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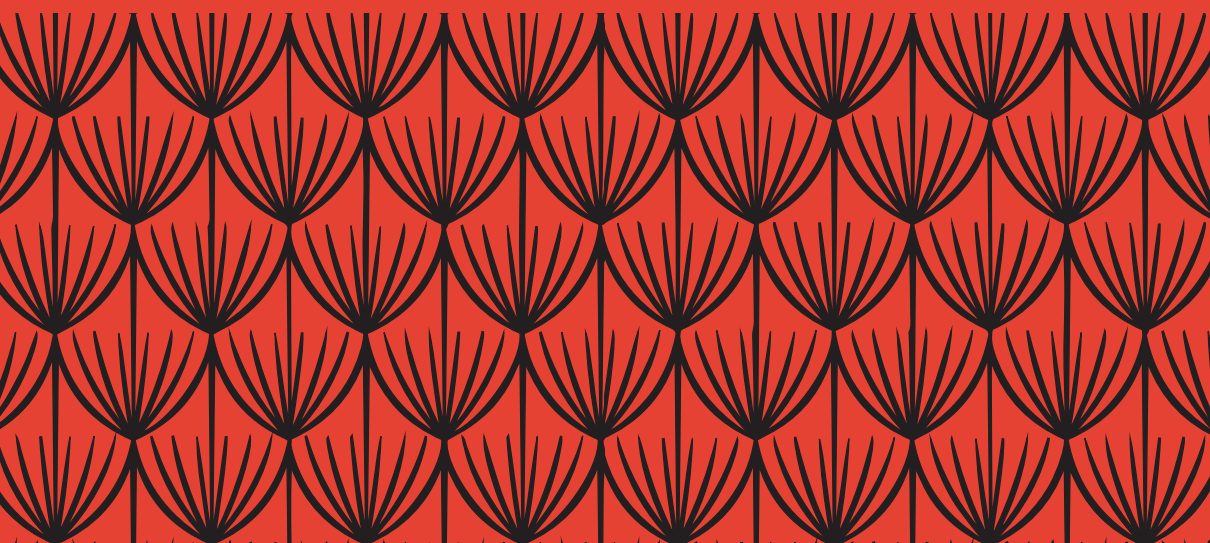
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Italy-Japan: Dialogues on Food

edited by
Maria Roberta Novielli, Bonaventura Ruperti
and Silvia Vesco



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Italy-Japan: Dialogues on Food

Ca' Foscari Japanese Studies

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Italy-Japan: Dialogues on Food

edited by Maria Roberta Novielli, Bonaventura Ruperti and Silvia Vesco

Abstract

In the last twenty years, Food Studies have fortunately become increasingly widespread and reflected in important academic and business institutions, as well as closely connected to popular media. They offer multidisciplinary perspectives of the relationship between food and the different components of the societies to which they are linked, in particular; science, culture, communication, economics, finance, and environmental sustainability. The approach to the subject, precisely because of its broad spectrum, allows a wide range of scholars and experts from different sectors to study the relationship with their respective disciplines in progressively dynamic and transversal ways.

The *Food+ Symposium*, organised by Ca' Foscari University of Venice in collaboration with the Consulate General of Japan in Milan, hosted some of the most prestigious names in different fields, with particular reference to the specificities of two of the countries where food has traditionally had greater symbolic value: Italy and Japan. These two culinary realities are now exported all over the world and have been for a long time representative of lifestyles, social and economic dynamics, in many cases similar all along their respective histories. This volume, therefore, presents the result of the contributions offered by the main exponents of the Italian-Japanese economic-cultural scene, intended as a starting point for further investigations.

The participation of authorities and guests, managers, experts, journalists and scholars from Japan and Italy to the Symposium, gave a chance to achieve a great overview into Food Studies.

Our guests have presented a great number of implications of the cultural representations of Food Culture analysed in a multi-perspective approach, underlying the value of Food and cuisine in Japan and Italy nowadays as in the past, through a considerable transition between tradition and modernity.

Keywords Food. Italy. Japan. Interdisciplinary. Transversal. Perceptions. Marketing. Design. Consumers. Trade. Investments and trends. Sustainability. Arts. Media.

Italy-Japan: Dialogues on Food

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Greeting from the Consul General of Japan Amamiya Yūji

On March 18th 2021, I had the pleasure of presenting my greetings to the participants at the *Venice/Japan International Food+ Symposium* and to attend the three day online event. I was deeply impressed by the richness and depth of each lecture made by various speakers. A number of stakeholders such as scholars, businesspersons, government officials and students exchanged their thoughts in a concrete effort to stimulate the ever-growing interest in Japan and its culture. The success of the event was especially achieved thanks to the excellent network of professors and staff of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, both inside and outside Italy, and their hard work to make this Symposium a special occasion. It was truly encouraging for us to encounter so many Italians who cultivate a strong interest in Japan and understand Japan so profoundly, especially in a modern global society where diplomacy often faces complex contexts. I would like to renew my sincere gratitude to Prof. Fabrizio Marrella, Vice-Rector for International Relations and Cooperation of Ca' Foscari University, who hosted us, and Prof. Maria Roberta Novielli, Prof. Bonaventura Ruperti and Prof. Silvia Vesco, curators of the present volume, for giving me the opportunity to add some words to it.

Food and culinary culture are one of the timeliest topics when we look at the latest developments in Japanese and Italian relations. Since I took office as a Consul General in Milan, I have noticed that the interest in Japanese cuisine and food in general has shown a sig-

nificant increase, driven by the success of Expo Milano 2015. The number of Japanese restaurants has increased considerably, not only in Milan but also throughout Italy. Nowadays, more and more people are discovering 'authentic' Japanese cuisine, also thanks to the growing number of Italian tourists visiting Japan, which reached the highest number of 160,000 people in 2019. However, these positive trends have been forced to stagnate due to the coronavirus pandemic. As soon as the pandemic crisis is finally over, the Consulate will make full use of the collaboration with the Japanese community in Northern Italy, starting from the Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador in Italy chef Ichikawa Haruo as well as the Japanese Chamber of Commerce in Italy and the Jetro of Milan in order to promote the various tastes of Japanese cuisine and its culinary culture.

Another significant moment of the recent relationship between Japan and Italy was the conclusion of the Japan-EU EPA in 2019 that has triggered the commercial expansion. After its entry into force, in fact, trade between two countries has increased: Italian exports to Japan increased by 19% compared to the previous year and imports from Japan by 9%, and specifically the increase of imports from Japan in the agri-food sector was equal to 11% and that in the beverage sector to 6%. However, we are well aware of the fact that the extent of imports from Japan to Italy in both sectors is still limited, being compared with that of Italian exports to Japan (the ratio is 1 to 65). It reminds us that there is more room to be exploited to increase Japanese imports to Italy in these sectors.

The Japanese government has set the goal of reaching five trillion yen, about 41 billion euros, for the worldwide export of agri-food products from Japan. The percentage of exports on the domestic production of these products in Japan is only 2%, and this is very marginal compared to other countries – such as Italy whose export of agri-food products covers about 21% of its internal production. Considering the global expansion of the agri-food market as well as the growing interest in Japanese cuisine worldwide, the potential for increasing exports of agri-food products from Japan could be very high.

This year 10 years will have passed since the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred on 11 March 2011. There are still people living displaced, uprooted from their homeland, and there are still issues to be addressed in order to complete the reconstruction. However, thanks to the support received from around the world, the regions affected by the earthquake have made great strides and the tie between them and the world is becoming stronger and stronger. One of encouraging signals is that the export volume of agri-food products in the province of Fukushima returned to pre-earthquake levels in 2017 and for three consecutive years has recorded an ever-increasing expansion. After the nuclear accident, 54 countries, including the EU, introduced restrictive measures on the import of Japanese agri-food

products. To cope with this situation, the Japanese government has introduced very strict control criteria and methods for radioactive substances, engaging in very intense activities aimed also at eliminating the damage caused by unfounded rumors. As of March 2021, 39 countries have lifted their restrictive measures. The European Union also gradually cancelled some restrictive measures, starting with the revocation of the need to present the non-radioactivity certificate for rice and some fish products from the province of Fukushima in 2015 and, hopefully, there may be other developments in this regard in the future.

In conclusion I strongly hope that the Symposium, whose main achievements are collected in this book, represents an important step of a vast undergoing process, to drive our countries even closer to each other.

Introduction

Food Studies in the last twenty years have fortunately been increasingly widespread and reflected in important academic and business institutions, as well as closely connected to popular media. They offer multidisciplinary perspectives of the relationship between food and the different components of the societies to which they are linked, in particular; science, culture, communication, economics, finance, and environmental sustainability. The approach to the subject, precisely because it has a broad-spectrum, allows a wide range of scholars and experts from different sectors to study the relationship with their respective disciplines in increasingly dynamic and transversal ways.

As a demonstration of the growing interest in the field, the opportunities of research and discussion have multiplied through *symposia*, Masters courses, specialised magazines and monographs. On each occasion it becomes increasingly evident that the entire sphere of disciplinary connections to food has not yet been defined: if historians, anthropologists, philosophers and sociologists have been dedicating specific studies to this field for a long time, more recently communication, journalism, political science and psychology experts have been added, suggesting new interpretations that intersect with the existing ones. A great contribution also comes from the spheres more traditionally linked to economics and finance, areas in which the concept of production and investment in food increasingly acquires a sustainable value of social interest, the function of food itself intended

as a set of values that it is capable of transmitting. In close connection with the competent communication bodies, the theoretical and methodological approaches are now based on a more attentive and conscious social sharing, trying to map the existing market conditions to rewrite new future strategies that envisage the centrality of welfare rather than the more clearly consumerist approach.

The *Food+ Symposium*, organised by the Ca' Foscari University of Venice in collaboration with the Consulate General of Japan in Milan, hosted some of the most prestigious names in the different fields, with particular reference to the specificities of two of the countries where food has traditionally had greater symbolic value: Italy and Japan. These are two culinary realities now exported all over the world, for a long time representative of lifestyles, social and economic dynamics in many cases similar in the course of their respective histories. This volume therefore presents the result of the contributions offered by the main exponents of the Italian-Japanese economic-cultural scene, intended as a starting point for further investigations that we hope for the future.

Thanks to the participation of authorities and guests, managers, experts, journalists and scholars from Japan and Italy, during the Symposium we have achieved a deep insight into this important topic. Our guests have presented, from varying perspectives, the many implications of the cultural representations of Food Culture, underlying the value of food and cuisine in Japan and Italy in the past and nowadays, in the transition between tradition and modernity.

We would like to thank the Consulate General of Japan in Milan, His Excellency the Consul General of Japan in Milan, Amamiya Yūji, and Yoshimura Yuko, Deputy Consul General of Japan in Milan, our Ambassador of Italy to Japan His Excellency Giorgio Starace, and the Rector Tiziana Lippiello and the Vice-Rector Fabrizio Marrella of Ca' Foscari University of Venice, Toneri Naoki, President of Kazepro Communication Agency Tokyo, Consuelo Puricelli and Martina Collauto from the Fondazione Ca' Foscari, and Francesca Prato from the Consulate General of Japan. We would also like to thank all our guests and panelists: Shimada Masahiko (writer and professor at the Hosei University in Tokyo), Koga Eiko (President & CEO of Mitsubishi Italia) and Natalia Sinatra (Mitsubishi Italia Spa, Food & Beverage export Manager), Ide Kentaro (JETRO, Milan – General Secretary of Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Italy), Obata Taketoshi (MUFG Bank, Milan-Ex-President of Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Italy), Davide Fantoni (General Manager of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan), Stefania Viti (Journalist and Writer), Nicolò Geri (Teacher, Writer and Food Expert), Yamamori Nanako (Journalist, The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan), Michele Bianco (President of Ubercom District Treviso, Professor of Marketing & Strategy), Francesco Biciatto

(Secretary General of Italian Sustainable Investment Forum), Chieko Nakabasami (Professor at the Toyo University Tokyo), Fumi Michihata (Representative Foodbiz-net.com), Emiko Kumano (Advertisement & PR Nihonshu Oendan), George Amano (President & CEO George Creative Company), Paola Scrolavezza (Professor at the University of Bologna), Eugenio De Angelis (researcher at Ca' Foscari University), and Giovanni Bulian (Professor at Ca' Foscari University).

We would also like to sincerely thank Marcella Mariotti, delegate for relations with Japanese companies, for her organisational support, and H.E. Ambassador Nishibayashi Masuo, director of the Japanese Cultural Institute in Rome for his always kind and active participation.

Special thanks go to Stefania Cantele and Giorgia Serpani for the excellent coordination of the Symposium.

Maria Roberta Novielli
Bonaventura Ruperti
Silvia Vesco

Venice/Japan International Food+ Symposium 2021 An Interdisciplinary Symposium

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Abstract This co-authored paper aims to be a brief overview of the *Venice/Japan International Food+ Symposium* themes and panels, with a particular focus on the speeches held during the three-day conference and not included as papers in this volume.

Keywords Interdisciplinary. Transversal. Food. Italy. Japan. Symposium. Venice. Soft power. Media.

Summary 1 Food+: The Power of Food. – 2 Food+ Perceptions. – 3 Food+ Diplomacy. – 3 Food+ New Challenges. – 4 Food+ Design. – 5 Food+ Trade. – 6 Food + Investments and Trends. – 7 Food + Sustainability. – 8 Food + Arts and Media. – 9 Conclusions.

Venice/Japan International Food+ Symposium, held from the 18th to 20th of March 2021, brought together experts from the most different fields, who analysed the theme of food from their particular perspectives. Their contribution to the multidisciplinary dialogue at the center of this Symposium constituted a meaningful occasion of confrontation between the public, the experts themselves and the organising committee.

The main innovation of the *Venice/Japan Food+ Symposium* was its transversal perspective, which made possible the involvement of representatives from cultural and economic institutions as well as



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journalists and media operating between Italy and Japan in an open discussion.

1 Food+: The Power of Food

Food is part of everyone's life: we eat food on special occasions or during traditional celebrations, as well as in our everyday life. Food, while being necessary to our wellness, has a cultural and symbolic dimension which makes it an important subject of investigation. As Professor Bonaventura Ruperti highlighted, food is constantly being used both in religious rituals and in traditional performative arts in Japan, with a symbolic-metaphorical function (representation of seasonal change, etc.) (see Bonaventura Ruperti, "Food Culture and Traditional Performing Arts in Japan").

In a contemporary globalised society, food, often considered as a form of soft power (Nye 2004)¹ due to its cultural and symbolic dimensions (Reynolds 2012, 49), has become to be at the centre of several debates in the most diverse fields (culture, arts, journalism, macro-economics, trade, etc.). As Kentaro Ide (JETRO, Milan) pointed out, macroeconomic elements are closely linked to culture(s) diffusion, and during this symposium we considered food as an important element which gives us the possibility to analyse bigger phenomena through an innovative perspective and the interrelation between different fields.

2 Food+ Perceptions

Naoki Toneri, Kazepro Inc., explained how Italian products (cars, food, fashion) are perceived by the Japanese public and how this perception has changed in the last thirty years. In the particular context of food, Naoki Toneri explained how Japanese consumers gradually got used to Italian food during the last decades. While during the 1990s people used to go to Italian restaurants only on special occasions, nowadays Italian food has become integrated in the everyday life of Japanese people. Japanese chefs are professionally trained, Italian food chains across different price ranges have increased in number, making Italian food something very common in Japan. Naoki

¹ Soft power, often used in contrast to 'hard power', is the ability to influence the behaviour of other people. It is also considered the 'second face of power' that indirectly allows you to obtain the outcomes you want. A country's soft power, according to Nye (2004, 39), rests on three resources: "its culture (in places where it is attractive to others), its political values (when it lives up to them at home and abroad), and its foreign policies (when others see them as legitimate and having moral authority)".

Toneri gave the example of olive oil and explained how a commercial video he took care of has been fundamental to increase its commercialisation in Japan during the 1990s. However, in the last few years, olive oil in Japan is no longer exclusively of Italian origins: many olive oils from other origins have increased their presence in the Japanese market. This reflects how the attitude towards Italian food has changed in the last few years.

3 Food+ Diplomacy

In the context of Italian exports to Japan, Giorgio Starace, Ambassador of Italy to Japan remarked that Japan represents an important market for Italian companies in the agri-food sector, particularly following the tariff liberalisation and thanks to the EU-Japan Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), in force from the 1st of February 2019. Thanks to this agreement, Italian exports to Japan have increased by 20% in the same year (ISTAT, 2019). Among them, exports in the agri-food sector increased by 11.8% and Italy stands out for the greatest utilisation of the agreement compared to the other EU member states. Ambassador Starace has also given an overview of the promotional events organised by the Embassy of Italy to Japan, with the aim of intensifying the promotion of Italian agri-food products. Together with the promotion of the Mediterranean diet and IGP products, the Embassy of Italy to Japan is involved in the organisation of events and gatherings (Italian Cuisine Week, Aperitivo all'Italiana, etc.), alongside webinars and specific seminars targeted at international stakeholders. Italian agri-food, along with fashion products are very popular in Japan because they reflect the cultural identity of the territory and are characterised by a sustainable use of environmental resources. Despite the crisis due to COVID-19, the entire Italian productive system proved to be very resilient and prepared to catch any economic opportunities in the post-pandemic phase. In this context, as Ambassador Starace pointed out, the Italian Embassy to Japan has participated in Foodex 2021, the greatest food exhibition in Asia, with a pavilion of 1,200 square meters with more than 100 companies taking part in it and it resonated with great satisfaction with the Japanese buyers. Furthermore, the pandemic has caused a significant decrease of both Italian exports to Japan and Japanese exports to Italy, nonetheless Italy is still the second EU supplier to Japan, after Germany and ahead of France in 2021 (Ministry of Finance), and agro-food sector has decreased less than other sectors of export to Japan (pasta +21%); chocolate-based products (+7.5%), tomato sauces (+7.3%). All these efforts are aimed at building a solid partnership between the two countries in order to ensure a steady cultural, political and economic recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

4 Food+ New Challenges

Emiko Kumano, PR from Nihonshu Ouendan, has provided an overview of Japanese *sake* exports and introduced the activity of Nihonshu Ouendan, who started its activities as a volunteer association. Due to the progressive ageing of *sake* craftsmen, small local producers are at high risk. For this reason, Nihonshu Ouendan decided to support them and involve them in new challenges in order to ensure continuation and preserve small *sake* breweries.

Even though compared to other countries' wine export it is still in an expanding phase, Japanese *sake* exports have actually tripled in the last ten years. Nihonshu Ouendan is now working on the production and branding of 6 different breweries from 6 prefectures in Japan in order to launch them in the international market (USA, Hong Kong, China, Singapore, UK, Malaysia and Vietnam). In doing this, they are working to keep the traditional delicacy resulting from small scale productions in order to ensure a high-quality unique product to be commercialised.

5 Food+ Design

George Amano, of George Creative Company, explained to us how design is deeply related to the market response of a certain product and how important it could be, especially in the food business. Appearance is fundamental in Italy as well as in Japan, especially in the food market and design can be decisive in the success of a certain product. Through examples from his own productions, he has analysed how design can have an impact on the sales and revenues of a certain product. As an example, he produced a new design for a Tropicana juice package, omitting the image of an orange pierced by a straw. This resulted in a sales decrease of more than 50% than before and even though substance is the same, demonstrating how packaging design can be of fundamental importance.

Furthermore, George Amano highlighted how the usage of technology can bring relevant innovations to the food design industry, not only allowing people from different parts of the world to have access to the same products, but also bringing significant strikes in terms of sustainability.

6 Food+ Trade

Eiko Koga and Natalia Sinatra, from Mitsubishi Italy S.p.a., introduced the role of *sōgō shōsha* (globally integrated business enterprise), literally 'general business enterprise' operating between Italy and Japan and their food business.

Mitsubishi Corporation operates in several different fields (machinery, automotive, cosmetics, infrastructure, food, healthcare, etc.) and even though originally its function was mainly logistics and finance, it has evolved through the decades and became a dynamic business in both trade (raw materials, manufacturers, distributors, retailer) and business management between these phases, optimising a new supply chain management.

The Food & Beverage division offers support to Italian producers and to Japanese clients and the product portfolio covers the majority of the most internationally known Italian specialities (olive oil, cheese, wine, and frozen products).

Mitsubishi Italy S.p.a. offers trading support services (logistics, translations, business follow up) and operates weekly economic and political analysis, market research, trend analysis and business development, in order to update clients' knowledge of a specific market. In doing this, they keep a focus on sustainability and circular economy with this value chain being the ultimate goal of this company.

A *sōgō shōsha* is also a cultural mediator and Mitsubishi Italy S.p.a. mediates between the culture of Italian producers and the necessities of Japanese clients, in order to share appropriate knowledge between the two markets.

After the EU-Japan Partnership agreement started in 2019, exports in the agri-food sector increased by 80% and this is considered as a starting point of a new era for the economic relations between EU and Japan.

Made in Italy products in Japan have always been appreciated by Japanese consumers and the market trends made possible the distinction between 3 different categories of Japanese consumers: traditionalists (48% of consumers with no propensity in purchasing novelty food), Millennials (36% of consumers, age 18~38, curious and open to the latest trends) and globetrotters (10% of the population, age 39~54, high spending power, demanding, sophisticated consumers really attentive to product quality).

Mitsubishi Italy has provided an overview of some different products in Japan, highlighting the share percentage for Italian products. As expected, Italy dominates the pasta market (75%), even though the most influential brand is De Niro (39%), almost unknown in Italy because it focuses on export instead of domestic market share. The olive oil market is also dominated by Italian products (67% market share) which is a remarkable percentage.

In conclusion, the answer that Natalia Sinatra, Mitsubishi Italy S.p.a. would give to the question: "what do Japanese customers look for when buying Italian products? What is the added value of Italian products?" is: "its relationship to Italian culture and the idea of enjoyment and fashion it brings with it".

Italian products are strictly linked to, and consequently branded in relation to, Italian culture and passion for the production of food products and this part of their added value.

7 Food + Investments and Trends

As Taketoshi Obata (MUFG, JCCI) highlighted, the JCCI (Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Italy) was established in 1973 with the purpose of promoting economic ties between Italy and Japan. The total volume of Foreign Direct Investments from Japan to Italy has been on the increase in recent years and Japan is ranked in second position, next only to the USA, among non-EU countries. Acquisition of local companies by Japanese corporations is another aspect of the investments from Japan to Italy, and southern Europe, including Italy, has a small portion. However, Italy always places as one of the top ten countries among EMEA countries (Europe, Middle East, Africa), except for 2020. According to MUFG statistics there are nearly 260 Japanese companies doing business in Italy and the top five industries include machinery, automobiles, electronics, apparel and trading. More than 60% of Japanese companies operating in Italy are located in Lombardy. So far, the number of Japanese companies in the food industry is still limited and the following three examples are to summarise the situation involving them:

1. Company J: a trading arm of a Japanese food-products manufacture, it promotes sales of Japanese food products and operates Japanese rice fields in Italy;
2. Company V: produces tomato and zucchini and exports frozen vegetables to Japan;
3. Company Y: produces beverage products in the Netherlands and sales in Italy;
4. Company S: operates a Japanese restaurant chain Italy

On this topic, Kentaro Ide, Director General of the Jetro office in Milan, introduced the general trends regarding food in the Italian and Japanese contexts.

In 2019, the import of agricultural products and food from Italy registered as 10.7% of the total import. On the other hand, for Japan it occupies only 0.5% of the total amount of import from Japan and if we compare the portion of import in each country to the whole amount from the world, we can calculate that the Japanese import of Italian food is 80 times higher than Italian import from Japan. In Japan, the boom of Italian cuisine occurred during the 1980s. Italian cuisine is widely accepted as daily food and this situation is reflected in the actual amount of imports of Italian foodstuff.

On the contrary, in Italy there were just a few Japanese restaurants in the 1990s and the main customers frequenting them were Japanese people living in Italy. Later on, a lot of *sushi* restaurants owned by non-Japanese people started to open in Italy and were cheaper compared to Italian restaurants. The situation changed in 2015 after the significant success of the Japanese Pavilion at EXPO Milano which gave the opportunity for young Italian people to know about Japanese cuisine directly, and it can be considered as a launch point of the boom of Japanese cuisine in Italy. The history of the development of Italian cuisine in Japan started almost thirty years ago, while Japanese cuisine started to become diffused in Italy only six years ago. This has to be taken into consideration when exploring the differences in the amount of export of foodstuff between the two countries and, as Ide Kentaro highlights, Japanese exports to Italy have just begun. Another important issue to be taken into consideration is the difference of import standards between the EU and Japan that make it very difficult for small and medium sized firms to adapt to them. As an example, the quality of *sushi* in Italy is improving, but still there are less varieties of fish compared to Japan. Importing some kind of fish from Japan is a solution, but by exporting some fish to the EU the processing facility in Japan has to adapt to EU standards and they have to get authorisation from the EU authority. Also, in Japan there is a big use of natural colorants when making traditional food, but these are not accepted in the EU. They would then have to remove that colour and re-configure it to export to the EU. The Cost to gain these authorisations and the operational changes required is extremely high and for these reasons it is not easy for small enterprises to enter the European market. These and other elements are to be considered as the background in which food cultures spread between EU countries and Japan and are subject to continuous changes and reinterpretations between the country of origin and the destination country.

In conclusion, as Ide Kentaro pointed out, the interaction of two cultures has been widened and deepened by the diffusion of food and those phenomena are to be considered as a proof of the connection between cultures.

8 Food + Sustainability

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about an essential gap between the actual and the pre-pandemic global food system. For the foreseeable future, scenarios of the international food market, with a specific focus on Made in Italy and Japanese products, have been outlined in light of the pandemic's impact by the panel of Michele Bianco, Manager of Ubercom Treviso. According to his speech on the role of

global sustainability, a subject on which the speeches of Francesco Bicciato and Nanako Yamamori also touched, is finally seen as an element of innovation and driving force for the F&B strategy, building the reputation and transparency of the companies of the food sector that choose to find sustainable solutions. New solutions of sustainable packaging drove the evolution of the Italian market in 2020 and highlight the consciousness of the consumers who wish to be part of a green global perception, and pointing out that the 'free from' formula (free from nickel, allergens, plastic, phosphate; and also: veggie, recycled, biodegradable, green...) is now considered a plus by the purchaser. Furthermore, both in Japan and in Italy, and especially within the pandemic scenario, there is a renovated rediscovery of tradition through a geography of taste, suggesting that local and regionally typical authentic food are becoming more and more desired by consumers. As observed by Michihata Fumi and Chieko Nakabasami, the pandemic gave the chance to rebuilt families and communities offering an opportunity to think about sustainability: being forced to stay at home, people seem to have realised the over-consumption of urban life, and the revitalisation of neighbours under a new light of global environment's consciousness.

Francesco Bicciato, Secretary General of Italian Sustainable Investment Forum (ItaSIF), explained the role of sustainable finance strategies to promote the agri-food industry, providing an overview on the ItaSIF, a no-profit organisation founded in 2001 and based on the concept of sustainable finance with regards to the environmental and social impact of financial activity, born with the aim to encourage the integration of environmental, social and governance criteria into financial products and processes. ItaSIF in particular is a founding member of Eurosif, a pan-European network whose mission is to develop sustainability through European Financial Markets, deepening the impact and visibility of sustainable investment organisations at the global level. In his panel Bicciato pointed out strategies, such as the selection of impact investing, the exclusion of activity against the environment and the violation of human rights, and suggested advantages and barriers of sustainable and responsible investment (SRI). The advantage of the investment includes the management of ESG risks, investment opportunities and returns, whereas the barriers to the investment depend in particular on prejudice, lack of harmonisation and lack of data. In short, part of the new revolutionary development is based on the promotion of the sustainable sector and culture as investments and not as a cost. Talking about the reaction of finance to the COVID-19 pandemic, Bicciato highlighted that the performance of ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance activities in sustainable investment) was better in terms of return of investment compared to a non-pandemic situation, saying that finance cannot act in efficient way without considering the orientation of cap-

ital toward sustainable investment. Among all the sectors, sustainable agriculture is one of the most strategic sectors in European Union, and Italy occupies the third place for agri-food production value, and first place among European levels for food security. Even climate change, agriculture and forestry can give an important contribution, having a crucial role at global level. In conclusion, according to Bicciato, the instruments that Sustainable Investment already have include the Green Bond, Social Bond, Impact investing and European Investment Bank. Finance has, in the end, a multi stakeholder responsibility concerning social and cultural development, especially in facing climate change and a health pandemic crisis; moreover, he drew attention to the importance of culture improvement for global movements of sustainability in order to set up new forms of cooperation.

Nanako Yamamori, Journalist for The Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan, held a panel called "Current Affairs of Japanese Food", analysing how the Japanese attitude has been changing since the Great East Japan Earthquake of 2011. According to Yamamori, the disaster had an enormous impact on the agriculture and fishing industry of the region and required more reassurance of transparency for what concerns food's safety. In fact, right after the calamity, there was not enough food and energy because factories and farms producing vegetables and fishery products for the domestic market were physically destroyed, and the transport system and logistics were not functioning. There was also a rising concern for food safety, especially because soil and water were contaminated, and basically there were no customers willing to buy food from farmers coming from the hit region. After ten years the industry had recovered, but the market changed in a way that people continue to require transparency in food processes, and provenience of the food declared in the labels. Furthermore, the Olympic Games of 2020 (2021) put Japan into the international spotlight, forcing the country to adapt with regards to both discrimination issues and food business, since the need to meet conform to international standards. As of three years ago, only 4% of Japanese production matched the Global G.A.P. standard, and Japan lacked behind in terms of numbers of vegetarian, vegan and *halal* restaurants; for this reason the Government has actually increased public education in order to prepare the country to receive athletics and tourists. The other issue pointed out by Yamamori concerns a series of current social and political trends regarding the sustainability of food production and the necessity to reduce food waste in Japan. Food loss in Japan is over 6.5 tons every year, more than a half of which would be considered edible, and equal to the total rice produced domestically. To reduce it, some start-up businesses created online systems in order to directly connect consumers, producers and restaurants through apps, avoiding waste of food due to overproduction or expiring dates. In conclusion, reducing food loss, plastic

bags, packaging, disposable plates and cutlery is a huge challenge. The pandemic crisis changed some people's attitudes, and shocked every level of the food chain, from supplies, to restaurants to consumers, forcing people to be flexible and to find new ways of communication and to sell food.

9 Food + Arts and Media

The cultural bridge that Japanese food culture and Italian food culture have built together with economic and finance strategies can clearly be seen through the arts and media, as the poster of the Symposium suggests, with the Japanese actor Toshirō Mifune eating *ramen*, and the Italian actor Alberto Sordi eating *spaghetti*. In the last decade, as Paola Scrolavezza pointed out during her speech, the number of TV series, TV shows, documentaries, movies and *manga* dedicated to Japanese food and distributed worldwide has gradually increased. Examples such as *Washoku - Beyond Sushi* (2015), *Shin'ya Shokudō* (Midnight Diner - Tokyo Stories, ended in 2019), *Nobushi no gurume* (Samurai Gourmet 2017), *Saboriman Kantarō* (Kantarō the Sweet Tooth Salaryman, 2017) are just a few. From an Italian point of view, Japanese food culture has been unconsciously integrated through the screen thanks to *anime* and movies that incorporate common knowledge foods like *ramen* (e.g. in *Ponyo on the Cliff by the sea*, 2008), *onigiri* (e.g. in *Pokémon*, 1997-present) *dorayaki* (e.g. in *Doraemon*, 2005) and *bento* boxes (e.g. in *Sailor Moon*, 1992-97). On the other hand, it is not difficult to prove that Italian culinary culture influenced *manga* and *anime* in Japan, as we can see in the *manga* *Kukkingu Papa* (*Cooking Papa*, 1984-present) with the comic page reporting the historic Pizzeria da Michele in Naples. The similarities of food narrative strategies in Italian and Japanese cinema have been underlined by Roberta Novielli's research about "Food Between Life and Death in the Cinema of Marco Ferreri and Itami Juzo", in which *La Grande Bouffe* (1973) and *Tanpopo* (*Tanpopo*, 1985), two fundamental films in the history of international cinema, are compared through an examination of the critique of the contemporary consumerist and materialist society, the body (physical, social, political), the excess and voracity of consumption and the aesthetic of cruelty that crosses all the narrative with grotesque tones, highlighting how cooking and eating became an ancestral ritual representing a system of communication and a body of image. Japanese relationships with food and tradition through the cinema has been discussed by Eugenio De Angelis, who, analysing the dining scenes of three films, underlined the fact that, even if street food is far more popular in East Asia than in Europe, home is still the main place to consume food, and cinema has become a useful case study of the representation of the Japanese

family dynamics. As the anthropologist Giovanni Bulian observed, the desire to remember home through food consumption enables the construction of ethnic identities, cultural boundaries and a sense of uniqueness: Japanese food and home cooking constitute a strong link to the domestic environment in connection with the primary need of nutrition. The power of *washoku*, inscribed in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list from 2013, lies in its direct embodiment of use value, and with its international promotion it undeniably establishes a link with the global food market. Moreover, performing arts such as music, poetry and dance, as Bonaventura Ruperti pointed out, are also important in the rituals dedicated to the divinities and to the entire audience on the occasion of rites and festival: food and drink, which are basis of civilisation and nutrition in Japan are connected with the traditional theatres, from *nô*, to *kyôgen*.

Nowadays Japanese food culture is spreading all over the world, becoming popular in Italy not just because of *sushi*, but also through *ramen*, *onigiri*, *tonkatsu*, *mochi*, curry rice, tea ceremony workshops, and so on. As the journalist and writer Stefania Viti illustrated in her panel on the project of creation, development and publication of a series of books on Japanese food culture within the Italian publishing scene, the gastronomic tale is increasing its importance both as a process of business strategy for the companies, and of course as interest and acculturation requested by the Italian market towards Japanese food and cuisine. A gastronomic tale, or storytelling, that at present cannot disregard the massive usage of social media – especially during the COVID-19 pandemic – as a way of business promotion and knowledge sharing: compared to ten years ago it is now easier to bump into Japanese food culture because of the extreme popularity of it through social media. Instagram is currently on the top list of social media used in Japan, after Hootsuite and We Are Social (Solito, Rinarelli 2020), and the hashtag ‘*sushi*’, in March 2021, shows up in more than 29 million feeds as pictures, IG stories and videos (Bugajski 2021). Following the same trend, Instagram profiles dedicated to Japan and Japanese food are growing in popularity and followers. Similarly, Italian food culture is becoming more and more popular in Japan, as we can see from the increasing interest in products such as wine, olive oil, coffee, *pizza*, Italian cheese and *panettone*.

10 Conclusions

Venice/Japan International Food+ Symposium at Ca' Foscari University of Venice has been a fruitful and constructive conference that saw the international participation of authorities, managers, experts, journalists and scholars exchanging knowledge about food and diplomacy, new challenges, design, trade, investments, sustainability, me-

dia and arts, and combining several disciplines in a comparative approach. Different implications of food's cultural representation have been discussed, providing an extremely accurate overview of the past and the present relationship between Italy and Japan onto this meaningful and symbolic theme.

The main aim of the Symposium was to explore different perspectives on food in the particular context of cultural-economic relations between Japan and Italy, and to create links of knowledge within a multidisciplinary and international field. Several themes, such as 'food and tradition', 'food and import/export', 'food and sustainability', 'food and communication', 'food and new technologies' and 'food and arts', all connected in a socio-economic and cultural context, were examined. Food culture has been taken into consideration by 23 experts of the most varied thematic areas during the three different days, exploring the value and the connection of food culture seen from different but connected perspectives, from the intellectual to the diplomatic, to the ones directly linked to business and enterprises, and providing a constructive information sharing within the participants.

This conference, that included Italian food culture perception, food trading companies in Japan, branding differences between the two countries, sustainable finance strategies to promote the agri-food industry, food culture as represented in cinema, traditional performing arts, design, and anthropology in both the Italian and Japanese contexts, is part of a major project that will embrace future face-to-face appointments with operators of the sector and entrepreneurs, in a positive and fulfilling cooperation.

Food Connections Between Italy and Japan

About Air Meal and Revival of the Black Market Post-corona. Meals. Restaurants. Sustainability Restaurants. Food consumption

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Abstract Everyone is anxious that the way we eat and drink will change drastically due to the pandemic. While the immediate challenge is how to overcome the harsh reality of the rush of restaurant closures, the chance of survival may be found unexpectedly in the black market. Large-capital *sushi* chains, *izakaya* chains, family restaurants, and First Foods are also shrinking. Privately owned restaurants have been forced to withdraw before the epidemic spread, but large capital has also been hit hard. Which is faster, to regenerate or restart? Private restaurants with weak capital will soon collapse, but the selling point is the lightness of the footwork that can be rebuilt immediately. It seems that minimalism is likely to become the standard in the post-Corona era.

Keywords Food. Black market. Restaurant.

Abundant experience and culture will greatly help to expand the wings of fantasy and delusion. I usually exchange opinions with friends, acquaintances, peers, people from different industries, scholars of different genres, disciples, students at taverns and bars, and I can massage my brain and fly my fantasies farther, hiring the others' brains. However, due to COVID-19, my favourite bar is closed and there is no place to gather, so I spend my days feeling like a *ronin* in forced house arrest or a cicada waiting for the time of emergence. Those who will

be charged with something will have a preparatory period to become accustomed to imprisonment in preparation for the day they will be imprisoned in jail or a detention centre. It reminded me of an experience I had heard from the President of a publishing company.

This person was once charged with drug addiction and possession and was imprisoned in a detention centre for about a year. I knew him as a luxury person who left behind a lot of heroic stories, so I thought the ascetic life in the jail would have been painful. But he said, “I was completely devoted to fantasy, so it was not painful as I thought”.

The food inside the jail was simple, and from a gourmet’s point of view, it was like being fed an emergency ration every day. But he said: “I could stand it because I added a few fantasy side-dishes every time. If you want to eat raw oysters today, imagine the visuals of the exquisite raw oysters you once ate, squeeze the lemon, slide that smooth body directly from the shell into your mouth, chew, and beat your mouth. It seems that the operation works if so-called ‘air raw oysters’ are used. If you look at it closely, you may be wondering what the ritual is, but the ritual must be done solemnly. As long as the image of raw oysters in your memory is restored to the maximum and it is realistic, you only need to improve your concentration and use your imagination to the fullest”.

When he was asked “if you have raw oysters, you also need white wine”, he said, “of course, I also prepare white wine. The fine white wine we have drunk is stored in the wine cellar of our memory”. After all, it is said that the ritual is to uncork it, pour it into a glass, check the scent, roll it on the tongue, and enjoy the taste. That way, it takes a lot of memory and experience to add a number of menus that have previously spoiled your tongue to the rations. Even if you add caviar, *foie gras*, *matsutake* mushrooms, porcini mushrooms, soft-shelled turtles, branded Japanese beef, etc., you cannot reproduce them unless you have eaten them. Taking advantage of his experience of gastronomy, he was able to upgrade the coarse food in the jail as much as he wanted. I was worried that it is very hard to keep imagination and concentration if he was eating air gastronomy every time. He answered,

There was a limit to the menu that could be reproduced, but as for curry and *ramen*, I eat it about twice a week. So, I can repeat it and reproduce it. Eventually, I started to feel heavy in my stomach just by fantasy, so at that time I would eat the regular jail meal. It’s good to have a rough meal once in a while. Above all, the good thing about fantasy gastronomy is that it doesn’t make you fat, your blood pressure doesn’t rise, and it’s healthy to the body.

It would be so. It’s like eating a delicious fog. However, the enjoyment of eating and drinking is halved if there is no other person who can

have a live conversation. The reason why a single person's meal gets simple is because he is the only one who is happy to make it, he is the only one who criticises it, and it becomes foolish to make it properly. Unexpectedly, such a person overcomes the bachelor's handicap by uploading today's menu on the net and getting comments. He takes pictures, so he tries to make the food photogenic by devising arrangements and spending extra time. If you have a partner, cooking can be a communication tool. If you keep facing the same face all the time, your love will deepen, but your hatred will also increase. Cooking can make relationships worse and repair them, bring both respect and contempt for others.

If the style of eating alone becomes cool, it means that you have joined the ranks of a dandy. If you don't become self-deprecating, don't look miserable, don't buy the sympathy of others, and become interested in others, you can see it as a professional.

In Europe, post-war reconstruction began with the reconstruction of the church. In the case of Japan, it started with the construction of a black market. Akira Kurosawa's movie *Rashomon* is a story of the Heian period, but the image of the post-war burnt town and the people living there is superimposed on the background and figures. A large amount of money was invested to make a set of decayed Rashomon gate, but it seems that he really wanted to reproduce the black market near the gate.

The black market is the prototype of a restaurant. In the midst of severe food shortages, the food rations were not enough, and everyone needed a black market. When someone saw a person walking with a large *furoshiki* wrap on his back, there were followers behind him. He'll start selling something soon. All the ways to survive led to the black market. The black market in Shinjuku was illuminated by a dazzling lamp that could be seen from the next station, and the slogan was "Light is from Shinjuku". You could get almost anything if you paid for it. However, for those who do not have to prepare for starvation, it is sake that makes them forget the fear. However, when they drank the liquor mixed with methyl alcohol and formalin, hell became closer. There were people who couldn't help drinking the *sake* even if their eyes were blurred and their legs became stiff.

At that time, those who were released from prison were given 95 yen and five rice balls. As soon as he stepped into the black market, he wanted to eat sweets, so he ate a cup of sweet soup for 20 yen, drank a beer for 30 yen, ate 40 yen in *oden*, and smoked a regenerated cigarette with the remaining 5 yen, and thus became empty. Maybe another ex-prisoner would buy a stove for 5 yen, a large pot for 20 yen, bought 10 soup bowls for 10 yen, boiled porridge in the large pot, and started selling.

There was a specialty of the black market cafeteria called 'stew', which was a stew made using as ingredients the nutritious lefto-

ver food from the foreigner-only cafeteria used by the US military. Hiding behind the cafeteria, as soon as the kitchen waste was taken out, they collected it in a bucket. They carefully removed the cigarette butts, matchsticks, and paper from the leftover food. Leftovers included miscellaneous items such as leftover steak pieces and ham, tooth-shaped cheese, chicken skin and lard, fish heads, potato skins, and apple cores. When the chef threw them into a large pot and simmers them slowly, the traces of garbage disappeared cleanly and were reproduced in an appetising stew. Whenever sold for 5 yen per cup, it was said that the people who made the stew managed to attract many customers and they were thanked for ‘warming’ and ‘nourishing’ them. Perhaps an adult male could get the calories needed per day with a single meal. In an era where food shortages continued, emphasis was placed on calorie intake. This principle is still alive among the poor, even today, when health-conscious and high-calorie diets are shunned. By the way, the cheapest calorie intake is macaroni cheese in the United States and the mega size of instant fried noodles in Japan.

Everyone is anxious that the way we eat and drink will change drastically due to the pandemic. While the immediate challenge is how to overcome the harsh reality of the rush of restaurant closures, the chance of survival may be found unexpectedly in the black market. Large-capital *sushi* chains, *izakaya* chains, family restaurants, and First Foods are also shrinking. Privately owned restaurants have been forced to withdraw before the epidemic spread, but large capital has also been hit hard. Which is faster, to regenerate or restart? Private restaurants with weak capital will soon collapse, but the selling point is the lightness of the footwork that can be rebuilt immediately. It seems that minimalism is likely to become the standard in the post-corona era.

The management body will also change. It is not a chain development, and it is not limited to individual management, but there may be a form of management by a cooperative method or opening a store in a flea market. Municipal, ward, and village canteens and taverns may also appear. Eating and drinking cannot be stopped as long as they are alive, so restaurants should pursue sustainability more than ever. In addition, eating and drinking is a culture, and the restaurants that provide the place are also cultural properties and public goods. It is not impossible to turn the pandemic into a fortune if you think that you have been given the opportunity to try to keep the restaurant alive for a purpose other than the pursuit of profit.

Evolution and Future Development of the Food Experience for Made in Italy and Japanese Products

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Abstract Guided by the results of a preliminary analysis on the effects of the pandemic on international markets, possible and foreseeable future scenarios have been imagined and investigated. With a special focus on Italy and Japan, we will analyse the innovative trends in the world of food that will guide future changes and developments, highlighting new approaches to consumption, the challenges to be faced in the new normal and the opportunities to be seized, under the perspective of the online approach. The objective of this speech is to investigate the evolution of the food experience for Made in Italy and Japanese products, identifying affinities and possible synergies between food and cultural styles, sharing points of reflection for strategic business development.

Keywords Innovation. Food experience. Online experience. Omnichannel journey. Consumactors. Gen Y and Z.

In 2020, which will be remembered as the ‘year of the pandemic’, the macro-economic and social balances have been overwhelmed at a global level, leading us in a rapid and unexpected way to experience multiple and deep transformations, the effects of which will last for such a long time that we can talk about a real year zero.

The vectors of change that have been triggered for the duration, and the multiple levels of impact that have influenced our lives, societies and businesses, require us to face the future by defining a new normal.

Participating in this Symposium between Italy and Japan in 2021 – the very first year of this new normal – is an opportunity to try to investigate in an analytical, strategic and prospective way the challenges and opportunities we are facing right now and that will transport us towards an unknown future. We will try to outline the scenarios that will likely represent the background to the evolution of our food experience, with the aim of identifying a space where thinking about the possible synergies and new frontiers that Japanese and Italian style and food culture will share and discover together.

The health emergency is causing a crisis that has terrible effects at the level of the real economy, hitting simultaneously the offering and the demand, inverting the trend of the growth for world GDP with an estimated contraction of -3.5% for 2020 (IMF, Jan. 2021).

Restrictions on international trade and tourism have had negative impacts on a global scale: the forced interruption of Global Value Chains and the shift to more localised regimes have translated into a decrease in economic activity and income for all national economies, affecting more those economies closely interconnected with foreign countries. However, the International Monetary Fund's forecasts for 2021 give us a certain degree of positivity regarding the recovery dynamics, favoured by the non-financial origin of this crisis. With regard to advanced economies, including Japan and Italy, assuming the gradual availability of vaccines and the effectiveness of economic policies, expectations are for a 'V-shaped' recovery in 2021, with a positive rebound in economic volumes and growth of 8.1% for the international trade (IMF, Jan. 2021).

Within a global context of difficulty and uncertainty for many sectors, the food industry has demonstrated a certain dynamism: unlike others, being essential, it has not suffered production blocks or a drop in demand; the restrictions imposed on the HoReCa chain and the effects of the closures of entertainment venues have in fact been mitigated by the increase in direct spending through conventional retail channels and innovative online solutions.

In Italy, too, despite the initial chaos due to some import restrictions for health reasons imposed by foreign countries to Italian goods, the F&B sector – which has stood out in the last three years for added value in relation to both GDP and manufacturing – has proved extremely resilient in comparison with almost all the others (ISMEA).

Then, we could consider 2020 a year zero for the food sector as well, accelerating some pre-existing trends whilst simultaneously generating new ones.

All the players of the supply chain, from Agribusiness to Hospitality, have been forced to innovate and redefine their business model. Our privileged point of view deriving from a long and concrete experience in assisting food industry companies in the development of business at an international level, gives us the possibility to state that, in

troubling contexts such as these, the ability to interpret the emerging changes in the market (and consumers), is critical for building a solid and durable competitive advantage. Thus, we can elaborate a strategy based on a deep understanding of the meaningful variables and their complexity.

We have identified some macro-trends that deserve further investigations, with the aim to envision a holistic perspective of what the future scenarios of food could be.

Today food can no longer be considered simply fuel for the body: nutrition has evolved into a kaleidoscopic and multi-faceted concept, linked in a wider way to that of Experience & Wellbeing.

Hence the search for a specific benefit in food products – think, for example, about the emotional benefits promised by mindful eating – and the attention to the functional side of food, valued for its positive impact on wellness.

In addition, we should not forget that in recent years the increase in pathologies such as obesity, overweight and metabolic disorders has raised awareness of the link between diet and health, shifting attention to the nutritional values of food. Consumers have become more attentive, informed and selective, while the food industry offer has expanded, specialised and diversified considerably.

Rather than slowing this trend, the pandemic has accelerated it: during the lockdown in Italy, the choice of 49% of people when buying food products was driven by healthy purposes (Nomisma Agri-Food Monitor, 2020). The growth in demand for specialty foods, free from and plant-based products will deeply change the market in the coming years, undoubtedly opening space for many opportunities, but requiring a great capacity of innovation from industry players.

Alongside the search for individual wellbeing, an increasingly important driver of selection is that linked to planet and people wellbeing.

The pandemic has accentuated the emphasis on issues such as climate change, biodiversity reduction or inequality of working conditions in different countries around the world, calling on brands and companies to take a position through concrete actions to demonstrate their commitment to shared value systems.

The trust of consumers – Millennials and Generation Z in particular – relies on the transparency of companies on environmental and social performance, to the point that sustainability metrics are becoming a real competitive factor. Many consumer products have moved to the premium segment of the market, reflecting the perception of greater value in healthier, more natural, sustainable products with traceable origins.

The food industry is experiencing a strong dynamism from various points of view, because today's consumers are not buying just to satisfy a primary need but want to see enriched and recognised

an increasingly complex and stratified sphere of values. The spread of goods with less use of plastic (+14.3%) and recyclable packaging (+6.9%) drove the development and evolution of the Italian market last year (Coop 2020 Report).

The ability to provide innovative solutions will be crucial in the future: not only by exploiting technology, but also rethinking the relationships between the supply chain players or actively involving customers – transforming them into consumActors – in initiatives and projects oriented towards sustainable actions.

The pandemic has also put the spotlight on the relationship between globalism and localism in the world of food: the restriction within domestic boundaries – not only seen from an individual perspective, but also at nation level – has stimulated the reflection on the meaning of the dynamics which, before being abruptly interrupted, flowed rapidly on a global scale. In Italy, campaigns have been promoted to encourage local purchasing with the aim of helping companies suffering from the forced shutdowns and, according to the data processed by Nomisma Observatory, consequently the entire Made in Italy brand has gained advantage and emerged strengthened.

However, is the concept of ‘local’ really the same as it was thirty years ago? In recent years local and regional traditions have been rediscovered through the enhancement of the typical and authentic Made in Italy flavours – through a ‘geography’ of taste, such as promoted by Eataly which tells the history of the territories. Meanwhile, products and food styles from other cultures have intertwined with our own, becoming part of daily lives and giving rise to innovative forms of culinary experimentation, as witnessed by the great success of fusion cuisine.

Culinary globalism and the contamination between different food styles are not only the result of economic globalisation, but express the propensity for experimentation: curiosity and the search for novelty animate the new generations of consumers; Millennials and Generation Z.

Globalism and localism should not be seen as incompatible trends, but as two sides of the same coin: one will need the other to meet the challenges posed by the market of the future. What is at stake in the process of their integration will be the creation of synergies that generate mutual added value.

The health emergencies, intermittent lockdowns, consumer concerns for safety and restrictive measures on the attendance of places of collective conviviality have also given a decisive acceleration to the trend of digitalisation in the world of food, and not only through the growth of the e-grocery channel, which in 2020 has seen an increase in sales of just under 180 million euros in Italy (Coop 2020 Report).

The increase in demand for food delivery, which has proved to be a business lever of vital importance for many HoReCa companies, en-

compassing a large part of the OOH (Out of Home) market, has digitised the Italian hospitality sector, generating a growth projection for 2021 estimated at 1 billion euros (Just Eat 2020 Observatory).

Beyond digital food delivery in its various forms, we will witness the proliferation of new formats and disruptive business models around food service: in an era of digital hyperconnectivity, we are projected towards a new form of customer convenience, no longer linked only to location, but also to service.

The consumption behaviour of new generations will be driven by the desire to enjoy a service characterised by a high degree of personalisation. On the wellbeing front, we can imagine that the offer of restaurants – physical with delivery service, or digital natives – will include the preparation of dishes conceived to meet tailor-made nutritional needs.

‘Different’ is a multi-layered proposition when it comes to Millennials and Generation Z.

Food is a form of social currency for these generations, so it has to look as good as it tastes, with extra points for technical, textural and flavour complexity.

First the emotional factor will dominate, therefore increasing the search for a food experience. In addition, there will be a desire for innovation, in consumption and service formats, as well as in culinary styles – from the particularity of ingredients to the exoticism of tastes and flavours, typical of EthnoFood.

They want to mix-and-match in ways never seen before, as traditional mealtimes blur and ‘pimped up’ snacking takes centre stage. Unlike older consumers who tend to concentrate consumption into two main meals, these youngsters do not discriminate against eating times. Thanks to a relatively flexible school/work schedule, they choose to graze throughout the entire day. They’re also fascinated with global food trends and often embrace different perspectives on what a traditional dish is, while a big part of what they’re looking for is food that feels good.

It’s these expectations that new generations have; seeking out brands they see as a positive choice and actively looking for greater control and transparency on food and its origins.

Across the board, Millennials and Generation Z are rejecting the traditional view that healthy must be boring and are prepared to pay a premium for healthier offerings that taste good. Although they are focused on fuelling their bodies with protein, healthy fats and antioxidants, it’s more than just physical – they are highly aware of maintaining good mental wellbeing, too.

As an integral part of the choices of Italian consumers, Japanese cuisine meets their daily preferences, as highlighted by its placement in third place in last year’s digital food delivery ranking (Just Eat 2020 Observatory). Focusing the analysis to the younger age groups,

which are undoubtedly regular consumers of ethnic foods, the survey conducted by Beyond Research and Next Gen Lab revealed that Japanese *cuisine* is the first choice for more than 50% of Millennials.

In addition to *sushi*, perceived as delicious healthy food, restaurants have diversified their offerings over the years to include many other proposals from the tradition at the base of Japanese cuisine, thanks to the values that the “brand” Japan has been able to inspire in Italians: health, longevity and wellness, but also quality, culture and innovation.

It also emerges that 81% of Millennials look to the media for inspiration for their dishes, mainly websites (57%) and social media pages (55%). Only 24% are inspired by cooking shows that are popular on TV. This is followed by tradition and travel or restaurant experiences (70%), 31% invent and experiment.

The influence of the media also affects the younger segment, who are increasingly conditioned by the aesthetic standards popular on TV and social networks. Finally, the over 25s, whose greater availability of spending often leads them to eat out, have a propensity to experiment with new and unusual things, recording a habitual consumption of ethnic foods (72%).

The spaces of evolution for the Japanese food experience are therefore wide and so far only superficially known and the trends that will guide future scenarios have suggested to us some interesting development ideas.

The Japanese style of nutrition and the culture of food that animates its principles lend themselves to be deeply intertwined with our eating habits of the future as they increasingly orient towards the achievement of an integral wellbeing. The medical conception of food on which it is based, enriched by the historical background of its ancient tradition, could be a differentiating element of value for Italian consumers, to be given prominence and space by creating experiential paths, weaving together the tasting itinerary of food and the opportunity to deepen the knowledge about the underlying cultural heritage.

Creating an innovative format of experience could then mean conceiving a dimension that integrates conviviality, sensoriality and cultural entertainment, supported and made modular in its configurations by an ecosystem of digital and physical possibilities.

In addition to traditional on-site consumption, the restaurant of the future has to be able to offer new hybrid models of highly personalised service, exploiting digital technology to communicate with customers.

From the preparation of dishes tailored to individual nutritional needs – think about the 3D-printed DNA-based *sushi* offered by Singularity restaurant in Tokyo – to delivering kits of freshly selected ingredients to cook meals, another interesting direction for Japanese

cuisine to explore could be the medical menu, listed by the National Restaurant Association Knowledge & Research as one of the 10 most relevant trends for dining in 2030.

A further cue for the redesign of the Japanese food experience is indicated by the disruptive models of consumption that are emerging from the need, expressed by teenagers and young adults in large urban centres, to combine speed, taste, quality and health: healthy on-the-go.

Vending machines, born as sources of junk food, are turning their offer towards healthy and sustainable snacks: thus far, the predominantly Italian assortment of products indicates a vast unexplored market potential for oriental food. Let's think, for example, about snacks popular in Japan such as *onigiri* and *omusubi*, enriched with vegetables and superfood, whole grains and legumes, exactly suitable for the increasingly popular vegan and vegetarian regimes. The use of recyclable packaging or biodegradable plastic would be a further element of added value, combining convenience and sustainability.

Along the same evolutionary line are smart and innovative formats such as healthy fast food restaurants or grocerants, the result of the intuition of drawing from the merging of the retail shopping experience and the conviviality of dining, an amplification in the value of the food experience for the customer.

Healthy fast food restaurants represent an answer to the frenetic lifestyle and nutritional needs requested by the consumers of the future; flexibly declinable in various forms and proposals depending on the target, as demonstrated by the advent of fast gourmet.

The love of young consumers for Japanese cuisine and their attitude to experiment with new dishes opens up a vast field of possibilities to be explored for grab on-the-go. This can be expanded beyond *sushi*, *ramen*, *donburi* or *okonomiyaki*, diversifying the offer with fermented and plant-based products, such as *miso* or *tofu*, typical of the Japanese tradition and appreciated for their nutritional richness.

The patterns we could conceive to enhance style, products and culture of two parallel worlds like Japan and Italy are manifold and diverse.

The future trends point at a universe of opportunities to be seized through innovation, as well as of potentials to be revealed, creating value coherently with evolutionary sets of people's needs in a changing world.

Made in Italy in the Japanese F&B Market and the Marketing of Freedom

Davide Fantoni

Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan

Abstract Italy in Japan resounds with fashion, lifestyle and most of all food. From HoReCa to home cooking to gifts, Italian F&B products have taken Japanese consumers by storm in the past few decades, imposing Made in Italy as the most loved national brand. But the Japanese market is extremely mature, fast and notoriously one of the most sophisticated globally. Competition is fierce and relying on the quality of the product itself is not enough to secure commercial success in a country where form often prevails over content. That is when (good) food marketing becomes the crucial element in dictating the lifespan of a brand. To what degree are Italian producers aware of this? And what is the best approach to minimize failure?

Keywords F&B. Italy. Japan. Marketing. Made in Italy. Commerce.

Summary 1 Japanese Market for Foreign Brands. – 2 The Japanese Consumer. – 3 Conclusions. – 3.1 How Important is Marketing for an Italian Producer Who Wants to Succeed in the Japanese Market? – 3.2 How Enthralling is an Italian Story to the Japanese Consumer? – 3.3 Would the Japanese Buy an Italian Product that is Charged with the Above Values?

The art of telling stories so enthralling that people lose track of their wallets.

(*The New York Times*, 2017)

In 2017, *The New York Times* gave a definition of marketing that strips it down to its very own nature: the art of telling stories which are so powerful and fascinating that consumers lose track of reality



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and end up buying the product they have been offered. They crave it. They need it.

The term marketing (from Latin *mercatus*, ‘marketplace or merchant’) has existed since the sixteenth century with the acceptance of buying goods, shifting in the late nineteenth century to a more modern vision which stressed the moving of goods from the producer to the consumer through the art of advertising. Given the historical isolation of Japan which contributed to the formation of a unique culture and a different way of conceiving business based more on monopolies than competition, marketing has a much shorter history here than in the West. It was only since the end of World War II and during the following three decades that Japan started adopting marketing strategies. Yet, since the market opened its doors to foreign producers, supported by a steadily growing economy and a thirst for internationalisation, it has experienced a fast diversification within the offer of F&B products from the outside world. Currently the level of saturation is high and marketing has become a vital element in dictating the success or failure of a brand. On the other hand, small medium-sized Italian producers still have a difficult time fully embracing marketing as a tool for internationalisation due to both budget constraints and a lack of vision. Furthermore the spin of success experienced by Italy from the last decade of the twentieth century, along with a global trendiness of Italian food, somehow contributed to blur the view that they have of the Japanese market: “a difficult market but why would they not like my product: they adore Italy and my product is the best”.

In this brief article I will try to put the definition of marketing into context and answer the following questions: to what extent do Italians need to tell stories in Japan in order to sell their product? How enthralling are Italian stories to the Japanese? And ultimately would they buy their product?

1 Japanese Market for Foreign Brands

Let’s start by taking a look at the Japanese F&B market. Japan is the third world economy. It has a population of 127 million people who on average spend about 70,000 JPY monthly on food and beverage, making Japan the second market in Asia after China for food consumption. On top of that, domestic production is insufficient so it is vital for Japan to rely on imports from abroad which make it the fourth largest importer of agri-food products in the world. On the other hand, we have to take into consideration the shrinking effect of Japan’s economy, the problem of its ageing population and the barriers to the import of certain categories of foods that remain despite entering into the Japan-EU Economic Partnership Agreement in 2019, and ultimately a fierce competitiveness. When in Italy I am

asked what new products would succeed in Japan, I usually answer that *how* you present a product is almost as important as *what* you offer. And that is after all the boxes have been checked: top quality, price competitiveness, production flexibility, customisation and past experience in internationalisation, preferably with a similarly demanding market. Add to that an extra dose of resilience and most of all a passion, or at least a sincere interest, in the Japanese culture. Given the above and the level of saturation of the Japanese market, the 'how' you present a product shall immediately be translated to a well thought-out, well planned and well conducted marketing strategy that necessarily has to be personalised for Japan, taking into account its many peculiarities.

The Japanese market opened its doors to foreign brands at the end of World War II. The hegemony that had reigned until then in food consumption based on local produce started to crack and an increasing interest toward foreign foods took off, alimanted by an historical and geographical sense of exclusion from the world, which stretches to the modern day. The experience of consuming foreign foods, as well as dressing in foreign brands, became an easy way to compensate for such a complex feeling of belonging to an international jet set as well as stating one's individual economical rise. The first model to be fully absorbed by Japanese society after the war was the American one. In the 1950s and 1960s family restaurants and fast foods started to bloom in Japan: unlike the Japanese traditional diet, hamburgers, shakes and french fries were rich in taste, extravagant and unfussy on top of being the food of the country which had won the war and that looked to the future with bright eyes. The infamous fast-food chain MacDonald's established itself in the next decade and never stopped growing, making Japan its most important foreign market to date. Also, the first pizza to be introduced to Japan was an American-style one. However, the level of sophistication of Japanese culture soon demanded a different model of reference. That is when Europe made its grand entrance from the mid 1970s. Apart from some sporadic episodes, like Great Britain with its soft toast bread that became *pan* (bread) for mass consumption, it is France that imposed itself. Unlike the USA, France had a long culinary history and refined traditions which fulfilled the innermost desire of Japanese consumers to identify with an *elite*. Wine and cheese were introduced along with a *cuisine* elaboration which resounded with elegance and mannerism. Italy entered Japan by the back door a good twenty years after France. Many Japanese chefs who went to France for a culinary experience in the field after their studies would occasionally travel to Italy soon realising that there was a striking resemblance with Japan: both countries put quality and freshness of the ingredient before its elaboration, they share the centrality of the family system in society and both have a rich, local craftsmanship tradition. While

still representing an European *elite* with a strong brand identity, Italy seemed to be more approachable and easier to identify with. Furthermore and most importantly, Italians are optimistic, bright and light spirited. The resulting mix of culture, tradition and joy for life worked out as a perfect combination for triggering the enthusiasm of Japanese consumers.

Today the number of Italian restaurants in metropolitan and rural Japan is overwhelming and exceeding any other Western cuisine, the Italian flag is remarkably present at different levels of the distribution channels and in general Italy is immediately associated with good food. Having said this, Made in Italy is still considered very much a niche and Italian sounding is a problem when looking at mass consumption products, like pasta and canned tomatoes. On top of that, although the F&B seems to be the driving sector of Italian exports to Japan, in reality it comes well after other less obvious categories such as pharmaceuticals, and its share of the imported food market is less than 10%. Italian producers typically find themselves at a loss when looking at the Japan of today. On one hand, they still remember the success stories told by those who rode the wave of the bubble economy. On the other hand, they hear horror stories from those who tried but failed miserably although the same brand, sometimes very well established, is shining in other foreign markets and despite the fact that made in Italy is a powerful brand in the eyes of a Japanese consumer.

2 The Japanese Consumer

Once hugely homogenous the consumer market is going through a fast diversification process, helped by the spread of social media. As a result, purchasing needs now tend to be very fragmented and personalisation has to be taken into account. On top of that, the Japanese consumer has to be one of the hardest globally: extremely sophisticated, educated and well informed. They are looking for something that goes well beyond their need for a good, fresh, safe and well-balanced value for money purchase. Especially when shopping for foreign products they are on the search for something that is trendy, new, well crafted and sufficiently explained. While brand orientation is still strong, an interest in healthy, locally crafted foods is on the rise. As a matter of fact, today foreign producers face a wide range of consumers: the post-Fukushima healthy conscious ones, the elderly with specific diet needs, the single-person household with higher expenditure availability and higher standards, the new (salary) men whose individuality in terms of taste and shopping is finally coming out and who are looking for ready, easy to eat products that are still emotionally appealing. In general Japanese consumers can still be

very selective with foreign brands. If they tend to trust unconditionally domestic makers, foreign ones have to prove their credibility and most of all have to give a good reason for consumers to choose their product over a Japanese one. Furthermore, once they do so, they still have to gain the trust of the consumer over a long period of time with consistent behaviour in quality delivery, excellent customer care and a certain degree of personalisation. From size to safety, from practicality to aesthetics it is difficult and sometimes impossible to conceive the exact same product for the European market and the Japanese one. Having said this, there is no doubt that Italian food at Ho.Re.Ca level has imposed itself in Japan like nowhere else. The Italian lifestyle in Japan is cool as it is in other Western countries but there is something that makes the Italian *Dolce Vita* extra sweet in the eyes of a Japanese consumer.

3 Conclusions

3.1 How Important is Marketing for an Italian Producer Who Wants to Succeed in the Japanese Market?

On one hand, we have a very complex market, highly competitive with a sophisticated and demanding consumer. On the other, a small producer with big dreams and limited means. In the eyes of the Italian producer the limitations are too often identified with budget constraints. In my opinion the lack of vision and sometimes lack of humbleness are greater barriers. Marketing for many still sounds like a million dollar operation when in reality given the revolution that is taking place in the advertising world it is way more approachable and sustainable than ten years ago. I am not talking only of the use of social media which can be a great tool of communication and relatively accessible but what comes before that: the thorough study of the market and the consumer. The literature is all there, and all free. A deep understanding of the culture of the market you wish to approach is the first step of commercial success. The second is questioning whether you are really ready for Japan despite the success you might have achieved in other markets. The third is accepting the fact that you cannot face this market without a local, competent counterpart. Then, once these requirements have been fulfilled comes the most important one: you need to create a good story and the way you tell it has to be even better. Marketing is not just important. It is necessary.

3.2 How Enthralling is an Italian Story to the Japanese Consumer?

Japan has gone from being a strict middle-class society to a divided one in just fifty years and the adjustment to such change is still in process. While opportunities and outcomes are no longer equally available, a total and non-negotiable acceptance of societal rules is still expected. Rules abound in Japan, often creating a suffocating effect which contrasts sharply with the global ideals of freedom and self-affirmation. Notably the Japanese feel an obligation to follow the same path as everyone else as individuality is still very much unwelcomed. According to the 2020 world happiness report Japan ranks 62nd with one of the lowest levels of hope for the future. Given this psychological aspect of the Japanese consumer, it should not surprise us the fact that *Made in Italy*, which embodies values of unconventionality and emotional freedom, holds a place of honour.

Seen from a different perspective, Italy has, although unintentionally, put into action an emotional branding strategy that appeals to the innermost needs, aspirations and dreams of Japanese. The emotional reward that a consumer has from buying or eating Italian products has no equals: the feelings of positivity and empowerment that major consuming brands are pursuing to evoke through the shopping experience are topped with a unique sense of liberation from the chains of social rules. In a way, Italy gives you the freedom to be yourself. No other reward is so emotionally valuable in a society like the Japanese one and in my opinion this aspect is still relatively unacknowledged by Italian marketers.

3.3 Would the Japanese Buy an Italian Product that is Charged with the Above Values?

While the immediate answer to this would be “would you not?”, there are other aspects to be taken into consideration such as the trust that the brand has to build with time and a smooth, pragmatic approach to delivering the product. As Aristotle would put this, it is only with-in the orchestration and balance of *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* that a persuasive strategy works best. However, in a business environment where Western ideals of individuality are becoming increasingly important in driving the consumers’ behaviours a Marketing of Freedom could be the next winning strategy for Italy.

The Gastronomic Tale: A Link between Japanese and Italian Food Culture

Creation and Development of a Book Series for Italian Readers

Stefania Viti

Journalist and writer

Abstract This paper focuses on the project of creation, development and publication of a series of books on Japanese food culture within the Italian publishing scene. We will have a chance to discuss the importance of Japanese food and culture's storytelling, and to examine the peculiar choice of this kind of narration, as well as the gastronomic tale as a link between Japanese and Italian cultures. Lastly, this paper will provide a few ideas on the nourishment of the gastronomic conversation between Italy and Japan after the pandemic.

Keywords Storytelling. Food. Italy. Japan. Publishing. Culture. Gastronomy.

Summary 1 Background and Expansion of Japanese Food in Italy. – 2 Western Gaze on Japanese Food: Storytelling of a Gastronomic Tale. – 3 Gastronomic Tale as a Link Between Italy and Japan. – 4 Subject, Structure and Storytelling of a Gastronomy Tale. – 5 Japanese Food Culture in Italy After the Pandemic: Storytelling as a Market Strategy.

1 Background and Expansion of Japanese Food in Italy

The journey of Japanese food towards the West started mainly after the World War II. The first dish to reach the West was *sushi*, which made its debut in the USA, where the California roll, a Westernised form of *sushi*, was created. *Sushi* was also the first Japanese dish to become popular in Italy. It arrived in Europe sometime in the 1980s, as a trend

imported by the USA, spreading to England first and expanding to other European countries (Geri 2015) soon afterwards. The first *sushiya* in Italy, Poporoya, was established in 1989 in Milan, where it remains, and it continued to be one of the few original *sushi* restaurants in the city for many years (Viti 2015). Until the mid-2010s, *sushi* was still the best-known Japanese food in Italy, the identifying dish of an entire food culture. *Ramen*, *sake* and other Japanese delicacies were not very popular among Italians and could be enjoyed only in the few Japanese restaurants located in large cities like Rome and Milan, where customers were mainly Japanese businessmen arriving from Japan. Still in 1990s and well into the early 2000s, Japanese restaurants were perceived as exotic and sophisticated venues, unapproachable by common people, due to the fairly expensive bills and to the obscure menu choices. Up to the beginning of the 2010s in Italy the general knowledge of Japanese food was very basic and mainly associated with *sushi*. In large cities like Milan *sushi* became increasingly popular, albeit still being perceived as a rather expensive, *chic* and somewhat *elite* and *gourmet* food choice. The opening of many *sushi* restaurants run mainly by Chinese helped popularise *sushi* among a larger public, although, the commercial success of *sushi* was not followed by a clearer understanding of the dish, thus creating a degree of confusion as to its country of origin. At that stage, the global wave of exotic and ethnic food had not yet struck and most Italians still regarded Asian food as a single undefined block, unable to trace clear boundaries around every single cuisine and peculiarity. The same lack of knowledge applied to *sake*, which, even up to the Expo Milano in 2015, was still erroneously considered as a grappa equivalent, a rice-distilled spirit with a high alcohol content, to be consumed as an after-dinner drink. As for *sushi*, while the dish enjoyed a growing popularity in the cities, raw fish still faced some degree of distrust and suspicion among people from the provinces. A sentiment which is still true today.

2 Western Gaze on Japanese Food: Storytelling of a Gastronomic Tale

From an editorial point of view, the coverage of Japanese dishes by lifestyle and food magazines followed and interpreted the general trend of the country. A gradual change began to occur in 2013, only a couple of years shy of Expo Milano 2015. “The knowledge of Japanese cuisine in Italy has gone through the expansion of *sushi* and the knowledge of it among the Italians” says Paola Manfredi,¹ food and travel editor for the Vanity Fair Italian website.

¹ Interview collected by the Author on March 2021.

By working on the web, we have a real perception of the number of readers who click and read an article, which is very important to understand the market and trends. During the years before Expo, we registered a boom of interest in articles about *sushi* that, up until now, has never been equaled by any other Japanese or ethnic food. It was a real wave. I still remember when we started to cover Japanese food by editing articles explaining what *sushi* is, how it is made, the ingredients and the different types. We also made sure to review *sushi* restaurants managed by the Japanese to make people better understand *sushi* and its world. Culturally speaking, I doubt that Expo Milano 2015 has changed the perception of Japanese food in Italy. Rather, I think that Expo catalysed an already existing trend, that saw the spread of ethnic cuisines in Italy. Among these, the Japanese cuisine has been the most popular. The globalisation of food cultures, which has brought about a growing interest in what we Italians call *cucina d'autore*, high-end cuisine created by famous chefs using an international array of ingredients, falls into this context.²

An example of this trend is the publication of books *Sushi & Susci* and *Susci più che mai* by Moreno Cedroni (2006; 2014), the two Michelin star chef who, inspired by Japanese *sushi*, created an Italian interpretation of it, even using the Italian phonetic spelling *susci*. In 2013, in Italy, Feltrinelli Real Cinema – the publishing house's series on art film productions – released to the Italian market *Jiro Dreams of Sushi* (Italian title: *Jiro e l'arte del sushi*) (Gelb 2013), a docufilm by David Gelb about the life and work of Jiro Ono, the most famous *itamae* in the world. Jiro Ono rose to international fame when he was awarded three Michelin stars in 2008, and by doing so, he became the holder of the Guinness World Record for being the oldest person to own the three-star accolade. The Feltrinelli Real Cinema releases are accompanied with a book related to the subject matter of the film and I was asked to curate the one related to Jiro Ono's documentary. The first idea we came up with was to find Ono's recipe book and translate it. Needless to say, I was unable to find any recipe written by Jiro Ono, since Jiro Ono has never authored any simple *sushi* recipe books. This discovery led me to a sudden awakening: the approach we had used so far, that is looking for *sushi* recipes, betrayed a wholly Western vision, in which food is customarily described through recipes. The theorem could not be applied to Japanese food. Secondly, the greatest living *itamae*, by having never written a recipe book, had sent a very clear message: *sushi*, while being a dish, cannot be synthesised in a simple recipe. In that period, as a journalist specialised in Japanese affairs,

² Interview collected by the Author on March 2021.

I was facing a similar problem, since I was frequently being asked to write stories about *sushi* with recipes attached. All these experiences gave me the opportunity to think about how much we knew in Italy about *sushi* and Japanese culture, both from a historical and gastronomic point of view, and I came to the conclusion that, culturally speaking, the popularity of *sushi* had been based on a great misunderstanding (Viti 2015a). A common mistake when approaching the Japanese culture is to believe that to a simple and essential form corresponds an easy technique, in this case a recipe. Furthermore, since the variety of Japanese cuisine was yet to be disclosed, I realised that Japanese food was still closely identified with *sushi*, so much so that it was common to think that the Japanese eat *sushi* every day.

3 Gastronomic Tale as a Link Between Italy and Japan

When I realised that, in order to write about Japanese food culture, I had to clarify all these points first, I took the chance to do that by going to Feltrinelli and pitching to them the idea for the book that was to be attached to the Italian DVD release of *Jiro Dream of Sushi*. The publisher green-lit the project and I created an editorial plan for *Il Sushi*, a book that collected a few essays on the history, geography and culture of *sushi*, written by experts of Japanese culture who were happy to contribute. *Il Sushi* was written with a clear goal in mind: to provide Italian readers with the tools to acquire a better understanding of the most famous Japanese food in the world, and to break down stereotypes, by giving new information and explaining the Japanese point of view on the matter. The writing style would have to be simple and clear, intelligible to readers unacquainted with Japanese culture: “our dissemination of the work is essential to reach readers who are unfamiliar with some topics, by expanding the general knowledge. This can have an influence on the market and create new customers. It is much more difficult for a book to appeal to and be read and understood by those who are completely unpractised on a topic than those who are already interested in it. In this sense, it was paramount to choose the most adequate style and topics, so as to overcome reticence and indifference and to sell the article or any other publication to the general public. These are the tasks that need to be undertaken in order to ensure new information about a given topic circulates among the people smoothly” concluded Paola Manfredi.³ This argument provided me with an excellent motive to propose to my editor to have *Il Sushi* elevated to a project of its own, in a revised and expanded edition. Gribaudo, the Feltrinelli im-

³ Interview collected by the Author on March 2021.

print specialising in gastronomy books, approved my idea and *L'Arte del Sushi* saw the light in the year of Expo Milano, during which time the number of initiatives aimed at the promotion and dissemination of Japanese food increased exponentially. *L'Arte del Sushi* did not include any recipes, but it featured essays written by scholars on Japanese culture and gastronomy experts, especially for the project. *L'Arte del Sushi*, curated by Stefania Viti, was published by Gribaudo in the summer of 2015. It needs to be considered that the Japanese culture, including its culinary aspects, was not completely strange to the Italians. For decades, the Italian culture had been permeated by it. However, while on the one hand the narrative of the Far East played a significant part in stirring up the 'exotic charm' of Japan, on the other hand, paradoxically, it distanced its beneficiaries, namely readers, from the true essence and more authentic nuances of an absolutely iconic and sophisticated culture like the Japanese one. As it happens, when we approach great cultures – I think of South America and its 'magical realism' – we are initially dazzled by the icon, the striking manifestation, the bright light that fascinates us, but, at the same time, blinds us with the pleasure of discovering new nuances and shadows, the perception of more hidden lights. In this sense, we worked with the author on a project that could bring back the natural frame of Japanese culture to the general public, with a storytelling integrating the numerous and different cultural levels" said Massimo Pellegrino,⁴ Editorial Director and Chief Operations Officer at Feltrinelli Gribaudo. *L'Arte del Sushi* heralded an editorial project that brought us – the publishing company and myself – to continue writing and publishing several books on Japanese food culture, which would follow and often anticipate the market trends.

4 Subject, Structure and Storytelling of a Gastronomy Tale

Since books are commercial products that must be sold and must be read, we need to be able to 'read' the market, that is to understand the needs, the liking and the taste of every reader, and, by doing so, to predict what topics will trend. Following these principles, since 2015 we have published books exploring new dishes and culinary aspects of the Japanese culture as they were spreading across Italy. In this process, it may be interesting to note that by 2016 Gribaudo had published the Italian release of a book written by Jiro Ono (2016). The book is a compendium of the characteristics of the main ingredients of *sushi*, and the most important techniques he uses to create his *sushi*. The title is very simple: *Sushi*, but it includes a very impor-

⁴ Interview collected by the Author on March 2021.

tant subtitle: *Aesthetic and Technique*, the two main characteristics of any form of Japanese art. In the same year, I published the last book of what I call a 'trilogy' about sushi, *Il sushi tradizionale*, in which I compiled over 50 simplified recipes by Poporoya's *itamae* Shiro Hirazawa. I did indeed include a few *sushi* recipes, but the book is not quite the cookery book that it may seem. From this publication on, all the recipes I have presented in my books have a very specific goal: to make readers understand how incredibly difficult it is to make *sushi* or other Japanese dishes. Raising awareness of the difficulty of making a dish, which is simple only in its appearance, can help readers and restaurant goers better appreciate the value of what they are eating. At the same time, encouraging readers to make *sushi* on their own can help them become acquainted with new ingredients and new ways of preparing food.

In any case, it is not sufficient to be a trained cook. There is so much more to making *sushi* than simply putting rice and fish together. Learning how to make *sushi* entails a willingness to 'think in a Japanese way', and to inhabit one of the most identified aspects of its culture. As I wrote at the beginning of my essay published in *L'Arte del Sushi*: "Masters never explain. Masters' actions must be observed and then repeated: this is the only possible lesson to be learnt" (Viti 2015a, 11; transl. by the Author). Through *sushi*, we thus reach one of the key principles of Japanese culture, which is *kata*, the unique Japanese way of doing things. *Kata* can be learned only through practice: it happens also in *chadō*, *shodō* and any other Japanese art. Only if we respect the long path of *kata* can we grasp the essence of Japanese culture. Whenever I meet – as I have in the past – a chef and they tell me they have learnt to make *sushi* in six months, I always reply that they may have learnt to put together rice and fish, but that *sushi* is another thing. As Pio d'Emilia wrote: "More than a dish, *sushi* is a ritual. A manual. Even more: a compendium of food and cultural anthropology" (2015, 16; transl. by the Author). Only if we understand this, can we fully appreciate the sophisticated way of making *sushi*, its essence, which is the quintessential Japanese way of making food. During my journey across the world of *sushi*, I made another banal but very important discovery: the storytelling of food is, indeed, a cultural performance in which the recipe must be the last actor to enter the scene, not the first. I used this structure for all the other books I wrote. Each book consists of two sections: the gastronomic tale first and then the recipes. The recipes arrive at the end of a literary journey in which the reader is informed by the origin, the history, the geographical characteristics of the ingredients he is going to use while trying to cook Japanese dishes. Recipes are then an expression of a chef's creativity and for this reason, each time I carefully select the restaurants and chefs with whom I want to collaborate. When creating a series of books on Japanese food culture, with my

editor I have chosen to tread an editorial path which endeavours to meet the needs of the readers, captivate their attention and answer the questions they may have on the subject matter. “After *L’Arte del Sushi*, the author returned to the bookshelves with *Il Sushi tradizionale*, followed by volumes on *ramen*, *sake* and a splendid book dedicated on popular cuisine, street food and the *matsuri* (festivals) of Japan. The forthcoming book on tea and pastry is a sumptuous and elegant volume which not only frames the most traditional and authentic aspects of Japan, in what has now become a real method of stylistic approach, but also depicts the ‘other’ Japan, as seen through the spyglass of our Mediterranean culture. This is carried out with no mystification or downright simplifications, but through the eyes of those who have devoted and will still devote a substantial part of their existence to the study of a *locus amoenus*, a second homeland in Japan, and of the Japanese culture, perceived as stratified, complex, not attributable to a slogan or a catchphrase. Japan is a myth and a real country at the same time, and in our project we paid attention to both dimensions. For this reason, Gribaudo is very proud of having given space to this inspiring narrative in their publications” concludes Massimo Pellegrino.⁵

5 Japanese Food Culture in Italy After the Pandemic: Storytelling as a Market Strategy

In a globalised world, the dialogue among cultures is an important aspect that can occur through the storytelling of food traditions. Tradition is indeed the keyword of our Italian culture and can be seen as an inspiration to find a literary style to present far-away countries. As in the case of Japan, we can find similarities that may then be turned into commercial opportunities from both sides. “The passion of the Japanese for our food heritage is well known, as evidenced by the presence in Japan of thousands of Italian restaurants and many publications. The attention of Italians to Japanese cuisine is more recent but has significantly increased in the last decade, during which we have discovered the extraordinary affinity between two distant worlds: the search for the authenticity of the ingredients, combined with a painstaking accuracy in the preparation of the dishes and a particularly developed aesthetic sensibility that are common to both cuisines. It should not be forgotten that Italy and Japan are very keen on their traditions in all fields. Today these are mutually studied, cultivated and delved into. Publications keep the dialogue between the two cultures alive, always expanding it to new fields and contribut-

⁵ Interview collected by the Author on March 2021.

ing to an increase in exchanges favoured by knowledge” said Ambassador Umberto Vattani,⁶ President of the Italy Japan Foundation. In 2019, EU and Japan signed the Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which guarantees 45 high-quality Italian products the same protection in Japan as they have in Europe. The COVID-19 pandemic has definitely thrown a spanner in everybody’s works, but, hopefully, we will soon be able to go on with our lives. However, we must prepare to work very hard, to regain lost market share and trust from other countries. To accomplish that, cultural activities are key, because any product – a dish, a garment, a country – without smart storytelling has a limited visibility, which means a limited value.

⁶ Interview collected by the Author on March 2021.

How *Sushi* Became Popular in Italy

The Role of Producers and Consumers

Niccolò Geri

Language teacher, food expert and author

Abstract The diffusion of *sushi* in Italy is linked to the globalisation of *sushi* chefs and to the globalisation of fish markets that allows people to buy every kind of fish they need, without thinking about the damages they could provoke. The consumption of *sushi* underlines also the diffusion of Japanese cultural elements and the fascination for Japanese culture in Italy. In general, *sushi* is not only linked to economic strategies adopted by chefs and restaurant managers, but also to the diffusion in Italy of other Japanese cultural elements.

Keywords Sushi. Italy. Globalisation. Culture. Restaurants. Culture. Japan. Consumption.

As Nützenadel and Trentmann (2008) wrote, food and globalisation are inseparable. Food plays an important role in the creation of national and local identities and it is often the cause of political contention, wars and protest. Nevertheless, there are few articles about global effects linked to food consumption and distribution, subjecting them to other factors such as financial markets, politics and migration. Human beings can survive without money, politicians, cars and other commodities, but they cannot get far without food. Scholars have focused their attention on the diffusion of restaurant chains such as KFC or McDonald's as they are linked to the globalisation process, but less attention has been paid to food and its creators. Glo-

balisation is more than having an IKEA or a KFC in your town (Kimura, Belk 2005, 325). Many scholars have only written about the production of food regarding “McDonaldisation” (such as Ritzer 1993), but few of them have focused on globalisation through food consumption (Nützenadel, Trentmann 2008; Ritzer 2010). Since food is about survival, it allows us to understand the social norms and the identity of groups of individuals. Saying that ‘we are what we eat’ is not only linked to a chemical-biological aspect of food consumption, but it also outlines that our society is deeply influenced by its own diet. Food in fact requires storage, utensils, space, recipes and communication. Food is also a social status marker; with regards not only to Michelin stars in modern restaurants, but also to the consumption of foreign products in the past, especially during the Age of European colonial empires which began in 1493.

The creation of the first colony in the New World, the modern Haiti, in which the consumption of Europeans foods was “a common practice amongst those social groups who were keen to acquire higher status” (Nützenadel, Trentmann 2008, 11). Food is also a national identity marker: after the War of Independence (1775-83), American people refused to drink tea like British people, replacing it with coffee (Nützenadel, Trentmann 2008). Thus, “food is about culture and culture is not an end in itself”, but a means to an end (Griswold 2008). As Griswold (2008) argued quoting Arnold and Swift, culture can be compared to the work of spiders and bees. If culture moves as do spiders, who work for themselves making webs only to catch their own meals, it cannot create communication between people. As bees allow people to make candles from their wax and sweet from their honey, food allows people to communicate, to develop knowledge and to spread science and technology. In this way it creates a link between culture and society. Food in fact is not to be seen as a mere commodity but as a symbol which tells a story about its creator and its origin. Only with its history can food (and commodities in general) obtain a value and be considered from a different point of view not linked to the economy or finance. Therefore, the meaning and the value of food lie in its own history and the value related to the consumption of the same food is different from place to place. During the War of Independence, coffee was considered a drink for slaves since it was produced mainly in Brazil and drunk by people working on the coffee plantation.

Let’s think again about the War of Independence in America and the destruction of tea thrown into the Boston harbour during the ‘Boston tea party’ in 1773. Why tea and not something else? Tea was the symbol of the British Empire which had colonised India, Sri Lanka and other territories, and which was characterised by tea plantations and the consumption of tea. The consumption of this beverage was a status symbol linked to the supremacy of Great Britain as a colonial power.

For this reason, destroying a load of tea meant refusing that supremacy, and after the end of the War of Independence, tea was then substituted in the USA by coffee, a beverage drunk by slaves in plantations, to symbolise the birth of a free country without control of the British Empire. The global system offers us a lot of products linked to other countries. Those products can be abstract such as holidays, ideas, and habits, and concrete such as clothes, vehicles and food. For these reasons, some scholars argue that globalisation is a phenomenon as old as humanity itself. Its birth lies with the first migration of humans from Africa and the invention of agriculture (Kiple 2007) but it was only in the period between fifteenth and seventeenth century A.D. that this phenomenon arrived to join other parts of the world. Indeed, till that period a lot of cultural and economic movements such as Hellenism, Christianity and Capitalism were born. Nevertheless, these movements only influenced a few parts of the known world. The diffusion of globalised food and, consequently, the increment of restaurants and shops, marketing, machinery, knowledge and tools linked to that product are a part of globalisation. Between 1970 and 1990 *sushi* arrived in the metropolitan centres such as London and Amsterdam (Cwiertka 2000), in high level Japanese restaurants and very expensive hotels attended by businessmen and Japanese tourists. Since it was considered a dish of *haute* Japanese *cuisine*, it was very expensive (Ming, Miho 2001). The creation of *sushi*-bars and low-cost *sushi* accelerated the diffusion in other countries such as the USA and Europe, *sushi* increased as a business.

Restaurants in Italy seemed to be forced to modify their menu with ingredients coming from Eastern traditions, and in particular from Japan. Ethnic restaurants such as Chinese restaurants, for this reason, are now inserting typical Japanese dishes such as *sushi* into their menu. For these reasons the effects of globalisation can be seen from the point of view of the 'original', created by the fusion between the 'exotic' with the 'familiar' (Brannen 1992). In fact, one of the main reasons for the quick diffusions of *Californiamaki* is the adaptability of new ingredients and new tastes. *Sushi* can be seen as proof that globalisation is not just a process linked to the diffusion of Western Euro-American products and values. Furthermore, the globalisation of *sushi* also represents the globalisation of other sectors linked to this product. For example, the fish market, where more and more fish such as red tuna are now sold (Bestor 2000). and the job market, where more and more *sushi* chefs are required. Nowadays, people eat and make *sushi*, increasing its success and popularity alongside *haute cuisine* and popular foods. In fact, the Great Recession of 2008 which affected *haute cuisine* restaurants in Italy, seems to have been one of the key factors of *sushi* as a healthy low-cost food. Supermarkets also started to create little corners for *sushi* and sell ingredients in order to permit customers to create *sushi* by them-

selves at home. Japanese rice, *nori* seaweed, rice vinegar and *wasabi* appear next to the pasta and tomato sauces, which are the base of the Mediterranean diet. Then, we can say that *sushi* has spread to a lot of sectors linked to its own business which originated in Japan to Italy, changing the appearance of our cities, our diet, the way of making healthy low-cost food, the idea of making something popular which originally belonged to a limited group. Nevertheless, with the exception of the works of Cwiertka (2005), Bestor (2000) and Milligan (2006), few literary works have focused on the diffusion of Japanese food, and *sushi* in particular, in Europe and few scholars have focused their attention on the spread of *sushi* in a country such as Italy. Scholars such as Cwiertka have focused their studies on Northern European cities such as London and Amsterdam but few literary works have explored the diffusion of *sushi* in Southern Europe. Then these studies could be too general, because the analysis of big cities cannot reflect the situation of other geographical places inside the same country (Milligan 2005, 3). *Sushi* can be seen as a cultural object, *sushi* chefs as cultural producers, *sushi* restaurants as specific social worlds and a consumer as someone who receives that cultural object. These four elements are the base of Griswold (2008) so called “cultural diamond” from which it is possible to make an analysis of a culture through a practical approach. For ‘*sushi* restaurants’, I don’t only mean restaurants which only offer *sushi*, but also other kinds of restaurants which have inserted *sushi* in their menus. In particular, the differences in terms of price, value, customers and staff between an Italian restaurant which offers *sushi*, a *kaitenzushi* restaurant, a Japanese cuisine dedicated restaurant and a new category of restaurant recently created in Italy, called *Wok-sushi*, will be analysed. According to an article which appeared in ANSA (Agenzia Nazionale di Stampa Associata) on October 5th 2012, there are 458 Japanese restaurants in Italy, representing 6.6% of all of the restaurants in the whole of Italy, of which about 50 are situated in Florence.¹

According to another article, written by Fabio Savelli in *Corriere della Sera* on October 3rd 2012, there are about 200 Japanese restaurants in Milan (Savelli 2012). The choice of the restaurants where interviews were conducted was motivated by the proximity to the place where I lived.² As the interviews have revealed, restaurants adopt different ways to promote and diffuse *sushi*. For the *Wok-sushi* restaurant, the diffusion is only based on the quantity of a product

¹ “Fipe sostiene vera ristorazione giapponese”, ANSA, October 5 2021. <https://tinyurl.com/2p95af2m>.

² The study is based on interviews made with the owners of three different *sushi* restaurants: an Italian restaurant whose menu includes *sushi*, a Chinese restaurant with *sushi* in its menu, a Japanese *sushi* restaurant.

and of its customers. In fact, the *Wok-sushi* restaurant menu offers 60 *sushi* recipes, available all year round, and thanks to the 'all you can eat' formula customers can eat everything for a cheaper price. The number of people the restaurant can host also suggests us how important the role of quantity is. The management has to guarantee a high standard of quality, and this is possible thanks to the open view kitchen through which customers can observe the chefs working within. The management of the selected Italian restaurant revealed how foreign cuisine could be promoted with local ingredients. The preparation of typical local food is also influenced by Japanese culinary techniques such as tempura style of frying. In this case, the purchase of local and high quality ingredients increases the price of the final product. Here, the quantity is not a basic element (as is shown also by the number of customers the restaurant can host). Quantity is replaced by quality and is guaranteed by the experienced staff in this field. The diffusion of sushi promoted by *kaitenzushi* is linked to the ability of the chef to understand the tastes of his customers. In fact, the chef of the *kaitenzushi* decided to offer new recipes alongside traditional ones in order to persuade even the most sceptical consumers to choose *sushi* not necessarily prepared with raw fish. The fact that sushi has become so successful through its adaptation to local tastes is typical of *kaitenzushi* which has based its strategy on a study of customer tastes. For most Japanese restaurants the quality of ingredients is a basic point, but the value of the final product is also influenced by the work, the knowledge and the ability of the chef: the *sushiman*. As the interviews have revealed, the presence of a *sushiman*, the hierarchical organisation within the kitchen of a Japanese *sushi* restaurant, and the values linked to his knives are particular features which only belong to Japanese restaurants. If we sum up the elements on which sushi restaurants promote the diffusion of *sushi*, we could quote quality, price and taste.

Every restaurant that took part to the interviews based its management on these elements in very different ways. Quality is the element which attracts customers even in expensive restaurants and it allows the creation of loyal customers. Strategies around price have promoted the diffusion of *sushi* in Italy amongst different types of customers from different social conditions and age.

Thanks to these differences in quality, price and taste that characterise these four types of restaurant, *sushi* was diffused in Italy. Even if chefs have tried to give us an image of their typical customer, it is very difficult to understand their characteristics. An important external factor which has influenced the strategy of the management of those restaurants is the economic crisis. The interviews revealed that, while this *Wok-sushi* restaurant focuses mainly on the number of customers, the Italian, Japanese and *kaitenzushi* restaurants rely on loyal customers who, despite the economic crisis, eat

out. According to these interviews, customers eat out less frequently than before the beginning of the economic crisis. Thus, the creation of a loyal customer is an important factor which permits *sushi* to be diffused. From this interview we can understand that the *Wok-sushi* restaurant, thanks to its low-price menu, has encouraged people to approach *sushi* by substituting the original role of *kaitenzushi* in Japan. These interviews have shown that three of the four chefs have attended specialised courses in *sushi*, while only two of them have obtained a specialised diploma. Experience as an apprentice in a restaurant is preferred to school courses, and no law obligates a *sushi* chef to have these kinds of certifications. The differences amongst these kinds of restaurants can suggest that even if all of them prepare *sushi*, this product is not the same in each place. The differences amongst the chefs has helped the diffusion of *sushi* in both big cities and small towns. From the interviews carried out it was difficult to understand the frequency in which clients visited the restaurants. Through the analysis of the quantitative data, we can understand the general features and characteristics of *sushi* consumers and their preferences in order to understand in which way they contributed to the diffusion of *sushi* in Italy. In order to collect basic information to understand the characteristics of a medium *sushi* consumer, I created 19 questions. After that I created an account with username and password for a website, I inserted the questions into the program on the site and I shared the survey on my personal page in the social network (Facebook).³ Many consumers went to a *Wok-sushi* chain restaurant and Japanese restaurant, while few consumers ate *sushi* in an Italian restaurant which offered *sushi* on their menu. If we look at the interviews with the Italian restaurant management and the *Wok-sushi* chef, this trend is reflected in the choices of business strategies adopted by each management: the *Wok-sushi* restaurant focuses on quantity of customers by attracting them with low-cost food and the Italian restaurant manager focuses on local and quality ingredients with higher prices and fewer tables influenced by the type of customer. There is little difference in terms of percentage between consumers travelling from their town and people who eat *sushi* in their own town. This could be explained by the absence of those kinds of restaurants in particular urban areas but also by the larger choice that big cities offer in terms of price, competition and quality. What a customer needs in these restaurants is good fish quality as the survey has revealed. Another point of view is that the strategy of *Wok-sushi* restaurant in preparing low-cost *sushi* is not synonymous with bad quality and the presence of the open view kitchen could be a sort of guarantee for customers. Consumers in Italy go to *sushi* restaurants

³ The web site I used for this survey is <https://it.to.luna.com/>.

with other people and few of them didn't eat raw fish. The use of the Internet has been important not only to understand how to prepare *sushi*, but also for the diffusion of other Japanese cultural elements such as *manga* or *anime*. Talking about other Japanese cultural elements, many participants had some knowledge of them: for example, a large percentage of the participants watched *anime* or read *manga*. On one hand it doesn't seem to have any correlation with *sushi* consumption because, as the answers to the opened questions suggested, not all *sushi* consumers have a wide knowledge of Japan or practice any of the activities the survey proposed. It could also present a *clichéd* image which doesn't reflect reality. There might or might not be a link in terms of cause and effect of *sushi* consumption and other elements and this is shown in the experiences furnished by the answers to the open questions. In fact, as some participants said, many of them were introduced to *sushi* by *manga* or *anime* in which characters ate *sushi*, but many of them approached it thanks to friends who invited them to eat it. What is important to notice is that the majority of the participants were aged between 18 and 35 years and they were influenced in their choices by price and fish quality. According to the answers to the open questions, *sushi* is a valid substitute to *pizza* or other kinds of Italian foods with low prices. It means that the diffusion amongst consumers has occurred in very different ways according to the experience of each individual, but it also means that this promoted the diffusion of this consumption amongst people offering a competitive price and serving fish of good quality at the same time. The results of the study suggests that the diffusion of *sushi* in Italy has derived from four elements: the presence of different kinds of restaurants which propose different products; these different restaurants having different business strategies which allow *sushi* to be presented in different menus with different prices; restaurants having the merit for having understood the interests of the consumers for *sushi*; and their different business strategies that were created to satisfy their customer's needs. At the same time the Great Recession has affected not only consumers but also chefs who adapted their strategies to the new contest. Even with the presence of low-cost *sushi* restaurants, the frequency with which consumers go out to eat *sushi* has declined and this is confirmed by the survey. What the study suggests is that the Great Recession has not stopped the consumption of *sushi*, but it has focused consumers' attention on their budget, changing their habits in terms of frequency of consumption. The study revealed that the diffusion of *sushi* amongst consumers is accompanied by the diffusion of other Japanese cultural elements such as *anime* and *manga* but, that does not mean that there is a correlation between the consumption of *sushi* and the interest for other Japanese cultural elements. Since Griswold (2008, 12) defined a cultural object "as shared significance embodied in form", the study

revealed that *sushi* could also be considered a cultural object. Behind the consumption of *sushi* there is its history, the work of chefs who permitted receivers (customers) to appreciate this food and there is the creation of particular place of consumption with the purpose to attract and to satisfy their own customers (Griswold 2013). The study showed that consumers aged between 18 and 35 represented 85% of participants surveyed, although we could find older people who ate *sushi*. This means that today, young consumers will be the older consumers of the future and the forecast is that the consumption of *sushi* will increase in the future. Answers to the survey showed that consumers consider *sushi* a valid alternative to other meals consumed outdoors and they linked values such as health to this dish and those elements seem to encourage people to go out and eat *sushi*.

Japanese Food Through the Media

Savoring Authenticity: Food Consumption and Nostalgia in Japan

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Abstract The Japanese culinary tradition and contemporary food-related values are often characterised by an emotional and evocative tone that can be traced back to nostalgia, a global multidimensional phenomenon that blends cultural anxieties, sentimental values and sense of place. The desire to remember home through food consumption, as a valuable way of approaching the past, enables the construction or redefinition of ethnic identities, cultural boundaries and a sense of uniqueness. This paper offers some introductory reflections on present-day practices and affective aspects related to Japanese food culture from the point of view of their symbolic meaning in media narratives.

Keywords Japan. Food consumption. Symbolic meaning. Media narratives. Nostalgia. Anthropology.

Food constitutes an important link between culture and the environment in Japan: it belongs to both because it combines certain biological functions with culinary practices, symbols and values that historically have produced a complex cultural heritage, whilst also representing a privileged lens for the observation of the social, political and economic interdependencies between food production and consumption. Japanese cuisine (*washoku*, a term that encompasses both regional and traditional food) has now consolidated its popularity on a global level. While the Western discovery of *sushi* and *ramen* occurred in the 1980s, with the progressive spread of *sushi* bars and Japanese restaurants or take-aways in Western cities (Bestor 2000), Japanese *cuisine* really gained international recognition



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in 2013, when it was added to the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list, thus unquestionably establishing it as a global food phenomenon (de St. Maurice 2017; Omori 2018).

The strategic importance of *washoku* is also highlighted by the creation of mass media 'identifying images' of food production, such as rice fields, rural villages or places of artisanal food production. At the centre of this cultural logic is the production and reproduction of culinary imagery functional to the policies of identity construction that have transformed *washoku* into a "particularly plastic form of collective representation" (Appadurai 1988, 3). *Umi no sachi yama no sachi* (treasures of the sea and mountains) is a popular expression to indicate the rich gastronomic heritage of *washoku*: rice (the basic 'cultural ingredient' of traditional Japanese cuisine), *sansai* (mountain vegetables and other produce, such as *matsutake* mushrooms, roots and wild fruits) and fish (tuna, bream, salmon and mackerel). Rice, in particular, marks a symbolic border that separates Japan from Asian gastronomic culture (China and Korea), including also ethnic minorities like the Ainu (Hosking 1996; Ashkenazi 2003). As Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney has observed,

rice fields have played an enormously important role in the identity of the self or in the identities of the Japanese. Thus, the symbolism of rice is forked: on the one hand, 'rice as our food', on the other, 'rice fields as our land', reinforcing each other. (1993, 4)

If *washoku* is therefore a typical 'total social fact', whose historical specificity is rooted in the cultural narratives of Japanese collective identity, its promotion also represents a means of international recognition, as it establishes a link with the global food market and entails a strong involvement of relevant interest groups in the agribusiness field and a tendency to commodify Japanese food practices. Among the countless economic interests at stake, it is necessary to also consider those linked to the tourism sector, in light of the growing importance of gastronomic tourism. Here the presence of 'authentic' food culture and local gastronomic traditions is seen to offer a deeper way of experiencing certain places, thereby significantly contributing to defining the social imagery of *washoku*.

The opposition between the enhancement of the food heritage of *washoku* and globalisation processes undoubtedly proves to be an important rhetorical strategy. At the same time, the global/local dialectic leaves several research questions open concerning the real protagonists of the political-economic competition that is being played out on the international scene – despite UNESCO's insistence on the centrality of local communities. However, beyond this complex debate, the turning point was undoubtedly the addition of *washoku* to the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage list, which has been re-

garded as an attempt to construct a national culinary culture in response to globalisation (Omori 2018).

The mass media has become filled with articles, news reports, and debates on *washoku*, praising it as suitably healthy and ‘gastronomically correct’, in line with the culinary paradigms expressed on a national scale. In other words, *washoku* has often been perceived as a safe way of protecting contemporary tastes against inauspicious xenophilic drifts and of providing a sort of new gastronomic orientation to encourage the cooking and consumption of this idealised, standardised food at home. Scholars, chefs and government officials, for example, have often worked together to promote *washoku no hi* (*washoku* day), encouraging students, teachers and families to set aside November 24th as a day to prepare and serve healthy Japanese food. Thus, *washoku* has gradually taken on the connotation of an ‘authentic’ food capable of reconnecting taste and traditions, recipes and seasons, appetites and health, local identities and citizenships, according to established customs part of the Japanese gastronomic heritage. According to Isami Omori,

The number of newspaper articles on the topic of Japanese food rapidly increased after the UNESCO registration in 2013 [...] [in which] the most frequently occurring words were ‘taste’, ‘heart’, and ‘rice’. [...] In the characterisation of Japanese food after the registration, time and place were critical elements rather than specific foods. This indicates that abstract words that could evoke nostalgia, such as ‘taste’, ‘tradition’, and ‘local’, were used more often than heuristic words, such as ‘cooking techniques’ or *nikujaga*, which was the most common home cooked Japanese dish according to several polls. Based on our results, we conclude that newspaper discourses created and shared a representation of Japanese food that could be proudly presented to the ‘world’. (Omori 2018, 440)

Unlike many other terms used by the mass media to indicate the Japanese culinary tradition, *washoku* would appear to indicate a more intimate sphere of meaning than terms like *nihon ryōri*. The semantic difference is that *washoku* indicates a ‘Japanese meal’, while *nihon ryōri* refers to any ‘Japanese dish’ (Masuda 1989, 1225), although both *washoku* and *nihon ryōri* are generally translated as ‘Japanese food’ or ‘Japanese cuisine’. However, on closer examination of the terminology, it is possible to note that *nihon ryōri* mostly indicates exclusive cuisine offered by restaurants, while *washoku* refers to the daily food of ordinary people, home cooking (Shibata, Yamada 2002, 1042) or people’s food (Rath 2010). In Japanese popular discourse, *washoku* constitutes a ‘grammar of sentiment’ strongly linked to the most intimate domestic environment in connection with cooking, food-related practices and domestic consumption.

The lending of a particular identity-defining value to *washoku* has in fact translated into a nostalgic feeling of irreparable loss of one's own identity, becoming part of the imaginary of *furusato* (old village or native place), a term that could be extended to the whole nation: *nihon furusato* (ancient Japanese village). As Jennifer Robertson has noted, at the center of this cultural logic is the production and reproduction of a nostalgic native narrative founded on the temptation to withdraw into the stylized and idealised world of yesterday:

A *furusato* can only be fully comprehended by observing both how the term is used ordinarily and how it has been appropriated by various members of, and interest groups in, Japanese society. The evocation of *furusato* is an increasingly cogent means of simultaneously fostering we-feelings and insideness at local and national levels. [...] The process by which *furusato* is evoked into existence is called *furusato-zukuri*, or home/native-place making. Ultimately, *furusato-zukuri* is a political process by which culture, as a collectively constructed and shared system of symbols, customs and beliefs, is socially reproduced. (Robertson 1988, 495)

While nostalgia is generally understood as an emotional reaction experienced when external or internal stimuli lead back to an ideal past moment or event that may belong to one's life experience (Divard, Demontrond 1997), the nostalgic emotions that emerge from an idealised past are focused on inanimate places, smells, tastes or sounds, discovered at the very moment in which these emotions are experienced (Hirsch 1992). This process of 'crystallisation' of nostalgia is expressed precisely by the term *furusato*, which implies both a temporal and spatial dimension fulfilled by identifying and supporting a common cultural worldview: *furui*, which indicates "the patina of familiarity and naturalness that objects and human relationships acquire with age, use, and interaction" (Robertson 1988, 495), while *sato*, indicates one's "natal household, a hamlet or village, and the countryside" (Robertson 1988, 495). Moreover, *furusato* is used above all today

in an affective capacity to signify not a particular place – such as a real 'old village', for example – but rather the generalized nature of such a place and the warm, nostalgic feelings aroused by its mention. (Robertson 1988, 495)

Furusato can undoubtedly indicate a rarefied dimension of nostalgic re-enactment with no historical foundation, but it is also true that this word, if placed in connection with other cultural contexts, acts as a powerful catalyst in the process of identity construction (Robertson 1991). The close relationship between *washoku* and *furusato* establishes a symbolic connection with food consumption, which

represents a metaphor of the self that recalls the socially constructed dimension of food closely linked to its ability both to act as a social catalyst and to define new identity horizons.

With regard to this last point, two examples may be enlightening. The first is the close connection between the nostalgic imagery of *furusato* and the city of Kyoto and its culinary tradition. Kyoto is often considered the cultural capital of Japan, from which traditional culture sprung; it has thus become the “hometown of the Japanese heart and mind” (*Nihon no kokoro no furusato*) (Brumann 2012, 49). This identification with the ‘authentic’ Japanese tradition also applies to the gastronomic culture of Kyoto (*Kyō ryōri*), which would be the source of much of what is now considered to be the quintessential Japanese cuisine (Rath 2010). Furthermore, in the mass media imagination, *Kyō ryōri* often assumes the role of a cultural stronghold apparently impervious to the processes of globalisation.

Kyōto’s status in Japanese gastronomic culture is clear in the “Bamboo Shoot Battle” episode of the now-classic Japanese TV cooking show *Iron Chef*. This episode occurs in the series’ second season and is the first time a chef from Kyōto appeared on the show. The narration and comments from the host and judges gloss the world of Kyōto cuisine as isolated, closed off, unchanging. In the introductory segments, Kyōto is described as “the ancient capital and cultural center”, restaurant Ikumatsu as “an eminent name amongst Japanese inns in Kyōto, a place of status and tradition established 182 years ago”, and chef Takahashi Munetaka as possibly the “true heir to authentic Kyōto style cuisine”. [...] “The top restaurants [in Kyoto] are closed to not only chance customers but also the media”, the character of Chairman Kaga dramatically declares, “But now they are opening their doors to us”. (de St. Maurice 2017, 39)

However, while it is true that *Kyō ryōri* is often considered the emblem of a kind of cultural particularism – a certain ‘Kyōto-ishness’ (*Kyōto rashisha*) – that contrasts with the process of erosion caused by globalisation, it is also true that many Kyoto chefs have strategically tried to actively reshape the local culinary culture and to control the Kyoto food industry on a global scale (de St. Maurice 2017). This wavering between different global-local culinary market policies is an example of the apparent contradiction that is part of the “conversation with both the state and the market” (Klein, Jung, Caldwell 2014, 19).

Beyond this dialectical tension between globalisation and local cuisine, it is clear that strong identity media alarmism persists. This is quite evident if we consider the cultural anxieties that have emerged in post-Fukushima Japan, in which food consumption and nostalgia have been linked to the neoliberal notion of self-help and to the neo-conservative sentiment of nation and tradition. Since the Fukushima

Daiichi disaster (*Fukushima Daiichi genshiryoku hatsudensho jiko*), the Japanese media debate has often focused on resilience projects and on criticism of the models of scientific prediction of nuclear disasters, promoting the return to traditional Japanese values, folk customs and the wisdom of previous generations (*senjin no chie*) (Koikari 2020). Again, the nostalgic rhetoric of *furusato* has become part of media debates focusing on the preparation of emergency meals, in which Japanese culinary culture (*washoku bunka*) is regarded as an indispensable resource in a context of crisis.

With much focus on Japanese tradition, one publication makes a surprising statement about food and resilience: after so much intake of seaweed as part of their basic diet for generations, Japanese bodies are “naturally” resistant to the effect of nuclear radiation. Sakamoto Hiroko is a passionate advocate of this return to Japan’s past. In her 2012 book *Daidokoro bosaijutsu* (Disaster-Ready Kitchen Techniques) coauthored with her daughter, the culinary specialist Sakamoto Kana, the mother-daughter pair argue that women can learn from the lifestyle of bygone days (*mukashi no kurashi*), when modern domestic conveniences were not yet available but housewives managed to make do with whatever they had. “Recalling what it was like merely forty years ago” women can figure out what to do in the modern-day context of disaster. [...] With a strong emphasis on tradition, they recommend that women cultivate a relationship with rural farming families and communities whom they can rely on as a source of food in emergency times. Japanese women must recover, rediscover, and reconnect with [...] *furusato* [...] as a way to prepare for the unknown and unpredictable future. (Koikari 2020, 56)

In conclusion, although there are undoubtedly strong gender implications in Koikari’s observation, there are also ethical and political implications related to the problem of food consumption and its role with respect to the wide range of meaning-making activities and discursive dynamics triggered by “disasters of the heart and soul” (*kokoro no shinsai*) in post-Fukushima Japan. As we have seen, *washoku* is a particularly rich medium for ethical orientations because it encapsulates tensions and contradictions in the management of the contemporary Japanese culinary heritage, and nostalgia further amplifies its cultural and symbolic value. As Plester has observed, “food becomes self and when we take food into the body we take in the world” (2014, 5). This is especially true in the case of *washoku*: its power lies in its direct embodiment of use value, which incessantly redefines new cultural horizons and socio-economic tensions, thus continuing to constitute a not-so-obvious interdisciplinary arena of inquiry.

Food Culture and Traditional Performing Arts in Japan

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Abstract Food and cuisine in Japan as well as in Italy – and certainly not only in France – are culture. The importance of food is naturally vital and is therefore the foundation of the rites, in which offerings to the deities also take place. In Japan, gods are presented offerings of rice, foods from the seas and the mountains, drinks (*sake*), as well as flowers, in rituals. At the same time the performing arts (poetry, music and dance) are also important in the rituals, dedicated to the divinities and to the audience on the occasion of rites and festivals. The paper will discuss food and drink, which are the basis of civilisation and nutrition in Japan, in connection with traditional theatres: from *nō*, to *kyōgen*.

Keywords Japan. Food culture. Performing arts. *Nō*. Kabuki. *Kyōgen*.

Summary 1 Rites, Foods and the Performing Arts. – 2 Water and *Sake*. – 3 Tea Culture. – 4 Foods and Other Delicacies. – 5 Tea and Poetry: Banquet Culture. – 6 The World of Public Theatres and the Culture of Consumption. – 7 *Maku No Uchi Bentō*. – 8 *Sukerokuzushi* 助六寿司. – 9 *Mitate* 見立て. – 10 Holidays and Seasons. – 11 *Kabuki* and *Soba*. Representation of Eating on Stage. – 12 Cooking and Preparing Food and Puppet Theatre. – 13 Travel and Regional Cuisine (*kyōdo Ryōri* 郷土料理).

1 Rites, Foods and the Performing Arts

Food and cuisine in Japan, as well as in Italy – and certainly not only in France – are culture. Food and cuisine are manifestations of a culture with a long and great tradition that arises from the cultivation and harvesting of fields and rice paddies, from fishing, hunting, breeding or other means, from the acquisition of ingredients, from



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its preparation (cooking) and presentation to reach the table and finally, with its consumption.

The importance of food is naturally vital and is therefore the foundation of rites, in which offerings (today called *shinsen* 神饌 in Shintō shrines or *mike* 御饌) to the deities also take place.

The culture of food, as well as the performing arts, are at the roots of civilisation, in Japan as in Italy. In Japan, gods are afforded offerings of rice (or other cereals), foods from the sea and the mountains, drinks (*sake*), as well as flowers, in rituals with differences according to the traditions of each sanctuary and geographical areas: that is basically alcohol (*sake*), rice cakes (*omochi*), sea fish, river fish, wild birds, water birds, seafood, vegetables, sweets, salt and water.

At the same time the performing arts such as poetry, music and dance are also important in the rituals, which are dedicated to the divinities and to the entire audience on the occasion of rites and festivals. The rituals, with offerings, and the arts (song, music, dance) have the function of recalling the divinity and its protection and energy, to propitiate the harvest and prosperity, to thank and entertain the deities and communicate with them, to magnetise their energy, therefore to represent the divinities and myths to the public and thus propitiate abundance, long life and fortune for the whole community. Even in the next phase of development of real complex forms of spectacle and theatre, the religious and vital value for the community of these scenic actions/performing arts is preserved and perpetuated.

In this paper, I will therefore discuss food and drink, which are the basis of civilisation and nutrition in Japan, in connection with traditional theatres: from *nō* with sacred dances and banquets of poetry, music and dance that characterise some pieces of the repertoire; to *kyōgen*, which represents the relationship, often playful and humorous, between man and food – in particular *sake* but also tea, which are of such importance and also reflect aesthetics in medieval times; to the puppet theatre (*ningyōjōruri bunraku*) and *kabuki*, in which in the premodern period, many of the foods, dishes and habits that are still practiced today are codified and from which new fashions and systems of consumption in the culture of food are also launched.

2 Water and Sake

Among the offerings to the deities in the rituals of the sanctuaries, an important place is assigned to rice and *sake* 酒. Just like bread and wine are the radical components of the Italian table and culture, both individual and collective, with both religious and secular meanings.

In the sacred ceremonial dances of *Okina* 翁 (the dance is a Shintō ritual of longevity that celebrates peace and prosperity and abundant harvest in the country), which are the basis of the performing arts

of *sarugaku* and the prerogative of the actors of the *nō*, the character of Senzai (a young man) emphasises and implores the abundance of waters of the waterfalls that in fact allow the cultivation of rice.

The water, that comes down from the mountains, and also the waterfalls, is a vital principle and its purity and abundance is a guarantee of plant life, in particular of the rice seedlings (*ine* 稲).

Needless to say, the purity and lightness of water, not only in the cultivation of rice, but in its preparation as a cooking dish, as well as in the preparation of *sake* or tea, is a basic requirement.

As Italian cuisine, Japanese cuisine places emphasis on the quality of the ingredients which, due to simplicity, is crucial.

As in the preparation of tea (*sencha* 煎茶 or *maccha* 抹茶 or other), which is made using only light/soft water (*nansui* 軟水), so for the *sake*, the production process uses only rice, *kōji* and water, whose quality is guaranteed, with that of rice, resulting in a superfine product with respect to perfume, fragrance and taste.

Sake (made with rice, water and *kōji* 麹), in addition to being an indispensable element in rituals, is also the absolute protagonist not only of rites but also of banquets, parties, symposia etc., together with poetry, singing, music and dance.

In this form, that is, in banquets or parties, it makes its appearance in the repertory of the *nō* theatre.¹ *Sake*, music and dance are preliminary ingredients for a pleasant and warm meeting between people and between lovers, as happens in *Senju* 千手.

In the *nō* drama *Senju*, Taira no Shigehira (1158-1185), the youngest child of Kiyomori, a Taira clan's chief commander, fought in the battle of Genpei but became a prisoner of war in the battle of Ichinotani. Shigehira is escorted to Kamakura and he is entrusted to the mansion of (Kanonosuke) Munemochi, a vassal of Minamoto no Yoritomo (1147-1199). Shigehira meets Yoritomo who was delighted and dispatched a beautiful maid, Senju no mae, to comfort him. Senju tells Yoritomo that Shigehira wants to become a monk, but Yoritomo does not agree to pardon him and Shigehira waits for the unknown day of execution. In the rain, Munemochi visited Shigehira with *sake*. Senju no mae also visits Shigehira with a *biwa* and a *koto*. Shigehira seems reluctant, but with the guidance of Munemochi, he faces Senju and the banquet begins. Senju pours *sake* to Shigehira, composes lines of poetry and tries to bring out his heart. Senju dances, Shigehira also plays the *biwa*, and Senju plays the *koto*, and the night continues. That morning, Shigehira is sent to the capital, and the two wet their sleeves and bid farewell: it was the last farewell between a young man who is going to die and a girl/dancer who spends an evening with him with music, dance and *sake*.

¹ For the plots of the plays here mentioned see Ruperti 2016a, 1-200.

In the *nō* drama *Kantan* 邯鄲 a young man, Rosei (*shite*), who visits Kantan/Handan Village in China, borrows a mysterious pillow from the hostess of the inn (*ai*). It is a pillow that allows you to realise the path you should take. Rosei immediately uses this to take a nap. After a while, Rosei is awakened by a man (*waki*) who calls himself a messenger, and is told that he will ascend to the throne, and is taken to the royal palace where the ministers (*waki tsure*) are lined up. Rosei, in the time of a dream, spends his days of glory holding a big banquet, with the dance of a child and with the sake of immortality and longevity, and does his best to enjoy himself, but in the meantime, people disappear. When Rosei wakes up, he is in the original inn and he realises that all the events so far were dreams, in which he perceived the essence of the things in the world.

Sake can also be a metaphor or instrument of the coveted *sake* of immortality and longevity, a long life elixir symbolised by the dewy liquor of chrysanthemums, flowers that express the wish for long life, as we can see in *Makura jidō* 枕慈童 (*Jidō* of the Headset) / *Kiku jidō* 菊慈童 (*Jidō* of the Chrysanthemum).

During the reign of Wei's Emperor, in China, a group of messengers are dispatched to search for the source of the sacred water that sprang up from the foot of Mt. Rekken (Li xian). The messenger finds a hermitage in the mountains. An eccentric boy appears from the hermitage. When the messenger asks for his name, the boy tells him that he served the King Mu of Zhou. *Jidō*, a child of great beauty, said that when he copied the two verses (of quatrains) from the pillow given to him by King Mu onto chrysanthemum leaves, the dew that arose became an immortal spirit water, and he was 700 years old because he continued to drink it. And he danced with the pleasure of joy.

Drinking *sake*, or a substitute for it, together is also a toast of good luck and good wishes for future hope, as is in *Shunkan* 俊寛 (*Shunkan*, *nō* play).

In the heyday of the Heian period the monk Shunkan (1143-1179) was accused of being complicit in a conspiracy to try to overthrow the Taira clan and, together with Fujiwara no Naritsune and Taira no Yasuyori, was exiled to Kikaigashima (Island of demons) in Satsuma. Thereafter, a temporary amnesty was held in the capital to pray for the safe delivery of Tokuko, Taira no Kiyomori's daughter who became consort of the Emperor Takakura. Naritsune and Yasuyori, who were religious, were praying and making a pilgrimage to the island, as if it were the sacred places in Kumano: Shunkan welcomes the two returning from the island tour, naming the water of Tanigawa as chrysanthemum liquor and holding a feast nostalgic for the capital Kyoto.

Kiyomori's messenger arrives directly and brings good news for forgiveness. However, the letter of pardon did not have Shunkan's name. Shunkan sinks into the abyss of surprise and despair, and

everyone around him has no words of comfort. Eventually, the boat leaves the island with the two pardoned and Shunkan clings to the boat, but is ruthlessly abandoned and crouches in the waves on the shore in despair.

Equally, drinking *sake* together is like a form of recognition of the other, a manifestation of esteem and sharing that brings rivals or enemies closer together, a pact between men of honour who respect each other as in the ending of *Ataka* 安宅 (*Ataka, nō* play). It is a famous episode from the life of Minamoto no Yoshitsune (1159-1189): the hero with his faithful Benkei and vassals tries to reach the north of Japan. Thanks to Benkei, pretending to be *yamabushi*, they manage to overcome the barrier manned by Togashi. Once over the barrier, the group moves away and rests with a party/toast: Benkei was rude to his lord, but Yoshitsune praised him for his wits and wept with his vassals, mourning his misfortune. Then Togashi appears and brings out *sake* in a way of apologising for the previous disrespect. In the banquet Benkei dances and the fugitives quickly resume their flight towards the North.

Sake is also a drink that melts memories and in which melancholy and sadness can be nullified and an instrument by which to overcome modesty and reluctance to confide one's pains to guests, as in *Tokusa* (*Tokusa, nō* play), an old father who would like to find his missing son.

But *sake* is also an instrument of seduction and perdition, as it clouds the senses and leads to the loss of the supernatural powers of the ascetic/hermit in *Ikkaku Sennin* 一角仙人 (The horned hermit). The hermit Ikkaku (*shite*), who lives in the mountains of Varanasi, once fought for power with the dragon gods and sealed the dragon gods in a cave. Since then it has stopped raining on the land, and the sovereign dispatches the first beautiful woman in the country, Senda *bunin*, to the hermit to free the dragon gods.

Senda *bunin*, who pretends to be a lost traveller, meets the hermit. The hermit, who is fascinated by her beauty, drinks forbidden *sake*. The woman dances and seduces the hermit: when the hermit falls asleep with drunkenness, the freed dragon gods (*kokata*) appear. The awakened hermit is surprised and challenges them to recommence the battle to contain. However, he, who had since lost his magical power, is finally defeated.

Through *sake* and pleasant banquets, deceptions occur in the dimension of the seduction and of the dream that in reality hides terrible demons as in *Momijigari* 紅葉狩 (The Maple Viewing).

A noble woman, with her female attendants, is celebrating the beauty of the red maples in the Mt. Togakushi, with a banquet, when a knight, Taira no Koremochi, who was in the middle of a deer hunt, passes by. Koremochi tries to avoid the road, but joins the party, being invited by the women who notice it. After being advised to drink by the noble woman with her maids, Koremochi gets drunk and falls asleep. The ladies in the meantime disappear/vanish.

During his sleep, the god Takeuchi, Hachiman Daibosatsu's messenger, rushes to his rescue and warns: the woman who entwined Koremochi was the demon god of Mt. Togakushi. The god Takeuchi appears in Koremochi's dream and gives him a sword from the Hachiman Daibosatsu. In front of Koremochi who wakes from the dream, a demon appears and assails him. Koremochi bravely confronts him and, after a fierce battle, he brilliantly defeats the demon with the sword.

But *sake* is also an auspicious drink, an object of limitless passion and amusement from men, fantastic animals and demons. In *Shōjō* 猩々 (*Shōjō, nō* play) a mysterious creature enters the scene: he is a liquor-loving fairy, who lives in the water; *Shōjō's* spirit (*shite*) appears from the water and dances innocently while being drunk and floating.

And banquets with *sake* can be accompanied or replaced by terrible libations of blood and death by demons hidden in the mountains who kidnap young women to make them their victims, as in *Ōeyama* 大江山 (The Demon of Ōeyama).

However, the meaning and value of the invincible pleasure associated with wine/*sake* is celebrated in a comic sense in *kyōgen*, a humorous theatrical genre that is traditionally combined with *nō*.

In *Oba ga sake* 伯母ヶ酒 (Aunt's Sake) the aunt who runs a liquor store is a stingy person and has never served alcohol to her nephew. One day, the nephew visits his aunt's house to try *sake*, but she refuses to let him taste it. The nephew suddenly comes up with a good idea, and kindly suggests his aunt to be careful because a terrifying demon might appear on his way home. The nephew, then, pretends to go home, returns wearing a demon's face, and cautiously enters the brewery and drinks alcohol to his heart's content. However, at the end he is unmasked and runs away.

The servant *Tarō kaja* (or his companion *Jirō kaja*), for example, cannot resist the temptation of *sake* and he is the protagonist of many episodes in which, due to his passion for *sake*, he causes trouble.

In *Bōshibari* 棒縛 (Tied to a Stick) the liquor-loving *Tarō* and *Jirō*, two servants, sneak into the brewery and steal *sake* every time their lord is away. Knowing this, the gentleman, before going outside, deceives them by tying the arms of one to a pole and those of the other behind his back. Still, they sneak into the brewery with their tied up bodies, take out *sake* and start drinking: the wisdom of the two, who cooperate in order to drink alcohol, overcomes the difficult situation. The lord returns home and surprises them in the middle of drinking and creates a fuss.

In *Hi no sake* 樋の酒 the lord tells the servant *Tarō* to take turns at the rice brewery and *Jirō* to take turns without leaving the *sake* brewery, but the two hang a gutter between the rice brewery and the brewery to pour *sake* and start a banquet. The lord returns home at the climax of the banquet, finds them and drives them out. Also in *Chidori* 千鳥 *Tarō kaja* goes to a liquor store, where payment was de-

layed, at the order of his lord. As the *sake* shop manager is reluctant, after telling various stories, he kidnaps the liquor barrel and escapes.

3 Tea Culture

Another drink that entered Japan thanks to Buddhist monks has extreme medicinal and magical importance: that is tea (*cha* 茶).

The *kyōgen Tsūen* 通円, even if in parodic form, testifies to the great success and popularity enjoyed and continuing to be enjoyed by the great tea gatherings that characterised the medieval era, giving life to a very refined aesthetic culture around the consumption of tea, the environments, the rooms, the tools, the contexts, the gardens, and the ingredients.

It goes without saying that tea culture in Japan has a very long tradition and quite particular developments that still testify to its enormous importance today (Tollini 2014).

The *kyōgen Tsūen* represents the story of a monk and tea master named Tsūen who prepares tea for visitors during the Ujibashi memorial service: when 300 practitioners from the capital arrive, Tsūen struggles to serve tea one after another to all the intervening guests, but at last the tea bowl and other tools to prepare tea break down, and finally he lays a fan under the edge of Byōdō'in Temple and dies after singing a poem of death. In fact, *kyōgen Tsūen* is a parody (with exaggeration typical of the *kyōgen*) of the *nō* drama *Yorimasa*, therefore it is completely in *nō*-style, with musical accompaniment and chanting. But the piece also testifies, in its comic hyperbole (a case of death from overwork, *karōshi* 過労死 *ante litteram*), to the importance that tea culture, and the encounters of individuals with tea, will gradually acquire in the history of Japan.

The culture of tea in Japan in its history has seen the unfolding of an extreme range of possible spaces in which to serve and enjoy tea with other participants, which culminates in *wabicha* in small and intimate rooms that are accessed through gardens or delicate external views, and where the rarefied aesthetics of many ways of artistic enrichment are concentrated: the arrangement of flowers, calligraphy, ceramics, lacquers, metals, bamboo or wood, simple and refined materials with which the environments and tools are built, collected dimensions in which participants can find peace, silence, freeing the mind from worries and a human encounter between equals.

Around tea, as around food, sociability of people is concentrated in the name of human encounter and peace.

4 Foods and Other Delicacies

Food is also a precious subject for humour and comedy, in particular natural and non-natural products, and ingredients that are objects of desire for the greedy people, such as fruits (*kaki*) or sweets.

The *kyōgen Kaki Yamabushi* 柿山伏 (The Persimmon Friar) begins with a scene where a *yamabushi* (Japanese mountain ascetic hermit) finishes his training and returns to his hometown. The *yamabushi* feels thirsty along the way, and when he looks up, he notices that there is a wonderful persimmon tree filled with fruits. He tries to drop them from under the tree, but it doesn't work out so he climbs the tree and eats a persimmon. Thus, the *yamabushi* has stolen the persimmons from the plant and is discovered by the farmer. The skit then develops unpredictably.

It is a funny depiction of humans trying to cover up their sins or faults, and is a satire of *yamabushi*, hermit of the mountains seen as a 'religious' figure not so authoritative or endowed with magical powers.

In *Busu* 附子 (The Delicious Poison) the lord orders the servants Tarō *kaja* (*shite*) and Jirō *kaja* to stay away, and goes out with caution because there is a deadly poison called *busu* (*torikabuto*, aconite). The servants have no choice but to worry about *busu*. Unable to resist they try to lick the poison and discover that it is sugar *satō* 砂糖, *mizuame* 水飴 (starch syrup or water candy, malt syrup). The two eat it all and, as an excuse, they damage the hanging scroll and bowl that are treasured by the owner. He then reports to his lord, who has returned home, that he took to *sumō* wrestling while he was away and broke important items, so he ate the *busu* to apologise through death, but he still did not die. The lord gets angry and drives them away.

In fact, it was during the Edo period that industrial sugar production became widespread in Japan. Before that, in Japan, sugar was a valuable item that relied on imports. *Kyōgen* reflects the values of Muromachi period, therefore, it is reasonable that the Lord did not want to show the expensive sugar to his servants, so much that he lies and says it is a poison and so much so that Tarō and Jirō ate it.

5 Tea and Poetry: Banquet Culture

It was in the Edo period (1603-1868) that the foundations of Japanese cuisine, that many of us recognise today, were formed: the combination of three meals a day and staple food, side dish, and *miso* soup was made in that period. In Osaka, in particular, where raw materials and ingredients were gathered from all over the country, there were many tradesmen, wholesalers, restaurants (*ryōtei* 料亭) and caterers (*shidashiya* 仕出し屋) established. Furthermore, with the intro-

duction of sugar-making technology, ordinary people could easily enjoy sweetness, and it is also during this period when banquet dishes that continue to the present day were born.

In the Edo period, the number of tradesmen who built their fortunes increased, and the hobbies of *haikai* (in modern times *haiku*) spread among the tradesmen who gained social status. At first, people who enjoyed *haikai* gathered and held a party where a little *sake* was served and from this the custom of poetry encounters/meeting spread among the common people. The *haikai* party started as *sake* dinking occasion, then it has transformed into a social place where you can drink and eat.

These meeting places, or poetry gatherings could be held outdoors or indoor, in 'cooking *chaya*' that is a restaurant similar to those of today: initially known as the place where the tea ceremony was held, with the arrival of the *haikai* boom, *haikai* parties began to be held in cooking *chaya*. From around the middle of the Edo period, 'tea *kaiseki*' (*cha kaiseki* 茶懷石) and '*haiseki ryōri*' (俳席料理) were collectively called '*kaiseki (ryōri)*' 会席料理 and this became a well-established name for fine cuisine. Nowadays, the dishes served at the tea ceremony and the fine banquet dishes served at the *sake* table often belong to the category of *kaiseki*. Also *miso* soup (*misoshiru*) had been eaten since the Muromachi period with the advent of *kaiseki* cuisine, but it was during the Edo period that it became a popular soup among the common people.

6 The World of Public Theatres and the Culture of Consumption

The Edo period is known as an era when the culture and art of the common people flourished, and this laid the foundation for traditional performing arts such as *ningyō jōruri* (puppet drama), and *kabuki*.

In the Edo period, in an era of lasting peace, the country developed the economy, services, consumption and even entertainment.

Among the entertainments for the common people of the town were *kabuki* theatre, *ningyō jōruri*, *kōgyō sumō*, *ukiyo-e*, and book rentals (*kashihon'ya*). This was thanks in part to the increasing urban development, in particular in Kyoto, the capital, in Osaka, the city of merchants and commerce, and in Edo, home of the *shōgun* and the military aristocracy.

Among the entertainment, the *kabuki* play tour was the greatest for the people of Edo, regardless of their status as ordinary people or samurai. Around the theatres and playhouses, there were a lot of shops for the audience, such as a teahouse/restaurant (*shibai chaya* 芝居茶屋), a purse shop (*kinchakuya*), a confectionery shop (*kashiya* 菓子屋), a tobacco shop, etc.

At that time, since the stage used natural light from the 'light window', play started at six dawns (around 6 a.m.) and ended at seven and a half (around 5 p.m.), so it took a whole day to see the play.

In the *kabuki* theatre, which is called a large theatre/playhouse 大芝居, wealthy people from the time, such as merchants, officials, maids or palace waiters, and middle-ranking tradesmen, frequently attended. For these clientele, through the teahouses, special seats (*sajiki seki* 棧敷席) were reserved and arranged in theatre with services and meals.

The theatre teahouses (*shibai chaya*) of the Edo period were located in the vicinity of the playhouse, where guests came to eat and drink before going to the theatre, and at the same time they could reserve a place at the play and be guided and entertained with food and drink such as sweets, *sake* and meals.

It is in this special context, where the most diverse audience can enjoy the shows during a day, that *makunouchi bentō* are born.

7 Maku No Uchi Bentō

Still today 'Makunouchi *bentō*' 幕の内弁当 is a meal consisting of small rice balls consumed in the *kabuki* play intermission (*makuai* 幕間). In the past it was delivered from the theatre teahouse and caterer's delivery service to guests and customers directly in the theatre boxes. But sweets such as *manjū* 饅頭 (buns) and *yōkan* 羊羹, *sushi*, tea, and *sake* were also pleasures enjoyed whilst watching the play.

Makunouchi lunch box today are a *jūbako* (18 cm square box) with 'bale-shaped rice ball' and several types of side dishes (*okazu*): 10 slightly baked rice balls (*nigirimeshi*), side dishes such as omelet (*tamagoyaki*) and *kamaboko*, simmered konjac and grilled *tōfu*, *saitoimo* (colocasia esculenta) and *kanpyō* (lagenaria siceraria), but also grilled fish, fried food (*agemono*), simmered food (*nimono*), pickles (*tsukemono*), *tsukudani*, etc.

During the show, Makunouchi *bentō* was served at lunch, and *sushi oribako* (assortment of *sushi*) and long-established sweets were served in the afternoon. The wealthiest guests often returned to the teahouse during the intermission to drink, eat and relax. After the performance, some spectators would often return to the second floor of the teahouse, take a snack or hold a banquet and invite their favourite actors and *geisha*.

It is said that it was sold as 'Makunouchi *bentō*' in the latter half of the Edo period. It has a deep connection with *kabuki* as a '*bentō* that was born with the development of play culture', although there are various theories on the origins of the name.² In any case, it seems certain

² The break time (intermission) between plays is called 'Makunouchi' and it is said that 'Makunouchi *bentō*' was born from that name.

that the Makunouchi *bentō* lunch was connected to the entertainment of the common people in Edo such as the playhouse and *sumō* teahouse. With the development of railways, Makunouchi *bentō* became the current style as the prototype of *ekiben* 駅弁, a specific type of *bentō* boxed meals, sold on trains and at train stations in Japan. A Makunouchi lunch was often chosen for special occasions such as travel and theatre.

8 *Sukerokuzushi* 助六寿司

Among the *kabuki* repertory there is a very famous drama, still performed today, that takes place in the pleasure district of Edo, the (Shin) Yoshiwara: *Sukeroku yukari no Edozakura* 助六由縁江戸桜 (Sukeroku: Flower of Edo).³

The main character, Soga no Gorō, named himself Hanakawado Sukeroku, and goes to Yoshiwara as a guest to search for Genji's treasure sword Tomokirimaru. There, he meets Yoshiwara's *oiran*, the courtesan Agemaki 揚巻 and the two become lovers. Eventually Sukeroku finds Tomokirimaru, which had been stolen by the evil Hige no Ikyū, and leaves Yoshiwara.

Inspired by this drama, with its protagonists, Sukeroku and his beloved courtesan Agemaki, a *sushi* lunch box was created to eat on the occasion of this show, to be served during the performance, and, thus, *Sukerokuzushi* was born. Taking the name of Sukeroku, it is a set of fried *Inarizushi* and rolled scroll *makimono* 巻き=巻物. In fact, in the composition of the lunch box the *makimono* recalls the figure of Sukeroku, and the *Inarizushi* suggests his lover, Agemaki. In the drama Sukeroku enters the scene with a purple headband wrapped around his head, as depicted in the seaweed rolls. As the name of Sukeroku's lover is Agemaki (a name that may recall fried rolls), the *Inarizushi*, made with fried *tōfu*, was linked to her image. This means that *Sukerokuzushi* is a kind of *mitate*.

9 *Mitate* 見立て

Mitate is a technique widely used in the fields of literature such as *waka* and *haikai* poetry, *gesaku* literature, in the fields of performing arts such as *kabuki*, and in gardening and paintings, in which many layers of meaning are layered atop one another, often to humorous effect. It is a technique by which references to historical or fictional events or personages, or ideas, are embedded into images.

³ This drama was premiered in 1811 but it is a variation of *Hanayakata aigo no sakura*, first staged in 1713 at Edo's Ichimuraza starring Ichikawa Danjūrō II.

Mitate means to see something, to resemble others; a way of expression which gives freshness and the element of surprise, and thus it gives people an intriguing experience (Tollini 2017, 31-2).

For example, just as rain can be *mitate* for tears, pink clouds a metaphor for cherry blossom petals, *makimono* can be *mitate* for Sukeroku, *Inarizushi* for Agemaki. The *norimaki* are supposed to represent the character of Sukeroku who, on his entrance on the scene, wrapped a purple headband (*hachimaki*) (Edo *murasaki*) on his head. While the character of Agemaki is represented through the *Inarizushi*, that is sushi wrapped in *aburage* (a sort of fried *tôfu*).

Going into further detail, we could say that in the case of Sukeroku, the purple band is depicted by the *nori*, the seaweed that surrounds the *norimaki*, and so it is a *mitate* that captures the visual aspect of Sukeroku; a representation of the character focused on a visual trait.

In the case of Agemaki, the *mitate* is inspired by the name (and word) Agemaki itself, that is, it gives the image of a *age maki*, i.e. fried roll. So, to depict Agemaki, *Inarizushi* was chosen, which is *sushi* wrapped in a sort of fried *tôfu*.

Mitate is a metaphorical, often playful or ironic connection made in popular Edo-period art and literature that linked the contemporary with the historical (either the recent or distant past), and also combined the vulgar with the refined (*zoku* and *ga*). This device is an imaginative technique that is frequently used in Japanese cuisine, both for the shape of individual dishes (e.g. sweets, desserts etc.) and for the general presentation of courses or tables set, often with an explicit reference to the seasons, the most typical being natural landscape and images linked to a season.

The ability to invent links and allusions between images is entrusted to the creator, with a flexible mind and an aesthetic sensibility, the capacity of inferring the hidden meaning of *mitate* ultimately depends on the reader and his sensibility.

10 Holidays and Seasons

The drama *Sukeroku Yukari no Edo Sakura* 助六由縁江戸桜 (Sukeroku: Flower of Edo) is also famous among the best known *kabuki* for the gorgeousness of the costumes, inspired by the showy aesthetics of the pleasure district of Yoshiwara. In particular the *uchikake*, which is worn by Agemaki, Yoshiwara *oiran*, are decorated with flowers of the four seasons of Japan and patterns of festivals wishing for no illness. This *uchikake* is based on the motif of the first festival of the year, which is the last day of the New Year (January 7): using the New Year decorations of *tachibana*, *yuzuriha* (*daphniphyllum macropodum*), and the spiny lobster on the *kadomatsu*.

When Agemaki takes off this black *uchikake*, a bright scarlet *uchikake* appears: a pattern with the motif of designs and decorations of the fabrics that recall the Hinamatsuri (Doll's Festival) or Momo no sekku (Peach blossom season) on March 3.

These costumes and decorations therefore recall some of the auspicious ceremonies called *gosekku* 五節句, the five annual ceremonies that were traditionally held at the Japanese imperial court, adapted from Chinese practices and celebrated in Japan since the Nara period. These festivities were accompanied by flowers, drinks and foods appropriate to the season and above all auspicious.

Gosekku are related to seasonal grasses and trees, but the purpose was to get rid of evil by eating seasonal plants: seven herbs rice porridge (*nanakusagayu* 七草粥) on the January 7 of New Year, peach blossom liquor (*tōkashu* 桃花酒) or white liquor (*shirozake* 白酒) on March 3, *shōbu* 菖蒲 (acorus calamus) and *chimaki* or *kashiwa mochi* 柏餅 in May 5, *sakuge* さくげ (作毛) or *sōmen* 素麺 noodles at Tanabata 七夕, chrysanthemum liquor (*kikuzake* 菊酒) on September 9.

Japan, which is a long archipelago stretching from North to South, has four distinct seasons, a variety of rich nature, and a food culture that was born there and has been nurtured in close relationship with the seasons. The use of ingredients in Japanese cuisine is linked to seasonality but also to the auspicious value that is particularly strong in the case of festivities: the most emblematic case is the New Year with dishes (*osechi ryōri* 御節料理) that have an ancient propitious value of good wishes for health, long life and abundance: shrimp (*ebi* = longevity), sea bream (*tai* 鯛 medetai = congratulations), herring roe (*kazunoko* = descendants prosperity), sweet chestnut paste (*kurikinton* = gold and money), black beans (*kuromame* = wishing for a healthy, strong and healthy life) etc., are all essential ingredients in New Year's cuisine.

However, for example, the atmosphere of the autumn festivity is also evoked in a drama, originally conceived for puppet theatre *Futatsu chōchō kuruwa nikki* 双蝶々曲輪日記 (A diary of two butterflies in the pleasure quarters, 1749), in particular the scene "Hikimado" 引窓 (The sliding window).

At the house of Nan Yohee in the Yawata village, which is close to Iwashimizu Hachimangu in Kyoto, Ohaya, the bride of Yohee, and Okō, his mother, are preparing for the "moon viewing" with the offering of *tsukimi dango* 月見団子 (plain rice dumplings), beans and chestnuts and the *susuki* (miscanthus herbs), dedicated to the moon in autumn. A sliding window as a skylight, which is opened and closed by pulling a rope/string from the inside, allows the light of the moon to penetrate and illuminate the room.

But in this situation of serenity a dramatic knot arises: the *sumō* wrestler (*sekitori*) Nuregami, who has killed a person unintentionally, sneaks up to see his mother Okō. But the mother, who has remar-

ried, had a son-in-law, Nan Yohee. Mother and son rejoice in the unexpected reunion but Yohee, who is a deputy officer, was in charge of capturing Nuregami, his older half-brother. The mother is sandwiched between a real child and a child-in-law and the sons, who think about each other's position, struggle between their duties towards the law and feelings towards family members or affection of the human world.

In this case, iconic food not only evokes the image of autumn, but is also deeply involved in the story development and is indispensable for the play.

One of the original meanings of moon viewing was related to the farming harvest festival: the traditional method of offering is to place the table in a spot where you can see the moon well, and pour 13-15 dumplings on a platter, together with sweet potatoes, green soybeans, chestnuts and other vegetables that are harvested in the fall, along with autumn grass, to celebrate the moon. With the device of *mitate*, *tsukimi dango* are made with processed glutinous rice powder (*jōshinko* 上新粉) and are shaped like *mochizuki* (full moon) and miscanthus (*susuki*) and are said to be *yorishiro* (objects capable of attracting spirits called *kami*) where the gods descend.

Also in the *kabuki* play *Tsuyu kosode mukashi hachijō* 梅雨小袖昔八丈 (commonly known by the title *Kamiyui Shinza*, Shinza the Barber 1873), there is the entry on the scene of a *katsuo* (skipjack) seller, a fish that when it arrived in Edo at the beginning of summer was very valuable. This scene allows us to perceive the atmosphere of the season, and the fashions of the time in which the plot is placed, and then this delicacy goes on to play a role in the dramatic development.

11 *Kabuki* and *Soba*. Representation of Eating on Stage

Around Genroku era (1688-1704), the staple food of the common people of Edo was not brown (unpolished) rice (*genmai* 玄米), but white rice (*hakumai* 白米) as it is today.

The cuisine of the common people has become richer, and there are shops and stalls that come to sell various foods that are still familiar today, such as *chameshi*, *tempura*, *sushi*, *Inarizushi*, seaweed rolls (*norimaki*), *udon*, *amazake*, sweet potatoes (*satsumaimo*), dumplings (*dango*), *tokoroten*, etc.

Later, not only peddlers (*gyōshō* 行商) and food stalls (*yatai* 屋台), but also restaurants that serve meals such as *tendon* and *unadon* appeared, and it seems that the food business in the town of Edo was very varied and rich.

Among the foods that show a link with *kabuki* there is certainly *soba* (buckwheat).

Soba has a very ancient history in Japan but it is in the Edo period that they begin to be prepared, cooked and consumed in a form similar to today, i.e. as *sobakiri* (buckwheat noodles). In the early Edo period, being noodles prepared with one hundred percent pure *soba* flour, the noodles broke easily and therefore were mostly steamed and thus served to the consumer on the *seiro* and at this stage the *tsuyu* was with *miso*. Then the *nihachi soba* 二八蕎麦 were born, which are cheaper but more resistant and which were prepared by boiling them in water: *nihachi soba* are buckwheat noodles made with a ratio of *udon* flour and buckwheat flour of 2:8 (it is also said that *nihachi soba* refers to cheap *soba*, that sell at a price of 16 *mon* per cup). The *nihachi soba* were so popular in Edo that they surpassed the *udon* (thick noodles made from wheat flour) that had come from Kamigata (Kyoto and Osaka area).

There is an almost mythical link (because it is not confirmed by historical documents) between the revenge of the Akō *rōshi* represented by the famous drama *Kanadehon chūshingura* 仮名手本忠臣蔵 (The Treasury of Loyal Retainers, 1748) and *soba*. In chronicles or historical reconstructions of much later than the Genroku incident, which was the subject of the drama, there is a story about gathering of the 47 *rōnin* on the second floor of a *soba* restaurant before the assault to carry out revenge.

But there is also a famous *kabuki* scene “Yuki no yūbe iriya no azemichi” 『雪暮夜入谷 畦道』 (The Snowy Road Through the Rice Fields of Iriya), in the drama *Kumo ni magou Ueno no hatsuhana* 天衣紛上野初花 (The First Flowers of Ueno, 1881) which is set in a *soba* shop.

This is one of the most impressive scenes in a very winter-like landscape: under the snow, Naojirō (Naozamura), a character who must leave Edo because he is pursued by justice, struggles forward and, out of hunger and cold, slips into a *soba* shop where he warms up, orders a cup of *soba*, while having a drink of hot *sake*. After a conversation between Naojirō and the *soba* shop owner, Naojirō sips *soba* in style. At this *soba* shop, from the small talk of the customer he happens to hear, Naojirō learns about the whereabouts of his lover, courtesan Michitose, whom he has not seen for a long time, and he discovers that she is ill. Naojirō is concerned with his beloved Michitose and wants to see her at a glance before leaving Edo, regardless of whether he is a wanted person, hunted by pursuers. In this way the *soba* shop scene is also a dramatic moment that directs the emotion of the stylish Edokko Naojirō and determines a turning point in the development of the play.

12 Cooking and Preparing Food and Puppet Theatre

An important and consistent part of the *kabuki* repertoire was originally conceived and performed for puppet theatre which had a remarkable artistic development in Osaka.

Masterpieces such as those mentioned above, *Kanadehon chūshingura* or *Futatsu chōchō kuruwa nikki* etc., are first staged at the Takemotoza theatre in Osaka and then transposed into the actors' theatre, *kabuki*, in Osaka, Kyoto or Edo.

The charm of the puppet theatre, which attracted illustrious playwrights such as Chikamatsu Monzaemon (1653-1724), is further enriched with the appearance of puppets operated by three puppeteers who achieve a delicacy and minutiae in their movements of particular attractiveness.

We can see scenes in which the puppets play musical instruments, or dance, smoke with a pipe or cook, and these scenes have a great impact on the audience.

In fact, in Japanese cuisine the mastery of the cook is not only in cooking the ingredients (boiling, simmering, stewing, roasting, stir frying, frying etc.), but also just cutting, on the cutting board, vegetables, fish or other; it is a moment of fundamental dexterity and if a puppet performs it, the gestures are even more appealing and impressive.

In the scene "Nozakimura" 野崎村 of the drama *Shinpan Utazaimon* 新版歌祭文 (A New Ballad of Osome and Hisamatsu, 1780) the protagonist Omitsu, happy to be able to marry Hisamatsu, is preparing for the wedding ceremony: her father, Kyūsaku, informs her that his brother-in-law, Hisamatsu, is back and that she must have the wedding today. Omitsu is confused by this sudden decision, but she cannot hide her joy, and so she prepares to eat by cutting vegetables whilst gazing in the mirror.

But when Osome, a wealthy merchant daughter who in reality loves Hisamatsu, although he is only an apprentice, arrives at the village, the drama of Omitsu occurs: Omitsu, for the happiness of the two, to prevent the two lovers from dying together, decides to become a Buddhist nun.

Shōutsushi Asagao nikki 生写朝顔話 (Diary of Asagao, copy from life, 1832), which is still performed both in puppet theatre and in *kabuki*, is the love story between the girl Miyuki and Miyagi Asojirō depicted by a thousand vicissitudes in which the two lovers, in a firefly hunt, cross each other, barely touch or cross each other but without meeting. After leaving the house, Miyuki, who has gone blind, becomes a musician, itinerant entertainer, and performs playing *shamisen* and *koto* and singing the "Asagao song" that Miyagi once wrote. But, among the many vicissitudes there is the humorous scene in which a funny physician, Hagi no Yūsen, prepares tea ("Shimada-

juku Laughing Medicine"). Yūsen's handling of the tea ceremony is not only accurate, but also contains strangely nervous movements to represent the eccentric character of Yūsen.

Furthermore, speaking of cooking and meals, the so-called scene of *Mamataki* 飯炊き (rice cooking) by the nurse Masaoka at the "Goten no dan" in *Meiboku Sendai Hagi* 伽羅先代萩 (Precious incense, Lespedezae of Sendai, 1777, 1785), is also deeply exciting. Masaoka cooks rice in a teapot/kettle (*chagama* 茶釜 / *furo hagama* 風炉羽釜) in the room, using tea utensils, for the son of his lord, the *daimyō* of Sendai, Tsurukiyo (Tsuruchiyo in *kabuki* version), and her own son, Senmatsu, who are hungry. Faced with the attempts of other evil ladies and conspirators to kill by poisoning the little lord, she is forced to watch, helpless and tortured, the killing of her own son in place of Tsurukiyo.

It is therefore a long scene of waiting and apparent calm with the preparation of the rice, but at the same time of great tension, and it ends with great tragedy. When Masaoka cooks rice, first, Senmatsu, who is also the poison taster of the Little Lord Tsurukiyo, tastes the water to check if the water is poisonous before the accurate preparation can begin. Masaoka does not leave the meal preparation to anyone to protect the children from being poisoned, and makes everything himself, sitting silently and cooking the rice with tea utensils. The movement of the doll is very fine and slow, while the three Masaoka's puppeteers are breathing together and manipulating these series of soft movements, they show dexterity and artistic skill. It is a surprisingly long scene during which natural acting and expression of emotions are required.

13 Travel and Regional Cuisine (*Kyōdo Ryōri* 郷土料理)

In another masterpiece among puppet theatre dramas, *Yoshitsune senbonzakura* 義経千本桜 (Yoshitsune and the Thousand Cherry Tree, 1747), there is a scene titled "Sushiya no dan", during the third act of the play.

In search of Taira no Koremori (1159-1184), who was involved in the Genpei war and went missing, his wife and son arrive at a *sushi* restaurant called "Tsurube sushi Yasukes". There, Koremori, who was hidden from the owner of the *sushi* restaurant, Yazaemon, was working under the name of Yasuke.

The stage is at the foot of Mt. Yoshino, a *sushi* restaurant in Shimochi village, in the region of Yamato, the area of the ancient capital of Nara, far from the sea. There are many '*sushi* tubs' that play an important role in the drama at the storefront.

In fact, these *sushi* were made by alternately stacking salted fish and rice and fermenting it in a tub and the *sushi* tub is a must-have item for that purpose. This is the original form of *sushi*, as 'pressed

sushi (*oshizushi*) common in the Kamigata, while 'Grip sushi' (*nigirizushi*) were the mainstream in Edo and *nigirizushi* appeared in the late Edo period during the Bunka-Bunsei period (1818-1830).

The existing Tsurube sushi Yasuke is a restaurant said to have been in business for 800 years, so it must have been a popular restaurant by the time this play was written. The owner who calls himself 'Yasuke' for generations is said to be the 49th generation.

Both in puppet theatre and *kabuki*, as well as in the more ancient *nō* and *kyōgen*, the stories are set in localities and areas of the country that have particular characteristics and local colour, which is also seen in the foods that manifest in the plays.

In fact, Japan, like Italy, has an extraordinary variety of different ingredients, from sea and land, from mountains, lakes or rivers, and vegetables that give life to rich and varied local cuisines.

Japan has presented and obtained the recognition of "Japanese traditional food culture" 「和食:日本人の伝統的な食文化」 as an Intangible Cultural Heritage by UNESCO. Initially, it was supposed to apply for the registration of "a distinctive and unique Japanese cuisine with a tradition centered on *kaiseki* cuisine", but instead applied for "Japanese food" (*washoku* 和食) which is considered to be a broad concept including *kaiseki* cuisine: a food culture that is conscious of Japanese-style eating habits such as respect for nature, relevance to Japanese culture such as annual events, and nutritional balance.

In fact, many studies argue that there is a distinction between Japanese and Kyoto cuisine (Kyō ryōri 京料理). The characteristics of agriculture in the Kyoto city area are the background of the development of the particular form of Kyoto cuisine.

In fact, just as in Italian cuisine, although there are characteristics that have become uniform on a national level, both historically and locally there remain differences and peculiarities at the local level which constitute its richness. Therefore, as well as in Italian cuisine, in Japanese cuisine there are many variations of which that of Kyoto, special and refined in the form of *kaiseki* etc., is one among many varieties. This is just one example of the many regional cuisines (*kyōdo ryōri* 郷土料理) based upon national, state or local regions, made by local products and foods that suit the climate.

Regional cuisines vary according to food availability and trade, varying climates, cooking traditions and practices, and cultural differences and regional food preparation traditions, customs and ingredients often combine to create dishes unique to a particular region.

The variety of regional or local cuisines starts from the climate, the atmosphere, the environment, the special ingredients, the processes, from quality and accuracy of agricultural products and foods with protected designation of origin and ultimately from the culture that flourished in those places and of which the people who live there are proud witnesses.

Italy excels precisely in this field with a desire for quality, variety and respect for biodiversity. There is a focus less on quantity, and instead more towards quality and proximity to the ideal characteristics of flavours, aromas and moods suited to the places and unique. We have 545 varieties of (grape) vines, while in France about twenty prevail, we have over 180 varieties of table grapes, over 500 olive cultivars, and over 600 varieties of cheeses, not to mention the varieties of vegetables from tomatoes to peppers, aubergines, lettuces and radicchio, legumes, fruits etc. with a very high number of quality accuracy of agricultural products and foods certification of food origin and protected designation of origin (IGP, DOC, DOP, DOPG), etc., as no other country in the European Union.

Thus, it is so, with respect for nature and biodiversity, that our cultures of food and cuisine, in Japan as in Italy, will continue to be appreciated by us and by others in the world. A world we want to preserve.

Today as in the past.

Menus for the Soul

Changing Food Landscapes in Contemporary Japan

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Abstract In recent years food in Japan has established itself as a fundamental feature of national and local identity and became one of Japan's most influential ways of cultural and national branding. An intriguing example is the *B-kyū gurume* boom, the celebration of creative versions of typical comfort food, intertwined with the obsession for local traditions. Such processes are reflected in representations of food in media and arts: contemporary culture plays a fundamental role in shaping but also in connoting food culture with new meanings. The aim of this paper is to analyse the construction and narration of contemporary Japanese food culture in one of the most recent and successful franchises, *Shin'ya Shokudō*, the popular manga by Abe Yarō, which inspired the Netflix series that enjoyed unexpected international success in 2017.

Keywords Food. Media. Shin'ya Shokudō. National identity. Japan. B-kyū gurume.

Food looks like an object but is actually a relationship.
(Eagleton 1998, 204-5)

As Nancy K. Stalker (2018) points out, in recent years food in Japan has established itself as a fundamental feature of national and local identity and has become one of Japan's most influential ways of cultural and national branding. Japanese cuisine spread internationally in the 1980s, when *sushi*'s popularity literally exploded in the United States and Europe, quickly achieving global favour. However, the importance of food culture for national branding has been recognised only in recent years, and an important contribution to this process



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has come from the representations of food in art, movies, animation, *manga* and literature: contemporary culture in all its forms has played – and plays – a fundamental role in shaping and defining food culture but also in imparting *cuisine* with new meanings.

An intriguing example is the recent surge in popularity of *B-kyū gurume* (B-class gourmet), the celebration of creative and local versions of typical comfort food, deeply intertwined with the obsession for regional traditions: the aim of this paper is to analyse its representation in one of the most successful franchises over the last few years, *Shin'ya Shokudō* 深夜食堂 (Midnight Diner), the popular manga by Abe Yarō, which inspired the Netflix series *Midnight Diner: Tokyo Stories*, that enjoyed unexpected international success in 2017 and 2019.

The manga has been serialised in Shōgakukan's *Biggu Komikku Orijinaru* since 2006, and the first volume was published in December 2007: to date twenty-three volumes have been released. Since 2009 it has been adapted into a Japanese *dorama* (TV series), directed by Matsuoka Jōji and starring Kobayashi Kaoru, which ran for three seasons up until 2014, and a live-action film was released in 2015. Netflix Japan produced a fourth season and a second live-action film in 2016/17, and a fifth season in 2019. *Shin'ya Shokudō* was also adapted into a Korean television series titled *Late Night Restaurant* in 2015, and into a Chinese television series in 2017.

In 2010, the manga won the Shōgakukan mangashō (Shōgakukan Manga Award) and the Nihon mangaka kyōkai shō (Japan Cartoonist Association Award), and in 2018 was nominated for the Fauve d'Or Prix du Meilleur Album (Best Comic Award) at the Festival de la Bande Dessinée d'Angoulême (Angoulême International Comics Festival).

As Tomoko Aoyama argues, “the food we read may well be closely related to the food in the actual, physical world. Or it may be symbolic or metaphysical food” (Toyoko Aoyama 2008, 2). Furthermore, as James L. Watson and Melissa L. Caldwell state, food is “a window on the political”, for “food practices are implicated in a complex field of relationships, expectations and choices that are contested, negotiated and often unequal” (Watson, Caldwell 2004, 1). In other words, *Shin'ya Shokudō* encourages:

the surprising and intriguing variety of ways that food and eating may function as a code, a sign system, a leitmotif of fascinating complexity, to expand the possible repertoire of readings. (Pole 1999, 4)

The setting of *Shin'ya Shokudō* is a small 12-seat *izakaya* (a sort of Japanese-style pub or tavern) in Shinjuku (Tokyo), open from midnight to 7 am. The opening of each episode of the Netflix series features a voice-over of the main character saying:

When people finish their day and hurry home, my day starts. My diner is open from midnight to seven in the morning. They call it “Midnight Diner”. That’s all I have on my menu (i.e. *tonjiru* or *butajiru*, sake, beer and *shōchū*). But I make whatever customers request as long as I have the ingredients for it. That’s my policy. Do I even have customers? More than you would expect.

“The Master”, the main character, is the owner, chef, and bartender who runs the diner. While he has a very poor menu (consisting only of *tonjiru* or *butajiru*, sake, beer and *shōchū*), he offers to prepare any dish a customer wants, as long as he has the ingredients, but refuses to cook any dishes that are beyond his skills or overly complicated. Sometimes recurring customers bring their own ingredients, usually local products from their hometowns or seasonal specialities, emphasising even further the connection between the dishes that can be tasted at the small restaurant and comfort food.

Moreover, each chapter of the manga or each episode of the TV series focuses on a particular customer, on his/her tragicomic drama (unhappy love affairs, broken marriages or friendships, loneliness) and on a particular Japanese dish, related in some way to the story. In addition, every single episode of the Netflix series ends with the recipe and with the Master offering a brief demonstration of how to prepare the dish.

The focus of *Shin’ya Shokudō* is certainly food, from the ingredients, to the preparation, to the pleasure of eating, and the obvious subtext is that food goes straight to the heart; it’s a relationship, as Eagleton says. Menus are rather curious to read: *amerikan doggu* (corn dog), *hamu katsu* (ham cutlet), *sasami chizu katsu* (fried chicken breast with cheese), to mention just a few of them.

Both the manga and the TV series in Japan have become best-sellers, and in addition to the agreeableness of the plot, this is surely due to the ‘gourmet boom’ of the most recent years, which has produced and consumed thousands of food-related books, as well as movies, manga, anime, *dorama* and TV shows.

As Tomoko Aoyama suggests,

In traditional Japanese culture, eating enjoyed a status far lower than that of drinking. To talk about food, to desire food, or to be at all interested in food was generally regarded as vulgar, especially in adult men. The uninhibited eating and food writing of contemporary Japan seems to have received its impetus from a reaction to the repression and oppression of appetite during the war – expressed in the slogan *hoshigari masen katsu made wa* (desire nothing till victory) – and to the understandable preoccupation, during and immediately after the war, with food simply as a means for survival. (Aoyama 2008, 131)

By the mid-1950s, however, eating and cooking for pleasure began to attract public attention, and that interest continued and developed into the gourmet boom of the 1980s: delicacies were no longer only for the elite, but were available even to ordinary people, who consumed food and, at the same time, were eager for information about food and the act of eating. An outstanding example of this trend is provided by popular television programs such as *Ryōri tengoku* (Cooking Paradise, 1975-92) or *Ryōri no tetsujin* (Iron Chef, 1993-99), and by manga series such as *Oishinbo* (The Gourmet, 1983-) and *Kukkingu papa* (Cooking Papa, 1984-), addressed to target audiences clearly diversified in terms of age, culture and interests.

Moreover, another intriguing feature of *Shin'ya Shokudō* is the strong connection established between food and the soul of the people, with a special focus on those "hearty, reasonably priced, down-to-earth dishes, often with strong regional associations" (Itō 2015), known as *B-kyu gurume* (B-class gourmet cuisine). The term *B-kyu gurume* was first coined in the mid-1980s, after the American movie genre 'B movies', or low-budget films. It's important to note that although *gurume* is the Japanese version of 'gourmet', it doesn't mean a person who enjoys food ('gourmand'): it refers to a type of cuisine. As we have seen, around the mid-1980s the Japanese economy was booming and dining out at luxury restaurants that offered expensive and maybe exotic dishes was definitely a must-do.

Early on, some people began to react against this trend, arguing that it was not necessary to pay crazy amounts of money to eat good food. Then, in the 1990s, after the economic bubble burst, *B-kyu gurume* literally spread: magazines and newspapers that had previously featured articles about luxury restaurants, began to focus on family restaurants that served hearty, 'homemade' food, and on cheap diners.

But it's interesting that one of the earliest examples of *B-kyu gurume* cuisine was *motsunabe*, a *nabemono*, a hotpot made with cow or pig offal, with leeks, garlic, chili peppers and other seasoning: a popular local dish in and around Fukuoka (especially in Hakata Ward) and Shimonoseki, in southern Japan, that uses inexpensive ingredients cooked with care and served in large portions, both fundamental features of *B-kyu gurume* (Itō 2015).

Here, the spread of *B-kyu gurume* intersects another emerging trend, the emphasis on local cuisine which is part of a wider discourse that has often surfaced within contemporary Japanese culture over the last few decades. A sort of obsession for the recovery of a cultural authenticity, whose integrity is constantly threatened by the exposure to 'the West' and to Japan's often-hostile other East Asian nations. Here the appreciation of regional cooking plays a pivotal role: as underlined by Theodore C. Bestor (2011, 278), there is no city or village not claiming original ingredients, peculiar styles of prepara-

tion, and regional calendars of seasonality and festivities marked by specific local foodstuffs.

A good example of this obsession is the popularity of *ekiben*, the typical *bentō* box meals available in the railway stations throughout Japan. Indeed, eating local food is one of the most cherished pleasures of travelling through the country: every district – or rather every municipality – claims its own culture, supposedly preserved for ages, including foods, dialects, and traditional crafts. In guidebooks the best restaurants or deli shops that will enrich your travel experience are listed alongside famous places and spots to visit. And this experience is not limited to local diners or eateries but widens to include train stations along your way that serve unique *ekiben*. *Ekiben* is indeed different from regular lunch boxes sold at any deli because it includes unique local ingredients, and some have even become destinations in themselves: people travel to certain stations just for their *ekiben*.

This concern for cultural and culinary authenticity, similarly to the already mentioned ‘gourmet boom’, emerged during the 1980s, when a new trend, born – as Abe Yarō – during the 1960s, was growing, a tendency that can be identified as ‘Returning to Japan’, an emergence of nationalistic discourse in Japanese media culture. An advertising campaign, launched by Japan Railways (JR, former Japan National Railways) in the 1970s had a leading role in spreading this concept. After EXPO 70, a national event that drew a total of 60 million visitors, JR started its *Discover Japan* campaign aimed at maintaining or increasing the number of railway travellers in Japan. In 1978, the success of this ground-breaking format inspired the *Good Day, Start Off* campaign and in 1984 the *Exotic Japan* campaign. The message behind JR’s strategy was clear: there is no need to travel abroad, because the desire for exoticism can also be fulfilled in Japan (Ivy 1995, 56).

In the 1990s, JR launched new advertising campaigns, based on the same communication strategy, and benefited from the decline of overseas travels after the economic bubble burst. In the same years – not surprisingly – the popularity of *B-kyu gurume* continued to grow, embracing new dishes that contributed to defining *B-kyu gurume* itself: first of all, *ramen* – and the first Netflix series starts with an episode focused on *tanmen*. *Ramen* is the poor and basic bowl of hot soup and noodles, cheap and tasty, probably originally brought in Japan by Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth-early twentieth centuries. In the 1980s and 1990s, this unpretentious dish was given new attention, and regional versions and varieties grew in appeal and relevance, becoming a sort of touristic highlights, attracting travellers eager to taste the ‘original dish’, to reconnect with that cultural ‘authenticity’ threatened by the alienating life of metropolitan areas. ‘Discovered’ and celebrated by food critics from Tokyo,

‘gourmet *ramen*’ quickly became wildly popular nationally, and in recent years have enthused international palates too.

Boosted by the enhancement and celebration of local cuisine, which – as we have seen – is one of the cornerstones in the construction of food culture as pivotal element in contemporary nation branding discourse, in the late 1990s, the concept of *B-kyu gurume* has morphed into the form of *gotochi* (local, or regional) *B-kyu gurume*: Itō Makiko, journalist, blogger and leading specialist in Japanese cuisine, in an interesting article in the *Japan Times* writes that one of the most popular examples of *gotochi B-kyu gurume* is *Fujinomiya yakisoba* from Fujinomiya (Shizuoka), made using thick, chewy steamed noodles and *tenkasu* (crunchy bits of fried batter left after cooking *tempura*), topped with *katsubushi* (bonito flakes) and dried mackerel or herring powder (Itō 2015).

However, in recent years, the concept of *gotochi B-kyu gurume* has been openly contested: the main objection is that the *gotochi B-kyu gurume* boom encouraged local organisations to ‘invent’ new dishes and to label them as ‘local’ and ‘traditional’.

Today, actually some of the most popular *B-kyu gurume* dishes in Japan include *takoyaki*, *curry rice*, *katsu*, *udon*, *yakisoba*, *ramen*, *okonomiyaki*, rice bowl dishes, but there are also Japanese derived Western dishes: for example, *spaghetti Napolitan* and *omuraisu* (cooked rice wrapped in an omelette). And most of them are quoted in *Shin’ya Shokudō*. Moreover, besides the taste, a defining feature of *B-kyu gurume* restaurants is that the personalities of the owners are important: the best places to find rich and reasonably priced *B-kyu gurume* are the small *izakaya* and diners, most of them located in the narrow streets behind the skyscrapers of Shinjuku, in a sort of world apart, very far from the image of Tokyo as an hyper-modern metropolis.

The Master in *Shin’ya Shokudō* comforts himself and the customers in his small diner preparing their favourite ‘soul dishes’. Cooking becomes a way to communicate, comfort and reconnect with one’s past and roots. It’s not, however, Japan’s traditional and worldwide praised *kaiseki ryōri* that are served, but a mix of familiar and modest flavours.

Shin’ya Shokudō, through food and foodways, offers a different point of view on Japan’s obsession for “culinary authenticity”, and on the contemporary Japan relationship with the myth of its self-essentialised cultural uniqueness and its increasing incorporation of foreign elements. Because, quoting Appadurai (1986), concerns over “culinary authenticity” are a reflection of a society’s uncertain sense of identity as it is going through – or reflecting upon – periods of great change.

Acculturation and Rediscovery in Japanese Food Culture

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Abstract Since the Meiji era (from 1868), in Japan, the excess acculturation towards foreign cultures cannot be stopped. Japan is a surprising food acculturation country. Recently Japan recorded the worst self-sufficiency rate, and the diet has been placing disproportionate weight on meat. Japanese people see its diet as unhealthy and try to find a way to coexist for both their traditional food culture and international one. In Italy, many families still keep eating together at home, but in Japan, families are often eating out. Now Japanese people should rediscover the value of homemade dishes.

Keywords Acculturation. Food culture. Japan. Japanese diet. Post-pandemic.

Summary 1 Introduction. Acculturation in the Japanese Food Culture. – 2 Accelerating Acculturation in the Japanese Daily Diet. – 3 Womens' Cooking Throughout the Post-World War II Rapid Economic Growth, and the Heisei and Reiwa Periods. – 4 Value Change and the Reconsideration of Family and Region. – 5 Supply Chain and Food Sustainability. – 6 *Chisan Chishō* 地産地消 (Locally Produced and Locally Consumed), an Attempt in Kyoto. – 7 Conclusions.

1 Introduction. Acculturation in the Japanese Food Culture

Japan is surrounded by sea, and two-thirds of the archipelago is covered with mountain forests. Thanks to such geographical advantages, there are rich sea products, salt, and soft water to produce a variety of food cultures. Rice is a Japanese staple and along with water, salt, and unique condiments such as *sake*, *soya sauce*, *miso*, and *mirin*, Japan has been creating its own food culture.



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With the advent of Buddhism in the mid-seventh century, eating of meat was inhibited until approximately 150 years ago. Although a few types of meat – such as birds and rabbits in rural areas – were allowed, meat was never seen openly on the table. Sometimes, in the name of taking medicine, it was said that noble families ate meat.

“Petal of peony” and “maple leaf” are colloquialisms for boar meat and deer meat, respectively, which have been used until now. In neighbouring China and Korea meat in the diet was not as strictly prohibited as in Japan. Another factor that brought us uniqueness was ‘self-isolation’, from the Edo era Japan had been closed off from the world for over 200 years. Since the mid-seventeenth century no war occurred; popular culture flourished; and traditional arts, such as *Ukiyo-e*, *Jōruri*, and *Kabuki* were developed. In reference to food culture, bachelor *samurai* had to move to Edo on their duty, they were going out to eat *sushi* and *tempura*. Dining-out culture was born in the Edo era.

In the Edo era, Japan shut out foreign people, products, and information to develop its own culture; meanwhile, Japanese people began craving what happened overseas. After 250 years the Edo era ended and the Meiji era commenced in 1868. In the Meiji era, various economic policies were initiated. With the purpose of joining the Western international community, many westerners were hired to help make public policy decisions. Western culture was appreciated in popular culture; for example, westernised architecture was built, short hairstyles and western-style food were recommended. At the same time, the indigenous culture and religion of local communities were negated, and even the policy of abolishing Buddhism, was introduced.

These drastic bipolar cultural policies necessarily influenced contemporary Japanese culture and lifestyles. On the food cultural side, *sukiyaki*, beef braised and seasoned with soy sauce and sugar became very popular in urban societies, and Japanised Western recipes such as fried pork cutlets, curry and rice, and red *bean bread with sweet red bean paste* were invented. Among them, *curry and rice* was first introduced as a military training diet for increasing body strength, and then it spread to the public. Curry and rice is now one of the most popular recipes eaten on average once each week by the Japanese. From an aspect of nutrition, the Western diet was able to supplement the oil and fat content in the Japanese diet.

2 Accelerating Acculturation in the Japanese Daily Diet

It seems that Japanese people are particularly good at accepting other cultures, especially in relation to food. Many diverse international *cuisines* are served in Japanese homes. They are localised along with Japanese taste and manners, and pasta can often be seen on tables because it is easy to cook. Chinese and Asian cuisines are also cooked in Japanese home kitchens, using diverse ingredients with different cooking utensils. However, now, the cooking process and kitchen space are becoming simpler and simpler, as mentioned below. According to the household survey annually carried by the statistics department of national government, Japanese spend half of their food expenses on restaurants and ready meals, because people can choose from so many casual-price restaurants and groceries. In addition, they also purchase many kinds of ethnic dishes, besides Japanese traditional ones. Very few countries are seen to have more diverse international food than Japan, in spite of relatively few immigrants to Japan.

Most of all, Italian dishes are a particular favourite of the Japanese people. Pasta and salad is called *pasta lunch* in Japan, and is often eaten by women. Italian pasta is now becoming immensely popular as frozen food made by big food companies and is a best-selling ready meal at convenience stores (about 56,000 locations across Japan) because it can be purchased at a good price and is easy to cook in a microwave. Japan has many Italian restaurant chains. Saizeriya, the biggest Italian restaurant chain in Asia, has 1,000 stores in Japan and 500 in China, Singapore, and other Asian countries. The founder of Saizeriya expected Italian dishes to become more popular at the onset, and he succeeded by serving low-price pasta for 3 Euros. Saizeriya is such a successful restaurant chain that even some famous Italian chefs are visiting.

As another example, *rāmen* is now spreading worldwide. *Rāmen* was originally a side dish from China, and since then, the Japanese people have been fostering *rāmen* culture by making it in its own cultural manner. *Rāmen* has been said to be the most well-known Japanese dish eaten around the world. Lately, at home in Japan, people have fewer opportunities to eat purely traditional Japanese dishes (*wa-shoku*), and they are eating hybrid dishes instead. In 2013, UNESCO declared *wa-shoku* to be part of Japan's intangible cultural heritage. However, this is truly ironic, in the sense that *wa-shoku* is no longer representative of current Japanese dishes but is, in fact, cultural heritage.

3 Womens' Cooking Throughout the Post-World War II Rapid Economic Growth, and the Heisei and Reiwa Periods

Acceptance of foreign cultures in Japanese food culture is deeply linked to the domestic economic situation. Rapid economic growth was achieved after World War II. That supported the spirit and fidelity of Japanese salaried men to the company just as in the feudal society of the Edo era. During that period, the typical Japanese family unit consisted of a husband who worked for a company outside home and a wife as housekeeper who supported him in his work to become a powerful driving force toward them achieving a satisfying life. Within that lifestyle, women as housewives played an important role in producing a vigorous work force by serving homemade dishes; they used to make a big effort to provide breakfast, lunch carried outside by family members, and dinner.

In the 1970s, American restaurant chain enterprises entered Japan. Japanese families could afford a car to drive and to enjoy leisure. In this period, dining-out culture was starting to flourish in Japan. This growth maintained its pace until the 1990s, and the market grew to over 250 billion dollars. From post-World War II until the 1990s, families consumed products together. Meanwhile, using the advantage of economic power, Japan started seeking inexpensive food ingredients from around the world, and at this time, the self-sufficiency rate became increasingly lower.

After the economic bubble burst in the 1990s, Japan was intermittently caught in an economic crisis, with even women and the elderly forced to work. The increase in the rate of women working made even minor double-income households the majority after 30 years of the Heisei era. Such social change diminished the energy of women at home for housekeeping (short time and simplicity were key words in this period). Shortening cooking time was prioritised. Frozen pasta and ready meals were developed based on the advance of women into society.

4 Value Change and the Reconsideration of Family and Region

In the Heisei era, the Internet and smartphones changed social life, and individuality was increasingly respected. Interpersonal relations were shaped in a different manner, and the concepts of family and community were increasingly underestimated. At the same time, the number of single households was increasing, and the average number of family members was 2.5, while in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, it was less than 2. In such a situation, individuality was also sought in the food culture. Ready meals for one person were welcomed and sold

at convenience stores. Even when family members sat at the same table, each member could eat different dishes depending on their favourite. At home, each family member was busy with their respective matters, and it was becoming rare for entire families to eat together except over the weekend.

Besides the appeal of this fast and simple way of cooking, individual ready meals had grown up. People did not cook at home and were eating ready meals by carrying dishes home in plastic boxes. Such a style of eating has been popularised, producing a ten billion dollar market. Food suppliers also proposed seasonings and how to prepare the dishes in combination with fresh food such as cut vegetables, making it possible to cook at home with extreme energy savings. Now due to the COVID-19 pandemic, people are obliged to stay home, which increases the time shared with family members. A by-product of the pandemic is that people have been rethinking the appeal of homemade dishes. Family members eat the same dishes surrounding big pots and barbecues. People shop more at the supermarket, purchasing more fresh products than before the pandemic. To-go options are promoted more at restaurants and fast food outlets. These shops are using delivery services such as Uber Eats, and they prepare frozen foods and meal kits for easy delivery with the aim of recovering their diminishing sales. Food mobility is being promoted, and food culture is changing because of the pandemic.

5 Supply Chain and Food Sustainability

As for the supply chain, supermarkets as mainstream have been revalued, and direct-from-the-farm and D2C (direct-to-consumer) products will no longer be considered conventional. The young generation, called Millennials, can engage in these unconventional food streams to have an opportunity to recognise the origin of the food they eat and the lifestyle of local agricultural producers. Due to the pandemic, more than a few young people are rethinking their urban, too-packed lifestyles, and are seeking a more minimal life. Millennials, as well as Generation Z, face social issues such as environmental changes, economic divide, and discrimination, and they expect companies to adopt their same attitudes as well as their own consumption patterns and preferences. The Italian Slow Food movement was propagated in Japan in the 2000s. In fact, Slow Food has been popularised only by the mass media and a small group of people highly interested in food. This word was also used for commercialism. On the other hand, Millennials have started thinking that they should enjoy Slow Food and local production by local people as much as they can.

At home, family relations will change. The traditional roles of husband and wife will continue to weaken, and independent person-to-

person relationships will be established. It is the same for local communities; the trends toward simple cooking and ready meals cannot be stopped. Fujiwara (2019), a researcher of the food culture under the Nazi government, called this *enshoku*: the uniting power of food to repair interpersonal relationships. Home, human bonds, the environment, and economic sustainability should be important for food culture.

6 **Chisan Chishō 地産地消 (Locally Produced and Locally Consumed), an Attempt in Kyoto**

Kyoto is the ancient capital of Japan that has 1,200 years of history and something in common with Venice. One author of this paper lives in Kyoto. It is surrounded by mountains and is rich in pure water. *Sake* is produced somewhere in Kyoto, among which Fushimi is one of the most famous brewery towns in Japan. *Sake* tourism is popular in Kyoto. Tourists travel around Kyoto, visiting several *sake* breweries. *Sake* is made mainly of rice, but most rice is not from Kyoto. However, *Shōtoku shuzō*, a *sake* brewery, uses heirloom rice of Kyoto, in collaboration with a producer in Kyoto to revive pure Kyoto *sake*.

As another example, Kameoka, located West of Kyoto, is a city famous for pickled vegetables, which is a representative souvenir of Kyoto. Kameoka is trying to revive *ai* 藍 (indigo) including through indigo dyeing and the development of edible indigo. Kameoka has historical sites and is also famous for river rafting on the Hozu River. Kameoka has been reborn as a more-appealing city by cooperation with the local people. Although the ageing problem has been evolving, such activities are expected to encourage young people to move into the city.

7 **Conclusions**

In this paper, we introduced the history of Japanese food culture from ancient times and explained the active acculturation of food by the Japanese people. It is interesting that the Japanese people have been incorporating non-native diverse food cultures and integrating them into their own food culture to invent 'Japanised' international food. Unfortunately, Japanese traditional dishes (*wa-shoku*) have been disappearing. It is ironic that UNESCO has recently named *wa-shoku* as an intangible cultural heritage. Since the 1970s, the Japanese food culture has been changing, and in the twenty-first century, Japanese traditional home-cooked dishes are on the verge of disappearing. Currently, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are forced to stay home, but ready meals are evolving instead of home-cooked dishes. On the

other hand, in Italy, family members continue getting together around the table to eat homemade dishes prepared by mamma. Japanese people should accept diverse food cultures from overseas as they have been doing and, at the same time, rediscover their traditional food culture. *Chisan chishō* 地産地消 (locally produced and locally consumed) should be incorporated into future food businesses domestically and internationally. Although tradition and innovation seem diametrically opposed, it can be said that ‘tradition is innovation’.

Shokutaku Jigoku

Visions of Family Meals in Japanese Cinema

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Abstract Cooking and dining scenes have been a ubiquitous presence in Japanese cinema since its inception, and the relationship between Japanese people and food has been frequently exploited to play out family dynamics, rites of passage, etc. Therefore, the dining room often becomes the place where drama unfolds in striking contrast with this supposedly safe environment. This paper focuses on three films where dining scenes are particularly relevant – Ozu Yasujiro's *The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice* (1952), Morita Yoshimitsu's *The Family Game* (1983) and Miike Takashi's *Visitor Q* (2001) – in order to analyse how Japanese cinema has documented the transformation of family relations in time.

Keywords Ozu Yasujiro. Morita Yoshimitsu. Miike Takashi. Traditional family. Dining scenes.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 *The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice*. – 3 *The Family Game*. – 4 *Visitor Q*. – 5 Visions of Family Meals. – 6 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

Japanese movies featuring dining scenes are countless since for many East Asian countries meals are regarded as a moment of socialisation, a break from daily life, or associated with traditional rites, such as eating *mochi* on New Year's Eve. Although street food is a far more common practice in Japan than in European countries, the house continues to be the main place to consume food. Japanese cinema often exploits the relationship between food and tradition to represent fam-



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ily dynamics, therefore a history of the Japanese family can be appreciated through the lens of movies. Kitchens and dining rooms are often the places where drama unfolds, creating a striking contrast with the seemingly safe environment. In this paper, I will analyse the dining scenes of three films and their relation to the development of the traditional family. I will focus on the representation of a marriage crisis in the 1950s in Ozu Yasujiro's *Ochazuke no aji* (*The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice*, 1952), the exploration of a middle-class family during the high-growth period of the 1980s in Morita Yoshimitsu's *Kazoku gēmu* (*The Family Game*, 1983), and the disintegration of the nuclear family in the New Millennium in Miike Takashi's *Bijitā Q* (*Visitor Q*, 2001). Although these movies vary greatly in terms of style, tone and characteristics, the comparison between them will highlight the differences running through the decades and the problematic aspects of the traditional family in their own temporal contexts.

2 *The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice*

The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice differs from Ozu's style of direction in both tone and the choice of characters. The gloomy script is counterbalanced by an unusually light touch and the story does not feature an old father abandoned by his daughters, nor sons visiting their ageing parents, but, instead, a dissatisfied wife, an uncommon character in Ozu's filmography (Bock 1980, 78). This is something Donald Richie links to Ozu's wish to modernise an old screenplay he wrote during the War (along with his usual screenwriter Nodo Kōga). However, Richie found him lacking in the attempt to "graft new material onto old" (Richie 1974, 238). The protagonists are Taeko and Mokichi, a longtime couple with no children, brought together by an arranged marriage, and trapped in a mid-life crisis given they are people with very different interests. The main subplot focuses on their niece Setsuko, her rejection of an arranged marriage like theirs and a possible sentimental *liaison* with the husband's *protégée*.

As the title openly suggests, food is symbolically meaningful in the story: *ochazuke* is a simple and traditional dish, where green tea is poured onto white rice with or without seasoning. Three scenes connected with food and meals mark the main turning points of the story and represent the symbolical development of the couple's relationship. In the first part of the film, the two are seldom seen together, emphasising the differences in their lives and a sense of detachment in spite of their marriage. The first dining scene features Taeko, the wife, taking a break from life in the city and enjoying a spa resort with two friends and her niece Setsuko. While eating and drinking in a beautiful *ryōkan* in their matching kimonos, the women talk about their husbands' flaws and Taeko is the most cynical amongst them.

Their criticism extends to naming carp in the pond below their room after their husbands, and once again it is Taeko who enjoys the joke the most since she names the one 'resembling' her husband *donkan san* (Mr. Thickhead), because the carp is not able to catch any of the food she throws at him. If this scene is useful in describing their current situation, the next one documents one of the biggest arguments between the couple, marking a further break in their relationship. This happens when Taeko sees her husband pouring his soup onto the rice and sipping it noisily. Mokichi loves this practice but so far has restrained himself from doing it in front of his sophisticated wife. His accidental slip shocks her and drives her away from the room in anger. The next day she boards the train to Osaka without notifying her husband. Ozu suggests that in an arranged marriage one does not really know the partner, in spite of the length of their matrimony. Later on, the dining table becomes the place where the couple finds happiness together for the first time and the *ochazuke* turns out to be the perfect dish to restore their relationship. This scene is preceded by a long one set in the kitchen, where the couple searches for the ingredients for the dish. Their confusion about the location of the ingredients mimics their lack of knowledge of one another but this time, the tone is joyful and the couple shares a new intimacy. *Ochazuke* becomes the symbol of their renewed relationship: while they share it on the traditional dinner table, Taeko realises that a simple and modest dish like the *ochazuke* can be as fulfilling as marriage to an unsophisticated man.

In *The Flavor of Green Tea Over Rice*, Ozu gives the audience a realistic representation of everyday life in post-war Japan, analysing how the institution of arranged marriage faced society of the 1950s. Yet, criticism of this institution does not come directly from the couple but from the niece, as she refuses to conform to outdated rules in order to avoid being trapped in a life of unhappiness like her uncle. Setsuko also represents the type of impact that modernity and Westernisation had in Japan and particularly on women, since her Western dresses contrast with her aunt's kimono. She then disrupts the highly hierarchical society by following her uncle to a *pachinko* parlour, a place traditionally reserved for men at that time. However, and perhaps because of her criticism, she is not portrayed kindly by the director but rather as a lunatic, stubborn and spoiled young woman and she keeps the same attitude when she starts dating a man of her choice.

If dining scenes are those that define the path of the wife-husband relationship, food emphasises the differences between the two protagonists conveyed through their culinary tastes: Mokichi likes simple and cheap food, while Taeko prefers sophisticated dishes. However, even considering the couple's happy ending, Ozu's reading of the post-war Japanese family is still problematic; in the end,

the 'blame' falls onto the woman since she is the one who has to conform to her husband's lifestyle to appreciate their relationship and the *ochazuke* itself.

3 The Family Game

Analysing films from different decades is useful to understand how economic developments affected not only what families ate, but also the manner and location of their meals. This is most evident in *The Family Game*, a rather free adaptation of Honma Yōmei's novel of the same title. The film is set in high-growth era Japan, when the private space of the family has shifted from the traditional houses of the 1950s to the *danchi* (lit. 'group land') of the 1980s. The Numatas, comprised of husband, wife and two teenage sons, live in one of these anonymous buildings. In Morita's vision, they represent the rigid roles that Japanese consumerist society assigned to them: the father is a *sarariman*-kind of person often absent from home, the mother is the housekeeper never leaving the house and caring about everything their sons need. The elder brother Shin'ichi is kind and study-oriented, while Shigeyuki is rebellious, at the bottom of his class rankings and bullied by his classmates. The dynamics of this apparently normal family are disrupted when a *katei kyōshi* (a private tutor) called Yoshimoto is hired to help Shigeyuki improve his grades to apply to a better high school. The film is a ruthless criticism of the "entrance exam war" and the Japanese educational system, but it is also "the unique mode of approach to the family" in "postmodern" Japan, an absurdist tale of the "middle-class nuclear family life in the city" (McDonald 1989, 55).

Spatiality in the movie plays an important role and it is one of the primary sources for comedy. The Numata's apartment is so small and claustrophobic that the couple has to go to the car to have private conversations, and the older brother can only access his room by walking through Shigeyuki's. In this house deprived of privacy, the dining table features as the central object. It is an unrealistic and un-traditional table, for it is extremely long and narrow, and all the family members line up on the same side, eating shoulder to shoulder. Although exceptionally long, the table does not provide enough space for the four of them to move freely, even less so when the tutor is invited for dinner, hence reinforcing the claustrophobic feeling of the house. Furthermore, the shots involving family meals are usually flat – much like in Leonardo's *The Last Supper* – and along with several elements such as, "the orientation of the table, the x-axis movement of the food-server, and the horizontal line up of diners", it contributes to "the image's precise, mechanical, frontal, flat

humour" (Davis 2006).¹ In Mita's opinion, far from being an 'un-realistic' object, the dining table is an accurate signifier of Japanese society in the 1980s, when families usually watched television while eating, thus reflecting the fictionality of reality itself (Mita 1995, 28), and the resulting lack of communication.²

In this context, tutor Yoshimoto is the disruptive force that, violating social norms, exposes the dysfunctionalities of the family. Similar to Pasolini's *Teorema* (1968), the outsider is able to bring to the fore contradictions inherent to the family, which were never openly addressed by its members. Although the tutor mostly works in Shigeyuki's room, his disruptive power is most evident in the dining room, thus affecting the entire family. In fact, since it is the only shared space of the apartment, the dining table features some of the most relevant scenes in the film,³ such as the hilarious attacks on the nuclear family in their last dinner with the tutor, held to celebrate Shigeyuki's accomplishment in entering a prestigious high school. It is a technically effective scene, a single eight-minute take where the situation degenerates into a food battle, further exacerbated by the little space the characters have. In one of the most memorable scenes in the history of Japanese cinema featuring a family meal, the tutor puts an end to the dinner by literally knocking out every single member of the family, overturning the table and then leaving the house. Yoshimoto has destroyed the Numatas' sense of stability, and his character exposes the contradictions in the representation of the traditional family in Japanese cinema "wreaking havoc on generic expectations and overturning cinematic traditions" (Knee 1991, 40). Yoshimoto has torn off the mask of the family as a fake unit, where each member has to play out their pre-assigned role regardless of their real relationships. If in Ozu's movie Taeko explicitly criticises her husband's flaws in front of her friends and Mokichi talks frankly to the maid about his marriage problems, in *The Family Game* appearances are

1 Another feature of the dining scenes is the sense of incommunicability they exert to the audience since all the family members face the same direction and they are not able to look into each other's eyes. This element clearly reflects the parents' inability to understand their sons' feelings, as everything the father seems to care about is to improve his son's grades - even offering monetary prizes to the tutor - and the mother is too fond of them to even understand when they ridicule her, as in the first scene or in the 'coffee joke'.

2 The layout of the dining table with the family lined up from side to side makes them look like products in a commodity catalogue, emphasising the consumerist era (Murakami 1984, 60-5). They are no longer real human beings, but archetypes defined by commodified objects, as it happens with the elder brother with his telescope and the mother with leatherwork.

3 In the opening scene, the characters are presented while sitting at the dining table and they are associated with a specific food. Shigeyuki introduces them first as a unit, then individually, labelling them as "noisy" (*sugoku urusai*) and "on the verge of a nervous breakdown" (*piripiri natte*).

all that matters and everything is accepted for the sake of the children's academic career or to seem as a normal, middle-class family. In 'postmodern' Japan, food and beverage thus become disposable commodities, something that can be thrown at people or spit in the sink, unlike the ingredients used to make the *ochazuke* that were so accurately organised and preserved in Ozu's movie. They are mere signs emptied of their inherent properties, whose only function is to stand for signifiers of characters, like the soymilk the father sips while being in the *ofuro*. In fact, when later in the movie the tutor asks for the same drink from the wife, he is declaring his position as the new head of the family (Gerow 2007, 244).

4 *Visitor Q*

If *The Family Game* parodies the family unit in postmodern Japan, then *Visitor Q* by Miike Takashi represents a post-postmodern society, one that has already lost all its signifiers, where parody has been replaced by nonsense and where what could be defined as a "traditional" family is already shuttered. It is one of those extreme movies that made Miike's eclecticism infamous. Shot entirely on digital video with a very limited budget, Miike was able to turn this limitation into a virtue, thanks to his background in the V-cinema industry and the "chameleon-like ability to adapt his filmmaking sensibilities to almost any kind of scenario" (Chris 2014, 189). It features the Yamazaki family and their inept father who is shooting a documentary about youth culture, and in the opening scene finds out his runaway daughter became a prostitute. When he tries to interview her, he is lured into having sexual intercourse with her. At home, his son, who suffers regular bullying from three classmates, takes his frustration out on the mother, beating her for futile reasons. The mother is addicted to heroin and sells her body to middle-aged men to afford her habit. In this disconcerting portrait, the father brings a bizarre stranger to live with them, which affects the entire family. As in *The Family Game*, it seems to be a variation based on Pasolini's *Teorema*, but this time the Visitor does not have the function to disrupt family's dynamics, on the contrary, he will provide – with no apparent reason, just like a divine force – the necessary inputs to 'wake up' the family and restore harmony in a rather peculiar way.

Visitor Q features several scenes in which characters are eating at the dining table, but they can hardly be called family meals, as the mere act of sitting together is the only action resembling a normal meal. They are war scenes instead, since they usually involve throwing knives, beatings, and assaults with fireworks. Family meals are just a gesture of what a 'traditional' family is supposed to do, even if there is no sense of family left. The woman diligently plays the role of

a submissive mother, serving the dishes with a smile moments after being beaten by her son, while the Visitor cheerfully asks for *okawari* and the father keeps eating. This absurdist behaviour is even more evident when the bullies destroy the house with their fireworks and everyone keeps eating unbothered, except for the father who is filming a new documentary about his son. The parents' attitude at dinner reflects the devotion to their family roles, which numbed them to their own feelings, losing track of each other and of their children. They are unable to communicate, as the only form of interest the father feels towards them is connected to his job, using the camera to observe his sons from a safe distance. It is therefore significant that the mother's awakening comes through food when the Visitor makes her rediscover femininity and maternal instincts by squeezing her breasts making her milk drip copiously. In a later scene, she is able to react to her son's beatings for the first time by throwing a knife close to him and then covering the kitchen floor with her milk. She later helps her husband kill the three bullies – the first activity they do together after years – while the son swims in her milk promising he will become a good student. The film ends with the mother breastfeeding the husband and the returning daughter, as “maternity covers all the contradictions by embracing them in herself” (Yomota in Tomasi 2006, 84). Even through extreme forms of expression, with characters embodying social phenomena of Japanese society, in the end *Visitor Q* reveals itself as a conservative movie at heart, as the unity of the traditional family is restored centring it on the woman's maternity.

5 Visions of Family Meals

In Ozu's film, the couple lives in a detached house with maids, keeps relationships with friends and colleagues, and is able to develop sociality. In contrast, the Japanese family of the 1980s becomes a mere number inside a beehive (the *danchi*), where nobody knows each other, as exemplified by Yoshimoto asking twice to neighbours where the Numatas live, without obtaining an answer. It is a seemingly inescapable place and the couple is never shown outside of the apartment, except for the car (its extension). In the 1980s the family is left alone, a nuclear unit isolated from – yet closer than ever to – other families. The only scene featuring direct contact with neighbours is an awkward, although hilarious, situation regarding a funeral, once again highlighting the ‘inhuman’ dimension of the *danchi*. The return to a traditional house in *Visitor Q* does not improve the family's condition, as the building is literally under attack from outside forces, represented by bullies. Except for a father's colleague, they are the only sort of distorted form of socialisation that the family has. Their presence is even more effective than in *The Family Game*, be-

cause their assaults tear down the house, spatially representing the dismantling of the 'traditional' family.

As family spatiality progressively changed through the decades, the same goes for paternal roles and their function. The mother in *Visitor Q* could be seen as the evolution of *The Family Game*'s one, as both are scolded or ignored by their husbands and both are treated like a servant or worse by their sons. Their existence is the most miserable among the members of the family and it is representative of women's condition in contemporary Japan (Morimoto 1994, 260-72). Nonetheless, the mother redeems herself at the end of *Visitor Q*, becoming the new centrepiece of the family. On the other hand, it is the husband/father figure that emerges as the weak one in the three movies. Even considering the rather positive characterisation of the husband in *The Flavor of Green Tea over Rice*, all three of them are symbols of failure. Mokichi fails in the most fundamental masculine duty in what is considered a traditional family: giving her wife a child. He is also extremely passive in accepting his marriage conditions, hardly understanding his wife's feelings. The Numata's father is mostly absent from home and the tutor basically replaces him in the household. He hardly talks with his sons except for discussing their grades, and he complains to his wife about everything that does not go as planned in the house, but hardly acts upon it. Finally, Yamazaki's father can be deemed as the ultimate failure. He is useless at his job as his projects are constantly rejected, and still, the only form of interaction he has with his family is through the lens of the camera, detaching himself from any sort of emotion. Most importantly, he is a failure from a sexual and educational standpoint and in every other aspect of family life. As the last scene graphically represents, he fundamentally regresses to his childlike self, entrusting the reunification of the family unit to his wife. Through these three films, the father figure has become progressively weaker since the post-war era, completely losing touch with the family reality, becoming unable to communicate with them and ultimately delegating his duties to someone else.

When it comes to the representation of traditional family, Ozu is certainly the reference point, since his style has been copied, modified or parodied even in very different movies. In this regard, *The Family Game* can be evaluated as a parody of the home drama genre *à la* Ozu, where Morita works against stereotypical representations of traditional family targeting family meal scenes in particular. Morita updates the so-called 'Ozu's style' – fixed shot, low camera angle – to subvert its dynamics, showing a family with dissolved human bonds, which is "subtly different from the Japanese family Ozu described"

(Satō 1985, 60).⁴ On the other hand, if Ozu places the viewer among the members of the family by situating the camera at the *tatami* level, Miike overturns this approach in *Visitor Q*. The majority of the shots inside the house are far from the action, framing the kitchen from the hallway, or covering part of the frame with *shōji* or objects. Considering the hyper-realistic quality of the digital video, this gives a strong voyeuristic feeling to the images, drawing the viewer closer and assigning him the role of a Peeping Tom (Mes 2006, 214-15).

6 Conclusions

The three movies analysed feature several scenes of family meals playing a functional role in the development of the plot. As the dining table changes from a traditional to a longitudinal to a Western-styled one, a progressive detachment of the family from reality can be observed. The dining room, the safest place *par excellence*, gradually turns into an intimate war zone where the drama unfolding inside the house plays out. Consequently, food loses its original function to become a literal or metaphorical weapon. In Ozu's movie, produced when memories of war privations were still fresh, food retains its specific value. This is why it is the dish itself – with its own taste and ingredients – that becomes the key to solving the marriage crisis. *The Family Game* depicts a post-modern society instead, where food has turned into a signifier of characters and where it is used symbolically to cover the appearances of the middle-class family, until it is thrown to the ground, exposing the family's dysfunctionalities. Finally, *Visitor Q* does not need to employ food to create meaning, nor for its symbolical value, because contemporary society has lost both. Food is either part of an emptied daily gesture and a proper weapon. In the end, though, it is the mother's milk, the most fundamental nourishment, the source for a renewed awareness and the foundation of a new family unit.

⁴ In order to further deepen this relationship, Knee compares the shots of the industrial landscape in *The Family Game* to the famous Ozu's 'pillow shot' "clearly commenting on the physically and spiritually decayed and oppressive milieu of the modern family" (Knee 1991, 44).

Food Between Life and Death in the Cinema of Marco Ferreri and Itami Juzo

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Abstract International cinema of every era has told of the relationship between men, women and food. In many cases it is presented as a common thread capable of binding every life impulse: sex, spirituality, greed, even death. In the cases of Italy and Japan, there are two directors in particular for whom the theme recurs with greater incisiveness: Marco Ferreri and Itami Juzo, and especially in their works *La Grande Abbuffata* and *Tanpopo*. Both movies also represent a critique of the consumer society and the general decay of civil entourage. The characters thus contribute to representing a sort of mythology of the human being, each distinct in a grotesque, surreal and in many cases parodic way while they use food to translate their impulses. This essay aims to highlight the similarities between the main narrative strategies used by the two directors.

Keywords Food. Cinema. Ferreri. Juzo. La Grande Bouffe. Tampopo. Symbolism. Life. Death.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Criticism of the Consumer Society. – 3 “If You Don’t Eat You Can’t Die”. – 4 Cruelty and the Exposure of Death.

1 Introduction

The relationship between food and cinema dates back to the dawn of the history of the seventh art. In fact, as early as 1895 the Lumière brothers referred to it in *Repas de Bébé* (Baby’s Lunch), where we see Auguste feeding his little daughter. From that first moment there have been countless films that have shown how food can alterna-



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tively become a symbol of the individual's condition and the driving force behind his actions, a metaphor for the primary instincts of the human being and a connecting element in the order of social rules. For this purpose, the aggregating and community value of the food itself is added in many cases, where the rituality of preparation and consumption defines the place of internal conflicts within the group and its communication dynamics.

Research on the subject has always been numerous: important philosophers, anthropologists, sociologists, as well as historians and film critics¹ have been dedicated to the analysis of how food permeates every cultural aspect of contemporary life. Moreover, in recent years there has been a furthering of research from a transmedia perspective, an interest also stimulated by the growing number of television programs dedicated to culinary art, as well as the multiplication of subjective perspectives on food in social media.

As recently pointed out by scholars Enrique Mirón, Santana González and Molina García (2020), the studies conducted until today have focused in particular on a few areas from which a general classification of films on the subject derives. The first group includes those films in which food becomes a symbol of social differentiation, i.e., Luis Buñuel's *The Discreet Charm of the Bourgeoisie* (1972) and Gabriel Axel's *The Feast of Babette* (1987). The second group refers to films in which dishes serve to enhance certain feelings, a category which could include, for example, *Eat, Drink, Love* (1994) by Ang Lee and *Como Agua Para Chocolate* (1992) by Alfonso Arau. Finally, the third group includes titles in which gastronomic personalities stand out, as in the case of *Julie & Julia* (2009) by Nora Ephron. While the three scholars suggest to also contemplate a fourth category dedicated to the representation of eroticism in gastronomy, it becomes necessary to add a further classification that implies the very close relationship between food and death and the dynamics of cruelty that link them, a sphere which also includes famous films such as Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salò* (1975) and Peter Greenaway's *The Cook, The Thief, His Wife, and Her Lover* (1990).

The two films analysed in this essay, namely *La Grande Bouffe* (*La Grande Abbuffata*, 1973) by Marco Ferreri and *Tanpopo* (*Tanpopo*, 1985) by Itami Jûzô, can be traced back to all the categories just examined. Moreover, both directors, almost the same age and who died in the same year, 1997, have often resorted to the symbolism of food in relation to the socio-economic sphere in their filmographies.

¹ The best-known essay on the subject is *Mythologiques I. Le cru et le cuit* (*Mythologique 1. The Raw and the Cooked*, Paris, Plon, 1964) by Claude Lévi-Strauss, through which the French ethnologist demonstrates, with the help of references to music and mythology, how the transition from the raw state of food (the natural condition) to the one after cooking (the cultural condition) represents the transformation of an elementary order into an elaborate system of codes that is typical of civilization.

La Grande Bouffe tells of a group of friends who retire to a Parisian villa with the intention of committing suicide by eating until they die: Ugo is a cook, Michel a television producer, Marcello a pilot, Philippe is a magistrate. The men are joined by three prostitutes, who, however, will leave the villa before their death out of disgust (for the excess of food and physiological functions of the men), and the teacher Andréa, the only woman who will remain to accompany their path towards death.²

In *Tampopo* the truck driver Goro and his young co-driver stop at a small restaurant to eat *ramen*. The owner, Tanpopo, a widow with a dependent child, tries to keep the restaurant going as well as she can, but with little success. Goro decides to help her become the best *ramen* cook in the neighbourhood. Various episodic portraits intersect their story, including that of a *yakuza* with his mistress who appears in several moments and who also opens the film by addressing the audience directly in the cinema, thus defining the fictional character of the entire film from the outset.

2 Criticism of the Consumer Society

The essays that refer to both films underline first of all how the stories represent, albeit with a surreal slant, a critique of the contemporary consumerist and materialist society in which the two directors themselves live. In the first case the idea is reinforced by the markedly decadent atmosphere in which the story unfolds, while in the second one the director opts for a parodic solution. Beyond the different approaches, the voracious and neurotic appetite translates the nausea towards the excess of consumption, therefore towards the altered idea of life itself, where food represents at the same time an element of pleasure and disturbance. Furthermore, in the case of *Tampopo*, everything is amplified by a continuous reference to Western elements which, now widespread and mixed with traditional and native ones, contribute to emptying the spiritual sense and making society more materialistic.³

² The names of the characters are the same as the actors who play them: Ugo Tognazzi, Michel Piccoli, Marcello Mastroianni, Philip Noiret and Andréa Ferréol. The professions of the five offer an interesting approach to the 'institutions' that regulate the society of the period and that suicide, as a metaphor, helps to break down. In this regard, at the presentation of the film at the Cannes Film Festival where it was booed by many (and later censored), Luis Buñuel called it "a monument to hedonism".

³ Many aspects are even parodic compared to Hollywood cinema, for example the cowboy hat worn by the protagonist Goro, while others refer directly to Western gastronomies imported into Japan: it shows how to eat pasta without making noise, how social status is also expressed by ability to choose courses on a menu written in French, and

Cooking and eating thus become rituals emptied of their ancestral function and shown as an exhibition of appearances and trends, in any case elaborated in their meticulous preparation and consumption. The refinement of the dishes exhibited in both films and continuously enunciated in their characteristics is not only mere exposure of waste, but represents “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usage, situations and behavior” (Barthes 1979). For example, in a scene from *Tampopo* a ramen expert explains to his pupil that in order to taste the dish properly he must follow some basic steps: observe the bowl to appreciate the harmony of shapes and aromas; caress the surface of the food with the chopsticks; gently dip the meat in the broth apologising to the pork because it will have to wait before being eaten; finally, start with the ramen looking at the meat “with affection”.

Similarly, *La Grande Bouffe* exposes with great care the presentation of the ingredients and the stages of preparation of the dishes, especially that of the final course prepared by Ugo (the three liver *pâtés* of different animals whose combination should have represented the apex of his culinary creation), which later becomes an instrument for his own death. Food therefore loses any primary meaning as an element for subsistence and is transformed into a Dionysian simulacrum of the use of the senses. Faced with its symbol as an instrument of pleasure (culinary refinement), both films also exhibit the ingredients in their ‘vulgar’ and nauseating aspect: in the carcasses of animals abandoned in the garden in the final scene of Ferreri’s film, in the food analysed in the garbage cans outside the restaurants in Itami’s film.

3 “If You Don’t Eat You Can’t Die”⁴

Between the two extremes of life and death, the human being lives and subjectivises himself with the use of food and sex in an infinite range of experiences of enjoyment or pain, considered in a continuum of small and large obsessions. The body is the canvas on which these dynamics materialise, and therefore both directors explore it in every function, even extreme, through a continuous use of close-ups and extreme close-ups that mercilessly show its fragility.

Sex is one of the key elements of this human representation. In *La Grande Bouffe* it is orgiastic, enjoyed in the same way as food is con-

finally how all this creates repulsion (in the scene where an old woman sneaks into a supermarket to fingerprint various foods displayed on the shelves).

⁴ This is the phrase that Ugo says to Michel as he gorges him with mashed potatoes in the midst of an intestinal blockage in *La Grande Bouffe*.

sumed: breathless, disordered, obsessive and at times vulgar and grotesque. In *Tampopo* it is more joyful and directly consumed in the relationship with food, as in the scene where the *yakuza* licks his woman's body after sprinkling her with various dishes and ingredients.

Some foods recur in both films in their common symbolic values, in particular eggs and oysters. If in *La Grande Bouffe* the egg has a greater analogy with death, in particular when Ugo arranges some slices of it on his latest culinary creation saying that for the Jews the eggs represent precisely the idea of earthly end, in *Tampopo* the *yakuza* and his partner reach orgasm by passing a yolk from mouth to mouth, an erotic symbol often used in Japanese culture to indicate the thin thread that unites life and death.⁵ Oysters, in turn, are the voluptuous sign of an erotic alteration. In Ferreri's film, Marcello and Ugo compete for who eats the most in a short period of time, indicating the unbridled consumption to which they expose all their forms of pleasure. In Itami's film, on the other hand, the *yakuza* approaches an adolescent *ama* (oyster fisherwomen, usually not so young): the girl opens an oyster for him, which nevertheless cuts his lip, which then bleeds, staining the oyster itself, and with pleasure it is the girl who eats it, thus reversing the canonical roles of sexual possession.

Preparing food, then creating pleasure, is a male prerogative in both films as in society, yet in both movies this domain is reaffirmed and at the same time ironised. In fact, in Ferreri's film, speaking of Andréa, Ugo says: "she is also good at cooking", then the teacher from *Tampopo* says: "I never thought that a woman could become a good *ramen* cook". The woman actually provides the primary need for food through breastfeeding, an image strongly present in the two films. *La Grande Bouffe* introduces us to Philippe subjugated by the breast of his childhood nurse (later also his lover). For him, a diabetic and who in the end is the only survivor in the group of friends, death will come through the excess of sugar in the dessert with the shape of breasts that Andréa herself has prepared for him, stimulating him to consume it until he dies. In Itami's film, after an initial fight Goro regains consciousness in the arms of Tampopo who brings his head closer to her breast. In the ending, especially after the killing of the *yakuza* and Goro's departure by his truck, the camera slowly slides towards a bench where a woman sits breastfeeding her baby. A continuous process of life and death, therefore, which ideally crosses the stages of psychosexual development theorised by Freud, of which the

⁵ The erotic symbolism of the egg often recurs in Japanese cinema, as indicated by the scene of *In the Realm of Senses* by Oshima Nagisa in which the protagonist Abe Sada penetrates herself with an egg, that is, with the eye that examines her uterus as "the place that gives life".

woman-mother represents in a certain sense an exterminating angel who has the task of opening and closing the cycle of existence.

4 Cruelty and the Exposure of Death

The two films use a precise aesthetic of cruelty that intersects various moments of the narrative with grotesque tones, often leading to a visually strong exposure of the body that has lost all vital functions or otherwise resuming it in the moment it is about to lose it. In *Tampopo*, for example, in one of the erotic scenes between the *yakuza* and his woman we witness the agonising end of some dying shrimp in the plate *odori ebi* (live shrimp in an alcoholic infusion) that the man places on the woman's belly and from which movement she gets pleasure. In another scene, an elderly man in a restaurant risks suffocating by eating *mochi* and Tampopo literally saves him by pulling it out of his throat with a vacuum cleaner, then the man in gratitude offers her a turtle to eat after cutting it while it is still alive and making it bleed and agonise. Finally, in one of the sketches that enriches the film, a man runs home where his wife, in the company of her children and a doctor, is on the verge of death: to stimulate her to react, her husband orders her to prepare dinner, and in fact the woman gets up, quickly prepares and serves, then lies back in her bed and dies.

La Grande Bouffe exhibits even more clearly the body in its extreme vulnerability, hence its grotesque aspect in death. During the first evening at dinner, the four friends, while they eat, look at erotic slides of women from the early twentieth century projected onto the wall, but Marcello notices how it looks like a funeral, since all those women have long since died. The bodies of Marcello and Michel themselves after their death are exhibited from the window of the freezer door in which they are hung so that they do not decompose.

Finally, there is one sign above all that unites the two films in the exhibition of the lifeless body: a severed head of a pig. It is shown by Michel in Ferreri's film when supplies of meat arrive, and he wields it as a sign of a voluptuousness that anticipates the group's own design of death. In Itami's film, the pig's head is one of the ingredients displayed in the kitchen when the bums help Tampopo improve her cooking skills, a thing that causes her disgust. But it is above all in the film's finale that its symbolism will become dominant: when the *yakuza* is hit in the street by gunshots, his woman reaches him while he is agonising among statues that depict boar heads, and the couple's last words are addressed to the explanation of how the animal is cooked in the mountains.

La Grande Bouffe and *Tampopo* still represent two fundamental films in the history of international cinema and in many cases serve as inspiration for other directors who often quote some scenes, in-

cluding the title by Greenaway to which we have already referred. Ferreri and Itami both carried out an examination of the body (physical, social, political) through similar surgical instruments as anthropologists, offering us in their symbolic and grotesque representations a still strongly current and disturbing human sample.

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Italy-Japan: Dialogues on Food

edited by Maria Roberta Novielli, Bonaventura Ruperti and Silvia Vesco

Notes on Contributors

Here below the profiles of the authors who contributed to this volume and to the online Symposium *Venice-Japan Food+ Symposium 2021*.

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Eiko Koga has been working for Mitsubishi Corporation for more than thirty years and has gained considerable experience in the fashion industry, in particular as distributor of Italian brands in Japan. From 2006 to 2012, he worked in Italy, where he supported the Food division as well. From April 2020, he covers the position of President of Mitsubishi Italia.

Natalia Francesca Sinatra has been the person in charge of the Food & Beverage Department at Mitsubishi Italia since October 2019, combining her Japanese economics and language studies at Ca' Foscari University of Venice with a long-time passion for Italian food and beverage excellences.

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Stefania Viti is a professional journalist specialised on Japanese issues. She writes about society, culture, food, fashion, design and lifestyle of contemporary Japan, for national and international publications. She lived in Tokyo for ten years but now she lives and works in Milan. For Gribaudo Editore (Feltrinelli Publishing Company) she has published six books on Japanese food culture.

Niccolò Geri's work focuses on the origin and evolution of *sushi* around the world, highlighting the role of producers, consumers and globalisation. He worked with the writer Stefania Viti on the book *L'arte del Sushi* (Gribaudo Editore). Since 2016, he is a high school teacher of Japanese language and Japanese culture, and since 2019 he teaches Italian language for exchange high school students.

Maria Roberta Novielli specialised in Japanese cinema at the Nihon University (Tokyo) and now teaches the History of Cinema and Animation at the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. She is a contributor to numerous Italian magazines and the author of various books, mainly related to Japanese cinema. In addition, she has cooperated with various Italian film festivals organising retrospectives on Japanese film directors. She is also the Chief Editor of *AsiaMedia*, the Italian website which focuses on Asian cinema, the Artistic Director of the Ca' Foscari Short Film Festival and the Director of the Master of Fine Arts in Filmmaking of Ca' Foscari University.

Giorgio Starace was nominated Italian Ambassador to Japan in 2017. After graduating in Political Economy at Bocconi University, Milan, he joined the Diplomatic Service in 1985. He had been deployed in Guatemala, China, India and New York, before his nomination for Italian Ambassador to U.A.E. in 2010. Has also served as a Diplomatic Counsellor to the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and the International Renewable Energy Agency. In 2015 he was nominated Special Envoy of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy for Libya.

Davide Fantoni is the General Manager of the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan. After graduating in Japanese Studies from the University of Florence, he moved to Japan in 2001 with a 2-year scholarship from the Japanese Government to research on discrimination issues. He has free-lanced for Japanese companies, private associations and public entities before taking on the role of General Manager at the Italian Chamber of Commerce in Japan in 2010.

Nanako Yamamori is an accredited journalist by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a member of the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan. She started her career as an Asian correspondent for Bloomberg News and has become the first Asian TV reporter in the history of Italian journalism. Over the past twenty years her reports and interviews were broadcast for Rai, Discovery Channel and NHK. Specialising in social issues and Italy-Japan relations, her articles have been published in *The Guardian*, *Il Sole24Ore* and *L'Espresso*, just to name a few. In 2007, she became a publishing co-author with the publication of *Nippon no Hyoban* by Shinchosha.

Michele Bianco Professor of Marketing & Strategy at CUOA, an Italian primary Business School, teaches courses as an adjunct professor at BU Boston University, University of Padua and University of Trento. He is founder and partner of Gemba, a management consulting company whose purpose is to support entrepreneurs in the creation of value. Since 2020, Michele is also holding the position of District Municipality manager for the City of Treviso (Veneto Region, Italy)

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Paola Scrolavezza teaches Japanese Culture and Literature at University of Bologna. Her research and teaching interests include women's literature as well as the circulation of fiction in the new media age, and the construction of transnational imagery in the context of globalisation. Since 2011 she is responsible for *NipPop*, a project focused on Japanese contemporary culture and subcultures.

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Emiko Kumano joined a major advertising company after graduating from the Faculty of Medicine at Osaka University. She was in charge of major distribution companies, airline companies and cosmetics makers; after that, in the role of account leader for dairy products makers, she started being involved in new products branding, advertisement production and event management. She is a *sake* lover, born and raised in Fukuoka prefecture.

George Amano is the President and CEO of George Creative Company Co. Ltd. Born in Kyoto, as a Design business producer he is a professional working in the establishment of design as a business. He produced several exclusive shops and restaurants and developed marketable products directing manufacturers and designers. He also works in the promotions and marketing strategies with a large number of corporations.

Nakabasami Chieko (PhD) is Professor of the Department of International Tourism Management, Toyo University, Japan. She is interested in multicultural communication and solidarity tourism. She is studying how to manage the multicultural society for all members to feel happy. Currently she is researching some multicultural communities in southern Italy as a model.

Michihata Fumi is the Representative of Foodbiz-net.com and she has been engaged as an advisor and an outside board member in many corporations and researching culture in the food industry, comparing Japan and other countries. Now she lives in an old traditional house in Kyoto, where people gather to network with city and rural communities.

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Italy and Japan are two of the countries where food has traditionally had greater symbolic value. They are two culinary realities now exported all over the world, for a long time representative of lifestyles, social and economic dynamics in many cases similar in the course of their respective histories. This volume, by the contributions offered by authorities and guests, managers, experts, journalists and scholars from Japan and Italy, presents a great number of implications of the cultural representations of Food Culture, analysed in a multi-perspective approach, underlying the value of food and cuisine in Japan and Italy nowadays as in the past, through a considerable transition between tradition and modernity.



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