

THE JAPANESE TABLE

Sake in Japanese Food Culture

The Edo Culture of Eating and Drinking Out

by Noritake Kanzaki

We continue our series on sake with this third installment, which takes a look at the customs of eating and drinking out during Japan's Edo period of the early seventeenth through mid-nineteenth centuries, with a focus on the capital city of Edo, known today as Tokyo.

4

CLOSE-UP JAPAN:

Matcha Green Tea Confectionery

—

5

JAPANESE STYLE:

Umeboshi Pickled Japanese Apricots

TASTY TRAVEL:

Tochigi *Shimotsukare*

—

6

MORE ABOUT JAPANESE COOKING:

Rice with Edamame, *Abura-age* & Kombu

Beef Roll-Ups with *Nagaimo* and *Umeboshi*

—

8

KIKKOMAN TODAY:

International Exchange of Food Culture in Milan

Sake in Japanese Food Culture

The Edo Culture of Eating and Drinking Out



From left: *Chikuwa* grilled tube-shaped fish cake, and *tsukudani* simmered *asari* clams with soy sauce, mirin and other seasonings.

Kudari-sake to Edo

The men of old Edo were big drinkers. During the Edo era (1603-1867), the ratio of men to women in the city was as high as three or four to one, and so this city of some one million people was rather skewed by its disproportionate number of single men. At the same time, the country was experiencing greater social and economic stability. In this milieu, shops serving food and drink proliferated rapidly in Edo, as social customs of eating and drinking out flourished.

Responding to demand in Edo, the sake-brewing coastal region of Nada, located in the Kobe-Nishinomiya area of Hyogo Prefecture, became the mass-production center for *kudari-sake*—sake destined for Edo. Sake brewers in the region gathered in Nada and set up breweries along the coast, where sake could be shipped out directly to Edo on cargo ships called *tarukaisen*. More than 800,000 barrels of sake were shipped annually to Edo, each holding 72 liters. It is estimated that roughly fifty percent of Edo's population were sake drinkers, which works out to an estimated 102 liters of sake per person per year.

Yatai Society

Drinking out in Edo began with stand-up drinking stalls called *yatai*. These stalls served accompanying dishes such as *soba* noodles, and *dengaku* grilled vegetables and *tofu* topped with *miso*. Another dish was *nishime* vegetables simmered in soy sauce, mirin and other seasonings. Engyo Mitamura (1870–1952), a pioneering researcher of Edo popular culture, wrote that, prior to the eighteenth century, there were no casual food-and-drink pubs such as those we now call *izakaya*. By the early part of that century, however, *niuri-sakaya*—literally, sake and simmered-dish shops—had emerged, recognizable by their façades of *shoji* paper panels. By the latter part of the eighteenth century, these shops were doing brisk business, and they are now considered the origin of today's *izakaya*. In his 1977 story *Yami no Haguruma* ("Gears of darkness"), novelist Shuhei Fujisawa, who wrote on Edo-era themes, describes a *niuri-sakaya*: "The shop was not very large. It surrounded a kitchen that projected into the shop, with a dirt floor extending into the back in an L-shape with a counter and stools clustered around it. Only about fifteen people could

fit into the space."

It was in shops such as these that warm sake (*kanzake*) became popular, heated in a copper container called a *chirori* and served in small ceramic cups called *guinomi*. Accompanying foods included *nishime* and pre-prepared dishes of fish and shellfish, including *kamaboko* steamed fish cake, and *tsukudani* small fish or shellfish simmered in soy sauce and other seasonings.

Restaurant and Honzen Dining Culture

According to Mitamura, proper restaurants began to appear by the mid-eighteenth century. Initially, food at such eateries was served on large platters. Utagawa Hiroshige's woodblock print *Edo Komei Kaitei Zukushi* depicts famous early nineteenth-century restaurants, and reveals



A sake-drinking competition in 1815, as depicted in the book

People enjoy food and drink at a *niuri-sakaya* shop in Edo during the early nineteenth century. Detail from the drawing *Kinsei Shokunin Zukushi Ekotoba*, by Keisai Kuwagata. Courtesy of Tokyo National Museum



how such dishes were served in Edo teahouses. We can see live sashimi displayed on colorful *sawachi* porcelain platters; simmered vegetables in great bowls; and large wooden lacquer boxes, in which *kamaboko* and *tamago-yaki* rolled-egg might be served, then distributed into small individual dishes.

Around the same time, the variety of food seasonings increased: cookbooks from that time describe the use of *katsudashi* dried bonito dashi stock, soy sauce and mirin. Sashimi, particularly that of various whitefish, was often dipped in *irizake* sauce made of boiled *katsuobushi*, sake, salt and *umeboshi* pickled Japanese apricot. Sake was served in ceramic *tokkuri* flasks and drunk from small *sakazuki* cups; it

became the custom for people to pour out sake for each other, and some even enjoyed competing with each other to see how much sake they could drink. Accompanying dishes of appetizers to be enjoyed with the sake were also developed.

The mid-eighteenth century also saw the spread of the *honzen* style of dining, especially for formal or ceremonial occasions. These meals consisted of *ichiju san-sai* (one soup and three dishes, served with rice and pickles). Such a meal was modest, rather than filling: the rice in a *honzen* serving was small, and the soup was clear *o-sumashi*, intended to stimulate the palate so as to better appreciate the flavor of the sake. Essentially, a *honzen* meal was a kind of “sake and appetizers course.” After plenty of sake had made the rounds, miso soup and

pickles were served, followed by a full helping of rice to finish off the meal.

In old Edo, any opportunity to enjoy sake was welcome. The city was a gathering place for people from different provinces throughout the country, and for the men who spoke different dialects and followed different customs, sake helped bridge the gaps and make social connections. Today, traditional customs of enjoying sake while viewing cherry blossoms or fireworks, or in *izakaya* and restaurants, endure throughout Japan, where they continue to enhance communication. ◆

Translated by Lynne E. Riggs



Gosuichoki, which records that one man drank 16.38 liters and a woman consumed 4.5 liters. Courtesy of Adachi Museum

Author's profile

Noritake Kanzaki was born in 1944. He is a specialist in Japanese folklore and president of the Institute for the Culture of Travel. He serves on the Council for Cultural Affairs of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and as guest professor at the Tokyo University of Agriculture. He is chief priest at the Usa Hachiman Shrine in Okayama Prefecture. His many published works include *Sake no Nihon bunka: Shitte okitai o-sake no hanashi* (“Sake in Japanese culture: convenient stories to know about sake”); *Shikitari no Nihon bunka* (“Manners and customs of Japanese culture”); and *Edo no tabi bunka* (“The culture of travel in the Edo period”).



CLOSE-UP JAPAN

Traditions and trends
in Japanese food culture



Matcha Green Tea Confectionery

Various *matcha* confections, clockwise from left: Gelatin, roll-cake, castella cake, chocolates, *sembei* rice crackers.

Matcha green tea is finding a place for itself in health-conscious diets around the world. Unlike regular tea leaves prepared by brewing in hot water, *matcha* green tea is made of ground, powdered leaves whose nutrients remain intact. *Matcha* is characterized by a deep green color and gentle aroma; it is distinctively refreshing with a slightly bitter and rich flavor. Outside Japan, *matcha* is often used in drinks, such as lattes. In Japan, it appears as an ingredient in various types of confectionery, both Western and Japanese.

Matcha was originally served



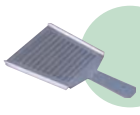
Matcha soft ice cream and
matcha powder

Matcha is
distinctively
refreshing.

only at the traditional Japanese tea ceremony. To make *matcha*, tea leaf veins and stems are discarded and only the leaves are ground into powder, which is then dissolved in hot water before serving. The type of tea leaf used to produce *matcha* differs from regular tea, and is also cultivated and processed differently. To discourage the over-production of catechin—the element that imparts the component of bitterness—and to maintain a high level of theanine, which supplies the element of umami, tea plants are shaded with black cheesecloth about 20 days before picking the leaves, in order to screen the plants from intense sunlight. *Matcha* leaves are carefully handpicked, steamed and dried. The leaves are not kneaded, which is

the usual process with regular tea leaves; they are ground in a stone mill into powder form. This labor-intensive process was established in the sixteenth century, when the tea ceremony matured.

In Japan in the mid-1990s, *matcha* ice cream triggered the popularity of confections prepared with *matcha*; these were followed by countless variations of new *matcha*-infused sweets. In Japan, *matcha* is now a standard flavor in chocolates and Western-style baked goods, as well as in traditional Japanese confectionery like *yokan* (sweet bean jelly), rice crackers and *manju* (buns stuffed with sweet bean paste). *Matcha* confectionery prepared by Japanese tea shops is also quite popular these days, and include delicious *matcha*-based sweets like parfaits, gelatins and cakes; it is not uncommon to see *matcha* soft ice cream sold outside their storefronts. Customers enjoy the slight bitterness of the *matcha* as a contrast to the delicate sweetness of the confectionery. ◆



Umeboshi Pickled Japanese Apricots

Umeboshi are prepared by pickling green Japanese apricots in salt for two to four weeks, then drying them in the sun and preserving them with red *shiso* (perilla) leaves in *umezu*, the liquid by-product of the first pickling process. There are many varieties of *umeboshi*, ranging from large and soft to small and crunchy. Sour red *umeboshi* are typically placed in the center of *onigiri* rice balls, or served as

a pickle to be eaten with a bowl of rice. *Umeboshi* are indispensable to Japanese cuisine. They were first mentioned in tenth-century records as being enjoyed by the aristocracy. Commoners were not able to enjoy this delicacy until much later when, in the sixteenth century, Japanese apricots were more widely cultivated. Today, *umeboshi* are enjoyed by most Japanese, and some even make them at home. *Umeboshi* have numerous benefits, including antibacterial and preservative qualities. They are typically placed in bento lunch boxes, for example, to prevent rice from spoiling, and their high citric acid content is known to counter



Umeboshi with red perilla

fatigue or exhaustion. *Umeboshi* are also used as seasoning, such as simmering them with sardines or straining them for salad dressing. *Umeboshi* have a long shelf life: they are prepared only once a year around mid-June, when the apricots are harvested, and people enjoy eating them all year around. ●



Umeboshi in bento

TASTY TRAVEL



Tochigi



Shimotsukare and *onioroshi* grater

Tochigi Shimotsukare

Shimotsukare is a traditional dish served in the northern part of Japan's Kanto region, particularly in Tochigi Prefecture, to celebrate the day of *Hatsu-uma*. *Hatsu-uma* refers to the first Day of the Horse in February, which celebrates the legendary deity Inari. On this day, people pray for a good harvest, a thriving business, or the well-being of their family. *Shimotsukare* is presented as an offering to Inari, and then consumed at home. Although its ingredients may vary, the dish is generally prepared by simmering the head of a salted, preserved salmon together with daikon, carrots, soybeans, *abura-age* thin sheets of deep-fried tofu, and sake lees. Using a particular tool called an *onioroshi*, the daikon and carrots are coarsely grated, which allows the vegetables to retain water and so preserve their natural flavors. ●



RICE WITH EDAMAME, ABURA-AGE & KOMBU

This recipe is vegetarian-friendly. *Abura-age* is used throughout Japanese cuisine in place of meat or fish to create a savory rich taste. While kombu is essential in making dashi soup stock, it can also be enjoyed in many other ways, as shown here.



◆ Edamame

Serves 3

407 kcal Protein 9.0 g Fat 4.0 g
(per person)

Kombu water

- 10 g / .35 oz. kombu for dashi stock
- 1000 ml / 4 C soft mineral water

- 1 1/2 C *japonica* rice
- 400 ml / 1 2/3 C + 2-4 T* kombu water
- 1 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 1/2 t salt
- 1 T sake
- 1/4 of the kombu shreds, after making kombu water
- 50 fresh shelled edamame, about 1/4-1/3 C
- 1/2 sheet of thin *abura-age* deep-fried tofu, cut in half horizontally, then cut into thin strips
- Walnuts, roughly chopped for garnish (optional)

1 Lightly dampen kombu with water, then cut into thin shreds 2-2.5 cm / 1 in. long and 1-2 mm / .07 in. wide with kitchen shears.

2 Place kombu in soft mineral water; allow to soak for at least 3 hours. Both the kombu shreds and this soaking water (kombu water) will be used in Step 4.

3 Wash rice 30 minutes before cooking and drain in a colander.

4 Put the washed rice, kombu water, soy sauce, salt and sake in a small (about 18-20 cm / 7-8 in. diameter), deep pot with a heavy bottom**. Mix gently, then spread kombu shreds, edamame and *abura-age* strips on top of the rice.

5 Cover with a lid and cook over lower-medium heat. When steam coming out from the pot has almost ceased, turn off heat. Allow to sit for 20 minutes.

6 Remove lid and gently mix the rice with all the ingredients. Serve garnished with chopped walnuts, if desired.

* Add an extra 2-4 T water, depending on how dry the rice is.

** A rice cooker may be used.

Note: *Kombu water* may be kept in the refrigerator for up to two weeks. Versatile and full of umami, kombu water may also be used as a soup stock base. Drained shredded kombu can be mixed with olive oil, vinegar and/or soy sauce to make a delicious sauce base or dressing for many dishes.

Kikkoman wishes to specially thank Mr. Kiyomitsu Kitajo of kombu wholesaler Tenma Osaka Kombu for the kombu water recipe.



Recipe by Michiko Yamamoto

1 C (U.S. cup) = approx. 240 ml; 1 T = 15 ml; 1 t = 5 ml



BEEF ROLL-UPS WITH NAGAIMO AND UMEBOSHI

Vegetables wrapped in beef is a popular dish to make at home. Other tasty fillings include asparagus, Japanese long onion, *gobo* (burdock root), carrot and green beans.



◆ Nagaimo

長芋

Serves 4

279 kcal Protein 18.6 g Fat 12.0 g
(per person)

- 120 g / 4 oz. *nagaimo* Chinese yam, peeled*
- 2 large *umeboshi*, pickled Japanese apricots
- 1 T Kikkoman Manjo Mirin
- 8 thin slices of beef, each 40 g / 1.6 oz.
- 16 leaves of *shiso* (perilla leaf)**
- 1 T vegetable oil
- 3 T sake

Seasoning

- 3 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 3 T Kikkoman Manjo Mirin
- 2 t granulated sugar

1 Cut *nagaimo* into 8 sticks, each roughly 10 cm / 4 in. long and 1 cm / 0.4 inch wide.

2 Remove the pits from the *umeboshi*. Mince the *umeboshi* and put into a small bowl. Add 1 T mirin and smooth to make a paste.

3 Lay out one beef slice on a cutting board. Lightly spread a small amount of the *umeboshi* paste on top of the slice, place 2 *shiso* leaves atop the paste, then place a stick of *nagaimo* on the side nearest you. Roll up the beef (*see photos*); repeat to make a total of 8 rolls.



4 Heat vegetable oil in a frying pan over medium heat; add the beef rolls with rolled ends facing down. Cook until golden brown, while shaking the pan.

5 Add sake to the pan. Cover with a lid and simmer for 5 minutes.

6 Add the seasoning ingredients and simmer again uncovered until the liquid has reduced and glazed, shaking the pan so that the liquid evenly coats the rolls.

7 Cut the beef rolls into bite sizes to serve.

* If *nagaimo* is not available, use potato.

** If *shiso* is unavailable, substitute *egoma* (wild sesame leaf).

Recipe by Kikkoman Corporation



International Exchange of Food Culture in Milan



Participants enjoy *kaiseki-ryori* at the Japan Salone.

In Milan this July 12-13, Kikkoman held a special event in cooperation with the Kyoto Prefectural government at the Japan Salone, the satellite pavilion of the Expo Milano 2015 Japanese Pavilion. Centering on the theme “Heart of Japanese Cuisine,” nine prominent Japanese chefs introduced *washoku* Japanese cuisine as part of Kikkoman’s *washoku*-related exhibitions and workshops, serving up Japanese food as a way of introducing Japan’s food culture to both food experts and to those living in and outside Italy. These various *washoku* events also provided the opportunity for a deeper understanding of the Kikkoman Group’s more than 30-year efforts to promote soy sauce and other Japanese foods throughout the E.U.

An audience of some 200 people, comprising both the media and attendees from Italy and abroad, participated in workshops organized by the *washoku*



Nine preeminent chefs* of Japanese cuisine



From left: *Suimono* clear soup with whitefish and a garnish of skillfully cut vegetables; An accompaniment to aperitifs, *hassun* appetizers evoke Japan’s four seasons.

chefs. With a focus on four themes—Japanese cuisine hereafter; Japanese cuisine and Italy; The traditions and succession secrets of Kyoto cuisine; and Tradition and potential of *washoku*—the nine chefs gave talks and demonstrated cutting techniques. Participants were also able to experience the actual plating of Japanese food and sample *kaiseki-ryori* Japanese haute cuisine. During these tastings, attendees were surprised and delighted with the delicious and authentic *washoku*.

Kikkoman also invited European food experts to attend a special session on *kaiseki-ryori*, offering a rare occasion to enjoy this authentic traditional cuisine prepared by the nine chefs using locally sourced ingredients. Some participant comments included: “I have never eaten such Japanese cuisine. It was like a dream,” and “The explanations from the chefs helped me understand the intentions behind their food choices, arrangements and flavoring, which allowed me to further enjoy the foods.”

For the first time in its long history, this year’s Expo is focused on food and diet. Kikkoman has taken advantage of this special opportunity to demonstrate the depth and diversity of Japanese cuisine, in the hopes of raising greater awareness and interest in Japan’s unique food culture. Kikkoman will continue to promote “the international exchange of food culture” as part of its management philosophy. ◆

* Expo Milano 2015 / Participating chefs and their restaurants (from left): Mr. Hisato Nakahigashi of Miyamasou, Mr. Yoshihiro Takahashi of Hyotei, Mr. Takuji Takahashi of Kinobu, Mr. Kunio Tokuoka of Kyoto Kitcho, Mr. Yoshihiro Murata of Kikunoi, Mr. Masahiro Kurisu of Tankuma, Mr. Shigeo Araki of Uosaburo, Mr. Motokazu Nakamura of ISSHI SOUDEN Nakamura, Mr. Naoyuki Yanagihara of the Kinsa-ryu Yanagihara School of Traditional Japanese Cuisine.