

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF JAPANESE CUISINE



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Class Times: WF, 1:10-2:40 PM

Course Description:

Japanese food has gone global. Sushi and ramen have become international fast foods, which is to say they are now almost as common to us as pizza or doughnuts. Still, one of the greatest appeals of Japanese cuisine is its promise of a healthier diet. This is increasingly a concern in an overfed and undernourished society where many of us have forgotten the pleasures, as well as the hard work, of cultivation and food preparation, not to mention dining as a form of communion, with both family and our larger communities. Despite its “exoticism,” Japanese cuisine can have much to teach us about eating locally, seasonally, and ethically.

Along with French and Mexican cuisine, Japanese cooking (*washoku*) has been designated world heritage status by UNESCO. Japan’s highly refined cuisine, based on the freshest ingredients, light and simple seasonings, and exquisite presentation, has been an overwhelming influence over many of the world’s greatest chefs. Several have studied under Japanese masters like Murata Yoshihiro of Kyoto’s Kikunoi restaurant. Today, Japan is a

leader, not just in Japanese cuisine, but also in fine international dining, and Japanese chefs and sommeliers travel the world to train. There are more restaurants with Michelin stars (the mark of culinary excellence) in Tokyo today than in Paris and London combined! And many of those Michelin stars are for French, Italian, and Chinese, etc. restaurants, run for the most part by Japanese.

This course will look at the history of Japanese cuisine and show how the country's obsession with eating well anticipated the global slow food movement and our age of celebrity chefs. Last but not least, Kyoto has been the mecca for Japanese cuisine for over a thousand years, and we are perfectly situated to explore its mysteries and delights.

A few topics we will cover include:

- Food as sustenance: The production, nutrition and economy of eating
- Food and the environment: The ecology of eating
- Food and class: The relationship between wealth and culinary tastes and habits
- Food, region and nation: Culinary culture as identity
- Food and ethics: Related to the environment, but not exclusively; the religious and moral practices of consumption
- Food and aesthetics: Gastronomy as art, both to be seen and eaten
- Food fads: cooking, competition, and the popular culture of consumerism
- Food and conviviality: The sociality of food as a symbol of what brings us together.

Exploring the World of Japanese Cuisine is laid out roughly in a number of culinary courses: each week we will address a certain ingredient and/or method of preparation—such as rice, soy beans, fish, and tea—and their significance to the Japanese people. Films, images, and readings will provide the basis for our exploration of Japanese food, but as much as possible I hope to engage all our senses, especially taste and smell, as we encounter new ingredients, scents, and flavours. We don't have the resources to prepare food in class—this is not America's Test Kitchen, and certainly not Chairman Kaga's Kitchen Stadium!—but some demonstrations will be provided, such as *chanoyu*, the classic “tea ceremony.” We will also take advantage of being situated in Kyoto, the mecca for Japanese cuisine. We will take field trips to places where food is made, sold, and served. Homework will include having you each try making some simple Japanese dishes, such as miso soup, *tsukemono* (pickles), and *takikomi gohan* (seasoned mixed rice). There will be something to enjoy for all tastes and diets!

Texts:

Kariya Tetsu, Hanasaki Akira, Miyaki Tetsuichiro, and others. *Oishinbo, a la Carte*. San Francisco: VIZ Media, 2009 [2007].

Other texts will be made available online, as e-books, web links, and PDF files.

Technological Requirements:

Everyone should have a secure internet connection for access to the entire course content (including syllabus, links to streaming content, readings, etc.). I would request that you do not, however, use any electronic devices in class.

Course Delivery and weekly assignments:

I'll give lectures each Wednesday and Friday during the regular class hour (1:10-2:40 pm).

Evaluation:

Weekly assignments:	(10 X 3%)	30%
Midterm and final test:	(15% X 2)	30%
Take-home essay assignment:		20%
Participation and Progress:		20%

Percentage grades will be assigned to all work submitted.

Weekly recipes (30%): Eat your way through this course. 10 recipes over 10 weeks of class, each recipe counting for 3% of your total mark. Try out this recipe at home. Post your recipe on the course website; provide ingredients, proportions, preparation style and cooking method. Post a photo of it and tell us how it tasted! Also provide a source for your recipe. **If the recipe is missing any of these essential items (ingredients, preparation, results, photo, source) you will be docked 1%; more than one of these essential items and you will not be graded on the work.**

Midterm and final test (30%): 2 quizzes will be held in class and will test you on factual matter raised in the lectures and readings for the course. The schedule for the quizzes is **October 14 and December 2.**

Essay (20%): A research essay (min. 1,500 words, max. 3,000 words) on issues and themes raised in the course materials. Essay questions will be supplied in advance, but you are free to suggest your own topic if there is sufficient research material available to write on it.

Class participation and progress (20%):

Daily attendance is mandatory. NO make-up classes will be given. In the event of illness or other absence, please notify your instructor, the Resident Director or the office staff as soon as possible by telephone or via e-mail.

Attendance is mandatory and your participation and progress will also be taken into account.

Grading: Letter Grades are calculated on the following Grade Point Average (GPA) scale:

A+ = 4.33	B+ = 3.33	C+ = 2.33	D = 1.00
A = 4.00	B = 3.00	C = 2.00	F = 0.00
A- = 3.67	B- = 2.67	C- = 1.67	

Academic Integrity:

As members of an academic community, each one of us bears the responsibility to participate in scholarly discourse and research in a manner characterized by intellectual honesty and scholarly integrity. Collaborative scholarship requires the study of other scholars' work, the free discussion of such work, and the explicit acknowledgement of those ideas in any work that inform our own. This exchange of ideas relies upon a mutual trust that sources, opinions, facts, and insights will be properly noted and carefully credited.

In practical terms, this means that, as students, you must be responsible for the full citations of others' ideas in all of your research papers and projects; you must be scrupulously honest when taking your examinations; you must always submit your own work and not that of another student, scholar, or internet agent.

Any breach of this intellectual responsibility is a breach of faith with the rest of our academic community. It undermines our shared intellectual culture, and it cannot be tolerated.

Student Accommodations:

If you are a student with a disability and have a Disability Services-certified 'Accommodation Letter' from your home institution, please send me this letter before the first day of class to confirm your accommodation needs. If you believe that you might have a disability that requires accommodation and do not have an accommodations letter, you should contact the Center for Undergraduate Global Engagement at Columbia University (uge@columbia.edu).

A Few Tips:

All written assignments should be typed, double-spaced, on single-sided paper. Always proof-read your work before submitting it, and keep an extra copy of anything you have submitted in case the original is somehow "lost in transit."

*** All work must be submitted on the scheduled dates.** Unless prior permission has been given, students who fail to submit their outline and essay at the time it is due will be deducted 5% from the total mark for that assignment for every day it is late. Written assignments submitted more than one week past deadline without prior approval will receive a mark of zero.

**** Plagiarism and cheating are not permitted and if you are caught you will fail! Cite all your sources judiciously.**

I'll assess your written work on the basis of the following (percentages are rough benchmarks for weighting of my evaluations):

CONTENT (/40%): Are all the points you raised relevant to your argument? Have you backed up your information with factually accurate and relevant data, with reference to primary sources and secondary criticism, and (if necessary) material covered in class lectures and readings? Have you covered all the relevant points? Are your ideas original and well thought out?

STRUCTURE (/20%): Do you state clearly and explicitly your topic and thesis in your introduction? Is there a coherent and logical progression of your ideas, which are reviewed and summarized in your conclusion?

GRAMMAR AND STYLE (/20%): Please note that term essays and examination papers will be refused a passing grade if they are deficient in English. You are expected to demonstrate that you can express yourself clearly, correctly, and as precisely as possible in writing. Should you fail to do so, the least you can expect is a letter-grade reduction (i.e., 'A' to 'B'). On the other hand, writing with originality and flair may boost your grade.

SPELLING AND PUNCTUATION (/10%): Have you used correct spelling and punctuation?

PHYSICAL PRESENTATION (/10%): Is the work double-spaced, typed, and legible? Does it have a title page with your name on it? Are citations identified by page references or footnotes? Is a complete bibliography provided?

Research Tools:

Many resources, such as journal articles, encyclopedias and dictionaries and even some books and videos, are available online through your university library on databases like JSTOR.

Style Guide:

Please use italics for words that are not in the English lexicon. Words like sushi and sashimi can be found in an English dictionary, but less familiar words, like *washoku* and *dashi*, should be in italics. Put academic articles, essays and shorter works into quotation marks (e.g. Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal"), but longer, book-length works into italics (e.g. Michael Ashkenazi, *Food Culture in Japan*). Either the MLA or Chicago Style of citation is permissible. Please refer to the following link on the University of Victoria Library website: <https://www.uvic.ca/library/research/citation/guides/index.php>

Exploring the World of Japanese Cuisine (F2022) Tentative Class Schedule

***This schedule is subject to change as I explore opportunities for us to get out and experience Kyoto cuisine and bring those who make it into the classroom.**

食 WEEK I SEPT 7: Introduction to course and its methods: What is *washoku*? What does the course cover? What doesn't it cover? A short history of Japanese food.

9: What is *washoku*? cont'd. *The Iron Chef* phenomenon: conspicuous consumption and cuisine as competition.

Readings: Mark Gallagher, "What's So Funny about IRON CHEF?" *Journal of Popular Film and Television*, 31:4, 176-184.

おばんざい Field trip to Masugata shōtengai at Demachi Yanagi to see what's cooking,

WEEK II 14: Japan's obsession with eating well.
Film screening: *Tampopo*

16: *Tampopo*, cont'd.

Readings: Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, "The Ambivalent Self of the Contemporary Japanese."

旨味 WEEK III 21: *Umami*: the fifth flavour. Food for thought and thinking about food. **Readings:** *Oishinbo*, ch. 1.

23: Rosanjin vs. Brillat-Savarin: How to think about food.

Readings: Brillat-Savarin, "Aphorisms of the Professor," from *The Physiology of Taste*: web link:

<https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/b/brillat/savarin/b85p/part2.html>

Roland Barthes, "Reading Brillat-Savarin."

Kitaōji Rosanjin, "*A Fool for Taste*: Rosanjin's aphorisms."

Field trip: To Kahitsukan in Gion, to see their collection of Rosanjin's tableware.

米 WEEK IV 28: Rice: The staff of Japanese life.

Readings: "A Delicious Way to Eat Rice," *Oishinbo*

Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, *Rice as Self: Japanese Identities Through Time*, Ch. 1.

30: Rice, cont'd.

Readings: Katarzyna Cwiertka, "From Ethnic to Hip: Circuits of Japanese Cuisine in Europe," *Food and Foodways: Explorations in the History and Culture of Human Nourishment*. 13:4, 241-272.

大豆 WEEK V OCT 5: The Great Bean: soy and a vegetable diet**Readings:** *Oishinbo*, ch. 3, 5.**Ancillary:** William Shurtleff and Akiko Aoyagi. *History of Soy and Soyfoods in Japan*. Lafayette, CA: Soy Information Center, 2014. <http://www.soyinfocenter.com/pdf/173/Japa.pdf>**OCT 7: Cooking Japanese vegetarian cuisine: a demonstration (TBA)****魚 WEEK VI OCT 12: Fish: The raw and the cooked****Film:** *Jiro Dreams of Sushi***Readings:** *Oishinbo*, chs. 2, 4, 9**Reading:** Theodore Bestor, *Tsukiji: the fish market at The center of the world*, ch. 4.**14: MIDTERM TEST****肉 WEEK VII 19, 21: Meat: Wild and domesticated.** Japan's relationship with animals.**Readings:** Kanagaki Robun, "The Beefeater,"

Tanizaki Jun'ichirō, "Gourmet Club"

Ancillary: Akira Shimizu, "Meat Eating in the Kōjimachi district of Edo," In Rath, *Japanese Foodways, Past and Present***SDGs WEEK VIII 26, 28: Sustainability:**

Whale, dolphin, tuna, and cod. Are we eating endangered species?

Film: *Bluefin*. Discussion of ethics of eating.**Readings:** TBA**礼儀作法 WEEK IX NOV 2: Table Manners and food as art****Film:** *Japanese Tradition: Sushi***Readings:** *Oishinbo*, ch. 6; Tanizaki, *In Praise of Shadows***4: 文化の日 (NO CLASS) .****茶 WEEK X 9: The culture of Tea:****Readings:** Okakura Tenshin, *The Book of Tea*;**Ancillary:** Herbert Plutschow, "An Anthropological Perspective on the Japanese Tea Ceremony." *Anthropoetics* 5 no. 1 (Spring/Summer 1999).Barbara Lynne Rowland Mori, "The Tea Ceremony: A Transformed Japanese Ritual," *Gender and Society*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (Mar., 1991), pp. 86-97.**11: Fieldtrip** to Urasenke headquarters to experience a "tea ceremony."

WEEK XI 16: *Kaiseki*: multi-course fine dining

Readings: Gary Sōka Cadwaller and Joseph Justice, “Stones for the Belly: *Kaiseki* cuisine for tea in the early Edo period.” In Eric C. Rath, *Japanese Foodways, Past and Present*. Rath, “Re-evaluating Rikyū: *Kaiseki* and the origins of Japanese cuisine.”

18: *Wagashi*: tea cakes. A demonstration on how to make them.

23: Coffee: Japan and Kyoto’s café culture.

Reading: Merry White, *Coffee Life in Japan*, Ch. 2. pp. 19-41.

B 級グルメ WEEK XII 25: “B-Gourmet” and *yōshoku* (Japanese-style western cooking):

Curry, noodles and other soul food.

Readings: *Oishinbo*, ch. 8; George Solt, “Ramen and U.S. Occupation Policy.” In Rath, *Japanese Foodways*; Satomi Fukutomi, “Ramen Connoisseurs: class, gender, and the internet.” In Rath, *Japanese Foodways*

Fieldtrip: To Moan (TBD)

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28: Alcohol: Beer, Sake, Whisky ... and course roundup.

Readings: TBA

WEEK XIII DEC 2: Final Test

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