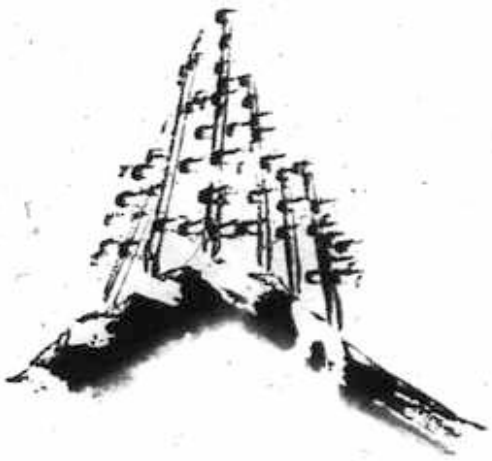
Pacific Citizen





Red and
White and Holiday
Bright. A small girl
wishes with all her might.
With both hands wrapped 'round
the treat
A holiday dream that s fragile and
sweet.

From bottom to top
the red ribbon spirals

A cluster of pines brushed with
icy mist
cool as frosted mint of a sugary
twist.

Candy Cane shadows on snow-
covered hill
the season s spirit, a magical
thrill.

Hat on head, shoes buckled tight
Red and White and
Holiday Bright.

Drue Kataoka

1998 Holiday Issue

Japanese American Food Culture

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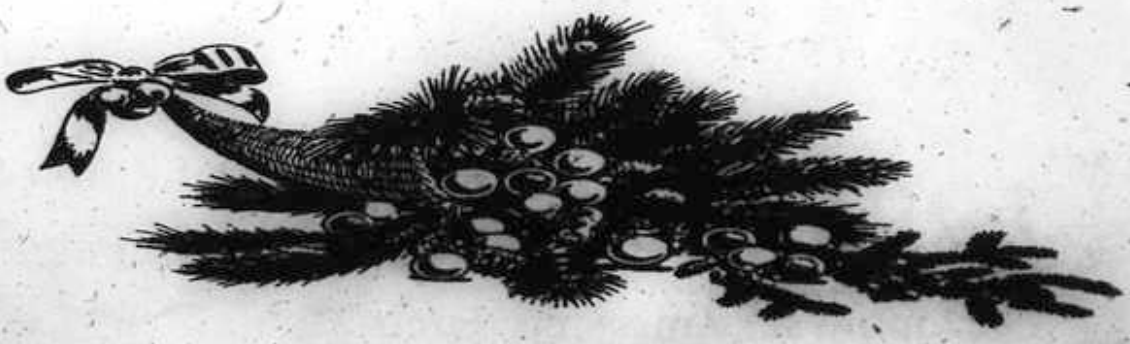
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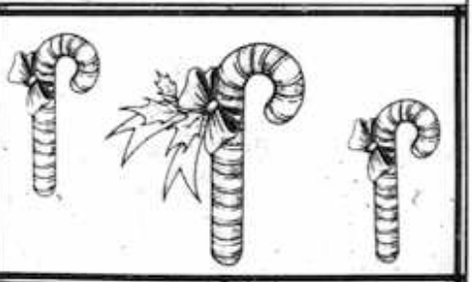
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Welcome to the 1998 Holiday Issue

Japanese American Food Culture

Each year as the *Pacific Citizen's* annual Holiday Issue approaches, the pressure is on to come up with a fun, interesting, yet thought-provoking theme for our readers. Once again, the P.C. staff has managed to do just that.

This year's HI theme is food, more specifically, how food has played a significant role in the development and continuation of Japanese American culture. Featured in this issue are a wide variety of authors who have contributed well-written and fascinating pieces. Some wrote of their special relationships with their grandmothers and the role that JA food has played, including Loren Kajikawa and Sachi Seki. Others told of the role JA food played during World War II, from the concentration camps and behind the frontlines, including Jim Yamasaki and Rob Oba of Hawaii. Still others explored their identity and the role JA food has played, including Velina Hasu Houston and Craig Ishihara. These are just a handful of the interesting articles you will read in this issue.

Pacific Citizen would like to thank all of the contributors for taking the time to submit pieces for this special issue. We would also like to thank all of our advertisers for making this issue possible and give a special acknowledgement to all of the chapter representatives who continue to solicit advertisements each year. Their names are listed in "P.C.'s People Who Count" on page 5.

And finally, the 120-page issue would not have been successful without the P.C. staff and volunteers who put in countless hours, starting from just after Thanksgiving until mid-December.

A special thanks to staffers: Brian Tanaka, Martha Nakagawa, Harry Honda, Margot Brunswick, Tracy Uba, Mene Kara and Mika Tanner. And thanks to volunteers: Gayle Jue, Carol Tanaka, Eva Lau-Ting, Pang Kam Yuen, Jin Shin, Juan Ramos, Alan Kubo, Mario G. Reyes, and Jeff Liu.

Enjoy the issue and have a safe and happy holidays!



Caroline Aoyagi
Executive Editor



Holiday Issue staff and volunteers — Front row (from left): Kyndall Ting, Eva Lau-Ting, Pang Kam Yuen, Jin Shin, Margot Brunswick; Back row: Brian Tanaka, Martha Nakagawa, Caroline Aoyagi, Alan Kubo, Harry Honda, Mene Kara, Tracy Uba. Not pictured: Mika Tanner, Carol Tanaka, Gayle Jue, Juan Ramos, Mario G. Reyes, Jeff Liu.

Pacific Citizen

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Founded in 1929, JACL is the nation's oldest and largest Asian American civil and human rights organization with a 25,000 membership base. JACL has 112 chapters nationwide, five regional offices, three district offices, a Washington, D.C., office and a national headquarters in San Francisco. JACL's mission is to secure and uphold the human and civil rights of Japanese Americans and all Americans while preserving our cultural heritage and values.

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Cover Art



The cover art of this year's Pacific Citizen *Holiday Issue, entitled "Red and White and Holiday Bright," was done courtesy of professional sumi-e artist Drue Kataoka.*

Kataoka is affiliated with the Sequoia chapter and a recipient of the Henry and Chiyo Kuwahara Memorial Scholarship. Currently, she is a junior at Stanford and is well-known to the university community and to the Bay Area.

"Art of Steal," is the 1998 commemorative poster for Stanford's Men's Basketball's Historic Run to the Final Four that was released in November. This past year she continued to bridge art and sport with Gallery of Champions, a permanent installation of original paintings at the Taube Family Tennis Stadium funded by Tad Taube, and with "Kick Off 100," the artwork that the Department of Athletics commissioned her to create for the 100th anniversary of the Stanford/CAL Big Game commemorative poster.

"Explosive Movement" is an ongoing exhibition of a 50-piece collection celebrating the athletic brilliance of Stanford sports in the Arrillaga Family Sports Center. "Stanford Time" for the Department of Physics, and "Postcards from Stanford" for the Stanford Credit Union celebrate the beauty of sandstone and arches of the campus. The Departments of Communication and Music and the Hoover Institution have also commissioned her for special projects. "Cardinal Strokes," appearing weekly in The Stanford Daily *chronicles campus events and sports.*

Kataoka is currently designing a special panoramic wall in the Arillaga Family Sports Center that will be titled, "Cardinal Champions." Off-campus, Kataoka has been commissioned to create "Classic Cool," the artwork for the 1998 PGA Toshiba Senior Golf Classic in Newport Beach, Calif. Her website is: http://www.stanford.edu/~drue.

Cookin' with Grandma

by Loren Kajikawa



When I found out that the *Pacific Citizen*'s Holiday Issue would deal with the theme of food in Japanese American culture, I knew that I had a story to tell. I've recently begun to take some cooking lessons from my Nisei grandma. As a Yonsei male, this might seem a little odd. However, I find these informal sessions to be valuable, not just for the cooking knowledge, but also for some of the things these sessions have led to. The following is the story of what took place one hot Los Angeles summer between Grandma, some good food, and me.

It all starts two years ago during my year off from school. I'm loafing around my dad's house with nothing to do. It's summer. It's hot.

I'm beginning to think that maybe I made a mistake by taking time away from college. What am I going to do with myself for the next year?

My dad is also troubled by my sluggish behavior. Out of school and without a job, I must be a parent's worst nightmare. I'm sure my dad can just see visions of me moving back into the house, regressing into a dependent. In fact, I'm sure he's worried because it doesn't take him long to suggest that I go over to grandma's house and help her with her yard work. Hey, if I'm going to be living at home for free, then I'm going to earn my keep by pulling weeds, trimming trees and raking leaves out in grandma's yard.

I have to admit with shame that at this point, I don't know grandma. Of course I know her presence from a lifetime of family gatherings: Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Year's, birthday parties, etc. I suppose we even get together once in a while for a family dinner at our favorite Japanese restaurant. However, I haven't spent any time alone with grandma since she baby-sat my sister and me as youngsters. At best, I know her superficially. She's the lady who works incessantly in the kitchen during New Year's or Thanksgiving preparing food or washing empty dishes, the lady I pass and say "hi" to on my way outside to play basketball or ride my bike.

From talking to friends of mine, this is not an unusual scenario. Many friends report ambivalently that they never got to know their grandparents. Grandparents are people you say "hi" to when you arrive and "bye" to when you leave, but there is no deeper interaction. An uncomfortable space separates their relationships until the day their grandparents pass on (pretty depressing, eh?).

I guess at this point in my story I'm not too much different from these friends, except that grandma is still alive of course. So I arrange to go to grandma's house once a week and work in her yard. It is hard work. Grandpa died two years earlier, leaving quite a legacy in thegarden. The flowers and plants that he tended daily are now overgrown with weeds. It's my job to battle the weeds. On my hands and knees, I begin clearing small patches of land making room for flowers.

After a few hours of work under the hot sun, I'm tired and sweaty. Defeated for the day, I go inside to rest. To my surprise, grandma has prepared a veritable feast while I was laboring outside. She even chose to make my favorite childhood dish: shoyu chicken. I can hardly wait to begin eating. Eating this childhood favorite dish brings back memories of contests my sister and I used to have to see who could eat the most pieces. I always won, and today I do a pretty good job as well.

This weekly "work and feast" gets repeated. Every week after I work in the yard, I come inside to find that grandma has prepared another one (or two) of her specialties: steak and onions, Spam musubi, boiled watercress, spare ribs. All delicious. I'm beginning to think she's doing more work than I am!

Over lunch we talk about the yard's progress. A few areas looking better, a few areas not looking so good .... Sometimes I ask her where she learned to cook a certain dish. "This steak and onions comes from my Maui aunt. She had a small restaurant, like cafe kind."

Gradually, these questions about food lead to more questions, and soon I'm forced to realize that there is a lot that I don't know about grandma. So I decide to do an oral history, tape-recording an interview with grandma. I've heard rumors about grandma being born on a sugarcane plantation. I also remember hearing that she used to work in a pineapple cannery in Hawaii. But I want to know more. Through a series of about three interviews, grandma tells me her story. "Good times and bad times all rolled up into one," she says.

I have a feeling food brings us closer together. As we're sitting over a steaming hot plate of fried rice, she tells me little secrets left out of the tape-recorded interviews: Her mom brewed her own saké during prohibition for her father to drink. It was so good they even sold some!

When the police inspector from Honolulu came snooping around, grandma had to bury all of the saké-making equipment in the back yard! When I ask her why she didn't tell me these things during the interview, she says, "How can I say these things about my mother!" (Sorry, grandma.)

Soon I'm making plans with

See KAJIKAWA/Page 11

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From Ocha to SPAM

The Health Quotient of JA Foods



By Kathy Ishizuka

Most people understand that nutrition and health are related, but surveys reveal that few implement dietary interventions to lower their risk of disease.

Consider the following:

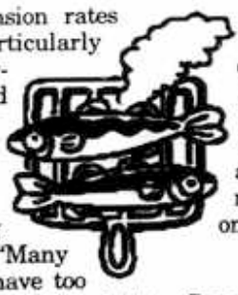
• According to recent California Department of Health statistics, Japanese American men are prone to colon cancer.

Ovary, breast, prostate, and other cancers are also occurring more frequently among JAs.

• Overall, the cancer mortality rate among JAs is climbing towards the national average.

• JA men have higher rates of diabetes and coronary heart disease than same-aged men in Japan.

• JA hypertension rates are rising, particularly among those living in Seattle and Los Angeles.



Contributing to this disturbing trend is our diet. "Many American diets have too many calories and too much fat (especially saturated fat), cholesterol and sodium. They also have too little complex carbohydrates and fiber," states the USDA Dietary Guidelines for Americans. "Such diets are one cause of America's high rates of obesity and of certain diseases — heart disease, high blood pressure, stroke, diabetes, and some forms of cancer."

Following is a health conscious listing of some common JA foods, many of which contain cancer fighting and other health promoting agents. As Hippocrates advised 2000 years ago: "Your food shall be your remedy."

Fish

JA men consume more fish than white Americans, but about one half the amount eaten by the Japanese. A diet high in fish, which contain cholesterol-lowering omega-3 fatty acids, contributes to the low rate of coronary heart disease in Japan. Containing less saturated fat than red meat, fish is a healthier protein source, and some nutrition experts recommend eating fish once or twice a week.



Consuming your catch

Many JAs proudly catch their own, but fishermen should be aware of any health issues concerning their local bounty.



"In general, the fish off our coast is clean and healthy," says Mary Larson, associate marine biologist for the California Department of

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eries biologist for the California DFG, advises sport fishermen to contact the local county health department for information, particularly when harvesting shellfish. The Health Department tracks red tide events, heavy rains, and sewer overflows, all of which can affect filter-feeding shellfish.

Soy Foods

Another excellent protein source, soy beans contain all eight essential amino acids and are high in fatty acids, including Omega-3. Calcium rich, soy foods contain phytoestrogens, which protect against breast and prostrate cancers, and can alleviate menopausal symptoms in women. Soy regulates insulin and blood sugar levels, and



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s by about nine
percent. That would be about six-half-cup servings of tofu a day! A tall order, even for JAs. If you're looking to achieve the full health benefit, you can supplement your diet with soy powder.

Many American staples are now available in soy form, including a milk substitute, cheese (rather gummy for my taste), chocolate, oil, flour, and — just in time for the holidays — tofurkey.

The following fermented soy products are common to most JA kitchens.

Miso starts from a base of cooked soy beans (in some varieties combined with grain) to which the enzyme *Aspergillus oryzae* is added, then fermented. There are many types of miso, including a low salt variety. Less desirable nutritionally is white miso, which is made from white rice and may contain chemical preservatives. Avoid prolonged cooking of miso, which alters the taste and kills the beneficial microorganisms.

Natto is made from fermenting boiled soy beans with *Bacillus natto*. Vitamin-K rich, natto contains anti-tumor and anti-hypertensive agents. Additionally, Japanese scientists have proven natto as an effective hangover remedy.

Cancer fighting in a cup: green tea

The non-oxidated form of black tea, green tea is high in beneficial polyphenols. Specifically, green tea extract has been shown to prevent cancers of the lung, breast, prostate, liver, skin, and the esophagus. How much should you drink for your health? In one study, women who drank two or more cups a day reduced their cancer risk by 10 percent.

Mayonnaise: not necessarily the best food

For JAs, mayonnaise is a "comfort food," essential in many casseroles, and the standard dressing for salad. The nutritional perspective, however, is less than comforting. Just one tablespoon of mayonnaise contains 100 calories, all of which are from fat. That one tablespoon represents 17 percent of your recommended daily allowance for fat. Think of one of those casserole recipes requiring as much as one cup of mayonnaise!

Nutritionists suggest choosing low fat or nonfat versions of mayonnaise or sour cream.

Speaking of fat ...

Spam®

The featured protein in many dishes that define Hawaiian "local food," Spam®, in musubi form, is now standard potluck fare on the mainland. Simply put, Spam® is a nutritional nightmare. Down just two thin slices of the pink gelatinous meat, and you've eaten 30 percent of your daily saturated fat quota, 31 percent of your sodium and 13 percent of your cholesterol. Any questions?



If you feel the need to binge, try calming your cravings with some Spam® haiku. (http://pemtropics.mit.edu/~jcho/spam/archive.html)

Eat your (Asian) vegetables

Popular among health conscious gourmets, Asian vegetables are now widely available. At New York's Greenmarket, for example, you can find *kabocha*, *satsuma imo* (Japanese sweet potatoes), several varieties of Asian greens, *eda mame* (fresh soy beans) and burdock, all grown organically.

Common to everyday JA cooking, the modest Chinese cabbage is a health powerhouse. Rich in vitamin A, this *Brassica*-genus vegetable contains dithiolthiones, a group of compounds that have anti-cancer, antioxidant properties, and indoles, substances that protect against breast and colon cancer.

Seaweed

Containing up to 20 times the mineral content of land plants, seaweed is an excellent food credited with many healthful properties. The high calcium content may help balance Japanese diets, which de-emphasize dairy products. Seaweed is also an acclaimed beauty aid — remember Grandma telling you that *nori* was good for your hair? Two distinct varieties used in Japanese cuisine are:



Kombu—The foundation of Japanese soup stock, kombu is high in potassium, calcium, and vitamins A and C. *Nori*—boasting the highest protein contents of the seaweeds, nori is also rich in vitamins A, B1 and niacin. A 1997 Japanese study found *Sujiao-nori* to have anti-inflammatory effects.

Happy New Year!

The culmination of our JA holiday season is celebrated with *osechi ryori* and other symbolic dishes of the New Year. Here is how some of them stack up healthwise.

Common to every New Year's spread, *gobo* (burdock root) is a good source of vitamin B1 and trace minerals. Burdock is also touted by herbalist as a blood purifier.

Another must-have is *ozoni*, the traditional New Year's soup. But dieters take note: mochi weighs in at 250 calories per 3-4 inch piece.

A relatively lean treat is *soba*. Traditionally served on New Year's Eve, the long noodles convey longevity, and the connection may be more than symbolic; buckwheat has been found to lower blood cholesterol.

To one and all this holiday season, a hearty *kanpai*, here's to your health in '99! ■

A freelance writer, Kathy Ishizuka lives with her family in New York City. She is currently at work on a Japanese American community cookbook.

KAJIKAWA

Continued from Page 6

grandma so that she can teach me to cook her famous dishes. She also teaches me the art of making guava jam or loquat jelly with fruit grown in her yard. Through these teaching sessions, our relationship is strengthened. Although grandma is in excellent physical and mental shape for a woman of 84 years, cooking is an activity we can do together as a team.

I've come to appreciate how much work goes into her cooking. Cooking is not just a hobby for grandma; it's part of her life's work: taking care of her family. It's not just food. It's a part of who she is. Of course her role in the kitchen has held her back from other things. She confided in me that she had hopes of pursuing a career as a pediatrics nurse. But she had to sacrifice her career dreams to help take care of her family.

From this point of view, the kitchen is like a prison, constricting her options and keeping her "where a woman belongs." True, women's roles in society have changed significantly in the past 50 years, and if grandma were growing up now, she would have a better chance of becoming a nurse. But grandma is not bitter, and this leads me to think there is more to her life than tragic oppression.



Confronting her options, grandma chose to make the best of her situation. If she was going to have to give up her dreams to take care of her family, then she was going to do a damn good job at it. From this point of view, I see grandma's role as one of a cultural warrior who has not only kept alive many traditions, but also created many of her own, helping to sustain family bonds.

The amount of preparation that goes into her cooking — skinning the chicken, preserving the vegetables, baking, frying, marinating, getting up early to make the sushi — is felt by the family. I believe that this "cooking with love" strengthens bonds within the family. It's a kind of positive reinforcement, a subtle message that she loves us enough to go through the trouble.

The results of this hard work is evident at our family gatherings. Let's be honest. People come to family gatherings to eat. When auntie June is late, you worry about what might have happened to her and her macaroni salad.

But jokes aside, I see how food helps to keep my family together. A diverse group of people with many differences — political, social, etc. — still can enjoy getting together and spending time with one another, forming bonds that seem to transcend their differences even on non-holidays. Uncle Bob and I might never agree on politics (he's a libertarian — yuck!), but the time that we spend together over the holidays gives us a chance to relate to one another on other levels. If it were not for these gatherings, we might not ever get such an opportunity.

It's important for me as a man to learn to cook so that I can help recreate this warm environment for my own family. Due to the changing times, I know that my wife will probably spend more time at work than in the kitchen. It will be up to both of us to cook if we want to avoid relying on fast food to feed the family.

Moreover, I know that a part of grandma will live on through me because I am learning to cook some of her dishes. I will be able to tell my kids and grandkids that my grandma used to make this dish for me when I was their age. Hopefully it will give them an opportunity to feel connected to an otherwise intangible past. More importantly, however, her spirit will live on because I've learned that whenever you cook, you should do it with love, and your friends and family will feel it. ■

Loren Kajikawa is a biology major at the University of California at Berkeley.

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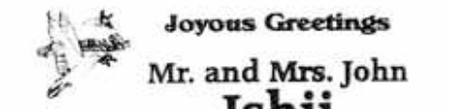


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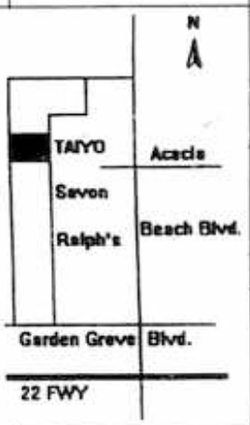
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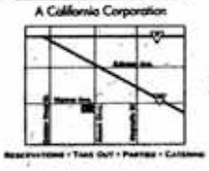
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What you can pick up ...ding from chopsticks



BY RAYMOND NAKAMURA

...summer ... a visit to ... Toronto, I ... ought ... passport ... annu... cultura... festi... out in ... the ... Tokyo ... me ... Chinese ... sharing the latest ... chopsticks in our lives, a mid... aged European man looked at us inquisitively from the next table. His English was limited, but his question was clear: he held out his chopsticks awkwardly, grasped in his chunky fingers. So we shared with him the secret of our Asian heritage in the art of eating with chopsticks, in the true spirit of multiculturalism.

The Japanese word for chopsticks is *hashi*, or *ohashi* if you are being polite. It is one of those rare Japanese words for which intonation is supposed to make a difference. Another *hashi* means bridge. In one case your voice is supposed to go up at the beginning and in the other it is supposed to go up at the end. I can never remember which is which. I figure that you should be able to tell the difference between chopsticks and a bridge by context. The only problem occurs on a vocabulary test and I don't do tests anymore. I especially gave up when I discovered that people in different parts of Japan use different intonations. I leave intonation to other languages that specialize in it, like Cantonese.

Anyway, we showed the man how to stabilize the bottom stick between the crotch of his thumb and the tip of his ring or middle finger and then move the upper one with the tip of his thumb and forefinger. I was going to go on about the potential symbolism of chopsticks: one stable, the other moving, working together for a common purpose, like Yin and Yang. Or, using a more recent metaphor, like integration and differentiation, the two compo... But I decided that could wait.

Eventually, he managed some movement, and smiled with delight and appreciation. He started practicing on his leftovers. Sensibly, he had already devoured his plate of tempura with a fork, so chopstick ability had not become a matter of life and death.

For non-Asians, the ability to use chopsticks has become a mark of culture. Perhaps it is not on quite the same level as say, knowing how to order wine, but nonetheless, it reflects a certain breadth of experience that denotes modern people with savoir faire.

For non-Asians, the ability to use chopsticks has become a mark of culture. Perhaps it is not on quite the same level as say, knowing how to order wine, but nonetheless, it reflects a certain breadth of experience that denotes modern people with savoir faire.

Among Asians, proper chopstick use is a measure of proper upbringing.

Nowadays, like so many traditions, "arbordexterity" (a word I just invented to mean "skill with chopsticks" from "arbor" meaning wood, and "dexterity" meaning, well, dexterity) is deteriorating among young Asians everywhere.

I recall the disdainful tone a friend of mine in Japan used in noting the pathetic arbordexterity of the young bride of one of our colleagues. In my own case, I was at some social function in Japan, when a slightly drunk and patronizing middle-aged man took it upon himself to correct my technique. I went home to practice until I became good enough to remove sesame seeds from my instant ... common are the ... bamboo kind. These ... though I've ... you don't ... the ... to ... in ... key), but they ... disturbing amount ...

Along with the basics of ... able to ... to ... points of chopstick etiquette. For example, if you are having dinner with a family and no serving utensils are available, you're supposed to use the other ends of the chopsticks, so your germs don't get mixed in. I find this rule really messy. Usually, your hosts will tell you not to bother. If they haven't put out extra serving utensils, then they probably aren't worried about your germs.

An even more pointless chopstick rule is never leave your chopsticks stuck upright in a bowl of rice. It's supposed to be really bad luck. Apparently this is only done when offering a bowl of rice to a dead person. I am not in the habit of inviting dead people to dinner, so this explanation has always baffled me. From a more practical perspective, I can see that leaving chopsticks in this position could increase the chance of knocking your bowl over and making a mess.

And oh, I almost forgot. My mother always tells me to put down my chopsticks before I pick up something else. It's supposed to be bad form, but I am usually too engrossed in the process of eating to remember this. I guess I should be eating more slowly. Maybe it will come when I learn to chew my food.

In my travels, I have seen many kinds of chopsticks, including a pair that had a knife and fork at each end, to cover all possible eating circumstances. In Korea, I once had metal chopsticks. I would not recommend them; they feel funny on your

Once, I met a person in Japan who brought her own chopsticks to restaurants. That seemed just a bit too inconvenient for a lazy environmentalist like me. More places should just have reusable ones. Yet I don't like the bulky plastic kind found in many Chinese restaurants. I prefer tapered lacquered ones —, they are light and elegant, but perhaps they are not durable enough for commercial use. Next time you go to a place that uses disposable chopsticks, ask them why.

Now, despite their connection to environmental degradation, chopsticks do have certain advantages. For one thing, you don't have to worry about how to set the table or which utensil to use when. Also, you can eat fish more effectively with them, assuming of course that you are one of those people with enough patience to pick out all the little bits of meat in the interstices around the head. My mother insists that they are the best parts. Arbordexterity can also be handy in the outdoors. If you are trying to cook things on a grill and you've forgotten your tongs, then all you need are two long sticks and you're ready to go.

So, the next time a piece of fish slips from the tips of your chopsticks, don't curse them as an antiquated and inconvenient tool. Recognize them as a metaphor for personal development, a warning against natural destruction and a bridge between cultures, leading toward world peace. Or at least go home and practice until you're good enough to use them without embarrassing yourself. ■

Raymond Nakamura, Ph.D., is a third-generation Japanese Canadian living in Vancouver, British Columbia. He is a marine biologist currently at Science World British Colombia.

Green Tea Girl: Meditations on tea and culture



BY VELINA HASU HOUSTON

Ban-cha... kuki-cha... sen-cha... genmai-cha... hoji-cha... gyokuro... ma-cha...

The aroma of green tea, particularly during new tea season, is soothing to me. To drink it is a meditative experience that can warm or relax me, or lubricate my connections to my muses so that writing flows more mellifluously and richly. A day does not go by in which I do not partake of the cultural elixir that is as organically intrinsic to me as breathing itself.

Many of my friends and colleagues in Japan and in the United States associate me with tea because of my play, "Tea," about the lives of five Japanese international brides who married Americans of diverse races at the end of World War II and came to live in a small Kansas town, an immigrant experience that is akin to my own. Moreover, they associate me with tea because of my poem, "Green Tea Girl in Orange Pekoe Country," that employs green tea as a metaphor for my hybrid Japanese consciousness and reality in the "orange pekoe tea" context of Americana.



My relationship with tea, however, began long before that play or poem, when I was a baby sipping green tea from a spoon as my immigrant Japanese mother fed it to me. She did it because drinking green tea was as natural a part of her existence as coffee, milk, and orange juice often are in the American diet, and perhaps — as my poem suggests — as preventive medicine to preserve her culture in my very blood and to build up a resistance to the invasion of too much Americana. Some was beneficial and desired, but not too much. Just enough. As my mother watches my children drink green tea and prefer Japanese foods, she recollects how it was the same for her two daughters and how it made her say exactly what she now says to my toddler daughter, "*Hontoni ne, anata wa Nihonjin desu.*" ("It's very true, isn't it so, [that] you are Japanese.")

As early as the age of four, I can remember sitting at my mother's tea table, the one piece of furniture that my mother insisted be brought across the Pacific on the 12-hour ship ride that delivered her to an alien new land. Made of chestnut and lacquered with red and black etchings with ornately carved legs, it was round and just the right height for people to kneel beside. My father placed it in front of the picture window that graced the living room of our home, which was part of the new housing on the western border of our town that advertised it would even sell to *Orientals* with the encouraging declaration, "Japs welcome."

Across from our home was an expansive meadow that, in later years, would be plowed under to build more homes. When I was little, however, it was just a meadow full of grass, occasional wildflowers, and hereford cows. My mother would serve scalding green tea in tiny porcelain cups that I loved to hold in my hands, along with various Japanese foods such as *o-tsukemono*, *maki-izushi*, *miso shiru*, *yokan*, and sometimes homemade *mochi-manju*. Nibbling on these foods and taking my tea in small sips so as not to burn my tongue, I watched the cows munching on grass and staring into space. I stared, too. But I had dreams. Fierce ones, infused with green tea.

The tea table with Japanese mother and Japanese Amerasian children poised around it juxtaposed with the Kansas meadow and Hereford cows was an interesting, culturally cacophonous picture. I think even then the difference struck me in a way I could not articulate, but felt deeply. America was outside of our home; inside, everything was diametrical. Expected behaviors, customs, foods, smells, legends and folk tales, and sounds were so distinct from what I heard when I went to school. I didn't have a name for it then because it was just the way we were, but I realize now that how we lived was a manifestation of an organic Japanese culture — innate from my mother and deliberately preserved on the part of my protective father who possibly did so in order to diminish the angst that my mother suffered due to her homesickness for Japan, which became so acute that she had to be hospitalized. Perhaps my father's act of preservation also was motivated by his desire to assuage his sense of guilt about taking my mother from her familiar nation to the land of milk and honey that was not quite as sweet as its reputation claimed it to be.

This upbringing soaked Japanese culture into my being with an intensity that I cannot fully characterize. This is why, despite the fact that I live in Southern California and am a multiracial hybrid, from a cultural perspective I am more

See HOUSTON/ page 111

GREEN TEA GIRL IN ORANGE PEKOE COUNTRY

The water is lucid liquid humidity
pouring over fine green tea leaves
bathing, steeping in the porcelain as
one-year-old eyes observe the ritual.
There is okonomiyaki on the table,
a peeled peach and steamed rice,
o-tsukemono and fruitnigrant dreams.
The ivory white Japanese mother
stares across these dreams in awe
at her cinnamon Amerasian child.

Ready for the cup, ready for the soul,
green tea as discipline for culture.
Into the teaspoon preventive medicine,
into the maiden child's mouth.
Down deep into the gut where life begins.
And so she lives, Japanese, deeply,
her shoes at the door, her soul at bay,
her summer kimono trailing the parquet,
pink chopsticks next to unused forks.

The house serene as Shikoku before war
is a sanctuary of tea and time,
the stronghold for a rage to live
that shall mark the Amerasian life.
She grows with every sip of gyokuro.
Gaman shite kudasai, gaman shite kudasai.
Yes, she shall persevere but counsel us
how fares Oriental grace in an Occidental world.

Outside the shoji there is no green tea.
The peaceless, selfish, easily fester.
Shoes track streets like cleaners
dirtying rot back into American homes.
The tea is black and bitter, sweet
only with the complement of sugar.
It stains the teeth and hates.
The cups reek orange pekoe tea.
What will become of me, what of me.

The orange pekoe country blares outside.
Out of place, bittersweet, the Amerasian dares.
Green tea girl in a land of milk and honey,
tea in bags without fine leaves to read.
She learns to drink the blacker brew
without honey to sweeten the bitter truth.
She learns different gaman to survive
in a land where the soul is in the fist.

But it's her land; they call it their land.
One moment she's a Jap without a home,
another moment a nigger, homeless yet free.
The rage to live flows in her like a river
and life becomes a time and a place
and land is only earthly confusion.
But the cup of green tea awaits her still
and she sips, caressing the cup,
and it sinks deeply into the gut,
feeding the fortitude, gaman, gaman. ■

VELINA HASU HOUSTON

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My grandmother's kitchen — a memory

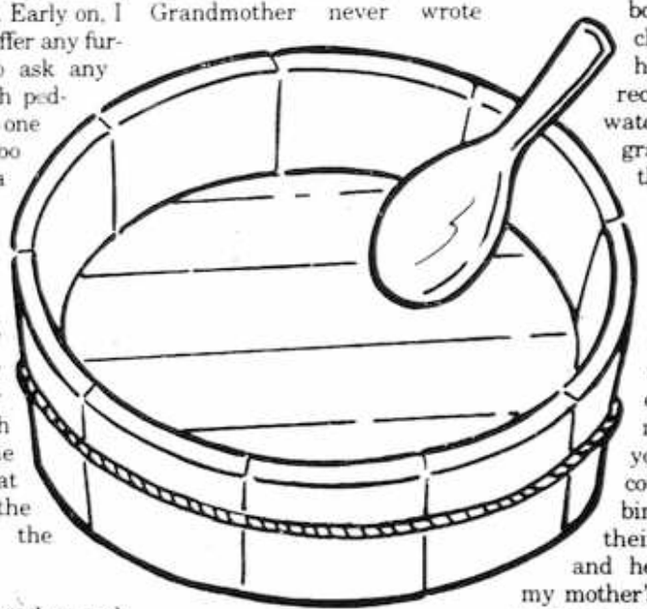


BY SACHI SEKO

Certain times and places on the landscape of the heart belong irrevocably to a particular person. It is not only that he or she has staked a legitimate claim to these times and places but that, in a demonstration of uncommon grace or plain common sense, the rest of us have yielded any proprietary interest we may have harbored.

Armed with such authority, my grandmother ruled the kitchen of my California childhood. She was built delicately, but had extraordinarily strong hands. Each winter, as the New Year approaches, I am reminded of grandmother's intense and animated preparations. In those days, before the war — the last great war — salesmen came to homes, bringing samples not only of foodstuffs, but also small kitchen appliances and crockery — even bottles of ointment and herbal cures. Grandmother took her time examining all proffered products, turning them toward the light, feeling and smelling them. Sometimes encouraged to take a taste, if an item failed the test, she spit the offending food into the palm of her hand, closed her eyes and wrinkled her nose in distaste. Only the finest ingredients were purchased because practicing economy in the preparation of food is reprehensible to an excellent cook. Grandmother was also encouraged and generously subsidized in embracing this culinary creed by grandfather's gambling winnings.

Frequently, trucks stopped at the corner to peddle vegetables or fish, for that was the way things used to be sold, freshly harvested from farms or caught daily from the ocean. It was exciting to hear the honking of the trucks' horns, each with its identifiable sound, and to join the stream of women and young children rushing toward the corner. Grandmother often selected a fish from a bucket and slapped it on the truck's cutting board to certify its freshness. Early on, I was warned not to offer any further opinions or to ask any questions of the fish peddler. It seems that one day, while still too young for school, in a piercingly clear child's voice, I had ordered the poor man, "Don't sell us any fish tails. We don't want them." Embarrassed, my mother clasped her hand over my mouth and yanked me home. But later that night, I heard the adults repeating the story and laughing.



As my grandmother and mother began preparations for the holiday cooking, all sorts of metal utensils were brought from the pantry together with an enormous collection of ingredients. The smells of soy sauce and vinegar permeated the house. Baskets of lemons were squeezed for grandmother's specialty, *saba* (mackerel) sushi. And above the sounds of beating and scraping, grating and slicing, the voices of women could be heard; snatches of conversations punctuated by laughter. When grandmother worked alone, she hummed or sang songs she had learned as a child in Japan. She spoke no English, but I think she understood more than she let on. I know she did. Time was when I knew those Japanese songs too, but now I can retrieve only a stray chord or a loose lyric. And if music came in colors, grandmother's songs were cast in sepia with a haunting sadness, almost a yearning, elusive and mysterious to my childish ears.

The women often paused to taste the food as they cooked. Grandmother never wrote recipes down, although she frequently recited them from memory for other women. She advised them to adjust the seasonings to their individual taste. Cooking is an art form that invites creativity and imagination. The best cooks I know do not depend on precise measurements, preferring to flavor food with a dash of daring. Most of us usually cook at a level of mediocrity, indicative of our abilities and attitudes in general. Only a few elevate food preparation and presentation consistently to the position of respect it deserves as an artistic expression. Grandmother was a kitchen artist.

She could cook anything and she did it better than anyone else. After the large variety of foods were set on the dining table and nearby buffet, with extras laid aside in the kitchen and pantry, she surveyed the ample display with satisfaction, placing her hands on her narrow hips, exclaiming, "There." I know it all from memory, the gesture, the exclamation of satisfaction. She even said it after boiling a batch of clothes starch from her secret rice recipe. We children watched with dread as grandmother stirred the pot, occasionally lifting the ladle to check the consistency of the clear concoction. We knew it would be used in the last rinse of our cotton clothes. Every morning, my younger siblings could be heard rubbing the starch from their collars, sleeves and hems, contradicting my mother's idea of appropriate dress. I refused to succumb to such chicanery and was therefore launched early into a career of lifetime martyrdom.

Grandmother was oblivious to controlling the amount or variety of food she prepared. Her great pleasure was setting extra places at the table for invited or unexpected guests. Years later, when I passed from being a child to a woman, I was often stopped by strangers who said they had dined in my childhood home. Did I remember them? No, I had to confess, without being facetious, that all our guests looked alike to me then. Nevertheless, I said, grandmother would have been pleased to know her hospitality and generosity were remembered ever so long afterwards. And often, these strangers said that grandmother's dinner had been their ultimate epicurean experience. Years later, in camp,

See SEKO/ page 20

San Mateo

Seasons Greetings

Season's Greetings to the San Mateo Nikkei community

As the two years of our co-presidency are coming to a close, we sincerely appreciate your generous support, friendship and contributions of time and money. We look forward to 1999 as we continue to promote the JACL Education Curriculum. We invite you to attend any of our meetings which are held on the 1st and 3rd Wednesdays of every month. We encourage you to participate in our events and to become more involved with the community center.

Best wishes during the holiday season and the coming new year.

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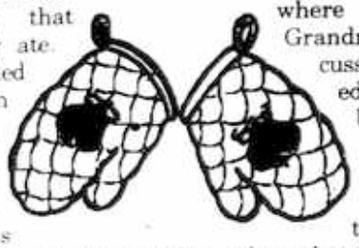
(Continued from page 18)

I recall a group of Nisei saying they would give anything for one more piece of grandmother's saba sushi — not prime rib or steaks.

Food was often shared with friends or neighbors. Grandmother always encouraged my mother to add more to each platter, reminding her of the size of some families. Days later, the plates would be returned in the Japanese way, containing a small token of appreciation. For many, those were lean, mean times, although I did not know it. So some of the plates were returned bearing a few kitchen matches. The first time it happened, I laughed and reminded grandmother that we already had boxes of matches. And what a silly thing for anyone to give us, I said, mistakenly believing she would share my mirth.

Grandmother was usually never one for discipline, but she slapped my wrist with her strong, small hand and said, "You talk too much, especially when you don't know anything." In this, which would have been her 130th year, I still recoil from that memory of the stinging rebuke that cut to the core of my being.

An occasional transient was also the recipient of grandmother's kindness. During the depression years, strangers knocked on the screen of the porch which adjoined the kitchen. They were all white men, none of color, traveling someplace in search of jobs. All of them were poor and hungry. Observing grandmother reaching to unlock the screen door, I tugged at the back of her apron in warning because I was afraid. In addition to having heard all the horror stories about strangers, I had a very active imagination. In the kitchen, grandmother provided soap and a fresh towel, motioning the stranger toward the sink. After instructing me to set the table, grandmother proceeded to cook breakfast for the guest. She served him the identical food that grandfather ate. She also filled a sack with sandwiches and fruit. When the nameless person tried to thank her as he rose to leave, grandmother smiled enigmatically and raised her small, strong hand. The significance of the gesture eluded me, but from the stranger's nod and smile, I knew some human transaction had occurred at the very highest level. It had everything to do with food and it had nothing to do with food.



After the guest's departure, the door was latched and grandmother cleared the table and filled the sink with hot, soapy water. I took my place by her side and dried the dishes and utensils, taking care with each piece, hoping to earn her approval. Sometimes I wondered about the strangers and where they came from and where they went. Grandmother never discussed these unexpected guests with me, but often I saw her looking through the kitchen window over the sink, toward the path where they disappeared, as she hummed a song, colored in sepia, evoking emotions too deep for me. ■

Sachi Seko's prose has appeared in the pages of the Pacific Citizen since the so-called "Resettlement era of the late '40s" when she wrote from Minnesota. She later settled down in Salt Lake City in "Happy Valley," which was the name of her column.

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Days of wine and roads



I got your itinerary and e-mail today. But we can't leave until 9/18 a.m. (as early as we want). I have to work on 9/17. Love, Penny.

Penny, my younger brother's wife, and I have been furiously e-mailing back and forth to firm up plans for a trip to the Southwest. No one else I know could work until the eve of a two-week trip, but I know from other instances that she and my brother Jay will have all the details pinned down by ground zero. And there is plenty to do: arranging for her work replacement, for the care of her mother, their dogs and their vast garden as well as getting stuff together for the trip. Penny's mother, who lives with them, suffers from Alzheimer's. Jay, now retired, takes over the caregiving and the multitude of homekeeping tasks by day.

My husband Shi and I had been talking with J and P for years about taking a trip together. We like each other a lot and agree that in our dotage (ours, not theirs) we need to spend more time together. But a trip always seemed a distant prospect, over the horizon even, given our obligations. It isn't as tough for S and me to wrench ourselves away as it is for them, but there's always something: painting the house, trimming trees, my community activities, and trying to parcel out time for writing.

Then one day, Jay says in his inimitable fashion: "Shit. Let's do it." And, like that, we clear our calendars, find friends and family to oversee things, and make the trip happen.



All the places you listed sound neat, except Needles. Re: visits with friends of the family, Jay says leave it to you.

Since I've been assigned to plotting the itinerary, I track a plan. We start from Ojai (near Santa Barbara) where Jay and Penny live, travel northeastward for stops at Hoover Dam, Las Vegas, Grand Canyon, make a pit stop at the Four Corners, then to Mesa Verde and almost due east across southern Colorado to walk the Great Sand Dunes, through to Blanca (Jay's birthplace), on to Amache (where Jay, Shi and I were summarily shunted during The War) at the southeast corner. The camp becomes the pivotal point from where we will turn and travel southwestward through New Mexico — a day at Taos, two in Santa Fe, on further west to Albuquerque, then to Needles, Calif., before crossing the Mojave for home.

I am glad to know that large-hearted Penny, blue-eyed, copper-haired, finds this itinerary "neat," strewn as it is with jetsam from a past of which she has had no part. But she is right: there seems to be no *there* in Needles. I cancel it. And given the option, I put a circle around Albuquer- que on the map for a visit with the Togami's, old family friends of ours (Jay's and mine).



We aren't worried about getting along. Remember, you stayed here a week, and we didn't fight once. Not to worry.

Well, I'm not worried about getting into a foursome debacle of Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf proportions, but I mention that friends and family have cautioned: "Two weeks of being together all day long, crowded for long periods in the van, sleeping in the same room, in some cases, and sightseeing, can be 'difficult and challenging.'"

Weeks later, in Ojai, Shi and Jay have neatly crammed a rented Toyota Previa van with an ice-box camp stove, cooking/eating equipment, two boxes piled high with food, a rice-cooker, electric coffee pot, Penny's first aid kit (a plastic box the size of carry-on luggage, I swear) plus a case of wine, all of which takes up more space than our luggage.

But these provisions turn out to be inspired. Early on, we establish the ritual of toasting each other with a glass of wine accompanied by snacks after a day of touring. It relaxes the tired drivers (J and P) and marks out time for us to "connect," to recount the day and to plan the next. And the "home-cooked" meals are to become welcome changes from the cholesterol-laden fare we allow ourselves to indulge in, from high-end gourmet to low-end Chinese restaurants. It also lets us skip fast-food restaurants altogether.

More important, preparing food, eating together, those quintessential communal events, help strengthen the cords of our connection and give events extra spark, we are to find.

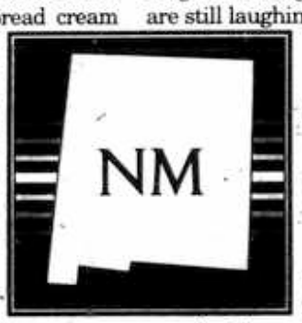


BY MEI NAKANO

Grand Canyon. We approach the canyon at sunset, Vivaldi echoing in the air from the stereo as the van climbs through the pines. We alight, a bottle of wine and snacks tucked in a knapsack. There it is. No matter what superlatives we've heard, no matter how many picture postcards we've seen, nothing equals the awesome grandeur of the sight before us. We survey the grand sweep of the canyon, peer down at the chasm 5,000 feet below and the slivery ribbon that is the Colorado River. We contemplate the ancient native Americans who lived here, and the Havasupai, who live here still. We have no desire to trample the rocks and ridges of the canyon, glad to know too that flying machines jammed with tourists no longer fly over this hallowed space.

Just now, the slanting sun casts an orange glow over the canyon, the edges of its monumental ridges sharply defined by great black shadows. We are stunned into momentary silence over this natural marvel.

Jay opens a bottle of chardonnay. Penny and I spread cream cheese and salmon on water table crackers. Shi cores an Asian pear and slices it into four equal wedges. We toast the canyon, each other. A perfect communal moment.



Taos. We've been through Colorado, emotion-laden sites for us all, even Penny, but those places deserve stories of their own, another time. Now, we are just outside the Taos pueblos where the Red Willow people live, and we find a city park at midday. Jay has decided to cook the hash browns and sausages he missed cooking that morning. He and Shi feel deprived of their "guy food," poor things, having been forced to eat an elegant upside-down blueberry pancake served at our bed and breakfast lodgings. "We're on vacation!" they regularly protest, as if that fact alone gives them license to rachet up their cholesterol count. Nevertheless, we unload the Coleman stove, the equipment, the cartons of food. We see that we have enough ingredients to make a salad: we will at least have a balanced meal.

Jay lights the stove and begins cooking the potatoes and sausages in a frying pan.

"Do we have cooking oil or something?" he asks. "This stuff is starting to stick."

I rummage around in the food boxes and emerge triumphantly with a pint-sized mayo jar, half-filled. "Oh yeah," I say. "Here it is." Penny, bless her, must have tucked the jar in the box. She has this amazing capacity for remembering even the tiniest detail.

I pour a liberal amount into the frying pan. It sizzles. Instantly, I divine that something is amiss. It shouldn't be sizzling, the "Oil" looks too heavy, too viscous. I dip my finger into the jar and taste it.

"Yuk!" I scream. "Take the pan off the stove!"

Penny runs around the table to see what the commotion is about. Her eyes dart from the jar to the pan. "Oh, my god!" She utters, her jaw dropping. "You've just poured Woolite on the potatoes."

Jay says, "Oh shit."

Then we start to laugh. And laugh and laugh and laugh. We are still laughing.

Albuquerque, N.M.: The Togami Family.

Over 60 years ago at the height of the depression, my family and perhaps three other Japanese families — including the Togami's — had eked out a living as tenant farm-

See NAKANO/page 28

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Family recipes



BY STEWART DAVID IKEDA

1976: Cross-cultural Faux Pas

This evening, my grandparents are entertaining a visiting Japanese couple. A paint salesman, the man seems *huge*: thick fingers and nose, a great round shining face like a sandwich plate. His taller wife is narrow-faced, Audrey Hepburn neck, self-contained in conversation, which is *entirely* in Japanese, Grandma struggling to translate. It's one of those excruciating dinners where the men wear jackets and the women pearls. I am ten. You get the picture.

Anyway, in rare juxtaposition to our colonial style dining room, there's a full Japanese spread: the special little bowls on annual furlough from their sideboard prison, the fancy *hashi* with sparkling inlaid flecks, all the exotic foodstuffs usually shelved in undecipherable tins about the house — the syrupy "footballs" (*inarizushi*), the "sprinkles" (*furikake*) and "flakes" (bonito).

Weary of bilingual stumbling, seeking nonverbal common ground, the adults fixate on the annoyed, prepubescent Hapa boy who isn't too thrilled conversing with adults in English, either. Hunched over my rice bowl, I will myself invisible beneath the bangs of my Beatle haircut, but they keep *staring* anyway, chuckling, fascinated by the lacquered hashi shoveling into my bowl. The couple is at once impressed and baffled by my dexterous chopsticking. Learned in a game called *Chop Suey* (wherein one fishes slick geometric shapes from a mechanically rotating bowl, the ingredients to either "Column A" or "Column B" on a scorecard), my hashi-style is competitive, martial, and very awkward — nothing like the instructions on the paper wrappers in Chinese restaurants. There's more chuckling from the woman as her husband tries to mimic me, chopsticks wobbling as if he's wearing mittens. Gratified by his failure, I show off and boredly tweeze up single grains of rice.

At ten, my palette is not subtle. I will eat sugar or salt raw; between these poles no flavor exists. When as always I set the porcelain cruet of Kikkoman hemorrhaging over my rice, the paint salesman guffaws in astonishment. "Bo-chan!" he booms. I cringe, marveling at how *deep* his voice plummets — like a *bear's*. His teary-eyed wife takes up the chorus: "Bo-chan!"

Patting me, gasping, laughing themselves sick! Mortification!

"Bochan," grandma consoles me, "means ... cute little boy," but I don't believe her. Whatever fine tonal nuances may underlie meaning in Japanese, I know the way they said "bochan" meant, "Weird!"

1994: "The Food Tapes"

Writing a historical novel about a Nikkei family's internment and dispersal, I depend heavily on oral history. Nisei overall do *not* make this task easy. I begin with grandfather, now bedridden with a prolonged, terminal pulmonary illness. There's much he hasn't told me about my own family's history — indeed, much he doesn't know. For example, I keep asking about evacuation and camp — *Were there protests? Did they have guns?* — but he was released from Tulare for college before the family moved to Gila River. Seeking drama, I'm asking the wrong questions. He lets me know this by sneaking away late one night with my tape recorder and whispering into it all the *real* highs and lows of the life he wants remembered: the Depression-era boyhood in a poor Montana railroad family, the career WWII tried and failed to abort, assimilation into a new Philadelphia life. It took several cassettes.

Compiling his memories later, I see thematic patterns forming — labor and hunger — beyond stereotypical Depression or immigrant work ethics to an ethic of survival. Beauty, wisdom, even love appear infrequently in his tales. The greatest compliment he can bestow on a lost friend is, "She had a hard life, but she worked hard. She put food on the table." Illness, accidents, are etched in his memory, but especially — surprisingly — food.

In our family, only Tasha can stomach natto. In Israel, her family treated me to sushi, but all I wanted was falafel, shwarma, amnun, and learned to order in Hebrew.

I've always known his ear to be tin and his palette dull (friends called him "Mikey" because in health he would "eat anything"), and now suspect this was a symptom of the impending sinus and breathing ailment. For, his most vivid boyhood memories are olfactory and culinary, such as "gardening at night." Disillusioned by his troop leader's arrest for theft one year, he dropped out of the Boy Scouts and joined a multicultural band of little pirates infamous among neighboring farms for their nocturnal raids, stealing chickens, corn, apples. Hauling the loot back to their forest campsite, they feasted royally and afterwards drew straws to see who must share the tent with one smelly boy who peed in his sleep. At dawn, they returned to town, stole milk from stoops, some sugar and ice from outdoor storage bins, and made ice cream behind the school. Playing hooky, they fished in polluted streams or shot crows for barbecuing.

"We were always hungry," the cassette said.

One adolescent summer, he lied about his age to join a railroad extragang as a waterboy for $5 a week. He proved too small to carry the full buckets, so the men made him a gandy dancer, shoveling gravel beneath the wooden ties or extracting bent spikes with a crowbar, until a division inspector got wise and sent him home. They lived and ate in boxcars, breakfasting on coffee, eggs, sour milk pancakes: "The food wasn't great, but there was a *lot* of it!"

Finally, the "food tapes" convince me that the thousand fryer chickens he beheaded, plucked, and gutted for another summer job were more crucial than internment in creating the essential man he was.

A surprisingly good writing collaborator, for a chemist, he returns transcribed interviews promptly, full of marginalia that shows a sensitivity to style; and he has an elephant's memory for dates. His voice weakens daily, and merely tying his shoes exhausts him, but his research zeal is impressive. We exchange articles, stories; he sends *Rafu Shimpo* clippings and I send David Mura poems.

One day I call him from wintry Madison, Wisconsin, the phone cradled warm by my ear while I type out notes. Hearing him talk, wheeze, talk, I feel my fingertips are in a race against his lungs, but they feel heavy and I type slowly.

"Lost more weight," he reports. "No appetite. Can't taste anything anymore. Can't sleep ..."

Staring out the window at the ice-fishing huts that dot Lake Monona, at the isolated madmen huddled by them, frozen and silent as if in prayer, I think. If there is cosmic justice, grandfather may live just long enough to see the results of our labors together. But what I say is, "You *must* take vitamins, keep warm! Don't forget to eat," then bitch about the weather a while and shrug off the dread. For now, we're beating the clock and have work to do. So I ask, "What's this word on page ten, 'meboshi'?"

"Oh, meboshi! That's pickled plum, eaten with rice. Verrrry salty. That was my lunch when I worked on the railroad," he'll say, and I think he sounds happy.

1997: Legacies

In food, Tasha's my opposite, a hardcore experimentalist. She's an unagi *fiend*, braves octopus, urchin — craves sushi weekly and will roll her own in a pinch. With her polyglot's facility for languages, she can request

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Hawaiian ways - American taste



BY RON OBA

Are you really what you eat, and does how you speak "Pidgin" necessarily identify you as a Hawaiian-Japanese-Chinese-Filipino-Portuguese-Caucasian? Just as "Pidgin" is a mixture of languages from these six or more cultures in Hawaii, the eating habits and ethnicity of the people eventually blend into one, or as Arnold Hiura says, is a "Mixed Plate."

Therefore, in Hawaii, what you eat does not manifest into pheromones that your neighborhood dog uses to identify a person's ethnicity. As you may know, the Army tried to train dogs to identify, by odor, some of the 100th Battalion soldiers on Cat Island off of Florida to help sniff out Japanese troops in the Pacific, but it was a total failure. As Ray Nosaka said, "It wasn't our body odors. The Army didn't know that we showered everyday."



Author Ron Oba (left) with fellow 442nd veteran Stanley Hashimoto.

The multicultural races in Hawaii had their own traditional foods that easily identified them from others, such as kalua pig, mochi, chop suey, lumpia, chorizo and hot dogs. As children working in the sugarcane fields, it was a gustatorial adventure to exchange our "bento" rice and sukiyaki with our Filipino and Portuguese friends for cheese and bologna sandwiches and chorizo for lunch.

Our Issei parents preferred the customary rice, miso soup and *tsukemono* (pickled vegetables). On special days, such as New Year's, the neighbors got together to pound the mochi for each family, who had to eat *kuri* for yearround trading, *mane* for good health, and other traditional foods such as *kazunoko*, *kobu*, *gobo* that had their special meaning for longevity.

In order to equate food with the development of our Japanese American culture, we need to look at and taste the different low-cost foods that our parents had to prepare for the average family of seven in those days. A large dried cod fish for a dollar went a long way by soaking it in water for days before frying, broiling or using it in *nishime*, since meat was too expensive and didn't keep too long in the homemade ice box.

Fish, eggs and chicken were plentiful. We supplemented store-bought canned goods with doves, pheasants, frogs and an occasional wild pig that our neighbors caught. Mangoes, mountain apples, dates, plums, papayas, lychee, pineapple and bananas became our snacks. Every family grew vegetables and exchanged the excesses with others. Thus the inevitable *hekka*, a stir-fried mixture of meat or chicken with vegetables sauteed in shoyu and sugar was invented and cooked by our Nikkei soldiers on the front lines of Italy and France.

When World War II started, I was eating pancakes at home on Sunday, December 7, 1941, because on Sundays it was a treat to have pancakes fried over our kerosene stove. Few Japanese families baked cakes or pies. Pineapple upside down cake cooked in a frying pan over the same stove became a specialty.

Army chow

At Camp Shelby, Mississippi, where the 442nd Regimental Combat Team trained, the boys preferred to go to the Post Exchange (PX) for their daily beer, milk shakes and hot dog than eat the southern menu they were fed. We were on the American rations with little or no rice so if the regiment wanted more rice, we had to switch to the Filipino ration.

The mess hall was the most popular place next to the PX. The boys were never satiated. At every meal they would make a mad dash to the mess hall only to refuse to eat hominy grits, rutabaga, liverwurst, mutton, yellow squash, black-eye peas, brussel sprouts, rhubarb, pig corn and powdered eggs. So one day we received a 25-pound bag of rice. The mess sergeant asked me to prepare the rice pudding with milk, sugar and raisins. I told him, "Do you want the boys to kill us? You can't ruin the rice like that!" We waited till we got four 25-pound rice bags to cook for the 200 or more soldiers in our company.

We later traded potatoes for rice with the *haole* (white) outfits in the camp. The boys savored the occasional steaks and beef stew. However, since they didn't like most of the southern vegetables, we decided that we'd save the meat and make hekka more often. Pork chops were okay, but not mutton. Mutton just stunk up the mess hall and the boys would say "Whew" and head for the PX.

Every Sunday the menu for the day was cold cuts of cheese, liverwurst and bologna with carrot and celery sticks. The mainland boys didn't mind the cold cuts. The Hawaii boys didn't know how to eat cheese or liverwurst in sandwiches so they all headed for Hattiesburg, the nearest town, to gorge on southern fried chicken, or steaks so huge it popped their eyes out.

The ladies at the USO looked forward to seeing the starving boys who invariably ordered pies and milk shakes. Watermelon was also relished. However, they missed their kalua pig. One night in the midst of maneuvers in the wilds of the Mississippi swamps, the F Company boys decided to dig a hole and chase the "wild" pigs into the hole and make kalua pig. The pigs really belonged to a farmer, but they didn't know that, so they cooked the lost pig that the farmer complained about.

Certain companies actually had luau (Hawaiian feast) on occasion, with poi sent over by their families in Hawaii. They roasted the pigs in the imu (underground oven) and frequently had birthday parties at the mess hall whenever families or girlfriends sent money to the local bakeries for the birthdays.

Frank Dobashi, our first cook, was very innovative and tried to accommodate the boys. One day he baked a pan of soft, moist, yellow layered cake and iced it to make it more attractive. The Hattiesburg Auxiliary Ladies happened to stop by and tasted the cake. One of the ladies gushed, "This is the most delicious corn bread I've eaten." Corn bread is gritty and dry, so Frank was incensed at the comparison and out went the entire batch of cake into the garbage can.

Another day he tried to reward the boys with home baked bread and kneaded the dough till ready and placed several pans of dough over the stove. The dough rose and rose so quickly that Frank was unable to punch it back into the pans. We were all laughing at slow moving Frank as the dough spilled all over the stove and burner. Naturally those pans of dough went flying out the kitchen door. Thus the boys had very little baked desserts for dinner.

Overseas

During most of our campaigns in Italy and France, the boys were given "C" or "K" rations of canned beef stew, Spam, or egg with crackers, powdered coffee, lemon, sugar and cigarettes. You either starved or ate the rations cold. So every chance the boys had of harvesting onions, potatoes, tomatoes and eggs, with an occasional chicken, they carried these in their back packs.

At every respite they had, they would take their steel helmets off and chop the vegetables to concoct variations of the hekka with the same canned beef stew. The lucky ones had fresh chicken and eggs. The Army also supplied the kitchen crew with dehydrated eggs and potatoes, which the boys really hated. The cooks finally camouflaged the rubbery eggs with bacon, onions and milk to make delicious scrambled eggs, and none of the boys believed that it was the same dehydrated eggs that they abhorred.

Once when the boys had a day of rest in reserve, we were told to prepare hot meals. With what? More of the canned stew? I decided to yank the kitchen stove from the truck and proceeded to bake some biscuits, since the only ingredients we had on the truck were lard, flour, salt and baking powder. The kitchen stove with its kerosene flames made the most palatable biscuits that day. The boys thanked me for saving the day of rest.

During breaks in the war, they were able to scour the neighboring farmland to harvest vegetables or barter with farmers for their chicken and eggs. When the troops fought their way to the Arno River, near Florence, Italy, the war came to a standstill. On the riverbanks, the boys, especially the Hawaii soldiers, made *tsukemono* in their helmets, sprinkled with salt and boullion, pressed down with a large rock over it.

They came to the kitchen for used coffee grounds and dried them in the hot sun for bartering with the Italians. Salted bacon was unpalatable so the mess sergeant gave chunks of it to anyone who wanted to trade them with the Italians. Boullion cubes melted in a bottle made the best shoyu for their cooking.

The German captain on the other bank of the Arno River complained to Chaplain Yamada that the men of the 442nd were running around in their BVDs chasing chicken and harvesting vegetables in the open. Many

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NAKANO

(Continued from page 23)

ers in the San Luis Valley in Colorado. Over the years, I had kept in touch with Henry, had even seen him once briefly in the early '70s. Now, living in Albuquerque with his wife, Ruth, he has invited us for lunch, since we are passing through.

I am thinking that this visit might be especially significant for Jay, considering the incident that took place in July 1931, but I cannot tell from his offhand "leave it to Mei" comment in Penny's e-mail, or his face, whether he is anxious about this meeting, indifferent, or what.

On that fateful July day, our mother had been "washing" our father's felt hat in a basin of gasoline, when the basin burst into flames. A lightning spark might have traveled down the chimney of a nearby stove, they said. In any case, to save the house and the four small children inside, including a one-month-old baby, our mother ran with the blazing basin out the front door, further encouraging the flames to inflict their damage. At the hospital, the doctors did not expect her to survive the third-degree burns she suffered.

Japanese families in the surrounding area came to offer whatever help they could, abjectly poor as they were. That was when Mrs. Togami, Henry's mother — with seven children of her own — came to take the baby home with her to nurse it, care for it, along with her own newborn. That baby was my brother Jay.

My mother did survive months of searing pain out of sheer determination to care for her brood of eight children, all under age fourteen. She and our family never forgot Mrs. Togami's singular act of human compassion, aware that it was not the kind of debt we could ever repay.

Now, Jay, a strapping father of five grown children, is about to meet Henry, the eldest son of the woman who had nourished and sustained him.

Henry, his wife, sister, and sister-in-law greet us. Henry and Jay talk of incidental things, nothing about this poignant episode marking their conversation.

Then Jay spots a family portrait. "Is this your family?" he asks.

"Yep. And that's Jimmy," Henry points him out." Born about the same time you were."

"Ah..." Jay contemplates the face. "I see the resemblance."

We all "get it" and break out in gales of laughter.

The women have set out an elegant table: sushi, roast turkey, an array of salads and other delectables. Starved for "Japanese," we linger over the food while we swap stories of the past and present.

How befitting, we remark afterwards, to be breaking bread with our oldest friends from the past on this, the last major stop of our amazing journey over the roads of our past.

I think of the trip and start laughing. What a great trip. The best vacation I've ever had. It was hard getting back to reality, but reality has set in, and I am back to work ... and work. Love you both. Penny. ■

Well-known Nisei writer Nakano is the author of Japanese American Women: Three Generations, *now in its fifth printing. She is currently writing a memoir of her father, Junsuke Takaya ("Osho").*

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Fatherly love

BY CYNTHIA GATES FUJIKAWA

My New York roommate has never eaten Japanese food before. He won't go near it because he says it's all raw fish. I think to myself, "Is this guy pulling my leg, or is that what they tell you growing up in Cincinnati?" I decide that he *is* serious. I try to tell him otherwise, but he won't believe me.

This is what I remember about food and our family:

"You hungry?"

"You hungry?"

"Cyndy, if you're hungry, there's plenty to eat." Dad was always trying to feed me. No matter what. Say I've been gone for months. A whole semester and them some. I walk in the door, and — "there's some soup and rice on the stove. I just made it!" — before I had a chance to put my things down I was being fed. Before I was asked how I was. Before a hug or kiss or anything else.

When I was in Junior High, my dad had retired from all but acting work. Prior to that, he had held down a myriad of jobs — restaurant, department store, machine shop, catering. After retirement, he spent his days waiting for the agent to call, auditioning, and working here and there as an Asian character actor in commercials and TV. I watched him fill the long bland spots in his days with trips to Safeway, and working in the kitchen. Throughout his sixties and my teens, dad's identity was behind the stove.

"Shit! Dad! Dad! It's overcooked!" My brother would say. Dad would run over from the stove to Peter's place at the table.

Peter worked at a liquor store in Santa Monica on Main and Ocean Park. He went to work at 5:30 p.m. on Saturdays. Dad always made him dinner around 4 p.m.

"I can't eat it like this."

"I thought you liked it medium."

"This is well!"

"It's medium, Peter!"

"Tastes like liver when you overcook it!"

Peter could always get to dad where it hurt the most.

It was a silly thing to say. My brother — all of us — were raised on overcooked food. Fried chicken, hamburger steak, beef stew, hot dogs and fried sauerkraut, macaroni & cheese with a crispy top, pork chops cooked to death. Spare ribs, black and crunchy. New England boiled dinner. Or lamb chops, without a trace of pink.



My mother, Marion Gates Breckle, had learned on the job. She was 22 when she married Jerry Hatsuo Fujikawa, 41. Being the youngest growing up, she never learned to cook, whereas Dad, being the oldest in his family, had cooked all his life. Part One of their marriage was New York City in the 1950s, surrounded by Broadway theater, summer stock playhouses, and live TV that filled dad's early career. Mom suffered trial and error in the kitchen, and he let her learn to be a '50s housewife. I envision their diets to be cruder versions of what cooking I'd enjoyed in part two of their marriage (L.A. in the '60s). Together, we had all developed a palate for her burnt cooking.

But through it all, a pot of rice, a pot of miso soup, and jars of yellow pickles, brown pickles (Cyndy's pickles, we called them), and the big sour red pickles shared our Fujikawa identity, along with bottles of catsup, French's mustard, black olives, A1, Heinz 57, dill pickle chips, Jello, Sara Lee, and so forth.

Dad passionately rejected being Japanese all his life. I learned this is 1971, when he turned 60, developed a bad heart, and suddenly got very "Japanese."

All over the house, suddenly, zillions of Japanese chachkees, rolly polly dolls, an enclosed, elegant figure in a kimono on the piano, books by Mishima. But the worst ... Japanese-language television programs blaring through the living room. "What's wrong with Dad?" we were all whispering. "What's gotten into Dad?" We were merciless. But we knew. I knew. I was nine, but I knew what the skinny was: after a lifetime of trying to fit into the white man's world, he was, at last, exploring his ethnic identity.

Under the guise of dad's bad heart, he began to separate his diet from ours. Mysterious new pickles started showing up in the fridge in billions of small jars. In the outside ice box were industrial-sized jars with his homemade *tsukemono*. There were pink and white things, fried things, fishy things, wrinkled brown things. And pots of tea with popcorn-things floating in it.

Our dining room was half a kitchen, half a converted porch, which amounted to sort of a dining "area." Mom sat at one end of the table nearest the fridge. Dad took the other end, the farthest away. A bowl of spaghetti and meat sauce, a salad, and bread — or stuff like that — featured in the table's center. But dad's end consisted of 20-odd saucers and jars. Still somehow, there was always one or two he'd forgotten.

"Cyndy-doll, could get daddy's yellow pickles?" "Cyndy, reach in the fridge and get me the blue container with daddy's fish." I'd grunt and groan, and pound my feet over to the fridge and produce some scary-looking things with tentacles. And dad would pick away at his separate meal of 20-billion saucers and bowls with his well-worn yellow chopsticks, his false teeth clicking, and his noisy mouth making no apologies for enjoying his food.

The truth is that dad's heart *was* bad, and mom's cooking probably *wasn't* the most ideal, and switching to his "Japanese" diet *was* probably the smart thing to do.

Preparing food for all of us came next, and as I said, this became something of a hobby for him in no time. *All* kinds of dishes. He'd see a commercial for something that looked tasty — something that even my brother would eat — and he'd run to the grocer store to recreate it. Hours later, we'd be devouring it for dinner.

It was trial and error at first. My brother, my mom, our friends, became his guinea pigs for any experimental thing he'd like to try his hand at. But as he got more and more perfected, his reputation among us blossomed, and his identity quickly became his cooking. It was the way in which he cared for his family, how he telegraphed who he was. Who he was becoming. How he felt about us. And we listened. With our nose, mouth, and stomachs.

No, Jerry had a *good* heart. I loved him dearly — all of us did. But he was a complicated, difficult man. He was a locked box, sealed tight with hard stories of Salinas and Castroville in the 1920s, of evacuation, Manzanar, Camp Shelby, and the 100th Battalion. He loved his children, but never threw a ball with his son, never danced with his daughters, and never really revealed himself to anyone.

As he got older, he showed his affection to us with a simmering broth, surrounded by platters of cut vegetables, meat, tofu and yam noodles.

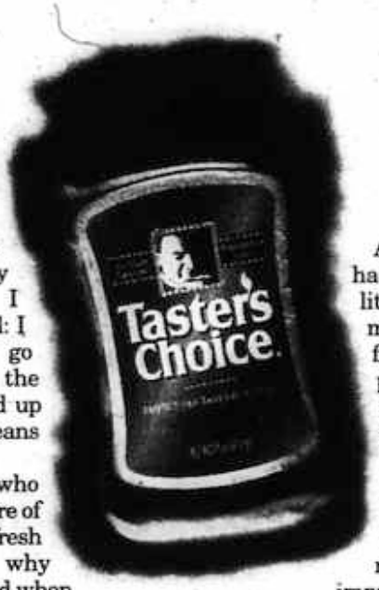
As he got older, he showed his affection to us with a simmering broth, surrounded by platters of cut vegetables, meat, tofu and yam noodles. Or his breakfasts of fried rice, scrambled eggs with shoyu or with chopped up bits of hot dogs or bacon.

He never read to me at bedtime, but when I was sick, he brought me rice with tea poured over it, and a swollen plum pickle

See FUJIKAWA/ page 97

A Father's Last Wish

By GLEN KITAYAMA



I'm a coffee lover. Every morning, I have a ritual: I get out of bed, go straight to the kitchen and grind up a fresh batch of beans to start my day.

Most people who know me are aware of my fondness for fresh coffee. That's why most are surprised when they learn that I keep a jar of Taster's Choice instant decaffeinated coffee in my cupboard.

I don't really care much for decaf—especially the instant kind. But every now and then, particularly on Christmas, I enjoy a cup. It reminds me of my late father-in-law.

December 25, 1990, will forever be etched in my memory. I had just gotten married the previous July and was spending my first Christmas with my wife, Arleen, in her hometown of Mountain View, Calif., as an official member of the family. Normally, this would be cause for celebration but this was not a normal Christmas. My mother-in-law was in the hospital, suffering from the effects of diabetes, and my father-in-law had just suffered a stroke in October at the age of 87.

I remember meeting Arleen's parents two years earlier. I wasn't sure if they were going to like me since they were immigrants from the Philippines and I had a Japanese face. Arleen's mother had vivid memories of the Japanese occupation during World War II, so I didn't know what to expect. When she asked me about my family's history, I emphasized that my parents and grandparents were in the United States during the war and had spent their time in American concentration camps. After talking a bit, she invited me to stay at their house — a sure sign that I was okay with her.

Arleen's dad had a different litmus test for me. Before our first meeting, I put on my best pair of Calvin Klein jeans and a nice polo shirt to make a good impression. I made an impression, all right. Just not the one I wanted.

After taking one look at me, he whispered to his wife: "Well, he's not rich."

Looking back, I shouldn't have been surprised. Like many Issei that I knew, he dressed sharply and carried himself with class, dignity and pride. And above all else, he wanted the best for his only daughter.

Arleen's father came to the United States in 1929 as part of the first wave of Filipino immigration. He wasn't a very tall man but he had a very large presence. He was around 5 feet 3 inches tall and probably weighed no more than 120 lbs. He was, however, strong for his age and enjoyed keeping himself busy in his retirement years. On weekdays, dad could still be found in slacks and dress shoes, playing billiards at the local senior citizens' center. Other times, he would be in the backyard working in his garden.

By December 1990, Arleen's dad was no longer the strong person that I had met two years earlier. After his stroke in October, simple things like walking around the house became difficult. We tried to get him to use a walker but he refused. When we gave him a cane, he threw it across the room. He preferred to fall down rather than admit that he needed help.

Unfortunately, he needed help more than ever before. My mother-in-law, who had taken care of him for all these years, was in the hospital. And for the first time in many years, my father-in-law felt like he was all alone.

At five a.m. on Christmas morning that year, my father-in-law began seeing ghosts at the house. I woke up to the sounds of him screaming: "Get out! Or I'll kill you!"

I put on my robe to see what all the commotion was about. The lights were on in the kitchen and I found my father-in-law alone in the room gripping a 10" chef's knife in one hand. "Are you okay, dad?" I asked.

He looked at me. "Can't you see?" He pointed to the porch outside the kitchen window. "They're right there."

I had never seen him so terrified. I looked out the window and couldn't see a thing since it was still dark outside. I turned on the porch light and still couldn't see anything.

Dad was breathing hard. He supported himself by holding onto to the kitchen chair with his left hand, while with his right hand, he still held the chef's knife. I could tell by the tired look in his eyes that he hadn't slept all night.

I extended my right hand to him. "Why don't you give me the knife, dad. I'll make some coffee for us."

He gave me the knife and sat down at the kitchen table. He didn't sit in his regular chair. He sat at the most strategic spot possible to defend himself from the spirits. Straight ahead, he could see the window that led to the porch. To the left was the sliding glass door that opened to the backyard. And to the right was the door to the garage. As I boiled the water in one of the kitchen pots and brought out the Taster's Choice, I could tell he still saw the spirits lurking outside. "What do they want?" I asked.

With his eyes fixated on the window, he replied, "They want to come in."

As we sat over our coffee, he told me about his life in America. He had been all over the place. He was in Montana during the 1930s to work on the railroads; he worked in canneries in Seattle in the 1940s; he did farm work for a while in Los Angeles; and then settled in Mountain View before Arleen was born in 1960.

He cradled his coffee mug. "Where do you and Arleen plan on living when you graduate from school?"

"I don't know," I said, taking a sip of coffee. "We haven't decided yet."

When I asked him about Seattle, he said, "Ayy! Too cold ... No good."

"How about Montana? What was it like up there?"

"I worked like a dog back then. I was young and strong — not like now."

Then I asked him about living in Los Angeles. He said, "You two live here. This is a good house. I'll take care of both of you, okay?"

"Okay dad," I replied.

By the time we finished talking, the sun had come up and my father-in-law was no longer afraid. The spirits went away, and he was finally ready to get some sleep. As he tried to get up, I extended my arm to see if he wanted help. For the first time, he grabbed on, and we both walked slowly down the hallway, back to his bedroom.

That was the last Christmas I spent with my in-laws. Dad died seven weeks later, and mom passed away a few months after that. As I look back on that Christmas morning, I often wonder who my father-in-law saw outside his kitchen window. I'm not a spiritual person, and I generally don't believe in ghosts. However, there is a big part of me that believes the spirits were planning on taking my father-in-law that morning. He just wasn't ready to leave until he knew that his daughter was going to be okay.

Almost eight years have passed since I last saw my in-laws. Since that time, Arleen and I have divorced and gone our separate ways. In some ways, I feel like I had let my father-in-law down since he expected me to take care of his only daughter. But I guess that things don't always work out the way you plan them.

Sometimes I make myself a cup of instant decaf and wonder if my father-in-law is out there somewhere worrying about Arleen. And if he is, I hope he can see that his only daughter is doing just fine. Maybe then, he can finally get some rest. ■

Glen Kitayama is a member of Seigi, a part of the National Coalition for Redress/Reparations in Los Angeles.

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Making Mochi, Creating Communities

BY JIM MATSUOKA

This was a first for me. I've never spent a New Year's Eve quite like this. For me, a New Year's without a noisy celebration seemed almost un-American. Most of all, it was an assault on my manhood if I couldn't brag about how hung over I was from my New Year's Eve celebration.

But here I was that evening, in the quiet of the old Union Church basement in Little Tokyo, watching racks of *mochi* rice steaming away. Of course, every move I made to help was supervised by an Issei lady — a group of them who were willing to join us in something new and different…a New Year's built around making mochi and serving *ozoni* to local residents. The Issei ladies were amazed that a group of college-aged Sansei and Nisei were more interested in the residents of Little Tokyo than their own selfish pleasures. "We need to get an *usu*," they said. "To do it the right way, we must have an usu so that we can pound the mochi properly." Well, it went without saying that we wanted to get ahold of this "usu" thing because we wanted to make things as authentic as possible.

That afternoon in the church basement, we learned not only how to make mochi, but also about each other. We learned how tough life was for many of the elderly Issei living in the small hotels that dotted Little Tokyo. At the beginning of 1969, the community was still trying to recover from the effects of the relocation of 1942.

More than two decades had passed since the end of the war, and a generation of Nisei were joining in the flight to suburbia. What was left behind was an elderly Issei population. Many did not want to leave this community, no matter how physically run-down it was. Others did not want to be a burden to their children and felt they were unwelcome. Many simply had no family to live with, even if they had wanted to leave.



Courtesy Visual Communications

Most of the elderly population were Issei men. Many led isolated and lonely existences, sometimes by choice, but more often, fate had brought them to a "trail's end" in Little Tokyo. It was a mystery to me how they managed to survive with very little money and social resources to draw on. Life as an immigrant in America was difficult. The camps destroyed any remaining illusion of hope for fame and fortune in the new world. I wondered how they managed to cope with the reality of poverty that would surround them in their final years.

To me, "shikataga nai" (it can't be helped), a maddening phrase used over and over, seemed to be a "cop out." But in the case of the Issei here, it seemed mercifully appropriate for these hardy pioneers. I should add the word "heroes," because our respect and admiration for these survivors grew as we realized how difficult their struggles were. Failing to even get a bit of the "American Dream," they sought final refuge in small, run-down hotels in Little Tokyo.

My father's aunt lived in one of these hotels. She lived in the old San Pedro Firm building. Now it's a renovated low-income housing hotel, efficiently administered by the Little Tokyo Service Center; a far cry from the old building. Today, even the plumbing is state-of-the-art. It's a long way from the dingy, dark room that was piled high with her possessions, leaving little room to even sit. "I couldn't live anywhere else but in Little Tokyo," she said. "Here, at least, I am among my own people."

Miraculously, one of our Issei volunteers mentioned she knew of an usu that was sitting neglected in a friend's backyard. And almost as miraculously, we came up with someone who had a pickup truck and volunteers who were willing to bring this heavy stone object down to us. So as the mochi rice steamed that evening, we all stared at the stone mortar, an object that somehow seemed to reappear out of our ancestral past. Yes, this was New Year's Eve; this was a genuine usu looking at us; and yes, we were going to pound away at the mochi rice when it finished steaming.

Our mochi came out well. Some of us had seen pictures of people pounding mochi, and with our Issei ladies coaching us, we were up to the task. But none of us were foolish enough to volunteer to turn the hot rice. Our lack of rhythm was enough to scare even the most daring in the group. Not even the offer of warm saké, which seemed to appear from nowhere, could get us to change our minds. Courage and bravery seemed to be in short supply amongst us. Again, our Issei seniors came to the rescue. They had guided us so far and they were not about to turn back. By some miracle of heaven, no fragile, darting Issei hands which had turned the rice that night were crushed. We clumsily, but sheepishly, took turns pounding away … at first with a great deal of hesitation, but later with gusto as the evening wore on.

I am not about to lie and say we made the ozoni. Our Issei volunteers took the lead. They knew how to make the *shiru* (broth) just right. No matter what, ozoni comes to life if you add little strips of *kamaboko* (fish cake), and a bit of leafy green *shingiku*. It starts to taste very good when you add in freshly pounded mochi. I don't know if it was "world class ozoni," but I can say it was as good as anything being slurped down in Southern California.

Early morning on north San Pedro Street, where the old Union Church was located, came up bright and cold. This was a typical Southern California Rose Bowl morning. The year of 1969 was upon us and we could only guess at what would happen now. Did any of the elderly get the message we sent around? Did anyone bother to read the notices we had posted in the lobbies of the hotels? We had relied on the Issei grapevine, but would it work? Would they come or would we be faced with the task of wondering what to do with the ozoni and mochi?

If this were any other New Year's, I would probably have been getting up around now, maybe turn on the TV, more to verify that I was still alive. It had seemed strange not to spend an evening waiting for the big lighted ball to come down at Times Square in New York. Well, anyway, if no one came, at least we could sit down with our Issei volunteers and try to make a good morning out of it.

The men started to come in little by little. They entered the basement hesitantly at first, but we were greatly relieved to see them! No matter how dire their circumstances, the Issei always seemed to have an aura of dignity about them that no one could take away. They gave us a short nod to acknowledge our presence. When they sat down at a table, we quickly brought each of them a steaming bowl of ozoni with mochi in it.

Soon the basement of the church began to fill with men from the hotels. They came from hotels with names like the Masago, the Tomoye, the Alan, New York Hotels, the Narasaki, the Beacon, the Daimaru and Sato Hotels. With the Issei men and the Issei volunteer women, the Sansei and Nisei, we soon began to resemble a family gathering. After serving the men from the hotels, we all sat down and started to have the ozoni. We wanted to do this to blur the line between the server and those being served. Here was the essence of a "community" as we felt it should be. A family of all generations, celebrating together in the basement of a church in our own historic community. Through mochi and ozoni, we warmed our stomachs that cold morning along with the residents of the hotels, but for all of us, it was our hearts that were being fed.

Initially, when we thought of the mochi tsuki, our intentions were simple. We wanted to honor our Issei pioneers living in the hotels. They were our pilgrims to this country. The road was hard for them as it was for many of us. We reached out to say despite all the efforts to separate us, we will gather to unite as a community again. We reaffirmed our pride in our elders and honored the customs they brought with them from Japan. Despite years of effort to denigrate us as enemy aliens and make us despise the roots from which we grew, we sat together that morning, united in pride and love as any family should.



I've never experienced a New Year's quite like that, before or since. As my thoughts return to that day, I wonder what became of most of my friends. They must remember that day from time to time when they celebrate a New Year's, wherever they are. The Issei ladies and men must be gone by now. Even the old Union Church was moved to another part of Little Tokyo. The building has since been renovated into the Union Center for the Arts.

Nothing will erase the memories of that cold morning in 1969. Doing something in common with a loving heart has the power to transform people. We came together that evening as individuals, but left the following day as a family. ■

A member of the L.A. Pioneer Project, Jim Matsuoka was instrumental in the development of the Pioneer Center at the Japanese American Cultural & Community Center in Little Tokyo.

A TASTE of JAPANESE CULTURE



BY GIL ASAKAWA

You don't have to travel the world to know something about other cultures. You've never been on a Roman holiday, but you've had spaghetti and other Italian food. And you've never crossed any border but you've probably tried tacos, burritos and other Mexican fare.

Food is the most accessible way that people are exposed to ethnic cultures. Food can break down barriers between countries and cultures, and serve as a point of shared experience. Cuisine is a cultural ambassador, and restaurants are the embassies where you can find the ambassador.

Anyone who's ever spent the night at a sushi bar with friends understands this concept: Japanese restaurants bridge the Pacific and can bring together not just generations of Japanese and Japanese Americans, but people of all races and countries. Whether it's something as commonly ordered as meat marinated in teriyaki sauce or something more "exotic," the Japanese food that's served up introduces diners to a taste of Japan — not just in the ingredients, but in the presentation, and the ambience of the restaurant, er, embassy.

This goes both ways, of course — American pop culture of all types is ubiquitous throughout the world, and Japan's no exception. Even with variations such as "Teriyaki McBurgers," McDonalds is an ambassador of American values — serving up fast food for modern Japan's on-the-go society.

I feel at home at Japanese restaurants, with the menus, the decor (especially the small, family-owned eateries), the smells of the ingredients mixing in the air, and even the murmur of Japanese being spoken, wafting out of the kitchen.

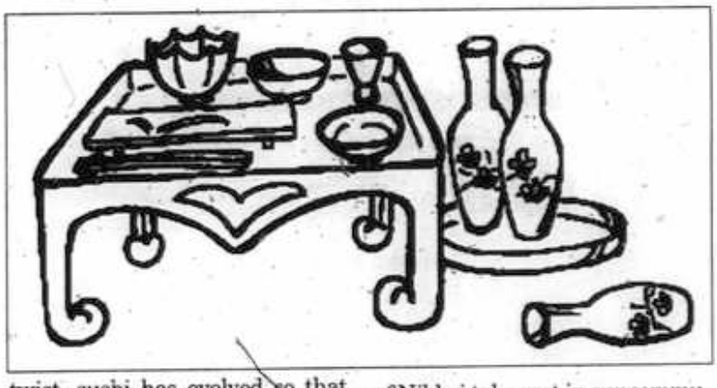
I schedule lunch meetings at a Japanese restaurant called Samurai near my office in south Denver. I like introducing my friends and business partners to the variety of food served there, which ranges from a full selection of fresh sushi to the type of meal my mother often serves herself: salty grilled salmon. I feel so comfortable at Samurai that sometimes I leave the office to dine alone there.

During one recent lunch at Samurai, its role as a cultural embassy struck home. I overheard a group of American businessmen introducing a man with a British accent to the joys of Japanese cuisine.

"You've never eaten at a Japanese restaurant before?" asked one man, who was apparently a regular and was familiar with most of the offerings. He proceeded to recommend some of the more esoteric dishes. "Oh, everything here's great. You can get teriyaki chicken or beef, but you should try something else. The tempura's great, but I like the *donburi*," he urged his lunchmates, explaining the combination of rice and ingredients served in a bowl.

I'm not sure what they all ordered, but they must have enjoyed their meal — the conversation faded as the food was served. Chalk up another step towards world peace and understanding.

Of course, in the American consciousness, sushi has been the most visible form of Japanese food in the past decade. Presented at first as a yuppie novelty, with hipsters daring each other to try it, sushi (and sashimi) is now a commonly-ordered specialty. In fact, in an Americanized twist, sushi has evolved so that every chef has his or her special rolls.



One Colorado Springs restaurant named Jun features a weekly invention of its creative chef and owner. One of the best-tasting rolls I've ever had was a concoction at Jun featuring salmon lightly seared in butter, then flamed with a splash of liqueur before being rolled in rice and nori. The dish was beyond just food — the whole process of preparation was a work of performance art.

When it comes to introducing people to Japanese culture, though, no restaurant in Colorado can match Domo near downtown Denver. The restaurant is meticulously designed to look like a 19th-century Hokkaido farmhouse, with thatched roofing and hand-crafted furnishings, using irregular slabs of slate for tables and oddly comfortable tree stumps for stools to sit on.

Outside Domo's dining room, there's a lovingly maintained rock garden complete with a pond stocked with carp, and a wing of the building that serves as a museum of traditional Japanese farm implements, clothing and tools. It's a fascinating experience, stepping back in time to a place half a world away by just going to the restaurant. Oh, and I should mention — the food is terrific — and you won't find any sashimi or sushi. The menu is "authentic" country-style Japanese.

And true to its role as an embassy, I struck up a conversation with an American couple the first time I ate at Domo. The man had been stationed in Japan while in the Air Force, and we shared stories about his tour of duty and my childhood. The shared experiences made the food taste that much better.

But Japanese restaurants aren't embassies just for American diners. As the fifth generation of Nikkei take root in our communities, and values become that much more removed from the experience of the Issei, Japanese food remains one of the durable cultural constants. Our taste for the staples of Japanese dining is handed down through generations in the appreciation of teriyaki, miso soup and rice, and I often see and hear JAs at area restaurants alongside Japanese and non-Japanese diners.

I dine often for lunch (probably too often), but of course you can't go out all the time. Like many families, when I was growing up, going out to Japanese restaurants was reserved for special occasions, like birthdays. Those dinners were public celebrations, and enjoying them in restaurants made them seem that much more communal.

But the holiday season — culminating with New Year's — was a more private time. That's when my mom would show off her culinary skill, which is the equal of any restaurant owner or chef — and do it with a cross-cultural flair not possible in a Japanese restaurant. For Christmas, there might be turkey or ham, but also *norimaki*, and teriyaki chicken and eggrolls. And while we (the kids and dad) had our American holiday meal, mom would serve herself some salmon, a bowl of white rice and *tsukemono* on the side.

And for a long time, New Year's Eve was the ultimate celebration of Japanese cuisine, and the time I felt most closely connected to my roots.

Mom prepared the ingredients for everything from sushi and teriyaki to various fish stews, sukiyaki, and mochi filled with sweet bean paste for several days in advance, and my parents invited their friends for the feast. The invite list included Japanese, Nikkei, American friends (we got to invite our school buddies, too) and my dad's old military buddies, so even in our home the food was the ambassador that brought many cultures and generations together. An awful lot of saké was poured, and an awful lot of political and cultural discussions were carried on from year to year.

My wife and I aren't blessed with the ability to cook all that for ourselves, so for now, we still go to my mom's house for big family dinners for the holidays, and to restaurants such as Sushi Den (my mom's favorite in Denver) for special occasions throughout the rest of the year.

At those times, I look around at the other diners and feel the sense of community that brought them all together in these impromptu embassies. And then I marvel at the source of this community — the food on our plates.

Happy Holidays, and *itadakimasu*! ■

Gil Asakawa is the president-elect of the Mile-Hi Chapter of the JACL, and a board member of the Japan-America Society of Colorado. His "Nikkei View" columns are published on the Internet at http://home.earthlink.net/~gillers/nikkeiview.

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I was a Japanese food snob



BY MIKA TANNER

Spam musubi? Yuck. I have to admit that was my reaction the first time I ever heard of this great Japanese American delicacy. Processed canned meat in any form seemed abhorrent, much less as an accompaniment to rice and seaweed. I guess you could say I was a purist when it came to Japanese food. Japanese cuisine was not supposed to be innovative, experimental or cutting edge — it was about tradition, about doing things a certain way, about a right and wrong, a good and bad.

I suppose my Shin-Issei mother had something to do with this. Her cooking and the summer vacations I spent in Japan led me to believe that Japanese cuisine was in a class by itself, and that it should remain that way. In short, Japanese food was inassimilable. Sure, the Japanese could make their own versions of pizza and spaghetti, but as far as Japanese food went, that had to remain pure and untainted.

When I first lived away from home, I took great pride in reproducing my mother's recipes. I made *miso shiru*, *nishime*, and *kinpara* to my mother's exact specifications, and in doing so I felt I was carrying on an authentic Japanese heritage, one that had not succumbed to the shortcuts of convenience or the banalities of an American palate.

I have to admit that I protected this tradition ruthlessly. One time, an ex-boyfriend said that he did not see the sense in using so many plates at one meal. To me, Japanese cooking meant eating beautiful, delicious food off of a wide variety of exquisite little plates, each dish served on its own to keep sauces from mixing with each other and ruining the purity of flavor. My boyfriend, on the other hand, commented that this made clean-up overly labor intensive and that you could just as easily serve everything on one large plate. He proceeded to dump all my carefully prepared and displayed dishes together on the plate in front of him while I cringed. "Like Chinese food!" he said happily.

Another time, after serving *somen* noodles the traditional Japanese way — each mouthful dipped in a small bowl of dashi, green onions, and wasabi — the same ex-boyfriend suggested that it made more sense to make a big bowl of noodles, throw some vegetables and sauce on top and make it into a kind of a salad. How much easier to prepare and eat, and how tasty! Of course, I was horrified. It sounded sacrilegious — simply WRONG. "That's ridiculous," I scolded. "No one eats somen that way — you just don't *do* that."

How was I to know that "somen salad" was a "traditional" Japanese American recipe? I found out a few years later when I was working at the Japanese American National Museum. It was here that I finally learned about the joys of JA food, a whole style of cooking I never knew existed. Each Friday, volunteers at the museum would bring a prepared dish and gather for potluck lunch. They brought *maki* and *inari*-style sushi and yes, the dreaded Spam musubi. They brought freshly made *tsukemono*, shoyu chicken, shoyu hotdogs and sometimes even chili and rice.

> *To me, Japanese cooking meant eating beautiful, delicious food off of a wide variety of exquisite little plates ...*

There was a layered concoction called *takuwan* rice, and desserts such as *manju*, butter *mochi*, coffee jello, and pound cake. It wasn't what I was used to, but it all looked delicious.

The volunteers would often invite the staff to take part in their great feast and, taking them up on their offer one day, I grabbed a paper plate and loaded it up with a bit of everything. Big surprise — it was heavenly, even the Spam musubi. And so much fun, with everyone joking, laughing, and teasing each other. It was one of the first times that I experienced a true sense of the JA community, with its vitality and its own rich tradition and history. Although I worked in a museum where each day I saw exhibits that shared and celebrated the past, it was in eating with this group of Nisei volunteers that I became aware of how alive JA culture and community really is.

I think, in many ways, working at the museum and going to these potlucks began the process of shaping my own JA identity. Until that time, I had always considered myself half Japanese — having grown up in a mostly white suburb of Northern California, the community and culture was unknown to me. Gradually, however, as I became active in the community, contributed my own dishes at potlucks, and saw the similarities of experience and perspective that I shared with other JAs, I began to realize that I was JA myself. I, too, had a claim to the diverse and wonderful legacy of Japanese America and was privileged to carry it on in the future.

Since then I have become a big fan of potlucks, jello, and macaroni salad, and I now realize that it's okay to claim a JA heritage by incorporating both a Japanese and American sensibility into the food I eat. I do not have to keep them separate as if one would poison or dilute the other. In that way, it's a bit like being biracial: I may be part white, but that doesn't make me less "authentically" JA than someone who is of "full blooded" Japanese descent.

I know there is a distinction between Japanese and JA, just like there is one between Japanese food and JA food. I am happy, like other JAs, to have access and cultural pride in both. So, although I love somen salad, there are times when I want Japanese style somen in all its traditional simplicity. One isn't an improvement on the other, like Japanese and JA culture, they are just different. There's a time and a way to appreciate and accept the beauty and richness of both. Because, you know, America is not a melting pot, nor is it one big plate of food with everything mixed together. Maybe it's a potluck — a little bit of everything. ■

Mika Tanner is currently a graduate student in the Asian American Studies Department at the University of California, Los Angeles.

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Here, there, everywhere



By Bill Hosokawa

Many decades ago, when my job would take me to the far reaches of the Rocky Mountain West, I discovered there was likely to be at least one Chinese restaurant in virtually every town large enough to call itself a town. They were distinguished by garish neon signs that proclaimed "American and Chinese food" or sometimes "Chinese and American food."

I found these restaurants in places like Liberal and Ulysses, Kansas; Rock Springs and Rawlins, Wyoming; Grand Junction and Montrose, Colorado; Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and Pierre, South Dakota, and a bunch of other lonely towns you probably never heard of.

Most of these restaurants were reasonably clean but far from fancy. They were the kind of places where they served coffee in heavy, white, porcelain mugs. The silver was scratched from long use and paper napkins were dispensed from a chrome-plated holder. The patrons were mostly blue collar. Sometimes the cashier was Chinese, but chances were that they stayed in the kitchen while a Caucasian girl took care of things up front.

The American meals in these restaurants were fairly standard: split pea soup, chicken noodle or beef barley soup, meat loaf with gravy, roast pork and mashed potatoes, corned beef and cabbage, hamburger steak and brown gravy, hot roast beef sandwiches, chicken fried steak, and sometimes fried chicken. And, always apple pie.

It wasn't this fare that impelled me to try the "American and Chinese food" places when I stopped overnight in a small town. It was the expectation of getting a decent Chinese meal with a big bowl of rice.

I soon discovered that the inland Chinese food bore little resemblance to the West Coast variety. Yes, there was egg foo yung which mostly consisted of eggs and onions, and chop suey which was mostly onions and celery and just enough pork to keep it honest, and sweet and sour pork which was mostly bones and gravy, and chow mein which was fried noodles buried under onions, celery and sometimes bean sprouts. And the rice was the crumbly Chinese long-grain type, not the sticky Japanese rice, and the soy sauce had a distinct hint of burned molasses.

To be fair about it, this was understandable. In those days, it was difficult and probably very costly to get fresh Chinese ingredients from San Francisco or Los Angeles. Besides, why go to all the trouble and expense of bringing in stuff that the locals wouldn't appreciate? I guess these restaurants served more pork chops and country fried steak with mashed potatoes than anything else.

Sometimes I wondered why there were Chinese restaurants in so many of these inland towns. Eventually, I figured that the Chinese who had arrived as railroad laborers and their friends and relatives just decided to sink their roots in local soil that wasn't entirely inhospitable.

But why weren't there any Japanese restaurants? Hadn't the Japanese followed the Chinese into interior America as railroad laborers? Well, for some reason most Japanese went back to the West Coast when they became weary of railroading. If they stayed, they became farm laborers or sharecroppers and eventually independent farmers, or settled in larger communities like Denver and became small merchants or innkeepers. Besides, how many non-Japanese potential customers knew enough about Japanese food to want to eat it as an alternative to chicken fried steak?

> The Japanese food that is featured in the restaurants that have sprung up postwar was, for Nisei of my generation, largely unfamiliar during the years we were growing up.

That brings us to the point of this small essay which is the question: Just what is Japanese food? Let's start with sushi, which today is probably the most readily identifiable Japanese dish. Usually it consists of a dab of rice about the size of a Baby Ruth chocolate bar, lightly vinegar-flavored, topped by a slice of raw fish, clam, shrimp or broiled eel. You dip it briefly in soy sauce laced with green Japanese horse radish, and down it in a bite or two.

Great stuff, devoured by the ton, after a bowl of miso soup, by yuppy types at expensive places like the Sushi Den in Denver.

What Sushi Den's patrons don't know is that this is a kind of sushi that was virtually unknown in the pre-war Japanese American communities. In fact, I'm told it was rare even in Japan outside of Tokyo and is largely a postwar phenomenon. Most Issei came from provinces, and the sushi they knew was vinegar-flavored rice spread on sheets of seaweed and rolled like a jelly roll with vegetables like boiled spinach, an omelet and sometimes bits of very tasty and expensive canned eel taking the place of the jelly.

(During the late and unlamented evacuation, I slipped into my luggage a treasured can of eel, which was the size and shape of a can of sardines. It was guarded zealously with the intention of saving it, to be enjoyed by the whole family with mess hall rice some night when the government issued food was especially unpalatable.

In the course of events, my wife Alice became ill and was taken to the camp hospital. I was entrusted with the care of our young son Mike who wouldn't eat his mess hall meals. In desperate search of something he would like, I opened what I thought was a can of sardines.

Alas, it was the precious can of eel. We ate it, but much to my chagrin, Alice missed out.)

The rolled-up sushi looked like batons, about eight or ten inches long and an inch and a half in diameter, and it was sliced into pieces that could be downed in a couple of bites. There was another kind of sushi which was flavored rice stuffed into pancakes of tofu and fried until brown. We called them gunny sacks. Sushi was a great delicacy and we could expect to have it only on special occasions.

On the boyhood that I remember, most of the Japanese meals at home consisted of lots of leafy vegetables cooked with a few slices of meat or fish and sometimes tofu and flavored with soy sauce which the folks bought by the keg. Sometimes we had *sukiyaki* which is a kind of stew-in-a-frypan, again flavored with soy sauce-based soup stock, but this was relatively infrequent. Meat was not inexpensive.

Tempura, much enjoyed today by American palates, was served only on very special occasions. Likewise for thinly sliced fried pork or beef marinated in ginger-laced soy sauce. In short, the Japanese food we knew was quite plebeian, relatively inexpensive, easily prepared by Issei housewives, and not particularly well-suited for American tastes. And because we were young and perpetually hungry — and didn't know any better — there were few complaints. The Japanese food that is featured in the restaurants that have sprung up postwar was, for Nisei of my generation, largely unfamiliar during the years we were growing up.

What I'm trying to say, I guess, is that the Japanese food we were raised on was the equivalent of American grits, wieners and sauerkraut, pork and beans or potato soup. Now, what is being marketed as Japanese victuals is more like beef Wellington or crown roast of lamb.

Fortunately, I have survived long enough to enjoy today's version of Japanese food. And so have Americans in such scattered places like Greensboro, North Carolina; Winter Springs, Florida; Columbia, Missouri; Colorado Springs and Fort Collins and Longmont, Colorado. I haven't been to Truth or Consequences, New Mexico, lately, but I wouldn't be surprised if sushi is available just as it is in centers of Japanese culture like Santa Fe and Albuquerque. If the Chinese beat the Japanese by several decades in the matter of introducing their ethnic food to Americans, the new breed of Japanese has made up for lost time.

Before I close, I must tell you about one thing I'd like to do. I would like to go to Little Rock, Arkansas, and eat at Charlie Trie's magnificent Chinese restaurant where he allegedly made so much money he could donate an obscene amount to his friend Bill Clinton's campaign for the presidency. ■

Hosokawa is the former editorial page editor for the Denver Post. *He writes regularly for the* Pacific Citizen.

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BY LESLIE A. ITO

Fortune is a universal idea, however, obtaining good luck varies from culture to culture. Some people rub a rabbit's foot for good luck. Others are in search of a four-leaf clover. A few place a lucky penny in their shoe. The list goes on and on, however in the Japanese culture, many foods symbolize good fortune, prosperity, and longevity.

For as long as I can remember, I have been told at our family gatherings and celebrations, "You better eat at least one bite of the *sekihan* for good luck." Sekihan is a traditional Japanese rice dish made from *azuki* (red beans) and *mochigome* (sweet rice). This Japanese dish is traditionally prepared for special occasions and festivities for good luck.

In our family, sekihan has become a regular dish at all our celebrations, ranging from all the traditional American holidays such as Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter, to birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, memorials, open houses, a birth of a [illegible] Year's celebration.

No matter what [illegible] my mother has planned [illegible] festivity, we can always count on Grandma Suzie making [illegible] hill. We have eaten sekihan with turkey and stuffing, with enchiladas and tacos, and with roast pork and apple sauce. Grandma Suzie's sekihan always adds a little ethnic flavor to my mother's almost-perfect "Martha Stewart"-planned-parties, and it is always a strong reminder of our cultural and culinary heritage.

Inevitably, Grandma Suzie brings the sekihan along with other delicious Japanese dishes to our celebrations. Grandma Suzie is from Yokohama, Japan, and she is the one who adds a more traditional Japanese flair to our Japanese American traditions and feasts. Since she is the only first generation cook in our family, I consider her cooking to be the most "authentic" Japanese food that we eat. She has immigrated from Japan with her Japanese recipes that are almost untainted by the American influences.

Grandma Suzie always brings the sekihan on a huge round Japanese lacquer plate which is carefully tied in a *furoshiki*. (A [illegible] is a very time consuming [illegible] dish to prepare [illegible] Grandma [illegible] spends two days preparing it. [illegible] In Japan and America, younger generations do not cook sekihan anymore because they can conveniently purchase it at the Japanese grocery stores. Although I'd like to learn to keep this tradition alive, learning to cook from Grandma Suzie is difficult because like many immigrants, she does not have a recipe. She cooks from experience and taste.

[illegible] dish is so heavy.

Because grandma used to work in a Japanese restaurant when she first came to the States and because she is an extremely generous woman, she cooks in very large quantities. More than half of the gigantic plate is always left-over. Therefore, tradition has it that after our celebrations, my mother gets out the zip-lock baggies and divvies up the sekihan for everyone to take home.

> Grandma Suzie's culinary expertise is a vital part of our family's eating traditions.

We spread the good fortune by taking leftovers to relatives in the Japanese retirement home, our JA neighbors and co-workers, good family friends, and anyone else

I have found that the only way to learn from grandma is to observe. First she boils the azuki beans over three times and then lets them stand for half an hour. Then she separates the beans and the liquid. The mochigome then soaks in the azuki stock overnight. This method of soak-

See ITO/page 44

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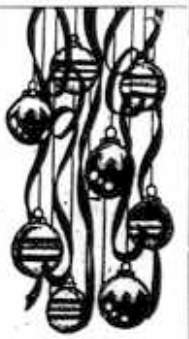
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ITO

(Continued from page 43)

ing is what makes the rice turn its unique pale pink color. (Grandma Suzie's sekihan always has a richer color than the anemic one you can buy at the Japanese market.)

The next morning, she steams the rice and azuki mixture on a rack covered with cheese cloth. Every ten minutes for one hour, she diligently bastes the rice with the azuki stock. For a final touch, she sprinkles *goma* or black sesame seeds. The end result is a sticky pink rice with red beans. The flavor is neither sweet nor salty, but a mild flavor in between the two. For me, however, the cultural significance of sekihan far outweighs the dish's flavor.

The mochigome and azuki that are required to make sekihan are both special ingredients that are not used on a daily basis. This is one reason that the rice dish is reserved for special occasions. Mochigome is a special type of rice that is stickier, heavier, and sweeter than regular Japanese rice. Not only does it differ in both taste and consistency, but it also costs more than the regular rice. Azuki is also a special ingredient that is usually cooked for celebrations. In addition, the blending of the white mochigome and the red azuki combine two of Japan's most symbolic colors, which most notably are the colors of the Japanese flag.

Although all these ingredients can be bought at a local Japanese grocery store, Grandma Suzie cooks only the best ingredients. She uses *sasaye* azuki beans, which do not crumble as easily when cooked. However, this special kind of azuki can only be bought in Japan. Therefore, when family members go to Japan, Grandma Suzie always requests we bring these special beans back for her. I suppose this is the only way we can really participate in the preparation of this dish.

Grandma Suzie takes pride in making her special sekihan and it is her way of showing her concern and care for her family. Since there is a language barrier between her and my immediate family, the sekihan acts as a culture translator. Both the preparation and presentation of the special dish convey her love and concern for the family's good fortune.

Beyond Grandma Suzie's intentions of making sekihan, the rice dish has also become a cultural marker for our JA family. We are all conscientious of eating our share of the sekihan in order to receive our share of good luck, but also out of respect for Grandma Suzie and recognition of the time and effort she has put into her cooking.

Grandma Suzie's culinary expertise is a vital part of our family's eating traditions. I feel fortunate as a Yonsei to have the exposure to such authentic Japanese cooking. For many Yonsei my age, the first and second generation women cooks in their families have already passed and only the legacy of Japanese cooking continues. I hope to be the cultural bearer of Japanese foods for the generations to follow me, but it will be hard to live up to Grandma Suzie's taste buds and her talent in the kitchen. ■

This piece was originally written for Professor Valerie Matsumoto's history seminar, "Asian American Culture, Cuisine and Economy," at the University of California's Los Angeles. Leslie A. Ito, a Yonsei native-Southern Californian, has completed her master's degree in Asian American studies at UCLA and now resides in New York City.

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Online Spam and virtual Japanese food

BY WATARU EBIHARA

A friend recently asked me, "Wataru, you stay so thin. How do you do it?" Well, it's an ancient Japanese nerd secret. And here it is.

Are you ready? It's called "virtual food" — the random access metabolism (RAM) diet! For optimum performance, I recommend at least 32 mega-bites, and of course, you'll need plenty of exercise for your hard drive to keep your floppy drive in shape.

Does it really work? Who knows? I can't say that you'll actually lose weight, but in cyberspace, you can download all the eye candy and hot links you'll ever want and not gain a single pound. That's right. You can also learn a lot about healthy foods like tofu and other soy products that Japanese people know so well.

Today, I spent about an hour working out on my modem, and I feel pretty good. Here's what I found. So if you have access to the internet, let's go for some virtual dining!

My first stop was in Tokyo, Japan, at the Tokyo Food page: **http://www.bento.com/tokyofood.html**.

This is a wonderful online guide to Japanese food and dining with listings of more than 1,000 Tokyo-area restaurants. There are detailed descriptions of Japanese specialty foods — *nabemono, yakitori, unagi, oden* and Okinawan cooking. Recipes are also available for 21 popular Japanese dishes — from making *shabu-shabu, chawan mushi, takoyaki* to even homemade *natto*.

The website also hosts a section called the "Culinary Explorer," presenting unusual food-related destinations and adventures. For example, there are entertaining restaurant signs from Osaka, pictures of the Ohmicho food market near Kanazawa and a profile on the Shin-Yokohama Ramen Museum.

If hanging out at Tokyo bars is not for you, you might consider the Aqua Bar. It stocks more than 20 different natural water brands from around the world at 200 to 500 yen per serving.

But before leaving the Tokyo Food page, please check out the Sushi Color Swatches — so you can buy table linen that matches your favorite kinds of sushi. It's on the Sushi Multimedia page.

Now we move on to the subject of that green clump on the side of your sushi dish — wasabi. To learn everything you wanted to know about wasabi, visit: **http://www.freshwasabi.com**.

You'll learn why fresh wasabi is better than prepared powder and that wasabi has active chemicals that act as an antidote to food poisoning and fungal growth. Interesting stuff, huh?

Thirsty? How about a virtual drink? (For 21 and over please.) If sake is your alcoholic beverage of choice, you might want to investigate "Sake World" by John Gauntner, a columnist for the *Japan Times*, who specializes in sake. The address is: **http://www.sakeworld.com**.

This website is the work of a true expert. If you thought sake was just sake, guess again. There is a list on sake fundamentals and a sake glossary. You'll have to know the difference between *junmai-shu, honjozu-shu, ginjo-shu, daiginjo-shu* and *namazake*.

There are also sake anecdotes and wisdom, notes on sake tasting, listing of the top 100 sake breweries in Japan and a "free" sake label reading service. This site is certainly worth a visit for the sake curious. You can email the author at: **sakeguy@aol.com**.

Next, let's taste some virtual tofu. What? It doesn't taste like anything? Well, tofu isn't the most exciting of foods, but it can do wondrous things like fight cancer, lower blood-cholesterol levels and prevent osteoporosis.

For anyone serious about tofu and soy products, one should definitely visit the internet edition of the U.S. Soyfoods Directory: **http://soyfoods.com**.

This is an online reference providing nutritional information about the health benefits of soyfoods — including lists and email addresses of research scientists, books, organizations and a free monthly newsletter. Best of all, there are plenty of recipes to try out, such as soy flour pancakes, *tempeh* chili, tofu fruit smoothies, soy milk and curried carrot soup.



And the soy product we know so well, soy sauce (otherwise known as *shoyu*) is also found online at the Kikkoman Corporation website: **http://www.kikkoman.co.jp/world/home/**.

You can learn fascinating facts on how soy sauce is made, and participate in their "Edutainment Park" by sending electronic postcards with recipes to your friends.

Now, we transition to the staple diet of those on a fast-paced lifestyle — ramen. If you're getting tired of the same instant ramen, try some variations. The Nissin Foods website has ramen recipes with a free cookbook offer. Their Top Ramen pizza and peanut soup looked "interesting." Check it out at **http://www.nissin-foods.com**.

You want to hear a ramen rumor? Koumi Ramen is developing something called SNNP (Steaming Network Noodle Protocol), a "new internet standard that will allow the delivery of hot food over TCP/IP networks." **http://www.animeigo.com/Products/Koumi.html**. If this becomes a reality, it could possibly revolutionize the internet as we know it. Hmmm . . . I'll believe it when I eat it.

Well, my dinner hour is over, and now I must return to working on the computer. So I'll leave you with one last link to feast on. One of my favorite sites is the "SPAM Haiku Archive" that is maintained by the SPAM Haiku Archive Master (SHAM) John Nagamichi Cho at: **http://pemtroptics.mit.edu/~jchio/spam/**.

The archive houses more than 12,000 Spam-ku, a literary form of haiku motivated by the mysterious food product, Spam. The archive lists the Spam-ku by chronological order, tasty picks and by arbitrary categories like art, childhood trauma, love, poverty, religion and sex. And you can even write a Spam-ku and submit it to the archive.

celebrate eating
with online Spam *musubi* —
ponder the network■

*Wataru Ebihara, born in Cleveland, Ohio, works as the Information Systems manager at the Little Tokyo Service Center in downtown Los Angeles. He is also on the staff of dis*orient, an Asian Pacific American arts journal/zine. You can find Wataru online at http://janet.org/~ebihara.*

For my father's generation

BY GREG UBA

my father's generation called one another
skunk or zombie, stone or horse,
or by the first three and four letters
of their very Japanese names
politely, kenji-nisan or some such thing for brother,

my father's generation is missing a leg
from the knee, or an eye
lost to shrapnel or diabetes.
shakes hands minus fingertips
from a fare machinery accident or butcher's blade.

my father's generation is brown like pearl city clay
or indio soil, toiling beneath a relentless sun
see, just read the age spots on their leather faces.
this noble shade — fifty years of gardening
and five last summers at june lake.

my father's generation learned to drive
at manzanaar, heart mountain, poston out west,
could hit fastballs, rig treble hooks and split-shot sinkers,
could dance a wicked jitter-mushi
in their prime time.
my father's generation didn't embrace us, no,
until we married, never wrote us, no,
until we divorced, knew not a lullaby.

but we were loved and knew it each wordless sunday
shagging fly balls or careening down snowy slopes.

my father's generation convinced us we were rich
not because they were but because
they had not a vice other than an occasional cigar,
or bowling, or marlboro soft packs,
or early morning fishing trips.

my father's generation cared for their weary moms
after their fathers died, will die fifteen years
before their wives from eggs and bacon and hom yu
from washing their hands in gasoline, from mixing pesticides
from worrying over wayward sons,

now my father's generation dines out at one or two
favorite restaurants, orders
the same thing, "s special,"
no surprises, catnaps in front of the television
tends to tomatoes, savors ice cream desserts
luxuries they never knew

when they were *our* age. ■

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Japanese taste buds



BY MICHAEL HOSHIKO

Living on a long sliver of islands with mountains covering most of the land, it is no wonder that the Japanese turned to the sea for sustenance, and what did they find? Fish and seaweed! So the taste for seaweed was brought to America by our immigrant forebears. And although we have acquired new tastes, for butter and cheese for example, our taste for seaweed is still very strong.



Most of us still love to eat sushi rolls wrapped with thin sheets of nori made from seaweed, or rice balls with a small square of nori. We enjoy our rice flour crackers flavored with small crushed bits of nori flakes. I suspect there are some beer drinkers among us who like to dip squares of that thin dark green wafer of nori in shoyu. Just about all Japanese cooking comes with a shoyu flavor.

After American GIs brought back a taste for shoyu, having been introduced to it in Japan, the taste for shoyu became international. Wisconsin has a shoyu factory that even produces a "light" variety of shoyu, and any reputable grocery store chain carries shoyu.

Right after Christmas many families still continue to prepare a feast consisting of many Japanese dishes including the use of *konbu* in soup stock and seasoning.

Wakame is also used for soups, eaten raw or prepared as a salad with vinegar or even boiled with vegetables. It can be dried and eaten in pieces with beer or sake. Wakame is found all around the coast of Japan and is supposed to have more calcium than any other seaweed.

Nori from Asakusa is considered the best. This red alga porphyra has been cultivated for centuries all around estuaries and bays, especially in tidewater near the shore. Bamboo is used to spread nets so that the floating spores of the porphyra cling and grow. It is said that when the fishermen used bamboo traps to catch fish for the shogunate, around 280 years ago when most of Asakusa was under water, they found spores of porphyra growing on the traps. The nori industry was started in Asakusa. Cold water provides the best environment for porphyra to grow between October and April. The finest flavor is found when the porphyra is harvested before the end of January.

To make nori, the porphyra is washed continuously to remove all sand and grit. Then it is chopped into fine pieces and mixed with clear water. This mixture is spread thinly on bamboo slats to dry. If drying does not take place overnight, the flavor deteriorates and its sheen fades. So the workers probably pray for warm dry weather.

Nori is very nourishing and highly digestible. It contains various vitamins, calcium, iron, protein, carbohydrates, amino acids and iodine. Incidents of goiter is nonexistent in Japanese who have been getting iodine from seaweed.

Konbu is the largest type of seaweed and has broad and long leaves. It is harvested by men in boats using a *kama*, a Japanese sickle attached to a long pole. (The kama with a short handle was used to cut off runners and leaves by Japanese immigrants in America when they cultivated strawberries.) The best konbu is found in the narrow seas between the extreme northern part of Hokkaido and the Russian-held islands. Some conflicts with the Russians have been reported recently, adding to the hard life endured by the harvesters of konbu in Hokkaido.

Especially during the New Year's celebration, konbu is almost a requirement for seasoning soups and all types of Japanese cookery. Among the more than 25 types of konbu products, the most popular ones are *oboro* and *hirome*. These are dried, salted and boiled in shoyu, while some, after being processed, are sold in strips and packed in bags. These types are popular with beer drinkers who have strong teeth, as they require a considerable amount of chewing. Sometimes the American GIs who chewed on these dried konbu products called them "Japanese chewing gum."

The word konbu suggests happiness, rejoicing and goodness, so it is used at special and happy events, like weddings and New Year celebrations, symbolizing happiness, prosperity and long life.

So the tradition and culture of old Japan has been carried forth by the second, third and fourth generations with the persistence of food tastes because our ancestors harvested seaweed from their island homeland. ■

Canadian-born retired professor of speech at the University of Southern Illinois, Dr. Hoshiko resides in Carbondale, Ill. He is active in the St. Louis JACL and is an avid amateur radio operator (call letters WØCJW).

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A Nisei's food for thought

Itadakimasu. As Nisei children of Issei parents, we made a declaration before each meal. What it meant to us was, "We're going to help ourselves to this food. Thank you." My Sansei children were taught to say "grace" before each meal. As they grew older, this was discarded and never replaced. As Americanized as we are today, I still use itadakimasu when my hostess is of Japanese descent.

As I struggle to write of my remembrance of relocation camp for the benefit of the next generation of my family, I vividly recall some of the food to which I was exposed. As a family in California where vegetables were plentiful in the '30s, we ate a lot of vegetables and meat, sukiyaki style, with rice as our staple. It was easy to make and a little meat went a long way. Tough meat was ground and mixed with the vegetables, thus cutting down on the expense.

When we entered camp, the war was on and food was needed for the armed forces. We were supposedly supplied food similar to what the Army received. When we first entered camp, the protein came mostly in cans — Vienna sausage (which to this day I dislike) and Spam (which I now tolerate when I encounter it). Sauerkraut (which I had never eaten prior to camp, but later became fond of due to my wife's embellishments) never took a hold of the evacuees.



As a 19/20 year old in the camp, food was not the primary focus of my attention. After all, there were all those girls around. Being from a rural area in California, all these girls in close proximity was a treat. We just gulped our food when dinner time came and then went about looking for girls who also had some free time after dinner.

But that's another story .... I did work as an inventory clerk in the food operation during the year I was in camp. My recollection, therefore, is based upon my first year in camp, 1942-43. In my journal on October 12, 1942, I relate the following:

"I found that Mess Hall 61 has done some fine storing. They stored a great deal of food in that block's manager's office. Two Caucasians found this. The items were : 25 pounds of tea, about six packages of cornstarch, about 18 cans of shrimp, 98 pounds of flour, 36 #2-1/2 cans of applesauce, 13 #2-1/2 cans of peaches, 10 #2-1/2 cans of pears, 12 #10 cans of prunes, about 12 #2 cans of grapefruit, about 120 cans of condensed milk, four gallons of salad oil, 600 pounds of rice, 30 pounds of salt, 200 pounds of sugar, 40 cans of corn, 44 cans of tomato paste, 50 pounds of coffee. I know that they had no intentions of stealing it. They claimed that there was going to be a shortage of food in the near future and by storing the 'leftovers,' they could meet a possible and probable food shortage. I think this is ill-founded logic. No one has yet been dismissed."

I don't know why they thought there would be a food shortage. Working as a clerk in the Mess Operation, I knew there was plenty of food in the warehouse. They certainly deprived the evacuees in their block of all this food. I don't remember what punishment was meted out to the block manager and his cohorts, but it made big news in the camp paper.

This incident gives you some idea of the type of food we were fed. Along with the vegetables produced on camp grounds, we actually ate well, albeit not of the same "taste" to which we were accustomed.

Another journal entry on October 19, 1942, implies that pressure was put on the evacuees to work on the farm.

"Mr. Fryer, our camp director, says the only possible shortage is vegetables, self-imposed by non-working Gila residents on the farm. When the Army doesn't eat, we don't eat!"

The camp director discussed the food shortage in the camp paper, implying that the food shortage may be caused by the evacuees themselves who were not working the farms as diligently as they should. The statement: "When the Army doesn't eat, we don't eat," sounded like a threat. The food produced by the Japanese was being shipped to other camps in colder climates. What he meant by including the Army in his statement is not clear. I don't know if the food that was being farmed by the evacuees was being sent to the Army. The statement implies this, but personally I do not know if this was the case.



BY JIM YAMASAKI

It is one thing to work hard on your own farm, as the Japanese did, but to work the farm in camp where there was no reward commensurate to an individual's effort, is another thing. I guess this is why socialism doesn't work in a large community. "Work according to your ability; receive according to your need." Only in a family does this seem to work effectively. The Japanese, reputed to be diligent farm workers, became like others when the reward did not match the effort. Backbreaking work for $12 or $16 a month was something to be avoided when other jobs that were easier were available in camp for the same pay.

When we first entered camp, the protein came mostly in cans — Vienna sausage (which to this day I dislike) and Spam (which I now tolerate when I encounter it).

The requirement to work the farm for the benefit of other Japanese in Gila and other centers was a worthwhile effort. I wonder, however, how the evacuees felt about growing food with essentially no pay, when they could have grown the same food for a substantial income had they been on the "outside." Many Caucasians who took over the Japanese farms in California did just that and became quite wealthy during this period of high demand for food.

As the years went by in camp, the cooks became adept at changing the food to satisfy the Japanese taste. Shoyu was produced in Manzanar, I believe, and shipped to all the camps. I'm sure the Japanese farmers did not have a work stoppage when making shoyu.

Here in South Orange County, Calif., a group of retired Nisei called the "COSSINS" (County of Orange Seniors Itoko Niseis) meet once a month to have lunch and to socialize. The group has grown to about 80 people, with about 50 active members at any one time. It is strictly a group that got together because of their Japanese heritage and love for Japanese food.

They originate from various places on the West Coast and Hawaii and seem to have gravitated to this area because of their Sansei children. Food is catered from Japanese restaurants as far away as Gardena, Calif., in order to assure the quality of the Japanese cuisine.

It is interesting to note that neither the relocation camp nor years in the environment of American, Italian, Chinese, French, and other ethnic foods have caused the Nisei to dismiss their love for Japanese foods. The Nisei are quite conscious of the quality; any Japanese restaurant that is not up to standard will not receive their patronage.

Misoshiru (soup), *tsukemono* (pickled vegetables), sushi, sukiyaki, teriyaki, tempura and the variety of foods that are made on New Year's Day will always remain the primary love of the Nisei when it comes to food. *Gochisosama* is how we Nisei concluded our meals, which meant to us, "That was great. Thanks," even though at times the meal was only tsukemono and rice. ■

Jim Yamasaki is enjoying his retirement in Mission Viejo, Calif., after working as an electrical engineer for 30 years. He is currently writing his memoirs of camp life at the Gila Relocation Center.

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A primer on traditional Japanese New Year's foods



BY EMILY MURASE

Food plays a central role in the traditional Japanese New Year's celebration. Growing up, me and my siblings, like other young Nikkei, didn't care much for the overwhelmingly sweet taste of *osechi ryori*, much to the dismay of our Issei mother. But now, we very much look forward to it each year as an important part of our Japanese heritage.

What is unique about osechi ryori is that the ceremonial foods possess specific symbolic meanings. Traditionally, osechi ryori is served in a *jubako*, a three or four tiered lacquer box. The first tier usually contains the ceremonial foods, the second tier pickled vegetables and seafood, the third tier grilled seafood and meats, and the fourth tier cooked vegetables.

The first tier (*ichi no ju*): Here you find *kuromame*, candied black beans. They are a symbol of hard work, since working in the fields turns your skin dark. Next is *kazunoko*, herring roe. The multitude of tiny eggs represents fertility. You will also find small dried sardines called *tatsukuri* or *gomame*. A mix of chopped sardines and ash served as a popular fertilizer for rice crops in preindustrial Japan. Thus, these sardines gained the name of *ta-tsukuri*, or field maker, and now symbolize productivity.

Kurikinton is a sweet paste with a gold color. The paste is usually made from *satsumaimo*, Japanese sweet potato, but can also be made from lima beans. It usually contains chestnuts. Because of its gold color, *kurikinton* represents wealth. Finally, you should find *kamaboko* fish cake in two colors, red and white. Like the Chinese yin-yang symbol, the combination of red and white symbolizes balance.

The second tier (*ni no ju*): Vegetables and seafood are pickled in seasoned vinegar and lemon juice. The pickled vegetables include *namasu*, a mixture of carrots and daikon, Japanese turnip, and cucumber with shrimp or crab meat. Octopus and fish are also pickled in this way.

The third tier (*san no ju*): Here you will find slices of chicken teriyaki, grilled fish, and jumbo prawns in the shell. Traditionally, prawns must have their head and tails intact. With their curved spine, these prawns symbolize longevity as it is believed that eating them will ensure a life so long that your back becomes curved (this was before the treatment of osteoporosis became an important health concern!).

The fourth tier (*yon no ju*): The bottom tier contains *nishime*, a delicious variety of vegetables simmered in a shoyu-based sauce. It includes carrots, *gobo* (burdock root), *renkon* (lotus root), *yatsugashira* (taro), *takenoko* (bamboo shoot), *satoimo* (potato), shiitake mushrooms, *konyaku* (devil's tongue root) and *kobumaki* (small squares of seaweed, folded over). Kobumaki represents multiple joyous events because the word for joy is *yorokobu* and the kobu seaweed is folded over.



In addition to osechi ryori, there is, of course, *omochi*, small cakes of pounded sweet rice, and *ozoni*, a broth served with omochi and osechi ryori. In western Japan, including Kobe and Osaka, ozoni is a broth of white miso. In eastern Japan, including the Tokyo area, ozoni is a clear broth.

While omochi is served in virtually all Japanese households at New Year's, it is important to remember that every region in Japan has its own combination of osechi ryori and versions of ozoni. In fact, each household has its own version of traditional New Year's foods. This variety is also true of Nikkei households here. I talked to JACLers from across the country about their favorite New Year's foods.

Lily Okura, Washington, D.C. chapter: "We always try to have a little omochi before New Year's. My husband Pat likes it with *an* (red bean paste) inside. I prefer it with shoyu and sugar. Each year, our chapter hosts a *mochitsuki* where we offer people the chance to see the traditional way of mochitsuki, with pounders and all. We invite Japanese members of the press corps and their families to join us, some of whom have never seen traditional mochitsuki pounding, even in Japan! At the event, we also prepare omochi using machines, in order to produce enough omochi to have with ozoni and other New Year's foods that chapter members prepare. The annual mochitsuki has become an important chapter tradition for us."

Grayce Uyehara, Philadelphia chapter: "Every year, I make lima bean *kinton* with chestnuts because it's my husband Hiroshi's favorite. This involves soaking the lima beans the night before, boiling it to soften, then mashing it up. I've had to cut down on the sugar due to health concerns, and we prefer the dish not too sweet. Another family favorite is cucumber with fresh crab meat in a Japanese style *sunomono*. I also prepare *makizushi*, *inarizushi*, ozoni, and all different cooked vegetables.

Mari Okabayashi, Houston chapter: "Of all the New Year's Day foods, I've always loved omochi. My grandfather, with the help of other Issei, built a clubhouse, which became a meeting place on Sunday afternoons and holidays for Japanese American families in the Rio Grande Valley of south Texas. For New Year's, my grandparents always organized a mochitsuki. About 20-30 different families would gather. My grandfather and other Issei had built a *usu*, a concrete mortar in which to pound the omochi. My grandmother would deftly move the hot omochi rice in the usu while my grandfather heaved the heavy wood mallets to pound it. Other women helped make the an. Once the omochi was ready, we would all eat together at long tables. Each family would bring a covered dish. Everything was so delicious!"

Charles Matsumoto, Hoosier chapter (Indiartapolis): "The question of my favorite food is rather difficult to answer because I like many types of Japanese cuisine. However, I do miss *kinpira gobo*, fried gobo with black pepper, *satsuma-imo*, Japanese sweet potato, dried shiitake, and a couple of other ingredients cooked together. These foods are really not available to me. I do not miss *mochi*, but will eat some during New Year's. I guess it is traditional. Unfortunately, it is best I do not think about traditional Japanese cuisine this year because my blood chemistry is a little out of the average range."

Reiko Parker, Omaha chapter: "My favorite food is, of course, omochi. We don't make it fresh here. We have an Oriental foods store that sells packaged omochi. My dad likes it in soup. I prefer them toasted. They get crispy on the outside and all gooey on the inside. Although I could probably eat six omochi at one sitting, I limit myself to two. Every year, we also enjoy sushi and sashimi, including frozen octopus."

Karen Yoshitomi, Pacific Northwest District regional director, Seattle: "As far as my favorite New Year's food is concerned, I guess I would have to choose omochi. Not so much for the flavor, but the memories I have with the preparation of the omochi. When my grandparents were still alive, we used to prepare the omochi the old fashioned way. All three generations would participate in the preparation, and sometimes it would involve aunts, uncles, and cousins as well. It was pretty much the one time of year that my parents and grandparents would talk about their younger days."

Barbara and Izumi Taniguchi, Fresno chapter: [Barbara] "I like kuromame, sweet black beans, because I don't have it at any other time of the year. I like the sweet taste. Growing up, we

See MURASE/page 77

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GOCHISOSAMA



BY BILL MARUTANI

'TIS THE SEASON when Nikkei families in the United States prepare *o-shogatsu* (New Year's) *go-chi-so* (feast) fare, a custom handed down to us from our Issei folks. As no doubt true of many of you Nisei out there, since my childhood days I observed my mother making preparations many days in advance — starting with *kazu-no-ko*, (herring roe) in a dried state having to be soaked for days in water to restore it to its crunchy texture; same for *renkon* (lotus roots) which also were in a dried state and needed soaking to restore it to a crispy vegetable even after being cooked in a shoyu sauce steeped in *iri-ko* (parched sardine, or dried anchovy fingerlings).

TRADITIONALLY, THERE WERE certain dishes that were forced upon me with the explanation they had symbolic salutary imprimatur on one's life. For example, there was sweetened beans, *mame*, with the word also meaning hearty good health; also *konbu* (sea tangle), often tied like a bow tie and cooked very possibly along with the renkon. Konbu was a play on the term *yoro-kobu* (joyous, felicitation), yet another positive approach to the New Year. Then there was shrimp (always with its head still intact) similarly cooked — very possibly along with the konbu, iriko, and renkon.

AND THERE WAS *mochi*, glutinous sweet rice steam-cooked and processed in an *u-su* (a mortar made from a tree trunk, a concave hollow being dug in the center) into which steaming sweet rice would be placed. After kneading with huge wooden mallets the rice would then be pounded until it became one large blob of sticky dough. One had to be in top physical condition to wield one of those mallets: among other things, the wielder had to maintain a tempo which allowed another individual to stick his/her hand into the usu to knead the blob. Timing was everything. When there were two mallet wielders, it was pure art if all three — the two wielders and the kneader — maintained split-second coordination among themselves. Miss the timing, and somebody got hurt. At times, seriously. These participants were deserving of "combat pay," so dangerous was the mission.

I'VE OFTEN THOUGHT that the Nisei's dietary habits could be associated with various stages in his/her life. First there were those early years co-terminus with the depression period of the '30s; working on the farm, we ate whatever the harvest was at that period — beans, cabbage, carrots, corn, lettuce, onions, peas, tomatoes, interspersed with the vegetation growing in the wild such as *warabi* (fernbrake) *fuki* (butterbur) plus some fungus such as *enoki* and *matsu-take*. You'll notice that the list includes some of the healthiest foods one could have. All fresh from the fields onto the Issei-Nisei dinner table.

THE NEXT STAGE of the Nisei's gustatory exposure came when (s)he left home, whether it be to college, a job away from home, or the military service. Speaking for myself, when this country lad moved to Seattle to attend the university there, I was introduced to a wide range of *yo-shoku* (western style foods) — some of which were so-so (artichokes never caught on with me) and others which became my favorites (dark pumpernickel bread). But nothing can replace *go-han* (rice, steaming hot). After 9066, I moved out of Tule Lake to resume college in Mitchell, South Dakota. My hankering for gohan was acute enough that I gladly would have welcomed *shina-ryó-ri* (Chinese cuisine). But there was no shina-ryōri in Mitchell. (There's one now. Pretty good, too.) When the university forensics team travelled to Sioux Falls, S.D., I managed to find a Chinese restaurant — and glory hallelujah — I had some rice. Never mind that the *oka-zu* (entree) was something less than five stars. For me at the time, it was "soul food."

THEN THERE WAS the Army. At basic training in Arkansas, I ate whatever was slopped onto my tray. Rain or shine. One can readily adopt and adapt to almost any chow, if hungry enough. It mattered not that the dessert pie was dumped on top of whipped potatoes dripping with gravy. As the mess sergeant reminded: it all goes into the same place. (That may be true, but I wished to be able to control the sequence in which they all went to that same place.) The fare at Ft. Snelling, Minnesota, was such that the cooks (were they Nikkei?) modified the menu here and there with a resulting fare that appealed to the Nikkei palate.

AND NOW, TODAY? Well, life has been a bit more kind so that along with thousands of others like you out there, we can try various dishes that were out of reach during the depression years, the college years, or the military service years. No more having to fill up on vegetables brought home from the fields, or settling for just *chazuke 'n kō-kō* (hot tea poured over rice with pickled vegetables on the side). Instead, today I've been indulging in greasy or fried foods (shrimp tempura) heavily dosed with fat and cholesterol. To list a few: all shellfish (oysters, clams, lobster), squid (*ika* sashimi having been a favorite), meats (including spare ribs, seasoned sausage, juicy hamburgers), bakery products in general as well as glazed doughnuts, French crullers, pecan pie à la mode.

Perhaps I should mimic Japanese movie actor Toshiro Mifune who played the part of a starving samurai. The hungry samurai, instead of giving in to pangs of hunger, simply poked around his teeth with a toothpick as if he had partaken of a voluptuous meal.

Gochi-so-sama deshita. ■

After leaving the bench, Marutani resumed practicing law in Philadelphia. His column appears regularly in the Pacific Citizen.

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From *ozoni* to Spam-*musubi*:

a lesson for race relations

BY KEN YABUSAKI



Ken Yabusaki of Albany, Calif., is a member of the Berkeley JACL and a member of the chapter's Civil/Human Rights Committee.

I am always intrigued by the perception of the term, "Japanese American." For myself, "Japanese" and "American" are terms that reflect unique cultures. As much as we love embracing the "Asian" part of our cultural heritage, we cannot deny that we have buried many of the customs and traditions the Issei brought with them due to cultural assimilation. I say "buried" instead of "lost" because we can uncover what is still there if we choose to do so.

One problem is that many of us don't even know what is buried within our own cultural heritages; and that applies to not only Asian Americans, but almost any ethnic group that immigrated to America. Because food is as much a part of any given culture as are its languages, customs, etc., the foods we enjoy are largely influenced by the realities of the many cultural heritages that have made America what it is today.

First, I often wonder how, if in fact, the JA internment experience affected our taste buds and attitudes towards the food we eat. After five generations, I think that we have changed dramatically our practices towards food from what the Issei practiced before and after immigrating to America.

Growing up in Seattle, after the internment, my family used to gather in a friend's garage with other families for the traditional *mochitsuki* with *mochigome* cooked and steamed on bamboo mats and the *gohan* pounded in an *usu* with wooden mallets to the rhythm of hands clapping, laughter, and Japanese songs. A few fingers may have been mashed, but the pain was soothed by the drinking of saké or whiskey.

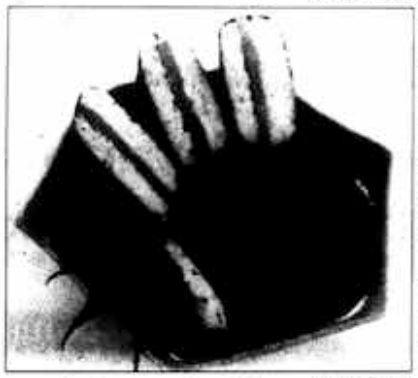
New Year's Day was always greeted with *ozoni* made with fresh grilled mochi cakes from the mochitsuki, *mizuna*, pieces of *kamaboko* and other vegetables in a delicious *dashi* broth. Today, most of us buy our mochi or use automatic mochi makers and many of us don't know what ozoni is or its traditional meaning.

In our family, my mother would make a certain day of the week a "*yoshoku-no-hi*" (Western cuisine day), when she prepared the likings of corned beef hash, a pot roast, or even spaghetti — and absolutely no rice was served. Certain Sundays were very special because my mother would make old-fashioned waffles from scratch on a cast iron waffle press.

Today, we toast or microwave frozen waffles or prepare them with waffle mixes on Teflon coated waffle makers. Then, there are personal Nisei friends who have told me they cannot, to this day, stomach any form of canned luncheon meat because they had it so often in the internment camps. Yet, if you visit Hawai'i, you'll see Spam *musubi* being sold everywhere from the Shirokiya department store in Ala Moana Shopping Center to the neighborhood mini mart gas station. Hawai'i people really enjoy their food and their state consumes more Spam per capita than all the others.

And finally, as a youngster, I remember ladies who would patronize my father's small grocery store and tell me the story of when it was my father's turn to cook in the mess hall of Block 22 in the Minidoka internment camp he would always burn the pancakes. *Makkuro* was the term they used as they laughed and kidded my father. I never found out whether these family friends could ever stomach pancakes again because of my father's alleged cooking skills, or maybe they finally relished eating "unburnt" ones after relocating from Minidoka.

Second, with respect to our culture, the foods we now eat versus the past express the direction of not only JA culture, but many other cultural groups as well. For



example: when my wife and I are in Hawai'i, we see the Japanese and other Asian tourists eating hot dogs, hamburgers, fried chicken and pizza even though there are loads of Asian eateries. Maybe this is the "when in Rome, do as the Romans do" attitude.

Then again, when I went to Japan on business for the first time, I realized how "un-Japanese" I had become because I could not speak the language. Yet, I felt very comfortable ordering and eating Japanese food at the various places my host took me, I enjoyed the likings of *shabu shabu* with Kobe beef, *soba* of various colors and flavors, and a *kaiseki* dinner whose presentations were works of art and almost too beautiful to eat.

I kept wondering how I could ever reciprocate the hospitality my host extended to me if he were to visit me in the United States. And then, there I was, in the middle of the Shinjuku district of Tokyo, looking at all the bright neon lights with familiar signs such as McDonalds, KFC, Coca Cola, etc., the hustle and bustle of traffic, the crowds of people not in kimonos, but everyday business suits and dresses that we see in the United States. Realizing that culture is more than food and dress, I still had an inclination to wonder who was more "un-Japanese."

And maybe, this is the price of "progress" or Western influence, a give-and-take situation. But I still have a nostalgia for what I experienced visiting certain rural parts of Japan and Okinawa where I saw no hamburgers and hot dogs but could enjoy a simple country meal not influenced by Western culture.

Finally, when I was recently having lunch at a fast food teriyaki restaurant, I observed an African American gentleman walk into the restaurant and purchase a roll of maki sushi. I was curious, so out of the corner of my eye, I watched the gentleman sit down and eat the entire roll, get up and order another roll.

How wonderful, I thought to myself, that this man of a different ethnicity could enjoy food of my heritage. Isn't this partly what diversity in America is about? Aside from its deep-rooted history of slavery, oppression, hegemony, and genocide, America still affords its people certain freedoms of expression and choice that we sometimes take for granted.

In my opinion, Spam musubi is the epitome of a pure JA expression of a food, ingeniously incorporating American luncheon meat (which may have its origin in Europe) with a Japanese rice ball. I wonder if our ancestors would turn in their graves if they ever saw the likings of a Spam musubi.

The fact that we can share and enjoy each other's food is encouraging in spite of the continuing dialogue of race relations in America. We certainly don't see sushi, sweet potatoes, collard greens, deep fried catfish, lumpia, adobo, kalbi beef, tandoori chicken, satay, kim chee, chili rellenos, tortellini, California cuisine, and matzos fighting amongst each other — just the people who create such gastronomic delights. Maybe we can learn a lesson or two from the foods we enjoy eating. It seems that pure enjoyment of food breaks down the racial and ethnic barriers that humans raise — and that's food for thought. ■

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Photo courtesy of Mario G. Reyes

Tony David Osumi, a Hapa Yonsei who writes from the Venice/Culver area and teaches fourth grade at Wilton Elementary School, misses Far East Cafe very, very much.

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Chirashi Sushi Meditations



By Stanley N. Kanzaki

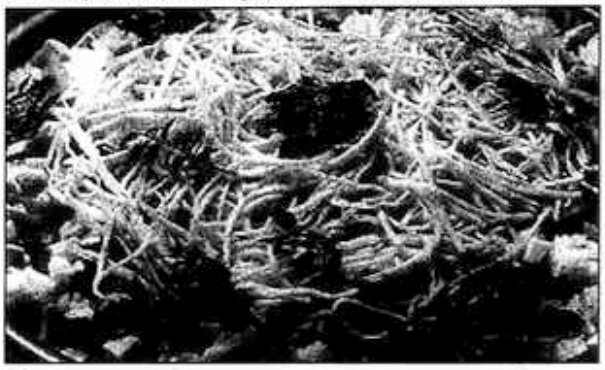
So, it's *P.C.*'s Holiday Issue time again. The theme this year is a mouthful: "How food has played a significant role in the development and continuation of Japanese American culture." Hey, that's food for thought. Sounds like a term paper. Some intellectual in the academic setting can submit some serious studies on this subject. But I'm sure that our new P.C. executive editor also had in mind everyday guys like me for the articles.

Not meaning to brag, but I wrote an article for the P.C. Holiday Issue of 1988 about chirashi sushi, therefore, the above title. The graphic illustration with the article was great, but pictured the wrong type of chirashi. Do you remember it? You don't! Well, not to worry. Anyway, I did get one letter from a kindly reader telling me of a place where they serve my kind of chirashi. Unfortunately I did not get a chance to go there, since it was in some remote area in California and is probably closed by now as it seems to happen to my kind of chirashi places.

Regardless, it has been over ten years, a decade, since my article — and many things have happened. One of which is, "The Yankees won, the Yankees won." Sorry, you Padres fans out there in San Diego. It was a *kirei-na haki* (4-0). Sorry, didn't mean to rub wasabi in your face.

Anyway, let me begin by clarifying what I mean by chirashi sushi. It is not the dish which I first had in New York City. I ordered a chirashi and the waitress plunked down a small wooden box with various sliced sashimi on top of sushi rice. I thought my Japanese missed something, but like a good Nisei boy, I didn't question it and ate it. It was okay, but not my kind of chirashi.

The chirashi I'm into is the original Issei creation brought to the American shores in the early 20th century by the young courageous Issei women. Now I know and you all know that this type of chirashi sushi does not have sashimi on top. Basically it starts with the same flavored sushi rice, but the difference begins there. For you sushi mavens out there, stop me if anywhere along the way you happen to differ with me. Anyway depending on which rural ken your Issei mothers came from, the rice was mixed with small bits of pre-flavored carrots, *age*, chicken, *gobo*, *takenoko*, celery and *kanpyo*. Also green peas. Before serving on individual plates, it was garnished with *kinushi tamago*, *oboro ebi*, *shiitake*, sliced dry *nori*



and *beni shoga* on the side. Hey now, doesn't that make you hungry?

It also makes me feel good since it was usually served on those feel good days, such as part of the New Year's *ogochiso*, birthdays, weddings, festivals, JAA and JACL events, etc. But above all, there was the human ingredient. The Issei mothers put their hearts into it to make the perfect chirashi sushi. This I will call the "Issei chirashi sushi" and hereafter indicate it as "ICS."

This non-pareil ICS has its origin from the rural farm areas of Japan for unlike their rich urban cousins, they did not have the luxury of sashimi. It was unavailable in the *inakas* and there were no refrigerators to preserve them. It was indeed an expensive gourmet item mostly unknown in the *tanbo*'s or the rice fields.

This type of urban chirashi is eaten on a weekly basis by the yuppy types in one of over 400 Japanese restaurants in the Big Apple. Some sushi crazies would order an extra bowl of rice to go with their meal, much to the bewilderment of the now disappearing kimono clad Japanese waitresses.

Another interesting thing about sushi in the Big Apple is that the Koreans and the Chinese are into the act. One half of the restaurant is for their ethnic food and the other half sushi. I'm afraid my prejudicial stomach detected the differences and it was not quite acceptable. Hey, don't get me wrong, for some of my best friends happen to be Asians.

But did you ever go to a bonafide Japanese restaurant with a Spanish speaking sushi chef? Not too far from where I live is a great all around Japanese restaurant. One day as I was enjoying an unagi dinner, I heard from the sushi bar Spanish being spoken with Japanese thrown in. I thought it was a customer, but it turned out to be a *hapi* coat, *hachimaki* clad, Latino looking sushi chef talking to a similarly clad Latino.

The next time I went, out of curiosity, I sat at the sushi bar to try some sushi rolled à la Latino. My stomach was open for as I said, "Some of my best friends...," okay, okay, you heard that before. Anyway it was good, in fact, it was great.

I got to know this Latino and got some interesting background about him. It seems he was a shy eighteen year old from Puerto Rico in the USAF stationed in Japan. It was a real culture shock for him after being away from home for the first time. Having been raised on rice and beans, he was curious about what else went well with rice. Near the base where the G.I.s hardly ventured, he noticed a sushi restaurant. Not knowing what was served, he walked back and forth many times before getting up the courage to go inside.

The chirashi I'm into is the original Issei creation brought to the American shores in the early 20th century by the young courageous Issei women.

The friendly Japanese proprietor, sensing the young airman's discomfort, gave him a sampler. It was the first time he realized there was more to rice than just beans. Thereafter, he not only became a regular customer, but family. He marveled at how the sushi chefs sliced sashimi and rolled rice. It was so ceremonial.

As his discharge day approached, he decided he wanted to be a sushi chef. At first the proprietor did not take him seriously. However, upon finally convincing him, things began to happen. It was off with the Air Force blues and into a non-descript hapi coat and hachimaki; no longer a customer, but an apprentice family worker. No cutting and rolling, but plenty of sweeping with a broom and other clean up duties. It was long hours, but good food. Then he was promoted to cooking and flavoring the rice. It was a slow, progressive training.

As the days went by, unknown to the gaijin, another pair of eyes were watching him. She was "kind of cute" according to "Ichiro," his given Japanese name to go with his difficult to pronounce native name of Raul. At first he didn't notice her, since he was deep into making good sushi. Seeing that she was hanging around not doing much, he assumed she was just one of the worker's daughter.

He was wrong on the first assumption, but right in the second one for she was one of the worker's too many daughters at home on an assigned mission to get married. Fortunately for Ichiro, he became her husband.

After years of hard apprenticeship, he got the papers towards becoming a master sushi chef. They also presented him with a set of official sushi knives. With all of this and his sushiya romanced wife, he headed for New York. Through the sushi connection, he got the job at my favorite Japanese restaurant.

I asked him about the other Latino and with a smile said, "Oh, he's only an apprentice." Ichiro loved his job and now with

See KANZAKI/ page 65

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KANZAKI
(Continued from page 62)

two children he worked even harder. I asked him if he still ate rice and beans. He told me he cooks it at home while his wife cooked Japanese food, but not sushi. He had regular customers, some who spoke Japanese, English and even Spanish. He was even working on something to be called "Supanishi Hae Maki." If it worked out, Ichiro would become one rich "Supanishi" sushi chef.

But all of this has a somewhat sad ending. After being out of town, I looked forward to some sushi. To my surprise, the place was closed. Being Monday, I assumed it was no longer a seven day operation. I went back the next day and the day after that, etc., until facing up to the fact that the place was permanently closed. High rents close down even the most popular and busiest establishments. Hey, Ichiro, if by chance you happen to read this article, contact me c/o *P.C.*

Well, it seems I got kind of side tracked from the *P.C.* Theme. Anyway, did you know that sushi had its origin going way back over 120 years and that a yakuza had literally a "clean hand" in it. It seems that in the early part of the Meiji Era, an unknown yakuza gambling with cards at a gambling hall got hungry. He did not want to leave the game and ordered some nigiri. Not wanting to get his hands sticky, he grabbed a sheet of dry nori and wrapped it around the nigiri and wolfed it down. According to legend, this is how sushi began and as they say, the rest is sushi history.

But again, getting back to the ICS and the theme, I must say that I ate ICS in many parts of the world, such as Brazil, Mexico, Canada, USA, etc., and it tasted the same everywhere, just great.

But a sad state of affairs of crisis proportions is coming upon us. I began to notice it while attending Nikkei events. The quality and quantity of the ICS is going down. The sad equation can be explained as follows: in an inverse ratio, as the years go up, the Q & Q of the ICS is going down. Is this a generational problem? It went from the Issei to the Nisei, who got it together, but how goes it with the Sansei? What is happening? Is this the beginning of the end of our revered ICS? What will happen in Y2K?

I warned you all about this in my aforementioned article, ten years ago. So, you may say, "What does this *imin* rice farmer's son know?" Well, I'll have you know I happen to be a sushi snob. Better yet, a connoisseur. Now that sounds real classy.

But let me tell you, the next ten years are critical and I am reproposing what I previously proposed, where as I said, only one kindly reader responded. Anyway, the proposal is again to have an annual International Issei Chirashi Sushi Day with a wealth of activities. There can be workshops, classes, seminars, contests, cook-outs, eat-outs, etc. The intellectuals can present ICS papers; poets with haikus in praise of the ICS; artists commissioned to paint ICS themes. A cottage industry of T-shirts, posters, etc., all on ICS. To perpetuate the ICS, an endowment fund towards the International Institute of Issei Chirashi Sushi (IIICS, Inc.) leading to a monument in front of the IIICS Museum. And on what day should this important event be observed? Of course, the day before the Bon Odori. What better day than this? It will doubly honor and please the spirits of our great Issei on these double days. Think and act upon it.

Remember, you read it all here first. All you Nikkei organizations and others with initials "JA" in the beginning or elsewhere, get moving. Listen and follow the beat from the wooden shamoji upon the wooden sushi oke. Hear the battle cry, "ICS lovers of the world unite for the threat of its endangerment is upon us." Repeat the motto, "For a sei without ICS is likened to sushi without shoyu and wasabe."

So, good folks, the challenge has been made. Now is the time for all good JAs and people of good will to act. By the way, does anyone know of a place where they still serve ICS? If you do, please contact me c/o the *P.C.* Oh, and about the Holiday Issue theme. I hope I managed to get it in. I kind of like to think I did. Hope that our new *P.C.* executive editor thinks so.

Well, let's hear from you. In the meantime, to those who have read this far, enjoy your ICS while you still can. *A shinen akemashite omedeto gozaimasu.* (Happy New Year to you all.)■

Stanley Kanzaki is a member of the JACL New York chapter.

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Sushi 101

California Sushi Academy welcomes cultural diversity into the Japanese culinary arts

By TRACY UBA
Writer/Reporter
Photos by Martha Nakagawa

VENICE, Calif.—Thanks to the new California Sushi Academy, the first and so far only state-registered Japanese culinary arts institute in the United States, more and more people who once sat facing the sushi bar are now stepping behind it, learning the tricks of a trade traditionally predominated by Japanese men.

Sitting just a few blocks from the Pacific Ocean near a trendy beachfront shopping district, the Academy opened its doors to the public just three and a half months ago, in an attempt to tap into the growing popularity of sushi within the expanding international mosaic of nouveau and fusion cuisine.

"People are starting to recognize how sushi is very popular and how healthy it is," said president of the Academy Yuji Matsumoto. "Sushi is becoming a standard [part of the] menu in many restaurants, combined with French and Italian fusion menu, so if you know about Japanese cooking or sushi, then you can utilize it to create a new menu."

Twenty-three students ranging in age, gender, ethnicity and background have already enrolled in the school, which offers two primary courses each lasting three months. The Basic course requires 126 hours of training in which students are introduced to the fundamentals of Japanese food. Besides sushi and sashimi, they learn to make teriyaki, tempura, *yakimono, sunomono* and *nimono*. By the end of the semester they are entitled to become assistant sushi chefs.

The Professional course is designed for aspiring sushi chefs or those interested in more extensive knowledge in the art of sushi-making. It requires 144 hours and emphasizes not only the fundamentals but presentation of plates, including decoration, color, balance and spatial location, and restaurant management. An internship program providing job experience at a designated restaurant is available to those taking this course.

For enthusiasts with not a lot of time on their hands but a genuine curiosity in the ways of raw fish, the one-day weekend course is also offered. For three hours and $65, basic sushi-making techniques are taught. But be forewarned, classes are booked full through February 1999, and enrollment is expected to double in the coming semester.

The "mainstreaming" of sushi coupled with tightening immigration laws, which forced many sushi chefs working in this country back to Japan, created a market demand that academy innovators Matsumoto, formerly an investment banker, and Frank "Toshi" Sugiura, owner and CEO of Hama restaurant, quickly picked up on. Due to this "shortage in sushi chefs," said Matsumoto, "we decided to educate, to teach here locally to support our industry."

At the kitchen's helm is head instructor and culinary prodigy, Andy Matsuda, who, at an age when most of us aren't yet legally old enough to drink saké, had already become a chief chef in Japan. His instinctive skill was evident from an early age, when even at three years old, he began making miso soup. His parents started in the restaurant business when he was nine and it was there that he spent time developing much of that natural ability.

After seven years working in major restaurants in Japan and traveling to parts of Europe, Matsuda moved to the United States and began to add to his already impressive resumé. Over the next few years, he worked in Santa Monica's Takanawa Restaurant and at the Long Beach Hilton Hotel, took night classes to improve his English and computer proficiency, and eventually received his green card.



Chief instructor and chef extraordinaire, Andy Matsuda, talks about his teaching experience at the California Sushi Academy.

It was four years ago that doctors discovered a malignant tumor near Matsuda's kidneys. After undergoing unsuccessful chemotherapy for three months at the UCLA Medical Center, he underwent surgery to remove the cancerous growth. "That's why I'm sensitive to the health [issue]," he stressed. "I quit smoking. I quit drinking after surgery. I'm keeping healthy. Good eating, take vitamins."

Matsuda credits his doctors as well as his new health-conscious lifestyle with saving his life and keeping him in remission today. It is a lesson which he tries to pass on both to his students and, hopefully, to his customers. "[Because of this experience] I can do something for people, using my skill and my knowledge to teach people the importance of eating healthier," he said.

Matsuda, who admits that his accented "English is not as good as American people," teaches both regular courses as well as the one-day weekend classes alongside assistant instructor cum translator, Phillip Yi. As the only two active instructors the Academy has right now, each puts in about 80 hours of work per week.

But Matsuda's not about to stop anytime soon. With plans to open a school in New York in the coming year, he hopes to spread his teachings in other cities, including Chicago and Seattle. Or maybe, he joked, he'll just infiltrate the world. At the very least, he said, smiling yet completely earnest, "I'd like to be a pioneer."

In the Academy's conceptual stage, Sugiura, Matsumoto and Matsuda realized that the school must take a more open, less tradition-bound approach in order to be successful in today's mixed, multicultural society.

"It's tremendous how many phone calls [we get], how many people are interested. A lot of Korean people, Chinese, Japanese," Matsuda noted. "I teach any kind of people, Mexican, Filipino, American."

"Different races [participating] in the school," Sugiura added, is all part of "expanding Japanese food culture."

One look at the international diversity of the Academy's first ever graduating class shows they aren't exaggerating. After just having endured a pre-commencement rite of passage — two arduous hours behind the sushi bar at neighboring Hama restaurant, impressing about 50 friends, family and interested onlookers with the fruits of their acquired craft — *Pacific Citizen* caught up with several students whose experiences are as diverse as the places they come from.

Nikki Gilbert, a student in the Basic course, is a young multilingual Caucasian woman, who recently moved back to the States after having lived and worked as an elementary school English teacher in Japan for three years. While there, she wanted to learn more about Japanese cooking, an interest which she had cultivated in high school and college, but found that cultural barriers such as language made it difficult.

"It's not even like Japanese people were against [the idea of me becoming a sushi chef]," Gilbert recalled with a laugh. "It's like they didn't even know where I was coming from. It was almost like a man telling someone, 'I'm going to have a baby.'

"But now, [having been to this school], I've gotten a better understanding of certain dishes," she said, which will surely help her as

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Gustavo Alvarez, a student in the Professional course, concentrates on molding his shrimp *nigiri* before handing them off to hungry customers.

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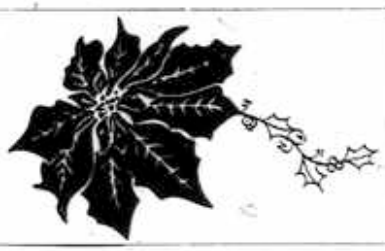
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Move on to nibble on tofu shish kabobs and Angel Delights (roasted tofu rolled in spinach, mushroom, pine nuts, topped with black bean sauce).

For fantastic seafood, the tofu poke (fish, marinated in secret sauce, melts in your mouth) is a must try! Also don't forget to pick up a plate of fresh eel and smoked salmon on a bed of sobe and tofu. If inclined towards spicier fishes, try the seafood soon du bu (spicy tofu casserole with oyster, shrimp and clams).

Then pig out on tofu spaghetti, tofu lasagna, fried tofu with marinated pork chops, tofu teppan and stuffed tofu cake.

Wash everything down with a cup of chilled tofu smoothie or soymilk or hato hato (tofu, mango, sweet bean, lychee, sugared palm and coconut).

Leave room for dessert. There's tofu cheesecake (strawberry or blueberry) or coffee/tofu bavarois (or as the Japanese like to say babarois) or just plain tofu ice cream.

Finally, throw utensils in the right recycling bin and look forward to next year's L.A. Tofu Festival!

By Martha Nakagawa
Assistant Editor

The L.A. Tofu Festival, now an annual Los Angeles summer event and biggest draw (next to the *ondo* and parade) during Nisei Week, is introducing a healthier diet to Americans, attracting institutions to offer free health screenings and luring youth groups (that's right, those youngsters often accused of being apathetic by the older generation) back into Little Tokyo. In fact, it's downright bringing the community together.

The festival, now in its third year, is put on by the Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), a social service agency that started out 19 years ago with a desk, two chairs and as Bill Watanabe modestly describes himself as "one inexperienced but hopeful executive director."

Today, LTSC has expanded to 50 staff members, still led by the same executive director who keeps hope alive.

Although LTSC may be most visible as an organizer of the L.A. Tofu Festival, the agency, on a daily basis, offers bilingual social services on immigration, welfare, physical and mental health and interpretation of government and other documents.

Much of LTSC's behind-the-scene efforts are also visible in Little Tokyo. One of its current projects include building a gymnasium, another move at bringing those elusive youths back into Little Tokyo.

In the past, the organization has also spearheaded the renovation of the San Pedro Firm Building and the construction of Casa Heiwa, both low-income housing units; led the conversion of the abandoned Old Union Church into the Union Center for the Arts which now houses the East West Players theater group, Visual Communications and L.A. ArtCore; opened the Union Center Cafe that doubles as a job training center; partnered with the Asian Pacific Women Center to develop a longterm shelter for survivors of domestic violence; and initiated a Nikkei conference where more than 40 organizations and hundreds of participants from across the nation came to discuss the future of the Nikkei community.

But back to the L.A. Tofu Festival. (By the way, did we mention all proceeds from the festival go to fund LTSC projects?)

In LTSC-fashion, the L.A. Tofu Festival started out as a simple vision back in 1995. Watanabe was part of a three member brainstorming committee that included Judy Nishimoto, Barbara Miyamoto and himself. Watanabe couldn't remember who exactly uttered the words "tofu festival" but once that idea was tossed out, things started rolling.



Photo courtesy LTSC

The concept was then pitched to the LTSC board, which, like all boards, took to it cautiously. There were doubts and misgivings. And understandably so. Nothing like this had ever been done.

But as it so happened, one of the LTSC board members was related to Shoan Yamauchi, the founder of Hinoichi Tofu and a pioneer in marketing the bean curd in America. While that board member worked the corporate angle, LTSC staffers did an informal survey among Japanese and non-Japanese. Four out of five respondents gave positive feedback. Even those who didn't eat tofu said they'd be open to attending such an event.

Then House Foods, which produces the Hinoichi product line, agreed to underwrite the festival. Watanabe noted that without their support, putting on the Tofu Festival would have been "extremely difficult or impossible."

With a corporate sponsor on board, things became a bit easier. The task of actually coordinating the event fell upon LTSC staffers Ayumi Kawata and Margaret Endo Shimada, the dynamic duo who plunged into their new challenge with gusto.

Up to that point, Kawata, a social service worker by training, admitted she'd never attended a food festival, much less coordinated one. "It was overwhelming," she said. "I wasn't sure where to start, but Bill was really supportive."

As for Endo Shimada, a former LTSC board member who was then taking time off after giving birth to a baby, recalled getting a call from Watanabe, who pitched the tofu idea and asked for her assistance.

Initially, Endo Shimada agreed to help as a Tofu Festival consultant, but today, she has expanded her services to a full-time staff person, overseeing general LTSC fundraising.

One of the first things Kawata and Endo Shimada did was pull together a Tofu Festival committee and come up with a list of potential restaurants to approach. On top of the list were local Little Tokyo eateries. But since the Tofu Festival took place during Nisei Week, one of the busiest times for Little Tokyo merchants, it was difficult to generate interest. LTSC board members even accompanied Kawata as she went door to door soliciting support.

"We basically called everyone," said Kawata. "We even called the places without tofu dishes on the slight possibility that they might come up with a tofu dish."

"We had to beg them to participate," recalled Watanabe.

To make it as easy as possible for participating restaurants, LTSC offered to cover all expenses, staff the booths and serve the dishes. "All we asked was the restaurants' expertise in cooking," said Watanabe.

In addition to soliciting food venues, a hundred other details had to be taken care of. This included everything from renting equipment, stuffing brochures into hundreds of bags, to making tofu deliveries to each participating restaurant. That's where volunteer help became crucial (This included a lot of LTSC staff's personal time too.). Thanks to the more than 200 volunteers that turned out and the dedicated efforts of the entire LTSC staff, the August 1996 inaugural Tofu Festival went beyond anyone's expectation.

LTSC's initial goal had been to sign up ten restaurants. They ended up with 18. They had hoped to attract 3,000 to 5,000 people. They ended up dishing out 25,000 servings of tofu to an estimated 8,000 people.

"It was really exciting because there was nothing like this. It was a new event and everyone pulled together," recalled Endo Shimada. "Nobody anticipated it to be as successful as it turned out to be. The turnout was overwhelming."

As an added bonus, LTSC was able to raise more money from this event than from their usual fundraising awards dinner. That clinched it. The Tofu Festival became tradition in the making.

For Endo Shimada, that first year was magical. She recalled eating a Tofutti ice cream and lounging under a canopy with board members and staff after the event was over.

"The feeling was 'Gee, we did it and the people had a good time,'" recalled Endo Shimada. "That was one thing we focused on. Everyone — the participants, the restaurants, the entertainers — had to have a good time ... That was part of the magic, and the success of the Tofu Festival. It was like a Forrest Gump thing. It went beyond anyone's expectations."

See TOFU/page 75

cookbook with a cause

By Martha Nakagawa

Tofu and *natto* are aiding Asian American survivors of domestic violence.

Well, the food items aren't physically helping them out, but proceeds from a tofu/natto cookbook are going towards a LTSC-sponsored domestic violence prevention program (which falls under LTSC's Nikkei Family Counseling Program and Emergency Caregivers Program). Since the cookbook's creation three years ago, more than $180,000 has been raised for this program.

The idea for a cookbook came with the decision to hold a tofu festival. "We wanted to use this (tofu festival) opportunity to raise money for a project that wasn't normally funded," said LTSC staff member Alice Ishigame-Tao.

So the cookbook, the brainchild of Ishigame-Tao and fellow LTSC staffer Yasuko Sakamoto, would become an integral fundraising ingredient in the tofu festival. That was in 1995.

From January 1996, Sakamoto, Ishigame-Tao and other LTSC staff members started experimenting with various tofu recipes. Most of the work and cooking was done on staffs' own personal time, and expenses paid out of staffs' own personal pocket. But six months later and hundreds of taste-tests later, the first edition was born.

The first edition came out in English and Japanese, with a 1,800 print run. Now in its third edition, the book has expanded from exclusively tofu to include natto recipes. House Foods which makes the Hinoichi product line helped in the projects.

What is striking when talking to Sakamoto and Ishigame-Tao is how much they credit the LTSC staff.

"There was a lot of support from staff, and many contributed recipes," said Ishigame-Tao. "This book really belongs to all the staff. They have ownership in it."

Sakamoto voiced a similar sentiment. "We couldn't have done it without the staff taste testing and giving suggestions on improvements and giving their honest opinions."

But it should be noted that of the 100 some recipes in the book, more than 50 percent came from Sakamoto, an avid kitchen concocter who likened cooking to meditation. "Cooking relieves stress for me," laughed Sakamoto. Most of the tofu recipes came naturally for Sakamoto since she'd been exploring various dishes since 1993. "With age, I started thinking about my health and the foods I eat," said Sakamoto. "I've read that tofu had a lot of calcium and was a cancer preventative so I've been trying out different tofu recipes."



But easy as it may sound, Sakamoto devotes at least six months out of each year to coming up with new recipes for every cookbook edition. What she usually does is think up a recipe, whip it out in the early morning hours and bring it to work for the staff to taste-test. From there, she would receive comments on whether the dish was perfect or needed changes.

While working on the third edition, Sakamoto had a sudden revelation: why not substitute tofu into non-Asian dishes and add natto recipes.

"Los Angeles is so multicultural that I wanted to see if we could come up with recipes that might appeal to Latinos, Whites, and other ethnic groups," said Sakamoto, who favors Mexican food. "I thought that might make the recipe book more appealing to a wider audience."

What Sakamoto discovered was that natto went well with jalapeño and cilantro. One of her favorite inventions is mixing mochi with natto and jalapeño. Not only did this give mochi a kick, but mochi, minus the soy sauce, equaled less sodium intake.

When Sakamoto's Latino taste-testing friends gave her the thumbs up, she got the confidence to bring the dishes to the LTSC staff for final approval. Since then, Sakamoto has witnessed many people who had never eaten tofu give the white block a try. One of the more popular recipes turned out to be tofu *carnitas*.

For next year, both Sakamoto and Ishigame-Tao are trying to come up with something new. ■

PC Staff Picks from LTSC's 'Four Seasons of Tofu' Third Edition Cookbook

Tofu French Toast

1 pkg (14 oz.) Hinoichi Firm Tofu
1 teaspoon soy sauce
8 slices whole grain bread
Maple syrup or your favorite sweet topping

Puree tofu and soy sauce in blender until smooth and creamy (add water if necessary to get this consistency). Pour into mixing bowl. Heat skillet with a small amount of oil. Dip bread, one slice at a time, in tofu mixture, coating each side with tofu. Place on hot skillet and pan fry until golden brown on both sides. Serve hot with maple syrup or other sweet topping. Makes 8 French toasts.

— Harry Honda's Choice

Vegetarian Tofu Soup

1/2 pkg (7 oz.) Hinoichi Firm Tofu, drained and crumbled
1 medium onion, sliced thin
1 cup sliced mushrooms
1-1/2 cups chopped *nappa* cabbage
1 clove garlic, minced
2 cups cooked rice
1-1/2 cups corn kernels
3 tablespoons soy sauce
1 teaspoon chili powder
4 tablespoons sesame oil
4 tablespoons miso
8 cups water



In a small bowl, combine crumbled tofu, garlic and soy sauce, and marinate for 15 minutes. In a large stock pot, saute onion and mushrooms until onion is translucent. Add cabbage and chili powder, continuing to cook until cabbage wilts. Add corn, rice and water, bring to a boil and simmer 10-12 minutes until vegetables are tender.

In small frying pan, stir fry tofu mixture until slightly brown. Add tofu to soup and blend in miso. Bring back to boil and serve hot. Makes 4-6 servings.

— Margot Brunswick's Choice

Tofu Carrot Salad

1/2 pkg (7 oz.) Hinoichi Tofu, drained
4 cups shredded carrots
1/4 cup dried cranberries
1 can (6 oz.) crushed pineapple, drained
5 tablespoons fresh lemon juice

Blend tofu with lemon juice until creamy. Mix in a large bowl shredded carrots, cranberries and pineapples. Add tofu lemon mix and combine. Chill 30 minutes before serving. Makes 6-8 servings.

— Merie Kara's Choice



Tofu Wontons

1 pkg (14 oz.) Hinoichi Tofu, drained in cheesecloth for two hours
1 pkg (8 oz.) cream cheese
1/2 cup jalapeno peppers, seeded & chopped
1 package wonton wrappers
vegetable oil
warm water

Soften cream cheese in microwave for 1-2 minutes on high. Combine tofu, cream cheese and peppers into bowl and mix well. Place about 1 tsp. of mix into center of wonton wrapper. Brush edges of wrapper with warm water and fold over, being sure to remove any air. Deep fry wontons in hot oil until golden and drain on paper towels. Serve warm. Makes about 50 wontons.

Variations: chopped water chestnuts adds crunch. If jalapenos are too spicy, green chiles may be substituted.

— Brian Tanaka's Choice

Fried Tofu With Oyster

1 pkg (14 oz.) Hinoichi Firm Tofu, parboiled, drained well and cut into 12 pieces
12 fresh oysters, washed and drained
1/2 cup flour, seasoned with salt and pepper
1 egg, beaten
1/2 cup *panko*
vegetable oil for deep frying
Sauce
1/2 cup soy sauce
1 tablespoon grated fresh ginger root
2 green onions, chopped

Dry both tofu and oysters with paper towel. Make a cut in middle of each tofu piece large enough to fit an oyster, and slip oyster in. Insert a toothpick to keep oyster and tofu together. Dredge each piece into flour, egg and finally panko. Deep fry until golden. Garnish with lemon slices and watercress. Serve hot with sauce. Makes 12 pieces.

— Eva Ting's Choice

Fried Tofu Curry

1 pkg (14 oz.) Hinoichi Tofu, drained and sliced into 6 pieces
1/2 cup flour
1 egg, beaten
1 cup *panko* (bread crumbs)
oil for frying
Curry Sauce
1 large potato, peeled and cut into small cubes
1 large carrot, peeled and cut into small cubes
1 large brown onion, chopped
1 small apple, grated
3 garlic cloves, minced
2 bay leaves
1 package curry base
2 cups vegetable stock
4 cups water
salt and pepper to taste



Directions: Coat each tofu slice, first with flour, then egg and panko. In pot, deep fry in oil each tofu piece until golden. Place tofu cutlets on paper towels to absorb oil and set aside. Saute garlic in oil until golden. Add carrots, potato and cook for 10 min. Add onion and cook for 10 min. Add water, vegetable stock, bay leaves, salt and pepper, and cook for another 10 min. Add curry base and apple, mixing well. Cook until curry base dissolves and mixture is bubbling. Before serving, place tofu cutlets on individual plates with rice and pour sauce over cutlets and rice. Makes 6-8 servings.

— Tracy Uba's Choice

Baked Tofu Cheesecake

2 packages (28 oz.) Hinoichi Firm Tofu, drained, mashed and measured to 4-1/2 cups
1/4 cup pineapple juice concentrate
1/2 cup oil
1/2 teaspoon lemon juice
1 tablespoon coriander
2 tablespoons pure vanilla
1/2 teaspoon sea salt
1/8 cup water
2/3 cup pure maple syrup
10" prepared granola or graham cracker crust

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees. Blend tofu on high until smooth and add remainder of ingredients except crust and blend well. Pour over prepared crust and bake for 25-30 minutes. Remove from oven and cool. Top with your choice, chill and serve. Makes 8-10 servings.

— Caroline Aoyagi's Choice

Jalapeño Mochi

10 pieces of mochi
2 pkgs (3.6 oz.) natto, finely chopped
1 tablespoon chopped jalapeno pepper
1 teaspoon chopped cilantro

Mix natto and jalapeno. Roast mochi until soft and serve with mixed natto and cilantro.

Challenge: Mix natto, jalapeno and cilantro, and set aside. Soften mochi in microwave so that it can be stretched (1 minute on high). Put mixed ingredients in mochi center and fold over mochi so natto mix is inside mochi. Pre-heat skillet and pan fry mochi on both sides until golden brown. Serve hot with soy sauce. Makes 10 mochi.

— Martha Nakagawa's Choice

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SUSHI

(Continued from page 66)

she pursues a career in catering.

Like Gilbert, Professional student Gustavo Alvarez has also traveled abroad. For three months, he worked as a cook in Thailand, hoping that what he learned about Asian dishes would give him some ideas for the fusion cuisine he prepares in his native Mexico City. Already he has been a chef for ten years and currently works there for a Japanese restaurant called Itto. That is, when he isn't taking sushi classes in the U.S.

Three times a week for the past three months, Alvarez and classmate Ismael Flores have driven three hours each way from their temporary homes in Tijuana to attend classes in Venice Beach. Typical school days begin at 3 a.m., include two separate three-hour classes plus fours hours of on-the-job internship work and end at 11 p.m.



Tired but happy. Basic course student Nikki Gilbert takes a break form serving tea, tempura and miso soup to family and friends, all part of a graduation ritual

But Alvarez isn't complaining. In fact, the only drawback he mentioned is that, "I can't be as creative here because we're learning traditional stuff and I'm used to being able to mix different [cultural foods]."

Indeed, a traditional *kaiseki* menu is taught, which includes appetizers, main courses, desserts, soups and salads, but students are encouraged to take what they learn and apply those skills to adapt to mixed ethnic fusion menus, assured Matsuda.

Portugal-born Paolo Soares, another Professional student, said, "Hopefully, one day I'll be able to marry both Japanese and Portuguese food."

For Soares, who recently accepted a job at Miyagi's in West Hollywood, it has been an informative yet intensive experience. "You have to have the time, you have to be prepared. You have to have the desire to do it," he said. "It's a lot of information, but the instructor is great and everyone has been really helpful."

Gilbert and Alvarez concur, though they pause to reflect on and laugh about the sometimes comic difficulties resulting from such a culturally disparate group. According to Gilbert, who is even now simultaneously trying to translate the story to Alvarez, "In class, I'm trying to translate for Gustavo and Ismael in Spanish. They're trying to translate to me. At the same time, they're super-professionals at this. I'm having trouble cutting fish, so they're explaining to me, while I'm trying to explain to them in English and they're trying to help me.

"One time this woman says to me, 'Oh they're so lucky that they have you in class [to translate].' I say, 'They have me?! I'm lucky they help *me* cutting fish and showing me how to do things!'" ■



Looking sharp! Ismael Flores shows off his collection of knives and other utensils essential for the preparation of sushi.



Just in time for the holidays! If those of you in or visiting the SoCal area are having trouble finding the perfect gift this season or if you'd just like to learn to pat, flip and roll with the best of 'em, look no further. Gift certificates ($65) are available for one-day weekend classes. Impress your friends! Wow your family!

The California Sushi Academy is located at 1500 Main Street, Venice, California 90291. For more information regarding gift certificates or class enrollment, call 310/581-0213.

TOFU

(Continued from page 70)

Kawata likened the event to a wedding where they prepared everything ahead of time, saw everything take shape before their eyes and then let the event run its course. "That first year was really neat. It was smaller back then, but you can't beat that feeling of excitement, of breaking ground. Everyone really pulled together."



Photo courtesy Mario G. Reyes

That first year, LTSC staff member Akiko Mimura-Lazare volunteered in one of the food booths. She summed up that experience in this way: "I thought, 'Wow, a volunteer can have fun too!'

So the second year, Mimura-Lazare joined Michael Takeichi, who headed the committee the first year, to oversee the volunteer committee. Because the festival expanded to 25 food booths with added attractions of taiko performances, an arts and crafts fair and plant sale, the volunteer need doubled, and Mimura-Lazare and Takeichi ended up coordinating more than 400 volunteers. An estimated 15,000 people ate 40,000 servings of tofu during the 1997 event.

By this summer (the third Tofu Festival), the event expanded to include a whopping 40 restaurants which dished out 60,000 servings of tofu over the two day period. Actual attendance level is calculated at 20,000 people.

As in the past year, there were performances, and new features were added such as cooking demonstrations and a children's pavilion for families with youngsters.

All this generated a lot of interest, not limited to the Nikkei community. The event garnered considerable ink in Spanish, Vietnamese, and Chinese, not to mention mainstream media.

The festival had become so big this year that Mimura-Lazare and Takeichi needed the help of another LTSC staff member Janet Hasegawa. The trio scrambled to find 700 volunteers to fill 1,000 shifts.

Hasegawa admitted it was a lot of work but praised the efforts of the volunteers. "It's really good to see these people pull together," said Hasegawa. "Some of these volunteers work really hard."

With so many volunteers, it's no wonder then that you're bound to bump into a student in L.A. sporting a Tofu Festival T-shirt, one of the fringe benefits of volunteering. But don't think for a minute that all the volunteers are students. Volunteers cover every age spectrum, from high school students to young adult to working professionals to retired community members.

While all this may sound like a lot of work (which it is), Mimura-Lazare noted that nothing can compare to the day of the event. "It's so great to see people coming out and hearing them having fun with their families," she said.

Hichiro Endo, Endo Shimada's father, initially volunteered to help out his daughter. But he had so much fun that first year he kept coming back. Today, the seventysomething Nikkei looks upon the event as a "big reunion."

"I meet a lot of my friends at the event," said Endo, who has now convinced many of his friends to volunteer.

Endo Shimada aptly summed it up when she said: "It really brings the community together and gets the community out."

Watanabe voiced similar sentiment: "Everything is important. Everyone is important. It's their connection to the community. All the way around, it's a good thing."

Next year, the staff will grapple with a problem many event coordinators probably wished they had — how to improve the flow of traffic. This year's Tofu Festival drew such a crowd that moving about meant elbow-to-elbow.

"It's nice that it's crowded and festive, but we want to make sure it's not so crowded that people step on each other's feet," said Watanabe. "We need to see how to make a little more space and ease of movement so it's not unpleasant."

With that, stay tuned for next year. ■

Ordering LTSC's Tofu Cookbook



To order a copy: the first edition sells for $8 each; the second edition in English or Japanese for $10 each; the third edition for $15.

There are special packages: the first and second editions for $15; the first and third for $18; the second and third for $20; all three for $25; the third and an apron for $25.

Shipping charge is: total order between $0-$15, add $3 shipping; $16-$36, add $4 shipping; $37-$72, add $5 shipping; $73 and up, add $6 shipping.

For more information call Ishigame-Tao or Sakamoto at 213/473-1602 or visit LTSC's website at www.ltsc.org/index.html. ■

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A taste of ethnic identity

BY CRAIG ISHIHARA

"What?!!!!! Yeah right! *Takuan* is totally Japanese!" I insisted.

My friend refused to back down. "It's Korean, I tell you. It's just like Kim-chee," she said.

Another heated intellectual debate in the Northwestern dormitory. This time the subject matter was of particular importance: food. The origin of *takuan* had brought about just cause for an argument. Whenever another ethnic group tries to take credit for what you believe is your ethnic group's creation, a dispute is inevitable. We take a lot of pride in our food.

Food is one of the last ties I have to my culture. Being a Yonsei, I know only a few Japanese words and have been very much "whitewashed." Growing up, I figured that my upbringing was nearly identical to that of my Caucasian friends. Slowly I began to realize that this wasn't entirely true.

A few Japanese words had stood the test of time and were still present in my household after three generations. Not surprisingly, a majority of these words were food names. *Gohan*, shoyu, *yaki soba*: all of these words had been imbedded into the minds of my parents and were still used frequently in our home.

When I was little, my dad would buy jars of *takuan*, one of his favorite Japanese delicacies. Whenever I saw that jar out on the table, my hand would fly to my nose — a protective reflex. For those of you who are unfamiliar with the aroma of this pickled pleasure, let's just say that there are some gas station restrooms that smell better than it does.



I refused to touch it. Not only did *takuan* smell funny — it was also this weird florescent, yellow color. It looked as though someone had cracked open a highlighter, emptying its contents into the jar.

"Come on Craig. Why don't you try some?" my father entreated. He knew I was repulsed by the stuff, which only made him push it more. "Just a little bite..."

"NO! No way! That stuff's nasty!" I would exclaim scrunching up my nose. Little did I realize that later in life, takuan would be one of my favorite side-dishes. It actually doesn't taste as bad as it smells.

In junior high school, I was surprised to find that a lot of people had never tried sushi. The idea of consuming fish without cooking it first repulsed them. I began to reflect on their disposition and guessed that I would think sushi was pretty gross too had I not been brought up on the stuff.

I was beginning to see that my ethnic background had an effect on me after all. I was certain that my experience was not unique. I knew a lot of other Yonsei who didn't know Japanese either, and yet had a good grasp of food names.

What made food names stick so concretely in our minds? I think that the answer is quite simple. Food tastes good. We don't often forget the names of things we take pleasure in. What if we were to want it again?

Knowing the names of different Japanese foods has been a source of pride for me. Unfortunately for me, my knowledge is limited and once it runs out, I find that embarrassment is waiting just around the corner. For my friend Paul's 18th birthday, my friends and I took him to a Japanese restaurant in Chicago. "Oh, good," I thought. "I can help people figure out what they want because I know that a lot of them have never been to a Japanese restaurant before."

Little did I know that there was someone in our group who, as it turns out, knew about some Japanese foods that I had never heard of. I had a firm hold on the basics like tempura, udon, and sukiyaki, but further than that, I found to my dismay that I really didn't know much at all. Needless to say, it was kind of embarrassing.

Returning from Thanksgiving break, Jennifer, the Korean friend of mine (of takuan fame) brought back a suitcase full of food. A crazy amount of Japanese food was in there. Nori, miso soup base, even *furikake*, was spilling over the sides of the suitcase.

"Geez!" I said. "That sure is a lot of Japanese food!"

"Oh," she said causually. "I didn't know it was Japanese. Wait, are you sure miso soup is Japanese?" she asked.

"What?!!" I exclaimed. "Of course it's Japanese! Listen to the name, 'miso' soup. Does that sound Korean to you?"

"No ... But Koreans eat it all the time!"

"Listen, I know what's Japanese food and what's not. I'm telling you, it's Japanese!" I said getting exasperated. I didn't understand why I was getting so riled up about it. It kind of amused me that I was so annoyed that she had thought miso soup was Korean. I mean, who cares? It was then that I realized that I really did care. Miso soup is Japanese and I'm proud of that. It was nice to know that I had some ethnic pride inside of me.

Looking back over my life, I see that food really has played a big part in shaping my ethnic identity. As "whitewashed" as I may be, Japanese food, and my knowledge of it, has been an ever-present reminder to me of who I am. ■

Craig Ishihara was one of Pacific Citizen's interns in 1998. He is currently a journalism major at Northwestern University in Chicago.

MURASE

(Continued from page 55)



always had lots of food for New Year's — we cooked days ahead of time. We would have the whole family over; there was always lots of people. One of my father's favorites was vinegared renkon, lotus root, which my mother would make every year, but didn't enjoy as much as my father."

[Izumi] "I remember playing *karuta*, the traditional Japanese New Year's card game, growing up in Brentwood. We would celebrate the New Year with Michi Weglyn's family who lived nearby. My mother and grandmother would do all the cooking. My favorite food is *kimpira*, sliced burdock root cooked with Japanese hot peppers."

Setsuko Uchida, West Los Angeles chapter: "Of all the traditional New Year's foods, my favorites are omochi and ozoni. You don't usually get omochi all year round. The fact that you can only get it at New Year's makes it special. I like it best with ozoni. Our family prepared a very simple ozoni, with kamaboko, matsutake, and shiitake, sliced very thinly. We also enjoyed a variety of sushi; makizushi is my favorite."

Jeff Itami, Salt Lake City chapter: "I like omochi best, either fried or boiled, with a sauce made from sugar and shoyu. We usually buy our omochi at the Japanese food market, but sometimes different community groups, such as the Buddhist Church, will make it fresh. I remember my mother preparing a tremendous meal for New Year's. My father would spend a small fortune flying in fresh seafood from Seattle to our home in Lava Hot Springs, Idaho. We would have fresh octopus, squid, large shrimp, Dungeness crab, and Pacific lobster. It was amazing to think that just 18 hours before our meal, the seafood was swimming in the ocean! I was also fond of all the vegetables prepared especially for the New Year — taro, gobo, etc. We would invite our Greek neighbor to the feast, a fishing buddy of my father's, since every Christmas, he would provide us with a hand- fed goose. Can you imagine, a Christmas goose!"

Bill Yoshino, Midwest District regional director, Chicago: "I grew up in Moses Lake, Washington. Each holiday season, we would eagerly await our grandparent's shipment of omochi from Seattle. I still remember one year when it got lost in the mail which completely ruined New Year's for me. Those memories still make me partial to omochi." ■



A comprehensive explanation of osechi ryori from which much of the above information came can be found at http://markun.cs.shinshu-u.ac.jp/japan/f_custom/shougatu-e.html.

Emily Murase thanks everyone who contributed to this article (her personal favorite is kazunoko kombu, herring roe on seaweed) and would like to wish everyone a very happy new year!

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Eastern District

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Our second look: Cookbooks by Nisei for Japanese American families



BY HARRY K. HONDA

BELIEVE IT OR NOT, there was a fun idea proposed in the *Pacific Citizen* 25 years ago that national JACL publish a cookbook with favorites from members around the country. And men were expected to be among the contributors. For starters, I had a very simplified recipe for Cabbage *Tsukemono* Instant — after finding that the standard recipe was to boil water, salt, sugar and vinegar; cool; sprinkle salt over the cut cabbage and squeeze; let stand for an hour, then pour the mixture over the cabbage, bottle and store in the refridge.

My "instant" at-table version was to squeeze a slice of lemon (ask for it, if it's not served) over the shredded cabbage, usually found as a green bed for *tonkatsu* or some entree; shoyu for taste. Not authentic tsukemono, I grant, but the taste and crunch was there. (6-28-74 *P.C.*)

"Food" — the theme for this year's Holiday Issue — can be a conversational bonanza almost anywhere. I won't forget the many times our gang of rival newspaper writers and editors would meet at a Little Tokyo cafe or drugstore counter after the daily pages were put to bed.

And I still can hear Vincent Tajiri (1918-1993) (after he had retired from *Playboy*) vowing to write a story about his favorite Chinese dish — *pakkai*, sweet and sour pork in Cantonese — as served and savored at the different cities in the world while he was on overseas assignment as picture editor for *Playboy*, where he created a photographic staff which was to become the largest and most efficient of any monthly magazine in the industry.

He never got that tasty adventure into print (so far as I know). I remember well that pakkai was his favorite (and for many of us, too) in the late 1930s at Far East Cafe — an institution on the north side of First Street that met its doom after the Northridge Earthquake of '94.

Taking another trek — certainly not to the cities around the country or the world that Vince would cite — we might compare sweet and sour pork recipes as spelled out in the various cookbooks; especially those below which have been published by JACL chapters and church groups as fund-raisers. The taste can only be savored in our minds by reading the recipes. Though hardly satisfying for the palate!



East West Cookbooks I and II (Auxiliary, West L.A. JACL)

It's hard to believe but pakkai is missing from the best-selling *East West Cookbooks I and II* by the Auxiliary of the West Los Angeles JACL. We were looking for and prefer "boneless" pakkai. Nevertheless, cookbooks No. I and II have different recipes.

SWEET-SOUR SPARE RIBS (I)

1-1/2 lb. Spare ribs cut in serving-size pieces
*2 t. Soy sauce for marinade (*)
*1 T. Brown sugar
*1 t. Salt
*2 T. Cornstarch
*1 small piece ginger, crushed
*1 T. Chinese soy sauce, if desired
3 T. Vinegar
1/2 cup Water
2 T. Brown sugar

Marinate ribs in (*), let stand 10 to 15 minutes. Brown ribs slightly in hot fat; remove excess fat and add vinegar, water and brown sugar. Cover pan, bring to boil, reduce heat and simmer slowly until tender about 25 to 30 minute.

—**Pauline Hanzawa,** Auxiliary.

SWEET-SOUR SPARE RIBS (II)

3 to 4 lb. Small spare ribs
1 cup Vinegar
1 clove of Garlic
1/2 cup Cornstarch
1/2 cup Shoyu
Oil for frying
1 cup Sugar
1 cup Vinegar
1 medium-size can Pineapple bits
1 Green pepper in one-inch squares
1 stalk of Celery, sliced

Cut spareribs into 1 to 1-1/2 inch lengths. Use large sauce pan and add spareribs with enough water to cover. Add 1 cup vinegar. Boil for 10 to 15 minutes. Drain well and let meat cool. Grate garlic, add to shoyu and cornstarch and mix together in a bowl. Dip handful of spareribs in this mixture. Deep-fat fry until golden brown. Drain.

In large frying pan, add sugar, vinegar and liquid from medium-size can of pineapple bits. Add spareribs and simmer for 45 minutes with cover. Add pineapple, green pepper and celery, stir and heat for a few minutes before serving.

—**Toshiko Nakashima,** Auxiliary.

E-W Cookbook #1 is still available from: Aiko Takeshita (310/207-5951). This beautiful 202-page cookbook with 363 recipes, designed by Don Chipperfield, is perhaps the first JACL-published cookbook. It was launched April 1966, enjoying many editions followed by #2, which came out in 1977 though no longer available.

In a Jan. 10, 1975, *P.C.* front-page brief, then-Auxiliary president Yuki Sato warned their EW Flavor #1 was being plagiarized with hardcover in red (the original is a softcover brown with clear plastic cover) and sale of the unauthorized version was being pocketed by someone.

According to the Auxiliary, approximately 80,000 total volumes were printed.

Whenever contributions were in order, they were substantial. One member recalled the maximum amount for one group was $6,000 at any one time. Most recently $3,000 was contributed to each of the current WWII Nisei monument projects (9-18-98 *P.C.*): 100-442-MIS Memorial Foundation, Americans of Japanese Ancestry WWII Memorial Alliance (both Los Angeles) and the National Japanese American Foundation (Washington, D.C.).

Records were not available but a sum total of $200,000 is believed to have been donated to local and Japanese community charities and organizations. Some of them include:

AADAP, AASAP, American Cancer Fund, Asian Pacific Women's Network, Battered Women's and Children's Home, Food for Homeless, Good Ship "Hope," Idaho Disaster Relief, International Institute, International Orphans Inc., "JACL Story," Japanese American Community Service, Japanese American National Museum, Japanese American Philharmonic Orchestra, Japanese Home for the Aged, Japanese Orphanage Fund, Keiro-Japanese Retirement Home;

L.A. Community Youth Group, LEAP, Little Tokyo Towers, LTSC "Hotline," March of Dimes, Nagoya Flood Disaster, National JACL Youth, Nikkei Leadership, Nora Sterry Lighted School Issei Project, Pacific Asian Women's Fund, Rotary, Sacramento JACL Emergency, San Fernando Earthquake Fund, Toastmasters International, UCLA International Student Center, Venice Japanese Community Center, Visual Communications;

WLA Buddhist YBA, JACL Presidential Classroom scholarships, Junior JACL, JACL Scholarship Fund, Methodist and Buddhist churches, Methodist Church Youth, Police Bike Patrol, Senior Lunch Program, Westside Family YMCA Building Fund, WRAAP, Yellow Brotherhood.

This past year, the Auxiliary celebrated its 40th year of community service and philanthropy. Twenty-two women attended their first meeting Feb. 11, 1958, at the home of the late Dr. Milton and Chieko Inouye. It was the first women's group in the Pacific Southwest district council to be formed through the conscientious efforts of the wives of chapter past presidents: Frank Kishi, James Kitsuse, Kiyoshi Sonoda, Elmer Uchida, Richard Jeniye, Steve Yagi, Dave Akashi, Sho Komai and Milton Inouye. Toy Kanegai, a charter Auxiliary member, became West L.A. JACL's first woman chapter president in the '60s.

~ . ~ . ~



Mamasan's Cookbook (Philadelphia JACL)

Here's the smallest example of a cookbook, with 4x6-inch pages bound with a pair of two-inch rings. Published by the Philadelphia JACL in 1974, *Mamasan's Cookbook* includes an introduction describing the basic ingredients for a Japanese meal — soup, rice, noodles, fish, meat, vegetables, pickles and green tea, and those bearing the Japanese tastes in miso, shoyu, *katsuobushi*, *konbu*, saké, mirin, and *dashi*. Plus the advice: "No Japanese dish is prepared without Ajinomoto [MSG]."

SWEET AND SOUR PORK

1 lb. Pork, cut into 3/4" pieces
Enough oil for deep frying.
• Batter:
1/2 cup Flour
1/2 cup Salt
4 T. Water.
• Sauce:
1 cup Pineapple cubes

See HONDA/ page 84

Gardena Valley

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HONDA

(Continued from page 81)

1 Green pepper, cut into 3/4" squares
1/2 cup Vinegar
1/4 cup Brown sugar
3/4 cup Water
1 T. Molasses.
• Thickening:
2 T. Cornstarch mixed with 1/4 cup water.

Heat a deep frying pan with the oil. Mix the batter, dip the pork cubes into the batter and drop into the boiling fat. When they brown, remove and drain on absorbent paper. Mix ingredients for the sauce in a pan and bring slowly to a boil, stirring constantly. Pour thickening into the sauce and when it becomes thick and smooth, add the meat and mix well. When it is very hot, turn into a shallow bowl; serve immediately. Serves 4.

—Irene Moy
Eiko Ikeda

Probably a collector's item today for a JACLer, Bunji Ikeda (217 Tyler Rd., King of Prussia, PA 19406) has been asked if he has information about the number printed, its present availabilty and any thoughts of future editions.

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IDC's Japanese Cookbook

A 1972 JACL cookbook, the Intermountain District Council dedicated it to the Sansei and young people who are intermarrying into a modern Japanese American society "in hopes that we will be preserving part of their cultural heritage." Harriet Kimura, cookbook chairman, of Salt Lake JACL, was assisted by ladies from the other five chapters (Boise Valley, Idaho Falls, Mt. Olympus, Pocatello-Blackfoot and Snake River) in the district to cram 225 recipes on 198 pages. Artist Richard Grimes drew the bold abstract designs. The first printing ran off 2,500 books. Here are two recipes.

SWEET AND SOUR PORK—No. 1

• Ingredients: (A)
1 lb. Loin of pork
1 T. Chinese or Japanese wine or sherry
2 T. Shoyu
2 T. Flour
1 T. Cornstarch
Oil for deep frying
• Ingredients: (B)
3 Green peppers, quartered and seeded
1 Round Onion, quartered
1 Carrot (4 oz.) cut into small wedges and boiled for 8 minutes
1 Bamboo shoot (4 oz.) cut into small wedges
2 slices Pineapple, each quartered
5 T. Oil
• Ingredients (C)
6 T. Sugar
4 T. Shoyu
1 T. Wine
2 T. Vinegar
4 T. Tomato sauce
1 T. Cornstarch, mixed with 1/2 cup water

Cut pork into 1-1/2-inch cubes and mix well with other (A) ingredients except oil. Fry pork in deep oil until crisp and golden brown. Turn out on plate. Heat frying pan, add 5 T. Oil and sauté (B) ingredients. Mix (C) ingredients in bowl and add to sauteed (B) ingredients. When mixture boils up, add cornstarch mixture, stirring constantly. Add fried pork and mix well. Serve hot.

—Yoshiko Ochi,
Idaho Falls JACL

SWEET-SOUR PORK—NO. 2

1 1/2 lb. Pork, cut in 1/2-inch cubes
1 cup Bamboo shoot
1 medium-size Onion, cut in chunks
2 or 3 Mushrooms, sliced
1 Carrot, cut in chunks, cooked
2 Green peppers, cut in chunks
1 cup Pineapple tidbits
1 clove Garlic, crushed

Marinate pork in sauce of 1 T. shoyu, 1 t. wine, 1 t. sugar, 1 t. grated ginger for 15 to 20 minutes. Roll in cornstarch and deep fry in hot fat. Mix 1 cup soup stock, 2 T. vinegar, 3 T. shoyu, 4 T. sugar and 1 T. cornstarch.

Sauté garlic, onion, bamboo and mushrooms in hot 3 T. oil, just to cooked. Add soup stock mixture to vegetables, stirring constantly. Mix in green peppers, carrots and pork. To make it look pretty and glossy, pour 2 T. cooking oil over meat just before removing pan from heat.

—Mrs. George Tamura,
Caldwell, Idaho.

One gentle caveat reads: "The recipes in this cookbook may not have been laboratory-tested, but they are recipes that are being used in the contemporary home today (1970s) and they pass the greatest test of all .... our husbands and families." As I remember, the Far East pakkai serving wasn't as pretty-looking as IDC's.

~ . ~ . ~



Nisei Kitchen (St. Louis JACL)

It was "Mr. St. Louis" of the early years, George Hasegawa, who saw the need and supplied the encouragement that produced *Nisei Kitchen*, which has been through seven reprints, selling over 2,000 copies at prices ranging from $5 to the current $12, according Robert Mitori, chapter VP-finance, 13148 Hollyhead Ct., Des Peres, MO 63131.

There are 300 books on hand and they plan to reprint as long as orders continue. For mail orders, add $2 for postage and handling. Mitori revealed the cookbook has been a steady seller over the years. "We are now receiving reorders because customers are saying their original copies have worn out. Some are ordering them for their children and grandchildren so they will have recipes for the dishes they all grew up with."

Toyo Henmi and Misa Izumi co-chaired the project; Nikki Hara was editor. On the committee were Anne Matsuoka, Chiye Endo, Phyllis Auger, Jean Eto, Skeets Hasegawa, Florence Hiramoto, Mary Maruyama, Asako Morioka; George Hasegawa and Dick Henmi, production. The 216-page book features 203 recipes.

Apparently unavailable then in Missouri, one recipe describes how to make *konnyaku*, using powdered konnyaku.

SWEET-SOUR PORK
1 lb. Lean Pork, 3/4-inch cubes
1 Egg, beaten
2/3 cup Flour
1/4 t. MSG
1/2 t. Salt
Oil for frying
1 cup Pineapple Chunks
1 Green Pepper, cut into 1/2" strips
1 t. Shoyu
1/2 cup Sugar
1/3 cup Pineapple Juice
1/4 cup Catsup
2 T. Cornstarch mixed with 1/4 cup Water

Place pork cubes in beaten egg. Combine flour, MSG and salt. Coat pork with flour mixture and deep fry for 6-8 minutes. Drain on absorbent paper. Keep warm.

Combine soy sauce, sugar, pineapple juice, catsup and vinegar in a large skillet and bring to a boil. Add cornstarch mixture and stir constantly until sauce is thickened. Add pork, pineapple and green pepper. Turn and mix rapidly for 5 minutes. Serves 3-4.

Major portion of the proceeds from the first printing, which was sold out within a half year in 1975, went to the Japanese Garden then under construction at the Missouri Botannical Gardens.

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Creative Cookery (Washington, DC JACL)

As a popular fund-raiser in the 1980s, Washington, DC JACL offered *Creative Cookery* of 229 pages and 398 recipes at their Aki Matsuri/Fall Festival. It has long been out of print. Published in 1979, no one could say just how many copies were printed and sold. "At least a 1,000," most oldtimers agreed.

On the production crew were: Nancy Yamada, chair; Hisae S. Batchelder, Sachi Hamamoto, Jane Hirose, Susie Ichiuji, Barbara Ikejiri, Betty Wakiji, Miyuki Yoshikami; Patsy Crouch, cover; Jean Marumoto, logo design and illustrations.

SWEET SOUR PORK
1 lb. Lean Boneless Pork
1 T. Sherry
1/2 t. Salt
1/4 t. Pepper
1 Egg
2 T. Flour
2 1/2 T. Cornstarch
4 T. Ketchup
1 t. Soy sauce
4 T. Vinegar
4 T. Sugar
3/4 cup Water
5 cups Oil for frying
2 medium-size Carrots, peel and cut into bite size
3 Dried Mushrooms, soaked and quartered
3 med. Onions, cut into bite size
1 Green pepper, cut into bite size
1 clove Garlic, peeled and sliced

Cut pork into bite-size pieces and sprinkle sherry, salt and pepper on all sides. Mix the egg, flour and 1 T. cornstarch in a bowl and dip pork in it; heat oil for frying to 375°F; fry pork until lightly brown. Remove from pan. Sauté vegetables all at once in same pan for 3 minutes. Mix ketchup, soy sauce, vinegar, water and 1-1/2 T. cornstarch well and pour on vegetables and add fried pork. Mix well.

—Shirley Nakao

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Centenary Favorites

Published in 1986 by a cookbook committee co-chaired by Mary Kurushima and Rose Oshima as a fund-raiser for the **Centenary United Methodist Church** building fund. Over 90,000 copies were sold at $10 and is now out of print. It would appear this cookbook would be in the kitchen library of most Japanese American homes. One businessman-church member thought the 344-pager filled with 680 recipes could have sported $20.

In recent years, Mrs. Kurushima has received requests to update the cookbook or put one out with Japanese/Asian recipes only, that would be welcome in the homes of the young generation of mixed ethnic families. She hopes the Sansei-Yonsei members of her church would undertake this worthwhile endeavor.

A cookbook with 13 chapters; pakkai is in the Asian Entrees/Pork section.

SWEET AND SOUR PORK

2 T. Saké
1/4 cup Soy sauce
1 lb. Boneless Pork, cut in 1-inch cubes
3 T. Cornstarch
4-6 T. Oil
1 large Onion, cut in 1-inch wedges
2 Green Peppers, cut in 1-inch squares
1 medium Carrot, thinly sliced
1/4 cup Water Chestnuts, sliced
1-1/2 cup Pineapple Chunks, drained
1/4 cup Sugar
1/4 cup Catsup
2 T. Vinegar

Blend saké and soy sauce; add pork cubes, toss lightly and marinate 10 minutes. Remove pork (reserve marinade) and roll in 2 T. cornstarch. Heat oil in skillet; add pork and brown lightly. Remove from skillet and set aside.

Reheat skillet; add 2/3 T. oil; sauté onion, pepper and carrot until crisp-tender (about 4 minutes). Add water chestnuts and pineapple. Blend sugar, catsup, vinegar and reserved marinade. Pour over vegetables and bring to a boil. Blend 1 T. cornstarch with reserved pineapple syrup and stir into mixture. Heat until thickened. Add pork and heat to serve. Serves 4-6.

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Our Treasured Recipes

No doubt out of print now, the advertising in the *Pacific Citizen* for *Our Treasured Recipes*, with 327 recipes over 209 pages, was on-going for many years. It was first published in 1965, revised 10 years later, and has endured many printings. Currently, the **Wesley United Methodist Church Women's Committee** (566 N. 5th St., San Jose, CA 95112) offers a new cookbook, *Soup to Sushi*, with over 600 recipes.

When the *P.C.* reviewed *Our Treasured Recipes* in 1975, the spotlight fell on Mrs. K. Mineta's Chow Mein (page 120). By then, 13 printings for 15,000 books had been sold, with proceeds toward church projects and women's programs.

MING'S SWEET AND SOUR PORK

1 lb. Lean Pork Butt
1/4 t. Accent
2 T. Cornstarch
Cracker Meal
1 Green Pepper, seeded and cut in 1-inch squares
1 large Tomato, cut in wedges
1 T. Cornstarch in 2 t. Water
Pinch of salt
1 Egg
1/4 t. Salt
1 t. Soy Sauce
3/4 cup Pineapple Chunks
6 T. Sugar
1 t. Worcestershire Sauce
2 dashes Tabasco Sauce
1/4 cup White Vinegar
1/4 cup Tomato Catsup
1/4 cup Water

Dice pork in 3/4-inch squares. Prepare egg mixture of egg, salt, Accent, soy sauce and 2 t. cornstarch. Dip pork in egg mixture, then roll in cracker meal. Let stand until coating dries (about 3 minutes) before cooking meat. Deep fry at 350° in hot oil for10 minutes until meat is thoroughly cooked. Prepare sweet and sour sauce in a small pan. Bring to boil and simmer for 30 seconds. In a large frying pan, put sauce, bring to boil and add pieces of pepper. Cook 30 seconds. Add cornstarch thickener, then tomato, pineapple and pork. Stir and cook quickly for 15 seconds until sauce is evenly mixed.

—Eiko Shimizu
Clara Ichikawa
Mrs. Jim Koshiyama

~ . ~ . ~



Nisei Favorites No. 2

Its predecessor, *Nisei Favorites No. 1*, is not on hand to peruse, but the **Gardena Valley Baptist Church's** No. 2 cookbook with 178 pages with 473 recipes is. The project was chaired by Aki Tsukahara. Our inquiries about its availability await response.

SWEET-SOUR PORK

1 lb. Lean Boneless Pork
1 Egg, beaten
1 cup Flour
1/2 t. MSG
1/2 t. Salt
Oil for frying

1 t. Shoyu
1/2 cup Sugar
1/3 cup Pineapple Juice
1/4 cup Catsup
1/2 cup White Vinegar
2 T. Cornstarch mixed with 2 T. Water
1 cup drained Pineapple Chunks
1 small Onion, thinly sliced
1 medium Green Pepper, cut into 1/2" pieces
Cooked Rice

Cut pork into 3/4" cubes. Dip meat into egg, then into a combination of flour, MSG and salt. Fry pork in heated to 360° about 6 minutes or until brown. Drain on absorbent paper and keep warm while preparing sauce.

Combine soy sauce, sugar, pineapple juice, catsup and vinegar in skillet. Stir well and bring to a boil. Mix cornstarch and water and add to sauce. Cook and stir until thickened. Add pork, pineapple, onion and green pepper. Cook for 5 minutes. Serve with rice. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Other recipes asking the pork be cut in 3/4-inch cubes happen to feature similar ingredients. The directions and amounts are almost similar plus "Serve with rice." But on a simpler note, this next recipe is inviting.

SWEET AND SOUR SPARERIBS

3 to 4 lbs. spareribs
1 cup apricot preserves
1 cup soy sauce

Cut up spareribs and boil for about 30 minutes. Drain and marinate in apricot preserves and soy sauce for about 30 minutes. Broil under broiler until browned.

—Keiko Imatomi

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The Maryknoll Cookbook

In 1983, the **Maryknoll Ladies Guild and Maryknoll Sports Club** in Los Angeles gathered 546 recipes for a 260-page cookbook, which was dedicated to Sister Mary Bernadette Yoshimochi, known for baking the best strawberry pies topped with whipped cream during the annual school carnivals in the fall. (And it's not in this cookbook!) But her many years of service at the Maryknoll Japanese Catholic Center were the source of comfort and inspiration that led June Kiyabu and her cookbook committee, Cathy Morofuji, Reiko Hashizume, Hideko Yamashita and Reiko Okazaki, to publish 2,000 books.

SWEET AND SOUR PORK

1/2 lb. Pork Loin
1 Red Bell Pepper
1 Green Bell Pepper
1 slice Pineapple
Oil for frying
1/4 t. Salt (for seasoning)
1 Egg, beaten
1/2 cup Corn Flour
Sweet-sour sauce
5 T. White Vinegar
5 T. Sugar
2 T. Tomato Sauce
2 T. Worcestershire Sauce
1/2 t. Salt
1-1/2 T. Corn Flour
1 T. Water
1 T. Oil

Cut pork into 1-inch cubes; sprinkle with salt. Dip into slightly beaten egg white. Coat pork with corn flour and deep fry in hot oil until golden brown. Cut red and green pepper and pineapple into 1-inch chunks. Sauté peppers with 1 T. oil. Mix sweet-sour sauce together with 1 T. oil, peppers. Stir constantly over medium heat until sauce begins to thicken. Add fried pork and pineapple chunks to the sauce and mix well. Serve immediately.

—Jeannie Quan

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JASEB's Asian Cookbook

Closing this Holiday Issue roundup is the 434-page *Asian Cookbook* published in 1989 by the **Japanese American Services of the East Bay**, a coalition of community organizations providing housing and social services to Nikkei senior centers. Their program continues to provide lunch meals in Berkeley, staff a 100-unit Eden Issei Terrace in Hayward for ambulatory seniors and the Channing Way House in Berkeley and Cypress House in Hayward for non-ambulatory and frail seniors.

In the foreword, then-JASEB board president Ben Takeshita of Richmond recalled an old statement: "A way to a man's heart is through his stomach" — or something like that. Wisely, he interprets that to "a good way to develop a good friendship with anyone is cooking or treating ... male or female ... to a good and delicious meal."

On the cookbook committee were Terry Ushijima and Nowie Yokomizo, co-chair; Sumi Ishida, Mary Kadoyama, Yo Kawabata, Jean Kawahara, Isako Momono, Maureen Nakano, Jane Nishi, Cherry Shiozawa, Sally Yokomizo; Natsuko Irei, Yuki Shibata, Tee Yoshiwara, finance; Joyce Yokomizo, Denise Yokomizo; Mrs. Moto Tani [1885-1988] (resident of The Cypress House), watercolor cover of persimmon and mushroom; George Yonekura and Blaco Printers.

SWEET & SOUR PORK (1)

1 lb. Pork Butt
1/4 t. Ajinomoto
2 T. Cornstarch
1 Egg
1/4 t. Salt
1t. Soy sauce
Cracker Meal
1 Green Bell Pepper, 1-inch chunks
Tomato, cut in wedges
1 T. Cornstarch, 2 t. Water
3/4 cup Pineapple Chunks
1/4 cup White Vinegar
6 T. Sugar
1 t. Worcestershire Sauce
Pinch of Salt

Dice pork into 3/4-inch cube. Prepare mixture of egg, salt, aji, soy sauce and cornstarch. Dip

See HONDA/ page 87

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Season's Greetings
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HONDA

(Continued from page 85)

pork in egg mixture then roll in cracker meal. Let stand until coating dries before cooking meat. Deep fry for 10 minutes or until meat is thoroughly cooked. Put in oven for 15-20 minutes at 350° until meat is rid of fat.

Prepare sweet & sour sauce by combining vinegar, catsup, water, sugar, Worcestershire sauce, salt and simmer for 30 seconds. In large frying pan add sweet & sour sauce, bring to boil then add the pieces of bell pepper. Cook for 30 seconds. Add cornstarch thickener, then tomato wedges, pineapple chunks and pork cubes. Stir and cook quickly for 15 seconds until sauce is evenly mixed.

MANDARIN SWEET AND SOUR PORK (2)

2 cups cubed Lean Pork (about 1 lb.)
2 T. Dry Sherry
2 T. Soy Sauce
6 T. Cornstarch
1 t. Salt
2 cups Cooking Oil

Mix thoroughly the above ingredients (except oil) in large bowl. Take out pieces of meat and fry in the oil (350°) until well done and crisp on edges, about 8 minutes. Drain on absorbent paper towel and keep in warm place or low oven.

- Sauce:

2/3 cup Sugar
1/3 cup Water or Pineapple Juice
1/2 cup Cider Vinegar
2 T. Soy Sauce
1/4 cup Catsup

- Mix above ingredients and set aside.

1 T. Cooking Oil
2 T. Cornstarch (mix with 1/3 cup water)
1 cup Pineapple Chunks, drained
1 clove Garlic, crushed

Heat saucepan with oil. Brown garlic and then discard. Add sugar/vinegar mixture, bring to boil and add cornstarch mixture. Stir constantly until it thickens. Add pineapple chunks first, then the fried pork. Mix well. Serve immediately.

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Miscellaneous cookbooks

One of the newest, the **San Mateo JACL Community Cookbook** (1994) was an inaugural memento of the chapter's 60th anniversary, "a tribute to friendship as well as an invitation to good eating," then chapter president Karyl Matsumoto writes in the opening section of the 76-pager. To order: San Mateo JACL, 415 S. Claremont St, San Mateo, CA 94401-3323. But pakkai is missing.

As to be expected in *Nihon Shoku*, there are no recipes flavored with pineapple — no pakkai — in the 1986 all-Japanese cookbook published by the **Placer Buddhist Women's Association,** 3192 Boyington Rd., Penryn, CA 95663. There is an opening feature on dishes for New Year's Day and their significance. No word yet as to whether they've printed more than the 3,000 by the fourth edition printing. *Centenary Favorites* (out of print) also has items for a New Year's feast.



In place of pineapples, there was a similar boneless pork dish prepared at a Chinese restaurant, somewhere I've forgotten, with the delicate, chalk-white fruit of fresh lichee — which was even much more exquisite than the pakkai at the Far East. Fresh lichee happens to be a South Florida crop (as well as in Hawaii) that flourishes in the fall, which we've seen at Asian supermarkets that abound in East San Gabriel Valley. ■

Closing Cookbook Thoughts. . .

Japanese American Cookbooks at a Glance

Please note: Japanese cookbooks marketed for profit are not listed below. This compilation is but a sample effort of the Pacific Citizen Archives, which is in the process of organizing those cookbooks which JACL chapters have assembled as fund-raisers and by a few church and nonprofit Nikkei groups which were privately purchased by P.C.—HKH.)

Asian Cookbook. JASEB—Japanese American Services of the East Bay (1989), 434pp, 780 recipes. (Info: JASEB, 2126 Channing Way, Berkeley, CA 94704.) A title page caveat — "The recipes in this book have not been laboratory-tested, but their merit has been established by the contributors, their families and friends."

Centenary Favorites. Centenary United Methodist Church, Los Angeles (1986), 344pp, 680 recipes. (Info: 213/295-1761 but OUT OF PRINT!) Compiled by Mary Kurushima, Rose Oshima, co-chairs, to celebrate Centenary UMC's 90th anniversary.

Creative Cookery ©. Washington, D.C. JACL (1979), 228pp, 398 recipes. (Info: OUT OF PRINT.)

East-West Flavors. The Auxiliary, West Los Angeles JACL (1965). 202pp, 363 recipes. (Info: 310/207-5951, Aiko Takeshita, 1431 Armacost Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90025.) From their traditional "favorite recipe exchange night," the Auxiliary launched its beautiful cookbook as a major fund-raiser.

East-West Flavors-2 ©. The Auxiliary, West Los Angeles JACL (1977). 331pp, 482 recipes. "The generous response to the first cookbook encouraged us to offer this second book ... with new recipe ideas." (Info: OUT OF PRINT)

Japanese Cookbook. Intermountain District Council, JACL (1972), 198pp, 225 recipes. Compiled by Harriet Kimura, Salt Lake City.

Mamasan's Cookbook ©. Philadelphia JACL (1974), 228pp (4x6 inch page), 129 recipes. (Info: Philadelphia JACL, B. Iwata, 217 Tyler Rd. King of Prussia, PA 19406).

The Maryknoll Cookbook. Maryknoll Ladies Guild (1983), 260pp, 546 recipes. (Info: MJCC, 222 S. Hewitt St., Los Angeles, CA 90012.) Dedicated to Sister Mary Bernadette Yoshimochi with deep respect for her many years of service at Maryknoll in Los Angeles. Maria Park, Guild pres.; Sports Club, Terri de la Torre, Ruben de la Torre, directors; Kats Yanaga, commissioner.

Nihon Shoku: Our Family's Favorite ©. Placer Buddhist Women's Association (1987), 140pp, 356 recipes. (Info: Placer Buddhist Women's Assn., 3192 Boyington Rd., Penryn, CA 95663.) Committee—Shigeno Ichikawa, chair; Haru Domen, Amy Hamada, Tsuneko Matsumoto, Masako Nekoda, Chiyoye Yamada, Haruye Yamamoto. [As a Chinese dish, recipe for *pakkai* was not germane.]

Nisei Favorites No. 2. Gardena Valley Baptist Church (1975), 175pp, 478 recipes. Cookbook committee chair: Aki Terukuhara. (Info: *not furnished.*)

Nisei Kitchen. St. Louis JACL (1975), 216pp, 203 recipes. (Info: 314/966-6324, e-mail: bobanne@compuserve.com, Robert Mitori, 13148 Hollyhead Ct, St Louis, MO 63131.)

Our Treasured Recipes. Wesley United Methodist Church, San Jose, Calif. (1965), 209pp, 327 recipes. (Info: OUT-OF-PRINT. Wesley United Methodist Women, 566 N. 5th St., San Jose, CA 95112) [Currently available from Wesley UMW is their new *Soup to Sushi* cookbook with over 600 recipes.]

San Mateo JACL Community Cookbook. San Mateo JACL (1994), 82pp, 190 recipes. (Info: Attn. April Osasa Smith, 415 S Claremont St, San Mateo, CA 94401.) Published to initiate the JACL chapter's 60th anniversary in 1995. Fifteen recipes used in the kitchen at Tule Lake for breads, cookies and cakes have been added.

A Touch of Oriental. Compiled by Joanne Marumoto Elyea (1978), 162pp, 477 recipes. (Info: 619/530-1151, J.M. Elyea, 4270 Pawderborn Drive, San Diego, CA 92154.) Originally published to support her son through college, but with the goal achieved in 1983 proceeds are contributed to local endeavors, including the Japanese American Historical Society of San Diego. [The "Sweet and Sour Pork" recipe is the same as found in *Our Treasured Recipes*, published by Wesley United Methodist Church Women's Committee, San Jose.] ■

Memories

BY IKU KIRIYAMA



Memories are tied to basic senses. Songs and sounds can evoke nostalgia, longing and sadness. Smells can evoke hunger, disgust and past memories. Probably the strongest responses are tied to taste ... to food.

Food is comfort; food is negative; food is warmth. Food is tied to the most meaningful times in one's life.

My memories are divided into stages of my life: childhood, young adulthood, and my own family life.

Like playing a game with words on a psychological test: "say the first word that comes to mind."

Colds — *okaiyu* with daikon and shoyu. My mother always made that soft rice — like gruel — grated some daikon and gave it to us when we got sick.

My family? Chicken soup. Why chicken soup? I don't know. But it was my mother's style. Later, it became *misoshiru* because one year misoshiru kept our family cold-free.

New Year — ah, New Year. So many foods, but the one most cherished memory was the annual *mochitsuki*. The old-fashioned way: steaming the rice on a converted oil drum, pounding it in the *usu*. Hands burned by the hot mochi as we hurriedly made the shapes before the mochi turned cold. Later, as hands became short with fewer people showing up, I became the "mochi cutter." Even my father praised how I cut off the pieces of mochi.

Now? My husband and I make mochi with a mochi machine on our kitchen counter. It's not fun anymore. The people are missing. And getting up early, being outdoors, waiting for each batch, eating the first one.

My father passed away in 1978. He died of a blunt force trauma to the head when a motorcyclist — on a big Kawasaki — broad-sided my father as he slowly made a left turn into oncoming traffic and shoved him into the middle of the car.

Omigod! I never got the recipes that he had concocted. He would do the shopping, come home and tell my mother how to make something he had thought of.

The steamed tofu loaf with a sickly yellowish-green color — but oh, the flavor and the texture. I was a young teacher when he and my mother began experimenting with the tofu loaf. They hit perfection. I never thought to help or ask how.

The *satsuma age*. Oh, I would kill for that recipe! They'd ground white fish through a meat grinder, mix it with some stuff, roll it into balls and then deep fry it. I have never tasted anything like it since. The ones in the market are cardboard. The ones in Japan were close, but not IT. I never thought to help or ask how.

The *toga* soup. The large whitish green toga in the melon family. My mother would cut the top, spoon out chunks of the toga, put in chicken broth and all kinds of goodies: *takenoko* (bamboo shoots), chicken, gingko nuts, mushrooms, etc. The toga, wrapped in cheesecloth, would simmer in a bucket on top of the stove. But I ... ditto ... ditto.

The lobster! My father would go to the Redondo Pier, buy live lobsters — about three pounds each. I knew when he had gone to the pier. The kitchen would be covered with newspaper from ceiling to floor. When he cut the live lobsters in half lengthwise, guts would fly all over the place.

Food is comfort; food is negative; food is warmth. Food is tied to the most meaningful times in one's life.

My mother made two kinds of sauces: Velveeta cheese or miso. We would have to choose one — what an impossible choice! Then she would cover each lobster half with the sauces and bake them in the oven. The thick, juicy hunks of lobster were sheer heaven.

I tried making the lobster once. I bought frozen steamed lobster halves. No contest. This I could make, but I couldn't do the live lobsters.

Pickled chayotes. Delicious. Our friends who were lucky enough to know my mother — it was her recipe — still talk about my mother's chayote pickles. I never asked her how either.

My mother's *bota mochi*. *Ohagi*? No way. Manju? Uh-huh. The steamed mounds of *mochigome* with thick, runny *an* on top — I have yet to eat anything close. I did ask, but never tried it.

I can't ask my mother. She lies mute and half-paralyzed from a stroke. Why do we live as if people will always be there for us?

The Kiriyama household has developed certain food traditions. Most by chance — as most meaningful traditions are.

Christmas morning and pancakes. My mother's recipe. One year, about 27 years ago, a friend's mother passed away just before Christmas. We invited him for Christmas and I made my mother's light-as-air pancakes. "Uncle Jim" has been coming ever since. We've missed only one Christmas — two years ago — when we went to visit our son, George, in Texas — his first Christmas away from home.

Our daughter Traci joins us for Christmas pancakes. She hasn't come in time to help, nor has she asked me how.

For the past ten years, I've been making a'most all the traditional Japanese New Year's foods — starting about four days before New Year's Day. I do the *osechi ryori*: *kimpira gobo*, *kiriboshi* daikon, *hijiki*, *kuromame*, *tazukuri*, *satoimo* with miso, and *nishime*. And I do the more JA foods: wonton, sukiyaki meat rolls, chicken, etc. I make *ozoni* — kagoshima style — with the mochi George and I make a week ahead. I never get around to making *makizushi* — my mother's was the best, but I never got around to helping her and learning how.

Traci tells me every year she must come out and watch me learn how to do New Year's. ■

A teacher for more than 35 years, Iku Kiriyama is a co-founder of the Japanese American Historical Society of Southern California. She recently was a member of the program committee for the "Ties That Bind" national conference held in Los Angeles.

A grain of rice goes a long way



BY PETE HIRONAKA

The phone call from *Pacific Citizen*'s Mene Kara sounded like an assignment from my old college English prof. It was a request for a "theme paper" on food for the Holiday Issue. Soon, not unlike my cartooning ritual, I was staring at a blank paper with myriads of fleeting, unsolidified thoughts.

Food for thought, ah yes. Slowly but surely, like a molded *norimaki musubi*, the thoughts of rice came to fore. Like other old-time Nisei who spent three years in an internment camp — Poston for me — I cannot remember any memorable meals there. But we did have rice. Our Block 229 mess hall cooks thoughtfully scraped the brown toasted leftover rice from the huge kettles and placed the salted *koge* rice at the exit doors. It was the best part of the meals.

According to our *World Book* encyclopedia, people in India and Japan eat an average of one half to two pounds of rice every day. In the United States, the average is only about five pounds of rice per year for every person. The increase in the U.S. Asian population in recent years has probably boosted that average by a few pounds.

Back in 1945 when I crossed the continent from Poston, Ariz., to enroll at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio, I began sitting down to riceless meals. Once in a blue moon, the university cooks prepared rice on their menu, but they were not suited for us "Buddha heads." However, the Hirotas came to the rescue. Tom and Mary Hirota were a relocated Issei couple employed by the university. Whenever I would run into them on campus, they would invite me to their basement apartment in South Hall for some *gohan*. I never turned down their invitation. Those were cherished meals and, no, I did not hide behind bushes or buildings to "accidentally" run into them.

The culinary skills in our household are, of course, handled by my spouse, Jean. We have rice almost every day, which is probably why our marriage has lasted for more than four decades. It might be noted here that, when we recently drove from Ohio to Connecticut, grandma Jean took along extra *musubi* for our Irish-Japanese grandchildren Kate and Peter. They were downed post-haste. The rice beat goes on.

Once a year, I venture into the kitchen for a major cuisine cruise. It's become a personal tradition. I make *nishime* for New Year's Day. *Gobo*, *takenoko*, *konnyaku* and all the other goodies are in there. Although it doesn't compare with a Mrs. Ueda's back in Salinas ... obasan's was the best ... local tasters have given a thumbs up for my version of Japanese-Irish stew.



In the culinary world, I function as an outdoor barbecue grill chef. I credit my tenure out there to my uncle Kuni. Many years ago he told me he had a close relative, who shall remain nameless, over for a cookout. The guest was reputed as a cantankerous eater. Things were overcooked or undercooked. Too much shoyu or not enough shoyu. Always complaining as he fed his face. Actually a very decent individual, but that was his nature. Well, Kuni put the steaks on the hot grill and went about tending to other chores.

"All of a sudden I became aware of billowing smoke," Kuni said. "I grabbed the fork and flipped the blackened, charred meat over. Shortly thereafter I nervously served him his steak and waited for the torrent of complaints. Instead of expletives, I heard 'Wow! This steak is great!'" The art of searing steak on the grill was discovered then and thanks to uncle Kuni, I have had modest success as an outdoors cook.

Weather permitting, I enjoy grilling out there under the Ohio skies. Longtime neighbor Charlie Dieterle, a German Nisei, would often holler over the fence, "Hey, neighbor! What are you having ... big steaks again?!" One day I went up to him and said, "Y'know, Charlie, today I'm cooking up something really special. It's something that's been handed down in our family from one generation to the next."

"Really?" he said peering over my shoulders. "What is it?"

"Bratwurst and sauerkraut."

An afterthought: I should have said "Bratwurst-yaki and sauerkraut-no-mono ... with rice, of course. ■

A freelance cartoonist formerly with the Dayton Daily News, *Pete Hironaka contributes his cartoons regularly to the* Pacific Citizen.

Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches!



BY MARIKO TRAN

Every day of my fifth grade year in elementary school, I dreaded the sound of the ringing bell signifying the commencing of lunch. For most of my fellow classmates, lunch was a time to relax and have a good time with friends. But for me, it was by far the most intense and aggravating 40 minutes of the day. It was all because of a peanut butter and jelly sandwich.

Each afternoon, I endured the torture of revealing a lunch filled with the strangest looking and smelling foods. I had what my classmates called, "seaweed wrappings." This was their attempt at playfully describing an *omusubi*. Within these "seafood wrappings" were even stranger things such as dried pickled plums, and shaved bonito. Reluctantly, I ate my omusubis, only for the pure nourishment, wishing in the back of my mind, that I too had a peanut butter and jelly sandwich like everyone else.

Then there came a day that I could no longer withstand the agony of taking Japanese food to school. In my squeaky ten-year-old voice, I demanded that my mother make me sandwiches for lunch. I told her that my life was being ruined because of *her* strange foods. At first, she didn't say anything back to me. She just stood and looked straight into my eyes. Then she asked if I wanted so-called American food at home as well. I said, "No".

"Why not?" was her response.

"It's just different at school. I have to have peanut butter and jelly!" I said, pleading with her to just comply with my one and only wish, which if granted, would open the doors to being accepted by my classmates.



It has been six years since I had this conversation with my mother. But it still remains as vivid in my mind because what it made me realize about myself will stay with me forever. What that simple peanut butter and jelly sandwich symbolized at that point in my life went far beyond the issue of food and taste. It had become my way of distinguishing "American" from "Japanese." And because I had such an intense desire to become one with "American" culture, I completely submerged my Japanese heritage and all that came with it.

Today, at 16, I've realized that being different from the majority is fine, and is rather something to cherish and appreciate. I no longer blame my Japanese ancestry for bringing forth the trials and tribulations of life, but actually look to it for guidance and wisdom. Being Japanese American has taken on a completely new meaning in my life. It is something to be proud of, something that not everyone has the luxury of being. I have been granted the wonderful opportunity to explore two avenues of life, rather than just one. Who am I to waste such a precious gift? ■

Mariko Tran attends the California Academy of Mathematics and Science in Carson, Calif. She is currently a junior. Her hobbies include bodyboarding, reading and playing the piano. Her future plans are yet unknown, but she hopes to continue thinking positively about life!

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Lake Washington Sunrise - The Eastside

BELLEVUE, WASHINGTON

BY
TRACY UBA
Writer/Reporter



Photo by Mario G. Reyes

more than a cup of joe

Amelia Toy, the ebullient 27-year-old manager of the newly opened Union Center Cafe in dowtown Los Angeles' Little Tokyo, already knows most of her customers on a first name basis.

Quite a feat considering it opened just under five months ago on Aug. 3, next to the recently reconstructed Union Center for the Arts theater (which is home to East West Players, Visual Communications, and LA Artcore). The Union Cafe is one of the latest projects that has come to fruition for the sponsoring Little Tokyo Service Center's Community Development Corporation (LTSC-CDC), an organization which invests its time in trying to make long-term community improvements through housing and institutional redevelopment.

Recent LTSC-CDC projects also include the renovation of the San Pedro Firm Building and the construction of Casa Heiwa, both of which provide housing for low income residents, as well as the much-anticipated Little Tokyo gymnasium, plans for which were approved a month ago by the Los Angeles City Council.

The Union Cafe opened to much fanfare in the community and the first few days were packed with Little Tokyo patrons, who no doubt were impressed by the friendly and dedicated staff.

"We're always trying to think of ways that we can improve service," said Toy. "I think people come here because the food's good and it's reasonably priced. But what really makes it special is the customer service."

"We know everybody on a one-on-one basis," added cafe assistant Brenda Lieras, 21, who worked with Toy for two and a half years at Amy's Pastries in Montebello prior to coming to the cafe. "It's more like family here."

But while quality customer service is a top priority, the cafe's real hook is its goal of providing job aid and training to people who are in need of a little help getting on their feet.

"We're mainly focusing on the domestic violence [survivors]," said Toy. "Eventually, we want to help them by providing health benefits, job stability ... It starts with a woman wanting to get out of an abusive relationship."

Evelyn Yoshimura, the cafe's project manager and LTSC staff member, noted this particular group was targeted because "apparently, the main reason women go back to abusive relationships is that they can't find a job."

The social services provided for LTSC clients include counseling, low-income housing referrals, job placement and child care. If they are unprepared to go out and try to find work on their own, said Toy, "they [can] come to the cafe, get trained, and from here we want to place them somewhere. We don't want to just leave them and go, 'Ok, your six months are up. Good luck.' Chances of succeeding are slim. They might be scared, they're timid. For whatever reason, they might not be able to get another position.

"I [also] don't just want to teach people how to make a sandwich and serve a drink," Toy added. "I want to actually explain management, cost control, inventory, the whole bit, so what they get out of this experience is a lot more than just knowing how to [prepare food.]

"That's why we wanted to form this network where we place them, we know it's a good place for them and they're not going to be abused by their employers."

Before the staff can help anyone, however, the cafe must prove itself stable. Still in its initial stages of marketing and promotion, it has recently moved into catering and hosting cultural events such as poetry readings to boost business.

Melissa Unpingco, cafe assistant and former Amy's co-worker, mentioned that people trickling in from the Union Center for the Arts theater substantially add to the growing customer base as well. "As more people are finding out about it, more people are coming," said Unpingco.

With items such as the pesto tomato turkey sandwich and Toy's signature tofu salad, the menu boasts a wide array of homemade delights that set Union Center apart from other cafes and restaurants in the area. Mainly though, said Toy, "we didn't go with a Japanese menu because we didn't want to hurt the [existing] Little Tokyo businesses."

Yoshimura echoed this sentiment and added, cautiously, that business is starting to pick up. But it's difficult considering the cafe is a nonprofit venture in a business where money is the make-it-or-break-it factor.

"The entrepeneurial world is totally different," admitted Yoshimura, who has long worked in the nonprofit realm, starting with the Little Tokyo People's Rights Organization in the mid 1970s, which later developed into the National Coalition for Redress and Reparations (NCRR). "The bottom line is we have to make money in order to do things like job training ... And we're still running in the red."

But Yoshimura isn't discouraged. New businesses typically run in the red their first six months to a year.

As of now, Toy said, most of the money is being reinvested into the cafe. "It wasn't fully funded by grants. LTSC actually put up a lot of their own money to build this place, so a lot of it [will go] to pay back LTSC [and] the staff I hired to get the place going."

Toy added, "This is such a good cause. We're not in it for the money. Basically, we're in it to help people. And that makes me extremely happy and proud to be a part of this."

Visit the Union Center Cafe at 116 Judge John Aiso St. (formerly San Pedro St.), Little Tokyo, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Or call 213/628-9787. Regular hours are Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.-5 p.m. Special extended hours are in effect during Union Center for the Arts productions. For details on booking events at the cafe, call 213/473-1690. ■

Union Center CAFE

Amelia's Garlic Bagel Chips

6 Bagels (day old works best,but fresh ones may be used. For more interesting chips, you can use sesame/cheese bagels.)
1 head of garlic, remove skins and separate into cloves.
1 cup of light olive oil (any cooking oil may be used)
Salt and pepper to taste.

1. Thinly slice each bagel to about 1/4 inch thickness or thinner.
2. Roast the garlic in a broiler or toaster until golden brown.
3. In a blender, add the roasted garlic and olive oil. Puree until well mixed. Add salt and pepper to taste. For a little variety, you may also add other ingredients like herbs or parmesan cheese.
4. For crunchier chips, first toast the sliced bagels in an oven or toaster oven until golden brown. Then lightly brush on the oil mixture just before serving.
5. For softer chips, lightly brush on the oil mixture before toasting. The chips are ready when the edges turn golden brown. Recipe serves 8-12

Bagel chips can be served with salads, soups, pastas, and whatever else appeals to your palette. They can also be served as an appetizer, if topped with various ingredients such as spreads, tuna, chicken, cheese, and so on.

Benkyodo Manju

BY MIKA TANNER
Writer/Reporter

Still doing it like they used to

When Suyeichi Okamura first opened the Benkyodo manju shop way back in 1906, he had no way of knowing that more than 90 years later his modest store would remain a cornerstone of the San Francisco Japanese American community. Situated at the corner of Buchanan and Sutter streets in the heart of Japantown, Benkyodo is truly a Japanese American establishment featuring not only a wide variety of traditional manju, but also a dining counter where customers can order sandwiches, hamburgers and sodas. Each day, regulars come in to meet their friends, drink coffee, eat manju, or watch the ball game on TV.

"It's the Benkyodo club!" one old-timer exclaims. "Every day I come to meet my buddies and we sit and talk story about the old days." Another daily customer living in the nearby Kimochi senior center says, "It's nice, because the place is small and you can talk. And, it's the best manju — *ichiban oishi* [best tasting]!"



A true Issei pioneer, Suyeichi Okamura immigrated from Japan as a teenager in the late 1800s. After a short stint in the Alaskan salmon industry, he moved to San Francisco and decided to open up a small cafe-style manju shop where customers could sit and socialize while enjoying their food. With the help of professional manju makers from Japan, Suyeichi ran a successful business until World War II, when the family was relocated to Amache concentration camp in Arizona.

Fortunately, Suyeichi was able to rely on the help of friends to look after the shop until the war ended. As soon as they were able, the family moved back to San Francisco and reopened the business. A new generation would be in charge, however, with Suyeichi's son, Hirofumi "Hippo" Okamura carrying on the torch. Hippo managed Benkyodo until the late 1980s, training his sons, Ricky and Bobby, along the way. Ricky and Bobby, the current general partners, are the third generation of Okamuras to run the business. "When Dad went into retirement, Ricky and I had the option to continue the store or not," Bobby says. "But we decided that we wanted to carry on the tradition and that it was important for the community."



Since they began managing the store, Bobby's job has been to make the *anko* and take care of the customers at the counter, while Ricky stays in the back and shapes the manju into all different varieties and colors. It is a labor of love that keeps them busy throughout the week. "We enjoy it," Bobby says. "We enjoy the people, the customers, and continuing the tradition within the family and the community."

Although Benkyodo has remained a consistent Japantown landmark, Bobby has witnessed significant changes to Japantown and the surrounding community. "There used to be a lot more family-owned businesses in Japantown. Now I think there are only two that are still family run — it's gotten a lot more commercial. There's still a tight JA community, but its different from how it used to be because many Sansei live outside the city — everybody is a lot more scattered."

Perhaps because of these changes, Benkyodo's clientele has become more diverse over the years. Bobby has observed that many Chinese and Korean Americans are regular customers, although the majority continue to be JA tourists and old-timers. True to tradition, however, Benkyodo is still frequently called upon to provide manju at customary community gatherings such as weddings, funerals, and New Year's celebrations.

"I really see Benkyodo as keeping a sense of community and tradition alive. Not only with food such as manju and New Year's mochi, but also as a meeting place where people can come in and see old friends. That's the kind of place it's always been. I think us being here is reassuring to a lot of people; so many businesses have moved or changed, but Benkyodo isn't going anywhere. We have a continuity that a lot of folks appreciate."

Neither Bobby or Ricky can see themselves retiring anytime soon, and they hope to carry on the family legacy for a number of more years. As far as the next generation of Okamura's to run Benkyodo goes, however, that remains to be seen. "My brother has a son who might get into the business," Bobby shares. "But who knows what will happen — it's so far ahead in the future, you know?"

For the time being, at least, San Francisco's Japantown can rely on the presence of Benkyodo and the Okamura family to preserve a link to a rich JA culinary and community heritage. Although times are changing and the JA community is undergoing constant transition, Bobby is not worried. "As long as we're around making manju, young JAs will still want a part of their culture, and people will come."

Benkyodo Manju is located at 1747 Buchanan Street in San Francisco's Japantown, 415/922-1244. ■

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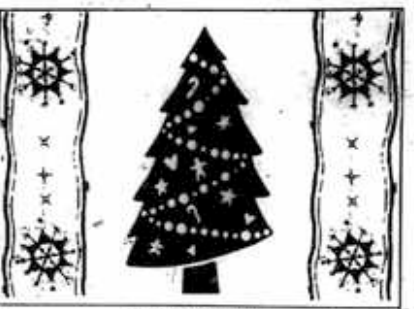
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Christmas Gift Ideas

Nikkei Donburi



Written with kids in mind and adults to enjoy, *Nikkei Donburi: A Japanese American Cultural Survival Guide*, is a perfect gift for a Yonsei grandchild and a must for that Japanophile in your life. Author Chris Aihara and a host of JA writers collaborated to provide insight on subjects such as *oshogatsu* and the annual kitchen rituals involved with *osechi ryori*; a thorough explanation of the customary ways of saying "*itadakimasu*" before a meal and "*gochisosama*" after; as well as teaching Japanese eating etiquette, like not using your *hashi* as pointing devices while eating.

There's an irreverent piece on the different ways of eating *mochi*—with *shoyu* or with stanky *natto*, directions on how to make *musubi*, contributor Daisy Nakai's *ozoni* recipe (Kanto style), the Senshin Buddhist Temple Fujinkai's quick *takuan* recipe, Marion Manaka's how-to on cucumber *tsukemono*. But "Nikkei Donburi" is not all food. There's also instructions on how to write numbers in Japanese, *origami* folding patterns, explanations for the different zodiacs as well as songs and poems. Grab a copy for $18.95 at the Japanese American Cultural and Community Center bookstore, 244 S. San Pedro St. in L.A.'s Little Tokyo. Call 213/628-2725 ext. 110 for information and mail orders.

Country Samurai Coffee

With three generations of Kona coffee-growing experience under their belts, Walter and Sharlene Kunitake of Country Samurai Coffee Co. are ready to reclaim lost familial territory. Walter Kunitake, a former professor at Penn State, has returned to his family's coffee plantation to work the 2,000 acres and tend the plants (some, which were planted by his grandparents, are still pumping beans). The question now is ... to caffeinate or decaffeinate?

Yes, the brew that Country Samurai sells is made from 100-percent Kona coffee beans. They tout to be the only coffee which strives to offer zero defects in their grades by using the old-fashioned method of hand-sorting before roasting. Currently they offer six different high-quality grades. Prices for 8 oz. bags are: $17.55 for Extra Fancy; $15.85 for Fancy; $15.85 for Peaberry; and $14.85 for Kona No. 1. Also available are 4 oz. and one pound bags. Minimum order is one pound. To order, call 888/ ONO-KONA.

Pianolight Music

Know anyone who needs some soothing sounds while their prospective partner's slurping down *miso* soup? Put aside the Def Leopard and the ZZ Top albums. Hide Huey Lewis and the News. Break out some Pianolight Music, orchestrated by Guy Maeda of Studio City. His collection of muzak hits help set the mood right with the tintillating sounds of his piano. The soloist dining series include titles: "Dinner is Served," "Cocktail Hour," "Regular or Decaf?," "Dessert Anyone?," and "Breakfast in Bed" (for those with alterior motives).



For the holidays, Maeda has taken jingle bell jollies to the pig pen with "A Barnyard Country Christmas." Among the notable guest stars on the album: Re-baah McEntire, Lee-Lamb Rimes and Wooly Nelson. These are real-live animal sounds, folks. For those missing a Prince Charming in their lives, have them ribbit along with "A Froggy Christmas." They'll be crooning to "Croakin' Bells" with Frog Marley in no time. Prices for the moo-ving Christmas albums are $15 for CD, $10 cassette; $16 a CD, $11 cassette for the dining series (plus shipping and handling). How can you discount 20 years of musical experience? Call 800/487-8659 to order.

Ramen City

Stuck in the middle of America with no take-out Asian food within county limits? Hey, sh*t happens. But lucky for the luckless, there's technology. And technology has brought us the convenience of shopping online. No more pleas to friends asking for care packages. No more whining over the phone to mom ... enter Ramen City.

OK, Ramen City is not the Mecca of Asian food, but it comes darn close especially when you're in the middle of the Appalachias with no Yaohan or 99 Ranch Market in sight. This Internet website <www.ramencity.com> carries a wide array of Chinese, Japanese, Korean and Southeast Asian instant noodles-stuff that's not normally found on the aisles of your local supermarket. Using those good 'ol college student pals—Visa and Mastercard—you can order online from any computer with Internet access. Purchase a box of one particular brand, or mix it up with sampler boxes. Prices range from $13.99 and up for 20 packages of instant gratification. Good thing is, there's no sales tax or shipping charges (unless you absolutely, positively have to get it there the next day).

KOO-KI SUSHI

If artistry were a category in food, then sisters Karen Sasaki and Janice Murai would get big-ups for their sushi. Well, it's not quite sushi ... it's Koo-ki sushi—hand rolls of Belgian and American chocolates carefully paired with fresh-baked cookies. *Ikura*, or salmon roe sushi, is re-created using crisp rice cookies under rows of apricot-flavored gummi "eggs" then wrapped in dark chocolate. It's enough to cause dietary dementia. Special gift packages are availabled: the eight-piece Holiday *Obento*, featuring Apricot Row, Tako-Nut, Berry Maguro, Great White Sushi, Fruit-O-Maki, Mau'i Maki and Drummi, ($65); five-piece Suedy's Obento ($42); two-piece, limited-edition Lucky Cat set ($25). They've got a gift arrangement to fit everyone's pocketbook. What makes the koo-ki sushi special is the presentation. Gift selections are arranged in imported Japanese obento boxes or elegant porcelain plates from Studio Potter; wrapped with a gold ribbon; and decorated with a handcrafted hand ornament made from delicate Japanese paper cords. Unfortunately, mail orders are out of the question. Those who live in the Bay Area can visit the Suedy's Gift Store at 830 Jury Ct. #1A in San Jose. It's recommended that orders be placed ahead of time. Call 408/947-8294 (Tu/Thur/Sat are the best days) to order or for more information.



IKEDA

(Continued from page 25)

restaurant sushi by Japanese names, while I stick with English ever since accidentally, alarmingly, ordering *natto*. In our family, only Tasha can stomach natto. In Israel, her family treated me to sushi, but all I wanted was falafel, shwarma, amnon, and learned to order in Hebrew. Every Passover seder, I demand to hear the *whole* Exodus story. So I figure when we have children, we'll have all our bases covered.

1998: Grandma's Teriyaki is Best

Called grandma yesterday for her teriyaki recipe, as I do whenever I make it, though I've caught her dictation in multiple media — scribbled on an envelope, a shoyu-stained napkin. I always lose them. Once I started a recipe book that died containing only one entry: *Grandma's Teriyaki is Best*. She sent a great old hand-annotated cookbook compiled by Nisei ladies from Altadena Union church (lost during a move). One year I typed it on my PC (zapped during an upgrade).

Now I call and only need to say, "We're having a barbecue tomorrow!" and she reaches for her recipe box, sighing for her mnemonically challenged, culinary talentless grandson. We negotiate the dozen recipes she keeps; I demand precision, every pinch and *tbsp* dictated scientifically. Or, no, not scientifically — ritually, *spiritually*. I always want the *other* one, the *exact* one she used before — the Holy of Holies. I want to know what brand of shoyu the gods use, how many drops of sweet wine the sprites hand-milk from mirin flowers.

You don't have to follow the recipe *exactly*, she insists. Just *taste* it.

Now I'm nervous because last Christmas, the family got her a PC and AOL account — we got her "wired." This year I thought to get her a webpage (www.grandmasisbest.com) where she could post the recipe, but the thing is, it's hard to "lose" a webpage. And that, of course, is what this impossible ritual is really all about: cooking it *with* her. She's the ingredient that makes her teriyaki the world's best. You can't download that. ■

***Stewart David Ikeda's** novel, What the Scarecrow Said (Regan Books, 1996), was selected for the Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award series, and earned multiple awards and nominations. He has taught writing and Asian American studies at the Universities of Michigan and Wisconsin and at Boston College, and been featured in media and presentations nationwide. A member of the Philadelphia chapter, Ikeda primarily lives in Massachusetts, where he's working on a second novel and developing a new online magazine, Asian American Village (http://www.minorities-jb.com/asian.htm).*

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OBA

(Continued from page 27)

of the boys carried a frying pan on their backs routinely. During the attack on the Gothic Line in 1945, the boys had to climb up the steep trails to Mount Carchio in the dark. Twenty-five of the soldiers fell off the trail, but luckily none of them were killed. However, the frying pan from someone's backpack fell off and went klankity klank down the steep mountain side. Thankfully, the German defenders never heard the falling pan. The boys attacked and took the mountains within 32 minutes while a whole division couldn't take it for five and one half months.

During rest periods in Vada, near Leghorn, the boys again went fishing with concussion grenades and bartered with the fishermen for their catch. The Italians liked their *tako* (octopus) as much as the Hawaiians and refused to give up their tako. We finally got used to their olive oil and vinegar dressings over raw onions, peppers and tomatoes.

In the Vosges Mountains near Bruyeres, I had to take some hot meals of hamburgers, rice, pineapple chunks, corn and coffee to the boys on the front lines. It was pitch black, but out of the shadows Lt. Rodarme came out and asked, "What have you got there, Oba?" I said that I had the hamburgers, etc. He said, "Forget the rest and serve only the hamburgers and rice. The enemy is too close over on the other side and we can't use mess kits." So I set up the line; I gave hamburgers into one hand and a scoop of rice into the other till all the boys were fed. They said that was the best meal they ever had.

Then again, in the Maritime Alps on La Bollene, Capt. Hill invited a captain from another outfit for a meal of steak and potatoes. I waited for the captains to sit with their coffee and salad. I had potatoes on the stove and a double boiler of hot milk with melted cheese. When the captain motioned, I cooked the steak and mashed the potatoes with butter, pepper, salt and curled the mashed potatoes into the milk and cheese. The visiting captain had three servings of potatoes. The next day, he sent a disgruntled mess sergeant to me to learn how to prepare potatoes au gratin. I don't think the cook heard a word of instruction.

When we were ready to leave La Bollene Vesubie, Madam Alexander Milio prepared a going-away luncheon for all the boys who were protecting the area. She painstakingly prepared blood sausages stuffed with spinach and served it with pumpkin soup and a small piece of meat. The boys enthusiastically ate the bread, soup, salad and meat, but no one ate the blood sausages. Madam Milio must have been disappointed, but I guess she realized that no one wanted to see blood ever again.

Finally at the end of the war when we were guarding prisoners of war, we were able to receive fresh rations every day with plenty of beef. Of course the menu was hekka and hot rice. Capt. Certain came daily at noon to sit and wait for Mas Yoshida to finish cooking the rice in the aluminum pan. Mas gave the captain the best part of the rice and cracked two raw eggs over the hot rice as the captain waited to sprinkle the boullion shoyu to make the most delicious *tamago meshi* (mixed rice and eggs). He then covered the whole concoction with heaping scoops of hekka. Capt. Certain, like the boys, never tired of the tamago meshi and hekka.

In the final analysis, I think we "Japanized" our haole officers to our way of cooking "Mixed Plate." Did the boys assimilate their taste buds to the American way of eating? I think not. We were already eating anything American except for the southern vegetables and mutton. Students returning to Hawaii from mainland schools make a beeline for the fast food mixed plate counters. Today, sushi and sashimi are household American words. Assimilate? Yes, some of the boys became good at speaking with a southern drawl and one married a southern belle. ■

Ron Oba is a veteran of the famous 442nd Regimental Combat Team and author of The Men of Company F.

FUJIKAWA

(Continued from page 30)

nestled within. He shook hands with all my friends with platters of *futomaki*, rice balls, or with the best tacos West L.A. had ever seen. And in the most trying moments of his relationship with Peter, he tried to win the love and respect of his youngest son every Saturday at 4 p.m. with the perfect steak.

I'm not much of a cook, but I got my dad's "acting" bug. I stumbled upon one of the first Asian American communities I've ever felt a part of eight years after he died, when I did a show with the East West Players. On Sundays, after the matinee, the cast and crew and staff always threw a potluck supper behind the theatre. Each week, it nurtured our play by bringing us close together.

The sense of community created by this simple weekly event was astounding to me. In theatre, the word "community" is always an ideal. The word "ensemble" is always something to achieve, to honor. But post-show gatherings in every other show I've done are usually centered around the consumption of alcohol. And on these Sundays, in the potluck ritual of my fellow Americans of Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, and other Asian ancestries, I always got the feeling that everyone knew something that I was supposed to know. That this was how you do it. How you be Asian.

I thought about things I'd forgotten, like all the food at the Hanamatsuri we used to go to at that church in West L.A. every year, and that potluck our family went to after my brother's Judo tournament. I saw a little bit of my own ethnic identity. One that belonged to my father too.

I'm in my thirties now. Dad's been gone 15 years, and no one so far has carried on the tradition of food in large supply, readily available for anyone who crosses the threshold. I don't have kids or anyone to cook for, so I don't cook much. But I have my comfort food. I have my mom's recipe for macaroni and cheese. I have mom's salad dressing down pat (olive oil, red wine vinegar, salt and pepper) and I still love my spare ribs black and crispy.

And I have my single person's-sized rice cooker, my favorite teacup, my favorite bowl. My *genmai-cha* is always in supply, as is miso in the fridge. I also have Cyndy's pickles, plus tofu, shoyu, nori, udon, *ume* and ramen nearby at all times.

I get teased to death by my New York roommate about "all that weird stuff I eat," but he can just stuff a California Roll in it. ■

Cynthia Gates Fujikawa is an actor and playwright. Her one-woman show about the life of her father, Old Man River, premiered in New York City in 1997 at the New Victory Theater. The show received it's West Coast premiere in Los Angeles last January, and since then has been transformed into a documentary feature film by Emmy Award-winning director and filmmaker Allan Holzman. Old Man River received it's first public screening in September at the Museum of Tolerance. Upcoming screenings include the Cinequest: The Annual San Jose Film Festival in February, and the Japanese American National Museum on Oct. 16. For more information, email: cfujikawa@aol.com, or write P.O. Box 29489, Los Angeles, Calif., 90029-0489.

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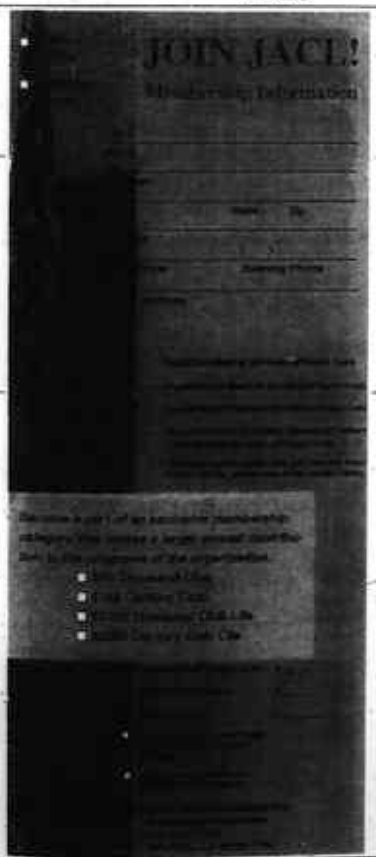
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Uncloseting the vegetarian within

BY TRACY UBA

"A son of the Buddha shall not eat the flesh of any sentient beings. If he eats their flesh, he shall cut off great compassion, as well as seed of Buddhahood within him. When beings see such a one, they shall flee from him on sight. For this reason, all Bodhisattvas should not eat the flesh of any beings."

—The third Minor Bodhisattva Precept from the Bon-mo-kyo (or Fan-wang-jing in Chinese)



Resident P.C. vegetarians Tracy Uba and Mene Kara thwart carnivore-at-large Brian Tanaka's attempts to take a bite out of a burger.

Over a thousand years ago, a new code of Mahayana precepts was written in China. This text, which included ten major and 48 minor precepts, contained what was perhaps the very first codified maxim prohibiting the consumption of meat in Buddhism. Though not all Buddhists believed in abstaining from the consumption of meat, much of the philosophy was passed down from India to China to Japan's Shingon.

As part of its cultural evolution, an imprint was made on the western world and, today, in modern quasi-adaptations of Buddhist (and Hindu) traditions, vegetarianism has gone mainstream, whether it is a matter of religion, morality, health or social politics. Vegetarianism has also gained somewhat crunchy cult status due to jokey references to hippies, new ageists and religious fanatics. Funny but often false.

I came out, so to speak, as a vegetarian three years ago, having done almost no research on the issue. It was a simple choice and, surprisingly, even easier to carry out. Any cravings I had for meat dissipated within the first few trial months, and fortunately I experienced no ill health effects or dietary shock from lack of certain nutrients. I was able to supplement any protein I lost from meat with foods like beans, nuts, potatoes or eggs.

Vegetarianism can be broken down into three basic groups. (There are probably subdivisions I don't know about, but let's not get too nit-picky.) There are those who cut out red meat from their diets but still partake in white meat, including poultry and fish. Yes, some do consider themselves vegetarians. There are those who eat neither red nor white meat but still retain eggs and dairy products. This is also known as ovo-lacto vegetarianism. And then there are vegans, who not only cut out all meat and animal-derived foods but also most if not all material products — leather, wool, makeup, certain perfumes, for example — which may have caused harm or death to an animal.

I have recently discovered the existence of an even newer practice and perhaps the most extreme of them all, raw foodism. All meat and dairy products are, of course, forbidden as are things like alcohol, coffee, tea and vitamin supplements. Certain spices and additives have also gotten the ax. In the attempt to stay mentally, spiritually and physiologically clear, raw foodists accept only 100 percent organic, uncooked, unprocessed fruits, vegetables and seeds. Now, how's that for dedication!

Personally, I am of the ovo-lacto persuasion. But what gets morally sticky for me at times is the animal derivatives found in foods like soup stock, gelatin, milk and cheese (which is made partly from the stomach lining of calves — yuck!) I also own leather shoes but don't buy other clothing or beauty aid products which have killed or harmed animals. I admit, I haven't totally reconciled where I draw the line quite yet.

The difficult part for me has not been sacrificing certain foods or products but rather contending with reactions, spoken and unspoken, from people I know. As for my family, some weren't too surprised and really tried to accomodate my new diet, while others joked about what college had done to me. Even my mom forgot now and then and would unconsciously hand me a plate of beef. Someone would have to remind her, "Jan, she's a *vegetarian* now." Just pointing it out made it sound so icky, and so alien.

When we were younger, there was a rule in our house that if my brother or I didn't eat a sufficient amount of what we were served for dinner, there would be no dessert. Unfortunately for me, being a picky eater, as my dad constantly teased me, this seemed to be the recurring pattern. But unlike most kids who refuse to eat their vegetables, I pouted over meat.

Sure, there were some greens I didn't like, those god-awful brussel sprouts and shrivelly stalks of asparagus. I'd pick out soggy lima beans from my alphabet soup and shred canned spinach with my fork until it looked like ... well, canned spinach. But more often, it was the thought of thick pockets of fat on chicken and the knobby ring of gristle which lined my mom's teriyaki steak which really made my nose wrinkle. During those meals, I spent far too much time pulling out strands of thready sinew and wishing that the meat wasn't so red.

As a kid, one of the most vivid memories I have of my Isaei great grandfather, whom I called *Ji-chan*, was an experience which firmly branded into my mind this already instinctive aversion towards animal flesh. He was in the middle of dinner when my mom and I arrived at his house for a visit. We stepped inside, to my horror, at the exact moment he was slurping the glassy eyeball out of a broiled fish as if it was a noodle. The fish had already been picked clean, and the only remnants left were the head (minus an eye) and the bones. To top it off, my grandmother informed me that this was a common practice among the Japanese.

I recalled this childhood scene recently when a vegetarian friend of mine, who moved to South America not too long ago, relayed to me the difficulty in finding things she could eat. In Bolivia, where she was living, meat is a major staple, and the cheap veggie restaurants and local organic produce markets that we once found so convenient in Portland had no part in this world so different from our own.

As she contemplates having to resort to beef jerky, it is coming down to a difficult choice — whether, as a foreigner, to impose a personal value on a culture which doesn't share it or to temporarily defer what is also an ethical practice out of respect for that culture. It's a nice reminder to me that the issue isn't always black and white.

Still, I can't help but get in a few knocks every now and then. I reflect upon the recent debates I've had with my mom and my brother about vegetarianism, the meat industry, product-testing on animals and medical experimentation. It seems the more I try to enlighten them on subjects like power hierarchies and moral responsibility (okay, so I pull out all the pretentiously eruditious punches), the more it falls on deaf ears. They say they'd rather not imagine ducks being overcrowded and overfed or cows getting their bellies slashed and throats slit. But isn't that the point, I ask, to *think* about it?

For now, I'm taking a hiatus from preaching to the filial unconverted. I figure, we all live with our choices; mine just happen to be soy, gluten and a little tofutti. ■

Tracy Uba is a recent graduate of Reed College and a regular writer/reporter for the Pacific Citizen.

GET BOOKED!

NON-FICTION



Nikkei Donburi: A Japanese American Cultural Survival Guide
By Chris Aihara
124 pp., $16.95 softback

Nikkei Donburi is a mix of stories, things to do, cultural information and resources for and about the Japanese American family.

The book details how to utilize chopsticks, fold origami, write a haiku, properly bowing, to name just a few. Other topics cover a range of subjects such as how to write numbers in Japanese, designing a kimono and learning about major celebrations in Japan such as Hinamatsuri and Oshogatsu

A great introduction for children.

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The Analects of Confucius
Translated by Roger T. Ames and Henry Rosemont, Jr.
Ballantine
256 pp., $27 hardcover

This partial text dating to 55 BC is a manuscript translation found in Dingzhou in 1973 and only became available to the academic world in 1997. Based on the latest research, and with both Chinese and English texts, this translation serves as an excellent introduction to Confucian thought.

Roger T. Ames is a professor of Chinese philosophy at the University of Hawai'i and director of its center for Chinese Studies. Henry Rosemont, Jr., is currently the George B. and Wilma Reeves Distinguished Professor of the Liberal Arts and St. Mary's College of Maryland.

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Yuan Dao: Tracing Dao to its Source
Translated by Roger T. Ames and D.C. Lau
Ballantine
149 pp., $12 paperback

The "Yuan Dao," first published during the Han Dynasty, challenged the autocratic aspirations of one of China's most powerful emperors. Its presentation set in motion a family tragedy in which the compiler, the most celebrated patron of literature of his age, fell victim to the expansionist politics of his uncle, the "martial" emperor.

The book, complete with English translation and Chinese text, is a distillation of earlier Daoist ideas found in the Daodejing (Tao Te Ching) and Zhuangzi (Chuang-tzu) texts.

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U S A Immigration Guide, Third Edition
By Ramon Carrion, esq.
S p h i n x Publishing
263 pp., $19.95

In this updated version, immigration attorney Ramon Carrion has compiled information on the following areas: how the U.S. immigration and visa systems are structured; how to enter the U.S. legally; what types of permanent residency and green cards are available; how to obtain a green card by investing in an American enterprise or creating a new business; and how to qualify for new types of work visas and other non-immigrant visas.

Carrion believes that with the recent passage of the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act, the law created a series of penalties and prohibitions which are discriminately applied and can result in unfair rulings against otherwise innocent people. To further complicate matters, Carrion noted that Congress has removed much of the discretion that U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service judges and officials previously exercised, and has encouraged these officials to take a "hard line" approach toward enforcement of the law.

"There is no better antidote to the poison of excessive and arbitrary governmental authority than knowledge and that is the purpose of this book," said Carrion, adding that the help of an attorney is still recommended.

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I am Jackie Chan: My Life in Action
By Jackie Chan with Jeff Yang
Ballantine
338 pp, $24.95 hardcover

Jackie Chan has seen it all — poverty and wealth, struggle and triumph. Born in Hong Kong during the 1950s to a cook and a maid, Chan's family was so poor they had to raise money to pay the doctor who delivered him. At the age of seven, Chan was placed into the China Drama Academy under the tutelage of Chinese opera master Jim Yuen.

What Chan at first thought was paradise soon became a nightmare since the masters were permitted to beat, starve and discipline their students without mercy.

"Master believed in just three things: discipline, hard work and order," Chan writes. "The order was never to be challenged. Anyone who disobeyed it was beaten soundly."

After months of lessons in singing, boxing and weapons skills, Chan finally saw his first opera and began dreaming of becoming a performer. "It's all worth it, I thought, looking at the rapt faces of the other audience members," writes Chan. "I realized that, more than anything else, I wanted that to be me up there on the stage. I wanted to hear a crowd clapping and cheering and screaming for me."

But opera was declining in China, and a new entertainment — kung fu movies — were becoming popular. After working as a stuntman for the famous Shaw Brothers studio, Chan was "discovered" in a film directed by John Woo of "Face Off" and "Broken Arrow" fame.

Today, Chan has achieved international stardom after plunging off skyscrapers, breaking most of his bones in his body at one time or another and bringing his trademark humor to each of his movies.

This book also contains 24 pages of photographs, many of them from Chan's personal collection.

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Bulletproof Buddhists and Other Essays
By Frank Chin
University of Hawai'i Press
440 pp., $19.95 softback, $42 hardback

This book is a compilation of six of Frank Chin's best essays, spanning 40 years. It recounts Chin's travel experiences, including the time he was arrested as an American spy following Castro's revolution and before the Cuban missile crisis; Chin's encounter with Ben Fee, the man who integrated San Francisco; his introduction to Southeast Asian gangs in San Diego; his discovery of a Chinese bachelor society along the California-Mexico border; his time among the Chinese in Singapore; and his contact with the "new White racism" during the Gulf War.

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The Northern Territories Dispute and Russo-Japanese Relations
By Tsuyoshi Hasegawa
University of California, Berkeley Press

It took University of California, Santa Barbara historian Tsuyoshi Hasegawa more than 10 years to compile this two-volume tome that examines the challenges facing the ownership resolution over the Kurils, a remote island chain located between Japan's northernmost island, Hokkaido, and Russia's Kamchatka peninsula.

The first volume titled, "Between War and Peace," covers the period from the first Russian-Japanese encounter in 1697 to 1985. Volume two titled, "Neither War Nor Peace," examines events from the Gorbachev era onward.

The book is based on a wide range of sources in English, Japanese and Russian, and incorporates extensive interviews with politicians, both in Japan and Russia.

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Masami Kuni
Designed by Yoshie Hayashi
Ronsosha
112 pp, 2200 Yen

This black-and-white photographic retrospective depicts the career of dance choreographer Masami Kuni, Ph.D. Interspersed are comments by Kuni's colleagues.

For more information on this Japan-published book, contact Dr. Masami Kuni, professor emeritus at California State University, Fullerton, P.O. Box 8698, Calabasas, CA 91302.

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Out of the Frying Pan: Reflections of a Japanese American
By Bill Hosokawa
University of Colorado Press
192 pp., $32.50 hardback, $17.50 softback

From vividly recollected personal experiences, *Out of the Frying Pan* is an insightful account of jounralist Bill Hosokwa's experiences during World War II when he and his wife and infant child were sent to U.S. concentration camps.

Hosokawa weaves a provocative narrative of the Nikkei evacuation from the perspective of an older man who has seen many changes

Hosokawa, born and raised in Seattle, grew up in a multicultural environment in which he spoke English at school and Japanese at home; made friends with Americans of German, Jewish and Italian descent; and assimilated both Eastern and Western values. But despite the ethnic melange of his surroundings, Hosokawa was still subjected to racist attitudes. As a student at the University of Washington, one of his professors discouraged him from majoring in journalism because he didn't think any U.S. newspaper would ever hire a "Japanese boy." Nevertheless, Hosokawa obtained a Bachelor's

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degree in journalism and gained prominence as a reporter *for the Singapore Herald, the Shanghai Times* and the *Far Eastern Review.*

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History, Cognition and People in East Asia
Edited by Dalchoong Kim and Chung-in Moon
Yonsei University Press
279 pp., $20 paperback

This book aims to reconstruct a cognitive map of today's people of East Asia, tracing historical origins of their mutual distrust, and exploring alternatives in reducing barriers to peace in East Asia.

It offers a comprehensive analysis of the view that national images and identity are more critical predictors of peace and conflict than power and interests in East Asia. In addition, the articles focus on the topic that historical memory and subsequent formation of negative perceptions are likely to hinder the process of regional reconciliation and security building.

Yonsei University Press is located at 134 Shinchon-dong, Sodaemoon-ku, Seoul, 129-749, Korea, or call 822/392-6201 or 822/361-3381/2.

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Remembering Heart Mountain: Essays on Japanese American Internment in Wyoming
Edited by Mike Mackey
Western History Publications
240 pp., $15.95 paperback

This book grew out of an April 1994 conference on the Heart Mountain Relocation Center, which was attended by more than 330 people from 22 different states

The first portion of the book begins with an overview of the anti-Japanese movement that existed in California prior to World War II and the politics behind the relocation process; the following sections focus on experiences of those involved with Heart Mountain; and the latter essays deal with future research, long-term effects of the camps and the importance of commemorating events as the internment camps.

Topics covered include: "The Seeds of Internment and the Relocation Process"; "Attitudes and Economic Opportunities in Wyoming"; "Important Institutions in Community Life at Heart Mountain"; "To Serve or Not to Serve, the Military Question"; "Recollections of Heart Mountain From Area Residents"; "Re-Reading the Archives and Sources for Future Research"; and the "Long Term Effects of Internment and the Importance of Commemoration."

Writers who have contributed to this book include: Scott L. Bills, Eric Bittner, Roger Daniels, Louis Fiset, Sam Fujishin, Arthur Hansen, Lane Hirabayashi, Bill Hosokawa, Frank T. Inouye, Mamoru Inouye, Gwenn Jensen, Velma Kessel, Mike Mackey, Philip J. Roberts, Peter K. Simpson and Frank Van Nuys.

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The Doomed Empire: Japan in Colonial Korea
By M.J. Rhee
Ashgate Publishing Company
178 pp.

Intended to give a better comprehension of Japanese colonialism in Korea, as well as a deeper appreciation of the present relationship between Japan and Korea, this publication investigates the years spanning from 1910 to 1945.

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Medic: The Mission of an American Military Doctor in Occupied Japan and War torn Korea
By Crawford F. Sams, Edited by Zabelle Zakarian
M.E. Sharpe, Inc.
344 pp., $29.95 hardcover

In the aftermath of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Crawford F. Sams became chief of Public Health and Welfare Section of the Supreme Commander of Allied Powers in East Asia. This is Sams' firsthand account of public health reforms during that period and discusses how their contributions played a role in the formation of a stable state in Asia following World War II.

Written between 1953 and 1958, after Sams's retirement from the U.S. Army, the book did not fall prey to censorship. The book can be ordered by writing to 80 Business Park Drive Armonk, NY 10504, or calling 800/541-6563

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Inward Light: An Asian American Journey
By Ben Sanematsu
Asian American Curriculum Project
191 pp., $14.95 softback

When Ben Sanematsu became blind in the Poston Relocation Center during World War II, he knew he would encounter racism as he attempted to make a living as a blind teacher. He just didn't know how much.

"I hadn't yet guessed that blindness would prove a stigma as bad or worse than my racial 'disability,'" writes Sanematsu.

But Sanematsu perservered and eventually developed an internationally acclaimed educational program for mainstreaming the blind.

In his personal life, Sanematsu met Kimie Yanagawa, who helped Sanematsu "see" again through her eyes.

Although Yanagawa recently passed away, Sanematsu is full of hope and he writes, "I hope my story will help someone else find what we all must--our inward light."

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Were We the Enemy? American Survivors of Hiroshima
By Rinjiro Sodei, Edited by John Junkerman
Westview Press
193 pp.

In this third revised edition, Rinjiro Sodei updates his primary sources and interview data and gives further accounts of the American hibakusha. It is a little known fact that when the first atomic bombs were dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki in August 1945, more than 3,000 American-born Nisei died from the atomic blast and another 1,000 Nisei hibakusha survived.

Branded as "foreigners" in wartime Japan and as "enemies" in postwar United States, the Nisei hibakusha were not recognized as victims of the atomic blast by either governments, both of which refused to give medical or political assistance.

This book bears witness to the human calamities of the nuclear age and to the dignity of the Nikkei hibakusha striving to obtain their rights and sustain their bicultural identity.

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America's Wars in Asia: A Cultural Approach to History and Memory
Edited by Phillip West, Steven I. Levine and Jackie Hiltz
M.E. Sharpe Inc.
296 pp., $66.95 hardcover, $24.95 paperback

From 1941 to 1975, the United States was involved in three wars in Asia — the Pacific War, the Korean War and the Vietnam War. This book attempts to bring a different perspective to this era by sharing the experiences of those who fought and survived the battles.

By placing each war in the historical and cultural experiences of the Asian countries, the wars are seen more than merely a conflict between the United States and the Asian countries. This volume is meant to encourage readers, especially in a teaching environment, to develop an understanding of the experiences of war in Asia that is as complex as the wars themselves.

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Moving Walls: Preserving the Barracks of America's Concentration Camps
By Sharon Yamato
40 pp., $9.95 (plus $4.15 shipping and handling fee)

Moving Walls chronicles a project to preserve two barracks at the Heart Mountain Relocation Center, which is currently on display at the Ellis Island Immigration Museum in New York.

The book, which features photos by former Newsday photographer Stan Honda, includes interviews with more than 25 participants of the project. Some of the people interviewed are project architect James R. McElwain; former Heart Mountain internee Bacon Sakatani, who originally discovered the barracks; and Buddy Takata, former Japanese American National Museum director who gave daily tours of the barracks while it was on display in Los Angeles.

The idea for this publication began after Sharon Yamato wrote to the *Los Angeles Times* about her volunteering experiences at the Heart Mountain barracks project. Yamato, a Sansei whose parents and seven siblings were interned at the Poston Relocation Center, received funding from the Civil Liberties Public Education Fund and the City of Los Angeles Cultural Arts Commission.

The book's photographer, Stan Honda, is also a Sansei whose family was interned at Poston. His mission during the past few years has been to travel to all 10 camps and document what remains of the camps today.

The book can be ordered through the mail for $9.95, plus shipping and handling of $4.15 per copy. Checks should be made out to Sharon Yamato and sent to P.O. Box 12615, Marina del Rey, CA 90295, or call 310/578-0090.

The book is also available at the Japanese American National Museum in Little Tokyo and at the National Japanese American Historical Society in San Francisco.

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Steveston Cannery Row: An Illustrated History
By Mitsuo Yesaki and Harold and Kathy Steves
Lulu Island Printing Ltd.
$26 ($24 for the book, $2 for shipping)

To many Japanese Canadians, Steveston, British Columbia is a familiar name.

In prewar days it had one of the largest concentrations of Nikkei residents on the Canadian West Coast.

This book, divided into eight

See GET BOOKED/page 108

Culinary inspiration

BY CAROLINE AOYAGI
Executive Editor

As a little girl growing up in Toronto, Canada, I was always a bit of a tomboy, preferring baseball gloves and playing catch over Barbie dolls and playing house.

Still, my Shin-Issei mother always tried her best to domesticate me, persistently calling me over to her side to demonstrate the art of sewing or patiently going over the details of cooking a particular Japanese dish. But somehow I could never find any enjoyment in these stereotypically "female" activities.



The Aoyagi's with their daughter Caroline on a recent visit to Los Angeles.

As I grew older, I even began to take pride in being a "modern" woman, refusing to give into the norms of what society thinks a woman's or man's duties in life should be. But lately, I must admit, my lack of culinary aspirations has even started to irritate me.

Two years ago I made the move from Toronto to Los Angeles, embarking on a new job and life as a single working woman. Between a hectic work and travel schedule, it wasn't long before fast food and frozen dinners had become my best friends. Somehow, after a long day at the office, the idea of having to spend any time preparing a meal was not only distasteful but downright unappetizing. Being able to eat something prepared and ready to eat became the number one factor in deciding what was to be that night's meal.

My mother would cringe if she knew about my unhealthy eating habits in L.A. But she wouldn't be surprised. I can still hear her worrisome comments prior to my moving to the United States: that I wouldn't make even the slightest effort to prepare the simplest of Japanese dishes she had so painstakingly taught me; that potato chips and chocolate bars consumed while fixed before a television screen would substitute for a meal.

Sadly, to a large extent these motherly predictions have come true.

Growing up, my brother and I were treated to the daily Japanese meals our mother would prepare for us. Along with the more well-known dishes like sushi, chicken katsu, udon, and tempura, my mother would prepare *kinpira gobo, satsuma imo, kazunoko,* and *renkon*. Christmas and New Year's were always a culinary feast at our house. My mom still makes the best turkey and stuffing which she serves along with rice, sushi, and *tsukemono*. For New Year's my mother prepares the traditional *osechi ryori* dishes such as *kuromame, kamaboko,* and *nishime*.

Admittedly, as university and work began to take up more and more of my time, the daily home-cooked Japanese meals became fewer and fewer. Not because my mother would no longer prepare them but because I had gotten into the habit of eating out for expediency's sake, often meeting up with friends to socialize over a restaurant-cooked meal.

Still, back in T.O. there was always the option of going home for a home-cooked Japanese meal. Somehow there was always an element of comfort in that knowledge.

Nowadays, those moments of culinary bliss are relegated to the couple of times each year that I'm able to head back home. And each time I do, my mother makes sure to feed me all of the Japanese food she can squeeze in. She says she knows that I'm not getting enough healthy Japanese food in L.A. Maybe it's a mother's instinct.

All this is not to say that I don't eat any Japanese food in L.A. How could you not, with Little Tokyo so close by? But the meals are always eaten at a Japanese restaurant, or, more often, it's a boxed lunch from the nearby Japanese grocery store or some sushi from the local Pavilions market. Still, there's something about eating a home-cooked Japanese meal that can't be duplicated.

My parents recently came to stay with me in L.A. for a week. Before their arrival, I was in a state of panic worrying that my pathetic eating habits would finally be revealed. To alleviate their worries and frankly my own, I even went out to a Japanese grocery store to purchase all of the food items that I had seen my mother purchase over the years. Embarrassingly, this was the first time I had gone shopping at a Japanese grocery store for items that weren't already cooked and prepared.

I bought miso, tofu, *kabocha, tsukemono, gobo,* and a whole bunch of other stuff. Even I was amazed to see all of the Japanese food in my refrigerator. Even more impressed were my mother and father. Of course they suspected that I had bought all of the food because of their visit. Still, my mother spent a good part of that week preparing all of the Japanese foods I had come to eat so rarely in my home away from home.

As the Holidays near this year and I'm planning my trip home, I'm looking forward to what has developed into a mother-daughter ritual of preparing Christmas and New Year's dinner together. Every year since I can remember, my mother drags me out of bed early Christmas morning to prepare the turkey, stuffing, *barasushi, miso shiru,* and other dishes that have come to appear regularly on that festive day. My job is to do whatever my mother instructs me to do, from chopping up the onions and preparing the barasushi ingredients, to making the salad. The ritual is repeated on New Year's day except this time the traditional *osechi-ryori* is prepared.

During the last couple of years I've come to appreciate this mother-daughter moment, not only because of the sumptuous meal I'm able to partake of, but because of the realization that somehow, during those earlier years, the tradition of preparing Japanese dishes that my mother brought over to Canada so many years ago is being passed down to me.

I recently moved in with a Japanese American roommate who, unlike me, is a whiz when it comes to preparing Japanese meals. In the past few months I've eaten more Japanese food than in the first two years that I was in L.A. She's even taught me how to make a few dishes like miso salmon and chicken tonkatsu.

This year when I return to T.O. I plan to make some of these dishes for my parents. Of course I'll have to bring a copy of the recipe with me and probably ask my roommate for some more cooking tips, but I know my mother is going to appreciate the effort that I'm finally making, after all these years. I guess somehow, something about the importance of Japanese food did sink in, even if it was without me knowing it. ■

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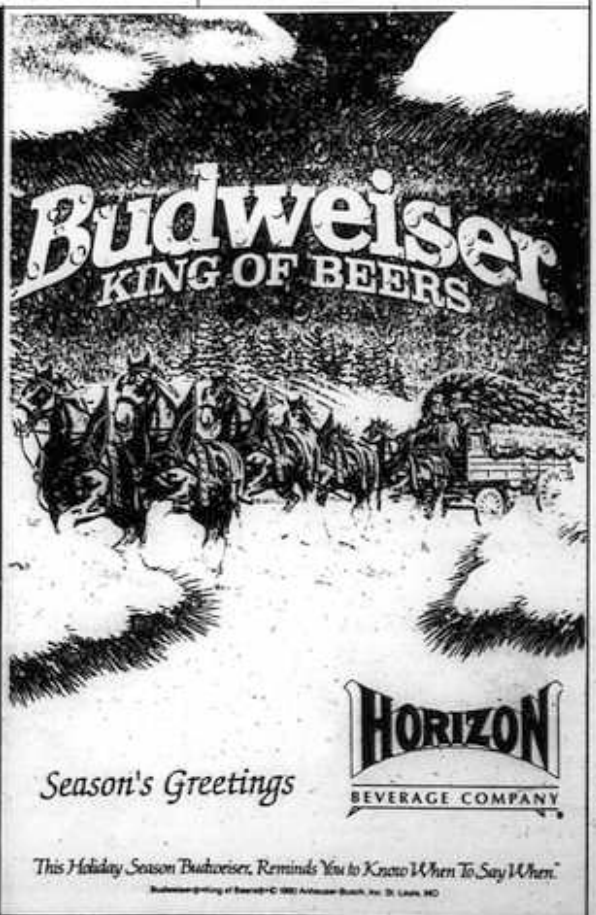


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GET BOOKED
(Continued from page 103)

chronological chapters, was compiled by Sansei Mitsuo Yesaki and Harold and Kathy Steves, whose grandfather Manoah Steves founded the town in 1877.

Although the book does not focus entirely on the Nikkei in Steveston, their stories comprise a large part of the volume because of the major role they played in the development of the fishing industry.

Included also are the stories of the Chinese and Native Americans.

In addition, the book gives an overview of the development of the West Coast fishing industry including topics such as fishing licenses, types of fish caught, canning techniques, fishing boat technology, just to name a few.

To order copies, contact Yesaki at Apt. 1105-1740 Comox Street, Vancouver, B.C., V6G 2Z1.

FICTION



Four Immigrant Manga: A Japanese Experience in San Francisco 1904-1924
By Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama, Translated by Frederik L. Schodt
Stone Bridge Press
152 pp., $12.95 paperback

Henry Yoshitaka Kiyama's visual chronicle of his immigrant experiences in the United States was originally published in Japanese in 1931.

Frederik L. Schodt rediscovered Kiyama's art work while doing research for a manga book at the East Asian branch of a University of California library.

What Schodt uncovered was a 112 page, faded book with bilingual text that covered the experiences of four young Japanese American men. It chronicles their lives, ranging from working as servants in fancy homes to laborers in the fields.

ᔕ • ᔕ

No Physical Evidence
By Gus Lee
Fawcett Columbine
400 pp., $24.95 hardcover

In his fourth publication, Gus Lee introduces Joshua Jin, a deputy district attorney whose life and job fall into danger when he is handed a politically charged Chinatown case involving the rape of a 13 year-old girl.

As an Asian American prosecutor, Jin is under tremendous pressure from Chinatown leaders to win a conviction. But first he must earn the confidence of his stone-silent client, a distant, troubled teenager who trusts no one. Working against a highly-payed defense attorney who wants nothing more than to crush the opposition, Jin throws his heart and soul into this case that proves to be far more explosive than he imagined.

ᔕ • ᔕ



Harvest Son: Planting Roots in American Soil
By David Mas Masumoto
W.W. Norton & Company
279 pp., $22.95 hardcover

David Mas Masumoto, the author of *Epitaph for a Peach*, recounts his life of growing up a third generation Japanese American in California's San Joaquin Valley and shares the history of the Masumoto grape and peach farm.

Family life and farm labor were often synonymous for the Masumotos. The author recalls such fond memories as spending his childhood napping with his brothers in the shade of tractor wheels and playing "swords" with sticks from peach trees while both parents labored nearby.

Throughout the book, Masumoto paints a lustrous portrait of his family and community among the bounty of central California. But in the midst of all of this, Masumoto does not forget the crippling problems of small family farms — severe weather that can ruin a year's worth of work, younger generations that leave the farm for less precarious lives in the city and competition from industrial mega-farms that force crop prices to unnatural lows.

These travails, however, are countered by the joy Masumoto describes when he sees the sunlight shimmering on the fuzz of new peaches in his orchard or listens to the laughter of his wife and children as they work with him in the fields — joy that transforms grueling work into reward.

"The ghosts of many pruners before me live in my fields–this is a place where generations reside," writes Masumoto.

ᔕ • ᔕ



365 Views of Mt. Fuji: Algorithms of the Floating World
By Todd Shimoda
Stone Bridge Press
356 pp., $19.95 paperback

Originally designed for a CD-ROM format, this illustrated novel, chronicling the travails of art curator Keizo Yukawa, challenges the traditional book form.

When the story opens, curator Yukawa has fled a dead-end job in Tokyo to head a museum devoted to exhibiting 365 paintings of Mt. Fuji by the genius artist Takenoko. Though Takenoko died 100 years earlier, his legacy of madness has infected the members of the Ono family, who owns the paintings but fiercely disagree on their future home. As Yukawa tries to handle his new job, the novel grows more and more bizarre — each Ono presenting a mysterious twist. Yukawa becomes fascinated with the two Ono daughters, especially distracted by the algorithmically controlled Kumi, whose humanness is ambiguous at best.

The primary narrative line, told in Yukawa's voice, is flanked by character "bytes," or sidebars. Though non-chronological, these "bytes" are linked to the story as they are told from the perspective of the other nine characters in the novel, lending the story numerous points of view. Kumi's character "bytes" reveal a head full of sexual apprehension, computer codes and thoughts on Yukawa. The author, Todd Shimoda, shares Kumi's fascination with cognitive science.

Placed throughout are more than 400 illustrations inspired by Hokusai's famous "One Hundred Views of Mt. Fuji," giving the emotional present a visual representation. Just like the fictional artist Takenoko, the actual artist of the book, L.J.C. (Linda) Shimoda, drew at least one illustration a day for a whole year.

Readers have a choice of reading the main body of the story and the "bytes" as they occur, or save all of the "bytes" for a second read. Or you can navigate your own way. However, you choose to read, readers will find that the black-and-white line drawings respond to each characters' situation and the story as a whole.

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The Zigzag Way — Manoa's Summer 1998 Edition
By Guest Editor Arthur Sze
University of Hawai'i Press
$16 per issue or a one-year subscription (two issues) for $22

The latest edition of *Manoa*, a literary anthology of Asian Pacific writing, is titled, *The Zigzag Way*, and focuses on writings from China and Hong Kong.

It is the first of two 10th anniversary issues, and features the new generation of avant-garde poets from the People's Republic of China and Taiwan.

Ten years after the Tiananmen Square massacre, which forced many Chinese writers into exile, a group of new poets emerged. Like many of their predecessors, they have learned to avoid censorship by writing in a "zigzag way," according to author and translator Wang Ping, who is interviewed in this issue by Arthur Sze.

The featured poets include Chen Dongdong, He Zhong, Liang Xiao Ming, Meng Lang, Ouyang Jianghe, Mo Fei, Mo Mo, Shang

See GET BOOKED/page 110

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5.	Music Cities	4/11-04/19	TBA	$1,669
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28.	Japan Furuzato Meguri	10/11-10/21	Roy Takeda	
29.	Japan Takiwawa Matsuri	10/04-	Yuki Sato	
30.	Japan Fall Foliage	10/25-	Ray Ishii	
31.	Japan Autumn Festivals	10/14-	Tracy Taguchi	
32.	Japan Chichibu Yo-Matsuri & Onsen	11/11-11/29	Toy Kanegai	
33.	Ozarks/Branson Christmas Tour	12/01-12/06	George Kanegai	

TBA denotes *To Be Announced*

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GET BOOKED
(Continued from page 108)

Qin, Tang Yaping, Wang Ping, Xi Chuan, Yang Mu, Yi Sha, Yu Jian, Zhao Qiong and Zou Jingzhi.

The volume also features newly translated poems by Noble Prize author Rabindranath Tagore; a poem written for Hawai'i's last queen by Native Hawaiian poet Mahelani Kamauu; new fiction, poetry, essays and reviews by other outstanding North American writers; and a portfolio of serigraphs by Hawai'i artist Laura Ruby. These serigraphs are based on myths and tales associated with Hawai'i's famous landmark, Diamond Head.

Also in this issue are new prose from Hong Kong. The short story "Father" by Ng Suk Yin, depicts the life of a family in a public housing estate who depend upon illegal mahjong games for their subsistence. "Lau the Tailor," written by American expatriate and *South China Morning Post* columnist Charles Martin, also looks at family. Mary Chan Ma Lai's memoir "Egg Woman's Daughter" chronicles the precarious way of life of the Tanka fishing people on the South China Sea following World War II.

Manoa, with its editorial offices in Honolulu, is the only literary journal in the U.S. bringing readers some of the best writing of Asia and the Pacific, alongside new works from new and established writers of North America.

* * *



Camp Notes and Other Writings
By Mitsuye Yamada
Rutgers University Press
95 pp., softback

Originally published in 1976, this third print run resurrects Mitsuye Yamada's poems, which recounts her camp experiences during World War II.

Yamada's strength as a poet stems from the fact that she has managed to integrate both individual and collective aspects of her background, giving her poems double impact. The weight of her cultural experience — the pain of being perceived as an outsider all of her life — permeates her work.

Yamada, the founder of MultiCultural Women Writers, was born in Kyushu, Japan, and raised in Seattle, Wash., until the outbreak of World War II when her family was herded into a U.S. concentration camp in Idaho.

* * *

Seventeen Syllables and Other Stories
By Hisaye Yamamoto
Rutgers University Press
134 pp., $14 paperback

One of the first Japanese American writers to gain national attention after World War II, even when anti-Japanese sentiment was still rampant, was Hisaye Yamamoto. *Seventeen Syllables*, a collection of 15 short stories, was Yamamoto's first book to be published in the United States and went out of print until Rutgers University Press recently agreed to reprint it. Yamamoto has received numerous awards for her detailed glimpse into the lives of various Japanese American women, among them the 1986 American Book Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Before Columbus Foundation and the 1988 Award for Literature from the Association of Asian American Studies. Two of the stories from the book were the basis of the 1991 American Playhouse/PBS film, "Hot Summer Winds," directed by Emiko Omori.

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HOUSTON

(Continued from page 15)

Japanese than anything else. This Japanese-ness is in and of itself quite complex. It is not a sense of being Japanese in the vein of contemporary Japan or anything akin to European American sinophilic worship of my motherland, but a cultural authenticity that is wrought of a provincial Shikoku pre-WWII Japanese female reality (that of my mother) which one rarely experiences in today's Japan. When I contemplate or consume green tea, all this is evoked inside my heart, mind, and soul, including the awareness that such a cultural consciousness packaged in a Japanese, African, and Native American Indian individual who is usually mistaken as Pilipina, Latina, or Pacific Islander may be considered quite an ethnic, cultural, and sociopolitical peculiarity to most. To me, it is not. It is just the natural order of things, a reality that has distinguished my life and informed my art and philosophy. Every drink of green tea moves my spirit. I grow stronger, I sing, I create, I muse about the nature of the human condition and embrace the culture that my mother has given to me.

Unlike fourth-generation Japanese Americans to whom Japan is generally more a foreign than familiar culture, my Shin Issei link to Japan as motherland is intimately innate. The green tea that I love and the foods that I regularly cook as part of my natural diet are intrinsically woven into this intimacy. Since my daughter was nine months old and stared at my cup of green tea steaming its ghosts into the evening air, I have given her tea first in a spoon and then in a bottle and now in her own Hello Kitty tea cup, just as I did with my son, except his cup was adorned with Ultra-man. My daughter does not drink juice. Tea and water are her favorite beverages (she loves genmai-cha the best). What is my cultural nature has become the nature of my children. My daughter's native Japanese nanny marvels at how such a little girl living in the U.S. prefers hot Japanese rice with flaked grilled salmon and seaweed over it for breakfast, and how my son requests *o-nigiri* for his lunch box. When they are sick, the children do not want chicken soup, but miso shiru.

These foods and the endless cups of green tea are our soul foods. They sustain not only our bond with Japan, but our very lives. Something about the Shin Issei experience transfers cultural nature and nurture in a persevering, indomitable way that cannot readily be diluted. The original Issei and their Nisei offspring were either forced to denounce Japan and deny their cultural bonds with Japan or did so out of their own fierce conviction to be wholly American. Perhaps the fact that Shin-Issei arrived after the end of WWII and never had to deny their organic links to Japan, never had to have them broken, has fortified our Japanese idiosyncrasies and spirit and subsequently preserved our culture in a deep-rooted, undisturbed vein that is confident and unshakable.

The fact that my cultural consciousness is so strong and has an ancient, unbroken history enriches my presence of mind and allows me to exist in the diverse traffic of U.S. Society and even the homogeneity of Japan without ever needing to question who I am. I know. This cultural confidence often has been interpreted as glorification of Japanese culture, but that is far from the truth. The truth is much less complicated or political. I simply know who I am and do not apologize for it or run away from it. Difference has to be protected if one believes in oneself as an individual and cherishes all that you are — which includes the peculiarities of culture, especially in the context of second and third cultures that are markedly distinct from one's first culture. English was my second language but, out of necessity, is now my first. Japanese was my first culture and, out of the sheer tenacity of maternal nurture and conditioning, must remain so, with American culture always second. I look for the green tea and cook the steamed white rice, washed five times. It is the culture of my maternal nurture, the gift of my grandmothers to my mother and my mother to me and me to my children, and then to theirs, no matter the context of multirace, monorace, or nation. ■

An award-winning multi-genre author, Houston writes plays, film and television, cultural criticism, poetry, and prose. Her signature play, "Tea," has been produced internationally to popular and critical acclaim. A Phi Beta Kappa, she is an associate professor, resident playwright, and director of the playwriting program at the University of Southern California School of Theatre and a member of the Writers Guild of America, west. Houston's works and papers are archived in the Velina Hasu Houston Collection at the Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.



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11:30 a.m.	Community Celebration Luncheon–$75/person, $750/table. (Tented Structure)
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Monday, January 25, 1999

10:00 a.m.	Open to the Public (Pavilion, Historic Building)

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MEXICO WEEKEND HOLIDAY CRUISE Ensenada, Baja California, Carnival Cruise	Apr 30-May 3
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ALASKA HOLIDAY CRUISE Vancouver, Juneau, Skagway, Haines, Ketchikan, Glacier Bay—Norwegian Cruise Lines	June 7-14
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GRANDCHILDREN'S/GRANDCHILDREN JAPAN TOUR Tokyo, Kamakura, Hakone, Gamagori Onsen, Hiroshima, Kyoto	June 26-July 4
NORTHERN NATIONAL PARKS HOLIDAY TOUR Salt Lake City, Jackson Hole, Spokane, National Parks—Grand Tetons, Yellowstone, Wenatchee Lupine, Glacier Park	Aug 13-21
EUROPEAN CAPITALS HOLIDAY CRUISE London, Channel Islands, Cork, Vigo/Portugal, Barcelona/Spain, Gibraltar, Monte Carlo, Florence, Rome—Norwegian Cruise Line	Sept 2-17
HOKKAIDO - TOHOKU HOLIDAY TOUR Lakes Akan/Mashu/Kussharo, Shiretoko, Abashiri, Onneyu Onsen, Sounkyo, Sapporo, Shikotsu, Noboribetsu, Noboribetsu, Oirase Valley, Lake Towada, Hachimantai, Matsushima Bay, Tokyo	Sept 26-Oct 7
HAWAII HOLIDAY CRUISE Honolulu, Kona, Hilo, Lahaina, Kauai, Ensenada, at Kailua—Norwegian Cruise Line	Oct 1-11
BRANSON/MEMPHIS/NASHVILLE HOLIDAY TOUR Memphis-Graceland, Branson Shoji Tabuchi Show, Louisville, Nashville-Grand Ole Opry	Oct 22-30
SOUTHEAST ASIA HOLIDAY TOUR Hong Kong, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Singapore	Nov
PANAMA CANAL—CARIBBEAN HOLIDAY CRUISE Acapulco, Costa Rica, Panama Canal, Aruba, St. Maarten, Barbados—Crystal Cruise Line	Dec 3-14

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DEATH NOTICE

DON KURIHARA

DINUBA, Calif.—Don Kurihara, 80, passed away Nov. 2. He was born in Tulare, Calif., and attended elementary and high schools there. He moved to Orosi in 1935, where he served on the Orosi High School Board of Trustees before graduation. Don received an Honorary Life Membership Certificate in the California Congress of PTA and Outstanding Farmer of the Year by the Cutler-Orosi Kiwanis Club, was president of California Citrus Nurserymens' Society, Board member of the International Agri-Center of Tulare, member of the Tulare County Republican Central Committee, member of the Tulare County Fair Board, appointed by governor Ronald Reagan, and was a member of the Palm United Methodist Church in Dinuba. He served in the U.S. Army during WWII. He established the Kay Bee Farms.

Don is survived by his wife, Alice Kurihara; son, Patrick Kurihara, both of Orosi; daughter, Ellen of Fresno; two brothers, John Kurihara of Orosi and Walter Kurihara of Dinuba; three sisters, Marie - Kurihara, Velma Kurihara and Betty Onawa, all of San Francisco; and five grandchildren.

Funeral Service was held at the Palm United Methodist Church, Dinuba, on Monday, Nov. 9.

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The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services is accepting applications for the Senior Executive Service position of Deputy Assistant Secretary for Minority Health until February 1, 1999. The position is located in Rockville, Md. The incumbent reports to the Assistant Secretary for Health and Surgeon General. The selectee serves as principal advisor on minority health programs and issues. Provides leadership and guidance on all aspects of the planning, establishment, management, direction, coordination, and evaluation of programs, policies, and activities of the Department concerned with the health of minority and disadvantaged populations nationwide. Directs staff operations of the Office of Minority Health. Candidates must have an M.D. or equivalent degree, a bachelor's degree or higher in a health science or allied science (e.g., nursing, biology, biochemistry, etc.), or have specialized experience in the field of public health, plus knowledge of the methods, processes, and techniques used to develop and deliver programs and initiatives designed to assess and meet minority health needs. The salary range is $106,014 to $125,009 per annum. If a physician is selected, he or she may also be entitled to a Physicians Comparability Allowance of $10,000 to $20,000 per annum. A recruitment or relocation bonus of up to 25% may be considered, if appropriate. To receive a copy of the announcement for this position, which provides detailed information about mandatory qualifications and application requirements, call 202/ 619-0146. The U.S. Government is an equal opportunity employer.



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—Holiday Issue Editor

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The NJAMF will also have a new office location for the New Year. In order to cut costs, the office will relocate to 1920 N Street NW to maintain the convenience and proximity to downtown Washington D.C. For mailing purposes, please note that the old address will remain active for one year, and the telephone and facsimile numbers and E-Mail address will not change:

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