

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



THE JAPANESE TABLE

Japanese Tea

The Culture of *Chanoyu*

by Mitsuru Shirai

In our continuing exploration of the world of Japanese tea, this issue's feature considers the art of chanoyu, the Japanese tea ceremony—a complex discipline that has inspired the philosophical and aesthetic spirit of Japan.

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Japanese Tea

The Culture of *Chanoyu*



Koicha and wagashi



Usucha and wagashi

A phrase that originates from the culture of the *chanoyu* tea ceremony is *ichigo ichie*, which translates literally as “a meeting that occurs once in a lifetime,” conveying the notion that each encounter is unique and special. When a host invites guests for a tea ceremony, they share the awareness that such an occasion is significant, and thus commit to and engage in the experience with utmost sincerity. The culture of *chanoyu* is not simply about the drinking of tea; it involves respect for others, courtesy and the spirit of hospitality.

Modern *chanoyu* culture dates back some 450 years to the latter half of the sixteenth century. Tea master Sen no Rikyu (1522-1591) elevated the practice to a sophisticated art, founded on the Japanese concepts of *wabi* and *sabi*—an appreciation for simplicity and serenity, wherein concentration on the act of preparing and drinking of tea in the tranquil space of the tea room grants calmness and introspection.

Many other tea masters, including disciples of Rikyu, continued to develop the culture of *chanoyu*, and thus formulated diverse styles, or “schools.” One of these instills an element of “elegant beauty” called

kirei sabi into the *wabi-sabi* aesthetic. In the late eighteenth century, *senchado* using *sencha* infused tea leaves, rather than powdered *matcha*, were founded, with an emphasis on spiritual refinement and wisdom. Among the most famous tea schools today are those tracing their lineage to Rikyu, including the Omotesenke, Urasenke and Mushakojisenke schools. Others reflect their samurai origins, including the Enshu and Sekishu schools, while *sencha* practices include the Ogawa and Hoen schools. Each revolves around its own unique *chanoyu* utensils and procedures, which differ slightly from one school to the other; yet all share the same spirit of mutual respect, courtesy and hospitality.

Tea Ceremony

There are certain established elements involved in a tea ceremony. For a formal gathering, the host will invite several guests; the venue is typically a four-and-a-half mat (or smaller) tea room. On their approach to this room, guests walk along a simple path that passes through a small, well-tended Japanese-style garden. The entrance to the tea room is called *nijiri-guchi*, a small opening sixty

centimeters square—just large enough for one person to stoop and pass through. Once inside, guests direct their attention to a recessed alcove called the *tokonoma*, where they may admire a hanging scroll and/or an arrangement of flowers.

Next, to complement the tea ceremony, a special *kaiseki ryori* meal is served which features fresh seasonal fish and vegetables. Accompanied by sake, the meal basically comprises soup, a *mukozuke* side dish, a *nimono* simmered dish and a *yakimono* grilled dish. The food is delicately arranged in harmony with the ware upon which it is served, and laid out on individual trays called



A Japanese-style garden is visible through the small *nijiri-guchi* entrance of the tea room.



In preparing the tea, called *temae*, the tea master ladles hot water into a tea bowl.

zen. To finish the meal, guests enjoy Japanese *wagashi* confectionery, which concludes the first half of the tea ceremony. After a brief interval, the guests reenter the tea room, where tea is then prepared by their host in accordance with a set of beautifully and precisely choreographed movements called *temae*. Two types of *matcha* are prepared: a thick version called *koicha*, followed by the lighter *usucha*. The formal tea ceremony ends here. More popular, simplified tea ceremonies may offer only *usucha* and *wagashi*; these are usually held in a large room where many guests can be accommodated.

Utensils of Tea Culture

A number of utensils are used in the tea ceremony. Some of these include the containers which hold the *matcha*—either a lacquered *natsume*, or a ceramic *cha-ire*; a *cha-shaku* tea scoop to measure out the *matcha* powder; a *cha-sen* bamboo whisk for mixing the tea; a *kama* iron pot for boiling water; and a tea bowl from which guests drink the prepared tea. To enhance the atmosphere, the host will have selected a special calligraphic or painted hanging scroll to place in the *tokonoma*, along with seasonal flowers arranged in a bamboo or ceramic

container. There are many tea utensils still in use today which are historically and artistically significant, some of which are designated as National Treasures. The simple appreciation of seeing such priceless items is one of the pleasures of *chanoyu*.

Chanoyu Past and Future

The distinctive charm of *chanoyu* has evolved through the centuries in response to the relevant customs and routines of daily life. As an example, there is a style of tea ceremony devised some 150 years ago that involves performing *temae* while seated on a chair at a table. *Chanoyu* culture has been refined gradually throughout its long history: the original intent of merely drinking tea has expanded, as people indulged a desire to embellish this act with lovely utensils, or to create an exceptional tea room where host and guests might experience a truly intimate space. Throughout history, *chanoyu* can be said to have exerted a tremendous influence on the Japanese way of life as a whole, prompting advancement in the arts and crafts, inspiring talent and creativity in architectural and garden design, influencing

the refinement of personal comportment and manners—even kindling transformations in Japanese cuisine.

In times like ours, when our values and ways of life are so diverse, and in the face of global conflict, surely the essence of *chanoyu*—which elevates respect for others in the spirit of hospitality while promoting feelings of peace—is needed more today than ever before. ◆

cover

Mixing *matcha* and hot water with a *cha-sen* bamboo whisk

Author's profile

Mitsuru Shirai was born in 1957. After graduating from Osaka Prefecture University, he served in the Shizuoka prefectural government and has long been involved in the promotion of tea in his roles as general manager of planning in the World Green Tea Association; manager of Shizuoka Prefecture Tea and Agricultural Production Division; director of Shizuoka Prefecture Department of Economy and Industry; and vice-director of Fujinokuni Cha no Miyako Museum (Tea Museum, Shizuoka). He is a qualified Japanese tea instructor, a Chinese tea artist and Chinese tea sommelier. His authored works include *Yabukita no subete* ("All about Yabukita cultivar of tea"; 2007); *No no fukei* ("Agricultural essays"; 2010-2017); and *Ryokucha tsushin* ("World green tea bulletin"; 2007).



CLOSE-UP JAPAN

Traditions and trends
in Japanese food culture



Clockwise from left: Pouring a cup of sake; *koji* being added to steamed rice; the fermentation process.

Sake

There are some 1,400 sake breweries in Japan today, ranging from large-scale companies to small artisanal makers, and together, they produce over 10,000 brands of sake. This number reflects the country's many regions that boast the essential ingredients needed to brew superior sake: pure spring water, outstanding locally grown sake rice, and special *koji* (*Aspergillus oryzae*). Sake is brewed by adding *koji* mold to steamed rice, resulting in a fermentation process that converts the rice starch to sugar. *Moto* yeast, also known as *shubo*, or "mother of sake," is added to induce alcoholic fermentation of the sugar.



A ball of fresh cedar leaves hangs outside a sake store.

Sake is made from
rice, *koji* and water

Carefully controlled, this simultaneous and complex process produces sake—and it is unique in the world. Every region has its own distinctive brands or types of sake, but the prefectures of Hyogo, Kyoto and Niigata are considered Japan's predominant sake-brewing areas.

Sake is made using only three basic ingredients: rice, rice *koji* and water. Successful sake production revolves around the precision and skill of an experienced chief brewer called the *toji*, who directs the entire process, scrutinizing not only each ingredient, but subtle environmental variations such as temperature. It takes time to become an experienced *toji*, and as Japan's population ages, the number

of *toji* are declining. Nowadays, the owners of breweries are increasingly taking on this task themselves.

Sake has long been linked to the worship of deities in Japan. Omiwa Shrine in Nara Prefecture enshrines a deity of sake, and on November 14 of each year, the shrine hangs a ball made of green cedar leaves in its honor. Traditionally, upon producing a new batch of sake, brewers suspend such a ball, called *sugitama* or *sakabayashi*, under the eaves of their stores. A similar tradition is seen in Europe, where a tree branch is hung when a new batch of wine is produced.

With the growth of tourism in Japan, organized tours have sprung up to introduce visitors to local sake breweries. Also popular are *sakagura biraki* events, where breweries hold an annual open house with behind-the-scenes tours and tastings to celebrate the annual production of their new sake. More specialized tours involve introducing sake-lovers to sake tastings at various *izakaya* Japanese-style pubs. ●



Kuzu Starch



Kuzu starch

The *kuzu* vine, or Japanese arrowroot, is a leguminous plant that grows wild in Japan. While Western dictionaries refer to the plant as “kudzu,” the preferred Japanese spelling is *kuzu*. From ancient times, *kuzu* has been eaten as food, and has also been consumed for medicinal purposes to maintain health. The traditional method of starch extraction involves cutting up thirty to fifty year-old mature vine roots and crushing them into fiber. These are soaked and rinsed repeatedly in water to extract the starch, which is precipitated and dried. This laborious process takes over a year, producing only seven kilograms

of starch from approximately 100 kilograms of raw root—the reason why pure *kuzu* starch is so rare, and is often sold mixed with other starches, such as potato. Dissolved and heated in water, *kuzu* starch becomes transparent with a viscous consistency that imparts a delicate, smooth texture. Used extensively in Japanese cuisine, including *wagashi* traditional Japanese confectionery, it features in dishes such as *kuzu-yu*, *kuzu* mixed with water and sugar and heated; *kuzu manju*, adzuki bean paste wrapped in translucent *kuzu* “jelly”; and *kuzu-kiri*, eaten with brown sugar syrup. ◆



From left: *Kuzu-yu*, *kuzu manju*, *kuzu-kiri* with brown sugar syrup

TASTY TRAVEL



Gunma



Various forms of *konnyaku*

Gunma *Konnyaku*

Gunma Prefecture is Japan’s largest producer of the konjac plant, whose starchy, edible yam is processed with calcium hydroxide to make *konnyaku* or konjac, a translucent, gelatinous food. Its consistency is somewhat like jelly, but firm and “bouncy.” *Konnyaku* is composed mainly of water, has nearly zero calories, yet is filling and fiber-rich; with almost no flavor of its own, it takes on the flavors of whatever it’s cooked with, while adding texture. *Konnyaku* is served in various forms depending on the dish: triangular *konnyaku* wedges appear in *oden*; *konnyaku* slices are boiled and glazed with miso in *miso dengaku*; and the traditional way of serving delicious *konnyaku shirataki* noodles is in *sukiyaki*. ◆



Konjac yams



SHRIMP WITH TOMATO-SOY MILK SAUCE



◆ Tomato passata

Appetizer serves 4

175 kcal Protein 17.7 g Fat 6.2 g
(per serving)

- 8 g / 0.3 oz. *kuzu* starch*
- 40 ml / 2 T + 2 t water
- 20 black tiger or other shrimp or prawns, 450-500 g / approx. 1 lb., peeled and deveined
- 2 t sake
- 2 T pure olive oil or vegetable oil
- 2 t Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 1/4 t chili mix**
- 200 ml / 6-7 oz. tomato passata, or strained tomatoes
- 120 ml / 4 oz. soy milk
- 1/4 t salt; adjust based on salt content of tomato passata
- 1/3 t grated lemon zest, or other citrus such as grated orange peel
- Black olives, sliced in rounds

In traditional established Japanese restaurants, *kuzu* starch is a crucial ingredient used for thickening liquids, as it produces a smooth and velvety texture. *Kuzu* starch produces thick sauces with a mayonnaise-like consistency, without the need for any oil. Soy milk is used here, as it does not separate even with the acidity of tomato, whereas dairy milk would. This sauce is ideal for use in vegetarian recipes.

1 *Kuzu* starch is lumpy, so break up any chunks. In a small bowl, mix 2 T + 2 t water with the starch. *Kuzu* starch settles after a while, so mix again just before using in Steps 3 and 4.

2 Sprinkle the shrimp with sake and mix well. Add in the olive oil, soy sauce and chili mix and stir together.

3 In a saucepan, mix the tomato passata and soy milk, and set over medium heat. When foam just begins to form, remove from heat, add 2 T of the *kuzu* starch and water mixture. Return to low heat and stir constantly with a spatula.

4 Allow to simmer while stirring until the sauce thickens; keep over heat and stir for another 5-7 more minutes. If sauce doesn't thicken, add more *kuzu* starch and water mixture little by little. Bring just to the boiling point and then lower heat. Stir in the salt and lemon zest. Turn off heat and allow the sauce to cool to room temperature.

5 Use non-stick aluminum foil*** in a frying pan to cook the shrimp. Preheat the pan, and cook one side of the shrimp for about 2-3 minutes over low heat; turn over and cook the other side for about 1 minute. Cover the pan with a lid and heat for another 1-2 minutes. To determine doneness, check to see if it is easily pierced by a bamboo skewer. Set aside. Save the cooked shrimp juice to use when serving.

6 Place the shrimp in a serving dish, pour on any shrimp juice, and spoon the tomato-soy milk sauce over them. Serve garnished with slices of black olives.

* Please see page 5 of this issue to read about *kuzu*.

** Chili powder blended with other powdered spices, e.g. cumin, oregano, clove

*** Using non-stick aluminum foil in a frying pan prevents scorching and serves to keep the cooked juices. Alternatively, shrimp can be grilled.

Recipe by Michiko Yamamoto

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



SHIRA-AE VEGETABLE SALAD WITH CREAMY TOFU DRESSING

Shira-ae is a traditional dish of vegetables dressed with creamy, mashed tofu. *Shira* means “white” and *ae* means “to dress.” Shrimp or snap peas could be added for a tasty variation, while unsalted peanut butter can be a possible substitute for ground sesame.



● Wood ear mushroom

Serves 4

174 kcal Protein 22.2 g Fat 16.1 g
(per serving)

- 2 dried *kikurage* wood ear mushrooms
- 150 g / 5.3 oz. carrot (about 2 medium size)
- 40 g / 1.4 oz. string beans
- 1 block of *konnyaku* konjac,* approx. 240 g / 8.5 oz.

Simmering liquid

- 240 ml / 1 C dashi stock
- 1 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 4 t granulated sugar
- 1/2 t salt

Dressing

- 1 block firm tofu, approx. 400 g / 14 oz.
- 4 T roasted white sesame seeds**
- 2 T granulated sugar
- 2 t Kikkoman Soy sauce
- 1/2 t salt

1 In a bowl filled with ample water, soak the dried wood ear mushrooms for about 15 minutes, or according to package instructions, and drain. Remove the hard mushroom tips and cut into thin strips. Set aside.

2 Peel the carrot and cut into julienne strips 3 cm / 1 in. long. Remove the strings from the beans and parboil them in lightly salted hot water, then drain. Cut them into angled slices.

3 Cut the *konnyaku* into slices 5 mm / 0.2 in. thick, then into thin 5 mm strips. Parboil and drain.

4 Put the simmering liquid ingredients into a pot. Add the mushroom, carrot and *konnyaku*, and allow to come to a boil over medium heat. Reduce heat and simmer while stirring with cooking chopsticks or a wooden spatula until most of the liquid has evaporated. Add string beans, mix briefly with the other ingredients, remove from heat and allow to cool.

5 Cut the tofu into 4 equal pieces. Boil in a saucepan for 1 minute, then remove. Drain, wrap with a paper towel and squeeze out excess water lightly.

6 In a mortar, grind the white sesame seeds with a pestle to an almost smooth state. Place tofu and ground sesame in a food processor and blend until creamy. Then add the other dressing ingredients and continue to mix well in the processor.

7 Drain the simmered mushroom, carrot, *konnyaku* and string beans. Mix these with the tofu-sesame dressing in a bowl, and spoon out into a serving dish.

* Please see page 5 of this issue to read about *konnyaku*.

** May substitute 2 T Japanese white sesame paste or tahini.



Wrap the World Kikkoman Advances Food Culture Exchanges with TEMAKI



From left: *Temaki* sushi-making party at Kikkoman Marketing & Planning Asia Pte. Ltd. in Singapore; making *temaki* at Kikkoman Sales USA, Inc. in San Francisco.

Kikkoman’s corporate philosophy is to promote the international exchange of food culture. This has inspired company activities that spread Japan’s food culture to the rest of the world, while also introducing other wonderful food cultures to Japan. For the Olympic and Paralympic Games Tokyo 2020 and beyond, Kikkoman has begun to contribute to the international exchange of food culture with the theme, TEMAKI. *Temaki* sushi literally means “hand rolled sushi,” and is made by spreading vinegared rice on a sheet of nori seaweed,

placing fillings on top, and then rolling up the nori by hand. Something simple that anyone can make, *temaki* is usually enjoyed together with family and friends in Japan today.

Under the slogan, “Wrap the World,” Kikkoman proposes TEMAKI, as based on *temaki* sushi, because it embodies the concept of children and adults together around the world, wrapping or rolling up their favorite ingredients, and eating their special *temaki* around a shared table. We want Kikkoman Soy Sauce to be the essential seasoning that is right in the middle of those happy tables.

As part of the TEMAKI Project, on October 28, 2018, a team of 100 members from the Kikkoman Group attempted and won the Guinness World Records™ title for making the most *temaki* sushi rolls in three

minutes. Their goal was to make over 600 *temaki* during that short time, and they achieved it with a grand total of 694 *temaki* rolls.

From November 2018 to January 2019, Kikkoman also held a “Temaki” Photo Contest for Kikkoman Group members around the world. Submissions included recipes and photos of unconventional *temaki*, and featured the friendly smiles of those making them. In addition, the “Wrap the World” TEMAKI Project website features global *temaki* recipes created at Kikkoman bases all over the world, as a way of sharing both the fun of making *temaki* and the global appeal of soy sauce. The TEMAKI Project is set to continue its activities in FY2019. The Kikkoman Group will always work together to contribute to the international exchange of food culture. ●



From left: Image of a “bouquet” of *temaki* from the Temaki Photo Contest; a selection of Japanese *temaki* sushi.

Kikkoman TEMAKI Project website:
www.kikkoman.co.jp/temaki/en/index.html



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