

- Pasa-pasa パサパサ

A dry, chalky afterfeel

Low-cocoa-butter, heavily filled chocolates

- Zarazara ざらざら

A gritty residue as the finish fades

Poorly dissolved cocoa powder at the bottom of a mug

Practise at home.

Try these phrases with our texture tasting box, or with your next Cocoa Runners Club box — and tell us how your language describes texture.