

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

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THE JAPANESE TABLE

Japanese Fusion Cuisine: One-Plate Rice Dishes

by Yo Maenobo

Our current Feature series examines the fusion of Japanese and Western cuisines—referred to in Japan's food culture as wayo setchu. In this second installment, we look at a distinctive type of fusion fare: dishes served together with rice on a single plate, with a focus on ever-popular curry rice and hayashi raisu.



Japanese Fusion Cuisine: One-Plate Rice Dishes

First Tastes from the West

For a little over two centuries, from 1639 to 1854, Japan isolated itself from the rest of the world, only keeping open a window in Nagasaki for commercial relations with the Netherlands and China. While there were Japanese who had the opportunity to sample the exotic tastes of Western cuisine there at that time, they were probably very few.

It is reasonable to assume that Western-style cuisine was truly introduced much later in Japan, when restaurants opened in treaty ports such as Hakodate, Nagasaki and Yokohama during the 1860s. The first Western-style restaurant in Edo (present-day Tokyo) was established just before the Meiji Restoration of 1868.

The customers of those early establishments soon found that the volume of food served was excessive for the Japanese appetite. Japanese at that time thought that things should be done properly, as in the West, and thus menus offered only full-course meals—considered the “authentic” style of Western dining. Most of these menus featured just three choices: low-, mid- and high-priced set meals. One rare exception was a famous sweets shop in Tokyo’s Ginza district, which earned a reputation for serving à la carte Western-style dishes in their restaurant, under the term *sho-shoku* (small-quantity dishes).

Cookbook Recipes in Demand

Compared to these authentic-style restaurants, cookbooks were a more practical means of making Western food easily accessible to the general public. After the emperor himself took the lead in eating beef, the trend of the times followed suit, which led to the publishing of Western-style cookbooks in Japan.

Among the earliest of these was *Seiyo Ryoritsu* (“Connoisseur of Western-style cooking”), compiled by Kanagaki Robun in 1872, the author of the literary work *Agura-nabe* (“Cross-legged at the beef pot”), mentioned in the first article in this series. During the following forty years, Western cookbooks were among the more than 100 cookbooks published in Japan—a clear indication of how the consumption of meat and other Western dishes was welcomed in the country.

Early Western-style restaurants may have limited diners to the menu of the day, but by referring to cookbooks, those interested in Western foods could find a wider, more practical selection of dishes, and could follow their own tastes. Most cookbooks of this era were based on English-style recipes such as those found in *Beeton’s Book of Household Management* (1861) by Isabella Mary Beeton, and in American cookbooks such as *The Boston Cooking-School Cook Book*. There was very little influence of French and German cooking.

Rice and Meat

At that time, most Western cookbooks invariably included a recipe for “curry and rice”—and it is this dish that has become a classic example of Japanese and Western fusion cuisine. Despite its Indian origins, curry and rice was introduced via England, where it had entered the diet from the British colonies; it was often made with white meat, such as chicken or rabbit. In Japan, its roots in India were not known, and curry rice here was served just as described in Mrs. Beeton’s recipe, with curried beef



Early 19th-century scroll depicting a banquet, with views of the Dutch Factory and Chinese Quarter in Nagasaki. *Torankan-emaki, rankan-zu emaki-zu* by Kawahara Keiga. Courtesy Nagasaki Museum of History and Culture



Curry sauce may be served separately in a gravy boat (left), or poured partially over rice, as shown at right



Illustration of curry with rice from *Beeton's Book of Household Management*.

surrounded by a border of cooked rice.

This style of serving curry and rice did not become the norm, however.

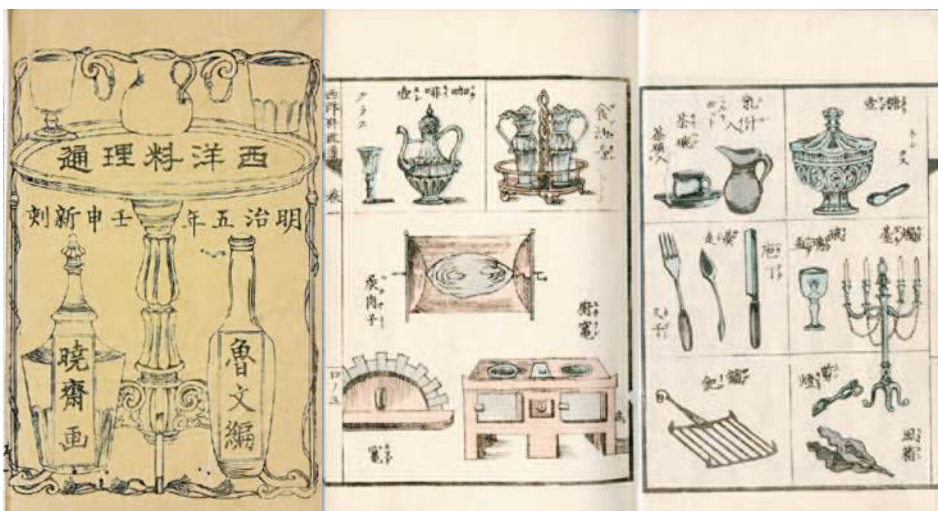
Two methods became more common in Japan: either serving the curry sauce partially or completely poured over the

rice, or separately in a gravy boat, which was considered more refined. Both styles, however, were invariably eaten with a spoon in Japan, perceived at that time in England as a utensil intended for children.

Similar to curry and rice, another favorite fusion dish emerged: *hayashi raisu*. The name was probably derived from “hashed-meat rice,” owing to the similarity in sound. In England, it was common to consume leftover meat as “hashed meat”—meat that was diced and sautéed with onions and flour, combined with stock, then seasoned with salt and pepper. This was served on a plate together with boiled potatoes or

slices of toast. In Japan, this concoction was intended, like curry, to be eaten with rice using a spoon.

Hayashi raisu made with beef and onions well sautéed in butter became extremely popular among Japanese at this time, and was referred to as *irini*—meaning a dish sautéed in oil and then simmered. In cookbooks published in Japan around 1910, beef, veal, lamb and chicken were all called for in *hayashi raisu*. In the 1920s, a pre-prepared roux for *hayashi raisu* was advertised for preparing six different types of *yoshoku* (Japanese-style Western dishes) most of which called for beef, which suggests that the evolution of “hashed-meat with rice” to “hashed-beef with rice” occurred around this time. ●



Inside front cover of *Seiyo Ryori-tsu* and pages featuring Western dining utensils, compiled by Kanagaki Robun. Courtesy Kikkoman Institute for International Food Culture

cover

Woodblock print of *Seiyoken*, a Western-style restaurant in Tokyo's Ueno Park. *Tokyo meisho no uchi Ueno koenchi Shinobazunoike miharashizu* by Utagawa Hiroshige III (1876). Courtesy Waseda University Library

Author's profile

Yo Maenobo was born in 1943. He is a specialist in Japanese Intellectual History and the author of many publications and academic papers such as *Meiji Seiyō Ryōri Kigen* (The origin of Western-style dishes in the Meiji era), and *Kindai Nihon Kenkyū*, vols. 24 & 25 (Bulletin of modern Japanese studies), *Fukuo giden, moshikuwa engisuru kosei (ken, kon)* (Falsehood : a chronological biography of Fukuzawa Yukichi). His most recent publication is *Mogi-to-Shinsei* (Acculturation in Meiji era Japan).



Washoku Nominated to UNESCO Heritage List



Washoku comprises a wide range of foods, including vegetables and fish.

Washoku is based on
a spirit of respect
for nature

This March, the Japanese government filed formally to register “*Washoku: Traditional Dietary Cultures of the Japanese*” as an intangible cultural heritage, as stipulated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage.

The category of intangible cultural heritage focuses on such aspects of culture as social customs, festivals, rituals and traditional craft techniques. Currently, 20 Japanese cultural traditions are on the UNESCO intangible heritage list, including the performing arts of Noh and Kabuki, the traditional Japanese music *Gagaku*, and Kyoto’s Gion Festival. Registered in the area of dietary culture are French gastronomy, the traditional diets of Mexico and the Mediterranean, and the ceremonial *Keşkek* tradition of Turkey.

Washoku is translated literally as “Japanese cuisine.” It is based on a spirit of respect for nature, and embodies the social custom of strengthening bonds among family and community by having a meal together in a setting where appreciation for nature is expressed.

Thanks to Japan’s four distinct seasons and diverse geography, *washoku* comprises a variety of fresh seasonal ingredients. *Washoku* dishes are made with very little animal fat, and include a wide range of foods that often revolve around fish, vegetables and herbs, served

together with steamed rice, miso soup and pickled vegetables. Nutritionally well-balanced and healthy, *washoku* not only curbs obesity, it contributes to the longevity of the Japanese people.

Washoku is also recognized for its lovely presentation, which uses seasonal leaves, flowers, bamboo and other natural materials. Food is served on pottery, lacquer and other ware that not only complement the food, but which reflect the season.

Though there are many excellent aspects to *washoku*, in recent years Japan has seen irregular dietary habits and a loss of traditional food culture among its people, owing in part to globalization and socioeconomic changes. The government therefore enacted its Basic Act on Food Education in 2005, in order to pass down traditions of food culture in Japan. Since that time, elementary and junior high schools have received food education, and traditional local dishes have been served for school lunches. Regional communities are also making efforts to pass down their own regional dishes to future generations, such as foods served at festivals and ceremonies.

UNESCO will determine as early as this autumn whether *washoku* will be registered as an Intangible Cultural Heritage. In Japan, the efforts involved in registering with UNESCO have served to awaken a greater appreciation and awareness of the true cultural value of the country’s unique cuisine. ◆



A family enjoys *washoku* together



Furoshiki Wrapping Cloth

The *furoshiki* dates back as far as the 8th century, when it was called *tsutsumi*, which means “to wrap.” This deceptively simple, extremely versatile square piece of cloth is used to wrap and carry various things. Similar types of wrapping cloth exist worldwide, but in Japan, *furoshiki* came into broad use during the 16th century, when public bathhouses (*furo*) appeared and they were used at the baths. During the Edo period

(1603-1867), *furoshiki* became even more popular as convenient carriers for a wide range of goods.

When presenting gifts in Japan, it is traditionally considered courteous for the presenter not to touch the item directly—and so gifts are wrapped in a *furoshiki*. A special type of *furoshiki* known as *fukusa* has been used for generations to wrap monetary gifts for celebrations or condolences, such as at weddings and funerals.

Furoshiki come in many colors and patterns, some with the family crest. *Furoshiki* are ideal for wrapping objects of different shapes and sizes, and so are perfect replacements for paper gift-wrapping. After unwrapping the gift, the *furoshiki* is taken home by the giver. These days, this handy cloth has aroused a new appreciation, thanks to its ecological aspect, as it can be reused time and again.



Popular way to wrap



Watermelon (left) and wine bottle wrapped in *furoshiki*



Fukusa and monetary envelope for a wedding

DELECTABLE JOURNEYS

Osaka Takoyaki

Takoyaki are bite-sized balls made of flour batter, seasoned with dashi stock and with a bit of octopus (*tako*) meat in the center. Red pickled ginger, long onion, *sakura* shrimp and other ingredients may also be added. When served, *takoyaki* are sprinkled with a savory sauce and dried bonito flakes, then topped with green *nori* seaweed flakes.

In 1935, the octopus-filled *takoyaki* we know today was created in Osaka, but previously, balls stuffed with konjak and beef were enjoyed there. The idea of putting *tako* inside the ball may have been influenced by a recipe for baked egg stuffed with octopus, made in nearby Akashi, a city famous for its octopus. Today's sauce-covered *takoyaki* grew popular during the 1950s, and the number of toppings gradually increased. Today in Osaka, *takoyaki* may be purchased almost anywhere, but they are also made and enjoyed at home using a special *takoyaki* mold.

Osaka





HAYASHI RAISU (HASHED BEEF WITH RICE)

Demiglace sauce was introduced to Japan with the arrival of French cuisine during the Meiji era. This is one of the basic sauces for *yoshoku* (Japanese-style Western dishes) and it remains popular here today: many recipes still call for it, and while it may be bought ready-made, this simple recipe combines red wine, tomato paste and soy sauce to easily make a delicious brown sauce at home.

Serves 4 to 6 734 kcal Protein 18.7 g Fat 36.4 g (per person)



● Sliced beef

- 400-500 g (about 1 lb.) thin slices of beef suitable for sukiyaki, such as chuck eye or rib loin
- 150 g (5 oz.) mushrooms
- 3 small-sized onions, total 500-550 g (1-1.2 lbs.)
- Butter
- Vegetable oil
- Salt and black pepper
- 1 small clove of garlic, crushed with garlic press
- 2 T flour
- 1 1/4 C red wine
- 1 1/4 C consommé (bouillon)
- 3 T tomato paste
- 5 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 1 bay leaf
- 4 to 6 servings of hot cooked rice
- Parsley, minced

1 Cut each slice of beef into three pieces. Cut mushrooms into 4-6 slices lengthwise, each slice about 2-3 mm (1/8 in.) thick. Cut all onions in half lengthwise. Finely chop one onion and set aside. Cut the remaining two onions horizontally into 4-5 mm (1/5 in.) slices.



2 Melt 1 t butter and 1/2 t vegetable oil in a non-stick frying pan and sauté half of the beef over medium heat until lightly browned.* Season lightly with salt and pepper, remove from pan.

3 Melt another 1 t butter in the same pan, and sauté and season the remaining beef in the same way. Remove beef from pan and set aside.

4 Add 1 T butter to the same pan, sauté the garlic and two sliced onions. Cook over low heat until tender and slightly browned. Add mushrooms and sauté until softened. Remove from pan; set aside together with the beef.

5 Melt another 1 1/2 T butter in the same pan and sauté the fine-chopped onion over low heat. When it turns transparent, sprinkle in 2 T flour, mix and continue to sauté.

6 Add red wine gradually to the pan, portioning it out about 3 times while stirring to incorporate the flour. Bring to a boil. Keep boiling for 1 to 2 minutes, add consommé. Return the onion-garlic-mushroom mixture together with the beef to the pan.

7 Add and mix the tomato paste and soy sauce. Add bay leaf and simmer over low heat for 10-15 minutes, then sprinkle with black pepper. Add salt, if necessary.

8 Serve the *hayashi* beef alongside cooked rice on individual plates. Garnish the rice with parsley.

* In both Steps 2 and 3, discard accumulated fat after sautéing, leaving 1 T of grease in the pan.

Recipe by Michiko Yamamoto



GYUDON (BEEF BOWL)



◆ Beni shoga

紅
生
姜

Serves 4 723 Kcal Protein 18.7 g Fat 28.9 g (per person)

- 1 medium-sized onion
- 300 g (10 oz.) thin-sliced beef chuck eye or similar cuts
- Vegetable oil
- 4 bowls of hot cooked rice (2 C before cooking)
- Beni shoga, red pickled ginger
- Green onion, if desired

Simmering sauce

- 1 C dashi stock
- 4 T Kikkoman Soy Sauce
- 2 T Kikkoman Manjo Mirin
- 2 T sugar
- 2 T sake

1 Cut onion in half lengthwise and then horizontally into 5-6 mm (1/4 in.) slices. Cut beef into bite-sized pieces.

2 Heat vegetable oil in a pan. Briefly sauté the beef over medium heat until brown, then remove from the pan. Add onion to the same pan, briefly sauté and add the ingredients for the simmering sauce.

3 When the onion becomes tender and brown from the simmering sauce, return the beef to the pan.

4 Bring to a boil; skim off the foam, and simmer briefly until the beef is cooked. If time permits, cool down the pan and allow the beef and onion to absorb the liquid, then reheat just before serving.

5 Serve hot cooked rice in individual bowls, topped with the simmered beef and onion. Garnish with red pickled ginger and chopped green onion to serve.

Note: Tofu and shiitake mushrooms may be added to the pan after sautéing the onions, if desired.

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

Recipe by Kikkoman Corporation



Kikkoman Special Lectures Held in Shanghai

At the Expo 2010 Shanghai China, the Kikkoman Group presented its Japanese Restaurant “紫 MURASAKI” in the Japan Industry Pavilion. The restaurant operated during the Expo’s run from May to October 2010; during that time, a total of 13 students from Shanghai University worked as *nakai* service staff and culinary assistants at the restaurant to support operations.

Inspired by this association, in October 2010 Shanghai International Studies University and Kikkoman established the Kikkoman “紫 MURASAKI” Fund to offer scholarships and educational opportunities in Japan. Other cooperative ventures have been ongoing: in 2011, the university held two Kikkoman Special Lectures on “International Exchange of Food Culture” and “Food Safety and Quality Assurance.” In May of this year, as Japan and China celebrate the 40th anniversary of the normalization of their diplomatic relationship, Kikkoman hosted a Kikkoman “紫 MURASAKI” Special Lecture series at five universities in Shanghai, targeting students studying the Japanese language at these schools.

During his lectures at Shanghai University, Kikkoman President and Chief Executive Officer Mitsuo Someya spoke on the themes of “What an Organization/ Corporation Is,” “Person-to-Person, Culture-to-Culture Exchanges Via the Shanghai Expo,” and “The Relationship of Food and Society.” Among those attending these lectures were Vice President Wu Song of Shanghai University, Executive Vice President Wang Xiaoshu of the Shanghai People’s Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, and Consul-General Hiroyasu Izumi of the Consulate General of Japan in Shanghai.



Kikkoman President and CEO Mitsuo Someya (left) spoke on various themes during his well-attended lecture series at Shanghai University.



In his lectures, Mr. Someya described the relationship between company and society, stating, “A company is a member of society whose existence is defined as contributing to society through its business operations. When you work in a company, you must be fully aware of the effects your actions have on society.” He also commented that, “The world is getting smaller with the advent of information technology. You need to understand various nations and cultures comprehensively, not just superficially. I hope that everyone here will continue to play an integral role in international society.”

Haruhiko Fukasawa, Manager of Kikkoman Corporation’s Foreign Operations Department, touched on similar themes in his lectures, which were presented at the University of Shanghai for Science and Technology, the Shanghai Business School, Shanghai International Studies University, and Tongji University.

This summer Kikkoman plans to invite students from these five universities to participate in a company-sponsored essay contest on “Pleasant memories about food that bring smiles.” The grand prize winner will be invited to Japan this fall. Kikkoman values the connections that were established at Expo 2010 Shanghai, and will continue to contribute to the cultural exchange of food and ideas between Japan and China. ◆



Kikkoman’s Japanese Restaurant “紫 MURASAKI” operated from May to October 2010; Shanghai University students worked as *nakai*, above. Left: A colorful dish served at the restaurant.