

Greetings

Washoku, Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese, was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2013. Preserving washoku and passing it down to future generations is now seen as an important issue. According to the results of a survey by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan, what is regarded as significant, in terms of ingredients, in the preservation and continuation of washoku, are traditional local dishes that use locally produced ingredients and embody the principle of *shindo-fuui* (a slogan encouraging the consumption of local foods in season and traditional dishes for health).^{*} Although soy sauce has long been an essential part of Japan's food culture, preferences regarding its taste vary from region to region. The Kikkoman Institute for International Food Culture (KIIFC) established a team comprising mainly academic experts in July 2014 to study how soy sauce and traditional local dishes are related. The study results will be reported in the next issue, Food Culture No. 26.

The KIIFC was established in July 1999 as part of a commemoration celebrating the 80th anniversary of the foundation of Kikkoman Corporation, and marked its 15th anniversary in 2014. The KIIFC will continue with research and sociocultural activities, as well as with the collection and publication of information, mainly focused on fermented soy sauce. The KIIFC will also develop activities to introduce the beauty of Japanese food culture to the world, and to introduce the world's superb food cultures to Japan. The international exchange of food cultures is a Kikkoman management principle. Your warm understanding and support for our activities is cordially solicited.

^{*}Data #2 Additional analysis results of the Washoku Japan questionnaire survey for the 3rd Study Session for Washoku Preservation and Continuation (March 4, 2015), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

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〈Cover〉 Yamahoko Procession at Kyoto Gion Festival, a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage



On September 30, 2009, at the fourth session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, Yamahoko, the float ceremony of the Kyoto Gion festival, was inscribed as an intangible cultural heritage. The Kyoto Gion Festival, which runs from July 1 to 31 each year, is one of the representative summer festivals of Japan, during which various rituals and events take place. The festival is said to have originated 1100 years ago, when plague spread throughout Japan. A ritual prayer for the elimination of disasters was held at Shinsen-temple in the then-capital of Heian-kyo (Kyoto). The Kyoto Gion Festival culminates with the procession of Yamahoko, which takes place on July 17. Yamahoko is a kind of float that people pull through the streets during the festival, and each has a long-handled spear or sword set upon its top. Gion festival music is played by people on board Hoko floats with drums, bells and fifes. The procession is led by the Naginata Hoko float, characterized by a sword blade on top of a 20-meter pole atop the float's roof, with a child designated as the divine messenger by the Yasaka Shrine riding on the float. The float begins to proceed slowly once the child cuts the *shimenawa* rope with a sword. At crossroads along the procession route, elaborate Yamahoko floats weighing several tons are turned around by large teams of men, in a spectacular display of teamwork. *Kawadoko ryori*, which is a style of dining enjoyed on a temporary tatami floor set over a river, is indispensable to the food culture of Kyoto. Although not widely known, it is in fact deeply tied in with the Gion Festival. In times long past, gods were thought to reside in rivers, and eating and drinking near rivers was not a custom. One theory of *kawadoko ryori*'s origin holds that, as gods were being received at the ritual of purifying portable shrines during the Gion Festival and not actually in the river at that time, the river was safe for eating and drinking. Back then, *kawadoko ryori* was offered for a limited period only during the days of the Yamahoko float procession. Today, it is enjoyed from May to September every year.

<References: Gion Matsuri – Shukusai no Kyoto 2010, and Nihon no Matsuri Jiten 2008>

UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritages in Japan (in chronological order)

●Nogaku theatre ●Ningyo Johruri Bunraku puppet theatre ●Kabuki theatre ●Gagaku ●Ojiza-chijimi ●Echigo-jofu ●Sekishu-banshi ●Hitachi Fuyurumono ●Yamahoko, the float ceremony of the Kyoto Gion festival ●Koshikijima no Toshidon ●Oku-noto no Aenokoto ●Hayachine Kagura ●Akiu no Tawe Odori ●Chakkirako ●Dainichido Bugaku ●Daimokutate ●Traditional Ainu dance ●Kumiodori ●Yuki-tsumugi ●Mibu no Hana Tawe ●Sada Shin Noh ●Nachi no Dengaku ●Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese ●Washi, craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper