

Greetings

Washoku was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December 2013. Soy sauce, along with other fermented seasonings, has long been a mainstay of washoku culture. It comes in many varieties, and preferences regarding its taste vary from region to region. At the same time, traditional local dishes that are created under the influence of various factors, including local climate, history, economy, available ingredients, and seasonings, change with the times to reflect the preferences peculiar to each region. The Kikkoman Institute for International Food Culture (KIIFC) organized a team composed mainly of academic experts in July 2014 to study the regional characteristics of soy sauce from the perspective of traditional local dishes.

The biggest issue in the Soy Sauce and Traditional Local Dishes research project was how specifically the subject area should be divided (e.g., into prefectures, cities, or towns). For the current research, we decided to take bird's eye approach in looking at the relationships between regional characteristics of soy sauce and traditional local dishes in Japan, and avoided detailed segmentation. For our research methods, we used two approaches. One was a general component analysis and sensory evaluation of leading soy sauce samples from each region, and the other was research based on interviews and literature regarding the relationships between traditional local dishes and soy sauce. The results are reported in this issue of Food Culture. Although our research on soy sauces and traditional local dishes throughout Japan is no way exhaustive, we hope it leads to some understanding of the regional characteristics of soy sauce.

The KIIFC was established in July 1999, as part of the commemorations celebrating the 80th anniversary of the foundation of Kikkoman Corporation. 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 appeal 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.

CONTENTS

Feature Soy Sauce and Traditional Local Dishes

3 Regional Characteristics of Soy Sauce Identified by Analytical and Sensory Properties

Hiroe Otomo and Miho Imamura, Research and Development Division, Kikkoman Corporation
Tsutomu Sasaki, Product Development Division, Kikkoman Food Products Company
Kunitomo Kizu, Production Division, Kikkoman Food Products Company

7 Regional Characteristics of Japanese Soy Sauce Hiroshi Tachi, Professor at Tokyo University of Agriculture

8 Characteristics of Soy Sauce Found in Regional Dishes

Food coordinator and cooking culture researcher, Nami Fukutome
Aoyama Gakuin Women's Junior College, Associate Professor, Yuka Utsunomiya

26 Dietary Life in Japan and Regional Characteristics of Soy Sauce Ayako Ehara, Professor Emeritus at Tokyo Kasei-Gakuin University

27 World Report A Kikkoman Event Held at Expo Milano 2015

<Cover>

Oku-noto no Aenokoto UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage



Aenokoto is a traditional ritual that has existed through multiple generations of farming families across the Oku-noto area (cities of Minowa and Suzu, and towns of Anamizu and Noto) in Ishikawa Prefecture, in which ordinary farmers thank the deities of rice fields by entertaining them in their homes. This ritual was nominated as a nationally designated important intangible folk cultural property in 1976, and inscribed as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2009. Even today this ritual is traditionally performed in each farming family, and a part of the ritual is demonstrated for the public.

It is said that "ae" means hospitality, and "koto" means Shinto rituals. Aenokoto is one of the many agricultural rituals held in various parts of Japan that are considered to be agricultural culture of interest. Aenokoto is generally held twice a year, on December 5 and February 9. Aenokoto in December signifies that the family welcomes the deities to their home to thank them for harvest of that year, and has them stay in their home over winter. After the deities have had a long rest, they are sent off to the rice fields in Aenokoto in February.

Both celebrations of Aenokoto involve the families entertaining the deities with various local delicacies from the mountains and seas. Offerings include rice cooked with *adzuki* beans, sashimi of cod covered with cod roe, and a small fish called the Japanese red rockfish. As the deities of rice fields are regarded as couples, all items used in the rituals, including the four-legged trays on which dishes are offered, are customarily prepared in pairs.

The deities of the rice fields are believed to have lost their vision due to fatigue from hard work in the fields. So the host orally describes each dish being offered to the deities and warns them to be careful when guiding them inside his house and along the footpaths between rice fields. Observing the farmer's behavior, you may end up feeling closer to the deities yourself.

<Reference: Nenju Gyoji Tokuhon: Nippon no Shiki o Tanoshimu Saiji Goyomi>

■ UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritages in Japan (in chronological order)

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