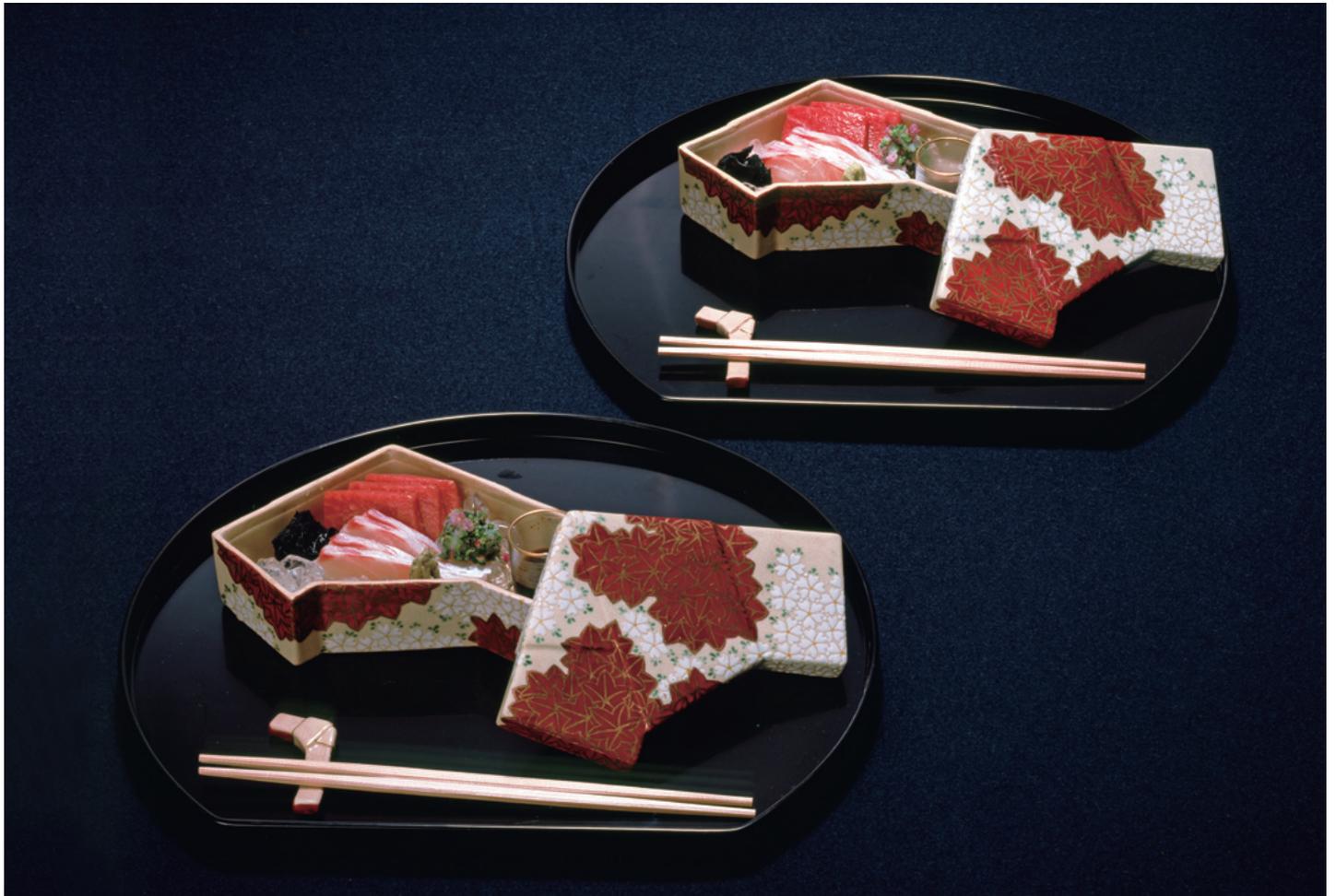


Kikkoman's quarterly intercultural forum for the exchange of ideas on food



## THE JAPANESE TABLE

# Japanese Feasts for Special Occasions

## Remarkable Restaurant Cuisines

by Ayako Ehara

*In this third installment of our current series, Food Forum explores two unique styles of special Japanese cuisine, as prepared by two very different restaurants.*

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# Japanese Feasts for Special Occasions

## Remarkable Restaurant Cuisines



From left: A *mukozuke* dish of three bite-size tidbits resting on red lotus petals atop crushed ice, served in the hot month of August; *Saikyo* sweet Kyoto miso-marinated grilled *managatsuo* butterfish, complemented by an antique Oribe-ware dish.

Japanese cuisine has made significant strides in the last sixty to seventy years. One of its driving forces was legendary chef Teiichi Yuki (1901-1997), who transformed traditional Japanese *kaiseki* cuisine by framing it within the context of modern design, creating innovative dishes deeply rooted in Japanese culture—a concept that influenced chefs in Japan and around the world. Meanwhile, there are outliers like Mitsu Chonan (1949-), dedicated to serving traditional home-style fare. Though outwardly distinct, both approaches share the same commitment to the fundamental principle of Japanese cuisine: to elicit the natural flavor of fresh seasonal ingredients.

### Kitcho *Kaiseki* Restaurant

Teiichi Yuki founded his first restaurant, Kitcho, in Osaka in 1930, followed by Tokyo Kitcho in 1961. Yuki studied the *chanoyu* tea ceremony and its accompanying *kaiseki* meals, and from his understanding he injected a distinctive aesthetic into his approach. He pursued the concept of *shuko*—fusing room setting with impeccable food presentation—as integral to his new style of traditional cuisine. Yuki incorporated decorative and savory touches that evoked elements of the four seasons. As one example, he conceived an arrangement of crushed

ice on a lotus leaf, upon which he introduced small appetizers on three red lotus petals. This creation captured the essence of summer, presenting diners with a surprising, unusually beautiful experience.

Though devoted to tradition, Yuki pursued his innovative aesthetic, often serving food upon historically significant wares; for instance, a simple dish of marinated grilled butterfish would be served on priceless seventeenth-century Oribe-ware. Reflecting *chanoyu* custom, Yuki gave careful attention to the hanging scroll and flowers in the *tokonoma* alcove, and was meticulous about the view of the garden. He placed importance on having guests comfortably enjoy both taste and atmosphere.

In June 1979, the 5th G7 Summit of world leaders was held at the State Guest House Akasaka Palace in Tokyo. Kitcho oversaw both cuisine and decor at the luncheon banquet—the first time Japanese cuisine had ever been served at a Summit. The decor reflected the summer season, and included a hanging scroll and hydrangeas in the *tokonoma*. The extensive menu comprised *zensai* appetizers: eel and burdock roll, salt-steamed abalone, roast duck loin, bayberry fruit and simmered sweet potato. These were followed by savory soup with *kuzu* starch-coated red rockfish and okra with *umeboshi* pickled Japanese apricot

paste. Next was a *yakimono* grilled dish of sweetfish with *tade* (marshpepper knotweed) vinegar. *Shiizakana*, which accompanied further drinks, involved seafood tempura and edamame. Then came the *takiawase* simmered dish of *kamo* eggplant and taro potatoes; *ishiyaki* stone-grilled Omi wagyu beef and small onions with pickle salad; then rice cooked with chicken, accompanied by salt-kelp and *shibazuke* pickles. The meal concluded with fruit, sweets and matcha green tea.

Over the years, royalty and other elite guests from around the world have dined at Kitcho. Reflecting Teiichi Yuki's conviction that Japanese cuisine is to be enjoyed in Japan amidst its four seasons, Kitcho has no branches overseas. The "world-renowned Japanese cuisine" that Yuki took for his motto is still regarded as peerless by Japanese chefs.

### Chikeiken Farm Restaurant

The small city of Tsuruoka is on the northwest coast of the Japan Sea, in Yamagata Prefecture. Here is where Chikeiken guesthouse and restaurant was founded in 2004 by farmer and chef Mitsu Chonan, who welcomes visitors to the rustic old farmhouse that is her home. The name Chikeiken embodies old country traditions of sharing knowledge and experience (*chi*) while gathered to rest (*kei*) under farmhouse eaves (*ken*).



From left: Kitcho serves *osechi ryori* auspicious foods during the New Year, presented in *jubako* tiered lacquered boxes; Kitcho founder Teiichi Yuki.

Chikeiken serves simple traditional country dishes made from ingredients harvested from one season to the next: green and root vegetables from the farm's fields, edible wild plants and herbs gathered in nearby woods and hills, various pickled vegetables and dishes made using dried ingredients that include taro stems, daikon and herring. The flavors are mild, natural and characteristic of simple country home cooking.



Chikeiken chef and owner Mitsu Chonan

Yet even basic dishes like simmered vegetables, simmered dried herring and *goma-dofu* black sesame

tofu require considerable time and care to prepare. Dried herring, for example, is a traditional preserved food which is utterly transformed through the drying process, acquiring a rich umami and unique texture incomparable to that of raw herring. Making simmered dried herring requires mindful preparation that takes several days. Dining on such sincerely prepared dishes as this, accompanied by simmered fresh vegetables and locally grown rice, feels like being purified, body and soul. As Chonan asserts, "You can be healthy by eating foods of the season that delight your body." She makes all the dishes primarily by herself, but never seems overwhelmed. It's not that difficult, she says offhandedly,

as while one dish is simmering, other tasks can be performed.

The calligraphy, paintings and flower arrangements throughout the old wooden farmhouse are mostly Chonan's own creations. The country-style furnishings are tastefully arranged, and the subtle tableware made by a local potter complements the authenticity of the food. Just sitting down at a table in the spacious farmhouse dining room is restful and calming. In 2014, Tsuruoka was designated a UNESCO Creative City of Gastronomy. Since that time, Chikeiken and its discerning chef have become internationally known, hosting visitors from around the world. ◆



Traditional country-style dishes at Chikeiken: assorted vegetables, simmered dried herring, miso soup and rice.

#### cover

Tuna and sea bream sashimi presented in boxes decorated with *unkin-de*, a decorative term that refers to a "cloud brocade" pattern that integrates spring cherry blossoms and autumn foliage. This dish was served in autumn.

#### Author's profile

Ayako Ehara was born in 1943 in Shimane Prefecture, and graduated from Ochanomizu University. She holds a Ph.D. in Education and taught for many years at Tokyo Kasei Gakuin University, where she is currently professor emerita. A specialist in food culture, the history of food education and cookery science, Dr. Ehara is the author and editor of many publications, including *Katei Ryori no Kindai* ("Modern Home Cooking"; 2012); *Oishii Edo Gohan* ("Delicious Edo-period meals"; co-author, 2011); and *Nihon Shokumotsushi* ("History of Japanese foods"; co-author, 2009).



## CLOSE-UP JAPAN

Traditions and trends  
in Japanese food culture



Various retort foods, clockwise from bottom left: oden, cooked rice, cooking-concentrates for mabo-tofu and takikomi gohan, saba miso-ni, pasta sauce, stir-fry seasoning sauce and curry.

# Japanese Retort Foods

Retort foods have long been embraced by Japanese consumers who appreciate their freshness and convenience. Retort foods are produced by placing pre-cooked food in a pouch or container. This is hermetically sealed and heated under high pressure at around 120°C (250°F), a sterilization process that permits storage at room temperature for about three months to one year without preservatives. The thermal treatment and multi-layered construction of the pouch maintain food's fresh flavor and nutrient value.

Retort foods were first developed by the US Army in the late 1950s as lightweight substitutes for canned field rations. In 1969, retort foods were carried by the Apollo 11 moon

## Retort foods evolved in Japan

mission, and were dubbed the “food of the future.” The US consumer market was slow to embrace the concept, however, and it was in Japan that development of retort foods evolved. The first product to be made commercially available was a Japanese-made retort curry. Japan's rapid economic growth at the time was transforming daily lifestyles and spurring demand for quick, easy-to-prepare meals. In response, the single-serving curry involved simply warming the pouch in hot water. This curry became widely popular, and paved the way for a wave of other retort foods, including pasta sauces and soups.

Today, Japanese shoppers enjoy an enormous range of ready-to-eat retort foods that can be heated up in hot water or in a microwave. They can select from a variety of cooked rice to more complex Japanese traditional dishes, such as *saba miso-ni* (mackerel simmered in miso-based sauce) and *oden* hotpot. Time-pressed home cooks turn to retort seasoning sauces or cooking-concentrates to prepare dishes like *mabo-tofu* (tofu and ground meat in spicy sauce) or *takikomi gohan* (pilaf with meat and vegetables). Kikkoman markets a range of such seasoning sauces called *Uchi-no-Gohan* (literally, “my home meal”) that can be used to make easy home-style Japanese dishes like stir-fries or simmered dishes with only one or two added ingredients, such as meat or vegetables. Thanks to these and Japan's many other versatile retort products, busy consumers can always enjoy a good meal at home. ◆



Kikkoman's Uchi-no-Gohan Sukiyaki Niku Tofu (sukiyaki-style beef with tofu)



## JAPANESE STYLE

Perspectives on  
Japanese cuisine

# Aemono

The term *aemono* means dressed (*ae*) dishes. These are often made with fresh seasonal vegetables, including green beans, spinach, cucumber, daikon and yams that have been pre-prepared by cutting, boiling or frying. Sometimes sashimi or seafood may also be used. These are then dressed with a variety of seasonings that may

include soy sauce, vinegar, miso, sesame seeds, tofu or grated daikon.

*Aemono* are referred to by the name of the dressing used—for example, *goma-ae* involves vegetables dressed with ground sesame seeds (*goma*), soy sauce and sugar; *shira-ae* dressing is made of tofu mashed in a mortar,



*Ingen no goma-ae*, green beans with sesame dressing

mixed with parboiled vegetables seasoned with soy sauce and sugar. Other favorites are *sumiso-ae* dressing of vinegar, miso and sugar; *bainiku-ae*, *umeboshi* pickled Japanese apricot paste mixed with soy sauce and sugar; and *karashijoyu-ae*, a combination of Japanese hot mustard, soy sauce and dashi. ●



Mashing tofu until smooth



Mixing vegetables with *shira-ae* dressing



*Shira-ae*, vegetables dressed with creamy tofu

## TASTY TRAVEL



Mie



Miso soup with *Ise-ebi*

## Mie *Ise-ebi*

The *Ise-ebi* spiny Japanese lobster thrives along the rocky coastline of the Shima peninsula, in the Ise-shima region of Mie Prefecture. *Ise-ebi* feed on the abundant seaweed that grows here in the warm, nutrient-rich Kuroshio current. The best season for *Ise-ebi* is winter, when its plump white flesh is particularly sweet. *Ise-ebi* is considered a luxury, and can be prepared in various ways: as sashimi, often accompanied by an umami-rich miso soup made from the lobster head; or charcoal-grilled or simmered (*gusoku-ni*) in its spiny, articulated shell, which is commonly described as resembling samurai armor (*gusoku*). The shell, red when boiled, makes *Ise-ebi* an auspicious New Year's symbol whose color and name evoke the sacred Ise Jingu shrine. ●



## CHICKEN AND VEGETABLE SOY MILK STEW

The ingredients in this delicious stew—chicken, daikon, carrots and onion—are used in traditional Japanese-style soups and simmered dishes. The added herbs, celery and cream impart a more Western taste to the recipe.



◆ *Shiitake* mushroom

### Serves 2-3

524 kcal Protein 34.3 g Fat 31.6 g  
(per serving)

- 1 bay leaf
- 2-3 sprigs thyme
- 2-3 stems parsley
- 600 g / 1.3 lb. deboned chicken thighs\*
- Salt and pepper
- 140-150 g / 5 oz. daikon
- 2 medium carrots, total 120-130 g / 4 oz.
- 1 celery stalk, no leaves
- 1 onion, 140-150 g / 5 oz.
- 4 *shiitake* mushrooms
- Pure olive oil
- 300 ml / 1 ¼ C chicken broth
- 8 small mushrooms, mix of brown and white
- 4 T sake, optional
- 4 t Kikkoman Light Color Soy Sauce\*\*
- 200 ml / scant 1 C soy milk
- 1-1 ½ T cornstarch or potato starch, mixed with 2-3 T water
- Fresh cream, optional

- 1 Tie bay leaf, thyme and parsley together with string or wrap in cheesecloth.
- 2 Remove chicken skin if desired. Cut into 4 cm- / 1.5 in.- square pieces. Sprinkle lightly with salt and pepper.
- 3 Peel the daikon and carrots and cut into 8 mm- / 1/3 in.-thick slices. Then cut the daikon slices into halves or quarters. String the celery, and cut into about 1 cm- / 1/2 in.-thick slices. Cut onion into wedges. Cut *shiitake* mushrooms into halves.
- 4 In a stewing pot or heavy-bottomed pan, heat olive oil over medium heat. Lightly sauté daikon on both sides. Remove from pot, add chicken to sauté until crispy and golden brown on both sides. Set aside daikon and chicken on kitchen paper.
- 5 Add broth to the pot; loosen browned bits from bottom of pot and quickly bring to a boil. Add carrot, celery, onion and herbs. Bring to a boil again, lower heat and simmer for 8 minutes.
- 6 Add daikon and all mushrooms; add optional 4T sake and water to pot to barely cover all ingredients; bring to a boil. Lower heat, cover and simmer another 8 minutes.
- 7 Add soy sauce, chicken and soy milk into the pot. Taste and add more soy sauce or salt if needed. Bring to a boil, reduce heat, simmer for 8 minutes. Turn off heat and add dissolved cornstarch. Cook for another 2-3 minutes until it comes to a boil. Add salt and pepper to taste.
- 8 Serve in individual bowls. If a richer taste is preferred, pour fresh cream on top when eating.

\* May substitute deboned chicken breasts: lightly coat with flour before sautéing in Step 4 to prevent drying out.

\*\* 2 t Kikkoman Soy Sauce and 2/5 t salt may be substituted.

Recipe by Michiko Yamamoto

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



## SALMON RICE GARNISHED WITH SALMON CAVIAR



◆ Salmon caviar

### Serves 4

490 kcal Protein 44.3 g Fat 3.9 g  
(per serving)

- 400 ml / 1 2/3 C japonica rice
- 1 knob ginger
- 2-3 stems watercress, no leaves
- 300 g / 10 oz. salmon

### Simmering liquid

- 3 T water
- 3 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 3 T sake
- 2 T Kikkoman Manjo Mirin
- 60 g / 2 oz. salmon caviar

- 1 Wash rice and allow to drain in a colander for about 15 minutes.
- 2 Cut ginger into needle-thin strips.
- 3 Parboil watercress stems and drain, squeeze out excess water. Chop into small pieces, and set aside for garnish.
- 4 Remove salmon skin and cut the salmon into bite-size pieces. Parboil the salmon briefly\* (*see photo*) and set aside.
- 5 Place the ingredients for simmering liquid in a saucepan.
- 6 Add the ginger and salmon, then simmer over medium heat for 3-4 minutes until salmon is cooked. Remove ginger and salmon; save the simmered liquid.
- 7 In a rice cooker, cook the rice together with a mixture totaling 480 ml / 2 C of simmered salmon liquid and water. After the rice has cooked, add the salmon, close the lid and allow to steam for about ten minutes.
- 8 Gently fold the salmon into the cooked rice. Serve in individual rice bowls, garnished with the watercress and salmon caviar.



\* Place salmon pieces on a strainer and gently lower into a pot of boiling water. Lift the strainer after a few seconds, or when salmon changes color.

Recipe by Kikkoman Corporation



# Kikkoman Branding Appeals to Broader Markets



Kikkoman T-shirt designed by Isaac Morris Ltd.



In collaboration with Primitive Skateboarding, the Kikkoman logo and image of its iconic soy sauce dispenser appear on skateboards and apparel.

The history of Kikkoman Soy Sauce can be traced back 350 years. Today, Kikkoman Soy Sauce is produced at ten factories located both in and outside of Japan, and is distributed to over one hundred countries around the world. Throughout the company's long history of making soy sauce for the global market, we have taken care to introduce soy sauce not just as an authentic Japanese seasoning, but as a respectful complement to the world's diverse food cultures. In doing so, Kikkoman strives to find ways of pairing its soy sauce with local cuisines, thus creating opportunities for people to encounter new and delicious flavors.

Those familiar with Kikkoman may immediately associate the brand with soy sauce, or with the company's longstanding

heritage, or perhaps with Japanese cuisine. In an innovative corporate challenge, in 2013 Kikkoman began to license its brand in order to broaden its appeal to a wider range of generations and markets. Through its Kikkoman brand licensing business, a number of products have already been launched, all featuring the famous Kikkoman trademarks. We hope that such Kikkoman-themed items will engage those not quite familiar with Kikkoman, and inspire them to explore and try out our products.

An example of this Kikkoman branding endeavor is a T-shirt designed by US apparel brand, Isaac Morris Ltd., with which sales began in 2014. To date, over 420,000 shirts featuring the iconic Kikkoman emblem have been sold globally. Sales of

collaborative products between Kikkoman and California-based Primitive Skateboarding began in 2019. Primitive Skateboarding is a premium skateboard equipment and apparel company that sponsors professional skateboarders, and which markets an expansive line of skateboard-related products. This unexpected collaboration between Kikkoman and Primitive Skateboarding was noted by celebrities and the products became a hot topic on social media.

Through this licensing business, we aim to reach out and introduce the Kikkoman brand to all generations around the world. In doing so, we hope our products will help everyone share a table with their loved ones as they discover exciting new flavor experiences together. ●

