

EXPLORING THE WORLD OF JAPANESE (KYOTO) CUISINE



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Class Times: Tuesdays & Thursdays, 2:55-4:25 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, soybeans, 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:

The course will consist of a mixture of lectures, screenings, presentations, and outings each Tuesday and Thursday.

Evaluation:

Weekly assignments: (10 X 2%)	20%
Midterm presentations:	10%
Final Essay:	
Outline and bibliography (due October 24)	10%
Final class presentations (November 19, 21, 26, 28, Dec. 3, 5)	15%
Final Essay (due December 12)	30%
Attendance, Participation and Progress:	15%

Percentage grades will be assigned to all work submitted.

Weekly recipes/reflection papers (20%): Eat your way through this course. 10 assignments over 10 weeks of class, each one counting for 2% of your total mark. These are a mixture of short reflection papers on outings we have made, memorial meals you have tasted, or special dinners you yourself have prepared at home. I am aware that not everyone will have a chance to cook for themselves while living here, but I hope eventually that you will be adventurous enough to try to make some of the delicious dishes you have eaten while you were here. If you cook something and want to write about it, 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.** If you write on a meal that you had out, post photos, tell where you went and what you ate, try to engage the staff, ask them if you can how it was prepared and what is special about the dish (seasonality, local specialty, etc.).

Midterm presentation (10%): This is an opportunity for you to share with the class your account of a special meal or dish that you have had here, or a place you went for lunch or dinner. Each student will have ten minutes to present. Everyone is recommended to use PowerPoint or another form of slideshow to provide illustrations to their talk.

Presentations are scheduled for October 3, 10, 17.

Essay (55%): 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.

Due dates are as follows:

Outline and bibliography (due October 22)	10%
Class presentations (November 19, 21, 26, 28; December 3, 5)	15%
Final Essay (due December 10)	30%

Class attendance, participation, and progress (15%):

Daily attendance is mandatory. NO make-up classes will be given. In the event of illness or other absence, please notify your instructor 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. Being actively engaged in the class, asking questions of your instructor and fellow students, sharing your experiences and thoughts: all these will be taken into account in assessing your performance.

With the exception of the weekly assignments (which may be submitted as much as one week late without penalty), all other work submitted late will be deducted one mark (1%) for every day late. If you miss submitting an assignment or fail to be present on the date you are scheduled to make a presentation, you will receive a mark of zero for that work.

Grading: Letter grades are calculated on the following percentage scale:

A+ = 95-100%	B+ = 80-84%	C+ = 65-69%	F = less than 50%
A = 90-94%	B = 75-79%	C = 60-64%	
A- = 85-89%	B- = 70-74%	D = 50-59%	

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, all work submitted in this course, whether in draft or final form, must be your own. 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.

The use of ChatGPT or any other AI tools for course assignments (with the exception of artificial neural networks like DeepL for machine translations, duly cited) is tantamount to plagiarism. Any cases of plagiarism or cheating will be reported to Columbia Undergraduate Global Engagement and the academic advisor at your home institution and are subject to the code of academic conduct there. In such cases, your final grade will be determined by your home institution and not by KCJS.

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 link on the Purdue University style guide [here](#) for more information.

Exploring the World of Japanese Cuisine (F2024) 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 September 3: 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.

5: 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.

旨味 WEEK II 10: Field trip: Ajiwaikan Museum of Kyoto Cuisine, to learn how to make dashi.

12: *Umami: the fifth flavour.* Food for thought and thinking about food. **Readings:** *Oishinbo*, ch. 1.

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.*"

米 WEEK III 17: 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.

19: 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.

魚 WEEK IV 24: Fish: The raw and the cooked

Film: *Jiro Dreams of Sushi*

26: Readings: *Oishinbo*, chs. 2, 4, 9

Reading: Theodore Bestor, *Tsukiji: The fish market at the center of the world*, ch. 4.

大豆 WEEK V Oct. 1: 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>

3: Class presentations

WEEK VI **8: Field Trip, TBA**

10: Class presentations

SDGs WEEK VII **15: Sustainability**

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

Film: *Bluefin*. Discussion of ethics of eating.

Readings: TBA

17: Class presentations

WEEK VIII **Oct. 15, 17: Fall Break: no classes**

茶 WEEK IX **22: Experience a “tea ceremony” with tea master Bruce Hamana, Amherst House, Doshisha University.**

24: 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.

WEEK X **29: Wagashi: tea cakes. Field trip to Tawaraya Yasutomi for a demonstration on how to make them.**

31: March 21. 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.”

WEEK XI **November 5: Coffee:** Japan and Kyoto’s cafe culture.
Reading: Merry White, *Coffee Life in Japan*, Ch. 2. pp. 19-41.

**7: B 級グルメ: “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*

WEEK XII **November 12:** Screening of *Tampopo*, Itami Jūzō’s delicious sendup of Japan’s fetish for eating well.

14: Screening of *Tampopo*, cont’d., and post-screening discussion.

WEEK XIII **19, 21:** Student presentations

WEEK XIV **26, 28:** Student presentations

WEEK XV **December 3, 5:** Student presentations; last class Dec. 5.

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