

BRANDING *WASHOKU*  
AS AN INSTRUMENT OF JAPANESE SOFT POWER

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BRANDING *WASHOKU*  
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## DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, Merve Yahşi, certify that

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## ABSTRACT

### Branding *Washoku* as an Instrument of Japanese Soft Power

Japanese food has become a global trend over the past two decades, and boosted the international standing of Japan. This study delineates the role of Japanese cuisine, or *washoku*, as an instrument of Japanese soft power. It traces how *washoku* was transformed into a strong national brand and how this brand was framed differently in domestic and global contexts. This thesis argues that while the promotion of *washoku* abroad depicts it as a flourishing cuisine based on characteristics such as respect to nature, seasonality, and a well-balanced diet, in the domestic context it is designed to address issues like a decreasing domestic interest in Japanese foods and the need for greater self-sufficiency in food production. This thesis also argues that through the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List nomination process, Japan was able to combine these two concerns and create a comprehensive strategy to strengthen the *washoku* brand on both national and global levels.



## ÖZET

### *Washoku*'nun Bir Japon Yumuşak Güç Aracı Olarak Markalaştırılması

Son yirmi yıl içerisinde Japon mutfağının dünya çapındaki popülerliğinde hızlı bir artış görülmektedir. Bu gelişmeye paralel olarak Japonya'nın uluslararası statüsünde de benzer bir yükselişten söz edilebilir. Bu çalışma, bir “Yumuşak Güç” (Soft Power) aracı olarak Japon yemeğinin, bir diğer adıyla *washoku*'nun rolünü inceliyor. Çalışma, *washoku*'nun bir ‘ulus markası’na (nation brand) dönüşme sürecini gözlemleyerek yerel ve uluslararası bağlamlarda ne tür farklılıklarla ele alındığını irdeliyor. Bu tez; *washoku*'nun uluslararası alanda doğaya saygılı, mevsimsel ve besin değeri açısından dengeli oluşundan hareketle yükselen bir yemek kültürü olarak sergilenmesine karşılık, ülke dahilinde ise konunun Japon yemeklerine azalan ilgi ve gıdada kendi kendine yeterlilik problemlerine odaklandığı ve Japon yemek kültürünün risk altında olduğu düşüncesi etrafında toplandığını savunmaktadır. Bu tez ayrıca, UNESCO Somut Olmayan Kültürel Miras Listesi adaylığı sürecinde Japonya'nın bu iki kaygıyı birleştirerek, *washoku* markasını güçlendirmek için kapsamlı bir strateji oluşturabildiği görüşünü ileri sürmektedir.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

ANA All Nippon Airways

GATT General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade

JAXA Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency

JCA Japanese Culinary Academy

JETRO Japan External Trade Organization

JNTO Japan National Tourism Organization

LDP Liberal Democratic Party of Japan

MAFF Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan

METI Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry

NHK Japan Broadcasting Corporation (*Nippon Hōsō Kyōkai*)

UNESCO The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNTWO World Tourism Organization

VJC Visit Japan Campaign

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Over the course of these past few decades, Japanese cuisine, also known as *washoku*, has become a global trend. *Washoku* is appraised as a healthy, nutritious, and aesthetic cuisine in the global media and cookbooks. In 2013, it was inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list under the title, “Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year.”

The UNESCO inscription was part of a series of initiatives to promote Japanese culinary culture within and outside Japan. *Washoku* became an influential national brand through these initiatives, which date back to the early 2000s. The *washoku* brand brought worldwide recognition to Japan as a ‘culinary superpower’ and created a worldwide Japanese food boom.

Figure 1 illustrates the number of overseas Japanese restaurants between 2006 and 2017. According to the data published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), from the mid-2000s there has been an overall continuous increase in Japanese restaurants abroad. As the numbers indicate, Japanese food is especially popular in Asia, North America, and Europe.

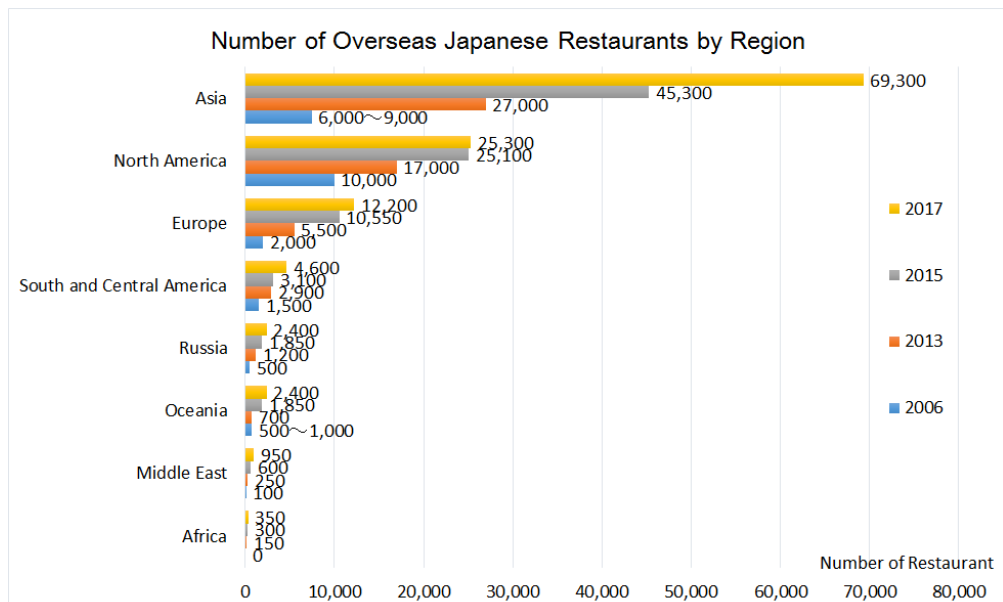


Figure 1. The number of overseas Japanese restaurants between 2006-2017  
Source: Funanalysis, “Increasing Japanese Restaurants”

The increasing trend continued until the end of 2019, when a global pandemic overtook the world.<sup>1</sup> According to the latest report released by MAFF, the number of Japanese restaurants in 2019 was approximately 101,000 in Asia (50% increase in two years from about 69,300 stores); 29,400 in North America (20% increase in two years from about 25,300 stores); 12,200 in Europe (no change since 2017); 6,100 in South and Central America (30% increase in two years from about 4,600 stores); 2,600 in Russia (slight increase in two years from about 2,400 stores); 3,400 in Oceania (40% increase in two years from about 2,400 stores); 1000 in Middle East (nearly no change since 2017); 500 in Africa (50% increase in two years from about 350 stores).<sup>2</sup> These results indicate that, in the past two years -between 2017 and 2019-, Japanese food has become more popular in Asia, South and Central America, Oceania, and Africa. The data between 2006 and 2019 indicated that the number of

<sup>1</sup> The global coronavirus pandemic resulted in world-wide travel bans and nationwide curfews. Many restaurants could not provide services for months.

<sup>2</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF) Food Industry Affairs Bureau, *Kaigai ni okeru nihonshoku resutoran no kazu*, 海外における日本食レストランの数 [The number of overseas Japanese restaurants].

overseas Japanese restaurants increased by 2.3 times in 7 years (2006-2013), 1.6 times in 7 years (2013-2015), 1.3 times in 2 years (2015-2017), and 1.3 times in 2 years (2017-2019).<sup>3</sup>

The rising popularity of Japanese food also brought about a scholarly interest in *washoku*. Scholarly discussions on *washoku* often focus on the economic motives for the promotion of Japanese cuisine. Katarzyna Cwiertka argues that *washoku*, as it has been promoted since the 2010s, is a myth constructed to meet the criteria for UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. According to Cwiertka, the propagation of *washoku* “ultimately aims to solve the problems faced by the Japanese authorities since the beginning of the post-bubble era: Japan’s declining competitiveness in the global marketplace, the Japanese population’s poor opinion of their country’s achievements and the country’s low food self-sufficiency ratio.”<sup>4</sup> In a similar fashion, Felice Farina also argues that “the strategy of promotion of *washoku* worldwide is not a mere act of popularization of Japanese food but it is strictly related to the issue of the low self-sufficiency rate of the country, as the main objective of the government is the raise of food export[s], in order to foster agricultural production and improve self-sufficiency.”<sup>5</sup>

However, there is also an ideological incentive behind the *washoku* brand. It stems from the fear that Japan’s national identity is disintegrating through globalization and the loss of cultural practices.<sup>6</sup> The aim of this thesis is to delineate the incentives behind, the branding process for, and the effects of the *washoku* brand

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Cwiertka, “Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku,” 89.

<sup>5</sup> Farina, “Japan’s Gastrodiplomacy as Soft Power: Global Washoku and National Food Security,” 131.

<sup>6</sup> “The basic style of washoku was preserved in each household until about the 1980s.” Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan”, 25. <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/data/publish/attach/pdf/index-20.pdf>



itself. This thesis supports the idea that there exists a number of domestic and international motives to promote Japanese cuisine. This thesis also argues that Japan had already been trying to promote its food as an instrument of soft power, following the global trends of soft power exercise and nation branding, but that the UNESCO inscription enabled Japan to combine domestic and global concerns and resulted in a comprehensive narrative around *washoku*.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction into the topic. The remaining sections of this chapter discuss the theoretical framework, consisting of soft power, nation branding as well as gastrationalism, and provide an overview of the sources and methodology.

Chapter 2, “*Washoku* Brand,” delineates the brand-making process of Japanese cuisine. The first part of Chapter 2 provides a history of *washoku* and lists its characteristics. The second part focuses on the UNESCO nomination and state involvement in the *washoku* brand. The final part briefly touches upon how *washoku* is framed in the national and global contexts.

Chapter 3, “*Washoku* Brand as Japan’s Soft Power,” discusses the overseas promotion of *washoku*. Beginning with an in-depth discussion of soft power theory, this chapter studies *washoku* in relation to diplomatic missions such as “Washoku-Try Japan’s Good Food” (2006-2010), tourism campaigns such as “Yokoso! Japan” (Visit Japan), the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, and international cooking contests.

Chapter 4, “*Washoku* Brand as Japan’s Gastrational Symbol”, delineates how *washoku* is framed in the national context. Discussing gastrationalism theory in detail, this chapter focuses on *washoku* in relation to domestic concerns such as decrease in rice consumption and food self-sufficiency. Additionally, nationwide

efforts to promote *washoku* through such initiatives as the Green Lantern (*Midori Chōchin*) and *Shokuiku* (School Lunch) movements will also be discussed.

The concluding Chapter 5 provides a summary and discussion of this work, considers some of the questions raised, and contemplates possible future research in relation to *washoku*.

### 1.1 Theoretical framework

Food began to appear frequently as a motif in national consciousness around the globe in late 1990s, and early 2000s. The promotion of national food cultures as elements of soft power through nation brands also became popular in this period. Thus, this thesis is based on three major concepts: soft power, nation branding, and gastronationalism.

Soft power theory was first developed by Joseph Nye. Nye describes soft power as the successful use of attraction to achieve intended actions and results.<sup>7</sup> In other words, it is the ability to influence populations and countries through appeal rather than economic or military might. In Nye's words, "[Soft power] arises from the attractiveness of a country's culture, political ideals, and policies. When our policies are seen as legitimate in the eyes of others, our soft power is enhanced."<sup>8</sup> Sources of soft power include a country's culture, values, and intranational and international government policies.

Nation branding is another major concept related to soft power. In fact, it can be considered as a practice of soft power. Nation brand makes use of marketing techniques to enhance the appeal of a country's charms. The characteristics of nation branding are "the rendering of national culture as an auditable form, its reorientation

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<sup>7</sup> Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, x.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

as source of either market opportunity or risk, and the defanging of diversity in the process.”<sup>9</sup>

Simon Anholt explains the difference between brands and branding in the following: “a *brand* is a product or service or organization,” while “*branding* is the process of designing, planning and communicating the name and the identity, in order to build or manage reputation.”<sup>10</sup> This thesis discusses the process through which *washoku* was branded as an instrument of Japanese soft power, over the course of three decades. Branding allows countries to incorporate diverse ideas and agendas into easily accessible conceptions. Thus, *washoku* brand not only communicates a health-conscious, rich, and delicious diet but also attracts people to Japanese culture through its national cuisine.

The promotion of national cuisines brings us to another theory named gastronationalism. Since mid to late 2000s but especially after 2010s there is a worldwide trend towards using food as national identity axis and international soft power asset. The way nationalism is reconceptualized through food is now referred to as ‘gastronationalism,’<sup>11</sup> or ‘culinary nationalism.’<sup>12</sup>

Gastronationalism deals with how food became a primary instrument for national identity politics as a response to globalization and the disappearance of boundaries. Cultural integration came to be considered a threat to traditional food cultures, led countries to adopt at times conservative and protectionist initiatives to keep the socio-cultural textures of countries ‘intact.’ In the case of Japan, this concern is reflected in the idea that Japanese culinary culture is endangered. Concern

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<sup>9</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 32.

<sup>10</sup> Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities, and Regions*, 4.

<sup>11</sup> DeSaucey, “Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union,” 433.

<sup>12</sup> Ferguson, “Culinary Nationalism,” 102-109.

for the promotion or preservation of Japanese traditional dietary cultures gained importance in the Heisei Period (1989-2019),<sup>13</sup> with the recognition of sustainability and decrease in home cooking, and increase in eating meals individually emerging as problems for the future of *washoku*.

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney explains the relationship between gastronationalism and *washoku* in the following:

In contemporary Japan traditional *washoku* has made a tremendous comeback precisely because Japan is undergoing an unprecedented transformation under the impact of global geopolitics. Similarly, “Scottish Highland culture” was created during the Union with England. In both cases, these “inventions” relate to the urgent need of peoples to redefine their own identities. The worldwide phenomenon of “ethnic” or “cultural” revivals, then, must be seen as a presentation and representation of the self, using foods as “metaphors of self.”<sup>14</sup>

Culinary nationalism has multifarious functions. As DeSaucey points out, “Gastronationalism ... signals the use of food production, distribution, and consumption to demarcate and sustain the emotive power of national attachment, as well as the use of nationalist sentiments to produce and market food.”<sup>15</sup> In other words, countries can simultaneously address diverse issues through culinary nationalism. The *washoku* brand, as an example and medium of gastronationalism, likewise enables Japan to address economic, social, political, and ideological concerns at the same time.

Thus, the promotion of *washoku* brand is shaped in line with the theories of soft power, nation branding, and gastronationalism. Each theory will be discussed in depth in the relevant chapters.

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<sup>13</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan,” 15. <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/data/publisth/attach/pdf/index-20.pdf>

<sup>14</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*, 9.

<sup>15</sup> DeSaucey, “Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union,” 433.

## 1.2 Sources and methodology

This thesis makes use of primary and secondary sources to delineate the global and domestic trajectory of the *washoku* brand. The primary sources include official documents by Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF); official reports and White Papers by Japanese governmental authorities such as Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO), Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI), Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO); international reports by bodies such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and World Tourism Organization (UNTWO). Secondary sources consist of newspaper articles, scholarly books and research papers on this topic, cookbooks, food blogs and webpages of international campaigns.

This study will analyze how policy makers, government bodies and private industries conceptualize the *washoku* brand through concrete actions such as UNESCO nomination, diplomatic missions, and national promotion campaigns. By studying media content about *washoku*, it will also discuss how this conceptualization is reflected in the minds of *washoku* consumers.

## CHAPTER 2

### WASHOKU BRAND

#### 2.1 What is *washoku*?

*Washoku* (和食), literally meaning ‘Japanese food’ or ‘harmony of food,’ refers to (traditional)<sup>16</sup> Japanese cuisine. Composed of the characters 和<sup>17</sup> (*wa*)- signifying harmony, Japanese style, Japan, peace; and 食<sup>18</sup> (*shoku*) -signifying food, foodstuff, eating, appetite, and meal, *washoku* is currently described as a “collective term for the traditional dietary cultures of Japan.”<sup>19</sup> Over the past two hundred years, *washoku* has been used in different contexts in a number of meanings. However, the latest description of *washoku* renders it a broad category that can accommodate layered significations and agendas.

This chapter will delineate the process through which Japanese cuisine became a globally recognized nation brand under the name *washoku*. The following pages will provide the history and different definitions of *washoku*; list its characteristics, address the connection between *washoku* and Buddhism (tea ceremonies in particular), discuss the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List nomination and the Japanese states’ involvement in the brand making. The last part of this chapter will evaluate the national and international implications of *washoku* branding.

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<sup>16</sup> Depending on the context, *washoku* has been used either for traditional home-made Japanese meals/cooking or Japanese cuisine as a whole. The ambiguity in its usage will be addressed in the following parts of this thesis.

<sup>17</sup> *Jisho*, “和 #kanji”, <https://jisho.org/search/%E5%92%8C%20%23kanji>

<sup>18</sup> *Jisho*, “食 #kanji”, <https://jisho.org/search/%E9%A3%9F%20%23kanji>

<sup>19</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan,” <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/data/publisth/attach/pdf/index-20.pdf>.

### 2.1.1 Short history of the term

The term ‘*washoku*’ came into use during the Meiji Period (1868-1912) in order to distinguish Japanese cuisine from the influx of Western dishes grouped under the name *yōshoku* (洋食).<sup>20</sup> To understand this term in depth it is best to approach it from a wider historical context.

Before the Meiji Restoration, Japan had remained quite isolated from foreign influence for much of the Tokugawa Period (1603-1868). Known as the *Sakoku* (鎖国) or "closed country" years, in the interval between 1635 (with the passing of the Sakoku Edict) and 1853 (with the ‘forced re-opening’ of the country initiated by the Perry Mission),<sup>21</sup> Japan had limited interaction with the outside world. In Naomichi Ishige’s words, “This period saw the formulation of what the Japanese today regard as their 'traditional' culinary values, cooking and eating habits... The majority of the traditional dishes eaten today date from the 220-year period of seclusion...”<sup>22</sup> These include, but are not limited to, sushi, *soba* noodles, change from miso (soybean paste) to soy sauce as the main seasoning, and the difference in taste between East and West of Japan.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, 21; Cwiertka, “Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku,” 92-93.

On *yōshoku* see also Aoki, “‘Yōshoku’: A Japanese Take on Western-style Cuisine.” <https://www.nippon.com/en/japan-topics/g00749/yoshoku-a-japanese-take-on-western-style-cuisine.html>

<sup>21</sup> Commodore Matthew Perry was sent on a mission to ‘open’ Japan on behalf of the United States of America in 1853. The aim of this mission was to make Japan sign a trade agreement with the U.S. and allow American merchant ships access to Japanese ports. Perry arrived with a huge fleet loaded with guns and demanded that Japan agree to their terms for treaty and ports. Failure to do so would result in war. Other Western countries such as Russia, Britain, Holland and France followed the U.S. example and all demanded trade rights from the Japanese. Eventually Japan had to agree to Perry’s terms in 1854 and thus, the country was ‘opened.’ Jansen, *The Making of Modern Japan*, 275-86.

<sup>22</sup> Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 105.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid. Before eighteenth century, Kansai area located in western Japan, where the imperial family resided for centuries, was considered as the culinary center of the country. However, after the shogunate took over government and moved the capital to today’s Tokyo Edo, a new culinary taste emerged in Kanto area located in the eastern part of Japan. To list a few differences, Kanto (East) food has a stronger compared to Kansai (West) food, and while pork is more common in Kanto dishes, in Kansai beef is generally preferred. For more, see: Nguyen et al “A Regional Food’s Features Extraction Algorithm and Its Application,” 15-20.

From the Late Tokugawa (1853-1867) period onwards, especially in the Meiji Period, Japan underwent great political, economic, social and cultural transformations, the most famous of which being the restoration of the imperial system of government in 1868. Commodore Perry's arrival in 1853 triggered increased contact with the West and initiated the spread of Western aesthetics in Japan. Westernization also took place in the culinary realm. For example, consumption of meat and dairy products, which had little place in Japanese cuisine before Meiji Restoration,<sup>24</sup> were popularized through the figure of the Emperor Meiji (1852-1912). Meat eating was seen as a symbol of civilization and became widespread via soldiers' meals and Western style restaurants.<sup>25</sup>

Japan's encounter with the Other led to a concern to specify 'traditionally' Japanese things. In historian Marius Jansen's words:

Until 1853 Japan was a world unto itself. ... The arrival of Perry made Japanese aware that Japan was their '*kuni*' [country]. It also made them aware as never before of foreigners, gunboats and distant alien lands.... If national politics depends on a national consciousness of the self, then both were enormously heightened at this time.<sup>26</sup>

Thus, the prefix 'wa' (和), meaning 'Japan' or 'Japanese style' was used in certain places to counter Westernization.<sup>27</sup> Some examples are '*wagashi*' for Japanese

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Gurunavi, "Kanto Food vs Kansai Food: Japan's Internal Battler for Culinary Supremacy." [https://gurunavi.com/en/japanfoodie/2016/09/kanto-food-vs-kansai-food.html?\\_\\_ngt\\_\\_=TT11c9bc5f5005ac1e4ae213wDYgmns-foshD8it1c22KS#:~:text=Kansai%20food%20is%20based%20around,broth\)%20and%20usukuchi%20soy%20sauce.&text=Kanto%20food%20on%20the%20other,flakes%20and%20koikuchi%20soy%20sauce](https://gurunavi.com/en/japanfoodie/2016/09/kanto-food-vs-kansai-food.html?__ngt__=TT11c9bc5f5005ac1e4ae213wDYgmns-foshD8it1c22KS#:~:text=Kansai%20food%20is%20based%20around,broth)%20and%20usukuchi%20soy%20sauce.&text=Kanto%20food%20on%20the%20other,flakes%20and%20koikuchi%20soy%20sauce).

<sup>24</sup> There have been several meat eating bans in the history of Japan. These were possibly due to Buddhist precepts against taking lives and the scarcity in livestock. For a detailed discussion see: Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*.

<sup>25</sup> "The learned men of the time who had acquired information from the West believed that one reason why the Japanese had poor physiques compared to Westerners was that they did not eat meat or dairy products. The populace was exhorted to consume meat and milk, especially after the news spread in 1872 that the emperor had eaten meat, and for the next few years such a diet was regarded as the mark of a civilized person." Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 142.

<sup>26</sup> Jansen, *Japan in Transition: From Tokugawa to Meiji*, 138-139.

<sup>27</sup> Yanagita 1957; Jansen and Rozman 1986; Yumoto 1996, cited in Cwiertka, "Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku," 92.



confectionary, ‘*wafuku*’ for Japanese clothing (especially kimono), ‘*wagyū*’ for Japanese beef and ‘*wafū*’ for Japanese style in general. *Washoku*, Japanese cuisine’ or ‘Japanese style meal,’ “appeared in opposition or resistance to the Other (Western cuisine)” as Isami Omori points out.<sup>28</sup> On the other hand, the prefix ‘*yō*’ (洋), meaning ‘foreign’, ‘Western’ or ‘European’ was used to specify Western influence.<sup>29</sup>

It was against this background that the term *washoku* emerged. According to Cwiertka’s research, ‘*washoku*’ entered into common use in the nineteenth century. Initially it represented “food enjoyed in a restaurant setting.”<sup>30</sup> As Cwiertka observes “... Western food (*yōshoku*) was primarily served in restaurants, and since *washoku* functioned as its counterpart, the two words were frequently used in reference to the restaurant scene.”<sup>31</sup> Her in-depth analysis of two Japanese daily newspapers databases, the Yomiuri and Asahi, indicates that, unlike the previous century, *washoku* was used in a broad sense to “refer to any type of food of Japanese origin from the innovative products of the food-processing industry to banqueting dishes served to royalty” in the twentieth century.<sup>32</sup> At some point during the application to UNESCO Intangible World Heritage List, the term seemed to signify traditional home-cooking.<sup>33</sup> However, since the UNESCO inscription, it has become a brand name used to refer to Japanese culinary traditions, cooking methods, ingredients, and aesthetics as a whole.

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<sup>28</sup> Omori, “The Redefinition of *Washoku* as National Cuisine: Food Politics and National Identity in Japan,” 729.

<sup>29</sup> Some examples being, ‘*yōfuku*’ for Western style clothes, ‘*yōkan*’ for Western style houses, ‘*yōnashi*’ for European pear, and ‘*yōgaku*’ for Western music.

<sup>30</sup> Cwiertka, “Serving the Nation: The Myth of *Washoku*,” 92.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 92-93.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>33</sup> “The basic knowledge and skills related to [w]ashoku, such as the proper seasoning of home cooking, are passed down in the home at shared mealtimes.” UNESCO Committee decision regarding inscription of *washoku* into the list of Intangible Cultural Heritage.  
<https://ich.unesco.org/en/decisions/8.COM/8.17>

### 2.1.2 Characteristics

*Washoku* started gaining global significance only in the past decade, through its inscription on the UNESCO list of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2013. During this process, a narrative about Japanese cuisine centered around qualities such as seasonality, wide array of ingredients, harmony with nature, and reciprocal hospitality became prominent. These characteristics were central in branding *washoku* as an instrument of Japanese soft power.

The *Washoku* Guidebook (Appendix A), published by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), can be considered as the ‘brand book’ of Japanese cuisine. A ‘brand book’ is the main vehicle for communicating a brand identity to a broad audience. Nation branding expert Melissa Aronczyk explains this concept in the following:

The communications and marketing strategies that underpin the brand are often referred to as “hymn sheets” or “song sheets,” which, as the terms imply, are intended to harmonize and unify the communications for the nation brand among the diverse members of the population. Typically hymn sheets are collected in a “brand book” to convey the principles of the brand essence, its core ideas, and its vision or strategy. The brand book is reproduced on a mass scale and distributed among citizens through a variety of channels.<sup>34</sup>

The *Washoku* Guidebook provides concise but comprehensive information about Japanese cuisine branded under the name *washoku*. Composed of eighteen parts, the official *washoku* pamphlet touches upon the history, characteristics, future of both Japanese cuisine and the mindset that lies behind it. According to this guidebook, *washoku* – “the traditional dietary culture of Japan” – consists of four elements: 1) foodstuff, 2) dishes and cooking techniques, 3) a well-balanced nutritive value, 4) the mindset of hospitality expressed by the guest and the host. The basic meal structure

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<sup>34</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 77.

is described as “one soup and three dishes,” with soup and secondary dishes complementary to cooked rice.<sup>35</sup>

Harmony with nature is also emphasized throughout the MAFF pamphlet. The concept nature here is also used to express four different meanings: the spiritual nature of *washoku* of “respecting nature that brings blessings in the form of food”; the social nature of *washoku* as “the cornerstone of society, [reflected] through family get-togethers, community gatherings and other parties”; the functional nature of *washoku* in the form of nutritional balance; and the regional nature of *washoku* representing local culinary diversity across Japan. As emphasized in the UNESCO application form, “[washoku] is associated with an essential spirit of respect for nature closely related to the sustainable use of natural resources.”<sup>36</sup>

Descriptions of *washoku* in books and websites about Japanese cuisine are in line with the MAFF guidebook. Referencing the UNESCO inscription, *washoku* is celebrated for its diversity, healthiness, visual appeal and harmony with nature in scholarly writings and mass media.<sup>37</sup> As it gained worldwide recognition and became Japan’s national brand, a philosophy centered around five principles, shown in Figure 2, also became widespread in discussions about Japanese cuisine.

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<sup>35</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan.” <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/data/publish/attach/pdf/index-20.pdf>

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), “Washoku, Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese, Notably for the Celebration of New Year.” <https://ich.unesco.org/en/RL/washoku-traditional-dietary-cultures-of-the-japanese-notably-for-the-celebration-of-new-year-00869>

<sup>37</sup> Kamakura, “Washoku (No. 1),” <https://www.kikkoman.com/en/foodforum/the-japanese-table/28-1.html>

Kikkoman Corporation, “Washoku: 2013 Dünya Kültür Mirası,” <https://www.kikkoman.com.tr/yemek-blogu/washoku/>

*Washoku* expert Elizabeth Andoh (2005) is credited for disseminating the five principles of Japanese cuisine to a global audience.<sup>38</sup> Andoh explains these principles as:

Five colors, or *go shiki*, suggests that every meal include foods that are red, yellow, green, black, and white. (Often very dark colors, particularly deep purple – eggplant, grapes – and sometimes brown – shiitake mushrooms – are counted as black.) Vitamins and minerals naturally come into balance with a colorful range of foods.

Five tastes, or *go mi*, describes what the Japanese call *anbai*, a harmonious balance of flavors- salty, sour, sweet, bitter, and spicy [umami]- that ensures our palates are pleasantly stimulated, but not overwhelmed.

Five ways, or *go hō*, urges cooks to prepare food by a variety of methods, simmering, broiling, and steaming being some of the most basic. By combining various methods at every meal, it is easy to limit the total amount of sugar, salt, and oil consumed, thereby avoiding excess calories.

Five senses, or *go kan mon*, are rules concerned with the partaking of food and have a strong basis in Buddhism. Indeed, many Buddhist temples in Japan that serve vegetarian fare (*shōjin ryōri*) will have these rules written on their menus. They instruct us, first, to respect the efforts of all those who contributed their toil to cultivating and preparing our food; second, to do good deeds worthy of receiving such nourishment; third, to come to the table without ire; fourth, to eat for spiritual as well as temporal well-being; and fifth, to be serious in our struggle to attain enlightenment.<sup>39</sup>

In fact, the five principles, originating in and spread from China via Zen Buddhism, can be observed in numerous Asian cultures. However, “in Japan, the five principles intertwined with indigenous Shinto beliefs, such as humanity’s oneness with nature, and evolved into a broadly encompassing, deeply integrated culinary philosophy.”<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> “However, it was the publication of ‘Washoku: Recipes from the Japanese Home Kitchen’ in 2005 that truly brought Andoh into the global spotlight. Winning her a second IACP Award (and a nomination for the James Beard Award), it was the first cookbook to make the underlying principles of Japanese cuisine available and understandable for anyone, anywhere in the world.” Bailey, *Elizabeth Andoh Writer, Chef, World-renowned Washoku Expert*.  
<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2020/03/07/food/elizabeth-andoh-writer-chef-world-renowned-washoku-expert/> )

<sup>39</sup> Andoh, *Washoku: Recipes from the Japanese Home Kitchen*, 26-28.

<sup>40</sup> Andoh, *Washoku: Recipes from the Japanese Home Kitchen*, 28.

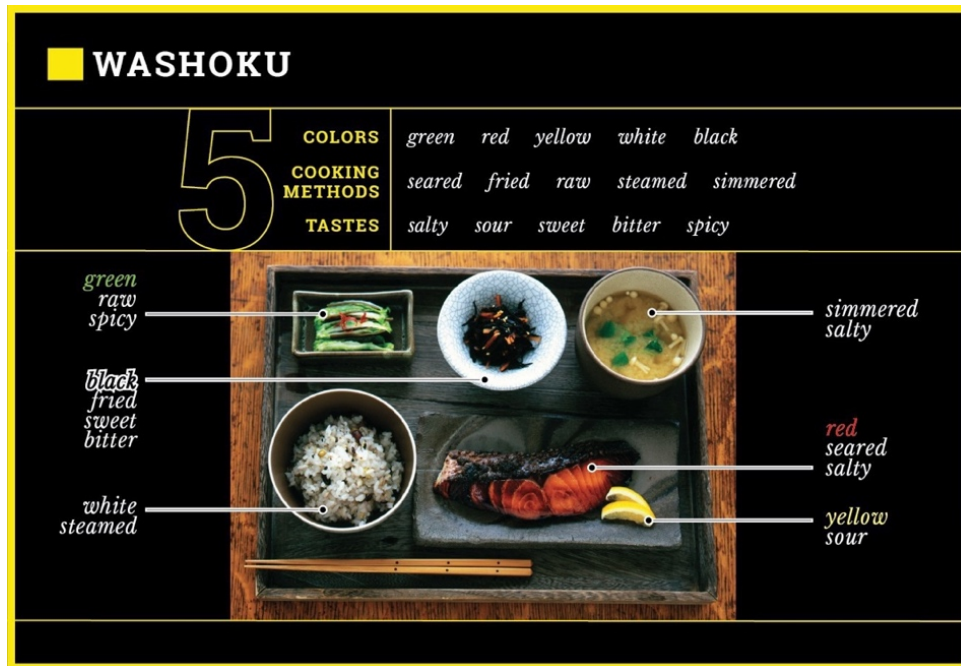


Figure 2. Five principles of *washoku*

Source: Kristen Mcquillin, Kilter Blog, “Sunday share: the fives of food”

Buddhist influence in Japan was prominent until the nineteenth century and resulted in two distinct forms of cooking: a multicourse feast served during tea ceremonies called *kaiseki*, and a vegetarian cuisine called *shōjin*.<sup>41</sup> The concept of *washoku* also seems to have been greatly influenced by Zen Buddhism and the tea ceremony in a number of ways. This is especially evident in the ‘one soup three side dishes’ structure, characteristics of seasonality and respect to nature.

As Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob explain:

Both Shintō and Buddhism share an ideal of simplicity. For Shintō, it is important that human activities be in harmony with nature, and that cleanliness and purity are at the heart of every action. In Buddhism, renunciation of wealth and the embrace of poverty and restraint were important basic principles. Thus, the ideas of restraint and elegance, and of simplicity and frugality of both these religions dovetailed neatly in Japanese food attitudes.<sup>42</sup>

The following part will focus on the relationship between *washoku* and *kaiseki*.

<sup>41</sup> Ashkenazi and Jacob, *Food Culture in Japan*, 19-20.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

### 2.1.3 Connection to *kaiseki*

*Kaiseki* is a ritualized banquet style meal served in Japan. It has been consumed since the sixteenth century and is considered pivotal in the development of Japanese cuisine. Depending on the kanji used, *kaiseki* can signify a type of simple meal accompanying Japanese tea ceremonies (懷石)<sup>43</sup> or an elaborate meal served at fine dining restaurants (会席). The two are different in terms of origin and content. The latter emerged as a response to the extreme formalization of Japanese banquet fare for the samurai and nobility and is now served mainly at restaurants while the former is thought to have been a part of the Japanese tea ceremony founded by the tea master Sen no Rikyū.<sup>44</sup> It is also known as *cha-kaiseki* (茶懷石, tea *kaiseki*). Currently, the kanji “懷石” is used to express both types of *kaiseki* meals. Figure 3 and 4 illustrate the differences between two *kaiseki* styles.

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<sup>43</sup> There is an interesting story behind this kanji. Kaichi Tsuji (1981) recounts, “Centuries ago, it was a rule that Zen priests ate only two regular meals a day – morning and noon. But since the priests engaged in rather strenuous work, by evening they were often hungry, and to assuage this hunger they would eat a light meal, which was called *yakuseki* (‘hot stones’). This term came from the practice of putting heated stones inside their clothing, by which the priests staved off hunger and cold during long sessions of meditation. When the tea masters developed the custom of serving a meal during the tea ceremony, they called it *kaiseki* (‘breast stones’). By evoking the mage use in the Zen term, they seasoned their specialty with religious connotations.” Tsuji, *Kaiseki: Zen Tastes in Japanese Cooking*, 12-23.

<sup>44</sup> Ashkenazi and Jacob, *Food Culture in Japan*, 8; Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 88-89.

Whether it was Rikyū who formalized the *kaiseki* meal form served at tea ceremonies remains a contested topic. In addition to many Japanese scholars, a number of English-speaking scholars such as Naomichi Ishige, Michael Ashkenazi and Katarzyna Cwiertka consider Rikyū as the central figure in establishing and perfecting the *kaiseki* meal. Cwiertka even calls Rikyū the “founding father of *kaiseki*”. Eric Rath delineates this topic in his paper titled “Reevaluating Rikyū: Kaiseki and the Origins of Japanese Cuisine”. According to Rath, there is not enough historical evidence to claim that Rikyū established the tea cuisine. He argues that it is highly improbable that tea cuisine could be the conception of one person alone, and that more research needs to be done in order to determine the multiple actors who contributed to the development of *kaiseki* over the centuries. Rath, “Reevaluating Rikyū: Kaiseki and the Origins of Japanese Cuisine,” 67-96.



Figure 3. Restaurant style *kaiseki* (会席)

Source: Kawara Soba Restaurant, “Kaiseki Ryori and Set Menu”

*Kaiseki* is characterized by lightness of meals, seasonality, natural arrangement, variety, harmony and rhythm.<sup>45</sup> Considered as the basis of *washoku*, it is regularly featured in writings about Japanese cuisine. A pamphlet published by MAFF titled ‘Washoku form and style’ lists *cha-kaiseki* as the source of seasonality<sup>46</sup> and “spirit of hospitality” in Japanese cuisine.<sup>47</sup> This sense of the season is reflected through ingredients, tableware and presentation.

<sup>45</sup> Tsuji, *Kaiseki: Zen Tastes in Japanese Cooking*, 2.

<sup>46</sup> Eric Rath challenges the view that seasonality in Japanese culinary tradition came from *kaiseki*. According to Rath “it is ... a modern concern born in a period when it became possible to eat nonseasonal foods, like watermelon in winter, thanks to improvements in transportation, refrigeration, and other technologies...[I]t was not until the late nineteenth century that tea masters in published writings paid attention to rules of seasonality in creating idealized tea menus.” Rath also argues that the change in ingredients was not to reflect the season with appropriate food like the modern chefs but more to protect the health of the guests. Rath, “Reevaluating Rikyū: Kaiseki and the Origins of Japanese Cuisine,” 86; 90.

Still, whether intentional or not, it seems that seasonality has a relatively long place in the history of Japanese cuisine.

<sup>47</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “Washoku: Form and Style,” 14-25. [https://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/gaisiyoku/pamphlet/pdf/14-25\\_english.pdf](https://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/gaisiyoku/pamphlet/pdf/14-25_english.pdf)





Figure 4. Spring themed tea kaiseki served at Sokkon restaurant.

Source: Hitosara Magazine, *Ocha no tenmae to cha-kaiseki, wa konseputo no kakuteru wo tanoshimu Sokkon*, お茶の点前と茶懐石、和コンセプトのカクテルを楽しむ【即今】 [Tea ceremony procedures and tea *kaiseki*: enjoying Japan themed cocktails at Sokkon]

Tea *kaiseki* is held on a number of occasions: to celebrate a new teahouse or the hosts' special birthdays -sixtieth, seventieth, seventy-seventh or eighty-eighth-; to view cherry blossoms in spring, maple leaves in autumn, snow or in winter; and even to celebrate newly acquired valuable tea utensils. Kaichi Tsuji observes, "As a rule, then, there is a specific purpose for calling people together, and that purpose determines the nature of the gathering."<sup>48</sup> Depending on the occasion, the formality level and meal courses are also subject to change. However, at the heart of it all lies the Buddhist teachings of simplicity. Thus, through care simple ingredients are transformed into unique feasts.<sup>49</sup>

Originally, *kaiseki* consisted of a soup and three side dishes accompanied by rice. This meal structure called '*ichijū-sansai*' is considered to be the basis of

<sup>48</sup> Tsuji, *Kaiseki: Zen Tastes in Japanese Cooking*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 163.



*washoku*. Over time additional courses were added in the meal that resulted in a more elaborate meal pattern.<sup>50</sup> Currently, a *kaiseki* meal can be between six and fifteen courses. The most common of which are: *sakizuke* (appetizer); *gohan* (rice); *suimono* (soup); *mukozuke* (sashimi), *wanmori* (central meal of the feast); *yakimono* (flame grilled fish); *hassun* (food reflecting the season); and finally, *ocha* (green tea).<sup>51</sup>

There are also different *kaiseki* themes that correspond to the twelve months of a year: Opening Kaiseki in November, Evening Tea in December, New Year Kaiseki in January, Spring Kaiseki in February, Doll's Festival Kaiseki in March, Flower Viewing Kaiseki in April, Boys' Festival Kaiseki in May, Off Season Kaiseki in June, Morning Kaiseki in July, All Souls' Day Kaiseki in August, Moon Viewing Kaiseki in September, and Closing Kaiseki in October.<sup>52</sup> Ingredients and tableware change depending on the theme of *kaiseki*.<sup>53</sup>

*Kaiseki* characteristics such as the initial one soup three dishes meal pattern and harmony with nature through seasonal ingredients remain at the heart of Japanese cuisine. It is also regularly mentioned in writings about *washoku*.<sup>54</sup>

## 2.2 Branding *washoku*

Concern with branding Japanese cuisine started at the beginning of 2000s and intensified in the following decade. *Washoku* become a nation brand of Japan

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<sup>50</sup> Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Cuisine*, 88-89.

<sup>51</sup> For detailed information see Kaichi Tsuji *Kaiseki: Zen Tastes in Japanese Cooking*, and "Kaiseki Guide: The Art of Japanese Multi-Course Meals," Master Class, <https://www.masterclass.com/articles/kaiseki-guide#want-to-learn-more-about-cooking>.

<sup>52</sup> Tsuji, *Kaiseki: Zen Tastes in Japanese Cooking*, 19-163.

<sup>53</sup> To list a few, in Spring Kaiseki warm and frugal dishes are served, while the Off Season is characterized by chilled dishes, raw fish is never served in Morning Kaiseki, on the other hand no meat is served on All Souls' Day Kaiseki. For an in-depth list see Tsuji, *Kaiseki: Zen Tastes in Japanese Cooking*.

<sup>54</sup> Hutchins, "Kaiseki- The Ultimate Japanese food", <https://www.nhk.or.jp/dwc/food/articles/177.html> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), "Washoku: Form and style," 14-25. [https://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/gaisyoku/pamphlet/pdf/14-25\\_english.pdf](https://www.maff.go.jp/j/shokusan/gaisyoku/pamphlet/pdf/14-25_english.pdf)

particularly after its inscription in the UNESCO Intangible World Heritage list in 2013. In fact, efforts to create the *washoku* brand gained momentum for and through the UNESCO application. Japan was not alone in its endeavor, though. Numerous countries also applied to register their culinary cultures into the intangible heritage list.<sup>55</sup> Japan was following the global trends of nation branding and gastronomicalism.<sup>56</sup>

Nation branding is defined as “the creation and communication of national identity using tools, techniques, and expertise from the world of corporate brand management.”<sup>57</sup> Branding expert and policy advisor Simon Anholt is considered to be the person who coined the term ‘nation brand’ in 1998. In Anholt’s view brands are representatives of “sustainable wealth.”<sup>58</sup> Accordingly, branding can affect “a country’s long-term prospects” if “[it] is supported and encouraged government, and written as key component into a consistent, imaginative and well-managed *national* brand strategy.”<sup>59</sup> Japan, for this reason established the Brand Working Group in 2004.

Typically, a few well known experts in either the United States or the United Kingdom assist countries in nation branding. While Japan might be getting guidance from famous companies abroad, nation-branding initiatives are managed mostly by domestic authorities. For the promotion of Japanese culture, including food culture, JETRO (Japan External Trade Organization) and MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries) have collaborated with the U.K. based Cross Media Ltd.

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<sup>55</sup> France, Turkey, Mexico, Korea, Georgia to name a few.

<sup>56</sup> The Thai government, for example, initiated the culinary diplomacy programme called ‘Global Thai’ in 2002, in order to raise awareness and make popular Thai cuisine. Ichijo and Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*, 110-111.

<sup>57</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 15.

<sup>58</sup> Anholt, *Brand New Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, 7.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid. 11.

marketing and advertising company. The company defines itself as a “Japanese company based in London” that “broadcasts Japanese culture to the world through English language events, publishing, and digital promotion.”<sup>60</sup> They have two brands called ‘EAT-JAPAN’<sup>61</sup> which solely focuses on promoting Japanese food culture through exhibits, articles, recipes, magazines and other events; and a brand named ‘HYPER JAPAN’<sup>62</sup> modeled after the Cool Japan initiative that deals with promoting Japanese culture in general. Their numerous Japanese government agency partners and corporate clients include, the Agency of Cultural Affairs, the Tokyo Municipal Government, Shizuoka Prefecture, Fukuoka Prefecture, the Japan National Tourism Organization, NHK, Kikkoman, All Nippon Airways, Tobu Railway, and British Airways. While Cross Media Ltd. offers services to and works in collaboration with Japanese authorities and private sector, ultimately it is the Japanese Brand Working Group established by the Japanese government that directs the whole process. Although they cooperate with people from all kinds of private and national sectors, the Brand Working Group is mainly an apparatus of the state.

How does national branding help a country? According to Anholt, “because we believe in the country images, we also believe that products possess similar qualities to the countries they come from.”<sup>63</sup> This certainly seems to be the case for *washoku*. As stated by Anholt, countries and brands are similar in that “[t]hey are perceived -rightly or wrongly- in certain ways by large groups of people at home and abroad; they are associated with certain qualities and characteristics”<sup>64</sup> *Washoku* is

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<sup>60</sup>Cross Media Ltd., “Company Profile,” <https://crossmedia.co.uk/en/company/>

<sup>61</sup> Cross Media Ltd., EAT-JAPAN Brand Website <https://www.eat-japan.com/>

<sup>62</sup>Cross Media Ltd., HYPER-JAPAN Brand Website <https://hyperjapan.co.uk/>

<sup>63</sup> Anholt, *Brand New Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, 11.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., 110.

For Anholt, “[t]he true art of branding is distillation: the art of extracting the concentrated essence of something complex, so that its complexity can always be extracted back out of the distillate, but it remains portable and easily memorable. The distillate, rather than actually attempting to contain all the detail of the country in question, is simply the common thread, the genetic constant, which

branded as a healthy, balanced type of cuisine, in harmony with nature, respecting seasons. Thus, when people consume Japanese food, they in fact also consume the images and ideas that come with such brand.

### 2.2.1 Homogenizing *washoku*

Nation-branding is only one step towards homogenizing *washoku*. Branding expert Melissa Aronczyk points out that “nation branding takes its cues from but is not the same as product branding” because nation branding is not only about essentializing and homogenizing the nation but also “maintains and perpetuates the nation as a container of distinct identities and loyalties, and as a project for sovereignty and self-determination.”<sup>65</sup> In that sense nation branding is the latest and most current step in homogenizing *washoku*. Before delineating Japan’s culinary politics and the UNESCO application process for *washoku*, it is best to take a look at how the Japanese state homogenized the national diet.

We have already discussed how encounter with the Other (West) had led to a surge in nationalist sentiments in Japan during the Late Tokugawa and Meiji Periods. For the first time the need to conceptualize Japanese culinary traditions became an important concern. That was why *washoku* emerged. This part will provide a short outline of the Japanese diet evolved towards *washoku*.

In their book titled “Japan’s Dietary Transition and Its Impacts,” Vaclav Smil and Kazuhiko Kobayashi trace the transformation of Japanese diet from the Meiji Period onwards. For instance, while rice is listed as the main staple of Japan and is considered an indispensable part of the *ichijū-sansai* (one-soup-three-side-dishes)

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underlies the basic commonality between the different parts of the brand” Anholt, *Brand New Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, 132.

<sup>65</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 8-9.

meal pattern, rice was consumed by the majority of the Japanese population only after the Meiji Period.<sup>66</sup>

Smil and Kobayashi observe that although the Japanese diet began to change at the end of nineteenth century -through increased meat eating, consumption of milk and other dairy products etc.- it was the interwar years and post-war 1950s that these changes became noticeably fast with long-lasting impacts.<sup>67</sup>

Katarzyna Cwiertka's study in "Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity" also reveals a similar picture. In Cwiertka's words:

Multiculturalism is merely one aspect in the culinary transformation of modern Japan that can very generally be described as a persistent homogenization of local food practices and attitudes into the Japanese cuisine as we know it today. Homogenization was not a goal in itself, but rather an unintentional outcome of a variety of actions undertaken for the sake of different objectives... For present-day Japanese, rice, soy sauce and fresh seafood are the ultimate symbols of 'Japaneseness', symbols more powerful than the cherry blossom or the national flag in that they satisfy visceral cravings. Yet it is only relatively recently that these three ingredients have turned into standard components of the daily meal of all Japanese.<sup>68</sup>

The Japanese Armed Forces played an important historical role in homogenizing the culinary consumption habits of the Japanese people from the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>69</sup> Military catering contributed to the creation of a national taste. For example, *yōshoku* dishes such as stew and pork cutlet (*tonkatsu*) started accompanying rice. The use of standardized soy sauce also spread through army

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<sup>66</sup> There is some disagreement when rice became the main staple of Japan. Smil and Kazuhiko's study reveals that "According to Tsukuba (1986) and Ōmameuda (2007), it became a truly dominant staple for the majority of population only during the Meiji ra. Dore (1958) thought that white rice became part of the Japanese birthright only during the 1930s, and Watanabe (1989) went even further, stating that rice became the staple only in 1939 with the advent of food rationing. In any case, rice had a prominent place in the nation's cosmology, identity, self-perception, and culture for centuries before it became an indispensable staple." Smil and Kazuhiko, *Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts*, 13

<sup>67</sup> Smil and Kobayashi, *Japan's Dietary Transition and Its Impacts*, 10.

<sup>68</sup> Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, 61.

food.<sup>70</sup> The army made use of foreign inspired meals (Western and Chinese)<sup>71</sup> which could not only be acquired at a reasonable price but also “helped to bridge regional differences in taste.”<sup>72</sup> When the army chefs returned home, they took occupations at schools and transmitted the palate they acquired in the army to the general population.<sup>73</sup>

Cwiertka lists the political context in which the Japanese dietary transformation took place:

...the political circumstances that provided a persistent stimulation for dietary change. First, the policies of ‘civilization and enlightenment’ set the stage for the entire transformation; they inspired adoptions from the West that became building blocks in the creation of modern Japan. Second, the rhetoric of ‘rich country, strong army’ and ‘good wife, wise mother’ generated the development of an advanced military catering and prompted the modernization of home cooking. Third, the militarization and economic mobilization of the war- time period facilitated the nationwide proliferation of a standardized cuisine that had developed under the influence of military dieticians and home economics experts. Fourth, imperialist ambitions were critical in outlining Chinese and Korean food as the integral components of modern Japanese cuisine. Finally, post-war economic affluence brought about the gentrification of taste and democratization of diet, which sealed off the construction of a Japanese national cuisine.<sup>74</sup>

This is how the Japanese palate has been homogenized. In light of these changes the national cuisine metamorphosed and was later branded under the concept *washoku*.

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

Previously there were great regional differences between soy sauce in Japan. While there are still more than a few types of soy sauce, the general taste has become standardized.

<sup>71</sup> Korean food came into fashion after WW2. Until then, there was a prejudice that Korean cooking did not suit the palate of Japanese due to strong flavors of garlic and spices like red pepper. For a detailed discussion see: Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, and Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*.

<sup>72</sup> Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, 82.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 137.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 176.

### 2.2.2 State involvement – Culinary politics

Branding *washoku* so as to promote Japanese cuisine as Japan's soft power was initiated by Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi in 2002.<sup>75</sup> Established within the framework of the Intellectual Strategic Program, the Brand Working Group was created to build food culture, fashion and local brands into Japan's attractive points. The task force was entrusted with developing a strategy for improving Japan's national image overseas through the propagation of Japan brand.<sup>76</sup> On the domestic level, the Brand Working Group worked together with MAFF on the national food education campaign called "*Shokuiku*."<sup>77</sup>

A member of the Japan Brand Working Group, Professor Satoshi Akutsu explains the reasoning behind Japan branding initiatives. Accordingly, "Key achievements critical to Japan branding initiatives aspire to two major goals (with respective sub-goals) set by [the] Policy Headquarters... The two major goals are (1) making Japan a world-class content superpower and (2) implementing the Japan brand strategy based on the Japanese lifestyle."<sup>78</sup>

In 2005 food culture was officially chosen as one of the national assets to represent gross national cultural power of Japan.<sup>79</sup> However, as soon as it started the initiative was disrupted when Koizumi's term ended in 2006. It was only around 2011 that efforts to brand *washoku* resumed.<sup>80</sup> According to Melissa Aronczyk, the nation brand can be used to "repair reputations damaged by political and economic legacies, to dodge unfavorable international attention in the aftermath of unpopular

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<sup>75</sup> Kohsaka, "The Myth of Washoku: A Twisted Discourse on the 'Uniqueness' of National Food Heritages," 66-71.

<sup>76</sup> Akutsu, "Elements of Nation-Branding Strategy: Country Case Insight - Japan," 209-220.

<sup>77</sup> The 'Shokuiku Campaign' will be discussed in detail in Chapter 4.

<sup>78</sup> Akutsu, "Elements of Nation-Branding Strategy: Country Case Insight-Japan," 216.

<sup>79</sup> Ibid.; Cwiertka, "Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku," 99

<sup>80</sup> The word "Japan Brand" appears in the 2013 White Paper on Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism in Japan as the main strategy of tourism activities. Retrieved from <https://www.mlit.go.jp/common/001063075.pdf>

domestic decisions, or to control and manage impressions in the context of unforeseen or uncontrollable events.”<sup>81</sup> This is the reason *washoku* branding initiatives were picked up in 2011 after the great Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami.<sup>82</sup>

For the past twenty years, *washoku* brand has been promoted nationally and globally through projects such as “Cool Japan,”<sup>83</sup> cooking contests, and culinary tours.<sup>84</sup> These topics will be discussed in the following chapter.

### 2.2.3 UNESCO nomination

The UNESCO cultural heritage designation plays a central role in branding *washoku*. Japan’s application seems to be motivated by a trend towards culinary inscriptions around 2010s. Specifically in 2013, of the 25 newly inscribed heritages 5 focused on culinary elements: ‘Ancient Georgian traditional Qvevri wine-making method,’ ‘Mediterranean diet,’ ‘Kimjang, making and sharing kimchi in the Republic of Korea,’ ‘Turkish coffee culture and tradition,’ and lastly ‘Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year.’<sup>85</sup>

Japan’s application process both mirrored and was influenced by Korea’s application.<sup>86</sup> In 2011 Korea had applied to UNESCO for the preservation of the

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<sup>81</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 16.

<sup>82</sup> Cang, “Japan’s Washoku as Intangible Heritage: The Role of National Food Traditions in UNESCO’s Cultural Heritage Scheme,” 491-513; Cwiertka, “Washoku, Heritage and National Identity,” 376-388; Ichijo, “Banal Nationalism and UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage List: Cases of Washoku and the Gastronomic Meal of the French,” 259-284.

<sup>83</sup> The Ana-Airlines “Is Japan Cool?”, launched in 2012 and aimed at promoting Japan’s popular culture, is a website that claims to offer the viewers a chance to decide whether Japan is really cool, by upvoting and liking sections under cool Japan. <https://www.ana-cooljapan.com/contents/>

<sup>84</sup> Arigato Travel K.K., “Flavors of Japan Daytime Tour.” <https://arigatojapan.co.jp/packages/flavors-of-japan-tour/>

Cookly, *Washoku Club Food Tours*. <https://www.cookly.me/by/washoku-club-food-tours/>  
Oku Jaapan, “Culinary Tours in Japan.” <https://www.okujapan.com/ways-to-go/activity/food>

<sup>85</sup> Cwiertka, “Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku,” 94-95.

<sup>86</sup> On Nov. 15, 2011 Japan Times published an article titled “Recognizing Japanese Food Culture”, about the UNESCO application of Japanese food. The article claims that “Japanese food culture is not in any danger of becoming extinct. Indeed, it is thriving. In large cities and the countryside, restaurants showcase fantastic local products and specialty items. In Japan, delicious food is not just big business and a national pastime; it is an inalienable right”. The article then goes on to cite Korean



‘Royal cuisine of Joseon Dynasty,’ but their application was rejected on the grounds that it did not correspond to a community, providing them with a sense of identity and continuity at present.

Initially Japan too had applied for the preservation of *kaiseki* (traditional multi-course dinner served at restaurants). Cwierka’s analysis of the support statements for the application dating between September and November 2011 reveals that instead of *washoku*, “[d]istinctive Japanese cuisine with traditional features centered on *kaiseki*” was supported and that it was only after late November that the support statements referred to *washoku*.<sup>87</sup>

Furthermore, the UNESCO application was not a state-led initiative at first. It was organized by *washoku* chefs who reached out to the MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan).<sup>88</sup> In early 2000s, around the same time that Japanese government started thinking about ways to promote food culture, there was also a concern about the future of traditional Japanese cuisine in the private sector. Lack of interest in learning traditional cooking, a limited number of young *washoku* chefs and the social status of chefs were seen as problematic.<sup>89</sup> In 2004, two years after the Brand Working Group was established, Yoshioka Murata, “the owner and the chief chef of Kikunoi, a traditional Japanese restaurant (*ryotei*) in Kyoto with three Michelin stars” founded the Japanese Culinary Academy (JCA).<sup>90</sup> According to the official website, the academy was established with the aim of “promoting to global understanding of Japanese cuisine” and “Contributing to the Next Generation

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royal cuisine application to UNESCO and the registration of French, Mexican and Mediterranean food as a motivation for the Japanese application. See:

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2011/11/15/editorials/recognizing-japanese-food-culture/>

<sup>87</sup> Cwierka, “Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku,” 96.

<sup>88</sup> Ichijo and Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*, 152.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid. Reported by Mutsuru Suda from the Washoku Association of Japan.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid.

of Japanese food Chefs.”<sup>91</sup> The incentive to apply for the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List also came from the Japanese Culinary Academy.<sup>92</sup> Later on governmental bodies, led by the MAFF took over the UNESCO application process.<sup>93</sup>

As Ichijo and Ranta report:

In Murata’s own words, when he learned that the South Korean government was planning to make an application for Korean court cuisine at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake in 2011, he mobilized the Academy to petition the Kyoto Prefectural government about applying to UNESCO as a way of ensuring the future of traditional Japanese cuisine.<sup>94</sup>

The change in content, from *kaiseki* to *washoku*, likewise coincided with the decision regarding South Korean government’s nomination of imperial cuisine. The UNESCO Committee found Korea’s application insufficient from a number of perspectives. They asked Korea to clarify the social function of royal cuisine for the community concerned, how its inscription would give visibility and awareness of its importance as a form of identity for a specific community, and to what extent it is relevant to a larger community beyond the academic milieu.<sup>95</sup> Seeing that Korea’s application for the royal cuisine was rejected, Japanese authorities in charge of the process made a change in the title and content of the application.<sup>96</sup> Thus, the nomination for “Distinctive Japanese cuisine with traditional features centered on kaiseki” was transformed into “Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese, notably for the celebration of New Year.”

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<sup>91</sup> The Japanese Culinary Academy website: <https://culinary-academy.jp/english>

<sup>92</sup> Ichijo and Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: from Everyday to Global Politics*.

<sup>93</sup> “In July 2011, the Working Group to Prepare for the Inscription of Japanese Food Culture in the Intangible Cultural Heritage List was set up by MAFF, drawing participants from other ministries (Agency for Cultural Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry for Economy, Trade and Industry), universities, cooking profession and catering industry.” Ibid, 152.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization. (UNESCO), “Decision of the Intergovernmental Committee: 6.COM 13.42,” <https://ich.unesco.org/en/Decisions/6.COM/13.42>

<sup>96</sup> Cwiertka, “Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku,” 97-98; Ichijo and Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: from Everyday to Global Politics*, 153-154.

It was this change that led to the creation of a comprehensive narrative around the *washoku* brand. This necessary change broadened the definition of *washoku* from home cooked meals to traditional dietary cultures including foodstuff and cooking methods. It also allowed Japan to address two major national concerns at the same time through the *washoku* brand. The first was a concern about how to increase Japan's self-sufficiency in terms of agriculture and foodstuff, the second was a concern about how to promote Japanese cuisine as an instrument of soft power.

### 2.3 Dual perspectives on *washoku*: national – global

The MAFF guidebook on *washoku* reflects the dual concern about Japanese dietary cultures in a quite explicit manner: “Even though WASHOKU is becoming a focus of attention in the world, its future is at risk in Japan, its place of origin.”<sup>97</sup> Thus, *washoku* discourse is addressed to two different audiences with two major concerns at mind; the first, to the Japanese citizens for safeguarding Japanese culinary traditions and family life, national food self-sufficiency and national image domestically; the second, to the international audience promoting *washoku* as an instrument of Japanese soft power. In a way, though, both nationally and internationally the branding of *washoku* was aimed through and towards performing soft power.

The following chapter will discuss how the *washoku* brand is globally promoted as an instrument of Japanese soft power.

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<sup>97</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan.” <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/market/attach/pdf/index-12.pdf>

## CHAPTER 3

### WASHOKU BRAND AS AN ASSET OF JAPAN'S SOFT POWER

This chapter will delineate how the *washoku* brand has been used as an instrument of Japanese soft power. The following pages will discuss soft power theory and trace Japan's gastropolitics since 2004 through campaigns such as 'Visit Japan' (2003-2010), 'Washoku- Try Japan's Good Food' (2006-2010) and 'Cool Japan' (2011-). It will also touch upon diplomatic meals, the relationship between *washoku* and the Olympics and finally outline how food tours and *washoku* contests are used to promote the *washoku* brand to a global audience.

#### 3.1 Soft power theory

Joseph Nye's theory of soft power rests on the argument that a country has three sources of power, which are hard (military) power, economic power, and soft power. Nye defines soft power as "the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion and payments."<sup>98</sup> A country's soft power is based on three resources: culture, political values, and (foreign and domestic) policies.<sup>99</sup> According to Nye, soft power behaviors, "[resting on] values, culture, policies, and institutions, [aim at] attraction and agenda setting [through] public diplomacy, bilateral and multilateral diplomacy."<sup>100</sup> One important characteristics of soft power is that it is contextual, meaning that it is a dynamic force whose effectiveness is intricately tied to the sender and receiver of messages and images conveyed, and the circumstances upon which it takes place.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>98</sup> Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, x.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*, 12; 44-44.

In a way, soft power is related to image making where a country's national soft power assets reflect an idea about, or aspect of that particular nation.<sup>102</sup> Nye cites polls that show how American popular culture has made the USA seem “exciting, exotic, rich, powerful, trend-setting – the cutting edge of modernity and innovation.”<sup>103</sup> The image reflecting nature of soft power renders it closely related to nation branding, since nation-brand creation is centered around a conscious effort to identify and highlight some attractive features of a nation. Thus, nation branding can be considered as a strategy towards realizing a country's soft power.

Simon Anholt's Competitive Identity theory, where governments try to promote their nations through soft power assets such as culture, policy, tourism, brands, investment etc., is one explanation of nation branding.<sup>104</sup> Melissa Aronczyk also considers nation branding as an important source and vehicle of national identity building in our global world. Accordingly, Aronczyk explains the function of nation brands in the following:

Using tools, techniques, and expertise of commercial branding is seen as a way to help a nation articulate a more coherent and cohesive national identity, to animate the spirit of its citizens in the service of national priorities, and to maintain loyalty to the territory within its borders. In short, the goal of nation branding is to make the nation *matter* in a world where borders and boundaries appear increasingly obsolete.<sup>105</sup>

While one function of nation branding is to contribute to national identity making, another function is to facilitate communication between that nation and the rest of the world. According to Anholt, the nation brand strategy is “reinforced and enriched by *every* act of communication between the country and the rest of the world.”<sup>106</sup> This

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<sup>102</sup> Nye is of the opinion that polls could provide information about how a country's soft power is received, whether it is successful and if so, to what degree. While acknowledging that polls might not be the perfect medium to assess soft power resources, Nye maintains that polls can at least indicate how attractive a country seems Nye, *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*, 18.

<sup>103</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>104</sup> Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations*, 26.

<sup>105</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 3.

<sup>106</sup> Anholt, *Brand New Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, 12.

includes trade, tourism, investments, how policies are made and presented, how culture is promoted, how citizens represent their country at home and abroad, through media, relations with other countries, sports, cultural events, exchanges and much more.<sup>107</sup> Illustrated in Figure 5, Anholt conceptualizes these interactions as the “Nation Brand Hexagon”<sup>108</sup> or “The Hexagon of Competitive Identity.”<sup>109</sup>



Figure 5. The hexagon of competitive identity

Source: Simon Anholt, *The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*, 26

The hexagon of nation branding orients the international and intranational communications of a country.

As Anholt points out, branding, and nation branding in extension, has much to do with emotions. Referencing Joseph Nye, Anholt claims that “National branding is about making people *want* to pay attention to a country’s achievements and believe in its qualities. It is the quintessential modern exemplar of soft power.”<sup>110</sup> The brand

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 12-13.

<sup>108</sup> Ibid., 122.

<sup>109</sup> Anholt, *Competitive Identity: The New Brand Management for Nations, Cities and Regions*, 26.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid., 13.

of *washoku* also reaches out to people's emotions through its image as a nature respecting, healthy, and multifarious diet.<sup>111</sup>

Anholt's national brand strategy rests on five elements; promoting tourism, representing culture, attaching investment, foreign policy, and exporting brands."<sup>112</sup> All of which are in fact considered as soft power 'currencies.' The *washoku* brand is also promoted through these 'currencies.'

In addition to being a kind of "national collective identity-making," a nation brand is a significant channel to boost a country's international standing.

In Melissa Aronczyk's words:

As a communications strategy, nation branding promises to generate international awareness of a national client, using proven marketing techniques to break through the clutter of a saturated and fragmented global media environment. To carry influence or curry favor, national representatives must find a way to make their jurisdiction visible in the competitive attention economy of media consumption. Nation branding conveys to the world that the nation is not only visible but also well regarded in international circles. Moreover, as an intensely visual practice, the nation's brand image itself -its logos, slogans, typefaces, and symbols- is well suited to the global vernacular of modern media.<sup>113</sup>

*Washoku* brand makes use of this dual function of nation branding. The following chapter will delineate how the brand of *washoku* is conceptualized as Japan's national identity making. This chapter will focus on *washoku*'s role in Japan's global communications strategy.

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<sup>111</sup> In 2020 MAFF conducted an online survey to determine the leading opinion in Japan about *washoku*. The results revealed that a majority of the participants consider Japanese cuisine as a healthy, nutritionally balanced diet, which conveys a sense of the seasons through the use of ingredients. See Figure 13 in Chapter 4.

<sup>112</sup> Anholt refers to these 'currencies' as the "national brand pentagon." Anholt, *Brand New Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, 122.

<sup>113</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 17.

### 3.2 Japan's food related cultural diplomacy

Though diplomacy through cultural exchanges and interactions has a centuries long history, it is only quite recently that it gained prominence in international relations. Food's role in cultural diplomacy is even more recent. As mentioned in the previous pages, food and food cultures' role as national assets became a global trend after the 2000s. In the case of Japan, initiatives to promote food as a soft power 'currency' began in 2002 and gained momentum after the 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, especially through the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage designation.

Over the years, the Japanese government has promoted the *washoku* brand through a number of campaigns and diplomatic missions since 2003. These include "Visit Japan" (Yokoso! Japan) between 2003-2010, "Washoku- Try Japan's Good Food" between 2006-2010, "Cool Japan" since 2011, and "Enjoy My Japan" since 2018. Each strategy has contributed to the global visibility of the *washoku* brand in different ways. The following pages will delineate the major campaigns related to Japan's food culture.

#### 3.2.1 Visit Japan campaign (Yokoso! Japan)

Supervised by Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), "Visit Japan Campaign" (VJC), also known as "Yokoso! Japan," was the main strategy to promote tourism activities in Japan between 2003 and 2010.<sup>114</sup> The idea took shape after Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi announced the government's aim to "double the annual number of visitors to Japan from other countries up to 10 million by

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<sup>114</sup> Since then, Visit Japan has become a general strategy of Japanese inbound tourism activities instead of the chief campaign. Currently, its website and related pages are out of access. Only available in web archive engines. However, it is still frequently used in Japan's White Papers on Land Infrastructure and Transport and Tourism.



2010” in his general policy speech on the 156<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Diet.<sup>115</sup> At the time, there was quite a big difference between the number of outbound Japanese travelers and overseas visitors, the latter being nearly three times the former. Thus, efforts to highlight Japan’s attractive points through tourism, culture, and food gained momentum. Together with Japan Brand undertakings, the Visit Japan Campaign was globally promoted under the slogan of “Making Japan a Tourism-based Country; A beautiful Country.”<sup>116</sup>

Although food culture was chosen as one of the representative national cultural power assets of Japan in 2005,<sup>117</sup> its place in the Visit Japan Campaign remained limited. Efforts to brand Japanese cuisine under the name *washoku* were still at an initial stage and the idea to promote touristic landscapes and regional festivals seems to be foregrounded. The website of this campaign is designed to aid visitors organize their trips to Japan.<sup>118</sup> The section on food culture, titled “What to Eat” redirects the viewer to National Tourist Organization’s articles on “Japanese Delicacies.” This page foregrounds the seasonally and regionally diverse characteristics of Japanese cuisine which the basis of *washoku* brand. Listed on this page as traditional Japanese dishes are *sukiyaki* (simmered meat and vegetables), *tempura* (deep-fry), sushi, sashimi, *kaiseki ryori* (banquet style meal), yakitori (grilled chicken), *tonkatsu* (deep-fried pork cutlet), *shabu-shabu* (thin slices of beef dipped in boiling water), *soba* and *udon* noodles.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup>Ministry of Land Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism (MLIT), “2003 White Paper on Land, Infrastructure and Transport in Japan,” 35. <https://www.mlit.go.jp/english/white-paper/mlit03.html>

<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Akutsu, “Elements of Nation-Branding Strategy: Country Case Insight – Japan,” 209–220.

<sup>118</sup> The website is unfortunately inaccessible at the moment. However, it is possible to view an archived version of the website through the link below:

<https://web.archive.org/web/20090228094407/http://www.japantravelinfo.com/top/index.php>

<sup>119</sup> This is a currently unavailable page of Japanese National Tourist Organization (JNTO) Accessed through web archive from the following link:

[https://web.archive.org/web/20090222180208/http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/indepth/history/food/jfood\\_01.html](https://web.archive.org/web/20090222180208/http://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/indepth/history/food/jfood_01.html)

What is interesting to note here is that there is no mention of the one-soup-three-side-dishes meal structure that is frequently articulated in discussions about *washoku* brand. On the other hand, the seasonal nature of *washoku* is frequently highlighted in sources on Visit Japan Campaign. One other important note here is that there is a difference between what is promoted as *washoku* domestically and internationally. While discourse on *washoku* rests more on introducing and promoting individual dishes to the foreign audience in the global context, when the target is Japanese audiences the emotive aspect of *washoku* brand, resting on traditional forms of culinary cultures, meal structure and dining etiquette, becomes noticeable.<sup>120</sup>

### 3.2.2 Washoku-Try Japan's good food

“Washoku- Try Japan's Good Food” was a diplomatic mission overseen by MAFF between 2006 and 2010. The aim was to promote Japan's food culture, dishes and individual food ingredients in particular, abroad through events organized by Japanese embassies and consulates in various countries.<sup>121</sup> The target countries were Russia, the U.S., Germany, Peru, Oman, France, Canada, Korea, Hong Kong, China, Dubai, Singapore, Brunei, Egypt, the U.K., Malesia, Ireland, Croatia, Mexico, the United Arab Emirates, Switzerland, Kuwait, India, Finland, Indonesia, and Bulgaria.

Around twenty events were organized annually as part of this mission. Foodstuff endorsed during this campaign include, on the one hand, delicacies unique to Japan such as *wagyu* (Japanese beef), sake, *miso* (soybean paste), *wasabi* (Japanese horseradish), *katsuo* (bonito flakes), and common agricultural products

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<sup>120</sup> This difference will be discussed in depth in the following chapter.

<sup>121</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU- Try Japan's Good Food Enterprise.” <https://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/annai/zaigai/washoku/index.html>

such as eggplants, tomatoes, and melons. As Cwiertka observes, “Thus, the definition of the word *washoku* as utilized for the purpose of this scheme could be summed up as ‘all agricultural produce grown on Japanese soil,’ which is much broader than the one used for the UNESCO nomination.”<sup>122</sup> While a number of scholars consider the difference of *washoku* in national and global contexts, this thesis argues that this is not a discrepancy. The contextual nuance can be seen as the broadening of *washoku* brand’s scope in the course of its development.

### 3.2.3 *Washoku* and Cool Japan

Integrated into the Japan Brand Program, “Cool Japan” is a strategy to publicize Japanese popular culture and traditional arts. The idea took shape after Douglas McGray published an article titled “Japan’s Gross National Cool” in 2002.<sup>123</sup> According to McGray, Japan was “reinventing superpower” for the second time after the 1980s. Previously Japan had become a superpower through the economic boom, this time through culture.<sup>124</sup> Soft power assets such as anime, manga, music, entertainment, fashion, high technology products and cuisine form the basis of Cool Japan strategy. The overall aim was to “ensure employment by promoting overseas development by small and medium businesses and young designers, attracting tourists to Japan, and revitalizing local communities.”<sup>125</sup>

In the early stages of the Cool Japan program, items promoted under food culture category were limited to a number of globally famous dishes and ingredients

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<sup>122</sup> Cwiertka, “Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku,” 99.

<sup>123</sup> McGray, “Japan’s Gross National Cool,” *Foreign Policy*, 44-54.

<sup>124</sup> Mcgray, “Japan’s Gross National Cool.” <https://foreignpolicy.com/2009/11/11/japans-gross-national-cool/>

<sup>125</sup> Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Creative Industries Division, “Cool Japan Strategy,” 10.

associated with Japan like ramen, sushi and soy sauce.<sup>126</sup> As initiatives to brand *washoku* progressed, food items endorsed through Cool Japan also diversified.

The aspects of Japanese culture promoted via this strategy vary depending on the target country. In Simon Anholt's view, countries should "identify key countries and key opinion-makers within those countries, and concentrate on them" to communicate the nation-brand more successfully.<sup>127</sup> A report published in 2012 by Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Creative Industries Division lists eighteen target countries<sup>128</sup> for five Japanese culture industries (fashion, food, media content, tourism, skilled manufacturing/regional specialties) as part of Cool Japan activities.<sup>129</sup> Promotional activities were expected to bring revenue back to Japan.

Figure 6 depicts how Cool Japan promotions differ in volume and content for each target country. Out of three categories, food and beverage receives most publicity. Nonetheless, food related campaigns are nearly absent in South Africa, Singapore and Hong Kong, while they occupy the main place in plans for the United States, China, Brazil, and Japan. Events to promote *washoku* abroad included workshops, Japanese food pilot stores, food showcases and tasting events. Through these events, local food industries in Japan would collaborate with a target country to develop *washoku* menus, operate restaurants and organize activities to introduce or popularize Japanese cuisine in that country. Thus, on the one hand the *washoku* brand would gain visibility abroad, on the other hand, contribute to Japan's economy through local businesses.

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<sup>126</sup> Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) Economic Research Department, "Cool" Japan's Economy Warms Up [Report], [https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/market/pdf/2005\\_27\\_r.pdf](https://www.jetro.go.jp/en/reports/market/pdf/2005_27_r.pdf)

<sup>127</sup> Anholt, *Brand New Justice: The Upside of Global Branding*, 134.

<sup>128</sup> United States, France, United Kingdom, Spain, Brazil, Germany, Italy, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, India, Russia, China, South Korea, Thailand, Indonesia, South Africa, Singapore, and Hong Kong.

<sup>129</sup> Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Creative Industries Division, "Cool Japan Strategy," 6.

## Cool Japan's potential

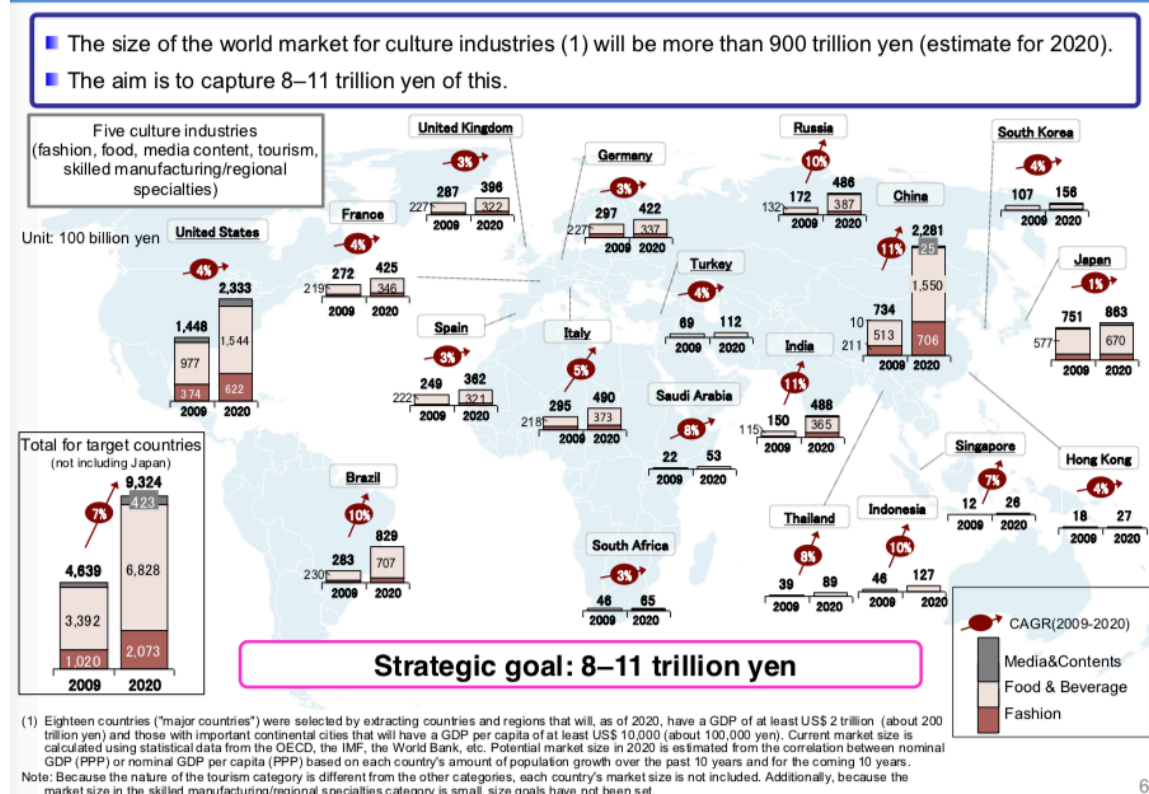


Figure 6. Cool Japan's potential

Source: Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI) Creative Industries Division, "Cool Japan Strategy" Report

In addition to government backed operations, the Cool Japan Strategy is also aided by the private sector. All Nippon Airways (ANA) launched an interactive website called "Is Japan Cool?" in 2012. It is composed of 15 categories titled: Washoku, Ramen, Discover, Tokyo, Okinawa, Cosplay, Kawaii, Kyoto, Dreams, Shopping, Museum, Matsuri, Dou, Craftsmanship, and Game/Chronicle.<sup>130</sup> The visitors get to decide whether Japan is really cool by selecting the 'cool' button or 'not so cool' button for each entry.<sup>131</sup> The entries are then ranked according to their

<sup>130</sup> All Nippon Airways (ANA), "Is Japan Cool?: Contents," <https://www.ana-cooljapan.com/contents/>

<sup>131</sup> There is slight variation in the upvoting buttons. Some categories, such as *Washoku* and Cosplay, only contain the 'cool' button; other categories, such as Dou (introducing Japanese martial arts and performing arts) and Matsuri (Japanese festivals) do not have the like button but are ranked according to the number of shares they get in digital platforms (the number of shares are not shown), and finally, the Kawaii section uses a 'kawaii' button instead of 'cool'.

popularity. Other features of the website include gamification and 3D experiences of certain categories such as Japanese festivals.

The *washoku* part, launched on 24 March 2015, opens with an explanation about UNESCO inscription and highlights seasonality in cooking and ingredients, “rich variety of natural blessings” and “diverse array of food cultures” being made with renowned techniques mastered over a long period. Sushi, tempura, and sukiyaki are listed as representative delicacies of *washoku*. According to the short informative explanation, the focus of this page is “on truly cool facets of *washoku*, which minimizes excess and takes full advantage of the essential taste of each ingredient, always seeking to learn from the excellence of international food cultures.”<sup>132</sup>

Listed by rank in descending order under the *washoku* category are *kaiseki*, *urushi* (lacquerware), rice vinegar, *tempura*, *oden* (one pot dishes), rice cakes, ramen, *katsuobushi*, *wasabi*, *soba*, sushi, whisky, and *sukiyaki*. Each has its own page, describing a short history, utensils used to make the item and a place where you can try the dish. The entries also contain interviews with specialists.

Though it is also listed in the *washoku* category, ramen has a page of its own in this project. Ramen occupies a special place in global *washoku* promotions because its recognition as Japan’s soft power asset outdates *washoku* branding initiatives. In fact, it is possible to argue that ramen, was one of the main pillars of Japan brand alongside sushi.

Below is a picture taken from the Ramen category of the ANA Cool Japan website, where 36 types of ramen from various prefectures are ranked through the ‘cool’ and ‘not so cool’ buttons. When the mouse goes over a type of ramen, its location on the Japanese map is also displayed. Entries provide information about a

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<sup>132</sup>All Nippon Airways (ANA), “Is Japan Cool?: About Washoku,” <https://www.ana-cooljapan.com/contents/washoku/about/>

certain ramen type's flavor (soy sauce, miso, pork broth), noodle and broth thickness (rated from one to five) and place of origin.

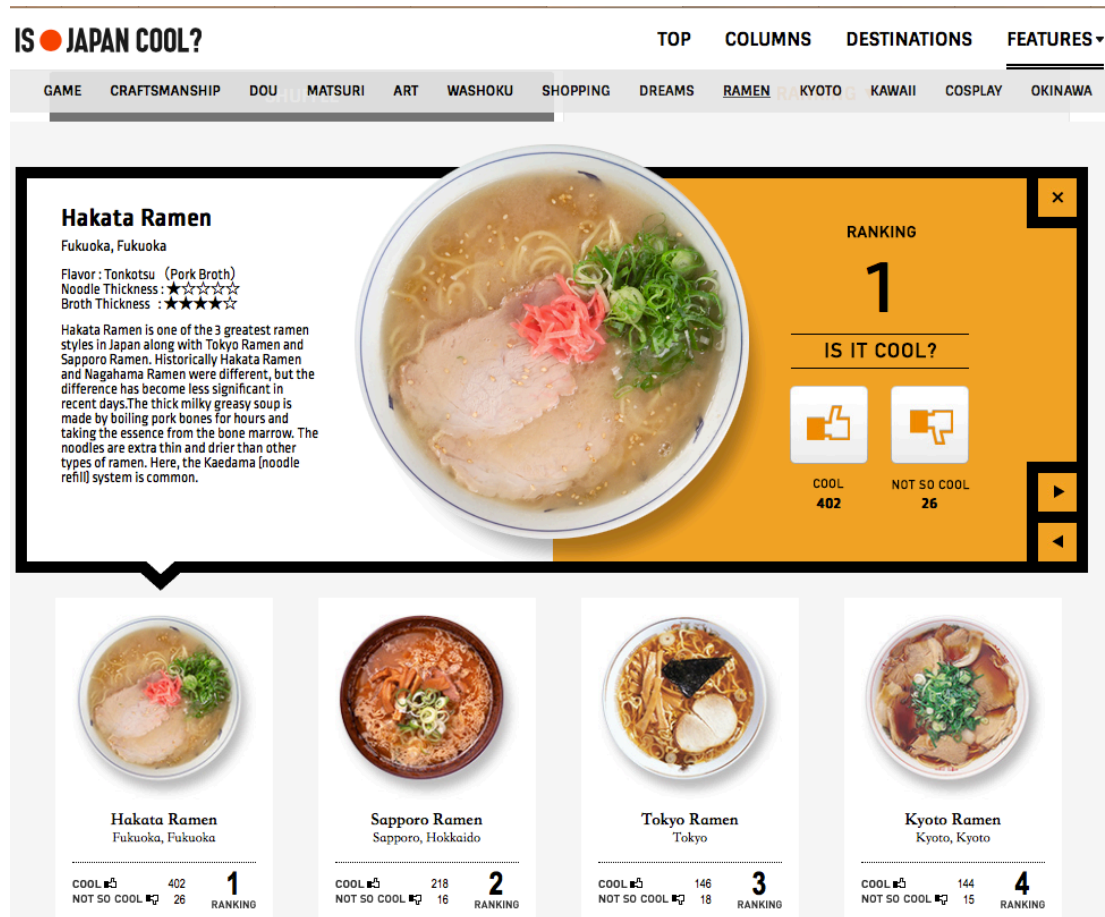


Figure 7. Ramen ranking

Source: All Nippon Airways (ANA), “Is Japan Cool?” Website<sup>133</sup>

ANA Airlines’ “Is Japan Cool” project reflects the broad nature of *washoku* brand.

While there is no mention of rice as main staple narrative, *washoku* introduced through this website encompasses individual dishes, food ingredients, tableware and much more. *Washoku* qualities such as seasonality, respect for/harmony with nature are frequently highlighted. In other words, while there is a difference between

<sup>133</sup> All Nippon Airways (ANA), “Is Japan Cool?: Ramen,” <https://www.ana-cooljapan.com/contents/ramen/?ramenID=hakata&cid=INT13030938>

*washoku* promoted abroad, and the *washoku* narrative directed towards the Japanese people, there are still substantial common points.

#### 3.2.4 Enjoy my Japan

On February 2018, Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) launched the “Enjoy My Japan” Campaign, with the aim to increase the number of foreign tourists from Western countries. Available in English, German, French, Russian, Spanish and Italian, the official website “[www.enjoymyjapan.jp](http://www.enjoymyjapan.jp)” enables visitors to experience Japan virtually through their areas of interest. Users can make a personalized travel movie about their ‘passions’ via a questionnaire.<sup>134</sup> The six ‘passions’ listed are tradition, cuisine, cities, nature, art, relaxation and outdoors.

The Cuisine category is also divided into three parts: Gastronomy, Eat like the Locals, and Food Culture. Gastronomy introduces Michelin Star restaurants, Eat Like the locals presents cozy establishments and the Food culture section illustrates “everything from simple ramen to opulent kaiseki.”<sup>135</sup> “Enjoy My Japan” campaign is integrated with JNTO’s ‘Japan Travel’ website. Thus, while viewers visualize their passions in the “Enjoy My Japan” website, they can organize trips and share their experiences through ‘Japan Travel’.

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<sup>134</sup> The survey consists of three “either or” questions; 1) “What kind of nature do you like?” (Maintained trails, organized routes/ Pristine, untouched wilderness), 2) “How do you relax?” (Modern Resort Hostel/ Traditional hot spring resort), 3) “What do your taste buds prefer? (Gourmet Michelin star rated/ Relaxed, local fare). Japan National Tourism Organization, “Enjoy My Japan,” <https://www.enjoymyjapan.jp/en/qa/>

<sup>135</sup> Japan National Tourism Organization, “Enjoy My Japan-Food Culture.” [https://www.enjoymyjapan.jp/en/passion/cuisine/subpassion/food\\_culture/](https://www.enjoymyjapan.jp/en/passion/cuisine/subpassion/food_culture/)



### 3.2.5 Diplomatic meals

For a long period after the Meiji Restoration in 1868, Western meals were preferred in diplomatic meetings. Cwiertka mentions that “diplomatic dining in Meiji Japan was entirely dominated by French food. This was determined by the supremacy of French cuisine in nineteenth-century Europe and the United States.”<sup>136</sup> At the time, Western food and dietary habits were seen as signs of civilization and modernity.

According to Cwiertka’s study:

The custom of inviting foreign diplomats to celebrate the emperor’s birthday with food and drink began in 1869. Before the new Imperial Palace in Tokyo with Western-style banquet halls was completed in 1888, these receptions were usually held at Enryōkan, a Western-style house in the grounds of the Hama Detached Palace on the edge of Tokyo Bay constructed especially to house the Duke of Edinburgh during his visit in 1869...

The dinner party on 4 November 1871 commemorating the emperor’s birthday was by no means the first European-style banquet organized by Japanese authorities to entertain Western diplomats, but it clearly signified the two important functions that Western food would play in the political scene of late nineteenth-century Japan. First, the adoption of Western-style dining for formal diplomatic occasions and state ceremonies became an integral component of the power politics of the new regime.

Officially designated for state ceremonies in 1873, Western-style banquets were designed to impress foreign dignitaries with Japan’s ability to succeed in imitating Western conventions and to strengthen the authority of the government in the domestic arena through its association with the ‘West’. Second, the year 1871 marked the beginning of a carefully orchestrated series of measures that aimed at turning the young emperor into a modern monarch and the Japanese into a modern nation. Designating the Emperor’s Birthday (*Tenchōsetsu*) as an official national holiday and celebrating it with a Western-style banquet were the first signs of the important roles that both the emperor and Western food would play in Japan during the following decades.<sup>137</sup>

Emperor Akihito’s enthronement banquet, on November 12, 1990, consisted of a kaiseki style menu. There were eight courses:

*zensai* (前菜, appetizer),

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<sup>136</sup> Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, 44.

<sup>137</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

*sunomono* (酢の物, pickled vegetables),

*yakimono* (焼き物, grilled dishes),

*atsumono* (温物, soup made with chopped vegetables, fish or meat),

*agemono* (揚げ物, deep fried dishes),

*kayakumeshi* (加薬飯, boiled mixed rice with meat, fish, or vegetables),

*suimono* (吸い物, clear soup),

*kudamono* (果物, fruit) and

*wagashi* (和菓子, Japanese style confectionary). Emperor Naruhito's enthronement

banquet, which took place on 22 October 2019, mirrored the previous enthronement

banquet menu.<sup>138</sup> As shown in Figure 8, the banquet consisted of *washoku* style

dishes. Western style dishes such as beef and asparagus rolls were prepared.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>138</sup> Nishikawa, “*Ten'nō sokui o iwau 'kyōen'nogi' bansan-kai no menyū ga, 29-nen mae no 'sokui no rei' to mattaku onajidatta riyū*,” 天皇即位を祝う「饗宴の儀」晩餐会のメニューが、29年前の「即位の礼」と全く同じだった理由 [The Reason Why the Menu of the Official Banquet to Celebrate the Emperor's Coronation was exactly the same as 29 years ago.] <https://www.dailyshincho.jp/article/2019/10280558/?all=1>

<sup>139</sup> Additionally, in consideration of Muslim guests, halal dishes were prepared. There were also slight variations for vegetarian guests. Kyodo News, “Washoku Delicacies Served at Banquet after Emperor's Ceremony”. <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/10/bebd59cf73c3-washoku-delicacies-served-at-banquet-after-emperors-ceremony.html>



[Imperial Household Agency]

Figure 8. Emperor Naruhito's enthronement banquet menu

Source: Kyodo News, "'Washoku' delicacies served at the banquet after emperor's ceremony", Oct. 2, 2019

After efforts to brand Japanese cuisine accelerated, *washoku* became the central menu in state dinners. Former U.S. President Donald Trump was served Teriyaki Chicken and *chawanmushi* (steamed egg) on his visit to Japan in 2017.<sup>140</sup> The U.S. President Donald Trump and Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe also had a private family dinner at a Japanese restaurant in 2019. The menu consisted of Japanese potato with butter, salad, grilled chicken, Wagyu beef steak with broccoli and carrots and vanilla ice cream for dessert.<sup>141</sup> Similarly, on Chinese President Xi Jinping's visit to Japan in June 2019, Prime Minister Abe and President Xi Jinping had Kobe Beef and Niigata rice for dinner.<sup>142</sup> That Japanese food is increasingly served

<sup>140</sup> Wong, "Trump's Asian Menu: What He Ate and What It Meant," <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41910960>

<sup>141</sup> Martin, "Trump will eat potatoes, ice cream, and rare, super expensive beef as he sits down for dinner with the Japanese prime minister," <https://www.businessinsider.com/trump-japan-visit-menu-for-dinner-prime-minister-abe-shinzo-2019-5>

<sup>142</sup> Sim, "Abe, Xi talk movies and football over a dinner of Kobe beef and Niigata rice", <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/east-asia/abe-xi-talk-movies-and-soccer-over-a-dinner-of-kobe-beef-and-niigata-rice>

diplomatic occasions indicates that *washoku* has become a national source of pride and international soft power asset.

### 3.2.6 *Washoku* and olympics

In 2013 Japan won the bid to hold the 2020 Summer Olympics in Tokyo. Olympics would not only boost Japan's economy through an influx of foreign visitors but also create the perfect opportunity to introduce and appeal the *washoku* brand to a wide audience. As stated in the Basic Strategy for Food & Beverage Services Report, the culinary goal of Tokyo 2020 Olympics was to “leverage the Games to introduce Japanese food culture to the world, encourage Japanese people to re-acknowledge their traditional food culture, and hand down this culture to future generations.”<sup>143</sup> By emphasizing global and national concerns, the 2020 Tokyo Olympics food strategy clearly reflects the dual nature of the *washoku* brand.

Numerous campaigns and events were scheduled to take place as part of the Olympics marketing strategy. The coronavirus pandemic, regrettably, stood in the way of actualizing many of these events. Although the events could not take place, they still shed light on how the *washoku* brand was intended to be broadcast globally.

One example is the campaign “Food that Supported Me” (私を支えた「食」) campaign organized by MAFF.<sup>144</sup> Interviews with top Japanese athletes reveal their favorite dishes and foodstuff since childhood and the special place these local cuisines hold in their lives.

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<sup>143</sup> Tokyo Organizing Committee of the Olympic and Paralympic Games, “Basic Strategy for Food and Beverage Services (Food Strategy),” 3

<https://gting.tokyo2020.org/image/upload/production/mxaeusze70ogap4imtl.pdf>

<sup>144</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), *Tōkyō 2020 × washoku watashi o sasaeta 'shoku' bakkunanbā: Nōrinsuisanshō*, 東京 2020×和食 私を支えた「食」バックナンバ

ー：農林水産省 [Tokyo 2020xWashoku “Food” that Supported Me]

[https://www.maff.go.jp/j/pr/aff/washoku\\_bcnm.html](https://www.maff.go.jp/j/pr/aff/washoku_bcnm.html)

“Your Japan 2020” was another campaign related to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Launched by JNTO with the slogan “Your Japan. Your 2020. Your Way.”, the campaign would offer cultural expo programs, tour packages and discounts and free domestic flights for international visitors. Cooking classes for “foodies and washoku-lovers” would be organized in various districts. JNTO also announced the concomitant “SAVOR JAPAN” campaign, co-organized with MAFF, in the press release for “Your Japan 2020”.<sup>145</sup>

SAVOR JAPAN introduces specialties produced in local areas certified by MAFF as distinctive culinary centers of Japan.<sup>146</sup> Each area has a page of its own, introducing the region, sceneries, sightseeing routes, possible activities and regional foods. The contact information of authorities in charge of food related activities in the specified areas is provided to aid possible visitors’ on planning their trips. The notable aspect of this campaign is that it reflects the diversity of *washoku*. In other words, the ingredients and dishes listed in this program strive to portray the appeal of relatively unfamiliar Japanese cuisines compared to sushi, ramen or curry rice.

National Museum of Nature and Science planned to hold a special exhibition titled “WASHOKU: Nature and Culture in Japanese Cuisine” as part of Olympic promotions in 2020. Supported by Asahi Shimbun, NHK, NHK Promotions Inc., Cookpad Inc., Agency of Cultural Affairs and Japan Arts Council, Japan Tourism Agency, MAFF, Intellectual Property Headquarters and a number of other important state mechanisms, the exhibition was scheduled to take place between May and June.<sup>147</sup> It was designed to showcase the evolution of Japanese cuisine since

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<sup>145</sup> Seino, *JNTO to launch “Your Japan 2020” Campaign* (Press Release), [https://asset.japan.travel/image/upload/v1577250219/pdf/JNTO\\_Press\\_Release\\_2020\\_campaign\\_site.pdf](https://asset.japan.travel/image/upload/v1577250219/pdf/JNTO_Press_Release_2020_campaign_site.pdf)

<sup>146</sup> Savor Japan Website: <https://savorjp.info/>

<sup>147</sup> The Asahi Shimbun, NHK, NHK Promotions Inc., “Washoku 2020.” <https://washoku2020.jp/english.html>

prehistoric times through historical documents, interactive images, food samples and other items such as food replicas from previous centuries.<sup>148</sup> The exhibition would also peer into *washoku*'s future as space food source.<sup>149</sup>

Although the exhibition was cancelled due to COVID-19 pandemic, a survey was conducted on the expo webpage. The questionnaire set out to determine whether twelve popular Japanese home dishes were considered as *washoku* or not.<sup>150</sup> Table 1 shows the ranking of *washoku* dishes according to the percentage of positive and negative answers.

While the English page only shows to what degree a dish is considered as *washoku*, the Japanese version of the site displays a detailed analysis of the results by categorizing the participant's age (below ten to over seventy years old), gender, country (Japan or foreign country), and prefecture.<sup>151</sup> For instance, 52% of the voters aged above seventy consider omuraisu as *washoku* while only 28% aged below selected yes for this question. Votes from Hokkaido have the highest number of positive answers with a rating of 43 to 57.<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>148</sup> Japan Times Ltd., "Washoku: Nature and Culture in Japanese Cuisine." <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/2020/03/13/special-supplements/late-march-june-14-2020-washoku-nature-culture-japanese-cuisine/>

<sup>149</sup> Japanese food has become one of the limited space foods abroad. With space discovery activities on the rise, nations are again in a competition. This competition is not only reflected in visits to space but also through food consumed in space. It will be interesting to see nationalism reconsidered through space food. Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) has already launched the "Japanese Space Food" (宇宙日本食) since 2018. Currently 47 food items in six categories made by 26 manufacturers have been certified by JAXA. Some examples are beef curry, mayonnaise, mackerel with teriyaki sauce, rice crackers, yakisoba noodles, soup with wakame seaweed and black sugar candy. For detailed information see: the related official JAXA page <https://iss.jaxa.jp/en/spacefood/about/>; and online exhibition by MAFF on "Space Japanese Cuisine" <https://artsandculture.google.com/exhibit/how-japanese-culture-is-changing-the-future-of-space-food/EgKCXZ74II9yLA>

<sup>150</sup> The Asahi Shimbun, NHK, NHK Promotions Inc., "Washoku 2020." <https://washoku2020.jp/index.html>

<sup>151</sup> If the voter is residing in Japan.

<sup>152</sup> The Asahi Shimbun, NHK, NHK Promotions Inc., "Is this washoku? Yes or No? Questionnaire Results," <https://washoku2020.jp/result.html>

Table 1. “Is This Washoku? Yes or No!” Questionnaire Results

Name of the dish	Washoku	
	Yes	No
<i>Sukiyaki</i> (hotpot dish)	98%	2%
<i>Okonomiyaki</i> (savory pancakes)	95%	5%
<i>Anpan</i> (bean paste bun)	90%	10%
<i>Yakisoba</i> (stir fried noodles)	84%	16%
<i>Karē</i> rice (curry and rice)	62%	38%
<i>Ramen</i>	60%	40%
<i>Korokke</i> (croquette)	58%	42%
“Neapolitan” spaghetti (spaghetti Napolitana)	52%	48%
<i>Teriyaki</i> burger (hamburger patty grilled with soy sauce and sugar)	39%	61%
<i>Omuraisu</i> (omelette with rice)	37%	63%
<i>Yaki-gyoza</i> (fried gyoza dumplings)	30%	70%
<i>Kasutera</i> (sponge cake)	27%	73%

Source: Washoku: Nature and Culture in Japanese Cuisine Exhibition Webpage<sup>153</sup>

A full analysis of what counts as *washoku* is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, as the questionnaire above demonstrates, it is a contested topic that needs further research.

### 3.3 *Washoku* tourism

Gastronomy tourism, also known as culinary tourism, allows visitors to experience a country’s local cuisines through cooking workshops, food and drink tours, trips to farms, festivals, markets, wineries etc., and tasting sessions. France, Italy, California, Mexico and Thailand are some of the top destinations for culinary tourism. Japan is also one of the most popular gastronomic travel countries.

A report published by World Tourism Organization (UNTWO) titled “Gastronomy Tourism- The Case of Japan” delineates Japan as a successful practitioner of culinary tourism. Japan is praised for “turning gastronomy tourism

<sup>153</sup> The Asahi Shimbun, NHK, NHK Promotions Inc., “Washoku 2020 Questionnaire.” <https://washoku2020.jp/questionnaire.html?lang=en>

into a tool for the development, inclusion and regional integration”.<sup>154</sup> The 93-page long report contains information about the place of food in Japan’s tourism, explains tourism markets, outlines eighteen specific case studies from different prefectures and private establishments, and finally discusses the success factors and challenges in Japan’s culinary tourism. Surveys conducted by Japan Tourism Agency, and interviews with municipalities show that there is not only a high awareness of gastronomy tourism in local authorities but also a great motivation to visit Japan for culinary reasons.<sup>155</sup> Accordingly, there are many *washoku* tours throughout Japan.

One example is the “Arigato Japan Food Tours.” Visitors can choose one among six tour categories in five destinations.<sup>156</sup> Prices range from 1650 yen (roughly 15 US dollars) up to 58100 yen (around 529 dollars).<sup>157</sup> Virtual tours and meetings are also held to enjoy *washoku*. Some *washoku* tours are designed to emphasize the one soup three dishes meal structure and nature respecting characteristics of *washoku*,<sup>158</sup> while others highlight the five principles (five colors, tastes, cooking methods and senses).<sup>159</sup>

Traditional accommodation facilities, *ryokans* feature regularly in *washoku* tourism. A *ryokan* is a Japanese style inn where rooms are fitted with tatami flooring and sliding paper doors. It is possible to experience Japanese culture closely in ryokans, where guests wear *yukata* (a type of casual kimono) and dip in communal baths and hot springs. Ryokans serve *kaiseki* style *washoku*. After *washoku* was inscribed on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2013, more and more

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<sup>154</sup> World Tourism Organization (UNTWO), *Gastronomy Tourism – The Case of Japan*, 5. <https://www.e-unwto.org/doi/pdf/10.18111/9789284420919>

<sup>155</sup> Ibid.

<sup>156</sup> Family Friendly, Green Tea, Market, Nightlife, Cherry Blossom (*hanami*), and Spanish tours in Tokyo, Kyoto, Osaka, Hiroshima, and Shizuoka (Mt. Fuji).

<sup>157</sup> Arigato Travel K.K., “All Tours.” <https://arigatojapan.co.jp/all-tours/>

<sup>158</sup> Tsukiji Cooking, *What is Washoku?*, <http://tsukiji-cooking.com/whatswashoku/>

<sup>159</sup> My Japan Guide, *Tokyo Food Tour – The Spirit of Washoku* <https://myjapanguide.com/local-tour-guides/tokyo-food-tour>



ryokans began to offer 2 nights stay packages centering on *washoku*. For instance, the Kyoto Nanzenji Ryokan Yachiyo, an inn located in Kyoto, offers four different *washoku* menus: *washoku kyo-kaiseki* course, *washoku sushi kaiseki* course, kobe beef course, and *washoku* vegetarian course.<sup>160</sup> They also have an additional *washoku* restaurant for visitors not staying at the inn.

While *washoku* tourism is a great way to spread Japanese food culture, it depends on visitors who can actually travel to Japan. Nationwide lockdowns and travel bans had a negative impact throughout the world. Tourism activities have nearly been halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>161</sup> Thus, the future of *washoku* tourism remains to be seen. Cooking contests, on the other hand, continue to familiarize the *washoku* brand globally.

### 3.4 *Washoku* contests

International culinary competitions not only introduce national cuisines to a wide audience but also make contributions to the aesthetics of a particular culinary culture. There are two major international *washoku* contests at present.

The “Washoku World Challenge” is a Japanese cooking contest organized by MAFF. Non-Japanese chefs are invited to demonstrate their interest, knowledge and expertise in Japanese cuisine through two recipes that show the participants’ take on *washoku*. The recipes are judged on whether they reflect the “essence of Japanese cuisine” by incorporating the 5 philosophies,<sup>162</sup> making a balanced combination of

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<sup>160</sup> Kyoto Garden Ryokan Yachiyo, *Dining & Washoku* <https://kyoto-ryokan.co.jp/cuisine.html>

<sup>161</sup> According to JNTO, Japan’s tourism growth rate since 2019 is minus 99 percent. (Source: Japan National Tourism Organization, “Japan Tourism Statistics,” <https://statistics.jnto.go.jp/en/graph/#graph--latest--figures>)

<sup>162</sup> Five tastes, cooking methods, colors, senses.

ingredients associated with *washoku* and using appropriate tableware.<sup>163</sup> There have been seven challenges between 2013 and 2020. Each contest highlights an aspect of Japanese cuisine. The 7<sup>th</sup> challenge titled “My Japanese Cuisine,” was held online due to the coronavirus pandemic, thus contestants from any country could apply without having to travel to Japan.<sup>164</sup>

The “Washoku World Challenge” is a state sponsored culinary contest. The “Japanese Culinary Art Competition,” by contrast, is organized by the non-profit organization Japanese Culinary Academy (JCA)<sup>165</sup> located in Kyoto. The tournament has been taking place annually since 2007 to disseminate a “global understanding of Japanese cuisine” globally and to increase the number of future *washoku* chefs.<sup>166</sup>

### 3.5 Overview

This chapter tried to illustrate how the *washoku* brand is presented to the global audience as a source of Japanese soft power through diplomatic missions, tourism campaigns, cooking competitions and other strategic events. *Washoku* is promoted as a healthy culinary style that pays respect to nature through seasonally diverse ingredients and plate arrangement methods. Since the aim of the global *washoku*

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<sup>163</sup>Washoku World Challenge Executive Committee, “Process,” <https://washoku-worldchallenge.jp/2020/en/process.html>

<sup>164</sup> 199 chefs from 41 different countries applied for the 2020 challenge. (Source: Food and Beverage Magazine, “The World Leading Japanese Cuisine Contest Announces Six Outstanding Finalists.” <https://www.fb101.com/2021/01/the-world-leading-japanese-cuisine-contest-announces-six-outstanding-finalists/>)

<sup>165</sup> The Academy was also influential in the UNESCO nomination process. See Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3 of this thesis.

JCA’s operations include Food Education Projects (in partnership with Kyoto City Board of Education and Kyoto University), Overseas Culinary Fellowship Programs, and Earthquake Disaster Support Program. See [https://culinary-academy.jp/english/project\\_en](https://culinary-academy.jp/english/project_en)

<sup>166</sup> The Japanese Culinary Academy, “Japanese Culinary Academy Invites Professional Chefs from Around Globe for Cooking Competition,” <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/japanese-culinary-academy-invites-professional-chefs-from-around-globe-for-cooking-competition-300058250.html>

campaigns is to introduce Japanese cuisine to foreigners who may have little to no knowledge about it, individual dishes and overall aesthetics shape the discourse. Some aspects of *washoku*, such as the one soup three dishes meal structure, are not highlighted.

*Washoku* brand is conveyed in a slightly different way to the national audience. Instead of focusing on a particular foodstuff, there is not only a concern to communicate the philosophy behind Japanese cuisine so as to protect the Japanese food culture, but also considerations about food self-sufficiency and economic strength. The following chapter will discuss how *washoku* is framed as a gastronomic asset.

## CHAPTER 4

### WASHOKU BRAND AS JAPAN'S GASTRONATIONAL SYMBOL

#### 4.1 Gastronationalism theory

Globalization brought about increased contact and integration among nations.

Diffusion of ideas through news forms of media platforms such as the internet had an overall homogenizing effect in terms of culture. There were a number of responses to this phenomenon.

Nation branding can be considered as one of those self-protective responses. According to Aronczyk, “the power of globalization as a set of ideas and discourses used to justify national change” served as the basis for conditions that led to nation branding.<sup>167</sup> In other words, nation branding set out to express how the nation still matters in an era of dissolving borders. Many countries utilize nation branding to manage their international reputation and enhance national pride.

Just as nation branding brings novel ways to think about and perform national expression,<sup>168</sup> the practice of gastronationalism also enables countries to re-conceptualize how food can function as a form of collective identity making. Ichijo and Ranta maintain, “... food is a medium through which, on the one hand, national identity is practiced and experienced, while, on the other hand, it is imagined, constructed, and reproduced.”<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 17.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid., 23.

<sup>169</sup> Ichijo and Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*, 4.

In Michaela DeSaucey's words:

The sociological relationship between food and globalization is an especially rich juxtaposition because it highlights the dialectic produced by globalism's homogenizing tendencies and the appearance of new forms of identity politics invigorated by an increasingly homogenous environment... I conceptualize this juxtaposition as *gastronationalism*.<sup>170</sup>

Gastronationalism became one of the primary forms of national expression after

2000s. There are two major functions of culinary nationalism:

In cases of gastronationalism, the state intervenes in the market, acting as an ideological agent and a broker for food production and distribution as cultural goods. Gastronationalism thus connects macro- and micro-level concerns around globalism, from the state to food producers' and consumers' lived experiences.<sup>171</sup>

In the case of Japan, the *washoku* brand, as a vehicle of Japanese identity making, clearly reflects these dual concerns. On the one hand, *washoku* is promoted worldwide as a Japanese soft power asset; on the other, it is used to address national food security issues and protect Japan's traditional dietary cultures. The *washoku* brand, thus, is a medium for Japan to practice gastronationalism. This chapter will discuss how *washoku* is used to address food related domestic issues.

#### 4.2 *Gurume taikoku nihon* (Gourmet superpower Japan, グルメ 大国—日本)

Japan has been leading the French based culinary ranking list, La Liste, since 2016. In the ranking process, over 25,000 restaurants in 200 countries are evaluated by taking into consideration 700 plus publications consisting of press reviews, guidebooks, and customer comments on popular websites such as TripAdvisor. Of the top 1000 restaurants in the list, there were 127 Japanese restaurants in 2016, 116 in 2017, 148 in 2019 and 130 in 2020. News outlets celebrated the success of Japan

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<sup>170</sup> DeSaucey, "Gastronationalism: Food Traditions and Authenticity Politics in the European Union," 432.

<sup>171</sup> Ibid., 434-435.

through such titles as, “Japanese Restaurants Rocket to Top of the Best in World List” and “Japan Storms La Liste 2020.”<sup>172</sup>

The popularity of Japanese food abroad gave rise to the notion of Japan as a *Gurume Taikoku* (グルメ 大国), in other words a gourmet superpower.<sup>173</sup> According to the Japanese media, there are a number of reasons for their culinary strength: the incorporation of seasonality in ingredients and cooking methods, the discovery of *umami*<sup>174</sup> (savoriness), triangle-eating and seasoning in the mouth,<sup>175</sup> and high-tech

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<sup>172</sup> France 24, “Japanese Restaurants Rocket to Top of Best in World List.” <https://www.france24.com/en/20191129-japanese-restaurants-rocket-to-top-of-best-in-world-list> McCafferty, “Japan Storms La Liste 2020.” <https://www.finedininglovers.com/article/best-restaurants-in-the-world-2020> ; NDTV Food Desk, “Japan and China Dominate the List of World’s Top Restaurants, as per the La Liste Ranking!” <https://www.ndtv.com/food/japan-and-china-dominate-the-list-of-worlds-top-restaurants-as-per-the-la-liste-ranking-1781420> ; Rodriguez, “Best Restaurants in the World: One France, One American, Two Japanese at the Top of ‘La Liste’ 2020.” <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ceciliarodriguez/2019/12/01/best-restaurants-in-the-world-one-french-one-american-two-japanese-at-the-top-of-la-liste-2020/?sh=4b9bc71e53f6>

<sup>173</sup> On Japan as a gourmet nation see the following news articles in Japanese:

Adventure Inc., “*Gurume taikoku nihon! Gotōchi gurume* グルメ 大国日本! ご当地グルメ” [Gourmet Superpower Japan! Local Gourmet Dishes]. <https://skyticket.jp/guide/394325>; Excite Japan Co. Ltd., “*Sekai ni nadataru gurume taikoku no Nihon wa, sekaiichi no ‘zasshoku bunka’ o motsu kunida = Chūgoku media*,” 世界に名だたるグルメ大国の日本は、世界一の「雑食文化」を持つ国だ＝中国メディア [Globally Recognized Culinary Superpower Japan has World’s Best “Omnivore Culture” according to Chinese Media]. [https://www.excite.co.jp/news/article/Searchina\\_20190727021/](https://www.excite.co.jp/news/article/Searchina_20190727021/) ; Imazeki, “*Gurume taikoku Nihon, kon’nani takusan no ‘gurume manga’ ga atta!*” グルメ 大国日本、こんなにたくさんの「グルメマンガ」があった! [Gourmet Superpower Japan, So Many “Gourmet Manga” Available.] <https://news.goo.ne.jp/article/searchina/world/searchina-1698472.html>

<sup>174</sup> Umami is one of the core tastes alongside sweet, sour, bitter, and salty. It was discovered by Japanese chemist Prof. Kikunae Ikeda in 1908. Its taste comes from monosodium glutamate and 5'-ribonucleotides. Fish, meat, and soy sauce are known to be rich in umami. Kikkoman Corporation, “Umami the 5<sup>th</sup> Taste.” <https://www.kikkoman.eu/food-blog/umami-the-5th-taste/>

<sup>175</sup> Triangular eating (*sankaku tabe* 三角食べ) is alternating between dishes with different textures. Based on the one soup three side dishes meal pattern, “[It] has been taught in elementary schools around Japan since ‘70s as a way to ensure that children get the most nutrients out of their school lunches. As school lunches typically consist of rice, miso and a side dish, with milk on the side, it’s not difficult to follow the triangle method of eating at school.” Seasoning in the mouth (*kōchū chōmi* 口中調味) means that instead of eating dishes separately, small bites of different food are put into the mouth one after another and chewed together to create a seasoned taste. (Oona McGee “Japanese Wife Berates Husband for Eating Rice and Side Dishes Together.” <https://soraneews24.com/2020/08/21/japanese-wife-berates-husband-for-eating-rice-and-side-dishes-together/>

food delivery systems<sup>176,177</sup> Japanese people's longevity, with an average of 87 years for women and 81 for men,<sup>178</sup> is also considered to be an indicator of Japan's culinary strength.<sup>179</sup>

Although Japan is portrayed as a 'Global Gourmet Superpower,' at home there are concerns about the future of *washoku*.

#### 4.3 “*Washoku* endangered!”

While *washoku* continues to receive international recognition as a Japanese soft power asset, the general sentiment in Japan is that Japanese food culture's survival into future generations is at stake.<sup>180</sup> Newspaper articles<sup>181</sup> and documents by the Japanese government, especially since 2010s, frequently highlight concerns about

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<sup>176</sup> Grain, “Digital Control: How Big Tech Moves into Food and Farming (and What *It Means*).” <https://grain.org/en/article/6595-digital-control-how-big-tech-moves-into-food-and-farming-and-what-it-means> ; Hirano, “Japan's Send, Data-Driven Food Distribution Platform for Restaurants.” <https://thebridge.jp/en/2016/09/planet-table-4-million-funding>

<sup>177</sup> Demoshi, “*Iwai: Nihon ga sekaiichi no gurume taikoku ni!!*,” 【祝】日本が世界一のグルメ大国に!! [Congratulations: Japan Becomes the World's No. 1 Gourmet Superpower] <http://unizon.co.jp/wordpress00/2019/12/06/%E3%80%90%E7%A5%9D%E3%80%91%E6%97%A5%E6%9C%AC%E3%81%8C%E4%B8%96%E7%95%8C%E4%B8%80%E3%81%AE%E3%82%B0%E3%83%AB%E3%83%A1%E5%A4%A7%E5%9B%BD%E3%81%AB/> <https://gourmet-kingdom.jp/about/>

<sup>178</sup> Japan ranks second at the Life Expectancy of the World Population list according to Worldometer. <https://www.worldometers.info/demographics/life-expectancy/>

<sup>179</sup> Watanabe, “The Transition of Japanese-Style Diet: Will Japan's Food Culture Become the World's New Macrobiotic Diet and General Health Food?”, Lecture in the 2006 Kikkoman Food Culture Seminar [https://www.kikkoman.co.jp/kiifc/foodculture/pdf\\_13/e\\_002\\_006.pdf](https://www.kikkoman.co.jp/kiifc/foodculture/pdf_13/e_002_006.pdf)

<sup>180</sup> “The construction of a national food culture often takes place in opposition to the spread of, what are perceived to be, foreign, or in some cases opposing national, influences.” (Source: Ichijo and Ranta, *Food, National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*, 11)

<sup>181</sup> Kageyama & The Associated Press, “Cultural Heritage Honor Sought for Japanese Food but May Be Endangered as Young Eat Western” <https://www.canadianbusiness.com/business-news/cultural-heritage-honour-sought-for-japanese-food-but-may-be-endangered-as-young-eat-western/> ; Ko, “‘*Hontō no washoku*’ ga zetsumetsu no kiki ni hin shite iru no wa ‘ryōri janai mono’ o dasu mise ga fuete irukaradearu,” 「本当の和食」が絶滅の危機に瀕しているのは「料理じゃないもの」を出す店が増えているからである [The reason why “real Japanese food” is on the verge of extinction is that the number of stores offering “non-cooking food” is increasing.] <https://www.gnavi.co.jp/dressing/article/20664/>; Iwamura, “Traditional Japanese Cooking in the Home: An Endangered Art.” <https://www.nippon.com/en/currents/d00110/>; The Indian Express Ltd, “UN Recognizes the Unpalatable Truth: Japanese Cuisine is Dying.” <https://indianexpress.com/article/news-archive/print/un-recognises-unpalatable-truth-japan-cuisine-dying/>; Quigley, “UNESCO-Certified Japanese Cuisine Losing Its Popularity at Home.” <https://thediplomat.com/2013/12/unesco-certified-japanese-cuisine-losing-its-popularity-at-home/>

*washoku*.<sup>182</sup> In addition to the drastic decrease in rice consumption and home cooking, the increase in fast food chains and convenience store dishes are listed as threats against *washoku*.<sup>183</sup>

According to Melissa Aronczyk, “By modeling national distinctions internationally, national leaders hope to generate positive foreign public opinion that will ‘boomerang’ back home, fostering both domestic consensus or approbation of their actions as well as pride and patriotism within the nation’s borders.”<sup>184</sup> The creation of nation brands such as *washoku*, international strategies such as Cool Japan and the inscription of *washoku* on the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list are seen as examples of this.<sup>185</sup>

The Washoku Guidebook published by MAFF is written with this concern in mind. While on the one hand it promotes *washoku* as a healthy, balanced, diverse cuisine to foreigners, its second important aim is to make Japanese people more conscious about issues related to Japan’s traditional culinary culture. According to this guidebook, after 1989 (Heisei Period) “changes in home cooking and having

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<sup>182</sup> While some newspapers portray *washoku* as endangered, others think differently. On Nov. 15, 2011 Japan Times published an article titled “Recognizing Japanese Food Culture”, about the UNESCO nomination. The article claims that “Japanese food culture is not in any danger of becoming extinct. Indeed, it is thriving. In large cities and the countryside, restaurants showcase fantastic local products and specialty items. In Japan, delicious food is not just big business and a national pastime; it is an inalienable right”. The article then goes on to cite Korean royal cuisine application to UNESCO and the registration of French, Mexican and Mediterranean food as a motivation for the Japanese application. They say that Japanese food also deserves the distinction. Highlighting a wide variety in products, with rice at center, fermented foods, and the “most unique basic flavor, umami” they claim that Japan’s eating rituals and habits, special tableware, manners, communication and hospitality make it eligible for the UNESCO heritage list. “Having Japan’s unique food culture added to the UNESCO list is an excellent way to express a justified pride in the country’s cultural asset.” <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/opinion/2011/11/15/editorials/recognizing-japanese-food-culture/>

<sup>183</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan.”

<sup>184</sup> Aronczyk, *Branding the Nation: The Global Business of National Identity*, 16.

<sup>185</sup> Daliot-Bul “Japan Brand Strategy: The Taming of ‘Cool Japan’ and the Challenges of Cultural Planning, 247-266; Ichijo and Ranta, *Food National Identity and Nationalism: From Everyday to Global Politics*.



meals individually at home were recognized as problems” regarding Japanese food culture (p. 15).<sup>186</sup>

Perhaps the aim of *washoku* brand, as evident in the MAFF *Washoku* Guidebook, is to make Japanese people realize the importance of Japan’s dietary culture from a roundabout course. It was mentioned in Chapter 2 that big dietary transitions in Japan were accomplished through nationally authoritative figures or organizations associated with the West. For instance, the Meiji Emperor was influential in the spread of meat consumption, which had little place in Japanese cuisine for centuries due to religious reasons (see Footnote 16). Watanabe reports, “In 1872, the fifth year of his reign, the Meiji Emperor broke the 1,200-year ban on meat eating by celebrating the new year by eating meat. The fact that the emperor ate meat of his own accord encouraged Japanese citizens of every social class to also begin eating meat.”<sup>187</sup> At the time, meat eating, seen as part of western culture was associated with progress and modernity.<sup>188</sup> Thus, a western culinary tradition was used to shape domestic consumption and production habits.

The same pattern could also apply to the *washoku* brand. As Ferguson points out, "... the gastronomic adventures upon which we embark at home and abroad bring us back to place. Whether or not we actually talk about *terroir*, we seek connections between taste and place.”<sup>189</sup> By pointing out to the increasing global standing and popularity of *washoku* (e.g. the UNESCO inscription) the Japanese

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<sup>186</sup> Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney’s research poses as a challenge to this argument. According to Ohnuki-Tierney’s observation, *washoku* started gaining prominence in the 1990s (or possibly a bit before that) due to big changes that Japan had been undergoing as a nation due to the impact of global geopolitics. Tierney mentions the comeback of traditional Japanese dishes (*washoku*) for special occasions in this period. She mentions how “inns and restaurants trying to attract customers with beautiful photographs of elaborate Japanese dinners, which have many courses served simultaneously.” Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time*, 42.

<sup>187</sup> Watanabe, “The Meat-Eating Culture of Japan at the Beginning of Westernization,” 8.

<sup>188</sup> Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*, 142.

<sup>189</sup> Ferguson, “Culinary Nationalism,” 105.

government wants its citizens to realize the cultural importance of *washoku* and make people enthusiastic about preserving their tradition.

The Guidebook is written with a concern about self-sufficiency in foodstuffs, in an attempt to prevent excessive Westernization and industrialization (fight against consumption of ready-made convenience store food), and to implement nationalistic and ideological visions through school meals. However, this booklet is also written for the purpose of introducing *washoku* to the non-Japanese audience. In that sense, it is aimed at promoting Japanese culture as an instrument of soft power within and outside Japan.

The following sections will discuss how the *washoku* brand is framed in the national context.

#### 4.3.1 Decrease in rice consumption

Considered as the main staple of Japanese cuisine, rice has had an essential place in Japan's history, culture, economy, religion and mythology.<sup>190</sup> Japan is known for being particularly protective about rice production.<sup>191</sup> Between the 1960s to 1994

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<sup>190</sup> This will be discussed in Section 4.3.1.1.

<sup>191</sup> Japanese rice production was under strict state control between WW2 and 1994. Protective policies such as the rice import ban reflect the conservative attitude towards domestically produced rice. The import ban was lifted in 1994, amidst strong opposition from Japanese farmers. Since then, Japan's self-sufficiency in rice production has fallen to 37% (2018). On this topic see the following: Brator, "The Sticky Subject of Japan's Rice Protection." <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2011/02/20/national/media-national/the-sticky-subject-of-japans-rice-protection/>; Davis and Oh. "Repeal of the Rice Laws in Japan: The Role of International Pressure to Overcome Vested Interests.", 21-40. [https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/cldavis/files/davisoh2007\\_cp.pdf](https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/cldavis/files/davisoh2007_cp.pdf); Lewis, "Japan: End of the Rice Age." <https://www.ft.com/content/f4db3b26-6045-11e5-a28b-50226830d644>; Obe and Hayashi, "Rice is Sticky Issue for Japan in Trans-Pacific Trade Talks." <https://www.wsj.com/articles/rice-is-sticky-issue-for-japan-in-trans-pacific-trade-talks-1432025782>; Pollack, "Japanese Farmers Rally to Keep Rice Import Ban." <https://www.nytimes.com/1992/12/17/world/japanese-farmers-rally-to-keep-rice-import-ban.html>; The Japan Times Ltd., "Japan's Agriculture Ministry to Keep Food Self-Sufficiency Target at 45%." <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2020/03/11/national/japan-keep-food-self-sufficiency-target-45/>

there was a ban on rice imports into the country.<sup>192</sup> As shown in Figure 9, despite its great significance, rice consumption has been on the decline for the past few decades. According to MAFF, the daily consumption of rice per person fell from 315g in 1960 to 163 in 2010.<sup>193</sup> The downward trend has continued until 2020.<sup>194</sup> This decline is portrayed as an alarming indicator of how the traditional fabric of Japanese culture is disintegrating.<sup>195</sup> A number of measures, such as school education programs, have been taken to address this issue.<sup>196</sup>

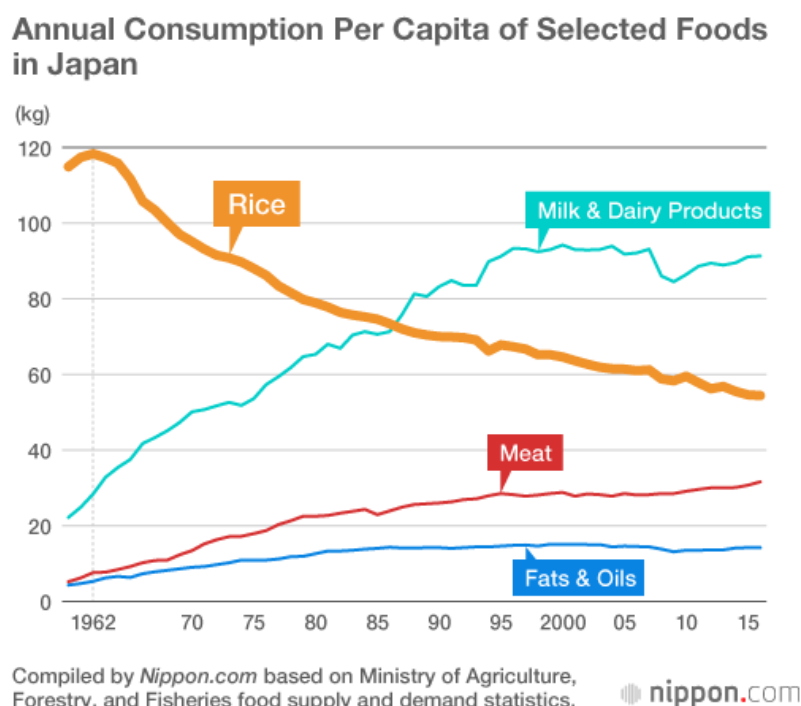


Figure 9. Annual rice consumption decrease in Japan  
Source: Nippon.com, “Japanese Lose Their Taste for Rice”

<sup>192</sup> Reid, “Japan Ends Ban on Rice Imports.”

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/12/14/japan-ends-ban-on-rice-imports/b249859c-fa49-445a-9069-b0b971064fd7/>

<sup>193</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan,” 31.

<sup>194</sup> Kitagawa, “Japan’s Appetite for Rice Takes Biggest Plunge in 7 Years.”

<https://asia.nikkei.com/Business/Markets/Commodities/Japan-s-appetite-for-rice-takes-biggest-plunge-in-7-years>

<sup>195</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), “WASHOKU: Traditional Dietary Cultures of Japan,” 31.

<sup>196</sup> This topic will be discussed in the following sections of this chapter.

In Cwiertka's opinion, the decline in rice consumption is inversely correlated with the rise in living standards. She explains this trend in the following:

[T]he position of side dishes was shifting from that of complementing the rice-based meal to that of the centre of the meal, accompanied by rice. ... The Japanese [started to eat] less rice [since 1960s], because they could now afford to include the former 'luxury' foods such as meat, fish and fruit, in their daily diet. Rapid urbanization and the transition of the patterns of income distribution (as a result of the movement of people from rural areas to improve their income positions) are now considered chiefly responsible for the changing consumption patterns in post-war Japan.<sup>197</sup>

Interestingly, while its consumption decreased drastically, rice became even more important in the national consciousness of the Japanese. This could be due to how Japan was pressured by U.S. during late 1980s and early 1990s to end the three decade long ban on rice imports. In order to access Japanese agricultural markets, the United States filed a formal complaint based on General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) in 1987.<sup>198</sup> In a similar vein, protests were organized by the U.S. Rice Millers Association to force Japan to revoke the rice import bans.<sup>199</sup> For a while, Japan remained adamant about keeping import restrictions in place. However, after facing heavy international pressure for nearly a decade, Japan at last had to concede to a minimal foreign access to its rice market at the GATT Uruguay Round in December, 1993.<sup>200</sup> This whole process created tension between Japan and the United States. Accordingly, the international pressure led by the U.S. was considered in Japan as "an attempt to undermine Japan's self-sufficiency in its staple foods,"<sup>201</sup> and resulted in nationwide protests.<sup>202</sup> For instance, on December 16, 1992, about

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<sup>197</sup> Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*, 158-159.

<sup>198</sup> Moore, "Unlocking the Japanese Rice Market: How Far Will the Door be Opened?," 274.

<sup>199</sup> <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1992/02/26/Refusal-to-lift-ban-sparks-protest-from-American-rice-group/5163699080400/>

<sup>200</sup> Moore, "Unlocking the Japanese Rice Market: How Far Will the Door be Opened?," 274.

<sup>201</sup> Ibid.; Yates, "Rice Import Stirs Japan's Wrath." <https://www.chicagotribune.com/news/ct-xpm-1988-10-26-8802100608-story.html>

<sup>202</sup> Pollack, "Japanese Farmers Rally to Keep Rice Import Ban." [https://www.joc.com/japanese-farmers-rally-protest-move-end-ban-rice-imports\\_19900628.html](https://www.joc.com/japanese-farmers-rally-protest-move-end-ban-rice-imports_19900628.html)

10,000 farmers and 200 lawmakers gathered in Tokyo to protest the government's stance towards easing rice import restrictions. As the protests took place, Hiroshi Mitsuzuka, a leading member of Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), supported the rice ban by stating, "Rice is a symbol of Japanese culture, and we should protect our culture with our lives."<sup>203</sup>

The process to lift rice import ban and the resulting protests show that in addition to economic factors, there are also cultural and ideological connotations surrounding rice in Japan.

#### 4.3.1.1 Symbolic value of rice in Japan

While rice only became the main staple of Japanese cuisine from the Meiji Period onwards, its symbolic value has a much longer history.<sup>204</sup> Rice is deeply integrated in Japanese mythology<sup>205</sup> (mentioned frequently in classical texts Kojiki in AD 712 and Nihon Shoki in AD 720,<sup>206</sup> rice is seen as the basis of Japanese society), religion

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<sup>203</sup> United Press International (UPI), "Farmers Protest Plan to Lift Rice Import Ban." <https://www.upi.com/Archives/1992/12/16/Farmers-protest-plan-to-lift-rice-import-ban/4611724482000/>

<sup>204</sup> Scholars in agreement about rice on four topics, most important of which being "rice became central to the political economy, ideology, and daily life of most Japanese during the Early Modern Period". (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993, p. 42) According to Ohnuki-Tierney, there were two events that made rice available to the majority of the population: 1) the military draft adopted by the Meiji Government providing daily rice for soldiers from different provinces who previously relied on miscellaneous grains (*zakkoku*), and 2) the 1942 Food Control Act (*Shokuryou Kanrihou*: 食糧管理法), which brought rice to remote parts of Japan where miscellaneous grains were being consumed. Ibid, pp. 39-40.

<sup>205</sup> Inari, the god of rice cultivation and Ta no Kami (田の神) are only two deities associated with rice in Japanese belief.

<sup>206</sup> Japan is referred to as "Toyoashihara no Mizuho no Kuni" (豊葦原の瑞穂の國) in Nihon Shoku, which means "the land where abundant rice shoots ripen beautifully." Just One Cookbook, "The Cultural Significance of Japanese Rice." <https://www.justonecookbook.com/the-cultural-significance-of-japanese-rice>

Additionally, the sun goddess Amaterasu is said to have introduced the cultivation of rice to the Japanese through Emperor Jimmu, who founded the Japanese imperial dynasty. Japanese emperors, on their enthronement, offer newly harvested rice to Shinto deities. This tradition continues at present, with the latest being Emperor Naruhito's overnight ceremony which took place in 2019: Kyodo News, "Japanese Emperor Performs Overnight Shinto Ceremony to Mark Succession." <https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/11/f1decd0aa0e3-japans-emperor-to-perform-thanksgiving-ceremony-as-key-succession-rite.html>

(rice and rice products are considered as highly sacred offerings), and culture (many festivals and celebrations such as special birthdays feature rice dishes<sup>207</sup>).<sup>208</sup>

Rice is also conceived of as a collective identity marker for the Japanese.

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney points out that:

As a people, the Japanese have repeatedly reconceptualized themselves as they encountered different others—Chinese and Westerners—by using rice as a metaphor for themselves. In addition to rice grains as food, rice paddies have played an enormously important role in the self-identity or identities of the Japanese. Thus, the symbolism of rice is bifurcated: on the one hand, “rice as *our* food” and, on the other hand, “rice paddies as *our* land,” each reinforcing the other.<sup>209</sup>

Thus, similar to the lifting of rice import bans in 1993, the decrease in rice consumption not only affects Japan’s economy but also has great impact on the national self-consciousness.<sup>210</sup> Nationwide initiatives to promote rice intake include state-led school lunch campaigns and government support to rice product industries such as sake.<sup>211</sup>

The *washoku* brand is another medium to disseminate the idea that rice eating is both healthy, and an integral part of Japan’s sociocultural tradition. The Japanese

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Japanese emperors also plant the first rice harvest of the year, to be used in rituals: Wada, “Japan’s Emperor Plants Rice Seeds at Imperial Palace, Rice to be Harvested in Fall.”

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20210407/p2a/00m/0na/002000c>

<sup>207</sup> The 88<sup>th</sup> birthday in Japan is referred to as “rice longevity” (米寿, *beiju*) age. This is because, “the kanji for rice 米(*bei* or *kome*) ... is composed of two 八 (*hachi*, 8), with the one on top written upside down, and 十 (*jū*, 10), making 八十八 (*hachijū-hachi*, 88).” Shreiber, “Japanese Packed with Phrases for the Ages.”

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2017/09/04/language/japanese-packed-phrases-ages/#.Wa86S5MjGqQ>

<sup>208</sup> Just One Cookbook, “The Cultural Significance of Japanese Rice.”

<https://www.justonecookbook.com/the-cultural-significance-of-japanese-rice/>

<sup>209</sup> Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities through Time*, 4.

<sup>210</sup> See Francks, “Consuming Rice: Food, ‘Traditional’ Products and the History of Consumption in Japan” on how rice came to signify national identity after 1920s.

<sup>211</sup> Japanese government support of Sake not only includes national monetary aid, but also international marketing campaigns such as “Your Sake Journey” by National Tax Agency, and other initiatives to export Japanese rice wine abroad. See the “Executive Committee for Export Promotion Strategy ‘Sake Exporting Efforts’” report published by MAFF on February 2016 for more information. <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/market/attach/pdf/index-7.pdf>

meal pattern consisting of one soup and three side dishes constitutes a perfect representation of this approach.

#### 4.3.2 Food self-sufficiency issues

Japan had a soaring food self-sufficiency rate of 79 percent in 1960s, which has since then been on a steep decline. The lowest ratio, equivalent to 37 percent was observed in 2018.<sup>212</sup> Reasons for this downward trend are substantial decrease in rice eating and rise in bread, meat, fat, milk, dairy product consumption.<sup>213</sup> Public opinion polls conducted by the government since 1990s called for measures to increase Japan's food self-sufficiency ratio.<sup>214</sup> Accordingly, the Basic Law on Food, Agriculture, and Rural areas was enacted in 1999, the Basic Plan on Food Agriculture and Rural Areas was enacted in 2000,<sup>215</sup> and the Food Action Japan campaign was launched by MAFF in 2008.<sup>216</sup>

*Washoku* is also seen as part of the measures to protect Japan's food self-sufficiency. Defining gastrodiploamacy as "the strategy pursued by [the] Japanese government to promote washoku worldwide", Felice Farina argues that "[the branding of *washoku*] is strictly related to the issue of low self-sufficiency of the country, as the main objective of the government is the raise of food export, in order to foster agricultural production and improve self-sufficiency."<sup>217</sup> Cwierka, likewise,

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<sup>212</sup> The Japan Agricultural News, "Japan's Food Self-Sufficiency Rate Marks 38 Percent in Fiscal 2019, Far from Its Target of 45 Percent." <http://english.agrinews.co.jp/?p=9725#:~:text=in%20Hiroshima%20%E2%86%92-,Japan's%20food%20self%2Dsufficiency%20rate%20marks%2038%20percent%20in%20fiscal,its%20target%20of%2045%20percent&text=TOKYO%2C%20Aug.,5.>

<sup>213</sup> Kako, "Sharp Decline in the Food Self-Sufficiency Ratio in Japan and Its Future Prospects," 3.

<sup>214</sup> Food related issues become noticeable in the White Papers on Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism in Japan, since 2015.

<sup>215</sup> Kako, "Sharp Decline in the Food Self-Sufficiency Ratio in Japan and Its Future Prospects," p.11

<sup>216</sup> Godo, "Japan's Food Self-Sufficiency ratio" in FFTC Agricultural Policy Platform,

<sup>217</sup> Farina, "Japan's Gastrodiploamacy as Soft Power: Global Washoku and National Food Security," 134.

sees the *washoku* brand as an initiative of the Japanese government to increase Japan's presence in the global markets, strengthen national pride through traditional Japanese food culture and to deal with the low food self-sufficiency rate.<sup>218</sup> In Stephanie Assmann's view, "the Japanese government couples an approach of governmentality with a protectionist agricultural food policy [to promote the consumption of *washoku*], which encourages Japanese citizens to maintain a healthy diet based on local food products."<sup>219</sup>

An in-depth analysis of the relationship between *washoku* and Japan's food self-sufficiency is beyond the scope of this work. However, we can say that it has a major place in the creation and communication of the *washoku* brand. Efforts to promote *washoku* include the National School Lunch (*shokuiku*) and Green Lantern movements. The next two sections will discuss these two campaigns.

#### 4.3.3 Green lantern (*midori chōchin*) movement

Traditional Japanese bars (*izakaya*) usually hang red lanterns, bearing the name of the bar, outside their establishments. In 2008, pubs and restaurants, and later on, shops, started hanging green lanterns to signify that they use domestically produced ingredients. The idea was proposed in 2005 by Kiyoaki Maruyama, from the National Agricultural Food Research Organization, whose aim was to aid initiatives to increase Japan's food self-sufficiency rate. After it was reported in national media, The Green Lantern Movement (*Midori Chōchin*) became a nationwide voluntary campaign.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Cwiertka, "Serving the Nation: The Myth of Washoku," 89.

<sup>219</sup> Assmann, "Global Recognition and Domestic Containment: Culinary Soft Power in Japan," 132.

<sup>220</sup> "The initial stage GL shops were located at the major urbanized areas in Japan, Tokyo, Osaka, Nagoya and Sapporo, and the initial GL supporters inhabiting area, Iwate, Ibaraki, Kanagawa, Saitama, Ishikawa, Tottori, Okayama and Nagasaki." Shibata et al., "The Green Lantern movement,



Figure 10 shows an example of a Green Lantern sign. The lantern is inscribed with a phrase that declares it as “a shop that aids domestic products,” and five stars to indicate the use of domestic ingredients.<sup>221</sup> As Shibata et al. explain, “Shops using 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, and 90% of domestic products in the total calories base of its commodities ... display the one, two, three, four, five [star] GL, respectively ...” to signify the extent to which domestic ingredients are used.<sup>222</sup> Since there are two stars in this case, it means that the establishment in Figure 10 chooses sixty percent of the ingredients they use from national produce.



Figure 10. An example of Green Lantern  
Source: Japan for Sustainability (JFS)<sup>223</sup>

The official website of Green Lantern, “midori-chouchin.jp” provides information about shops in each prefecture that take part in this campaign.

Yet another strategy to promote local products and preserve Japanese dietary culture is school lunch programs.

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its strategy, and road-map as a bottoms-up movement for improving the food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan,” 1167. <https://www.cabi.org/gara/FullTextPDF/2008/20083298172.pdf>)

<sup>221</sup> From fifty to ninety percent.

<sup>222</sup> Ibid.

<sup>223</sup> [https://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news\\_id027032.html](https://www.japanfs.org/en/news/archives/news_id027032.html)

Picture copyright holder is the Green Lantern Secretariat.

#### 4.3.4 School lunch (*shokuiku*, 食育) campaign

School meals have played an important part in shaping Japanese people's dietary habits. For instance, during the mid-1940s and 1950s, milk and wheat flour consumption, which had little place in Japan's culinary culture until then, spread across the country through school lunches.<sup>224</sup> Currently, milk is an indispensable part of meals served at schools.

As it was mentioned in the previous sections, from 1990s onwards national concern about Japanese people's eating patterns intensified. The general opinion was that the decrease in rice consumption and increase in ready-made meals and processed food not led to health problems but also endangered Japanese food culture. Thus, *Shokuiku*, "food and nutrition education" gained strategic importance for the state.

To promote food education, the "Basic Act on Shokuiku" was passed in 2005.<sup>225</sup> The Shokuiku program is implemented nationwide from kindergartens to junior high schools. Dieticians and nutrition teachers assigned to schools are in charge of overseeing the lunch menus.<sup>226</sup> Government offices, food-related businesses, health organizations, medical institutes and volunteers work together to promote a healthy diet centered around local cuisines. In addition to school lunches, the food education campaign is disseminated through events such as the annual

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<sup>224</sup> These products were sent by Western countries, mainly United States to "modernize Japan". At the time, Japanese government was also concerned about promoting a healthy diet. Western cuisine appealed to the Japanese because it provided new sources of energy for the body (Source: Ishige, *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*; Ishida, "The History, current status, and future directions of the school lunch program in Japan.") Inclusion of milk into children's diet had a positive effect on Japanese people's bodies. The average height of Japanese men born after WW2 increased by eight inches (20 cm) compared to males born in the previous years (Source: Ashkenazi and Jacob, *Food Culture in Japan*, 13.)

<sup>225</sup> There have been a number of revisions since then, mainly in 2008 and 2016.

<sup>226</sup> Ishida, "The History, Current status, and Future Directions of the School Lunch Program in Japan," 8.

The "Washoku School Lunch Program Support Group" consisting of young chefs also aids the promotion of traditional Japanese cuisine at schools.

Nation Convention on Shokuiku Promotion, *shokuiku* seminars for children, Shokuiku Month (organized by the MAFF every June), Shokuiku Activity Awards (given by the MAFF to business holders, educators, or volunteers who promote shokuiku) and White Papers on Shokuiku.<sup>227</sup>

*Washoku* forms the basis of *shokuiku* campaigns.<sup>228</sup> As shown in Figure 11, school lunches follow the one-soup-three-side-dishes meal pattern. While rice is served every day, soup can be omitted once a week.

## WASHOKU is the ideal model of nutritional balance



Comprised of vegetables, fish, meat and rice, WASHOKU is also well-known for its excellent nutritional balance. Recently, in some regions, school lunch is served with cooked rice menus for all five school days of the week instead of traditional post-war bread menus. Let's find out the secret of the nutrition of washoku, one of its distinct characteristics.

**Examples of school lunch menus in Sanjo City, Niigata Prefecture**

These are the examples of lunch menus served at elementary and junior high schools in Sanjo City. The Koshihikari breed grown within Sanjo City is used for cooked rice. Some people say that "because rice is digested slowly, children are satisfied even without much dessert." Chinese or Western style dishes are selected to go well with cooked rice. The menu always includes some kind of soup.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cooked rice Seasoned and deep-fried squid (two pieces) Dish dressed with <i>natto</i> Mushroom soup Liquid yogurt <small>(Elementary school: 619 kcal/ Junior high-school: 731 kcal)</small>	Cooked rice with green soy bean ( <i>edamame</i> ) Cheese-fried salmon Pan-fried and seasoned <i>kuki-wakame</i> Egg soup Milk <small>(Elementary school: 687 kcal/ Junior high-school: 823 kcal)</small>	Cooked rice Spicy chicken Dressed squid and cucumber Ginger <i>miso</i> soup Milk <small>(Elementary school: 639 kcal/ Junior high-school: 752 kcal)</small>	Cooked rice Saury cooked with <i>ume</i> flavor Dish dressed with <i>takuan</i> pickles <i>Nikujaga</i> (Stewed potatoes and beef) Milk <i>Nashi</i> pear <small>(Elementary school: 688 kcal/ Junior high-school: 814 kcal)</small>	Cooked rice Curry-flavored seasoning for cooked rice Spinach omelet French-style salad Pumpkin soup Milk <small>(Elementary school: 708 kcal/ Junior high-school: 833 kcal)</small>

Figure 11. Weekly school lunch menu sample  
Source: MAFF, "Washoku Guidebook," 25

<sup>227</sup> Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), "Current Dietary Situation in Japan and Promotion of Shokuiku (Food and Nutrition Education)." [https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/tech\\_res/attach/pdf/shokuiku-9.pdf](https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/tech_res/attach/pdf/shokuiku-9.pdf)

<sup>228</sup> The "Dietary Guidelines for Japanese", created by MAFF, advises citizens to "Take advantage of Japanese dietary culture and local food products. Preserve local dishes". Emphasis in the original document. Ibid., 31.

In Stephanie Assmann's view, the *shokuiku* campaign should be seen as a broad food governance issue. According to Assmann:

The *shokuiku* campaign pursues two entwined but differently nuanced agendas. First, the actors involved in the *shokuiku* campaign seek to improve dietary health and alert citizens in Japan of their responsibility for their health. A healthy diet includes seasonal awareness and eating domestically and locally available food products. Second, the *shokuiku* campaign supports rural economies. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) relegates the responsibility to cherish local food products to individual citizens as part of a culinary politics.<sup>229</sup>

On the other hand, the *shokuiku* campaign is also instrumental in creating a national cuisine. As Ashkenazi and Jacob point out, "Since food policies for schools are set at a national level, most children for the past half-century have been exposed to the same diet, in effect creating a sort of 'national' cuisine: a lowest common denominator of familiar and preferred foods."<sup>230</sup>

The influence of *Shokuiku* is not limited to Japan. In 2017, Table For Two, an American non-profit organization, launched the "Wa-Shokuiku: Learn. Cook. Eat Japanese!" campaign in the U.S. The aim of this project is to introduce *washoku* to elementary and middle school students in Boston, New York, and Washington through a seven-week program consisting of lectures and hands-on activities.<sup>231</sup>

The campaign has three objectives:

1. Expand students' palates by teaching how to prepare tasty and healthy dishes using *washoku* preparation techniques.
2. Include discussion about manners, respect towards food and its producers and simple relevant Japanese vocabulary.
3. Introduce food related concerns, such as obesity and waste while discussing do-able Japanese inspired daily actions.<sup>232</sup>

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<sup>229</sup> Assmann, "Global Recognition and Domestic Containment: Culinary Soft Power in Japan," 15.

<sup>230</sup> Ashkenazi and Jacob, *Food Culture in Japan*, 14.

<sup>231</sup> Table for Two USA, "TABLE FOR TWO Launches the Wa-Shokuiku Pilot Program: Learn. Cook. Eat Japanese!" <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/table-for-two-launches-the-wa-shokuiku-pilot-program-learn-cook-eat-japanese-300473620.html>

<sup>232</sup> Table for Two USA, "Wa-Shokuiku Overview", <https://www.wa-shokuiku.org/overview>

Japanese food is depicted as a nutritionally balanced healthy diet surrounded in a culture of respect and appreciation not only for nature but also for those who prepare the meal. Thus, the *washoku* brand is a source of global and domestic soft power.

#### 4.4 Overview

Gastronationalism is the practice of re-conceptualizing the nation's meaning and significance through food. It has become a major form of national expression in 21<sup>st</sup> century. The *washoku* brand is an example of Japanese gastronationalism. On the one hand, *washoku* is an international soft power asset, while on the other, it is a strategy to address concerns about the effects of economic and cultural integration due to globalization. As Stephanie Assmann points out, "The objective of this two-fold approach is the containment of globalization through firm state-led culinary politics, which emphasizes a controlled form of authenticity, governmentality, and agricultural protectionism."<sup>233</sup>

Food self-sufficiency, decline in rice intake, and increase in pre-prepared and processed food consumption are depicted as factors endangering the future of the Japanese dietary culture. Thus, *washoku* is promoted through state, private sector and volunteer-led initiatives. These include international campaigns such as Savor Japan, and national projects such as the Green Lantern Movement and *Shokuiku* Campaign.

Figure 12 depicts the national image of *washoku* in 2020. According to an online survey conducted by the MAFF in 2020, the leading opinion on Japanese cuisine is as follows: healthy (48.9%), conveys a sense of seasonality (44.9%), uses delicious seasonal ingredients (43.7%), nutritionally balanced (41.8%), full of flavor (41.8%) and has a beautiful color and arrangement (29.7%). Although there are

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<sup>233</sup> Assmann, "Global Recognition and Domestic Containment: Culinary Soft Power in Japan," 132.

negative answers of *washoku* being difficult to cook (21.4%) and high-priced (14.3%) the overall image is quite positive. The *washoku* brand highlights qualities such as seasonality, color range (five colors, five tastes, five preparation methods, five senses), and respect for nature. The answers in this survey reveal that these qualities have successfully reached the Japanese audience.

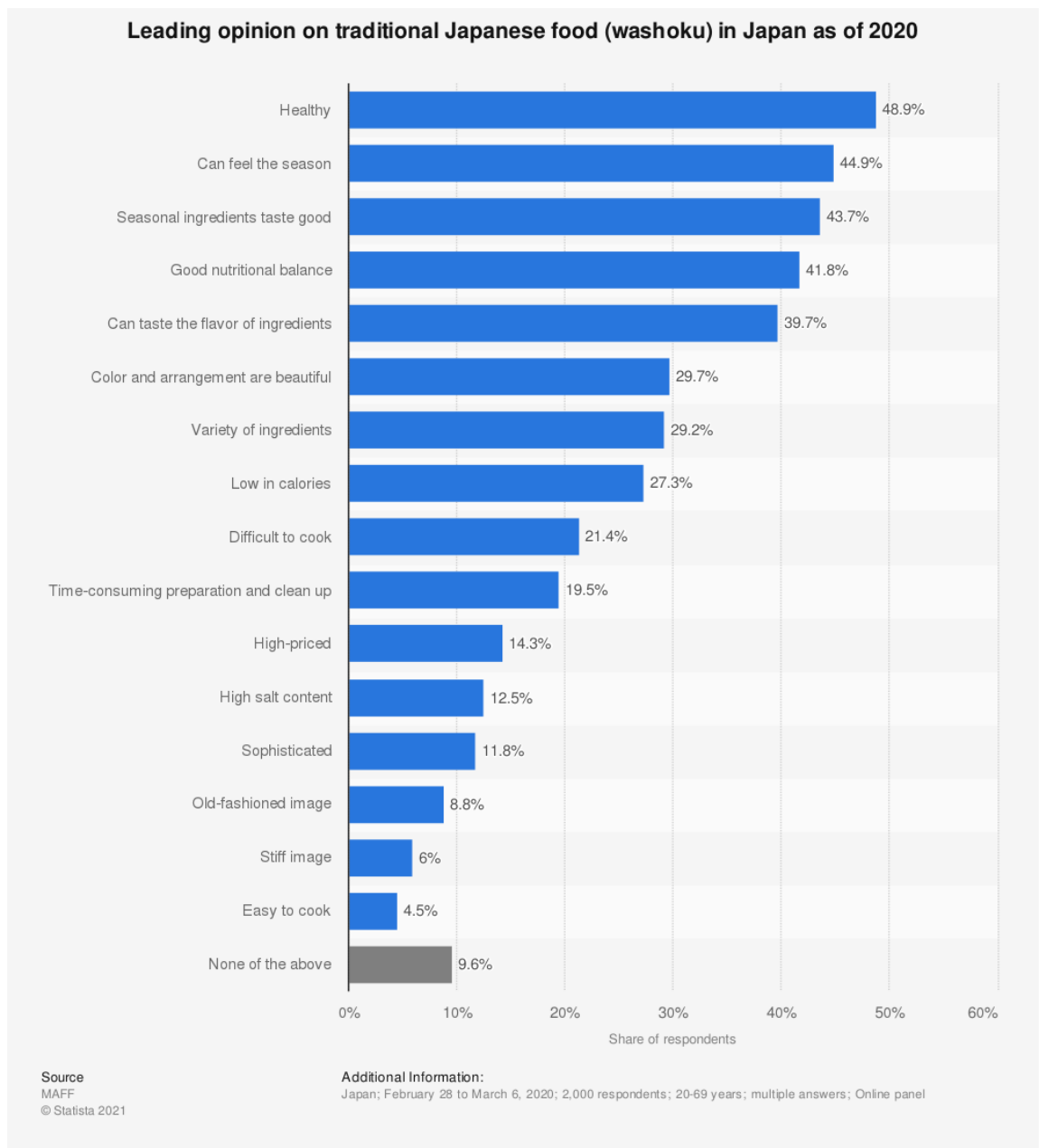


Figure 12. Leading opinion on *washoku*, Survey Conducted by MAFF  
Source: Diep, “Perception of Traditional Cuisine in Japan 2020,” Statista

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

Gastronationalism became a significant mode of national consciousness from the late 1990s onwards. This period is also characterized by a global trend towards carrying out national agendas through the use of soft power and nation brands. Japan, following this global trend, branded Japanese cuisine under the name *washoku* with two concerns in mind. The first concern was to promote its culture as a strong soft power asset, whose success can be reflected in the *washoku* boom that overtook the world after the 2010s. The second is a domestic concern to communicate how the idea of a nation is still relevant in a period of disappearing boundaries and fast cultural integration.

Using theories of soft power, nation branding, and gastronationalism as conceptual guides, this work tried to analyze the *washoku* brand from a broad perspective. Towards this end, miscellaneous primary and secondary sources consisting of official documents and White Papers by Japanese government bodies such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries of Japan (MAFF), international reports, academic publications, cookbooks, webpages, newspaper articles were employed throughout this study. Accordingly, the branding process of *washoku*, promotional activities and policies regarding Japanese food culture and production illustrated how *washoku* is conceptualized differently in domestic and international contexts. While *washoku* is portrayed as a strong soft power currency of Japan abroad through diplomatic missions and strategies, tourism campaigns, and cooking contests; at home it is depicted as an endangered culinary tradition.

This work also examined how the UNESCO inscription was central in branding *washoku*. All programs, activities, politics about *washoku* almost certainly refer to the UNESCO inscription as an international recognition of Japanese food culture's worldwide influence. The UNESCO application enabled Japan to combine two of its agendas/motives concerning its gastropolitics; the first being a national concern about how to protect Japan's dietary culture and its society base; the second being international concerns about promoting *washoku* as an element of soft power. We can see this duality reflected in the discourses and activities about *washoku*. Japan could thus perform gastronationalism domestically and internationally.

While scholarly writings often focus on the economic factors behind the promotion of *washoku*, this thesis has tried to approach the topic from a comprehensive perspective encompassing economic, cultural, and ideological concerns expressed over the course of a two-decade period. However, there is still much to discuss.

As mentioned frequently throughout this thesis, the UNESCO inscription was crucial in making *washoku* globally renowned. Some scholars even argue that the *washoku* narrative was created so that Japan address domestic concerns by registering its food culture into a globally high-esteemed authority. Perhaps this was the case. Remembering that big dietary transitions were accomplished through important figures associated with the West, for example when consumption of meat and dairy meat eating were popularized through the figure of Emperor Meiji, could Japan could again be trying to appeal to the domestic environment through the appreciation/approval of the West via UNESCO? Even if that is the case however, Japan is not the only country to behave this way. Other countries such as France and Mexico also aim to boost the domestic reputations of their respective food cultures



through UNESCO registrations. This can be seen as one reflection of gastronationalism. Although this topic was briefly mentioned in this work, it is a topic beyond the scope of this thesis and needs in depth research.

What are the benefits of studying the Japanese nation brand *washoku*? In a period when the concepts of nation and nationalism are being re-considered, food provides an intriguing way to enhance the national imaginary. While many countries are prioritizing culinary traditions as a form of soft power practice and nation branding, Japan is perhaps one of the few countries to create a comprehensive narrative around its food culture.

Therefore, the case of *washoku* can serve as a model for other countries to promote their national culinary cultures, since some of the international and domestic concerns expressed by Japanese people are shared by other nations. For example, while *gastronationalist* activities are becoming more and more prominent in Turkey as evidenced by UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage inscriptions of “Turkish Coffee Culture and Tradition” in 2013 and “Flatbread Making and Sharing Culture: Lavash, Katırm, Jupka, Yufka,” there is still yet to be an all-inclusive campaign around Turkish cuisine. Studying Japan’s nation branding process could help Turkey combine the complicated and diverse opinions about the trajectory of Turkish culinary culture into a structured narrative.

Nearly twenty years have passed since initiatives to brand *washoku* began. If we consider the UNESCO designation as a milestone for the *washoku* brand, then it is possible to say that *washoku* is only a ten-year-old brand. While this might not seem a short period, it is not long either. This thesis tries to delineate the motives contributing to, the branding process behind, and the effects of *washoku* as an instrument of Japanese soft power. Whether Japan succeeded in making *washoku* a

global brand or an effective national brand addressed to the nation, or to what extent intended goals were achieved, remain topics that need further research. However, it has certainly proven to be fruitful, as the numbers of overseas Japanese restaurants indicate.

One last topic of interest is the sudden pandemic that took over the world at the end of 2019. The coronavirus pandemic led to renewed interest in immune boosting food, and as mentioned frequently throughout this thesis, *washoku* is known as a nutritionally balanced, healthy, aesthetic and diverse food. Thus, future research could be conducted about the effects of the coronavirus on the *washoku* brand. The future of *washoku* brand remains to be seen.

APPENDIX A

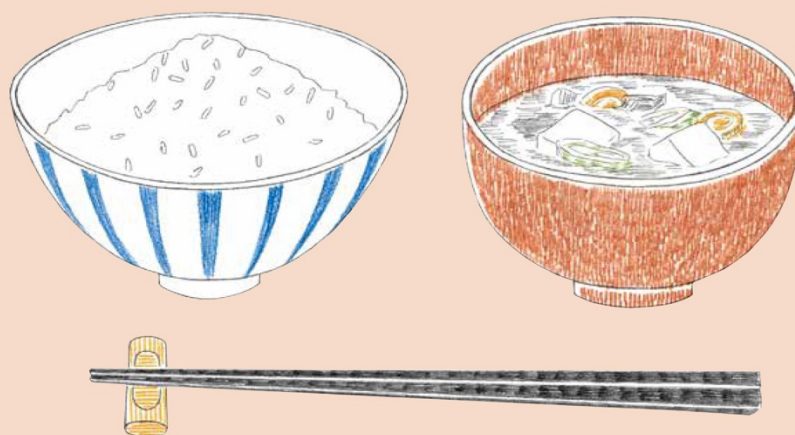
MAFF WASHOKU GUIDEBOOK

WASHOKU

和 食

**Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese**

*Itadaki-masu*



**MAFF**

Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



## WASHOKU - cultures that should be preserved

What exactly is WASHOKU? Maybe even Japanese people haven't thought seriously about it very much. Typical washoku at home is usually comprised of cooked rice, miso soup, some main and side dishes and pickles. A set menu of grilled fish at a downtown diner is also a type of washoku. Recipes using cooked rice as the main ingredient such as curry and rice or sushi should also be considered as a type of washoku. Of course, washoku includes some noodle and mochi dishes. The world of traditional washoku is extensive.

In the first place, the term WASHOKU does not refer solely to a dish or a cuisine. For instance, let's take a look at *osechi-ryori*, a set of traditional dishes for New Year. The dishes are prepared to celebrate the coming of the new year, and with a wish to be able to spend the coming year soundly and happily. In other words, the religion and the mindset of Japanese people are expressed in *osechi-ryori*, *otoso* (rice wine for New Year) and *ozohni* (soup with *mochi*), as well as the ambience of the people sitting around the table with these dishes.

Food culture has been developed with the background of the natural environment surrounding people and culture that is unique to the country or the region.

The Japanese archipelago runs widely north and south, surrounded by sea. 75% of the national land is mountainous areas. Under the monsoonal climate, the four seasons show distinct differences. The average annual precipitation is as high as 1800mm. In such natural environment, the people are obtaining the wealth of seasonal foodstuff from the sea, mountains and fields. Japanese people respect and live with nature, which brings such blessings to people's lives. With belief in deities and ancestors, combined with foods, a unique food culture has been developed in this land.

Food culture in Japan has been developed by also incorporating foreign cultures from China, Korean Peninsula and Southeast Asia, and from West European countries in the modern era. As a result, delicious and healthy WASHOKU that Japan can boast to the world developed.

However, such tradition of WASHOKU is now disappearing from Japanese tables. While WASHOKU had been developed by using foodstuff grown in Japan, the food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan is now lower than 40%. Household consumption of rice is decreasing, and traditional local cuisines and dishes specially prepared for certain events are also disappearing.

In its long history, Japan has developed WASHOKU as something beyond mere cuisine but culture. Let us explore the history of WASHOKU, the traditional food culture in Japan, in this booklet.

# WASHOKU

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[Editorial Committee] Principal: Isao Kumakura; Committee members: Ayako Ehara, Hiroko Okubo, Takuya Oikawa; Advisor: Shigeyuki Miyata; Edited by: Magazine House, Ltd.; Art direction and design: Kaori Okamura; Cover illustration: Kawanakayukari (tento)  
Translation; MAFF (Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries)

\* In this booklet, the traditional dietary culture of Japan is expressed as WASHOKU, and dishes with such tradition are expressed as washoku.





**Foodstuff**



**Dishes**

Foodstuff used in WASHOKU includes grains (mainly rice), vegetables, mushrooms, fish, shellfish and seaweed. Delicious *wagyu* beef is also used in recent years. There are two types of rice: non-glutinous rice and glutinous rice. The variety of vegetables ranges widely from indigenous varieties to Western vegetables that arrived in the Meiji period and thereafter. Fish is also an abundant foodstuff, and there are as many as about 4,200 varieties of fish around Japan.

The basic structure of WASHOKU is "one soup and three dishes other than cooked rice." Such structure comprises dishes that take full advantage of the deliciousness of the ingredients themselves. The key for every dish is *dashi* (stock). It may be prepared from *kombu* (dried kelp) or *katsuo-bushi* (dried bonito), or by cooking ingredients for a certain time. Deliciously prepared dishes are served in beautiful style.

#### What is WASHOKU?

### Foodstuff, dishes, nutrients and hospitality; the occasion and style of eating are also important elements of WASHOKU

WASHOKU starts from selecting foodstuff. Then, the menu is composed by taking nutrition into consideration. Then, the dishes are served with a mind of hospitality. How to eat the dishes is also an important element.

WASHOKU. We use the term as a word expressing Japanese-style cuisine.

However, does the term WASHOKU merely represent a single style of cuisine?

For example, "*itadaki-masu*" and "*gochisou-sama*," the phrases Japanese people say before and after meals, respectively, express thanks to not only the person who prepared the meal, but also to nature in which the foodstuff was grown, and to our ancestors and deities who preserved such nature.

Also, we pay attention not only to the dishes prepared but also the cooking method, the menu structure, plates and bowls used, and how the dishes are served on the table and how they are eaten. These also reflect the feeling and style unique to Japanese people.

In such context, WASHOKU refers not only to cuisine, but also to Japanese customs related to eating.

All tangible and intangible assets, including the wisdom and customs of eating that were generated and built by Japanese people, or the people who created such assets, are included in the concept of WASHOKU. Let's recognize

the word as a collective term for the traditional dietary cultures of Japan.

#### WASHOKU is constantly changing over time.

The basic structure of WASHOKU is "one soup and three dishes," which means eating cooked rice with side dishes, soup and pickles. This is a style developed to eat rice, the staple food, deliciously. It also generated the characteristic style of combining cooked rice and other dishes and tasting them at the same time in the mouth.

While WASHOKU had been inherited based on this style, it has been actively incorporating foodstuff, recipes and cooking methods from abroad and has been changing its content.

With the active introduction of Western culture in the Meiji period, WASHOKU experienced a further change. The taboo against eating meat was dissolved, resulting in the invention of various Western-style Japanese dishes such as *nikujaga* (stewed potatoes and meat seasoned with soy sauce), *sukiyaki*, *curry*



## Nutrition

Traditional washoku that is low in animal fat ensures the necessary energy for living and an ideal nutritional balance for healthy life, including staple food and side dishes. Eating the main staple food and side dishes alternately, harmonizing the tastes within one's mouth, is a unique style of eating for washoku. By prioritizing umami, salt content and calories can be effectively controlled.



## Hospitality

*Motenashi*, the Japanese concept of hospitality, is not merely a service offered from the host to the guest. It also includes the entire attitude of people who eat at the table. For example, the hospitality of the host expressed in the decoration of the space for eating, or various ideas incorporated in dishes and plates, will be rewarded when the guests notice them. Precisely, WASHOKU is the representative culture of Japan.

and rice and *tonkatsu* (Japanese-style cutlet). These are some of the new traditions of WASHOKU.

Nowadays, the dietary life of Japanese people is changing at an unprecedented speed. The style of cuisine has diversified through changes such as westernization, while handing down the culture of WASHOKU is diminishing due to an increase of people who are indifferent to what they eat, or a decrease of occasions for cooking and eating at home.

For this reason, it may be the time for us to reconsider what WASHOKU is.

### What are the four elements comprising WASHOKU?

Now, what elements comprise WASHOKU?

The first is foodstuff. In Japan, the four seasons are distinctive, and the climate is temperate and rainy. Agricultural products harvested in such climate are wide in variety, including rice, vegetables, edible wild plants and mushrooms.

Japan is also surrounded by productive fishing ground, where the Japan Current and the *Oyashio* Current collide. An abundant variety of fish is hauled from sea, and various local fish-eating cultures were developed. While 90% of fishery yields in Norway, which is also a major fisheries country, comprises only eight varieties of fish, that of Japan comprises as many as 28 varieties. This fact shows how abundant the variety of fish in Japan is. The annual

consumption volume of fish is about 57kg per person, which is about twice that of the U.S. and 6th in the world. It shows that the blessings from the sea are important foodstuff for washoku.

The second element is dishes. Cooking methods capitalizing on abundant water resources such as steaming, boiling and stewing, cooking utensils such as Japanese kitchen knives that are suitable for processing various types of fish, and *dashi* stock improved so as to prepare delicious meals mainly using vegetables and seafood, are the pillars of WASHOKU dishes.

The third is nutrition. Washoku is relatively low-calorie and allows the easy intake of different nutrients in a well-balanced manner.

And the fourth is hospitality. The mindset of greeting guests with utmost care is not merely a service for guests. By tasting the dishes and appreciating the decorations of alcoves or tableware used, the guests also reward the host. "*Itadaki-masu*" and "*gochisou-sama*" are both words of thanks before and after eating, respectively, and it also makes those offering the hospitality feel satisfied as well.

The manner of using chopsticks, the people's behavior, decoration that expresses the season and feeling, and the attitude of appreciating them...the idea of understanding the manners and the intention of preparing the eating place, and the feeling of caring for one another, is the spirit of WASHOKU.



## Living with nature: “Aenokoto” in Oku-Noto



The reason why

### WASHOKU, developed in life with nature, is a part of Japanese culture

Japanese people lived with nature that shows different aspects by region and by season, and developed various different styles of dietary culture.

Let us look for the reason why WASHOKU is a part of the culture.

Nature not only brings blessings, but also shows harshness to people. The lifestyle of Japanese people used to be deeply linked to nature, by accepting the environment in terms of geography or climate.

#### 1. Spiritual nature of WASHOKU

Back in the days when science and technology were not developed as is now, nature existed overwhelmingly over humans. People felt the existence of deities in such nature, and prayed for large hauls and good harvests. The joy and thankfulness of harvests developed into the form of festivals. The lifestyle nurtured the spiritual nature of respecting nature that brings blessings in the form of food.

#### 2. Social nature of WASHOKU

Everyday household tables, celebrations, festivals and annual functions in the communities of villages and towns-WASHOKU has been inherited by

The tradition of “Aenokoto” is inherited in the Oku-Noto Region of Ishikawa Prefecture (such as Wajima City, Suzu City, Anamizu Town and Noto Town). The ritual invites the deities of rice paddies inside the house, and lets them stay there from December to the next February until the coming of spring. The deities of rice paddies are husband and wife. Therefore, the tradition prepares two sets of utensils used for the ceremony, including divine tables with dishes, goblets and chopsticks. People welcome the deities with the foodstuff harvested in the nearby region. The dishes offered to the deities include rice cooked with adzuki beans, cod soup, daikon radish, fish and amazake (sweet fermented rice wine). These dishes are given to children after the ceremony. It is one of the Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties designated by the Japanese government, and is also included in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO.

people eating the blessings of nature together. WASHOKU plays the role of the cornerstone of society, through family get-togethers, community gatherings and other parties.

#### 3. Functional nature of WASHOKU

Naturally, food also has the functional nature of providing the stuff of people's life. WASHOKU, which uses abundant natural blessings such as rice, vegetables, seafood and seaweed, also represents a healthy dietary culture with amazing nutritional balance. In addition, the dishes for celebration also have the “function” of wishing for health and longevity.

#### 4. The regional nature of WASHOKU

WASHOKU differs widely among regions. Because geography and climate



## Living with nature: In the case of Aomori Prefecture



## 1. Spiritual nature

In this region, the entire family cooperates to make "winter-dried daikon radish" for a whole winter. Daikon radish is boiled, immersed in clear icy water, and then dried in cold winter wind. The process is the wisdom of life developed with the spirit of living with nature, capitalizing on the cold weather, rather than trying to resist the cold winters.

## 2. Social nature

In Sai Village, located at the tip of Shimokita Peninsula and with a population of about 2,500, holds the Yanonemori Hachimangu Festival every September. During the three days of the festival, all houses keep the doors open, and welcome any guests and have drinks together. Deities visits all the places in the village during these three days, and people share the table and strengthen the bonds among them.

## 3. Functional nature

*Kenoshiru* is a soup in the Tsugaru region that is prepared for the 15th of January as another new year's celebration, as a replacement of *nanakusa-gayu* (rice porridge with seven spring herbs) in other regions. Because the common spring herbs cannot be harvested in Aomori in winter, the dish uses root vegetables such as daikon radish and carrots, edible wild plants such as *warabi* and *zenmai*, and preserved foods such as freeze-dried tofu, to brighten up the New Year table in the harsh winter. The dish is prepared with the wish for maintaining health and soundness.

## 4. Regional nature

*Mizu* is a type of edible wild plant growing throughout the Tohoku Region. This dish is prepared by boiling *mizu* to remove scum, and immersing it in *kombu* stock together with steamed horned turban. It is interesting that blessings from the mountain and sea coexist in a single dish. It is a traditional dish for the Nishi-Tsugaru Region, where the distance of the sea and mountain is close, which combines the wealth of both mountain and sea in the same dish.

varies widely throughout Japan, much-diversified dietary culture had been developed among different regions. From Hokkaido to Okinawa, each region supplied the needs within the region, and was developing original dietary culture up to the early modern period. In other words, WASHOKU is the symbol of regional culture in Japan.

Let us take a look at "*Aenokoto*," a ritual inherited in Oku-Noto, Ishikawa Prefecture. This is an agricultural rite to thank the deities of rice paddies for the harvest of the year.

"Ae" means "hospitality," and "koto" means "festival." From winter to spring, the deities of rice paddies are invited and welcomed into the house. Abundant blessings from the mountain, sea and fields of Noto Region are offered to the

deities.

Another example is the dietary culture in Sai Village located in Shimokita Peninsula of Aomori Prefecture.

The dietary habit of using many preserved foods made of vegetables and edible wild plants was developed, and the tradition has been well-preserved until now, with the unique traditional dishes being inherited. *Osechi-ryori* (new year dishes) unique to the region is enjoyed at New Year's, wishing for health and soundness.

These examples show that a lifestyle of living with nature developed unique dishes and dietary habits in different regions in Japan, making up WASHOKU.



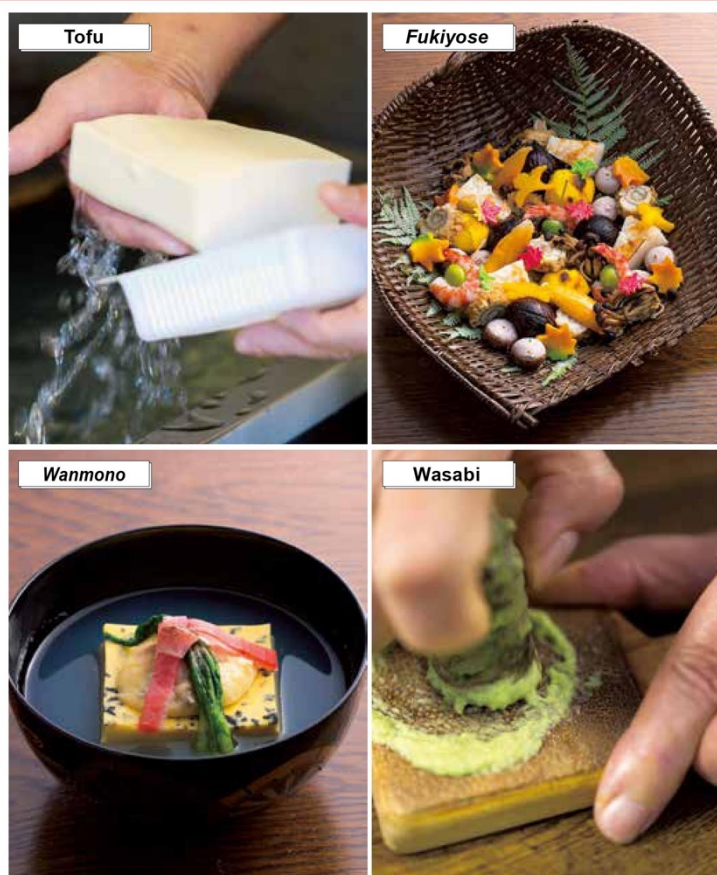
(1) Respect for nature

## WASHOKU started from respecting nature and has continued to the present.

WASHOKU, supported by plentiful nature, especially clear water, blessed with rich foodstuff, and methods of cooking, utensils, and arrangement were developed.  
That is why WASHOKU allows us to feel the seasons and reminds us of respecting nature.

Somei No Ido in Nashi No Ki Jinja Shrine in Kamigyo-ku, Kyoto City, is a spring that is familiarly known to local residents for its good-quality water. In every region in Japan, people were blessed not only with river water but also water from springs and wells, and lived thanks to such water.





### Tofu Utilizing good-quality water

Tofu, a food solidifying soy bean curd with a coagulating agent, has been widely eaten from ancient times. Tofu made in Japan is unique with its high content of water and softness. Because it is a bland-tasting food, the taste depends largely on the good quality of water used in the preparation process.

### Fuki-yose Expressing seasonal feelings

WASHOKU takes in the feelings of the season in various styles. The dish called *fuki-yose* expresses a scene in autumn where seasonal vegetables, ginkgo nuts and mushrooms all drift with wind inside a basket works.

### Wanmono Using wood materials

Soups are usually served in wooden bowls. Lacquerware made by wrapping cloths over a thinly-carved wooden core and finished with lacquer has been used throughout Japan. Because it is made of wood, it can be held in the hand without feeling the heat even if it contains boiling-hot soup inside.

### Wasabi Functionality of nature

Wasabi is a familiar relish for sashimi. Its stinging spiciness is caused by a volatile chemical substance called allyl isothiocyanate, which has strong antibacterial and sterilizing activities. Therefore, it is effectively used when eating raw fish. It is wisdom peculiar to WASHOKU, fully utilizing the efficacy of natural products.

In Japan, where people are blessed with rich products of nature, a mentality to worship and respect nature has been developed from ancient days. Festivals to wish for good harvests and large hauls for each season held throughout Japan express such mentality.

Spring, summer, autumn and winter – the four seasons in Japan are so uniquely distinguished in a way that is almost unseen in other places in the world. Washoku takes in various foodstuff that can only be enjoyed for the season.

The plates and bowls to serve the dishes are also quite unique. Lacquerware, using natural lacquer resin, is tableware invented with the knowledge of nature held by our ancestors, realizing beauty and a high mothproof effect and durability.

It is also characteristic that the season can also be felt with the eyes, such as expressing the season with plates and bowls or with garnishes, or decorating flowers of the season in an alcove.

In addition, one of the important blessings of nature is water.

#### Mellow soft water has large influence

Water is also an object to be religiously worshipped, and has played an important role in formulating food culture in Japan.

The average annual precipitation in Japan is as high as 1800mm. Water suitable for drinking is abundant, and also the water contains less minerals because it stays only for a short period underground. Thus, in contrast to hard water found in continents such as Europe, the water in Japan is soft water (WHO

standards: the content of calcium and magnesium is 120mg/L or less), which has a large impact on WASHOKU.

Cooking methods using mild-tasting and mellow soft water abundantly, and dishes accentuating the natural taste of the foodstuff itself, were developed.

One example is Tofu. Because *momen* or *kinu* tofu generally eaten in Japan is made by using a lot of water, the taste of the product depends largely on the quality of water.

It is the same with cooking rice. By rinsing rice several times with water, and by cooking with an adequate amount of water, the rice can be finished softly and without any hard core inside.

Other cooking methods using water abundantly, such as boiling vegetables and rinsing with water thereafter, removing scum with water, or firming the surface of soba noodles with cold water after boiling, are all quite unique and different from methods seen in other regions of the world. The good quality of water in Japan supports WASHOKU.

Also, soft water brings out the taste of *kombu* and *katsuo-bushi* effectively, which resulted in a cooking method that uses *dashi* stock. With the use of *dashi* stock, the unique taste of ingredients themselves, which are the blessings of nature, can be enjoyed.

Sensitivity to the changes of seasons lies within the spirit of WASHOKU. In other words, WASHOKU or food for Japanese people, developing emotions towards the four seasons from childhood, is precisely the expression of respect for nature.

## (2) Uniting family and region

# Gathering to connect ties among people; role of foods for events and festivals

People strengthen ties among them by eating together.  
Family get-togethers, celebrations, festivals of the region,  
annual events...  
Food plays a central role in uniting people within the  
traditional culture of Japan.

### (Table for family)

The occasion for family members and relatives to enjoy *osechi-ryori* at New Year's at the same table is an ideal situation for handing down food tradition of the region or family to the next generation. The photo below is a scene in Fukaura Town, located on the coast of the Sea of Japan in the western part of Aomori Prefecture. The "Fukaura Committee for Local Production and Local Consumption" is acting for several families to gather and teach local dishes inherited in the region to one another. The generation of grandparents tries to hand down the local tradition to the next generation by presenting dishes that only they know how to prepare.



Daily occasions of family members and relatives sitting around the table is an important situation for communication. By all the members showing up at the table and talking about what they felt or what happened each day while having meals, the bond of the family is strengthened. It is an important opportunity to teach children the manner of WASHOKU such as how to use chopsticks or how to hold bowls, or taste sensation and nutritional balance can be educated through dishes.

Aside from daily occasions, special dishes are enjoyed at annual events such as New Year, *setsubun* (the day before the calendric beginning of spring) and New Year's Eve. Such custom is also useful for strengthening ties among family members and relatives. It also results in handing down the taste and tradition of the family to the next generation.

### Being connected with people and region through foods

Other than family events, there are also annual events that unite the local community.





Food is also an important factor for festivals of local community. After rites at shrines, there is an eating and drinking ceremony called *naorai*. It is expected that the deities and people unite and people are blessed, by eating and drinking the food and wine offered to the deities. Nowadays, the ceremony also has the meaning of a party after the rite, and people drink together after the rite is carried out. This works to develop familiar feelings and reinforce the awareness as the same community.

Such parties can also be said to be a part of Japanese culture in terms of food.

There are also situations where the local community is united through the intermediary of foods, other than festivals. For example, *imoni-kai* (taro-cooking gathering) held frequently in Yamagata and Miyagi Prefectures in autumn is a

seasonal event where friends, colleagues or members of the local community are invited and gather at riverside. The pot-dish served on the occasion generally contains ingredients such as taro and beef and is seasoned with soy sauce in the inland parts of Yamagata Prefecture. On the other hand, in Miyagi Prefecture, taro and pork are cooked and seasoned with miso. Although there are such regional differences, there are common factors that people gather around a dish cooking regional foodstuff of the season in a large pot. It is suggested that exchange and the feeling of unity are strengthened not only by eating together but also by preparing the dish together.

The bonds of family, relatives, region and community are strengthened through foods. This is one of the characteristics of WASHOKU, its social nature.

### (Foods for regional community and festivals)

Sharing the table as a part of rite is an important occasion for people who implement the festival to reinforce the ties among them. The photo below shows the table at a festival in Osaka Prefecture. Dishes served here included a pot dish of *hamo* (conger pike) and *matsutake* mushroom, and local eggplant pickles. On the other hand, *imoni-kai* (photos right) held frequently in Miyagi and Yamagata Prefectures in the Tohoku region in autumn is usually held not only by the regional community but also among colleagues, relatives and friends. By all participants bringing foodstuff and preparing the dish together, the feeling of togetherness is reinforced.



### (3) Wish for health and longevity

## Wish for health and longevity with dishes for special occasions

For example, *osechi-ryori* preserves the unique culture of different regions throughout Japan. While the content varies widely among different regions, the wish for health and longevity is expressed in every region by eating the dishes.

There are special ceremonial days in the life of Japanese people. One is an annual event as New Year, and another is milestone days in a person's life such as childbirth, coming-of-age, marriage or *kanreki* (60th birthday), which are called rites of passage. There is one thing in common in these special days: people eat special dishes to expel evil spirits, bad luck and disasters, and wish for health and longevity.

On New Year's Day, people celebrate the start of the year by welcoming the "deity of the year" to each household. It is an important annual event that takes place only once a year. *Kadomatsu*, which is a decoration set at the entrance of the house, is a mark for inviting the deities. On New Year's Day, family members gather and have meals together, wishing for happiness throughout the year. *Osechi-ryori* dishes are served on that occasion. *Osechi-ryori* dishes vary widely among regions: some



### *Osechi-ryori*

The content of *osechi-ryori* varies among different regions. The above is a sample of *osechi-ryori* in Tokyo. The tier of food boxes (at the front) contains the three dishes for celebration, namely *kuromame* (sweet cooked black soybean), *kazunoko* (herring roe) and *tazukuri* (dried small sardines), which represent wishes for health, for the prosperity of descendants, and for good harvest, respectively. Other dishes for celebration include red-and-white (considered auspicious colors) *kamaboko* (minced and steamed fish), grilled shrimp representing a wish for longevity, and *tataki-gobo* (crushed and seasoned burdock) representing a wish for a good harvest. The content differs by region. A vinegared dish (in the small box at the left) and *nishime* (vegetables cooked with *dashi*) (in large box at rear) are also some popular dishes for *osechi-ryori*.



include a lineup of appetizers for drinking alcohol, while there are regions where only *nishime* (vegetables cooked with *dashi*) is prepared as *osechi-ryori*. However, it is common that the dishes express the wish to beckon fortune and ward off misfortune, while sharing the table with deities.

*Ozohni* (soup with *mochi*), also eaten on New Year's Day, was originally the most important and formal appetizer for drinking alcohol among samurais. On New Year's Day, *ozohni* with *mochi* inside and *otoso* (rice wine for New Year) are always served. Round-shaped *mochi* as used in *kagamimochi* symbolizes the souls of deities. It is also called "*hagatame-mochi* (*mochi* for firm teeth)," and eating *kagamimochi* on January 11th has a meaning of wishing for longevity with healthy teeth.

Other events for sharing the table and wishing to be able to spend every day in peace include five *sekku* (season-related festivals). These are January 7th ("*jinjitsu*"), when people eat *nanakusa-gayu* (rice porridge with seven spring herbs), March 3rd ("*joushi*"), when people eat *kusamochi* (sweet

*mochi* seasoned with *mugwort*) that is believed to have the effect on quelling negative vibes, May 5th ("*tango*"), when people wish for health by eating *chimaki* (steamed rice wrapped in bamboo leaves) and *kashiwamochi* (sweet *mochi* wrapped with Kashiwa oak leaves), July 7th ("*shichiseki*"), wishing to stay disease-free by eating thin noodles called *sakubei*, and September 9th ("*chouyou*"), wishing for immortality with *kikuzake* (sake served with chrysanthemum petals).

As for rites of passage, *sekihan* (red rice), which was believed to quell negative vibes and bad luck, used to be eaten not only on celebrating occasions but also in Buddhist ceremonies such as bon festivals and in funerals.

The tradition of WASHOKU, constantly in pursuit of things good for one's body, culminated in a healthy food culture that is rarely found in other regions of the world. Strong orientation towards the wish for health and longevity lies at the heart of WASHOKU.



**Ootoso**

*Ootoso*, enjoyed with *ozohni* on New Year's Day, is served by using a sake server called *choushi*, three stacked-up cups, a cup stand, and a tray to put all these on. *Ootoso* was originally a medicinal liquor made by immersing *tososan*, which is a blend of several types of herb, in sake or *mirin* (sweet rice wine).



**Ozohni**

Eating *ozohni* with round *mochi*, a symbol of the soul, inside originally meant to be given the power of deities. Above is *ozohni* seasoned with *Saikyo* miso, which is familiar in Kyoto. The characteristics of this type of *ozohni* are that it cooks round *mochi* without grilling, and contains *kashiraimo* (mother yam), which was considered a lucky charm from ancient times.



**Okuizome**

*Okuizome* is a ritual held for a child 100 days old, with a wish for being able to have no trouble eating for a lifetime. In the ritual, a menu of "one soup and three dishes," including sea bream with its head and tail on, is served. "Stone for firm teeth," wishing for the baby to have good teeth, is also indispensable.



**Sekihan**

Red-colored adzuki beans were believed to have the effect of quelling negative vibes and bad luck, so it was frequently used for celebration. Eating steamed glutinous rice is an old custom in Japanese culture. For instance, *sekihan* is served as a dish for special days, and is especially indispensable for festive occasions.

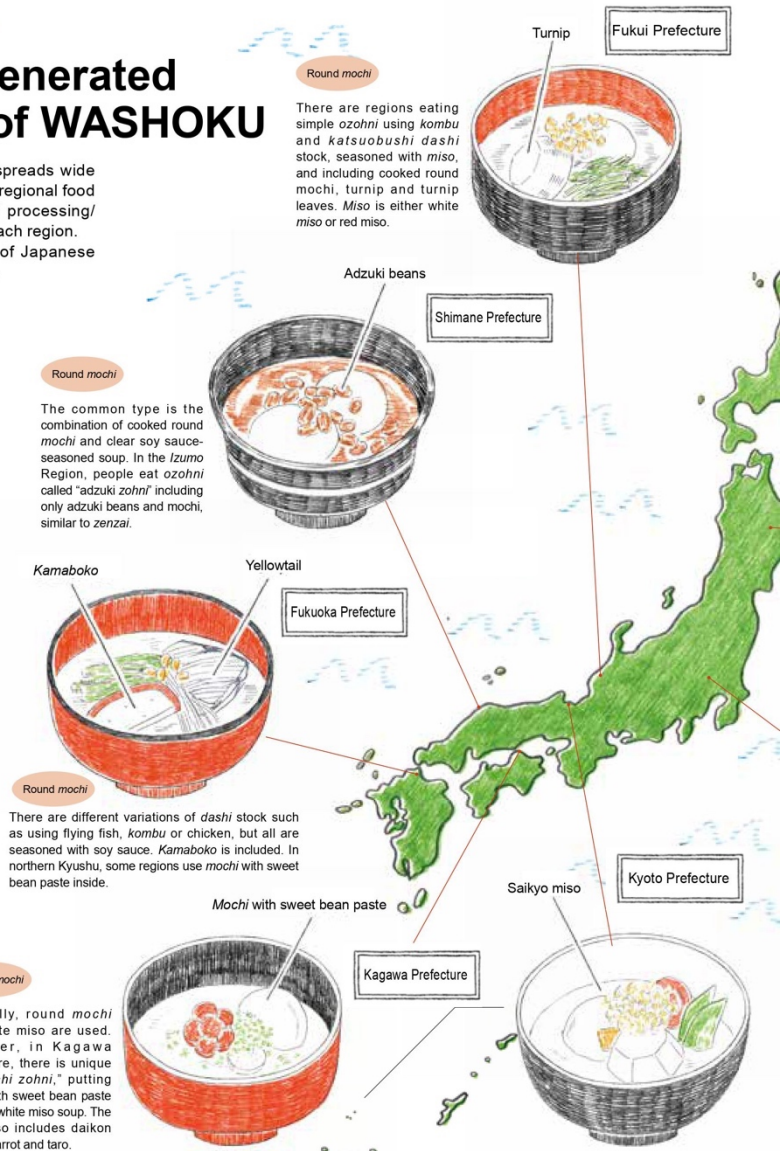
#### (4) Diversity of WASHOKU

## The climate generated the diversity of WASHOKU

Because the Japanese archipelago spreads wide north-south, there is a wide variety of regional food culture. There are local cuisines and processing/preservation techniques inherited in each region. The more you know about the map of Japanese food, the more interesting it becomes.

### Ozohni Map

*Ozohni* eaten on New Year's Day varies widely among regions and households, in terms of the ingredients of *dashi* stock and seasoning used, the shape of *mochi*, and other ingredients in the soup. *Dashi* ingredients include *kombu*, *katsuobushi*, dried small fish, dried squid, conger and chicken. For seasoning, salt, soy sauce and miso are used. The shape of *mochi* is different, either round or square, and there is also a difference of baking it or not before cooking with soup. In some regions, *mochi* with sweet bean paste is stuffed inside. Other ingredients in the soup include vegetables, seafood and chicken, and the specialty product of the region is often used. In Okinawa, people eat *nakami-jiru* (soup using pork organ meat) instead of *ozohni*. The map here shows some of characteristic *ozohni* types throughout Japan.



"You're from XX Prefecture, so you may have eaten that." "How do you prepare *mochi* for *ozohni* and what do you use for *ozohni* seasoning?" Traditional dishes and foodstuff may differ for each region throughout Japan, and the seasoning also differs by regions.

With different climates, foodstuff that can be harvested and cooking methods have become different, resulting in the formation of *washoku* with abundant regional flavors. Such diversity is also one of the attractive points of *washoku*, and it is one of the things to look forward to when travelling in Japan.

Back in the days when logistics systems and preservation technology were not developed as now, it was an important and difficult task to use foodstuff effectively and stably without wasting them. People used wisdom and added improvements to invent effective food processing and preservation methods. Such wisdom resulted in

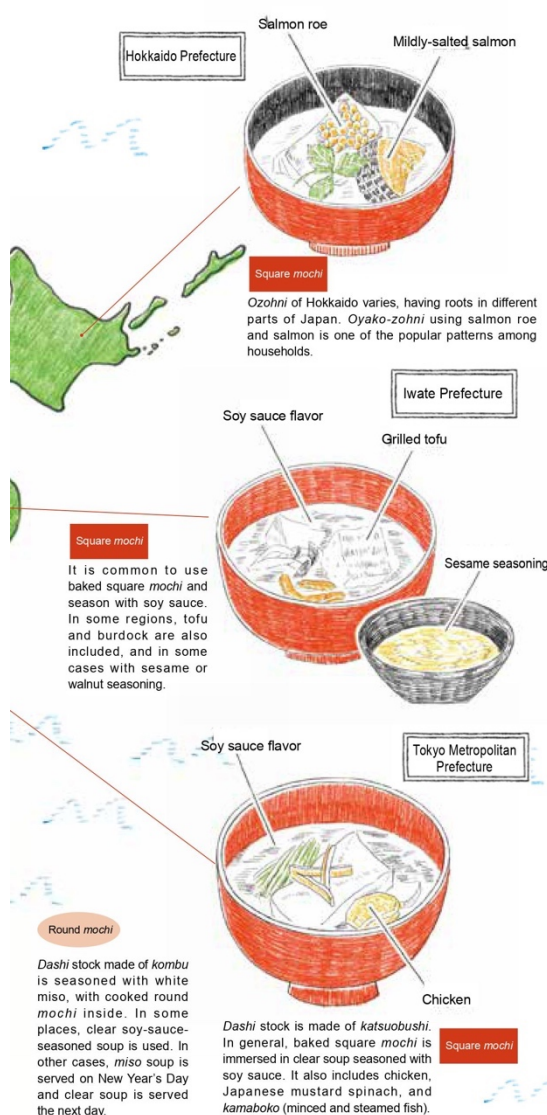
generating the diversity of WASHOKU.

### Diversity of food culture generated from the difference of climate

In lands far from sea, wisdom was developed to improve the storage life of fish. In the northern region experiencing harsh winters, techniques improved to preserve vegetables for a long time.

Dried fish, *mochi*, pickled *ume*, freeze-dried tofu, etc. are all long-life processed foods created a long time ago. Similarly, fermented food is also a type of ancient processed food in Japan. These are foods with improved storage life, nutritional value or flavor by the agency of microorganisms or with the effect of enzymes. Pickled vegetables are one such fermented food.





### Miso in Japan — Region and characteristics —

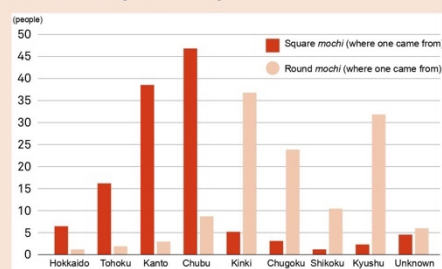
*Miso* can be roughly divided into three types, in terms of manufacturing method and ingredients. Rice *miso* is common throughout Japan, which is made by fermenting steamed or boiled soy bean with salt and malted rice added. Replacing malted rice with malted barley will make barley *miso*. Soy bean *miso* is made by fermenting and maturing soy bean. Rice *miso* can be divided into salty red *miso* using steamed soy bean and matured for a long period, and mildly sweet white *miso* using boiled soy bean and matured for a short period.

Major type and region	Characteristic
Tsugaru <i>miso</i>	Mature for long period. The mainstream is salty, red <i>miso</i> type.
Sendai <i>miso</i>	Traditional <i>miso</i> inherited in Sendai. The mainstream is salty red <i>miso</i> type matured for a long period.
Shinshu <i>miso</i>	Mainly made in Nagano Prefecture. Salty <i>miso</i> with light orange color.
Rice <i>miso</i>	
Edo sweet <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet red <i>miso</i> using more malt and less salt compared to ordinary <i>miso</i> .
Saikyo <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet white <i>miso</i> containing a lot of rice malt, mainly made in the Kansai Region.
Sanuki <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet white <i>miso</i> made in Kagawa Prefecture. It is also used for <i>an-mochi</i> zohni.
Fuchu <i>miso</i>	Mildly sweet white <i>miso</i> containing a lot of rice malt, mainly made in Hiroshima Prefecture.
Barley <i>miso</i>	Kyushu, Shikoku, Chugoku
Soy bean <i>miso</i>	Haccho <i>miso</i> / Sanshu <i>miso</i>



### Shape of *mochi*

The result of interview on the shape of *mochi* included in *ozohni* is as follows. The share of square *mochi* is large in the east and that of round *mochi* is large in the west, bordering at the Chubu region.



Source: "100 Selected Ozohni" (Agency for Cultural Affairs)

For example, there is *iburigakko*, a local cuisine dish of Akita Prefecture. Daikon radishes are hung over the open hearth and smoked with an open fire using oak and cherry wood. Then, the radish is made into pickles with rice bran and salt. This is wisdom in Akita Prefecture, where winter comes early, to dry daikon radish quickly to improve its storage life. With time and effort, the flavor is condensed and a rich taste is generated that is different from fresh vegetables.

An example of preserved seafood is *narezushi*. Fish is matured with salt and cooked rice for several days to several months and fermented with lactic acid bacteria. It holds down the growing of bacteria, and preservation for a long period became possible. In addition, it adds umami. Some of the *nare-zushi* local cuisine dishes throughout Japan are *Funa-zushi* of Shiga Prefecture, *nare-zushi* using mackerel and Pacific *saury* of Wakayama Prefecture, *heshiko-narezushi* of Obama

City, Fukui Prefecture and *hatahata-zushi* of Akita Prefecture.

Fermented seasoning such as miso, fermented soy bean, and soy sauce can be considered as the key to the taste of Japanese cuisine. There are also differences in preparation methods and taste among these, depends on the region. For instance, there are many variations of miso: Tsugaru miso, a salty miso using soy bean and malted rice and fermented for a long period, mildly sweet Saikyo miso containing a large amount of malted rice, red-brown Haccho miso of Nagoya using malted soy bean, and barley miso of the Kyushu Region made of barley.

The diversity is obvious by taking a look at the variations of *ozohni* as an example, made of regional specialty products, fermented seasoning and *mochi*.

Climate and food culture in Japan are deeply connected, developing a wide variety of foods that the world pays attention to.

Edo period	Azuchi-Momoyama period	Muromachi period	Kamakura period	Heian period	Nara period	Asuka period	Kofun period	Yayoi period	Johmon period
17 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> Century	16 <sup>th</sup> -17 <sup>th</sup> Century	14 <sup>th</sup> -16 <sup>th</sup> Century	12 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> Century	8 <sup>th</sup> -12 <sup>th</sup> Century	8 <sup>th</sup> Century	7 <sup>th</sup> Century	Around 500	Around 240 Around BC 200	BC 2500 BC 3000 BC 9000
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "Ryori Monogatari," the first published book on cuisine in Japan, was issued.</li> <li>- Cafes and restaurants became widespread in urban areas.</li> <li>- <i>Kaiseki-ryori</i> style enjoying sake served in restaurants was formulated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Toyotomi Hideyoshi held the Kiato-dai-sanoe (prosperous tea gathering).</li> <li>- Europe entered the Age of Exploration and Western-style sweets and chili pepper arrived in Japan through Nanban trade.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Honzen ryori</i>, dishes to welcome guests by samurai, was formulated.</li> <li>- Professional chefs called "<i>houchou-nin</i>" appeared and formulated their original style.</li> <li>- Notched mortar widely used.</li> <li>- Sake-brewing technology progressed.</li> <li>- Tea ceremony style shifted from <i>shoin</i>-style to <i>wabi</i>-style.</li> <li>- Tea ceremony style was completed by Sen no Rikyu.</li> <li>- <i>Kaiseki-ryori</i> style for tea ceremony was established.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dogen wrote "Tenzo Kyokun" and "Fushoku Hanpon," which guide the manner of preparing and eating meals in the Zen school.</li> <li>- Vegetarian meals were developed for Buddhists using vegetable-origin foods only.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Daijyo ryori</i> (dishes for banquets) of aristocrats and annual functions were established under the influence of Chinese culture.</li> <li>- Tofu arrived from China.</li> <li>- Preparation method of powdered green tea was brought back from Song China by Eisai.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- "So," made by boiling down milk, was used as a tribute to the Imperial court.</li> <li>- Use of chopsticks became widespread.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>Kentoshi</i> (Japanese missions to Tang China) brought the food culture of the continent.</li> <li>- In 675, Emperor Temmu prohibited eating beef, horsemeat, dog and monkey meat, and chicken.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Mobile furnace made of Halki pottery was used.</li> <li>- Steaming rice by using Halki pottery became popular.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Wet-field rice cultivation arrived in Japan.</li> <li>- Rice cultivation spread. <i>Nare-zushi</i>, made by fermenting fish was invented.</li> <li>- In the "Gishi Wa-jin-Den" book written in the late 3rd Century in China, it is stated that people in Wa (Japan) eat fresh vegetables in winter and summer, use a pedestaled bowl for drinking and eating, and eat with their hands.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Global warming progressed and the game hunting shifted from large animals to small animals.</li> <li>- Holes to store acorns became widely used in pit-dwelling houses in southern Kyushu.</li> <li>- Vegetable-origin foods such as acorns became important food.</li> </ul>



Honzen ryori, dishes to welcome guests by samurai



Dishes to welcome guests by the aristocrats of the Heian period



Establishment of rice cultivation in rice paddies

established in this period.

On the other hand, the everyday staple food in Japan was generally *katameshi*, mixing barley, various grains and potatoes, or foods using wheat such as *udon*. The tendency continued up to the Showa period, and the original culture of WASHOKU developed in each region.

Since the Meiji period, where Japan started to actively import Western culture, books on Western cuisine were published, and Western cuisine restaurants opened in urban areas. In the late Meiji period, many cookbooks for households were published one after another, and many semi-Western dishes, which customized Western dishes and incorporated washoku, were introduced.

Nutrition science was developed with the foundation of the National Institute of Nutrition in the Taisho period, and interest in the nutrition of everyday meals

gradually diffused.

After World War II, where the country experienced hunger, it was recommended to take animal protein and fat as side dishes other than carbohydrates in rice. As a result, by around the 1980s, the meals of Japanese people further improved their nutritional balance, adding an adequate amount of milk, dairy foods, meat, fish and vegetables to cooked rice. The dietary habit of this period is referred to as the "Japanese-style dietary habit." However, the Westernization and simplification of the dietary habit progressed thereafter, and the food self-sufficiency ratio declined below 40%. The basic style of meals is being changed mainly among young people, and skipping meals or eating alone has become an issue. Thus, it is now required to review washoku once again.

Characteristics of WASHOKU (1) Menu structure

## Soup and dishes are for eating cooked rice. “One soup and three dishes” is the basic style of washoku

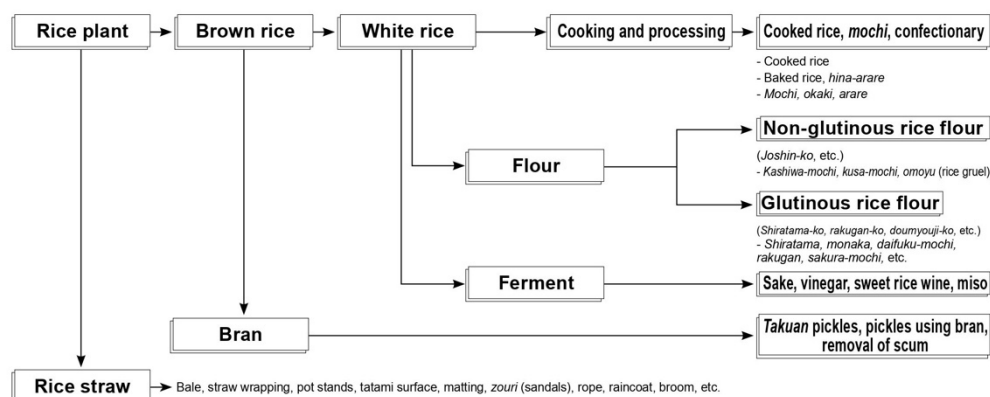
“One soup and three dishes” is a combination of cooked rice, soup and pickles, with several dishes added.

“One soup and three dishes” is a structure of menu adding three dishes to cooked rice, soup and pickles. In this photo, there are grilled fish (back right), stewed vegetables (back left) and boiled and seasoned Japanese mustard spinach (center). A bowl of cooked rice is supposed to be placed at the front left side of the person, soup at the front right side, and pickles at the center.





## Rice is deeply involved with the lifestyle of Japanese people.



### Japonica rice and Indica rice

Major varieties of rice grown today throughout the world include Indica rice (Indian-type rice) and Japonica rice (Japanese-type rice). Indica is a type called long rice, while Japonica is a short, round rice widely eaten in Japan today. Starch, the main component of rice, includes amylose and amylopectin. While Indica rice containing more amylose is less sticky, Japonica rice including less amylose is more sticky, and tastes delicious to the palate of Japanese people. Dishes like *onigiri* and sushi, with cooked rice shaped in balls, were invented with this Japonica rice.

The production amount of rice in the world is about 600 million tons, approximately the same as wheat, and more than 90% of rice is grown in Asian countries, including Japan. Japonica rice accounts for about 15% of the total, and is mainly cultivated in Japan, the Korean Peninsula, the northeast part of China, and the northern part of Taiwan. On the other hand, the cultivation area of Indica rice is mainly South Asia, including India, the Bengal region of Bangladesh, Indochina Peninsula (mainly Thailand), the central and southern part of China, and Indonesia.



Japonica



Indica

### Non-glutinous rice and glutinous rice

Japanese people usually eat non-glutinous rice at meals, while they use glutinous rice for making *sekihan* and *mochi*. While the nutrition value is virtually the same, the composition of starch is different. The ratio of amylose and amylopectin of non-glutinous rice is about 2:8, while glutinous rice is composed mostly of amylopectin. That is why glutinous rice is stickier than non-glutinous rice, and is suitable for making *mochi*. In Japan, the characteristics of both types of rice are utilized effectively to create various dishes and confectionaries by using rice grain or flour, or by fermenting into sake and *mirin* (sweet rice wine).

Cooked rice; soup of *dashi* stock made of *kombu* or *katsuo-bushi* and seasoned with miso or salt, with some ingredients; pickles such as salted pickles or pickles using bran or sake lees; side dishes such as grilled, stewed or dressed foods. "One soup and three dishes" is the combination of these four elements.

As a basic rule, "one soup and three dishes" refers to a style including one soup and three side dishes. Pickles, that refresh the mouth during the meal, and cooked rice are always served as basic items, so they are not counted as a part of the "three dishes."

In contrast to the "one soup and three dishes," which is the structure of daily meals, "two soups and five dishes" appeared frequently in the Edo period. This means two types of soup and five side dishes, which used to be the basic structure of meal to welcome guests. Two small tables were used for one person. In contrast, "one soup and three dishes" is served on a single small table, showing that this is the ordinary daily household meal.

There are also various types of soup. Bony parts of fish removed when making fillet are used for soup. *Kenchin-jiru* is a soup of various vegetables and tofu. There are other various chunky soups in various regions, and it is also one of the characteristics of washoku to eat rice with soup.

The greatest characteristic of "one soup and three dishes" is that soup, pickles and dishes all exist just for eating cooked rice. At the base of the concept of "one soup and three dishes," there is an idea that cooked rice is the main dish, and the other three elements are side dishes. The basic style of

washoku used to be eating plenty of cooked rice with a limited amount of side dishes, and controlling the caloric intake with the amount of cooked rice.

### Where did rice come from, which is essential for WASHOKU?

Let us also look at cooked rice, which is indispensable for WASHOKU.

There are two types of rice: glutinous rice and non-glutinous rice. Glutinous rice, which is strongly viscous, is used for *okowa* (hard, steamed rice) like *sekihan*, while non-glutinous rice is less sticky and is usually eaten as cooked rice for daily meals.

It is said that the cultivation of rice started more than 10,000 years ago, originally by growing wild rice. The land of origin according to the widely-accepted theory is the basin of the Yangtze River in China. Indica rice diffused westward from there, while Japonica rice diffused eastward and settled in East Asia.

It can be said that the purpose of the menu of WASHOKU is to eat cooked rice with soup and side dishes. In other words, everything from *nikujaga* (stewed potatoes and meat seasoned with soy sauce) and *korokke* (Japanese-style croquette) to *tonkatsu* (Japanese-style cutlet) was fine as a side dish as long as it goes with cooked rice. The flexibility of side dishes is due to the strongly established WASHOKU style which places cooked rice as the main dish. If it were not for the basic structure referred to as "one soup and three dishes," there would be no difference with cuisines in other countries.



## Characteristics of WASHOKU (2) Foodstuff

### Foodstuff at the base of washoku The secret of deliciousness and diversity

"The deliciousness of washoku is enforced by the original taste of the ingredients. Foodstuff in Japan produced from nature in all four seasons has a surprisingly wide variety.

#### Japanese food culture is based on two main foodstuffs, vegetables and seafood

WASHOKU dishes had been prepared mainly by using vegetables and seafood. That is because various types of fish and vegetables could be obtained or grown abundantly throughout Japan, and also because eating meat was generally prohibited until Japan lifted its seclusion and started taking in international cultures.

It is said that the number of types of vegetables currently distributed in Japan is as many as about 150. There are also many categories, such as potatoes, legumes, root vegetables, stalk vegetables, leafy vegetables and

Many WASHOKU dishes use vegetables, and the number of types of vegetables currently distributed in Japan is as many as about 150. There are also many categories: potatoes, including potatoes and sweet potatoes; legumes including soy bean and adzuki bean; root vegetables such as daikon radish and turnip; stalk vegetables such as Welsh onion and udo; leafy vegetables such as Japanese mustard spinach and Chinese cabbage; and fruit vegetables including eggplants and cucumbers. In addition, there are mushrooms such as shiitake mushroom and shimeji mushroom, and edible wild plants such as ferns. Although we can obtain various kinds of vegetables throughout the year thanks to the development of logistics systems, it does not mean the same vegetables can be harvested throughout the country. For example, sweet potatoes are largely grown in the Kyushu region, while potatoes that are resistant to cold weather damage and grown in cool climates are cultivated in mountain areas such as Yamanashi and Nagano Prefectures, or the northern part of Japan. In addition, traditional vegetables that are the specialty products of certain region are now beginning to attract attention.

fruit vegetables. In addition, edible wild plants in forests such as mushrooms and wild mountain plants have also been widely consumed as foodstuff with improvements in cooking methods.

Vegetables marketed in Japan are diverse, including some imported from abroad after modernization or some that had been improved to make it easier to eat. On the other hand, there are traditional vegetables (indigenous vegetables) that have been grown from old times in Japan. Traditional vegetables refer to the kinds of vegetables that had been grown for more than three generations, and cultivated with methods that took root in the region. Currently, there are some active movements to preserve these kinds of





**Oceanic fish**

Seafood has been a precious and important foodstuff for Japan, an island country, from ancient times. According to the Quality Labeling Standard for Fresh Foods set forth by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, aquatic products consumed in Japan varies seawater fish such as tuna, bonito, sardines and horse mackerels, freshwater fish (stream fish) such as carp and eels, shellfish such as clams, crustaceans such as crabs and shrimp, aquatic animals such as turtles, and seaweed such as *kombu* and *wakame*. According to the results of the survey on people's taste preferences, conducted by Ajinomoto Co., Inc. in 2000, seafood was preferred over meat as a foodstuff. Among others, crab, shrimp and tuna were particularly preferred, and it seems that these are recognized as "luxurious foodstuff."



**Stream fish**

Freshwater fish (stream fish) have been appreciated as a precious source of protein in regions such as mountain areas where it is difficult to obtain fish from the sea. The above photo shows *ayu*, but various other stream fish including carp, eel, loach, *wakasagi* and *funa* are used as foodstuff in Japan. They are rarely consumed raw, because of the risk of fish being infested with parasites. Instead, various different cooking methods have been developed. Although freshwater fish has a unique scent and strong taste compared to seawater fish, it can be improved with cooking. For example, *koikoku* dishes hold down the scent of carp by stewing the fish meat for a long time, and *kabayaki* of eel adds strong seasoning. Another example of such improvement is *funa-zushi* made in Shiga Prefecture, which ferments *funa* fish caught in Lake Biwa with lactic acid bacteria together with salt and cooked rice, in order to improve the storage life and brings out umami.



**Seaweed**

Seaweed has been consumed in Japan from ancient days. It is still used conveniently in washoku, as a low-calorie foodstuff containing abundant minerals and vitamins. In Japan, about 50 kinds of seaweed are consumed. An ethnic group processing and eating such various types of seaweed is quite rare in the world. Seaweed can be categorized into three groups: red algae including *funori* and *tengusa*, brown algae including *wakame*, *kombu* and *mozuku*, and green algae including green laver and sea grapes. The use of them also varies. Some like *kombu* are used for preparing *dashi* stock. Some like *nori* are eaten after being dried, and some like *wakame* are used for miso soup and vinegared dishes. In addition, seaweed has been regarded as an important tribute to the deities, so it not only is consumed in daily meals but also is presented as offerings in festivals and rituals.



**Shellfish**

As can be seen by the fact that a large amount of the shells of abalone, clams and oysters are found in the shell mounds of the relics of the Jomon period, shellfish has been consumed as foodstuff from prehistoric era in Japan. Clam-digging is a familiar spring event, where people gather clams from the seabed when the tide is low. It is said that nearly 6,000 species of shellfish live in the waters of Japan, and especially bivalves such as clams and snails such as horned turban and whelk are familiar foodstuff. They are used in various dishes such as sashimi, clear soup, miso soup, stew, grilled shellfish and cooked with rice. They are also used for preparing *dashi* stock. They can also be stored for a long time when dried, so they were valued highly in trade from long ago.

traditional vegetables.

Seafood is also an indispensable foodstuff for WASHOKU. There is an abundant variety of seawater fish hauled in Japan, and there about 4,200 varieties, just by counting those that live in waters around Japan. Japanese coastal waters are a mine of fish, including sea bream that is always appreciated as a lucky charm, horse mackerels, sardines and saury.

Not only seawater fish, but also freshwater fish (stream fish) such as carp, *ayu*, *funa*, eels and loach that can be found in rice paddies were also a precious source of protein in regions far away from the sea. These foodstuff are used in dishes from long ago. Eel *kabayaki* is one of the popular menus. The cooking style also varies, as seen in *koi-no-arai*, immersing the thin strip

of carp fillet in hot water at about 50 degrees for a short time and then dipping into icy water, and eating with vinegared seasoning, or *koikoku*, where the chunk of carp meat is stewed with thick miso sauce.

Seaweed is also an essential foodstuff for washoku. *Kombu* has been used through the ages as a source of umami. *Wakame* is used in various dishes, including miso soup. *Nori* is indispensable for making *onigiri* (rice balls). There is also a wide variety of shellfish, and *noshi-awabi*, which is an abalone cut into thin strips and dried, is used as a symbol for rites and celebration.

Recently, the food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan is declining. There is also the issue of the increased use of imported foodstuff. However, the original WASHOKU is based on the natural blessings of Japan.

### Characteristics of WASHOKU (3) Cooking

## Cut, stew, grill, steam, boil, dress, deep-fry... Arrange the foodstuff this way and that to make it even tastier.

The base of a well-balanced menu of "one soup and three dishes" is cooked rice. Cooking methods of side dishes developed in order to eat cooked rice even more deliciously.



#### Deep-fried dish

(Tempura)

This is a method to deep-fry foods in heated oil. Oil is usually heated to 150-200 degrees.



#### Steamed dish

(Chawan-mushi)

This method adds heat to foodstuff by using the vapor of boiled water.



#### Pickled dish

(Cucumber and daikon pickled with rice bran and takuan pickles)

This is one of the methods to preserve perishable foods. In addition to the effect of salt, lactic acid fermentation is frequently used.



#### Soup

(Nameko mushroom miso soup)

This is a method mainly using *dashi* stock. Variations include clear soup, miso soup and thick soup.

### Various cooking methods to bring out the deliciousness of seasonal foodstuff

There are various cooking methods for side dishes for washoku, such as stewing, grilling, steaming, boiling, dressing and deep-frying. By combining these methods with seasonal foodstuff such as vegetables, edible wild plants, seafood and seaweed, a wide variety of side dishes are prepared for the table.

Among various cooking methods used in washoku, the most characteristic should be the "raw dish." The foodstuff is cut raw, placed on the plate and accompanied with seasoning and relishes. In most cases, sashimi refers to those using seafood, and the techniques such as cleaning, cutting and placing on the plate are currently winning attention from throughout the world. The method is completed with the combination of technology to keep ingredients

fresh and to place food beautifully on the plate. The combination of relish and seasoning is also closely considered, so that it goes perfectly with the fish. Relishes such as wasabi, ginger and mustard, the julienne daikon radish called "tsuma" or "ken," green *shiso* (Japanese basil) leaves, parsnip roots, smartweed buds and *shiso* flowers that have antibacterial effect are added so that the dish also looks beautiful on the table.

Soup is an indispensable factor on the table together with cooked rice. The base of the soup is the umami of *dashi* extracted from *katsuo* *bushi*, *kombu*, dried small fish or dried shiitake mushroom, and the umami of other ingredients included in the soup. Some chunky soups are eaten also as a side dish.

Boiling is the method that takes advantage of the abundant water resources.





**Dressed dish**  
(Vinegared cucumber and wakame)

This method dresses vegetables and seafood with sesame, *miso* or vinegar.



**Stewed dish**  
(Chikuzen-ni)

This is a method to season foodstuff in cooking liquid while adding heat.



**Grilled dish**  
(Salted and grilled saury)

Foodstuff are grilled by being placed relatively far from strong open fire. There also are methods to grill with indirect heat.



**Simmered dish**  
(Komatsuna ohitashi)

*Ohitashi* is seasoned by immersing into seasoned liquid.



**Raw dish**  
(Bonito sashimi)

Raw dishes include sashimi, *arai*, vinegared fish and pickled fish.



**Boiled dish**  
(Mori soba)

This is a method to boil noodles made of wheat and buckwheat.

A generous amount of water is boiled and foodstuff is dipped and heated. In cases like leafy vegetables or soba, the foodstuff is further rinsed with running water after being boiled in order to remove scum and improve texture. *Ohitashi* of spinach or Japanese mustard spinach we prepare and eat as ordinary foods are dishes established in Japan, blessed with abundant water resources, and is quite unique in the world.

Traditional grilled dishes like salted and grilled saury are prepared by sprinkling salt over foodstuff and grilling slowly over direct heat.

Stewing must be one of the most popular cooking methods throughout the world. In Japan, the original taste of ingredients is brought out while arranging the taste with fermented seasonings made of soy bean, such as soy sauce and *miso*.

Pan-frying with oil is rarely used for traditional washoku dishes, but it is very popular nowadays and is adding further variety to washoku.

The examples of cooking methods and dishes given here are mainly eaten with cooked rice. However, there are other main dishes using the flour of wheat, buckwheat and other grains. The representative example is noodles, such as *udon*, *soba* and *somen*. They are usually boiled, but are also stewed for dishes like *nikomi*.

Washoku is a combination of various types of dishes. If the taste of the ingredients and strong umami can be brought out, deliciousness can be felt with minimum seasonings. This concept allows us to enjoy various types of dishes.



## Characteristics of WASHOKU (4) Flavor

# Umami, the greatest wisdom discovered by Japanese to “eat deliciously”

The most important element for the taste of washoku is *dashi* stock. It is the base for miso soup and clear soup, and is the cornerstone of flavor that determines the taste of various dishes including stewed dishes and *ohitashi*.

**The fifth sense of taste, umami, is something Japan can be proud of to the world.**

What cannot be forgotten when explaining the flavor of washoku is the presence of *dashi* stock. It is used as a base for various dishes such as soup and stew.

Why are Japanese people so fond of *dashi*? The key to the answer to this

question is umami. In the book of cuisine written in the Edo period says that “*dashi* is precisely the foundation of cooking.”

In 1907, Dr. Kikunae Ikeda was the first in the world to discover that one of the umami contents is glutamic acid, a type of amino acid. Study was further carried out thereafter mainly among Japanese researchers, and umami is now widely known as the fifth sense of taste, in addition to sweetness, saltiness,

## About *dashi*



The general method to prepare *dashi* is to extract the umami components from seafood or vegetables into water or hot water. The most frequently used ingredients for *dashi* are *kombu* and *katsuobushi*. Others include *niboshi* (dried small fish), vegetables, dried shiitake mushroom, fish guts, heads and bones. There are other methods to utilize the umami of ingredients, such as *ushio-jiru*.

### *Niboshi*

*Niboshi*, made by drying boiled small fish, is often used for preparing soup. The most common ingredients of *niboshi* is Japanese anchovy. It is usually prepared with a relatively small fish like round herring, silver-striped round herring or flying fish.



### Dried shiitake mushroom

Shiitake mushrooms, containing abundant umami components, are also one of the foodstuffs used for *dashi*. For preparing *dashi*, dried shiitake mushrooms are used because the umami and fragrance components of shiitake mushrooms increase when dried.



sourness, bitterness. Today, seasonings that allow the use of an umami component easily are widely used such as umami seasonings and soy sauce seasoning with *dashi*. They are popular also abroad, and used daily in Japan.

Other than *dashi*, what essential for the taste of washoku is seasonings such as salt, sugar, miso, soy sauce, vinegar, sake, *mirin* (sweet rice wine) and fish sauce. Ingredients like wasabi, mustard, ginger, Japanese pepper, chili pepper and yuzu citrus are also used as relishes. With these relishes, the flavors of ingredients are brought out while allowing one to enjoy seasonal feelings at the same time, which is the wisdom of WASHOKU.

In Japan, where the climate is hot and humid in summer, fermented foods developed just like in other countries in Asia. Therefore, fermented seasonings, such as miso and soy sauce vinegar, are frequently used for washoku. Most of them are made by fermenting salted soy bean and grains. In the course of preparation, the protein contained in the ingredients is degraded into amino acid, and changes into seasonings containing abundant umami components.

## Fermented foods and seasonings

### Fermented foods



*Narezushi*, which is made by maturing salted fish and cooked rice for a few days to ferment with lactic acid, is wisdom to preserve fish. Those made with *funa* of Lake Biwa in Shiga Prefecture, with mackerel in Wakayama and Toyama Prefectures, and with *ayu* in Gifu Prefecture are well-known. The photo above shows the preparation of mackerel *narezushi* made for a festival at the beginning of the year in Kohoku Region, Shiga Prefecture.

#### Shiokara

*Shiokara* is made by salting fish meat and guts and fermenting. It is one of the traditional preserved foods in Japan. Ingredients vary by region, so there are various types of *shiokara* including squid, shrimp, *ami* (mysidacea) and octopus.

#### Natto

*Natto* is a fermented food developed in Japan. It is a food made by fermenting soy bean with hay bacillus, and is sometimes referred to as "*itohiki-natto* (stringy *natto*)" in order to distinguish it from *tera-natto* (below). It is not only eaten as-is, but also is used as ingredients for soup or dressing.

#### Tera-natto

This is a fermented food made by adding *koji* molds to boiled soy bean for fermentation and maturing while being dried. Unlike stringy *itohiki-natto*, *tera-natto* is dry and salty. It is said that the food arrived from the continent together with the propagation of the Zen school, and is called *tera* (temple)-*natto* because it was often made in temples.

#### Pickles

Pickles are made by pickling food materials in salt, vinegar, *sake* lees, soy sauce, etc. and maturing. It was invented as a way to preserve vegetables for a long time, such as *takuan* pickles (pickled daikon radish), pickled *ume* (Japanese plum) and *nozawana* (a leafy vegetable)-pickles. It is also characteristic that there is wide variety of original pickles in every region of Japan.



### Fermented seasoning

#### Miso

*Miso* is one of the representative seasonings of Japan, made by fermenting and maturing steamed or boiled soy bean by adding *koji* and salt. It is often used for miso soup and stewed dishes. It is also characteristic that the type of miso varies largely among regions.

#### Soy sauce

Soy sauce is made by fermenting, maturing and pressing "*moromi*," which is *koji* made with soy bean and wheat diluted with salt water. It is used for a wide variety of dishes including sashimi, grilled fish, stewed dishes and pan-fried dishes. Soy sauce is divided into five groups: *koikuchi* (dark), *usukuchi* (light), *tamari* (rich), *sai-shikomi* (twice-brewed) and *shiro* (white).

#### Vinegar

Vinegar is a seasoning to add sourness in washoku dishes like sushi and *namasu*. It is made by adding acetic acid bacteria to sake brewed from rice. The preserving property of food is improved by dipping into vinegar.

#### Sake

*Sake* is also one of the essential seasonings for washoku. The major effects of *sake* as seasonings include killing the smell of ingredients, bringing out the umami of foodstuff and improving the flavor, and adding sweetness.

#### Mirin (Sweet rice wine)

*Mirin* is a fermented seasoning made with steamed glutinous rice and rice malt, and by maturing for 40 to 60 days. Compared to sugar, its sweetness is softer, and it also has the effect of killing the smell of foodstuff. It is also used to make the surface of food glossy for dishes such as fish *teriyaki*.

#### Fish sauce

Fish sauce, having a unique odor and strong umami, is made by fermenting salted fish. *Shottsuru* of Akita, made with *Saifin* sandfish, and *ishiru* (or *ishiri*) of Noto Peninsula, made with squid and sardine, are well-known.



### Seasonings

#### Salt

Salt has been used widely as a seasoning from ancient times in Japan, which is surrounded by the sea. Not only for seasoning dishes like grilled dishes and sashimi, it is also utilized for preserving foods, such as pickles and dried fish.



#### Sugar

Sugar is one of the essential seasonings for modern washoku, which includes many dishes focusing on sweetness compared to the cuisines of other parts of the world. However, it is rarely used solely, but by combining with soy sauce, salt and miso in various dishes including stewed dish.





## Characteristics of WASHOKU (5) Nutrition

# WASHOKU is the ideal model of nutritional balance



Comprised of vegetables, fish, meat and rice, WASHOKU is also well-known for its excellent nutritional balance.

Recently, in some regions, school lunch is served with cooked rice menus for all five school days of the week instead of traditional post-war bread menus.

Let's find out the secret of the nutrition of washoku, one of its distinct characteristics.

## Examples of school lunch menus in Sanjo City, Niigata Prefecture

These are the examples of lunch menus served at elementary and junior high schools in Sanjo City. The Koshihikari breed grown within Sanjo City is used for cooked rice. Some people say that "because rice is digested slowly, children are satisfied even without much dessert." Chinese or Western style dishes are selected to go well with cooked rice. The menu always includes some kind of soup.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Cooked rice Seasoned and deep-fried squid (two pieces) Dish dressed with <i>natto</i> Mushroom soup Liquid yogurt (Elementary school: 619 kcal/ Junior high-school: 731 kcal)	Cooked rice with green soy bean ( <i>edamame</i> ) Cheese-fried salmon Pan-fried and seasoned <i>kuki-wakame</i> Egg soup Milk (Elementary school: 687 kcal/ Junior high-school: 823 kcal)	Cooked rice Spicy chicken Dressed squid and cucumber Ginger <i>miso</i> soup Milk (Elementary school: 639 kcal/ Junior high-school: 752 kcal)	Cooked rice Saury cooked with <i>ume</i> flavor Dish dressed with <i>takuan</i> pickles <i>Nikujaga</i> (Stewed potatoes and beef) Milk <i>Nashi</i> pear (Elementary school: 688 kcal/ Junior high-school: 814 kcal)	Cooked rice Curry-flavored seasoning for cooked rice Spinach omelet French-style salad Pumpkin soup Milk (Elementary school: 708 kcal/ Junior high-school: 833 kcal)

Washoku, combining the main dish of cooked rice (also including barley and other grains) with seafood, meat, vegetables, fermented seasoning and *dashi*, is a well-balanced meal also from a nutritional perspective.

From a historical point of view, it used to be a diet strongly balanced towards grain, with heavy consumption as the main dish in everyday meals.

However, there are many things we can learn from the traditional diet, such as efficiently taking amino acids in cooked rice by eating tofu, *natto* and miso soup together, or enjoy eating seafood on special occasions such as annual functions.

Especially, the basic structure of washoku that has been handed down for centuries is excellent.

Dishes including abundant protein such as fish, meat and tofu are served as the primary plate of side dishes. And then, other dishes including vegetables and potatoes are prepared. Soup is prepared so that it goes well with the primary plate. Grilled fish, stewed vegetable, leafy vegetable *ohitashi* and miso soup represents a favorable nutritional balance.

The basic style of washoku was preserved in each household until about the 1980s. The amount of main dish decreased slightly, and side dishes increased, particularly showing the growth of the ratio of milk and dairy foods and meat. The PFC balance, which is one of the indexes to measure nutritional balance, showed the ideal ratio around that time (refer to the next page).

However, thereafter, occasions for eating out increased and the Westernization of home cooking progressed, and rice consumption decreased sharply and the problem of lifestyle-related diseases due to excessive fat intake arouse. In such context, movement to review people's dietary habit

started in various regions in Japan. One example is the effort made with school lunch.

The fully-supplied school lunch with the style of bread, milk and side dishes started in 1950, in the midst of post-war food shortages. School lunch with bread that continued until 1976, when rice was introduced into school lunch, also had an impact on the basic style of washoku.

The ratio of school lunch with cooked rice gradually increased, and in 2010, more than 90% of elementary and junior high schools serve school lunch with cooked rice more than three times a week. However, the ratio of schools serving rice all five days of the week is still low at around 7%.

Let us take a look at the case example of Sanjo City, Niigata Prefecture, which switched to serving rice school lunch all five days of the week in 2008.

The city decided to introduce school lunch serving rice all five days of the week with an aim to build healthy bodies, and to acquire ideal dietary habits and live healthy for a lifetime by having a balanced diet while growing up.

For the main dish, the *Koshihikari* breed rice grown within the City by reducing the amount of pesticides used, and polished with rice bran slightly remaining. The menu is based on this main dish and side dishes include a primary plate and other side dishes, and soup. The primary plate is not limited to traditional washoku dishes, such as fried salmon, spicy chicken and saury cooked with *ume* (Japanese plum) flavor, but is considered to be naturally incorporated within the basic style of washoku.

Although bread goes well with fat and sugar and can easily lead to obesity, rice with bran remaining is digested slowly, which not only resulted in a decrease in the number of children who eat snacks, but also resulted in a



Some people point out that food preferences among children changed after switching to rice menus. When children are asked their favorite side dishes, they raise washoku dishes such as "grilled fish" and "natto" other than standard dishes such as "Hamburg steak" and "curry and rice."



"Itadaki-masu" and "Gochisou-sama" are said out loud by all students at lunchtime to show their appreciation. Dietary education is also prioritized, and the connotation of these phrases is taught at school.

decreasing trend in the number of children with obesity. It is considered that the rhythm of their dietary life improved.

Side dishes that go well with cooked rice can use locally-grown vegetables easily. Therefore, menus with a wide variety can be prepared for each season. As a result of the education on the concept of "one soup and three dishes," the number of children who leave foods uneaten decreased.

By adding new ideas to side dishes within the basic eating pattern, it is possible to enjoy a wide variety of meals. It also allows for learning about seasonal foodstuff, and to acquire knowledge on annual functions.

It is also crucially important that children experience the basic style of washoku through school lunch every day. The habit may not be acquired just by experiencing it occasionally, but may become a standard and take root by repeating it every day. It is expected that children will gradually think about the combination on their own. It is considered that school lunch should play an important role in the future.

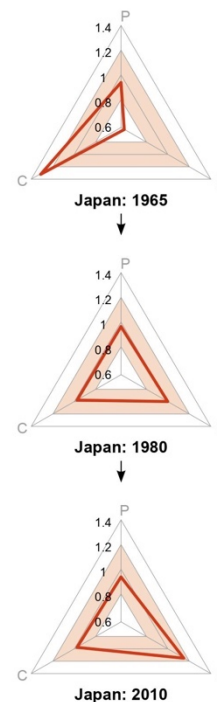


Children who finished the first served lunch rushed and made a queue to have another serving of cooked rice. There were no leftovers this day.

## What is PFC balance

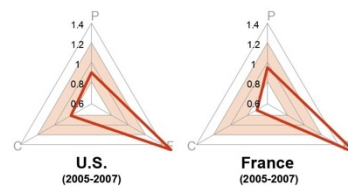
PFC stands for **protein, fat and carbohydrates**, which are the three major nutrients especially essential for humans. PFC balance is the calorific ratio of protein, fat and carbohydrates of every meal. The ideal PFC balance for healthy life is protein: 15%, fat: 25%, and carbohydrates: 60%.

## Changes of PFC balance in Japan



The PFC balance of Japanese people was weighted toward carbohydrates in 1965, but was excellently balanced in 1980. However, the dietary life of Japanese people thereafter tended to have too much meat and fat, with a decreased amount of rice, and it has been coming closer to a Western type of diet in 2010.

## PFC balance in the U.S. and France



Source: FAO Statistics Yearbook (Food Balance Sheet for the data of Japan). The ideal balance of protein: 10-20%, fat: 20-30% and carbohydrates: 50-70% has been made into an index with a range of 0.8 to 1.2.





Before welcoming guests, water is sprinkled at the front of the restaurant. It shows that the place is purified with water and is well prepared. Selecting hanging scrolls for the alcove to match the entire concept is also one of the basics of hospitality. Flowers decorated are hand-grown and arranged in the vase of the alcove by the host. About 150 varieties of plants & flowers are grown in the garden in preparation for the arrangement. The guests are welcomed by the warm hospitality of the madam or the hostess.

## Characteristics of WASHOKU (6) Arrangement

# Mindset and formality of welcoming people

Hospitality is not a unilateral style offered to a guest. It is a comfort generated from the mind of caring for one another.

The well-groomed garden is swept over and sprinkled with water. The alcove is decorated with hanging scrolls and arrangements of seasonal flowers. The *fusuma* panel of the room is replaced with a screen window in summertime to make the space feel cooler, while keeping warm in winter. These are all preparations for welcoming guests. That is what we call *shitsurai*, the arrangement of the space. For washoku, and especially for *kaiseki* for tea ceremony, *shitsurai* is a critical element together with foodstuff and types of dishes.

Even in households, those who prepare meals imagine the faces of those who eat them. Those who eat imagine the feeling of those who prepared the meal for them. The joy of hospitality arises from this exchange of imagination.

Hospitality in *ryotei* restaurants is the ultimately-sophisticated form of such culture of hospitality. Let us hear from Mr. Eiichi Takahashi, who is the 14th manager of the long-established *ryotei* restaurant in Kyoto, "Hyoutei," and was designated Holder of Intangible Cultural Techniques of Kyoto Prefecture as the first chef, about the spirit of such hospitality.

"It can be said that *ryotei* is where Japanese culture is concentrated. Even the pathway leading from the entrance to the room gives the atmosphere of the season. A scroll of the season or the event is hung in the room, and the room is decorated with flowers especially selected for it. We prepare the room so that the atmosphere is naturally accepted by the seasonal sense that Japanese people have naturally acquired, and welcome the guests. Although *ryotei* is a special place that is different from people's daily life, we try to offer natural *shitsurai* and hospitality that are not excessive but lack nothing."

Flowers decorated in the rooms of "Hyoutei" are hand-grown by the manager in the garden, and are also arranged by the manager himself. "I am always reminded of Sen no Rikyu's words, 'flowers should be as growing wild in the field,' at the root of hospitality. That may sound easy but is very difficult." Even at the well-established restaurant, the host devotes himself every day to improving the decoration to welcome guests in a natural style.

## Expressing the four seasons

In "Hyoutei," a *mukozuke* dish of sea bream from the particular region is served throughout the year. However, the four seasons are expressed by changing the plates and decorations.

### Spring

The plate with a cherry blossom pattern adds floridness as if a flower bloomed on the table. Sashimi is garnished with vinegared parsnip root and wild-grown *nori* seaweed.



### Summer

Ice is filled inside a slightly deep glass bowl. You can feel the coolness both with eyes and tongue. Sashimi is garnished with *shiso* (Japanese basil) buds and Malva nut.



### Autumn

The plate is the shape of a chrysanthemum, the flower of autumn, and combined with the deep color, provides an atmosphere that goes well with autumn. Sashimi is garnished with *iwatake* mushroom and chrysanthemum petals.



### Winter

The crane is a lucky charm and motif that is also used for the New Year table. Sashimi is garnished with *Suizenji nori* and purple *shiso* shoot.



## Characteristics of WASHOKU (7) Chopsticks and bowls

## Chopsticks and bowls that support WASHOKU

Japan is the only country where only chopsticks are used for meals.

WASHOKU takes pride also in a unique culture of utensils, together with plates and bowls that give seasonal feelings.

Japanese people use plates and bowls in everyday meals casually, by putting cooked rice in a rice bowl, miso soup in a wooden bowl, and grilled fish on a flat plate. The types, shapes and materials used for these plates and bowls vary widely. There is no country, either among nearby countries or in the West, where such a wide variety of plates and bowls are used. That is not irrelevant to the fact that the country has distinct seasons.

"Just using different plates for the season changes the mood even at home," says Mr. Takahashi of "Hyoutei."

For example, try using something with florid colors and shapes for spring, materials like glass and celadon that give a cool feeling for summer, something with harvesting colors for autumn, and thick earthenware or wooden plates and bowls that give a feeling of warmth for winter. It is possible to express the season just by changing colors, materials and shapes. This is the enjoyment that is available only with WASHOKU.

Japanese use chopsticks at every meal without giving it much thought, and they are the representative utensils of food culture in Japan. The tradition of using spoons disappeared since the Nara period, and people started to use only chopsticks, which established the style of holding a bowl in one's hand and sipping the hot soup inside directly from the bowl. At the same time, it became standard that there are exclusive bowls and chopsticks owned by each person. This is different from the food culture in other Southeast Asian countries, where spoons are used and particular bowls and chopsticks are not assigned to an individual. Japan is the only country where people eat only with chopsticks among the cultural zone of chopsticks. In addition, there is also wide variation in chopsticks according to their use, such as for eating, serving or cooking. Even among *shoku-bashi* used for eating, there is a lineup of different shapes, materials, finishing process and length.

## How chopsticks work

Chopsticks for Japanese people are an important utensil covering the whole process of cooking, serving and eating. Because *shoku-bashi* for eating are basically owned by individuals, it is characteristic that people can select a pair suitable for them.

## Types

There are chopsticks used for eating and chopsticks used for cooking. *Sai-bashi* for cooking, are about 30-50 cm long to protect the hands from heat, and some pairs are tied with a string so that one does not go missing. *Tori-bashi* for serving is also a type of *sai-bashi*. Because *shoku-bashi* are basically owned by individuals, you can select a pair with a suitable length for you. Many of them are decorated with lacquer or *raden* (mother-of-pearl work) decoration.

## Shape

Shapes of chopsticks used in households include square type, square type with rounded corners, five-sided, six-sided, seven-sided, eight-sided and carved. You can select the one that fits in your hands. There are also types that are specially processed at the tips. As for individual chopsticks for guests and disposable chopsticks, there are types such as *genroku-bashi*, with an oblong cut surface and slit and chase for splitting, and *rikyu-bashi*, which is wide at the center and narrow at both ends.

## Materials

Not only the shape, but also the materials vary. Hard wood like ebony and ironwood are frequently used in recent years. Among trees in Japan, Japanese cedar has a unique fragrance and has been used for chopsticks in *kaiseki* for tea ceremony and disposable chopsticks. *Hinoki* is resistant to water and humidity, has a strong preservative quality, and is light and easy to hold. Bamboo is strong, bows adequately and easy to pick up small objects.



## Learn the manners of using chopsticks

## [Bad-mannered use of chopsticks]

The basic pattern of *washoku* is to eat cooked rice in between side dishes and soup, i.e., to eat a bite of cooked rice and then have a bite of a side dish, or eat a bite of cooked rice and then have a sip of soup. Please remember that the following uses of chopsticks are regarded as poor manners.



## Utsuri-bashi (skipping)

First placing the chopsticks on a dish and then moving to a different dish without picking any food up



## Mayoi-bashi (waving)

Moving chopsticks over dishes as if hovering to choose what to pick up



## Sashi-bashi (pointing)

Pointing to people or things with chopsticks while eating



## Watashi-bashi (bridging)

Placing the chopsticks over a plate or a bowl before finishing the meal



## Yose-bashi (pulling)

Pulling plates or bowls to oneself with chopsticks

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## Characteristics of WASHOKU (8) Sake

# Japanese sake that accentuates the appeal of WASHOKU and relaxes your mind

Rice is the staple food for Japanese people, and is also a spiritual cornerstone of the culture. Japanese sake, brewed from rice, is an indispensable element for WASHOKU. It is also the "national liquor" of Japan.

Japanese sake is made mainly with rice, rice malt and water and by fermenting the ingredients. As for ingredients, rice especially bred to have properties favorable for *sake*-brewing is used, which is different from ordinary rice for cooking. Water, which comprises 80% of the components of Japanese *sake*, is also an important element that determines the quality. Good-quality water that does not perish the flavor of *sake* is essential.

The *sake*-brewing process incorporates a wide variety of techniques. For example, there is a technique to polish the rice grain to adjust the taste and fragrance of the finished product. The purpose is to remove protein and fat from the outer side of the grain that may cause bad taste, but in the case of exquisite *daiginjo*, *sake* is made by rice milled to less than half of the original grain size.

Another example is the technique to ferment rice. In the case of *sake* brewing, fermentation means the process of yeast eating sugar and generating alcohol. However, rice does not include sugar, so starch in rice must be first transformed into sugar with the enzyme of *koji* molds, and then fermented by adding yeast. Such a complex process (duplex fermentation) is necessary for brewing *sake*. *Koji* used for this process is also a unique type used in Japan

called *bara-koji*. It is unique in that it has a strong glycation effect (transforming into sugar), and has a large impact on the fragrance and taste of Japanese *sake*.

In Japan, where culture has developed mainly around rice cultivation, much importance is placed on rice, *mochi* and *sake* made of rice, regardless of region. It was believed that every grain of rice holds a deity in it, and that *sake* can be brewed because of the blessing of the deity. Similarly to foods, *sake* was used as a tool to come closer to deities from ancient days.

At the same time, *sake* also has an important role to connect ties among families, relatives and regions. For example, *omiki* is *sake* for deities. At festivals, people drink the *omiki* offered to deities after the rite. The region and the community enhance their unity by drinking the same *sake* with the deities and by sharing it among others.

*Shochu*, using rice, barley or sweet potatoes as ingredients, is also the national liquor together with Japanese *sake*. Japanese liquor has important roles of relaxing people's minds, enhancing relationships and accentuating the taste of dishes and warming up the table.



There are nearly 1,600 sake brewers throughout Japan. Although the number is decreasing every year, a "Japanese sake boom" occurs once every few years.



*Omiki*, an altarage and tribute to deities, holds a very important position so that it is placed at the center of the top tier of the altar.

## Characteristics of WASHOKU (9) Japanese sweets and Japanese tea

## Wagashi (Japanese sweets) and tea that are close to people's lives

*Wagashi* expresses appreciation for the blessings of nature and the delicate changes of season.

Japanese tea is not only for quenching thirst, but also for fulfilling your mind and elevating your feelings.

### Wagashi made with a wish on special occasions



January

#### Hanabira-mochi

Sweetened burdock and sweet white miso paste are wrapped inside red or white *mochi* or *gyuhi*. The origin is "hagatame (firm teeth)" *mochi* for wishing for longevity in one of the New Year events back in the Heian period (8th-12th century). Due to the combination of *mochi* and miso, it is also referred to as "tsutsumi (wrapped) zohni."



May

#### Kashiwamochi

Round and flat shaped *mochi* made of rice flour is folded in half, holding adzuki bean or miso paste inside, and is wrapped with Kashiwa oak leaf. Because the leaves of the Kashiwa oak tree do not fall off until new buds sprout out, they are used with a wish for one's descendants to prosper. It is used as a tribute for the *sekku* of tango on May 5th in the old calendar.



June

#### Minazuki

Adzuki *tsubuan* (sweet red-bean paste) is spread on the surface of white *uio* (sticky steamed cake). It is eaten in early summer, reminding one of "Nagoshi no Harai," held on *misoka* (30th) of June in the lunar calendar in Kyoto. The adzuki bean has the meaning of expelling evil spirits, and the triangle shape represents ice.



October

#### Inoko-mochi

October in the lunar calendar is referred to as "I no Tsuki (the wild boar month in the Oriental Zodiac)" and this sweet used to be eaten in an annual event on the "I no Hi (the wild boar day in the Oriental Zodiac)" of I no Tsuki. In the old calendar, October is the beginning of winter. On such timing, this sweet was eaten with a wish for one's descendants to prosper, with the healthy and prolific boar (the symbol of I) in mind.

This list is a rough classification of *wagashi* according to its process of manufacturing. There are other ways of classification, such as *namagashi*, *han-namagashi* and *higashi* according to moisture content, or *jo-namagashi*, *namigashi* and *dagashi* according to the class.

\*Oka-mono means the combination of already-finished products (example: *kinton* = *ame-dama* + *soboro-an*)

Source: "Exhibition on the History of Wagashi" from the 50th Toraya Archives Exhibition

### Classification of wagashi

- *Mochi-mono*: *mochi*, *dango*, *daifuku*, etc.
- *Mushi-mono*: *manju*, *imo-youkan*, *uirou*, *murasame*, etc.
- *Neri-mono*: *nerikiri*, *konashi*, *gyuhi*, *an*, *kuzu-gashi*, etc.
- *Yaki-mono*: *miso-matsukaze*, *senbei*, *momoyama*, *castella*, *dorayaki*, etc.
- *Nagashi-mono*: *nishiki-dama*, *neri-youkan*, *mizu-youkan*, etc.
- *Age-mono*: *age-senbei*, *karinto*, etc.
- *Uchi-mono* (*oshi-mono*): *rakugan*, etc.
- *Oka-mono*: *monaka*, *kinton*, *kanoko*, *suhamu*, etc.
- *Kake-mono*: *kompeito*, *gosikimake*, *ishi-goromo*, etc.

Sweets are also a critical part of WASHOKU. They can be divided into *jo-namagashi* for guests, and *manju* and *mochi-gashi* that are eaten daily. There are also various other types of *wagashi*, including *higashi* and *dagashi*. In addition, there is also classification according to the process of manufacturing, such as *mochi-mono* including *dango* and *daifuku*, *neri-mono* including *gyuhi* and *an*, or *nagashi-mono* including *nishiki-dama* and *mizu-youkan*. A wide variety of sweets have been created with ingredients such as rice, barley, adzuki and other beans, sugar and *mizuumame* (thick sugar liquid).

There are also sweets for tea ceremony, enjoyed with *matcha* (green powdered tea). Ingredients, colors and design are determined according to the season, to be enjoyed not only with the tongue but also with the eyes.

There are also sweets connected to annual functions. For example, March 3rd in the lunar calendar is "Hina-Matsuri (girl's festival)," and people eat *kusamochi*, made of *mochi* seasoned with *yomogi* (*mugwort*), which is a symbol of strong vitality and is believed to have the effect of expelling evil spirits.

Japanese tea is appropriate to enjoy with *wagashi*. Green tea arrived in Japan from China in the 12th century. However, the manufacturing process of green tea has been established as an original style in Japan of steaming raw tea leaves and then kneading before drying. Caffeine included in green tea has an alerting influence, while catechin has an antioxidant effect. It also contains abundant vitamin C and is good for health. The fragrance and umami peculiar to Japanese tea is the essence of Japanese culture.



Hand-kneading, which is the unique process of manufacturing Japanese tea, is done to bring out the umami while squashing the fibers of tea leaves. Hand-kneading avoids the tea leaves being cut into pieces, which preserves the sweetness of tea.



## Necessity of dietary education

# WASHOKU is now endangered. How can we hand it down to future generations?

Experiencing major transformations in the past 150 years, washoku is now starting to decay. Where is the cause?

The culture of WASHOKU in Japan has been changing constantly not only due to the natural environment but also from influence from abroad.

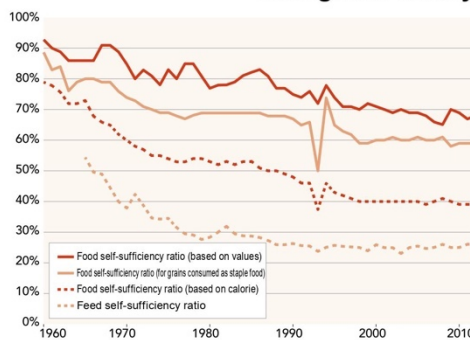
After modernization, new dishes were invented, such as meals combining Western-style dishes with the basic style of washoku (for example, *korokke* and *tonkatsu*), or stewed dishes and dressed dishes containing meat and vegetables. Many of them are inherited while maintaining the element of

WASHOKU, such as the basic style of washoku, use of seasonings such as soy sauce and miso, or dishes that can be eaten with chopsticks.

However, when Japan entered the high-growth period after World War II, people's dietary habits started to change rapidly.

The first fast food and casual dining restaurants opened in the 1970s. Convenience store franchises also developed.

## Changes in dietary habit

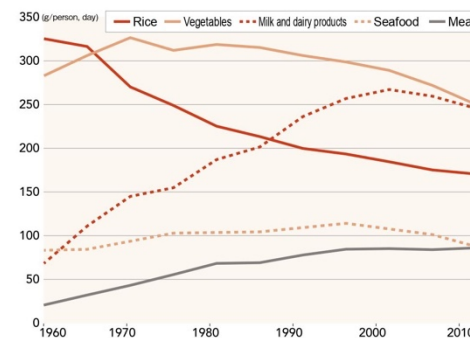


### What will become of WASHOKU with less consumption of Japanese products?

The food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan is constantly declining. While it was 73% in 1965 (based on calories), it was 39% in 2012. The major reason for this is a decline in the consumption amount of rice, fish and vegetables that can be provided within Japan, and an increase in the consumption of livestock products grown with grain feeds that are difficult to produce in Japan, frozen/processed foods and wheat that tend to rely on imported ingredients. Is there a future for healthy WASHOKU, which allows for well-balanced intake of carbohydrates, protein and fat?

#### Changes in the food self-sufficiency ratio of Japan

Prepared from the Food Balance Sheet by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries

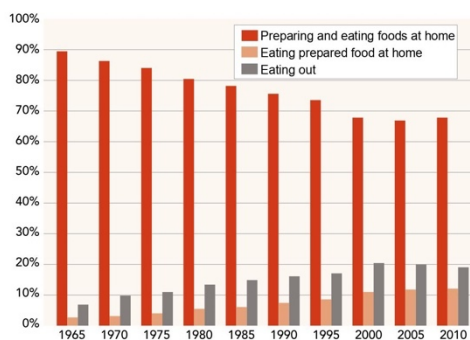


### Rice consumption amount halved in 50 years!? What increased instead are meat and dairy products.

What can be found when looking at the food consumption amount per capita by items? It shows that the amount of rice consumed by Japanese people is showing a striking decline. While the consumption of rice per day per person was about 315g in 1960, it almost halved to about 163g in 2010. What increased instead are milk and dairy products (from about 60g to about 240g) and meat (from about 14g to about 80g). It shows changes in the style of WASHOKU, eating cooked rice with side dishes mainly containing vegetables and fish.

#### Net food supply per capita per day

Prepared from the Food Balance Sheet by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries



### Even eating at home, occasions for cooking at home are decreasing!?

In contrast to "eating out," home-made meals are prepared and eaten at home. However, there is another pattern, purchasing ready-to-eat dishes such as bento and prepared foods and eat at home. In fact, this pattern of eating prepared food at home is increasing. While the ratio of eating out is generally unchanged since 2000, the ratio of eating prepared food at home is constantly increasing, while that of preparing and eating foods at home is decreasing. If the number of households where families eat at home but do not prepare meals at home is increasing, wouldn't that mean that occasions to convey the important elements of WASHOKU to children are decreasing?

#### Ratio of those who wouldn't be able to stand not eating cooked rice at least once every day

Prepared from "Fixed-Point of Living 2012" by the Hakuhodo Institute of Life and Living

Although the balance of a main dish and side dishes struck an ideal balance by around the 1980s (p.26), the consumption of rice declined further thereafter, while the consumption of bread increased. Consumption of meat, fat, milk and dairy products also increased, and the food self-sufficiency ratio declined. Eating out with family became an everyday affair, and meals at home are also Westernized.

With the diffusion of microwave ovens and frozen and instant foods, preparation of meals became highly convenient. On the other hand, this means the occasions for cooking at home decreased.

In such context, how can we convey the advantages of WASHOKU to future generations? In addition to handing down the tradition of meals at home from parents to children, it should be necessary to transmit the message to children and also to their parents through school education. It is also required to learn specifically about WASHOKU from elderly people.

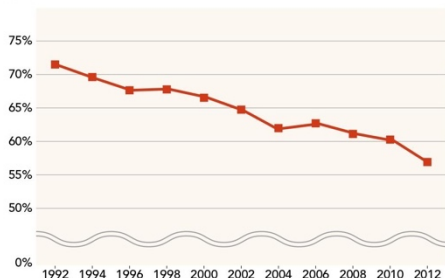
Selection of foods from the weaning period and enriching the eating experiences during infancy are especially important. Dietary habits developed during childhood continue to have a strong influence thereafter.

The concept of WASHOKU can be conveyed through buildup of activities such as experiencing the deliciousness of *dashi* every day or tasting fish and learning how to remove bones with chopsticks in an enjoyable atmosphere.

When people encounter a taste they have never experienced before, they recognize it as a foreign culture. Any cooking method can be difficult for a person who has no experience with it, even if the steps are actually simple. Building up experiences such as observing the process of preparing meals every day, enjoying helping, using beautiful plates and bowls with great care, sharing the same foods with family and friends and eating together at festivals and flower-viewing parties, should not only result in the conveyance of WASHOKU as a culture, but also lead to developing people's power to live.

### "I'm okay without rice." Such people are increasing!?

There are data showing that the ratio of those who wouldn't be able to stand not eating cooked rice at least once every day has been decreasing in the recent 20 years. The ratio was 71.4% in 1992, but it decreased to 56.4% in 2012.

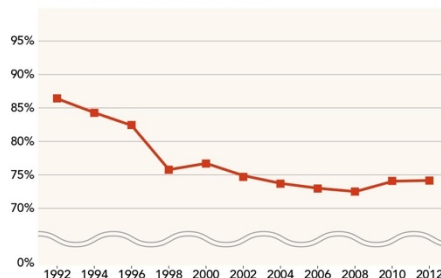


Ratio of those who wouldn't be able to stand not eating cooked rice at least once every day

Prepared from "Fixed-Point of Living 2012" by the Hakuho Institute of Life and Living

### The ratio of those who eat *osechi-ryori* is gradually decreasing every year.

During New Year, families and relatives gather and celebrate being able to start the new year in peace while sharing *osechi-ryori* together. However, the ratio of those who eat *osechi-ryori* is also decreasing every year. While it was 86.6% in 1992, it declined to 74.8% in 2012.



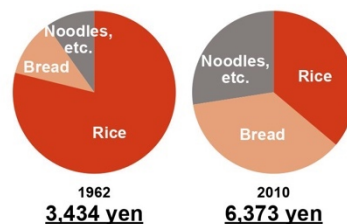
The ratio of those who ate *osechi-ryori* for New Year.

Prepared from "Fixed-Point of Living 2012" by the Hakuho Institute of Life and Living



Many modern kitchens face the living room instead of a wall. In this household, with the husband and wife both having jobs, the husband also cooks in the kitchen frequently. The important elements of WASHOKU can be handed down to the next generation by preparing meals together with children like above.

### Prefer bread and noodles over rice; is the tendency accelerating?



1962

3,434 yen

2010

6,373 yen

Breakdown of household expenditure on grains per month

Prepared from the Annual Report on the Survey of Household Economy by the Statistics Bureau, Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communication

Expenditure on rice, which took up more than 80% in 1962, is largely replaced by bread in 2010. Although the consumption volume of rice is larger than bread, expenditure for eating ready-to-eat breads and noodles at home is increasing compared to that for rice, which must be cooked before eating. This may also indicate that occasions for cooking at home are decreasing.

***"Gochisou-sama."***

***"Itadaki-masu."***





## The future of WASHOKU

After entering the 21st century, washoku is becoming a boom in the world. The taste and healthiness is attracting people's attention, and many Japanese food stores and restaurants can be found in every part of the world.

Even though WASHOKU is becoming a focus of attention in the world, its future is at risk in Japan, its place of origin.

As we have seen so far, the history of WASHOKU had been taking in something new quite flexibly. From time immemorial, Japanese people had been incorporating the food culture brought from foreign countries into their own dietary habits, and succeeded in developing the unique food culture of Japan. They have been creating dishes perfectly fit for the environment of each region. Dishes eaten and how to eat them have also been changing in each period and region.

However, there are things that are kept unchanged: improving the cooking method so as to bring out the deliciousness of foodstuff obtained from rich nature and to taste it; decorating the table with the atmosphere of the season and holding eating occasions where the feeling of hospitality can be shared; regarding the combination of "one soup and three dishes" as the basic style of meals and living a healthy dietary life; and eating *osechi-ryori* in New Year and *sekihan* on celebration day together with the members of the family. In other words, meals work as ties bonding the family.

Just like the rich nature, isn't WASHOKU, which allowed Japanese people to live healthy and strengthened ties among them, also an important Japanese culture that we must preserve?

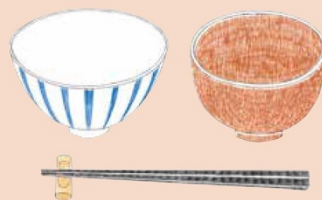
Let's say "*itadaki-masu*" and "*gochisou-sama*" properly. Only this may bring our feelings closer to WASHOKU. It can unite people with warm ties.

All in all, Japanese people favor eating cooked rice. Soup with rich *dashi* flavor will fulfill their minds as well as their stomachs. No one would feel that WASHOKU, a wonderful asset Japanese people have been developing over a long history, should be left to go extinct. It would be a real pleasure if this booklet serves as a starting point for people to feel proud of WASHOKU, being praised as a good food culture in the world, as a Japanese asset, and cherish it and to hand it down to next generations.



# WASHOKU

和 食



／“Gochisou-sama”／

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE WASHOKU MENU



Source: Kobayashi Foods, *Ichiju Sansai no Kondate Rei*, 一汁三菜の献立例 [One soup and three (side) dishes menu sample.]

Main staple: Mixed grain rice

Soup: Miso soup with tofu and *daikon* (Japanese white radish)

Main dish: Salmon broiled with salt

Side dish 1: *Kinpira gobo* (burdock root braised in sugar and soy sauce)

Side dish 2: Spinach *ohitashi* (spinach soaked in dashi)

Pickles: Japanese-style pickled cucumber

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