

Kikkoman's quarterly intercultural forum for the exchange of ideas on food



THE JAPANESE TABLE

## Global Fare in Contemporary Japan Chinese Cuisine

by Yoshiki Tsuji

*Japan's food scene comprises a delicious and diverse range of international cuisines that have influenced—and been influenced by—Japanese food culture. This final installment of our Feature reflects on the historical and cultural contexts of Chinese cuisine in Japan.*

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# Global Fare in Contemporary Japan

## Chinese Cuisine



Far left: *Shippoku* (illustration by Keisai Kuwagata) from *Edo Ryuko Ryoritsu* (Edo connoisseur trends;1822); Zenshiro Kuriyama, author. Courtesy of Tokyo Metropolitan Central Library Special Collections Room. Left: The series *Shin Chugoku Ryori Taizen* (1997); Prof. Tokiko Nakayama, supervising editor. SHOGAKUKAN (out of print).

Enjoyed in restaurants and at home, Chinese food is widely embraced in Japan. This may be because China and Japan fall into the sphere of East Asian food culture, and the two countries have quite similar eating patterns and customs. Despite some regional differences, rice is the staple of both diets and meals are eaten with chopsticks. There is also a flourishing population of Chinese living in Japan who sustain vibrant Chinatown communities in Yokohama and Kobe.

### Early Influences

Japan's national seclusion policy (1639-1853) during the Edo period restricted most international trade, with the exceptions of the Netherlands and China, which were permitted to engage in import-export activities at the port of Nagasaki. *Shippoku* banquet cuisine emerged from such interchanges in Nagasaki as a fusion cuisine characterized by the mingling of Japanese elements with essentially Chinese dishes. By the early nineteenth century, *Shippoku* had spread to the Kyoto-Osaka area as well as to Edo, present-day Tokyo.

During the Meiji era (1868-1912) the national edict against eating meat was lifted and, by the late nineteenth century, restaurants that included the Kairakuen in Tokyo began to offer authentic Chinese cuisine. The

Kairakuen was established in 1883 with capital investment by business leaders, specifically for the purpose of cultivating friendly relationships between Japan and China, and it served as an upmarket gathering place. There was also a proliferation of popular restaurants, such as Ishingo, catering to many Chinese who came to study in Japan. The cooks in these establishments were primarily from China.

From this time onward—and particularly during reconstruction following the 1923 Great Kanto Earthquake—the number of Chinese restaurants in Tokyo grew steadily. This included large luxury establishments with banquet rooms, as well as casual eateries that catered to the general public. In the late 1920s, as Chinese restaurants became more generally accessible, women's magazines began to introduce Chinese cooking, and the cuisine began to appear on household menus.

### Postwar Benchmarks

There was more rapid growth of Chinese restaurants in the 1950s. One of these, Chugoku Hanten, was the pioneer of sophisticated Guangdong-style cuisine in Japan. Similarly, the Szechwan Restaurant, led by the legendary Chef Chen Kenmin, was instrumental in introducing genuine Szechwan foods such as *mapo tofu* in spicy ground meat sauce, and prawns in chili sauce. Both restaurants trained countless chefs; the Szechwan, in particular, evolved as a major force in the Chinese restaurant industry through the trained cooks and chefs working at its many affiliated restaurants. At the same time, buoyed by a robust economy, the standards of Chinese cuisine in Japan improved exponentially.

Around 1960, Tokiko Nakayama, then professor at Ochanomizu University, led a formal study of "authentic Chinese cuisine" involving scholars and chefs, who gathered at Yushima Seido Confucian sacred hall in Tokyo. Their research on Chinese



Prawns in chili sauce



From Wakiya Ichiemi Charou, this appetizer by Chef Yuji Wakiya called “Nine Delights” features foods from sea and mountains.

food culture was based on extensive resources and fieldwork. Among those participating in this research was Rokuro Kozasa, founder of the Chimisai restaurant. Chimisai perpetuated the spirit of this invaluable project by providing a learning environment for aspiring chefs, and is also known for its early initiatives to encourage the cultivation and propagation of Chinese vegetables.

In the run-up to the 1964 Olympic Games in Tokyo, numerous chefs were invited from Taiwan and Hong Kong to oversee Chinese restaurants that were established in large hotels in and around Tokyo. These restaurants ultimately served the latest dishes at the highest levels of quality, and therefore boosted the prestige of Chinese cuisine at a time when most people still associated hotel dining with French cuisine. This

contributed to the expansion of luxury Chinese cuisine.

During the 1970s, a trend known as *Nouvelle Cuisine Chinoise* gained momentum under the influence of French cuisine in Hong Kong—a movement which became notable in Japan as well. Chef Yuji Wakiya presented a new style of Chinese cuisine that was served, not on large platters, but as small, attractively arranged dishes on individual plates at his restaurant, Wakiya Ichiemi Charou. His innovative way of presentation appealed to many, including younger generations, and helped broaden the acceptance of Chinese cuisine.

### Present and Future

Until the 1990s, fine Chinese dining was primarily encountered in hotels and larger restaurants, but since

around 2010, small privately owned restaurants have increased. The 2021 Tokyo Michelin Guide named Sazenka as the very first three-star Chinese restaurant since the first Tokyo edition was published in 2007. Chef Tomoya Kawada at Sazenka creates unique Chinese dishes founded on established Chinese culinary techniques, together with his own Japanese sensibility and experience, nurtured through his apprenticeship at Michelin-starred Japanese restaurant RyuGin. This genre of Chinese haute cuisine, as refined in Japan, is sure to continue to evolve.

Meanwhile, ramen noodles—whose origins can be traced to China, and originally known to the masses as *shina soba* Chinese noodles—are also evolving in distinctive ways, not only in Japan, but around the world. This well-loved noodle dish continues to make its mark globally as a leading example of Japanese cuisine. 🍡



“Steamed sliced pork and eggplant topped with Schezuan sauce,” by Chef Tomoya Kawada

#### cover

Popular in Japan, *mapo tofu* is enjoyed both at home and in restaurants.

#### Author's profile

Yoshiki Tsuji was born in 1964 in Osaka, and educated in the UK and the US. He is chairman and head of the Board of Directors of Tsuji Culinary Institute. His numerous publications encompass the subjects of the modern transitions of gastronomy, and Japanese cuisine. He was awarded France's National Order of Merit in 2018.



## CLOSE-UP JAPAN

Traditions and trends  
in Japanese food culture



Yose-nabe “combination” hot pot with chicken, meatballs and vegetables (left); tomato-flavored hot pot with vegetables and seafood.

# Nabe Hot Pot

Japanese hot pot, or *nabe*, is a warming winter dish whose assorted ingredients may include seasonal vegetables and mushrooms, tofu, meat or fish. These are traditionally cooked in dashi stock seasoned with soy sauce or miso. Easy to make and nutritious, family and friends typically gather around a simmering pot of *nabe* placed at the center of the table. Diners add ingredients to the flavored soup in the pot and select what to eat as they cook, sharing food and enjoying lively conversation. As a communal



A classic *shime*, *zosui* rice porridge

Any favorite  
ingredient can be  
added to *nabe*

dish, *nabe* is served at home and in restaurants as a casual meal, as well as on special occasions or at parties. “Hot pot for one” has recently grown popular, where individuals choose their preferred *nabe*—a trend that has inspired single-serve *nabe* restaurants and convenient one-person hot pot sets.

*Nabe*-style cooking on the table stems from the early seventeenth century, when portable earthenware cooking stoves appeared, thus enabling diners to cook and eat on their own. These days, just about any favorite ingredient can be added to a *nabe*, and so the dish can vary considerably. Numerous *nabe* recipe

books and websites offer up myriad ideas for personalized preparations and recipes.

After all the ingredients are eaten, it is customary to add cooked rice or udon noodles to the remaining soup with its rich condensed umami, thus reflecting the Japanese custom of ending a meal with the staple food of rice. This final touch is called *shime*, loosely translated as “finish up the meal.” One classic *shime* is *zosui* rice porridge, made by adding cooked rice and beaten egg to the soup.

There is an extensive variety of soup flavors nowadays, like soy milk and curry, allowing those with an adventurous palate to sample a broad range of *shime* options. Soy milk soup can be transformed into carbonara by adding spaghetti and cheese; tomato-flavored soup might be recast as a risotto with rice and cheese; or adding udon noodles to curry-based soup transforms it into curry udon. ◆



## Mikan Satsuma

Japanese have long enjoyed fresh citrus fruit for dessert, including the small, sweet mandarin-style orange known as *mikan*. *Mikan* have been cultivated in Japan for centuries, evolving into today's seedless and easy-to-peel *unshu mikan*, which currently holds the highest production volume among Japan's many *mikan* varieties.

Called satsuma in English, this type of *mikan* originated in Kagoshima Prefecture, known as the Satsuma Domain during Japan's Edo period (1603-1867). *Unshu mikan* are rich in vitamin C and are eaten in the colder seasons; in fact, the cozy image of Japanese families eating bright orange *mikan*, seated around a table with heater and blanket (*kotatsu*),

is a long-held winter tradition. *Mikan* remain a winter fruit, but new hybrids have been developed, and greenhouse cultivation in recent years allows for availability almost year-round. Not only eaten fresh, this palm-sized fruit can be frozen whole and served as a frosty treat. *Mikan* are also enjoyed in Japanese and Western confectionery, jams and sauces. ●



Eating *mikan* at a warm *kotatsu*



*Unshu mikan* are palm-sized and easy to peel.

### TASTY TRAVEL



Shimane



*Botebotecha*

## Shimane *Botebotecha*

Preparing whisked *sencha* green tea was common in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and *botebotecha* arose from that custom. From Shimane Prefecture, *botebotecha*, a type of tea served with dollops of garnish, derives its name from the sound of tea being whisked. *Botebotecha* is made by boiling *bancha* (a variety of *sencha*) with dried tea flowers that produce the tea's unusual foamy texture. Poured into a large tea bowl, the tea is whipped vigorously with a special long tea whisk edged with a bit of salt until it turns white and frothy. Next, very small portions of boiled beans, chopped Japanese pickles, and rice or *okowa* sticky rice are added to the bowl. Rather than using chopsticks, the bowl is tapped to bring the garnishes to one side to drink together with the tea. ●



## MAPLE-TERIYAKI CHICKEN

Pure and natural, mirin imparts an elegant sweetness to classic Japanese teriyaki sauce. In this recipe, natural maple syrup provides that similar grace note of refined sweetness.



◆ *Shio koji*

塩  
麹

### Serves 2

880 kcal Protein 48.6 g Fat 52.5 g  
(per serving)

- 2 boneless chicken thighs with skin, total about 500-600 g / 1-1 1/2 lb.
- 2 1/2 T *shio koji* (salted malt)\*

### Maple-soy sauce

- 5 T amber maple syrup (rich taste)
- 2 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 2 T sake
- 1/2 package daikon radish sprouts
- 1 1/2 T pure olive oil
- 1 1/2 T sake
- 1/2 T grated ginger
- 2 T dry-roasted pine nuts for optional garnish

**1** Trim excess fat from chicken. Butterfly the thicker part of the thighs to cook evenly. Rub *shio koji* on both sides of the chicken to season and tenderize; allow to chill in refrigerator for 3-12 hours.

**2** Mix ingredients for the maple-soy sauce, set aside. Cut off roots of daikon radish sprouts. Loosely cover and microwave the sprouts at 500 W for 25 seconds or until slightly wilted; pat dry stems with paper towel.

**3** Wipe *shio koji* from chicken with a paper towel. Add olive oil to a non-stick frying pan; when the pan gets warm, place chicken skin-side down. Cook for about 4 minutes over low-medium heat until skin turns golden brown. Turn and cook for another 2-3 minutes. Wipe excess oil from pan with paper towel; add 1 1/2 T sake to the pan, and shake gently.

**4** Pour the maple-soy sauce and grated ginger into the frying pan and bring to a gentle boil. As the sauce boils, flip the chicken skin-side down and allow to absorb flavor, then turn again. When a skewer can be inserted smoothly into the thickest part, remove chicken from pan and let it rest for about 5 minutes. In the pan, bring the sauce to a second boil over low-medium heat to thicken. Turn off heat.

**5** Cut the chicken into pieces about 1.5-2 cm / 1/2 - 3/4 in. and place on a serving platter. Arrange the sprouts on the side, drizzle the sauce over the chicken, then garnish with roasted pine nuts.

\* There are two types of *shio koji*: clear liquid and thick, ivory-colored liquid. Use the thick ivory-colored liquid *shio koji* in this recipe, and adjust according to weight of chicken; i.e., about 2 T *shio koji* per 450 g / 1 lb.

Recipe by Michiko Yamamoto

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



## YOSE-NABE HOT POT

There are two ways to cook and serve *nabe*. Here, it is made in the kitchen and brought to the table. Another style is for diners to prepare the *nabe* together, cooking and sharing the meal at the table.



◆ *Kuzu-kiri*

### Serves 4

483 kcal Protein 39.5 g Fat 18.7 g  
(per serving)

- 240 g / 1/2 lb. filleted alfoncino cut in 8 bite-sized pieces\*
- 1 squid body, cleaned and skinned, 100 g / 3.5 oz.
- 1 boneless chicken thigh with skin, 250-300 g / 1/2-2/3 lb.
- 6 leaves *hakusai* napa cabbage
- 100 g / 3.5 oz. spinach
- 2 Japanese long onions
- 4 fresh shiitake mushrooms
- 150 g / 5 oz. edible chrysanthemum greens\*\*
- 1 block soft tofu, 300 g / 10 oz.
- 40 g / 1.5 oz. dried *kuzu-kiri* arrowroot starch noodles

### Soup

- 2,000 ml / 8 C dashi stock
- 3 T sake
- 3 T Kikkoman Light Color Soy Sauce
- 2 T Kikkoman Manjo Mirin
- 1 t salt

**1** Place the 8 pieces of alfoncino in a colander and gently pour boiling water over them until color changes slightly, so as to rinse off fishy aroma (*see photo*). Cut open the squid to flatten and cut into bite-sized pieces.



**2** Remove excess fat from the chicken and cut into bite-sized pieces. Place in a colander and gently pour boiling water over them until color changes slightly.

**3** Parboil the napa cabbage leaves and spinach and drain, squeezing out excess moisture. Cut into bite-sized pieces.\*\*\*

**4** Cut the long onions diagonally into pieces 1 cm / 0.4 in. Remove stems from the shiitake mushrooms, carve decorative cuts into the caps. Cut the chrysanthemum into pieces about 5 cm / 2 in. long. Cut the tofu into 8 pieces. Soak and boil *kuzu-kiri* according to package instructions and drain.

**5** Mix soup ingredients and pour into a 24 cm- / 9.4 in.- earthenware pot. Add fish and chicken; cover and bring to a boil. Add all the ingredients except for the chrysanthemum leaves, cover and cook over medium heat until done. Finally, add the chrysanthemum leaves and cook briefly. Serve portions in individual bowls.\*\*\*\*

\* May substitute other seafood such as white fish, scallops or prawns.

\*\* Alternatively, use *mizuna* (Japanese mustard greens) or watercress.

\*\*\* For an attractive presentation, roll napa and spinach as pictured.

\*\*\*\* After the *nabe* ingredients are eaten, enjoy the soup by making *zosui* rice porridge. Add 2 bowls of cooked rice (300 g / 10 oz.) to the pot and bring to a boil over medium heat. Reduce to low heat and add chopped scallion; pour 1 beaten egg over the rice and cover until egg is set to desired firmness. See Page 4 of this issue for more on this and other *shime* options.



# New Webpage "Kikkoman Recipes from Around the World"



Kikkoman introduces a tasty new collection of links to Kikkoman recipe-sharing websites from around the world.  
<https://www.kikkoman.com/en/cookbook/kikkomanrecipes/index.html>



Kikkoman Soy Sauce is sold around the world in over 100 countries. This all-purpose seasoning complements so many diverse ingredients and cuisines . . . so how do you use Kikkoman Soy Sauce?

The companies of the global Kikkoman Group each have their own recipe-sharing websites that introduce ways in which Kikkoman products are used in distinctive regional cuisines, as rooted in their unique food cultures. The Kikkoman global website has now launched a new resource that gathers all these disparate recipes together on



Barbecued Cod Loin Fillets in Spiced Yoghurt Marinade (Europe)

one convenient webpage: *Kikkoman Recipes from Around the World*.

This webpage provides easy access to a diverse collection of recipes from around the globe simply by clicking on selected countries in the Americas, Europe, Africa or Asia Pacific region. Discover new food ideas and find fresh inspiration about how to use Kikkoman Soy Sauce in salads, meat or fish dishes, as well as in rice bowls, noodles, and even desserts.

On this new webpage you'll also find a link to *Cookbook*, the English resource for Kikkoman's Japanese recipes from our global website. In *Cookbook*, you can experience delicious Japanese home-style recipes that use soy sauce, and find information about ingredients and basic cooking methods unique to Japanese cuisine. *Cookbook* also features an easy one-click link to all our YouTube recipe videos. >>



*Kikkoman Recipes from Around the World* is one more example of how



5-ingredient Fancy Toast (USA)

Kikkoman continues our mission "to promote the international exchange of food culture." We invite everyone all over the world to create and share in our global culinary journey via Kikkoman Soy Sauce. Visit our website and "Contact Us" with your recipe requests and comments—we'd love to hear from you! ◆

We also share recipes from *Cookbook* on Instagram. Stay updated and follow us on Instagram:



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