

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

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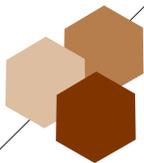


THE JAPANESE TABLE

## Japanese Fusion Cuisine: *Yoshoku*-Style Dishes

by Yo Maenobo

*Our 2012 Feature introduces Japanese cuisine from the viewpoint of wayo setchu, the fusion of Japanese and Western cuisines. In this third installment, we follow the evolution of certain Western-style dishes that pair well with rice, a special genre of Japanese cuisine generally known as yoshoku.*



# Japanese Fusion Cuisine: *Yoshoku*-Style Dishes

## Japan's Popular Fries

The practice of eating beef in Japan started around 1872. During the years 1904-1905 the country was at war with Russia, and a large number of Japan's cattle were used to produce canned beef to feed troops serving at the front. Overall supply was reduced by this high demand; the number of cattle slaughtered in Tokyo dropped to 21,996 in 1907, some 6,000 fewer than the figure five years earlier. As Japan's overall beef supply became depleted, the price of beef skyrocketed—and consumer demand shifted to pork.

Pork thus became the meat of choice for the breaded, deep-fried dishes referred to as "fries" by the Japanese. Fries, made with either meat or fish, were considered standards of *yoshoku*, a unique fare defined as Western dishes made with a Japanese twist. Western-style restaurants in Japan first featured popular fish-filet fries, drawing from the tradition of tempura, and veal followed, soon to be replaced by pork. Animal fat was originally used to deep fry the veal cutlets and *wiener schnitzel* introduced from English and European cuisines, but as the recipes were reinterpreted for Japanese menus, cooking methods came to include sesame oil. Coating fish or meat with bread crumbs made with grated bread introduced a unique crispy texture that was new to the Japanese palate.

Eventually, as these dishes became more generally accepted, the Japanese term "pork fry" morphed into *tonkatsu*: *ton* refers to pork and *katsu* is a shortened version of *katsuretsu*, or cutlet.

Croquettes were called *korokke* from the start, and those made with shrimp were referred to as "*Furansu korokke*" ("French croquettes"). A song titled *Korokke no Uta* ("Croquette Song") was all the rage around 1920—a clear sign of how popular this food was, and how fashionable the concept of *yoshoku* dining had become during the Taisho period (1912-26).\*

## Yoshoku Variations

When Western cuisine was first adopted in Japan, all such dishes were referred to as *yoshoku*. "Yo" comes from "*seiyō*," meaning "the West"; "*shoku*" means "food." The term *yoshoku* follows a linguistic pattern used to define other aspects of culture introduced from the West; for example, *yofuku* (clothing) and *yokan* (buildings). *Yoshoku* went on, moreover, to acquire the specific meaning of Western dishes that go well with rice. Restaurants serving such *yoshoku* were identified as *yoshoku-ya*, which were differentiated as a separate specialty among restaurants that specialized in Western cuisine.

In 1967, in the midst of Japan's rapid economic growth, a leading Japanese publisher marketed a book titled *Tokyo Ii Mise Umai Mise* ("Good and tasty restaurants in Tokyo") as Japan's answer to the *Michelin Guide* of Paris and the *Good Food Guide* of London. This Tokyo food guide made a point of featuring Western cuisine, including five *yoshoku* restaurants that were introduced even before its listing of famous *kaiseki* (Japanese cuisine) restaurants. Restaurant menus excerpted in the guide highlighted *tonkatsu*, *hire-katsu* (pork filet cutlets), *korokke*, beef stew, curry, hamburger steak and a *yoshoku bento* (packed lunch box).

This particular *yoshoku bento* was the ultimate answer to the whims of Japanese diners who craved variety, yet preferred to eat with chopsticks. The stylish multi-tiered square container held tidy arrangements of rice, accompanied by small barrel-shaped *korokke*, fried prawns, potato salad, *tamago-yaki* rolled egg, and more. *Wayo setchu* fusion attained its highest level of refinement in this particular *yoshoku bento*. At the opposite extreme, one might encounter



Illustration of a Japanese family dining at a Western-style restaurant by Georges Ferdinand Bigot (*Tobae* magazine, March 1887)



Popular cutlet curry, accompanied by *rakkyo* (l.) and *fukujin-zuke* pickles

the more down-to-earth “cutlet curry”: a pork cutlet on rice, doused with curry.

### Condiments and Accompaniments

*Yoshoku*-style dishes are often served with *o-shinko* pickles or other condiments: curry and rice, for example, are invariably accompanied by *rakkyo* pickles and *fukujin-zuke*, pickles made of seven types of vegetables, while *beni shoga*, red pickled ginger, is often



Kikkoman's lineup of Worcester, semi-thick and *tonkatsu* sauces

eaten with *hayashi raisu*, hashed beef with rice. Other indispensable accompaniments to *yoshoku* dishes are demi-glace sauce and Worcester sauce. The head chef of the Hotel Okura, who sought to set the standards of Western cuisine in Japan, often lamented the fact that these sauces were so popular, Japanese poured them liberally over any Western dish.

The first Japanese sauce manufacturing companies were established around 1890, and the Meidi-ya food company began to import the Lea & Perrins brand from England. In *Things Japanese* (1890), B. H. Chamberlain, a nineteenth-century observer of Japanese culture, decried the “Japano-European cuisine” consisting of “slabs of tough beefsteak anointed with mustard and spurious Worcestershire sauce.” While they may share the same name, however, the sauce Chamberlain was familiar with is completely different from Japan’s modern Worcester sauce.

The original Worcester sauce of



*Korokke* are made with potatoes.

Worcestershire was made with spices, vinegar and anchovies, but today’s sauces produced in Japan range from Worcester and semi-thick varieties to thicker *tonkatsu* sauces. These are all mild-flavored, made of vegetables, tomatoes, apples and other fruit—and do not include anchovies. ◆

\* *Korokke no Uta* lyrics excerpt: “Today’s supper was korokke, tomorrow’s supper will be korokke. At this rate I’ll be eating korokke all year long. Isn’t this funny?”

### cover

A modern *yoshoku bento*, served at Kamiya, a *yoshoku* restaurant in Tokyo, originally established in 1925. This three-tiered lunch box includes rice and a variety of foods including the popular *hire-katsu* and *korokke*.

### Author's profile

Yo Maenobo was born in 1943. He is a specialist in Japanese Intellectual History and the author of many publications and academic papers such as *Meiji Seiyō Ryōri Kigen* (The origin of Western-style dishes in the Meiji era), and *Kindai Nihon Kenkyū*, vols. 24 & 25 (Bulletin of modern Japanese studies), *Fukuo giden, moshikuwa engisuru kosei (ken, kon)* (Falsehood: a chronological biography of Fukuzawa Yukichi). His most recent publication is *Mogi-to-Shinsei* (Acculturation in Meiji era Japan).



# Wasabi



Sashimi served with a dab of wasabi

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## Wasabi is known for its pungency

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Wasabi is a plant native to Japan, traditionally used in herbal healing. Today it is known more commonly as a condiment that accompanies a wide variety of Japanese dishes, including soba, sashimi and sushi.

Wasabi is an aquatic plant with a thick rooted stem called a rhizome that lies beneath the water's moving current; its leaves grow above the water level. Thin, fine roots from the rhizome burrow underground, and these hold the entire plant in place. The color of wasabi is a beautiful light green, reminiscent of fresh leaves in springtime; it is best known, however, for its refreshing fragrance and pungent flavor.

Wasabi is delicate and thrives only in waters whose temperatures range between 10 to 17°C (50-62°F). Wild wasabi may be found in isolated mountain streams, while cultivated plants are grown in special fields called *wasabi-da*, typically situated in

cool regions with fresh running water. The plant develops so slowly that it can take up to three to four years before it can be harvested for shipping. Wasabi cultivation is believed to have begun in today's Shizuoka Prefecture around 1600, when the Edo shogunate was first established. Later on, the habit of eating soba, sashimi and sushi with wasabi became popular.

To prepare wasabi for eating, the rhizome is grated using a very fine grater, such as one with a traditional dried sharkskin surface. Slowly grating the wasabi in a circular motion breaks down sinigrin cells, causing them to interact with enzymes, thus creating wasabi's peppery sharpness. This effect peaks in the few minutes after grating, and the grated root stays tasty for less than 30 minutes; for this reason, it is best to prepare only small amounts of wasabi as needed. Wasabi complements raw fish and other foods, and has antiseptic properties that can prevent food poisoning. Moreover, it contains large amounts of vitamin C, which supports digestion and stimulates the appetite.

Today, wasabi paste is widely available in convenient, easy-to-use plastic tubes or packets tucked into take-out sushi or for use at home: just a small squeeze produces the desired amount of wasabi. ●



Grating wasabi on a dried sharkskin surface



*Wasabi-da*



Perspectives on  
Japanese cuisine

Thin and delicate, wheat-flour *somen* noodles are a refreshing favorite during the hot summer months in Japan. *Somen* was originally introduced here during the 8th century via Japanese envoys returning from China. During the Heian period (794-1185), *somen* became associated with various ancient court events,

including *Tanabata*, the Star Festival.

*Somen* is made by mixing salt and water with wheat flour, and is kneaded and lightly coated with cooking oil to prevent the noodles from drying out, as they are then gradually stretched to an extremely slender diameter of less than 1.3 mm (.05 in.) using the weight of the *somen* itself, and then left to dry. These days, *somen* may be stretched by machine, but those stretched in the traditional method by hand are more prized for taste and texture. To prepare *somen*, dried noodles are cooked briefly in boiling water, then drained and rinsed under running water. *Somen* should then be served immediately, dipped in chilled *tsuyu* (soy sauce based dipping sauce) with chopped green onions and grated ginger.



Somen noodles



*Somen* are gradually stretched to extreme thinness then dried in the sun.



*Somen* is eaten by dipping in chilled *tsuyu*, accompanied by condiments.

## DELECTABLE JOURNEYS

### Kagoshima *Akumaki*

Boiling or steaming rice wrapped in bamboo leaves, sheaths or tree leaves is common throughout eastern Asia. In Kagoshima Prefecture, *akumaki* is a traditional local confectionery served during the Boys' Festival in May. *Akumaki* is made by wrapping glutinous rice in a bamboo sheath, then simmering it for several hours in lye, the clear upper portion of water in which plant ash has been dissolved. When cooked, *akumaki* turns a golden brown color with a soft, sticky texture, and is usually cut with a string, rather than a knife.

The glutinous rice of cooked *akumaki* has no flavor itself, and so is typically enjoyed with a sprinkling of sugar blended with *kinako* (roasted soybean flour) or drizzled with brown sugar syrup. Despite its high water content, *akumaki* can be kept for many days, thanks to the alkalinity of the lye and bamboo's antibacterial properties.





## POTATO BOATS YOSHOKU-STYLE WITH KATSU SAUCE

These baked potato boats have a taste similar to Japanese *korokke*, which are made with potatoes and meat and fried. Beef may be excluded from this recipe to create a delicious vegetarian main dish, enhanced by the rich taste of the katsu (*tonkatsu*) sauce.



◆ Panko

Serves 2 to 3 363 kcal Protein 10.1 g Fat 20.2 g (per person)

- 4 small potatoes (500 g /1 lb.)
- 1 T vegetable oil
- 1 t olive oil
- 50-60 g (about 1/3 C) minced onion
- 1 t Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- Black pepper to taste
- 2 T milk
- 1 T butter
- Pinch of salt
- 1 t butter
- 1 t vegetable oil
- 100 g (3.5 oz.) ground beef
- 1 T butter
- 4 T *panko* (Japanese-style bread crumbs)\*
- Kikkoman Katsu Sauce
- Cabbage finely shredded (optional)

**1** Preheat oven to 200°C (400°F). Wash potatoes and wipe dry. Mix 1 T vegetable oil and 1 t olive oil in a small bowl, then brush this mixture over the potatoes, covering completely.

**2** Bake the potatoes in oven for 30 minutes, or until skewers can be inserted without resistance.

**3** While the potatoes are baking, heat 1 t butter and 1 t vegetable oil in a frying pan and sauté the beef over medium-low heat. When the meat changes color, add onion and sauté until tender. Add soy sauce and pepper, turn off heat.

**4** Heat a frying pan and melt 1 T butter to sauté the bread crumbs slowly over low heat, until they turn golden brown. Place on paper towel and set aside.

**5** When the potatoes are baked, remove from oven and cut in half. Scoop out the pulp with a spoon to make a 5 mm (0.2 in.) thick shell.

**6** Mash the pulp with a potato masher while still hot. Add milk, 1 T butter and a pinch of salt. Add the sautéed beef mixture to the mashed potatoes and mix well. Fill the potato shells with the potato mixture, and sprinkle with the sautéed bread crumbs.

**7** Bake the potato boats for 10 to 12 minutes. Adjust time depending on size of the potatoes.

**8** Remove from oven and serve the potato boats with cabbage on the side. Drizzle plenty of katsu sauce on the potato boats when eating.

Note: Olive oil or other vegetable oils may be substituted for butter when sautéing; when using a non-stick pan, amounts may be reduced.

\* Japanese bread crumbs are large and coarse, with a crunchy texture.

Recipe by Michiko Yamamoto



## TERIYAKI TOFU HAMBURGER



◆ Firm tofu

木綿豆腐

Serves 4 228 kcal Protein 18.4 g Fat 12.2 g (per person)

- 1 t vegetable oil
- 90-100 g (about 2/3 C) minced onion
- 200 g (7 oz.) firm tofu
- 250 g (9 oz.) ground chicken meat

### Seasoning

- 1 t juice of grated ginger
- 1/3 t salt
- Pepper to taste
- 1 t Kikkoman Soy Sauce

- 1 T vegetable oil

### Sauce

- 1 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 1 T Kikkoman Manjo Mirin
- 1 T sake

- 1/2 beaten egg
- 1/4 C *panko* (Japanese-style bread crumbs)

- Grated daikon, *shiso* (perilla), if desired

**1** Heat vegetable oil in a pan. Sauté onion over low heat and remove from pan and cool.

**2** Place tofu in boiling water and break into several pieces using a spoon or wooden ladle; boil for 3 minutes. Place a cloth over a colander and drain the tofu for 10 minutes.

**3** Place ground chicken in a bowl and mix with seasoning ingredients. Add beaten egg, bread crumbs, onion and tofu one at a time in this order, and mix. Divide the meat mixture into 4 equal portions and form each into an oval patty.



**4** Heat vegetable oil in a frying pan and cook the patties over medium heat. When the patties turn brown, lower heat. Turn the patties over and continue to cook.

**5** Add sauce ingredients to the pan and turn up heat to medium, and cook briefly making sure the sauce covers the patties entirely.

**6** Remove from heat and serve garnished with grated daikon and *shiso*, or other desired vegetables.

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

Recipe by Kikkoman Corporation



## Renewal of Kikkoman General Hospital

Kikkoman Group has always considered its connection with society to be of paramount importance. This stance remains unchanged today and has been reconfirmed in Kikkoman's management philosophy "to be a company whose existence is meaningful to society." This includes active social engagement in the fields of both food and health.

Recently, Kikkoman completed the renewal of Kikkoman General Hospital in the city of Noda, Chiba Prefecture, where Kikkoman was founded. The new hospital building comprises four stories above ground and is a seismic-isolated structure; it is equipped to function as a hospital even in case of disaster. Its design invites abundant natural light,

while natural ventilation provides the entire building with a healthy, fresh atmosphere. This environment-friendly facility also incorporates solar power generation, efficient use of water resources and energy-saving equipment. The completion ceremony of the new hospital building was held on June 1, 2012, and medical care services commenced from mid-August.

Kikkoman General Hospital has a long history, dating to 1862. It is said to have originated as a health facility established by soy sauce brewers for their employees and families. The brewers later established the Noda Soy Sauce Brewers Association (*Noda Shoyu Jozo Kumiai*), and opened Noda Hospital in 1914, which was owned and managed by the Association. This marked the origins of today's hospital. In 1918, after the establishment of Noda Shoyu Co., Ltd., the predecessor of Kikkoman, the hospital came to be owned and managed by Kikkoman. Currently, Kikkoman General Hospital is the only hospital in Japan owned by a food manufacturer.

Kikkoman General Hospital, although owned and managed by Kikkoman, has been providing community-based medical services since the hospital's establishment, serving not only employees of the Kikkoman Group but the entire community. With this new opening, the hospital continues to serve as the focus for community medical care, and intends to strengthen cooperation among other

local hospitals and clinics in the Noda area. Director Yoshiro Kubota of Kikkoman General Hospital explains: "As a general hospital with a focus on acute-phase treatment, we hope to continue to treat and prevent illness as part of Kikkoman's social contribution activities. We will strive to meet the medical needs of the local people who have long supported the Kikkoman Group."

The Kikkoman Group aims to coexist with global society as a good corporate citizen by contributing to society through business activities, environmental conservation, and proactive engagement with local communities. ●



Top: Kikkoman Chairman Mogi (center) and President Someya (center left) at the opening ceremony.  
Above: Kikkoman Hospital