The Immigrants Who Introduced Japanese Foods to the Americas (Part 1: North America)

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When speaking with Nikkei (Japanese immigrants and their descendants residing in a foreign country), I am sometimes struck by their words and attitudes. They cause me to reflect upon the meaning of "Japaneseness" and Japan's tradition. I still remember the enlightening sensation I felt when a second-generation Nikkei told me that since she learned of the Japanese phrase "*okage-sama de*" (I am what I am because of you), she had a great desire to pass the Japanese culture's deep appreciation of gratitude on to the next generation.

It is often said that living in a foreign culture, particularly in a multicultural society, causes us to become more cognizant of our own culture and to try to consciously maintain it. Certainly, being exposed to other cultures, immigrants are known to become more conscious of their own culture, and to strive to pass it on to subsequent generations. We have much to learn from Japanese immigrants and their descendants. In the US and Brazil, both of which have received a large number of Japanese immigrants since the end of the 19th century, Japanese immigrants were once concentrated in enclaves called Japantown, Nihonmachi, etc. The remnants of these neighborhoods are retained in some cities, as in San Francisco,

Japantown, San Francisco

Los Angeles and São Paulo, with Japanese restaurants, general stores, bookstores and other Japanese-themed shops still operating. Japantown in San Francisco had a record of the following professions and business establishments as of 1904: Government official, bank, newspaper and magazine, school teacher, physician, dentist, art supply store, grocery store, restaurant, Western restaurant, barber, hotel, shoemaker, photo studio, mover, employment agency, cosmetics and accessories shop, flower shop, laundry, bookstore, watch and clock shop, interpreter, greengrocer, confectioner, shooting gallery, pool hall, bathhouse, clothing store and cleaner.

It really was a town of Japanese. In some places where the Japanese neighborhood has dissolved, its traces are seen in still-active Japanese-owned stores. Typically, such stores include *yorozu-ya* and Japanese confectioners, with histories of several decades or a century since establishment.

The World of *Yorozu-ya*

Yorozu-ya may more commonly be called general stores, or grocery stores with general merchandise in addition to foods. However, these terms do not fully reflect the functions of *yorozu-ya*. In addition to foods, they offer almost all the necessities of daily life, including kitchenware, china, stationery, cleaning supplies, bathroom supplies, clothes, Shinto and Buddhist altars and their articles, souvenirs, magazines, books, musical instruments, CDs, accessories, and hobby items. And this is not all. As *yorozu-ya* bulletin boards were usually filled with notices and flyers, local immigrants often went just for information and updates, both official and unofficial, regarding community events, job availabilities, ceremonial occasions, and other news. Many of these stores also served as employment agencies. *Yorozu* denotes the comprehensiveness of their services, where Japanese immigrants can still find a condensed version of just about everything concerning life in Japan. For others, it is a place where they can get a glimpse of the Japanese lifestyle and atmosphere.

Canned *inarizushi-no-moto*

Today's *yorozu-ya* houses a small world transcending time and space. You can find stationery, tools and other household goods that can no longer be found even in Japan, items that were apparently popular in Japan at some

point in the past, and things that spark a sense of nostalgia. Browsing in a *yorozu-ya* is like treasure hunting. I have found some interesting goods, such as canned foods containing *inarizushi-no-moto*,[1] *chirashizushi-no-moto*,[2] *makizushi-no-moto*,[3] *sukiyaki-no-tomo*,[4] and *fukujinzuke*.[5]

1) Deep fried and seasoned tofu slices
2), 3) & 4) Cooked and seasoned vegetables used to make *chirashizushi*, *makizushi* and sukiyaki.
5) Finely chopped vegetables pickled in a *shoyu*-based sauce

Anzen's sign

Japanese Flavors Being Passed Down through Canned Foods

I encountered these canned goods in a Nikkei general merchandise store named Anzen, in Portland, Oregon. Established in 1905, the store has survived more than a century, and it's a real *yorozu-ya*. The current president, Mr. Hiroshi Matsushima, is the fourth owner. Today these kinds of stores are quite rare. Anzen is a living museum, and just browsing in the store is fun.

Now, with the progress of food refrigeration and pascalization technologies, as well as improved transportation, these varieties of canned *sushi-no-moto* and pickles seem as though they belong in another era. Yet, they have good reason for being here. Hiroshi Matsushima explained, "The customer you saw a short while ago comes to Portland to visit her mother every month, and on her way back home she drops by this store to pick up Japanese foodstuffs. She drives 4 hours each way." Anzen's customers are not limited to residents of Portland or even the State of Oregon. Orders have come from as far as the State of Montana. Some come several times a year to buy foods by the case. The regular patrons include farmers who come every month or so to purchase bulk quantities of rice, soy sauce, canned foods, etc. They buy several cases of canned foods at a time, with each case containing two or four dozen cans. For customers who were unable to travel to Portland, the store accepted orders by mail, and delivered via a parcel delivery service. For these customers, perishability has always been a concern. The goods that have been delivered this way include canned foods, soy sauce, magazines and books. Several people have been known to form a group to place an order. These groups were often Japanese (such as war brides) and those who had lived in Japan (including soldiers who had returned home) and their families. In the store, I saw an old American man accompanying a Japanese American woman, making a joke in Japanese, and non-Nikkei young men and women, as well as some families, buying Japanese rice, Japanese sweets and other items. In the past there were other important customers–not least, Japanese from the work camps.


Shigeru Kojima

A research fellow at the Institute for Migration and Ethnic Culture Studies, Waseda University, Shigeru Kojima was born in Sanjo City, Niigata Prefecture. As a student at Sophia University, he went to study in Brazil and earned a master's degree in Social History at the Graduate School, Federal University of Paraná. After having traveled throughout Brazil by bus, he became a fervent admirer of the country, and was inspired to engage in immigrant studies in Curitiba, the capital of the state of Paraná. He lived there for roughly 10 years before returning to Japan. He worked at a university and elsewhere, and helped establish the JICA Yokohama Japanese Overseas Migration Museum, where he currently works in the Project Management Division. He is interested in the history of Japanese immigrants, the identity of the Nikkei, and changes in Nikkei communities in multicultural societies such as Brazil, the US and Canada. His main research themes include festivals, ethnic enclaves, foods and translation.

Life in the Camps and Japanese Foods

By "camps," I am not referring to internment camps or recreational camping. Hiroshi's brother, Mr. Yoji Matsushima, the 3rd owner of the store, explained that the people in camps were those working at lumber mills or in railroad construction. At one time, more than a hundred Japanese laborers were living in camps at one location. The groups of laborers were called "gangs," so a group working in railroad construction was called a railroad gang. In the freight trains, there was usually a dining car with cooks who prepared meals. The laborers slept in the freight cars. When work at one site was finished, they moved in the freight cars to the next site.

Anzen was founded in 1905 as Matsushima Shoten, and later renamed to Teikoku Co. The store used to wholesale canned goods and vegetables for Japanese laborers via the railroad companies. The store also sold food, clothing, shoes and many other items to individuals, and provided hotel bookings and ticket services. Thus, almost all the needs of these Japanese laborers were covered by imports from Japan through Japanese-owned general stores, and the laborers did not consume much of the foods and products that most Americans did.

Teikoku Co. advertisement (*Hokubei Nenkan*, 1936)

Diet of Japanese Americans

This practice was not unique to the gangs in camps, but common among Japanese Americans living in Portland, as well. Yoji Matsushima said that in his youth, his family mostly consumed foods imported from Japan and rarely ate what Americans ate. They sometimes had toast, eggs and coffee for breakfast, but for lunch and dinner, they had rice and either noodles or *miso* soup, often with canned foods. In his home, chicken and ground beef were stir fried with vegetables and seasoned with soy sauce. Canned *mirinzuke* (pickled vegetables) and canned *kamaboko* (steamed fish cake) sold well. Children lived on Japanese foods, though they often had bread, milk and meat when they grew older. Hiroshi

Canned *kamaboko* label (Property of Homer Yasui)

Matsushima also remembers that the family's staple dish was rice, and that they had bread only occasionally. They rarely ate beef, partly because of its high price. Side dishes were canned foods, such as *fukujinzuke* and *kamaboko*, or fresh fish from a Japanese-owned fish shop. For *oden* hotpot ingredients, canned *kamaboko* was used, along with *konnyaku* (arum root gelatin) that some other Japanese made. For fish dishes, Japanese black porgy or salmon was broiled or stewed, then seasoned with soy sauce and eaten with vegetables. Vinegared dishes and *takuan* (pickled *daikon* radish) were prepared at home. Due to their diet, Americans often teased the brothers for smelling fishy, or even shunned them due to the smell of *takuan* when they were small.

Japanese Food Imports and Takuan Trade

The business of importing mainly Japanese foods and everyday sundries from Japan for Japanese immigrants was called the Takuan trade. Records from the 19th century show the Japanese working in Hawaii as "convention contract laborers" imported sake from Japan. The most popular imports were condiments with a long shelf life, such as soy sauce, as well as *miso* and dried foods. As the imports included *takuan*, the business came to be called Takuan trade. One reason for this moniker may be that *takuan* was especially noted for its peculiar smell, or was symbolic of Japanese food when the diversity of available foods was not what it is today.

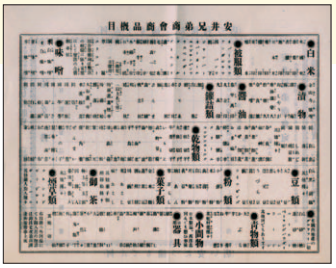
In 1910, five years after the foundation of Matsushima Shoten, there were 242 grocery stores, 21 trading firms, 42 tofu shops, 36 confectioners, 35 fish shops, 2 soy sauce breweries, and 4 noodle factories owned by Japanese American proprietors in the US, not including Hawaii. These numbers continued to increase thereafter. For instance, the number of Japanese grocery stores and general stores grew to 273 in 1914 and 305 in 1917, and import/export trading firms increased from 6 in 1908 to 34 in 1917. In Portland alone, there were 9 grocery stores besides Matsushima Shoten in 1908.

The S. Ban Company, which was based in the State of Oregon, ran a wide range of businesses, like today's general trading companies. The M. Furuya Co.,which opened its main store in Seattle, Washington in 1892,

S. Ban Company advertisement (*Nichibei Nenkan*, 1910)

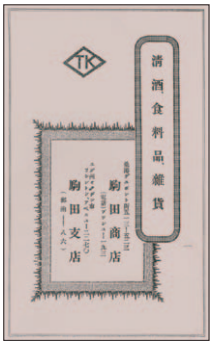
M. Furuya Co. advertisement (*Nichibei Nenkan*, 1910)

was a pioneer in the Takuan trade.With a branch in Vancouver, the company was widely known among Nikkei. Uwajimaya, which is the largest Asian food importer/exporter and retailer in the Pacific Northwest, started as a *kamaboko* and *satsumaage* (deep-fried fish cake) shop in 1928 in Tacoma, Washington. Hood River, roughly 100 km inland from Portland, was home to the Yasui Brothers Company. Its inventory records, which have been kept to this day, clearly indicate that even this store in this small town carried a very wide variety of merchandise. In those days, while the Japanese American populations in Portland and Seattle were approx. 1,300 and 7,400, respectively, there were roughly 40 import/export firms and general stores in the two cities. This means that there was one store selling Japanese merchandise for every 100 or 200 Japanese American residents. Records show that as of 1948, even after the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII, there were 10 stores in Portland, 17 import/export firms in San Francisco, and 9 trading firms, 8 stores and 22 grocery stores in Seattle.


Inventory of Yasui Brothers Company (Property of Homer Yasui)

Yokohama and the Takuan Trade

Many of the merchants specializing in importing foods and general merchandise from Japan to Nikkei general stores and *yorozu-ya* in the US had stores/offices in Yokohama and Kobe. Yokohama in particular was home to many firms in the Takuan trade. One of the pioneers there was Komada & Co. Its founder, Mr. Tsunesaburo Komada, went to the US in 1890 and ran an import/export business for food and Japanese general merchandise in San Francisco. The Komada papers (documents related to the Komada family), maintained in the Yokohama Archives of History, indicate that in the 1900s, the company dealt with sake brewing, soy sauce brewing, and canning companies in Japan, and wholesaled products to Nikkei stores in San Francisco, Seattle and Portland. Later, Tsunesaburo Komada established the North American Mercantile Company (NAMCO), and played an important role in the Takuan trade. NAMCO brand canned foods often appeared in newspaper ads and were widely distributed. From the labels of *takuan*,



Komada & Co. advertisement (*Nichibei Nenkan*, 1905)

North American Mercantile Company advertisement (*Nichibei Nenkan*, 1909)

gomoku-no-moto[6] and other canned foods that are included in the Komada papers, we can see that the *takuan* itself was sent canned, that canned *gomoku-no-moto* had already existed at least as early as the 1930s, and that both were long-time sellers.

6) Cooked and seasoned vegetables for use in *gomoku* rice.

Homare takuan label
(Property of Yokohama Archives of History)

Canned *gomoku-no-moto* label (1937)
(Property of Yokohama Archives of History)

Surviving Canned Foods

The canned foods introduced at the beginning of this article, *inarizushi-no-moto*, *chirashizushi-no-moto*, *makizushi-no-moto*, *sukiyaki-no-tomo* and *fukujinzuke*, are still available today. *Gomoku-no-moto*, and vegetables such as bamboo shoots and *fuki* (Japanese butterbur), as well as *konnyaku* in a block form and *shirataki* (*konnyaku* noodles), are also sold canned. Until the not too distant past, tofu and Japanese taro were also imported in canned form. According to Yoji Matsushima, big sellers among the canned foods were bamboo shoots, *fukujinzuke* and *narazuke* (white melon pickled in sake lees). Canned *fukujinzuke* is still available and seems to be a consistent seller. A 3rd generation Japanese

Canned *chirashizushi-no-moto*

Canned *makizushi-no-moto*

Canned *sukiyaki-no-tomo*

Canned *fukujinzuke*

Canned *gomoku-no-moto* label (Property of Fujita Canning Co.)

Canned boiled bamboo shoots label
(Property of Fujita Canning Co.)

Canned boiled *fuki* label
(Property of Fujita Canning Co.)

Canned boiled *shirataki* label
(Property of Fujita Canning Co.)

Canned *konnyaku* label
(Property of Fujita Canning Co.)

Canned tofu label
(Property of Fujita Canning Co.)

Canned boiled Japanese taro label
(Property of Fujita Canning Co.)

American I met told me that her family often eats it even today. Unlike the red *fukujinzuke* in Japan, this canned version is a darker color with quite a bit of soy sauce used, and tastes sweeter. Although too sweet for the palate of most people in today's Japan, it is a familiar taste to Japanese Americans. I was told that canned eel used to be another popular item. Although canned eel is difficult to find today due to the prevalence of vacuum-packed eel, many Japanese Americans prefer it because they are accustomed to its flavor, and because its firmer texture is better suited for use in sushi rolls. Yoji Matsushima said that he was absolutely sure that every Japanese American had canned bamboo shoots and eel.

Canned eel advertisement
(year unknown) (Property of Japanese Overseas Migration Museum)

We can learn a lot by looking at the can labels in the collection of the Japan Canners Association. Many have a minimum of Japanese writing, in some cases none at all, with a Japanese style design. The variety is abundant, ranging from seafood products such as salmon, crab, skipjack tuna, octopus, scallop and clam, to vegetables such as bamboo shoots, *fuki* and Japanese taro, as well as fruits such as *mikan* (mandarin oranges), pineapple, white peach and apricot. It is also known that foodstuffs and dishes familiar to Japanese, such as sukiyaki, Japanese curry, *kombu* kelp roll, and even a version of chop suey were sent canned. Among the labels I noticed an unfamiliar dish named pork *hama-yaki*, produced by Teikoku Co. in Yokohama. Of particular interest were the names of pickles and simmered dishes that I have never heard of in Japan. Shown below is the complete list of names ending either with *zuke* (meaning pickled or marinated) or with *ni* (meaning stewed) found on the labels in the collection of the Japan Canners Association.

Chikuzenni, *Surugani*, *Shimizuni*, *Tokaini*, *Tosani*, *Fujimini*, *Shigureni*, *Yamatoni*, *Kanroni*, *Mizuni*, *Amani*, *Tairyoni*, *Heiwani*, *Goshikini*, *Satsukini*, *Katsuo-Yasaini*, *Bunkani*, *Manpukuni*, *Miyakoni*, *Chidorini*, *Mikadoni*, *Fukurokuni*, *Tokiwani*, *Takasagoni*, *Sportsni*, *Fukokuni*, *Koshoni*, *Fukujinzuke*, *Tokyozuke*, *Tokiwazuke* and *Koshijizuke*.

Canned *Tokyozuke* advertisement
(1957) (Property of Japanese Overseas Migration Museum)

I don't have any clear idea how half the foods listed above are prepared or seasoned, or how different they are from one another, though some experts in the field may be able to say. In any event, we can see that ingenuity was very much in evidence in the way they sent Japanese flavors over the sea.

These canned foods reflect the diet of the Japanese and the tradition of Japanese food culture. They also indicate that the Japanese diet was especially heavy in fish, vegetables, pickles, and sushi.

Canned Food Production for Japanese Immigrants

Where in Japan were these canned foods produced? The manufacturers' addresses on the labels indicate that they were made in various places, from Hokkaido in the north to Shikoku in the south. However, with decreased demand, there are only a few factories still manufacturing these products today. In order to flexibly respond to the diversity of orders, easy access to transportation and an abundant supply of quality water are required for the locations.

One of the manufacturers still in the business is Fujita Canning Co., Ltd., located near the Kyoto City Central Wholesale Market. Founded by Mr. Masajiro Fujita, who was born in 1867, the company has a long history. The current president, Mr. Masahiro Fujita, is the fourth owner. Rationing made it difficult to produce canned goods in Japan even after WWII, and so the company was unable to resume canned food production until 1951, following the removal of restrictions. It was a time when hardly any jobs were available. The resumption came about because there was demand for exports, and the favorable exchange rate (365 yen to the dollar) was a big help.

Masahiro Fujita, in front of the Fujita Canning Co., Ltd. factory

Thereafter, roughly 45% of the company's production was for export, until the Nixon shock in 1971. Currently, exports account for just 20% of their production. The products are generally sold by the case, each case containing 48 cans. During peak periods, the company shipped 100 cases at a time, and roughly 800 cases per year. This means that Fujita shipped around 40,000 cans each year. With cans from other companies in Japan added to this figure, it is estimated that at least 100,000 cans of these products were consumed annually. At present, although orders are coming in more frequently than in the past, the order is often for as few as 2 cases, with 50 cases being the largest order received. The destinations are the US, Taiwan, and Europe. In the past, the company has exported to South Pacific islands as well.

In the US, Hawaii is an especially large market for canned Japanese foods, with the largest orders coming in July and August, partly due to the influx of Japanese tourists. Other Nikkei-related destinations for Fujita's canned foods are Los Angeles, Oakland, Chicago and Vancouver, as well as the East Coast. The company used to produce about 70 such products, including *takuan*, *narazuke* and *fukujinzuke*, though that number has decreased to around 30 today. Some varieties of canned foods no longer sell because of the availability of frozen foods (such as Japanese taro), and because of increased local production by leading Japanese firms (as with tofu). Of the canned items still being produced, *konnyaku* is consumed in the US and *aburaage* is eaten in Taiwan and the US. *Aburaage*, namely *inarizushi-no-moto*, is also a popular toping for noodles.

Fujita Canning receives monthly orders from two leading trading companies, and less frequent orders from several others. Information provided by these trading companies helps Fujita to improve product quality and develop new products. According to Mr. Fujita *gomoku-no-moto* was originally made to offer a convenient and tasty lunch for laborers, which suggests that it was developed for the railroad gangs. Today, it has spread beyond the Japanese American community, and it is now common to see it eaten by Latino workers. Still, with only *gomoku-no-moto*, the company was not able to increase its sales, so *chirashizushi-no-moto* was developed to expand its line of products. It was developed in response to information suggesting that products using rice vinegar would sell in the US. I heard that some sushi shops there serve *chirashizushi-no-moto* in place of *gari* (ginger slices marinated in vinegar and sugar). Mr. Fujita recalls that the current product is the result of several adjustments made in response to customer feedback about taste, and comments that the original was too sour.

Newspaper Advertisements and Food

The roles these canned foods played in the lives of the Nikkei can be understood through advertisements in a Japanese-language newspaper published in California. The metal printing plates used for advertisements in the *Nichi Bei Times* (first published in 1946) are stored at the Japanese Overseas Migration Museum in Yokohama. In the 1950s to the 1970s the ads are mostly related to food, primarily soy sauce, sake, green tea, rice and canned foods. These advertisements worked to increase brand awareness of the trading companies handling the products. These companies descended from the Takuan trade, and their main customers were Nikkei. They included the Nishimoto Trading Co., Ltd., Hosoda Bros. Inc., Mutual Supply Company, Pacific Mutual Sales Inc. and Pacific Trading Co., Ltd. Later, Pacific Trading and the Japan Food Corporation joined the Kikkoman Group, and now form an important part of JFC International. There is a symbolic photo that appears in an article describing the JFC International company history. Here is what it says on the photo:

Pacific Mutual Sales Inc. advertisement (1955) (Property of Japanese Overseas Migration Museum)

Nishimoto Trading Co., Ltd. advertisement (year unknown) (Property of Japanese Overseas Migration Museum)

"We have waited for the arrival of this cargo for 14 years. The *General Pershing*, loaded with Sakura Masamune sake, entered the Port of

San Francisco on December 31 at midnight in the heavy rain. Customers from different areas and all employees gathered to unload the cargo at the pier. Photo taken at 1 a.m. on January 1, 1934. Pacific Trading Co., Ltd."

JFC advertisement (year unknown) (Property of Japanese Overseas Migration Museum)

From late night on New Year's Eve into early New Year's Day at the port of San Francisco, some ten people, including employees of Takuan trade companies and Japanese Americans from various locations who had eagerly awaited


Unloading cargo of the Pacific Trading Co., Ltd. (Property of JFC International)

the shipment, gathered to unload sake that had traveled great distances. Their look of relief and easy smiles makes quite an impression, and conveys how keenly they had been waiting for the products' arrival from Japan.

Some of the advertisements of these trading companies display their original brands, such as HIME, MADAM, GEISHA, SAKURA and HANAYOME. Their names are written in the Roman alphabet, but their logos often make use of kimono-clad Japanese women. Other designs include warships, samurai, and historical or fictional characters such as Ushiwakamaru and Fuji Musume. These traditional images were meant to induce nostalgia and desire for Japan.

At first, Anzen imported products directly from Japan, but this method resulted in steadily decreasing profits. Instead, they started to buy from JFC International, Iwakami Shoten in Yokohama, and Crown Trading Co., Ltd. in Kobe. In the past, Yokohama and Kobe had many facilities and shops that served Japanese expatriates, as well as companies related to Takuan trade.

JFC brand advertisement (*Zenbei Nikkei-jin Jusho-roku*,1965)

Crown Trading's HANAYOME-brand can label (Property of Crown Trading)

Foods for the Japanese and Japanese Immigrants in America

When people move to a foreign country, their diet does not change overnight. An interesting record tells us of the Japanese and their diet. It was several years prior to 1866 when overseas travel for Japanese people was first permitted. To ratify the Treaty of Amity and Commerce between the United States and Japan, a Japanese legation consisting of 77 samurai visited the US in 1860, which was the first case of group travel overseas. The record states that, to prepare for the long journey, the *Kanrin Maru*, a vessel accompanying the legation, was loaded with soy sauce, *miso*, pickled vegetables and plums, green tea and dried vegetables. For soy sauce, for example, the total volume was based on an assumed daily consumption of roughly 90 ml a person. The record also says that when they stopped over at San Francisco on their voyage, the cooks purchased some tofu and *aburaage* at a Chinese-owned store and served them in a meal, which greatly pleased the emissaries. These episodes tell us about their dietary preferences and the importance of certain foods. The situation of the first immigrants in the US several years later would have been more or less the same. If a certain ingredient could not be obtained, a substitute was found and various creative measures were taken. If these measures failed to satisfy, or if one could afford it, the ingredient was imported from Japan.

Soy sauce production started in 1891 in Hawaii, which has the longest history of Japanese immigrants in the Americas, and the Hawaii Shoyu Co. was established in 1906. *Miso* production was first attempted in the 1920s, and the Kanda Miso Factory, one of the pioneers, started commercial production in the 1930s. The record states that there were two soy sauce breweries in 1910 on the American mainland, and at the end of 1948, the State of Washington alone had 10 Japanese food suppliers, including soy sauce breweries, and tofu and fish shops.

According to Yoji Matsushima of Anzen, Kikkoman soy sauce was introduced to the US before WWII, and its sole distributor was the Pacific Trading Co., Ltd. The *80 Years of History of the Kikkoman Corporation* (2000) says that export of their soy sauce for Japanese overseas started at the end of the Meiji era (1868–1912). During the war, Japanese Americans faced confiscation of their assets and forced internment. It is well remembered that Kikkoman sent soy sauce to those interned, with the assistance of the International Red Cross. Mr. Yuzaburo Mogi, Kikkoman's Honorary CEO and Chairman of the Board of Directors, mentions it in his book *Kikkoman no Global Keiei* (Japan Productivity Center, 2007). However, it is less well known that, to repay the favor received from Japan, Japanese Americans and other groups sent relief supplies to postwar Japan in the form of powdered milk, blankets and more, as Licensed Agencies for Relief in Asia (LARA). A monument

to commemorate to these deeds was placed at the pier in the Yokohama Minato Mirai area, where the LARA supplies first arrived. This is historical evidence that connects soy sauce, immigrants and Japan.

It is said that, as imports from Japan were suspended during WWII, production of soy sauce and *miso* developed dramatically in Hawaii. Anzen in Portland, unable to import Japanese products, bought soy sauce from San Francisco after the war. *Miso* could be purchased from the Fujimoto Miso Company, which had moved from California to Salt Lake City, Utah, during WWII. Aloha and Diamond soy sauce from Hawaii also started to appear on the market. There was also a small soy sauce brewery, Sanyo Shoyu, in Portland before the war, which sold only to the locals. It is said that small breweries such as this sporadically existed in some areas. As time went by, many of these Nikkei businesses were closed down. However, some Japanese confectioners and general stores have managed to survive.

Although Portland has no Japanese confectioners, Los Angeles is home to Mikawaya and Fugetsudo, both of which have a history of more than a century. Other confectioners include Benkyodo in San Francisco and Osakaya in Sacramento. Why did these shops survive? Mikawaya, for instance, has a big seller called *Mochi Ice Cream*, though their other Japanese sweets do not sell in impressive quantities. The reason these shops have survived may be found in Japanese social habits as well as dietary habits. Japanese people eat Japanese sweets and send them to their friends for seasonal occasions, or use them for community associations, such as *mochi* rice cake on New Year's Day and gift giving on ceremonial occasions. It is said that *mochi* and red and white *manju* (steamed bean-jam buns) have many die-hard fans. The recent trends toward healthier diets in the West have also served as a tailwind.

Mikawaya

Fugetsudo

Interest in Japanese Foods

How did the interest in Japanese foods spread? First, Japanese immigrants brought foods with them, and the demand continued as the foods were both necessities and nostalgic items for the Nikkei people. It was not until after the war that this interest spread beyond the Nikkei. There were quite a few Japanese who ran Western or Chinese restaurants before the war, but it was after the war when Japanese cuisine rode the popularity of sukiyaki to become accepted by everyday Americans. Yoji Matsushima recalls that Americans started to arrive as guests in the middle of 1960s, and most of them came for sukiyaki, which was popular because the waitress prepared it right in front of the guests.

Sukiyaki was just the start for Japanese cuisine in America. It was followed by tempura, shabu-shabu, ramen and sushi, as Americans grew accustomed to Japanese dishes. In Portland, one Japanese restaurant that opened in the 1960s with sukiyaki as a marquee menu seated 400 guests each evening. Of course, soy sauce was used for all of their menu items. In tandem with this trend, there was another vital factor—the women who were then called war brides.

War Brides and the Diffusion of Japanese Foods

According to a representative of Pacific Trading, the repatriation of solders and personnel in the Allied Occupation forces along with their war brides triggered a dramatic expansion of soy sauce throughout North America. It was also noted that soy sauce saw huge sales on paydays in areas where many war brides resided. Mr. Hiroyuki Enomoto, CEO of JFC International, is a savvy businessman in North America, and he agrees that soy sauce and other Japanese foods sold well on paydays. He remembers that JFC offices often received inquiries as to how Japanese foods could be purchased, and that they sent products to states as remote from the Nikkei-influenced West Coast as Alabama and Mississippi. Japanese foods, first brought over and imported by early Japanese immigrants, were then diffused to the rest of the US by war brides and returning Allied Occupation forces. As part of this trend, sukiyaki and other dishes gradually became commonplace.

Instant Noodles, Sushi, Sashimi and Japanese Resident Employees in the US

The next big postwar change was brought by instant noodles, which were also introduced to the US in the mid-60s, when they sold for 10 to 20 cents each. Today, instant noodles have gone well beyond Japanese grocery stores, and now normally occupy an important section of mainstream supermarkets as well. Instant noodles were invented by Momofuku Ando (noodles in a cup were introduced later), and certainly increased interest in and demand for Japanese foods. Thereafter, sushi and sashimi also gained acceptance, which was perhaps enhanced by the fact that Japanese foods, especially sushi, were endorsed in the McGovern Report (Dietary Goals for the United States, 1977), published by the U.S. Senate Select Committee on Nutrition and Human Needs. After some time, the effects of the report spread to the Southern Hemisphere as well.

Overseas business trips and temporary transfers of Japanese businessmen increased in the 1960s, and overseas assignments

were added to this in the 70s. These periods coincided with increased demand for Japanese foods from Japanese living overseas. This jump, however, only took place after the prewar immigrants and war brides had laid the foundation.

The Future of Japanese Foods – Between Authenticity and Creation

We should be pleased that sushi, sashimi and other Japanese dishes have become so accepted by people outside Japan. It should also be noted that Japanese cuisine has promoted further interest in Japanese culture. Yet, a new issue has arisen. As Japanese cuisine has gained popularity and became enviably profitable, many new entrants and competitors have appeared. This has brought a few problems.

Not least is the effect on relations with Japanese immigrants and their descendants. One incident was witnessed by this author, although it was not in the US. A Japanese consul general stationed in a South American country was invited to a party hosted by the local Nikkei. The menu served that day was sukiyaki, which was prepared by some volunteers. It seems that the consul did not care for the sukiyaki offered. He went so far as to say, "You cannot call this thing sukiyaki. I will invite you to have real sukiyaki at my official residence." It is easy to imagine how those people felt when their sukiyaki was so brusquely rejected. At this occasion, a second-generation Nikkei who was there said, "This is our sukiyaki. As we cannot obtain the same ingredients as you can at your residence (or Japan), our sukiyaki is not exactly the same as yours. Also, our tastes and preferences may be different from those of the Japanese in Japan. So, this is not Japanese sukiyaki, but Nikkei sukiyaki." What can we learn from this episode? It certainly was a thought-provoking incident that hopefully sparked reconsideration of who the Nikkei are, not only with respect to food.

The other problem is the production and creation of Japanese dishes by those other than the Japanese and Nikkei. There are quite a few Japanese restaurants run by non-Japanese owners, even in areas densely populated by Nikkei and Japanese, such as Vancouver, Los Angeles and San Francisco. Although there is no easy way to know what each owner's training is, clearly some people were granted dubious "qualifications" as a sushi chef or Japanese cuisine chef after attending a quick two-month course. Naturally, their culinary skills do not compare with those of professionals in Japan. Due to the popularity of Japanese dishes, stories were often heard that top Japanese sushi chefs or cooks were hired with superb employment terms in order to add Japanese dishes to the menu, but were terminated once their basic knowhow was absorbed. There is a surplus of poorly trained chefs accumulated to meet demand. Yet, the problem is complicated because dishes prepared by these instant chefs are often popular, and attract regular customers. As the number of these kinds of restaurants increases, they may tarnish the image of authentic Japanese cuisine. It is therefore understandable that a rating system or accreditation system should be called for.

While it is important to maintain original and authentic Japanese cuisine, in my opinion, it should not be said that Japanese dishes that were created, developed and modified in areas outside Japan, such as the Nikkei-style sukiyaki, cannot be included as part of the Japanese cuisine family. Since some dishes, such as often-cited California rolls, have been highly appreciated even in Japan, we cannot make a blanket decision on these. Although it is a complex issue, the first thing to be done is to widely diffuse the original and authentic level and quality of Japanese cuisine. I cannot help but think we should simply watch, with a certain permissive attitude, to see how the cuisine deviates from the mainstream, and how it develops in the future. Some of these modifications may survive, and that suggests there is some value in them.

Nothing has made a bigger hit than California rolls. It would not be a surprise, though, if more new American or Brazilian style Japanese dishes come out. I would rather they do. Just as there are people among the Nikkei who have Japanese and non-Japanese qualities, new cuisines may have a subtle mixture of Japan and foreign essences, and yet still be based on Japanese traditions.

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