

# Washoku Down Under

The Localisation of Japanese Food in New Zealand

by

*Grant Petersen*

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# Disclaimer

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own original work and has not been submitted before to any institution for assessment purposes. Further, I have acknowledged all sources used and have cited these in the reference section.

# Abstract

In this thesis I will examine the ways in which *washoku* (lit. Japanese food) has been adopted and adapted in New Zealand, by both New Zealand gastronomes and Japanese expatriates. The thesis will trace the history of well known Japanese dishes such as sushi, sashimi, and ramen, in both their “traditional” setting and their new antipodean home. Through a series of interviews with New Zealand and Japanese consumers of *washoku*, this thesis will challenge established notions of what Japanese food is, and by whom it is consumed. By examining New Zealand Japanese restaurants and their owners, the thesis will demonstrate how and why Japanese food has changed and evolved.

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# Washoku Down Under

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# On Japanese transliterations and translations

Japanese, Chinese, Portuguese and Korean words are normally printed in italics. Exceptions include those words that have entered common usage in English, such as *tempura*, *anime*, and *ramen*. Era names like Meiji and Edo will also not be italicised. Long vowels in Japanese are indicated by a macron, as in *shōyu*, although this rule has not been applied to common place names, as in Tokyo, Osaka and Kyoto. Proper names will be written in the Western style, with the given name followed by the family name, for consistency.

Unless otherwise stated, all translations were written by the author.

Tell me what you eat, and I will  
tell you what you are.

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Jean Anthelme Brillat-Savarin

# Course One

## Appetizer

### 1.1 Introduction

This thesis details the ways in which *washoku* (literally “Japanese food”) has been adopted and adapted in New Zealand, tracing the history of well known Japanese dishes (such as sushi, sashimi, and ramen) in both their traditional, Japanese setting, and in their new home of New Zealand. The aim is to determine how Japanese food has been adapted to suit New Zealanders’ palates and the reasoning behind those changes.

#### 1.1.1 *Washoku*

*Washoku* (和食, literally “Japan food”) uses the kanji (Chinese characters) 和, a character that once represented the ancient Chinese name of Japan. The character 和 has come to refer to elements of Japanese culture that the Japanese consider specific to themselves. On the other hand, the character 食, pronounced ‘shoku’, means food. Therefore, *washoku* refers to Japanese cuisine, and for the purposes of this document refers to the unique *Japanese-ness* of the cuisine.

However, when making the leap from concept to some actual product, what actually constitutes *washoku* is difficult to define. Similarly to the concept of authenticity, the meaning of *washoku* seems to vary based on diners’ experiences with the cuisine. Though certain Japanese dishes are popular in New Zealand, they are no perfect replicas of the same dishes in Japan, rather modified to suit local tastes; hence, while one Japanese national sampling a New Zealand Japanese dish might be happy to accept it as *washoku*, another might dismiss it as something different entirely.

For the purposes of this thesis, ‘*washoku*’ is taken to mean Japanese cuisine from both Japan and New Zealand. Still, as mentioned, *washoku* in New Zealand is not the same as

in Japan. The reasons for these changes are many, and so it will help to briefly introduce some of the theoretical framework that underlies the essay.

### 1.1.2 Food studies

It is in part thanks to Brillat-Savarin, author of the quotation on page preceding the beginning of this chapter, that the “gastronomic essay” genre in anthropological food studies gained popularity in the nineteenth century. This genre developed in France, focused on three main themes: firstly “correct food practices”, referring to the “disquisition on what constitutes ‘correct’ practices at the time on such questions as the composition of menus, sequences of courses and technique of service,”<sup>1</sup>; secondly the dietetic, or “setting out what foods and what forms of cookery are good for one according to the prevailing knowledge of the day,”<sup>2</sup>; and finally the third, which by contrast leaves real world concerns of practice and diet and turns instead to “a brew of history, myth, and history serving as myth.”<sup>3</sup>

It is this last theme that encompasses the origins of foods and dishes, encapsulated in cultural artefacts such as orally-transmitted stories or written recipe collections. To illustrate, one may cite the still-contested origins of the Pavlova, a cream-topped meringue cake with a soft marshmallow centre. The cake was named in honour of Russian ballet dancer Anna Pavlova, making reference to the cake and dancer’s lightness, who toured Australia and New Zealand in 1926. Shortly after the cake’s invention, both Australia and New Zealand claimed it as their own. A 1933 recipe book from New Zealand containing the recipe was found, predating Australia’s earliest claim by two years, although even this is inconclusive.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, it is from media such as recipe books and cooking shows that an image of a given culture’s culinary past and present may be derived. These images reveal the “cultural cues” of the culture involved.

### 1.1.3 Cultural cues

Throughout this thesis it will be taken for granted that a person’s behaviour and tastes are governed by their lived experiences and their exposure to stimuli within their own culture. These are what I term “cultural cues”.

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1. Stephen Mennell, *All manners of food: eating and taste in England and France from the Middle Ages to the present* (Oxford, U.K: B. Blackwell, 1985), 270

2. *ibid.*

3. *ibid.*

4. Helen M Leach, “The Pavlova Wars: How a Creationist Model of Recipe Origins Led to an International Dispute,” *Gastronomica* 10, no. 2 (2010): 24-26

The way people behave, think, and even eat are all influenced by cultural cues passively learnt while young. The home is where these cultural cues are learnt. Liz Brooker states that “in their first four years of life, [a child] learnt more than they would ever again in such a short length of time [consisting of] all the ways of living and systems of meaning”<sup>5</sup>. Thus, the home is the first cultural classroom, teaching cultural cues from an early age.

Cultural cues are similar in principle to the concept of memes, a term coined by evolutionary scientist Richard Dawkins in 1976. Dawkins defines a meme as a unit of cultural transmission, or a unit of imitation.<sup>6</sup> These units are essentially thoughts or thinking patterns that are able to ‘move’ from person to person in the manner of a gene passing from a progenitor to its offspring. A meme encompasses any concept able to be understood by a recipient. These concepts can be consciously passed on, such as manual or technical skills taught through training or apprenticeship; or unconsciously, such as the way human babies are able to eventually learn their first language. Where cultural cues differ is the distinction of what they transmit. As stated, memes could be any idea or concept regardless of domain; a cultural cue, on the other hand, is an idea or concept specific to a given culture.

Culture-specific use of cutlery provides a useful and simple demonstration of how cultural cues develop. While the art of eating with a knife and fork is taken for granted in much of Western society, late seventeenth and eighteenth century literature on acceptable table manners and etiquette<sup>7</sup> show that there is more to eating with a knife and fork than merely slashing with one and stabbing with the other. In Western countries, eating with the fingers, and a knife or spoon, was the common mode of fare prior to the seventeenth century. The later show of genteelness, by not touching the food, which began among the upper classes of France and Britain, eventually trickled down to the middle classes.

Nowadays in Western cultures, eating a fast food hamburger using bare fingers is a common occurrence, but the same mode of conveyance with soup will obviously have people question the sanity of the diner; the casual observer might be inclined to think such a diner lacks common sense, but of course, common sense depends on common cultural cues. In a similar vein, eating pizza with a knife and fork flies in the face of most countries’ cultural cues regarding that dish; in the case of the Governor of Ohio, John Kasich, who might not have realised that in New York doing so is a cultural faux pas, did so and sparked anger in locals.<sup>8</sup> In Kasich’s case, his knowledge of the cultural

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5. Liz Brooker, *Starting school: Young children learning cultures* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 2002), 1

6. Richard Dawkins, *The selfish gene* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 192

7. For further reading, consult Lawrence Klein’s “The Third Earl of Shaftesbury and the Progress of Politeness.”

8. Annetta Konatantinides, *What the FORK?! John Kasich risks the wrath of New Yorkers by opting to eat*

cues specific to New York culture was lacking.

Similarly, in Japan, the Chinese concept of eating with chopsticks was adopted in the latter part of the first millennium CE, and “from the traditional Chinese viewpoint, which equates chopsticks with civilisation and regards eating with the hands as barbarian, civilised dining in Japan appears to date from the eighth century”.<sup>9</sup> This link of utensil with civilisation mirrors that of the class system of the West.

Nowadays, the cultural cue regarding chopsticks in Japanese is likely not based on the same reasoning, but even the statement “chopsticks are just normal” reveals a cultural cue that is specific to Japan (or East Asia), as the same could not be said of New Zealand’s attitudes towards the same utensils.

Food is strongly linked to culture, and even the basic consumption of food is experienced in relation to ingrained cultural cues. Anything eaten today is judged based on previous dining experiences - if what was eaten yesterday was received particularly well, perhaps there will be more of it tomorrow.

#### 1.1.4 Cultural cues in Western media

In addition to the cultural cues learnt in the home, we are shaped and governed by media, such as television and literature. Specifically in the domain of food, this could refer to cooking shows on television, gastronomical blogs on the internet, or even the humble recipe book.

This section is not to be misconstrued as the beginning of a media studies thesis. Rather, the examination of popular media is intended as an example of the propagation of cultural cues from one culture to another, and how that might change the existing cultural cues of the culture receiving the media. A more detailed analysis of media’s impact on these cultural cues is also outside the scope of this thesis, and would make for interesting future research.

Creators of such media are able to input cultural cues into their creations and influence audience opinions. This concept is not new, from the subtle expression of advertisements to the egregious manipulation of war propaganda. Even when authors do not believe themselves to have a specific agenda in mind, the way certain objects or people are portrayed, the words used to describe things, and even what is not shown or said, all are the result of unconscious cultural cues and opinions about the content in

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*pizza with silverware (before quickly switching to his hands to finish it off)*, The Daily Mail, Newspaper Article, 2016, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3516695/John-Kasich-caught-using-knife-fork-eat-pizza-New-York.html>

9. Naomichi Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food* (London, England: Kegan Paul Limited, 2001), 67

question. One may detect and interpret these cultural cues to determine what opinions the media creators have about specific foods, and perhaps also determine what those creators thought the public would accept. In the case of this study, the way Japanese cuisine is portrayed in Western, specifically New Zealand media, reveals a lot about how New Zealanders think about Japanese food, and also how those who did the work of importing Japanese food to New Zealand thought the new, exotic dishes would be received.

Cooking shows have had great success as a television format, from Julia Child explaining the intricacies of French cuisine in an accessible manner to American audiences to Heston Blumenthal's esoteric creations that are more akin to science experiments. *MasterChef Australia* is one of the most watched shows on Australian and New Zealand television, with Australian viewers preferring to watch Nigella Lawson guest star on *MasterChef* than watch the Leaders' Debate for the 2016 election.<sup>10</sup> With such a following, cooking shows have great sway in influencing popular culinary opinion. Analysing the shows' presentation of food to a wide audience would be an entire thesis unto itself, and is not treated directly in this document; however, a spin-off of this form of media is the recipe books produced by such people as television chefs or winners of *MasterChef*.

Recipe books are a key primary source for sociological and historical research.<sup>11</sup> Indeed, recipe book studies is a burgeoning area of the food studies research domain; an example of can be seen from the 2013 special edition of *M/C* edited by Donna Lee Brien and Adele Wessell.<sup>12</sup> Recipe books, when read as "cultural artefacts" are "rewarding, surprising and illuminating when read carefully [and] with due effort".<sup>13</sup> Recipe books are in essence a snapshot of the tastes that were in vogue and reflect the socioeconomic climate, and thus the cultural cues, of the time.<sup>14,15</sup>

With the themes of the gastronomic essay in mind, recipe books serve three purposes: firstly, they describe the correct way to prepare the meals detailed within; secondly, they inscribe the knowledge of obtaining adequate nutrition; and lastly, bringing unfamiliar

10. See David Knox, *Thursday 26 May 2016 - TV Tonight*, Web Page, 2016, <http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2016/05/thursday-26-may-2016.html> as well as David Knox, *Australian Story dips on Monday*, Web Page, 2016, <http://www.tvtonight.com.au/2016/05/australian-story-dips-on-monday.html>

11. See Christine Folch (2008) "Fine Dining: Race in Pre-revolution Cuban Cookbooks.", and Sandra Sherman (2004) "'The Whole Art and Mystery of Cooking': What Cookbooks Taught Readers in the Eighteenth Century."

12. Donna Lee Brien and Adele Wessell, "Cookbook: A new scholarly view," *M/C Journal* 13, no. 6 (2013)

13. Máirtín Mac Con Iomaire, "Towards a Structured Approach to Reading Historic Cookbooks," 2013 16, no. 3 (2013)

14. For more information, see Emily Weiskopf-Ball, "Experiencing Reality through Cookbooks: How Cookbooks Shape and Reveal Our Identities," *M/C Journal* 13, no. 6 (2013)

15. See also for instance, what is considered the most famous English cookery book ever published, Mrs Beeton and Nicola Humble, *Mrs Beeton's book of household management*, Abridged (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000). It is now considered a 'a bastion of traditional English fare and solid Victorian values'

cultural cues, either the recipe itself or aspects of it, to those who are willing to accept them.

Recipe books can present themselves as being intended for the everyday cook. For example: Julia Child, who took the traditions of French chefs, at the time seen as far beyond the ability or comprehension of everyday people, turned them into an industry of cookbooks (and television shows) aimed at the average American housewife. Such works are able to satisfy the three purposes given above, detailing how to cook well, how to choose ingredients well, and also, in the given example, bring cultural cues from abroad into one's kitchen in an accessible manner.

Yet, some recipe book publishers instead offer an idealised image of cuisine that is difficult, almost impossible, to attain. The lavish photographic presentation of the food and the exuberant descriptions of the recipes have become a trademark of certain chefs such as Nigella Lawson or Delia Smith;<sup>16</sup> yet, the actual procedures for replicating these recipes are sometimes difficult to understand.<sup>17</sup> Exoticised foreign cuisines remain exotic since there is no means for the reader to accessibly approach the foreign cuisine, either through the publication itself or attempting to replicate the recipe. As a further example, Donna Lee Brien posits that fans buy Heston Blumenthal's books not to recreate his recipes, but to own a part of the Fat Duck empire.<sup>18</sup>

By drawing on and developing cultural cues, media creators deliver a new product that continues to both perpetuate cultural trends but also present a new ideal. Through the identification of the cultural cues that are at play in recipe books, we are able to note that trends as they develop and influence the opinions of New Zealanders regarding Japanese cuisine. So how do these cues work in a Japanese language environment where different cultural expectations are at play?

### 1.1.5 Japanese media

The proliferation of Japanese media throughout the world is largely due Japan's cultivation in the beginning of the twenty-first century of the national brand "Cool Japan". The campaign was intended to "enhance global competitiveness of the industry or Japanese economy and/or to enrich Japan's 'soft power' "<sup>19</sup>, and capitalised on the popularity

16. Sophie Borland, "Nigella and Delia's recipes not a piece of cake," <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/1562852/Nigella-and-Delias-recipes-not-a-piece-of-cake.html> This article alludes to a 2007 study done by the then Department of Innovation and Universities and Skills of the United Kingdom that details this point.

17. The BBC mini-series *Posh Nosh* parodies the complex way in which celebrity chefs attempt to present seemingly ordinary food in an exotic, sophisticated manner, often at the cost of a comprehensible recipe. The two chefs are as far from down-to-Earth as their supposed target audience.

18. Lee Brien and Wessell, "Cookbook: A new scholarly view"

19. Takeshi Matsui, "Nation branding through stigmatized popular culture: the cool Japan craze among central ministries in Japan," *Hitotsubashi journal of commerce and management* 48, no. 1 (2014): 81



of anime, manga, and other cultural products exported from Japan around the world. “Soft power” describes the way by which countries exert influence without resorting to economic or military means: “soft power arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies”.<sup>20</sup> In other words, it is a means for one culture to modify the cultural cues of another in order so that the latter may be more accommodating to the wants or needs of the former.

The Japanese governmental initiative of “cultural diplomacy” was intended to set up the content-producing industry, that is to say those producing anime, manga, and video games, as the leader of the Japanese economy after the Lost Decade (1991 to 2000).<sup>21</sup> Examples of this initiative include capitalising on the fact that anime and/or manga such as *Dragonball Z*, *Naruto*, *One Piece* are popular in the United States, and that video games such as *Final Fantasy* have grown from a relatively obscure Japanese title to a series with worldwide appeal. These products also enjoy immense popularity throughout Eastern and South East Asia, to the point that Hello Kitty was even used as a Japanese tourism ambassador to China and Hong Kong.<sup>22</sup> This initiative put Japanese media in front of the world, and made people aware of Japan’s presence, thereby increasing Japan’s soft power.<sup>23</sup>

In terms of cultural cues, the process of growing Western acceptance of Japanese media is an even longer one, and almost invisible. The Japanese anime *MACH GoGoGo* (マッハ GoGoGo) has been known to Western audiences since 1967 as *Speed Racer*, though at the time its Japanese origins were not widely known. Post-World War Two Japan also had a booming technology industry: the first entire electronic calculator was produced by the now well-trusted brand Casio (カシオ計算機株式会社) in 1957, whilst the leader of the portable audio industry was Sony (ソニー株式会社) with the worldwide release of the TR-63 portable transistor radio and later the Walkman in 1979. Thus, the West has been aware of Japan in a positive light for many decades. The later “Cool Japan” campaign was a more conscious push to further promote Japanese culture through the content it produces, and thus boost the economy.

With the internet being a worldwide phenomenon, media from all around the world is accessible to anyone with an internet connection. Websites such as Crunchyroll, Drama

20. Joseph S. Nye, “Soft Power and American Foreign Policy,” *Political Science Quarterly* 119, no. 2 (2004): 256

21. Matsui, “Nation branding through stigmatized popular culture: the cool Japan craze among central ministries in Japan,” 82

22. The Associated Press, *Hello Kitty named Japan’s tourism ambassador to China and Hong Kong*, New York Daily News, Newspaper Article, 2008, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/kitty-named-japan-tourism-ambassador-china-hong-kong-article-1.328249>

23. Scholars question the validity of ‘Cool Japan.’ Can anything truly be ‘cool’ once it has been labeled as such? See Mark McLelland, ed., *The end of Cool Japan: ethical, legal and cultural challenges to Japanese popular culture*, Routledge Contemporary Japan (Routledge, 2016)

Fever, and Nico Video bring Japanese video content to Western audiences.<sup>24</sup> This easy access to uncut, fansubbed, or fandubbed anime<sup>25</sup>, means that these kinds of Japanese popular media products are no longer tethered to their cultural origins. This in turn allows cultural cues to flow directly from the source culture to foreign audience, or in the case of fansubbed or fandubbed content, at least unmodified by Western commercial interests.

Where the Japanese media must move through the intermediary power of a Western commercial localisation house, their treatment of food in anime and manga is something of particular interest. For series aimed at children, it is common for depictions of elements or acts corresponding to Japanese cultural cues, such as nude public bathing, Japanese signage, and food stuffs to be removed, redrawn, or edited.<sup>26</sup> For instance, in the anime *Pokémon* (ポケットモンスター), one memorable scene showed the character Brock (Takeshi in Japanese) clearly holding a pack of *onigiri* (Japanese rice balls) whilst proclaiming his love of “jelly doughnuts”. In other scenes, *onigiri* are redrawn as sandwiches. This is an example of domestication<sup>27</sup> effectively removing the audience’s ability to come to grips with the Japanese origins of the series.

As a counterexample, the American adaptation of *Ansatsu Kyōshitsu* (暗殺教室), known in English as *Assassination Classroom*, takes a foreignisation approach to localisation<sup>28</sup>. The main character’s name is a pun that only works in Japanese: 殺せんせー (Koro-sensei), the school teacher (先生, *sensei*, ‘teacher’), is supposedly unkillable (殺せない, *korosenai*, “cannot be killed”); although the pun does not work in English, the name was retained since the series’ setting in Japan is undeniable, and a classroom full of Japanese people in Japan with English names is unbelievably absurd.

While a direct inquiry into translation and localisation theories is outside of the scope of this thesis, the examples given above of the treatment of Japanese cultural artefacts, be they *washoku* shown in television shows and / or recipe books, or directly the outputs

24. The availability of anime and manga online changed the way that fans interact with each other once the necessity to gather in one physical location to share VHS tapes was removed. See for example: Emerald King, “Girls Who are Boys Who like Girls to be Boys: BL and the Australian Cosplay Community,” *Intersections: Gender, History and Culture in the Asian Context* 32, no. 32 (2013)

25. Fansubbing and fandubbing relates to the practice of fans (sometimes illegally) creating and adding their own subtitles and dubbed vocal tracks to untranslated Japanese anime before posting it online. See for example, J Diaz-Cintas and P Munos Sanchez, “Fansubs: Audiovisual Translation in an Amateur Environment,” *The Journal of Specialised Translation* 6 (2006): 37–52

26. Emerald King, “ailored Translations – Translating and Transporting Cosplay Costumes Across Texts, Cultures, and Dimensions,” *Signata: Annales des sémiotiques/Annals of Semiotics* 7 (2016): 366

27. This is defined as “a term used to describe the translation strategy in which a transparent, fluent style is adopted in order to minimize the strangeness of the foreign text for target readers” by Shuttleworth, M. and Cowie, M. (2004) as cited in Lili Wang, “A survey on domestication and foreignization theories in translation,” *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 3, no. 1 (2013): 175

28. This is defined by Shuttleworth and Cowie as “is used to designate the type of translation in which a target text is produced which deliberately breaks target conventions by retaining something of the foreignness of the original” as cited in *ibid.*

of the Japanese content industry itself (anime, manga, video games), media has the potential for great influence over one culture's drawing near to another culture's cultural cues.

In order to gain a more direct understanding of how the cues that do manage to have an impact on New Zealanders' experience of Japanese cuisine, a series of interviews were conducted with Japanese nationals and New Zealanders who have eaten *washoku* in both Japan and New Zealand. A subset of these interviewees are restaurateurs who are the gatekeepers of Japanese food in New Zealand.

## 1.2 Interviews

Interviews were conducted as part of this research thesis with the notion of "food events" as their guideline. In their book, *The Essence of Japanese Cuisine- An Essay on Food and Culture*<sup>29</sup>, Ashkenazi and Jacob attempt to explain to non-scholars the link between Japanese food and culture. Their method was by analysing the various times and places food were eaten, and they termed these "food events". A food event's focus is not only the food, but all the points of culture surrounding it. They explain that it is important to analyse food events because there is an interplay between the subjective emotion and experience, and objective phenomena that are part of the act of eating. Each meal evokes specific feelings and emotions based on the diner's individual experiences and dining history. Each meal is a social event that is bound by rules, cultural cues, that any member of a particular society instinctively understands and accepts without much thought<sup>30</sup>. Therefore, to study the food event means to examine a diner's impression of a cuisine based on an understanding of the undertaking itself, the diner's individual previous experience with the dish (or similar ones), and cultural cues of the society to which the diner belongs.

These interviews were conducted between June to November 2016 in Wellington and Auckland, in both English and Japanese. The two targeted groups of interviewees have unique experiences that are shaped by both their upbringing and their exposure to certain cultural cues. The experiences of New Zealanders who have been to Japan and eaten Japanese food there are naturally very different to those of Japanese nationals who have left their homeland to find a slightly different version of a familiar cuisine here in New Zealand.

The opinions of both groups towards *washoku* in both Japan and New Zealand help to determine what cultural cues may influence how *washoku* has changed for a New

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29. Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob, *The essence of Japanese cuisine: an essay on food and culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2001)

30. *ibid.*, 8

Zealand audience. The key difference between the two groups lies in the preconceived ideas of what Japanese food is, based on their culture's cultural cues: for example, a New Zealander, brought up with a variety of cultural cues common to the Western world, may have grown up believing that sushi is made entirely of raw fish<sup>31</sup>. On the other hand, a Japanese national indoctrinated by the *nihonjinron* (日本人論)<sup>32,33</sup> is more likely to insist that *washoku* can not truly exist outside of its originating culture. These differing perspectives only serve to further highlight what cultural cues are in play when it comes to adapted foodstuffs.

With the exception of franchises, many Japanese restaurants in New Zealand lack a standardised menu or layout. The dishes that are offer are often limited to the ingredients that are easily accessible in a given location and at a given time, as well as the extent to which the establishment values authenticity.

The specific criteria that underly the interviews is further explained later in the thesis.

### 1.3 Structure of this thesis

In order to immersively experience the migration of *washoku*, this thesis is divided in the format of a traditional Japanese *kaiseki* (懐石, multi-course banquet).

This first chapter was the first course, the appetiser, which introduced the thesis and summarised the concept of cultural cues. This concept is woven throughout the remainder of the thesis. It also demonstrated that although cultural cues are sometimes learnt unconsciously, they may be gradually modified by external influences such as the media, recipe books, television shows, and so on.

Course Two, a dish of seasonal sashimi, gives a brief overview of well known Japanese dishes, such as sashimi, sushi, and ramen, in their native context of Japan (and where applicable, other East Asian countries). The history of these dishes, as well as developments into their modern form, are detailed and used as the basis of Course Three. This course, a simmered dish, continues from Course Two; moving away from Japan, this course traces how these well-known dishes have evolved in the New Zealand cultural context.

Course Four, a cooked meal, details the theoretical framework and methodology that form the basis of the interviews. Course Five, a hot pot stew, presents the findings of

31. As famously stated by Bart Simpson in *The Simpsons*, Series 2, episode 11. 'Sushi? ... isn't that raw fish?'

32. The *nihonjinron* is a genre of texts that espouse the homogeneity of the Japanese people. This genre attempts to foster nationalism based on the uniqueness of the Japanese culture and language.

33. Anthony J. Liddicoat, "Internationalising Japan: Nihonjinron and the Intercultural in Japanese Language-in-education Policy," *Journal of Multicultural Discourses* 2, no. 1 (2007): 32–46

these interviews; Course Six, a hearty rice dish, discusses the findings by placing them in the context of the theoretical framework from Course Four. From this, a conclusion is drawn for dessert in Course Seven, the conclusion.

The following courses investigate the history of well-known Japanese dishes. To use another analogy, if this thesis were a miso soup, now is the time to start boiling the water and add the *katsubushi* (history of Japanese food), *konbu* (evolution of Japanese food in New Zealand), providing a good base before the main ingredients (the interviews) are thrown in.

いただきます！

## Course Two

# Seasonal Sashimi: Japanese food in Japan

### 2.1 Introduction

One of the most comprehensive accounts of the history of Japanese cuisine is Naomichi Ishige's *The History and Culture of Japanese Food*.<sup>1</sup> Ishige gives detailed accounts of the origins of dishes seen as intrinsically Japanese, as well as providing a cultural background for how and why these dishes developed into their modern forms. Using Ishige's insights regarding the origin of Japanese food, this course gives a historical overview of certain popular Japanese dishes that have become popular in New Zealand, and shows how these dishes are currently presented. This overview will be used as a point of comparison in Course Three, which details how these dishes have been adapted for the New Zealand cultural context.

In order to study the origins of a particular culture's cuisine, it is first necessary to understand the holistic nature of all cultures. Food, and the cultural sphere it inhabits, is influenced by political, geographical, meteorological, and societal changes. Any change of one element, such as a scarcity of a particular food crop leading to a rise in price, affects the cultural import placed upon that element. Take the example of rice and bread in Japan. Rice has long been considered a staple food in Japan, with bread a thoroughly Western affair. During World War Two, rice production dropped due to the conscription of farm labourers. In post-War Japan, bread was "a symbol of the American Occupation and a poor substitute for white rice. The occupation authorities distributed cheap factory bread and powdered milk, which were often served for lunch in Japanese schools and by all accounts tasted horrible. It was not until the late 1970s

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1. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*

that the Japanese learned to embrace bread as a main staple".<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, this staple is relegated to a quick breakfast alternative, rarely eaten with other meals: "the urban lifestyle of rushing off in the morning to work or school, making it hard to find time to cook rice, and hence people make do with store bought bread".<sup>3</sup> In this way, a culture that had placed little cultural importance on bread has accepted bread as a staple food. This example highlights the importance of knowing the historical and cultural background of a cuisine when discussing its current condition.

## 2.2 Sashimi

The philosophy of traditional Japanese cuisine emphasises that food should be enjoyed as close as possible to its natural state<sup>4</sup>, and the epitome of this philosophy is sashimi. As Ishige explains, sashimi is "raw fish that is sliced to a size that can be grasped with chopsticks, dipped in soy sauce with grated wasabi<sup>5</sup> and placed in the mouth".<sup>6</sup> Even though there is no preparation other than slicing fish and arranging on a plate, it is considered to be the most refined form of cuisine, and is "an indispensable part of a first-class meal".<sup>7</sup>

### 2.2.1 History of Sashimi

The earliest use of the word 'sashimi' was in the Muromachi period (1336-1573), in the memoirs of a Shinto priest written in 1399. The memoirs, called the *Suzukakeki*<sup>8</sup>, describe sashimi with the characters '刺身': '刺 (sashi)' means "to pierce" and '身 (mi)' means "body". The etymology is explained thusly: first, 'sasui' (刺, 'pierce') was used instead of 'kiru' (切, 'cut'), because 'cut' was considered to be an inauspicious word by samurai<sup>9</sup>; second, the word may be derived from the culinary practice of sticking the fish's tail and fin to the slices to allow identification of the fish that is being eaten<sup>10</sup>.

2. Kaori Shoji, "A short history of 'real' bread in Japan," <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/life/2015/12/04/food/short-history-real-bread-japan/#.WJyoyxhh2lk>

3. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 162-3

4. *ibid.*, 225

5. Wasabi is a condiment, that is made by grating the stem of the *Wasabia japonica* plant. It has a pungency similar to horse radish, but much stronger.

6. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 225

7. *ibid.*

8. Kondō Heijō (近藤瓶城), 史籍集覽. 24 (*Shiseki Shuuran* 24) [in Japanese] (<http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/1920401>: 近藤活版所 (Kondō Kappansho), 1902)

9. According to Corson, in the culture of the samurai, *sashi* was a euphemism for *kiru* 'to cut' because calling the meal *kirimi* 'cut meat' would have raised unpleasant connotations of sword fighting and human bloodshed.

10. Yuko Murata, "Sashimi and sushi products," chap. Sashimi and Sushi Products, ed. Lahsen; Murat Balaban Ryder John; Ababouch (FAO/The University of Alaska, 2010), 110

The precursor to sashimi was the raw fish dish called *namasu* (膾, raw fish salad.) *Namasu* was traditionally made with slices of raw fish topped with a vinegar dressing. In China, the tradition of eating thin slices of raw meat or fish with a dressing which existed from ancient times. This tradition continued in southern China until the Communist government, to prevent illness from the parasitic worms that the fish carry, outlawed the practice in the twentieth century.<sup>11</sup> During the eighth century<sup>12</sup>, the time when Japan borrowed foods and eating habits from China and Korea and concentrated on imitating them, *namasu* appears in Japanese literature.<sup>13</sup> In later years, the terms *namasu* and sashimi both referred to the meal prepared with vinegar, eventually the meanings diverging as the preparation methods became more diverse. During the Edo period (1603–1868), *namasu* became associated with fish and vegetables cut into long cord-like pieces and dressed, while sashimi was associated with sliced into bite-sized pieces and dipped in soy sauce and wasabi.<sup>14</sup>

A subset of sashimi is called *tataki* (叩き, 'pounded'), where beef or fish is seared, chilled, marinated, and thinly sliced before being served with a citrus-soy dipping sauce. These are served at *izakaya*<sup>15</sup> restaurants and sushi shops.

## 2.3 Sushi

Sushi is the most popular form of Japanese cuisine eaten in New Zealand, indeed around the world, constituting a highly recognisable icon of Japanese cuisine. Modern sushi is usually a combination of rice and fish, either as a hand-shaped ball with the fish inside or as rice rolled around the fish. Other meat, eggs, or vegetables may be substituted for the fish. The result is a compact product that may be eaten with chopsticks or held with fingers.

### 2.3.1 History of sushi

According to Ishige, the origin of contemporary sushi is three-fold: *narezushi*, *namanarezushi* and *hayazushi*. With no access to refrigeration, seasonal or large catches of fish had to be preserved in order to not be wasted, and techniques such as salting, drying, and fermentation were used for this purpose.

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11. Trevor Corson, *The zen of fish: the story of sushi, from Samurai to supermarket* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 149

12. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 226

13. *ibid.*, 76

14. *ibid.*, 227

15. An *izakaya* is a bar where customers can sit and drink, while eating small sides that complement the alcohol. See Thomas Henry Strenk, "Interpreting Izakaya," *Restaurant Development + Design* 3, no. 2 (2015): 227



*Narezushi* (熟れ鮓 or 熟れ鮓, “matured sushi”), a precursor to contemporary sushi, is a fermented dish where salted fish and cooked rice are packed into a jar and sealed for up to six months. Yoshiaki Matsuda suggests the first record regarding *narezushi* in Japan was in the *Yōrō-ritsuryō* (養老律令, Yoro Code), an administrative and penal code system written in 718<sup>16</sup>, and was mentioned as an accepted means of paying taxes.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike other fermentation methods that do not use rice, the meat does not immediately turn into a paste, but rather the fish may remain whole for a year or more.<sup>18</sup> The rice would be discarded after use and what remained was eaten as a side dish. With regards to taste, Ishige notes that the fish “has an odour comparable to a pungent cheese, is sliced and eaten without cooking, as a savoury food”.<sup>19</sup> The word ‘sushi’ referred to this preparation method, and from “the latter part of the fifteenth century, variations appeared which was prepared in shorter periods, and to distinguish the original style, it came to be known as ‘*narezushi*’ ”.<sup>20</sup> *Narezushi* is still eaten today in Southeast Asian countries such as Thailand and Taiwan.<sup>21</sup> It remains a dish eaten in Japan, around the shores of Lake Biwa, the country’s largest lake. Lake Biwa contains a freshwater carp indigenous to the lake called *nigorobuna* (ニゴロブナ). The dish made with this fish is called *funazushi* and “remains on the menu to this day at restaurants and shops around Lake Biwa”.<sup>22</sup>

Another variation that appeared in the late 15th century was called *namanarezushi* (生熟鮓, literally “raw mature sushi”) This dish is eaten at what might be called an intermediary stage of the *narezushi* making process and “at this point, the rice has a slightly acidic or vinegary taste, but retains its granular form, and the fish is still basically fresh”.<sup>23</sup> Rather than being thrown away, the rice is eaten alongside the fish, making it a fully fledged meal, unlike *narezushi*’s status as a side dish. As Ishige notes:

“*Narezushi* developed originally as a method of preserving a large amount of fish caught at one time so it would be edible later in the year. In contrast, *namanarezushi* was made in small quantities, for use at festivals and at feasts, and so was a luxury food instead of a preserved food”<sup>24</sup>

With smaller portions, non-seasonal fish could be used such as sea fish, and various tastes and variations were created.

16. G.B. Sansom, *Early Japanese Law and Administration* (Asiatic Society of Japan, 1932), 67-68

17. Yoshiaki Matsuda, “History of Fish Marketing and Trade with Particular Reference to Japan,” *IIFET 2000 Proceedings*, 2001, 5

18. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 40-41

19. *ibid.*, 42

20. *ibid.*

21. Matsuda, “History of Fish Marketing and Trade with Particular Reference to Japan,” 5

22. Corson, *The zen of fish: the story of sushi, from Samurai to supermarket*, 30

23. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 231

24. *ibid.*

The process of fermentation occurs due to the lactic acid that is produced by bacteria while the fish is wrapped in the relatively airtight enclosure made of rice. This is what gives *narezushi* its acidic yet tasty flavour. At the beginning of the 16th century, it was discovered that adding rice vinegar to the cooked rice made it possible to shorten the fermentation period to around 24 hours<sup>25</sup>. Thus lactic acid was replaced with acetic acid. Later, this “quick sushi” was given a name which means exactly that, *hayazushi*“.<sup>26</sup> This was created in a shallow box by placing fish on a bed of rice and covering the box with a lid weighted with a stone. The fish was then sliced into long pieces, and served without cooking. This tradition of sushi made in a box still exists, called *\_hako-zushi\_* (箱寿司, “box sushi”).

Sushi as we know it today became popular in the early 19th century by streamlining the preparation techniques of *hayazushi*. Ole Mouritsen states that “tradition has it that in the 1820’s Hanaya Yohei (1799-1858) from Edo invented or elaborated the modern form of sushi”.<sup>27</sup> This “modern form” consisted of a simple ball of freshly-cooked rice, shaped by hand, with a piece of fish placed on top of it.<sup>28</sup> The cuisine of Edo was based largely around fresh fish<sup>29</sup>, and thus began the use of fresh rather than fermented fish in sushi.

Because it was invented in Edo, now called Tokyo, this early 19th century sushi was known as *edomae* (江戸前, “from Edo”) although it is now called *nigirizushi* (握ずし, ‘grasped’ or ‘squeezed’), “referring to the rice portion which is traditionally moulded by hand”<sup>30</sup>. The shaped rice is called the *shari* (舍利, “cooked rice”) while the topping is called the *neta* (ネタ). If some support is needed to keep the *neta* on the *shari*, a strip of dried seaweed paper, called *nori*, is placed as a belt across the breadth of the *nigirizushi*. This style of sushi became very popular in the Edo period, (1603–1868), amongst those living in the city’s *shitamachi*, the large artisan and merchant district, which was also the centre of fashion and entertainment<sup>31</sup>. As Mouritsen explains: “*nigirizushi* was intended for ordinary people who in the course of a busy day could, without much fuss and bother, grab a couple of pieces of sushi at one of the many outdoor kiosks found all over Edo in the nineteenth century”.<sup>32</sup>

25. Ole G. Mouritsen, *Sushi: Food for the eye, the body & the soul* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2009), 24

26. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 231

27. Mouritsen, *Sushi: Food for the eye, the body & the soul*, 24

28. *ibid.*, 23-24

29. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 109

30. Harold McGee, “On food and cooking: the science and lore of the kitchen,” (New York) 1st Fireside (1997): 191

31. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 227

32. Mouritsen, *Sushi: Food for the eye, the body & the soul*, 16

### 2.3.2 Styles of sushi

*Nigirizushi* is nowadays considered the quintessential sushi, upon which other styles are based.<sup>33</sup> For instance, *gunkanmaki* (軍艦巻き, literally “battleship rolls”) use a length of *nori* twice the height of the *shari* wrapped around the rice to make a reservoir that can contain ingredients not easily placed on top of a rice base such as salmon roe or sea urchin. Another style is *makizushi* (巻き寿司, “rolled sushi”), the most commonly prepared sushi in New Zealand. A layer of rice seasoned with vinegar is placed on a sheet of *nori*, the *neta* is placed on the rice, and the whole thing is rolled into a cylindrical shape with the aid of a bamboo mat to keep the roll’s shape. It is then cut into bite-sized pieces.

All of these sushi types are available at sushi shops in Japan. In the 19th century, sushi was sold at outdoor stall, but after the Great Kantō Earthquake of 1923 concern for sanitation caused “the gradual transition from street sushi stalls to the elegant decorated sushi restaurant”.<sup>34</sup> At a traditional sushi shop, the likes of which still exist today, the “dishes are only prepared after they have been ordered. Customers sit at a counter seat in front of the preparer, and freely order the sushi they desire”.<sup>35</sup> As the popularity of sushi increased, sushi shop owners experimented with cheap and efficient ways to serve a growing public. One successful experiment resulted in *kaitensushi* (回転寿司, “conveyor sushi”, also known as “sushi train”) shops. Here, “a number of plates with sushi rotate on a conveyor belt in front of customers, who then take a desired plate, consume the dish, and do not immediately return the plate but pile it up”.<sup>36</sup> Each plate has a distinctive design used to indicate the cost of the sushi. When the customers have finished their meal, the bill is calculated by reference to the number of plates of each denomination.

A 2013 online poll by NTT DoCoMo<sup>37</sup>, one of Japan’s largest telecommunications companies<sup>38</sup>, asked its participants to rate *kaitensushi* chain stores. The menus of the top three restaurants reveal the Japanese public’s preferred varieties of sushi. The menus show that *nigirizushi* with *neta* using seafood products such as salmon, tuna, prawns, squid, and octopus are commonly found in roughly the same configurations across all three restaurants’ menus. Non-seafood *neta* such as egg and aubergine, as well as meat

33. Mouritsen, *Sushi: Food for the eye, the body & the soul*, 16

34. Wen Yang, “The “authenticity” of sushi: Transforming and modernizing a Japanese food” (2013), 25

35. Devarahandhi De Silva and Masahiro Yamao, “A yen for sushi: an analysis of demographic and behavioural patterns of sushi consumption in Japan,” *Journal of Foodservice* 17, no. 2 (2006): 66

36. *ibid.*

37. The top three stores were Kura Sushi, Kappa Sushi and Sushiro. The menus were taken from their websites, viewed on the 22nd June 2016. Since Japan’s food culture moves with the seasons and menus change with ingredient availability, the menu may not remain the same.

38. The survey was taken by NTT Docomo and the results presented on ‘Goo Rankings’ Retrieved from [http://ranking.goo.ne.jp/ranking/category/013/gourmet\\_5Eso31y4bJFG\\_all/](http://ranking.goo.ne.jp/ranking/category/013/gourmet_5Eso31y4bJFG_all/)

*neta*: lightly grilled beef slices, grilled bacon, and *shari*-sized hamburger patties are also available. Along with *nigirizushi*, *gunkanmaki*, with *neta* consisting of various fish roes, canned tuna salad, or corn, as well as *makizushi* with ingredients such as tuna, cucumber, and *kanpyo* (made from the shavings of a gourd grown in Japan) are also featured on the *kaitensushi*'s menus. While there was diversity across the three styles sushi, the style with the biggest selection of *neta*, *nigirizushi*, show that *nigirizushi* is the preferred type of sushi.

## 2.4 Noodles

Noodles are not exclusively used in ramen, there are many varieties of noodles eaten in Japan and around the world. The earliest-known variety of noodle eaten in Japan is one of Chinese origin called *sakubei*, eaten from the eighth through to the fifteenth century.<sup>39</sup> Kushner, in his research on the culinary and social history of ramen, notes a possible origin for noodles in Japan: Ennin, a well-known early Japanese Buddhist monk who participated in one of the last official Japanese missions to China in 838, mentions *botuo* noodles in his account of the journey, and may have been responsible for bringing the recipe to Japan.<sup>40</sup> *Botuo* noodles were similar to a dumpling or a thick noodle.

This noodle eventually became known as *sakubei* (索餅) in Japanese. The first character means 'cord' or 'rope', and refers to the noodle-like quality of the ingredient. The second character is called *bing* in Chinese, meaning a noodle of indeterminable shape. In Japanese, the character stands for *mochi*, a cake made of pounded sticky rice.<sup>41</sup> Used together, the character denotes that this is a noodle shaped product of rice that has been processed in some way. Indeed, *sakubei* was made by mixing wheat and rice flour with salt water to make a dough, and then by attaching the dough to bamboo poles, and pulling the poles to stretch the dough into fine threads. These were boiled or steamed and eaten with a hot miso soup, or dipped in a cold miso soup.<sup>42</sup>

From the fifteenth century *sakubei* came to be called *sōmen* (素麺, "fine white noodles"), and the recipe changed slightly. Rice flour was no longer used, replaced with wheat flour, and the dough was coated in vegetable oil so that it could be stretched more thinly.<sup>43</sup> The making of *sōmen* was skilled work and a profession that exists to this day. Because of the thinness of the noodle (the standard extra-fine product is a bundle

39. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 77

40. Barak Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup* (Brill, 2012), 31

41. *ibid.*

42. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 77

43. *ibid.*

of 4000 noodles cut to a length of 20 centimetres with a weight of only 100 grams <sup>44</sup>), *sōmen* dries quickly, will not spoil easily, and can be shipped farther afield. *Sōmen* is still eaten today, usually in summer. It preserves some aspects of *sakubei* as it is boiled, then served in ice water, with a dipping sauce made of soy sauce and other flavourings.

## 2.4.1 Ramen

Ramen is known throughout the world. In many Western countries, particularly the United States and Canada, it refers to the instant or pot noodles, rather than the fresh noodle and broth variety that is ubiquitous in Japan.

The origin of term ‘ramen’ (ラーメン) is unclear, and has many possible derivations. Ishige explains the term as coming from the Chinese word “*la mian*” (拉麵, “pulled noodles”), a type of handmade noodle used in various Chinese dishes.<sup>45</sup> Barak Kushner relates another possible etymology, that it is a combination of two words: the ‘ra’ is from a shortening of the phrase “*hao le*” (meaning ‘ready’ in Chinese) said by a Chinese worker at a cafeteria in Sapporo, Hokkaido where his noodle soups made in the ramen style was becoming popular, and ‘men’, the Japanese term for noodles. The combination became “*lia-men*”, and was approximated as ‘ラーメン’ when written in katakana.<sup>46</sup>

### 2.4.1.1 History of Ramen

The history of ramen itself is unclear. Kushner explains that several origin stories exist, some of which are probably myths. Take for example the story of the well-known Venetian explorer Marco Polo, who was said to have either brought pasta to China from Italy, or to have taken noodles from China to Europe. Another legend states that nineteenth century immigrants, coming from China to Japan, brought the recipe for noodle soup with them, and it was localised for local tastes at that time.<sup>47</sup> However, as previously mentioned, the holistic nature of culture meant that all the social, geographical, and political elements at the time worked together to create the meal.

“A staggering assortment of flavours and components needed to appear precisely at the right time and these resources needed to be manipulated in a certain manner to satisfy a complex new set of consumer demands [...]  
] None of the items crucial to the birth of ramen –the noodles, meat broths,

44. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 78

45. *ibid.*, 251

46. Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, 157

47. *ibid.*, 13

soy sauce, seaweed, bowls, spoons and toppings –occurred without human intervention between China and Japan.”<sup>48</sup>

Whatever the case, ramen begins distinctly as a Chinese noodle dish that was brought to Japan by Chinese immigrants from the Guangdong region who worked as cooks at restaurants in the port city of Yokohama in the 1880s. Over the next few decades, Japanese restaurateurs that employed these chefs slowly transformed the dish, adding ingredients that were previously not in the Chinese noodle soup such as roast beef, soy sauce and pickled bamboo shoots.<sup>49</sup> From the 1920s onward, this dish used to be served in these Chinese restaurants and from street peddlers with the name “*shina soba*” (支那そば, “Chinese-style *soba*”)<sup>50</sup> and had some success. The consumption of this meal however rose dramatically after World War II:

“It was a time of food shortages in Japan, and not only did Chinese food in general have a reputation for high nutrition, but ramen with its meat broth and meat topping offered more protein than most traditional Japanese noodle dishes.”<sup>51</sup>

It was also during this time that Japan received food aid from the United States consisting mostly of shipments of wheat flour. With Japan’s national food being rice, and bread seen as not particularly nutritious,<sup>52</sup> its use in ramen was ostensibly a healthy and popular way to use the wheat.

#### 2.4.1.2 Serving ramen

Ramen noodles are more elastic and chewy because of the addition of an alkali in the salty water used when kneading the dough. With the addition of lye water<sup>53</sup>, the noodle gains its distinctive aroma and its pale yellow colour. According to Kushner, the Chinese developed this method during the political upheaval between the Tang and Song dynasties (907-960 CE)<sup>54</sup>, but it was not adopted by the Japanese at the time. Rather, the practice was utilised in the beginning of the twentieth century when Japanese ramen was in its relative infancy.

A typical dish of ramen (both instant and non-instant) is made up of three parts: noodles, broth, toppings. To a Japanese ramen connoisseur, the noodle is as important as the broth, since the noodles provide the mouth-feel and the texture.

48. Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, 14

49. George Solt, *Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014), 4

50. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 251

51. *ibid.*, 252

52. Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, 210

53. Lye water is a combination of sodium carbonate and potassium carbonate.

54. Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, 31

The broth is another important element of the ramen meal. There are several flavours of broth that are enjoyed universally, such as salt, miso, chicken and *tonkotsu* (豚骨, pork bone). The last two broths are made by slow-cooking the bones of the animal for many hours, drawing out the flavours into the water, and then adding other ingredients to create a full flavoured broth. Complimentary toppings are then added to the dish, such as sliced chicken or thinly sliced pork loin or belly, depending on the broth, and a range of vegetables such as spinach, spring onions, and sheets of dried seaweed. A hardboiled egg, or half of one, is used to complete the meal. The function of the broth is to impart flavour to the noodles and provide the meal's overall taste. The diner may chose not to drink it if they have filled up on the noodles and toppings, leaving a bowl of broth to be disposed.

### 2.4.1.3 Ramen in restaurants

Ramen is traditionally thought of as a fast food, inexpensive, and not entirely sophisticated. In mid-1990s Japan, the image of ramen changed from “a food eaten primarily by manual labourers”<sup>55</sup> into a gourmet food, worthy of national, and even regional, pride. As George Solt explains in *The Untold History of Ramen*:

“Over the course of the last century, what started as an exotic food from China famed for its affordability, quickness and nourishing qualities developed into a staple of Japanese working-class cuisine, and eventually a slow food symbolising the value of hand-crafted, old fashioned, and small scale production representing national tradition.”<sup>56</sup>

Within the last two decades, the Japanese ramen industry had something of a mini-boom, a result of many new ramen restaurants opening around Japan that reinterpreted ramen and created new flavours in the name of seeking a competitive advantage.

Therefore, ramen has pride of place in specialised and upscale restaurants, as well as in more humble fast food establishments which were once their sole home.

### 2.4.1.4 Instant Ramen

During Japan's phenomenal period of economic growth in the 1950s and 60s, the image of *chūka soba* “became more readily recognisable as a custom of urbanites, particularly at lunchtime for blue-collar workers, and at nighttime for white-collar workers (following post-work drinking routines)”<sup>57</sup>. The invention of instant ramen came after World

55. Solt, *Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze*, 155

56. *ibid.*, 215

57. George S. Solt, “Taking ramen seriously: Food, labor, and everyday life in modern Japan” (PhD diss., 2009), 110

War Two when Japan's Ministry of Health and Welfare were looking for ways to use the wheat flour from American food aid: in something of a rags to riches tale, when developing the instant noodles in 1958 in his backyard shed, Momofuku Andō invented a cheap, dehydrated form of ramen that has become the staple of poor students worldwide.<sup>58</sup> Andō named it "instant ramen" rather than "instant chūka soba.", further popularising the name and dish.<sup>59</sup> Instant ramen, or pot noodle form of the dish, proved very popular with millions of instant ramen products sold worldwide every year.

It became so popular that students and businessmen not only bought it, but praised the new food in letters and articles in magazines and newspapers<sup>60</sup>. With the increasingly hectic urban lifestyle, the ability to make a quick, tasty and relatively nutritious meal had great benefits: students studying for entrance exams had something to eat at their desks during study time, and businessmen and factory workers working overtime in hopes of promotion would fill up on instant ramen to sate themselves whilst away from home. Government initiatives to promote the purchasing of houses in cities meant that:

"[...] semi-cramped yet clean apartments that divided communal living into tiny spaces measured in square footage, complete with personal bathrooms, full plumbing, kitchens with running water and electricity [were built, but] reduced family living space almost required that some meals be taken outside the home or at least prepared using processed food."<sup>61</sup>

Instant ramen's ease of preparation made it a perfect dish for busy housewives to feed their family in these limiting conditions.

In Japan, instant ramen generally is sold in a cellophane bag, with the flash-fried noodle cake and a sachet of flavour powder for the broth, sometimes accompanied by a small bag of chilli or sesame oil, or even teriyaki sauce. Many different brands have created a range of flavours, and these are available from supermarkets and convenience stores throughout Japan.

Outside of Japan, instant ramen is one of the most consumed foodstuffs; furthermore, its appeal does not appear to be diminishing.<sup>62</sup> In the Western world, this variety is more commonly referred to as instant noodles, pot noodles, or cup noodles. When attempting to appeal to the American market, Andō realised that American dining habits and crockery were different to those of Japan<sup>63</sup>, where chopsticks were rarely used, let alone carrying a personal set of cutlery on one's person. He created Cup Noodle,

58. Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, 206

59. Solt, "Taking ramen seriously: Food, labor, and everyday life in modern Japan," 112

60. Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, 206

61. *ibid.*, 214

62. *ibid.*, 228

63. Ramen is served in a deep bowl called a *donburi* bowl, but American soup bowls are shallower.

64. Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen - Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, 221



an instant ramen product that comes in its own polystyrene cup and plastic spoon or fork. If a product's popularity can be determined by its brand name being used as a synonym for the product itself (such as Hoover instead of vacuum cleaner, or Sellotape rather than adhesive tape), "Top Ramen" succeeded in penetrating American social consciousness. In New Zealand's mainstream supermarkets, international noodle brands such as Maggi and Australian brands such as Fantastic Noodles are commonly sold, and instant noodles are popular enough to be manufactured by various supermarket's homebrands (Value and Homebrand). Other instant ramen brands, including those from Japan, are relegated to international sections or specialty supermarkets.

## 2.5 Yakitori

Grilling meat on skewers is not a cuisine style that is unique to Japan. Both the Middle East and the Far East have histories of grilling foods on skewers or swords. This cooking style is known around the world. In English speaking countries it is known as kebabs, a Turkish word meaning sword or skewer. It is also used throughout the Middle East albeit with various differing pronunciations of the word. It is also known in China as 串 (*chuàn*), and is called *sekurwa* in Nepalese. Traditionally, lamb is used in the Middle East, but in this cuisine's movements around the world, depending on local tastes and religious proclivities, other meats such as beef, chicken, goat and pork are used.

In Japan this cuisine is called *Yakitori*. 'Yakitori', when written in kanji, is 焼き鳥, meaning "grilled chicken". This is a misnomer since the term 'yakitori' is used interchangeably with the term 'kushiyaki' (串焼き "skewer cooking").

### 2.5.1 History of Yakitori

To date, there is little work that addresses historical accounts of *yakitori* in English. For most of Japan's history, the government decreed against the consumption of certain animals' meat based on the Buddhist precepts of not taking life. The first prohibition of meat eating in Japan was promulgated by Emperor Temmu in 675 CE.<sup>65</sup> This interdicted eating beef, horse, dog, monkey, and chicken during the fourth through ninth months, and also forbade the use of certain "fishing traps [which catch indiscriminately], on pain of execution".<sup>66</sup> Though chickens were brought to Japan in the Yayoi Period (300 BCE-250 CE), the ancient legends depicted them as messengers of the deities, and were

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65. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 53

66. *ibid.*, 54

often considered taboo as food. Thus, they were viewed more as pets with a sacred nature, renowned for their dawn crowing and as fighting birds.<sup>67</sup>

This tradition of prohibition against meat eating was bolstered by further decrees against killing animals, but it did little to dissuade the Japanese populace's love of the taste of meat. Later, in the 800s as Buddhism spread to the rural areas, "the Buddhist concept of transmigration of souls and the taboo on mammal meat became linked".<sup>68</sup> From this, "the belief that a person who ate the flesh of a four-legged animal would [...] be reincarnated as a four-legged animal"<sup>69</sup> became widespread and helped to reduce the consumption of meat in Japan. While Buddhist beliefs discouraged the idea that meat eating was spiritually improper, the indigenous Shinto belief also played a part. In Shinto, an important element of the religion is the concept of *kegare*, (汚れ, "ritual impurity" or 'defilement'). This concept is strongly linked to matters concerning death or bloodshed. When a close family member dies, the immediate family would be considered contaminated with the defilement of death and would need to remain separate from the community for a certain period of time in order not to spread that contamination. Since butchery involves both death and bloodshed, "the defilement associated with blood may well have been the reason for placing meat eating in the category of ritual impurity".<sup>70</sup>

While common people generally did not eat meat, fish and fowl (excepting chicken) were not particularly avoided, although fowl was only eaten at special occasions leaving seafood as virtually the only source of animal protein.<sup>71</sup> However, even this is not strictly true: the concept of eating meat for medicinal reasons was a long standing tradition, and was "sometimes used as an excuse for indulgence by healthy people who simply liked meat".<sup>72</sup>

This taboo on meat-eating continued up until the Meiji Restoration in 1868, when the ruling *bakufu* (幕府, 'shogunate' or "military government") handed over power to the emperor, who was until that time merely a figurehead leader. In January 1872, it was publicly announced that Emperor Meiji partook of beef and mutton on a regular basis, breaking a centuries-old official ban on meat-eating.<sup>73</sup> From this act, the more progressive-minded Japanese tried a trendy meat cuisine known as *gyunabe* (牛鍋, "beef stewpot"). This cuisine called upon the "medicinal eating" ideology that claimed that meat was good for the health. The Meiji government believed that "lavish consump-

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67. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 54

68. *ibid.*

69. *ibid.*

70. *ibid.*, 57

71. *ibid.*

72. *ibid.*, 58

73. Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese cuisine: food, power and national identity* (London: Reaktion, 2006), 28

tion of meat by the Westerners was responsible for their superior physique, and they tried to convince the Japanese public that by adopting Western dietary habits Japanese bodies will be bolstered as well".<sup>74</sup> Therefore, meat was included in soldiers' meals.

When meat-eating became more widespread, the consumption of chicken also became popular. However, it was considered to be a luxury item, was very expensive, and unsuitable for use in street stalls. In order to make chicken a viable product in street stalls, and thus capitalise on the new meat-eating phenomenon, stall owners would use chicken carcasses and gristle thrown away by high-class restaurants. Thus, *yakitori* stalls came into existence, and were set up near entrances to temples, shrines, and at traditional fairs. The public was already used to food sold on skewers due to the use of skewers in other traditional dishes, such as *dango*, a rice flour dumpling sweet. Other meats were also sold, including horse meat, beef intestines, and even dog meat.

During the Taishō Period (1912-1926), a variant of *yakitori* called *yakiton* (skewered grilled pork) became popular with businessmen from the Kantō (Central Eastern Japan) region. At the same time, *kushikatsu* (skewered deep fried pork) gained popularity in the Kansai (Central Western Japan region).<sup>75</sup> As explained below, the lack of meat during the World Wars One and Two affected these dishes, but their reintroduction in the later part of the twentieth century adds to the popularity of *yakitori*.

After World War One and Two, Japan struggled with food production. Two major reasons were the influx of repatriated Japanese civilians and military personnel, and the poor rice harvest in 1945.<sup>76</sup> With the American occupation helping to alleviate the food crisis with imports of flour and milk powder, it was not until 1955 that rice production was restored to the level of the 1930s.<sup>77</sup> During this time, meat production also suffered<sup>78</sup>, and consequently *yakitori* stalls were no longer common at festivals. When adequate supply of meat once again became available after austerity measures set in place by the Allied occupation forces in the 1960s, permanent *yakitori* restaurants were established.

Chicken was once again a staple of the *yakitori* menu thanks to America introducing the 'broiler' variety of chicken to Japan in 1964.<sup>79</sup> This new breed has a rapid growth cycle of around five to seven weeks, leading to fast production. Thanks to this increase in production and lowering of cost, other cuts of chicken could be used, and new kinds

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74. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese cuisine: food, power and national identity*, 33

75. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 247

76. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese cuisine: food, power and national identity*, 157

77. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 162

78. *ibid.*, 160

79. Using data gathered by the United States Department of Agriculture, the broiler variety was introduced in 1964. see United States Department of Agriculture, "Japan Broiler Meat (Poultry) Production by Year," <http://www.indexmundi.com/agriculture/?country=jp&commodity=broiler-meat&graph=production>

of *yakitori* using such cuts as chicken breast, became popular. Vegetable skewers also appeared.

Today in Japanese *yakitori* restaurants, menus include *yakitori* made from various parts of the chicken such as breast meat, wings, hearts, cartilage, and skin, as well as balls made of minced chicken meat. The meat is grilled in one of two ways: either with salt, or with the aforementioned *yakitori* sauce known as a *tare*. Restaurants also have house specialities such as chicken with cheese or garlic. Other varieties of meat, such as beef and pork, are served in various forms such as beef tongue and mince balls.

## 2.6 Other dishes

While choosing a certain brand of instant ramen in a supermarket is a decision that is dictated by habit and personal tastes, the same can not be said for those dishes that have little or no similarity in the target culture. While New Zealanders have eaten *yakitori* as would be found in the style of Middle Eastern shish kebabs, ramen in the style of Chinese noodle soups, and have come to enjoy sushi as they know it, there is a certain reticence to try dishes that are considered too far from what is normally eaten. All the dishes mentioned below are sold at Japanese restaurants in New Zealand, but some are considered to be more exotic than those mentioned above.

### 2.6.1 Tempura

While tempura is known and enjoyed in New Zealand, usually as starters at Japanese restaurants, many equate it with the kind of thick batter that fish and chip shops in New Zealand coat their fish with. However the batter used for tempura is lighter, and is fried more carefully to preserve the natural tastes of the ingredients used.

#### 2.6.1.1 History of Tempura

Tempura was thought to have been brought to Japan by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century. The earliest mention of the word as, *tempôra*, has several theories as to its origin. One such origin tale points to the word "*tempero*", which means "to season". Another uses the term "*tempora*" which relates to the religious concept of feast days where fish was eaten instead of meat, and using the Portuguese missionaries and their religious habits towards fish on those days, the Japanese first adopted the word to denote fish fried in oil.<sup>80</sup> Tempura then became popular as a snack food that was sold at street

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80. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 93-4

stalls. The fish, prawns and vegetables were stuck on bamboo skewers, battered and fried, and the customers ate them straight after cooking while standing. Now, tempura is eaten as a side dish of a meal, or as toppings on a *donburi*<sup>81</sup> or served with soba.

## 2.6.2 *Takoyaki*

*Takoyaki*, too, has no real equivalent in New Zealand and while it is enjoyed as starters at Japanese restaurants, or as snacks from night markets and some sushi shops, it is currently seen as an exotic side dish from Japan. It's popularity might also come from the juvenile reading of its common translation "squid balls". Made from a batter flavoured with a *dashi*<sup>82</sup> stock, these balls of dough are cooked in a pan with circular depressions. The batter is poured into the depression, and when the batter in contact with the pan browns, it is rotated with a tool so that uncooked batter can fill the hole, creating a ball shape. Before rolling into a ball shape as well as other flavourings such as red ginger and spring onions. Other popular fillings include other types of seafood, meat, and cheese

### 2.6.2.1 History of *takoyaki*

*Takoyaki* comes from a ball shaped egg snack made during the Edo and Meiji period called *akashiyaki* (明石焼き), named so for the place of it's origin, *Akashi* city in *Hyogo* Prefecture. *Takoyaki* as it is known today is attributed to a street vendor from Osaka called Tomokichi Endo, who, in 1935, after selling *akashiyaki* with beef mince (being a status symbol at the time) was suggested to try octopus since it was what people in *Akashi* would add. After detailed trials, it became popular and the name *takoyaki* was used.<sup>83</sup>

## 2.6.3 *Okonomiyaki*

While *okonomiyaki* is not as well known as other Japanese dishes in New Zealand, it is sold in Japanese restaurants and, in smaller sizes in sushi shops. The name can be loosely translated to "the things that you like, fried", and, because there is no real equivalent dish outside of Japan, it is often translated as a "Japanese pizza" or "filled

81. Outside of Japan, and especially in New Zealand a meal consisting of rice with a topping is called a 'rice bowl'. In Japan it is called a *donburi*, named so for the bowl it is served in. (refer to footnote 77)

82. *Dashi* being a stock made from a mixture of kelp and shavings of preserved fermented skipjack tuna. It has an umami filled, lightly fishy taste.

83. PHP Biz online Shūchi, "歴史を知ると奥深い！「たこ焼き」と「明石焼き」と「ラヂオ焼き」"  
<http://news.goo.ne.jp/article/phpbiz/entertainment/phpbiz-20151110122012314.html>

pancake.”<sup>84</sup> This term is correct in the sense that, as a pancake, *okonomiyaki* is a batter of flour, grated yam, water or a fish stock, and eggs. Unlike pancakes in the traditional sense. However, the ingredients are savoury. The main ingredient is cabbage, with the other ingredients filling the “things that you like” definition: meat, octopus, squid, other seafood and shellfish, vegetables, and/or cheese. These ingredients are mixed into the batter and then fried. After cooking the pancake is usually decorated with mayonnaise and a type of sauce called *okonomiyaki* sauce, a sweetened Worcestershire sauce made to appeal to Japanese palates. Because of New Zealanders’ unfamiliarity with this dish, only a few variations are sold at sushi shops, such as vegetarian or prawns. Some Japanese owned restaurants have wider *okonomiyaki* menus and they report that these are popular sellers.

### 2.6.3.1 History of *okonomiyaki*

*Okonomiyaki* hails from a smaller savoury pancake called a *dondonyaki* or a *monjayaki*, a small thin pancake, with seafood fillings covered in a sauce. This later evolved into a dish served today. *Monjayaki* is still served in Japan today, and some restaurants will serve both. Most *okonomiyaki* restaurants in Japan, especially in the Osaka region, have metal hotplates built into their tables so that customers can cook their own pancakes. *Okonomiyaki* also has regional variants that have become popular. *Hiroshima-yaki*, a variant from *Hiroshima*, where instead of the ingredients being mixed into the batter before frying, the ingredients are layered on top.

## 2.6.4 *Teppanyaki*

### 2.6.4.1 History of *Teppanyaki*

According to their website,<sup>85</sup> the restaurant *Misono* was the originator of the *teppanyaki* style. The owner, Shigeji Fujioka, opened his first store - an *okonomiyaki* store - in Kobe in 1945. Using an iron plate as a grill plate, he entertained his customers - the entertainers of the port area and the American soldiers that they brought to enjoy the beef steak he prepared on the grill. With his skills using the spatula, Fujioka entertained them with his preparation during the cooking time. He opened his next store in Tokyo fifteen years later, and now has 5 stores throughout Japan. At an interview with an American reporter, he coined the phrase “*teppanyaki*” (鉄板焼き literally “iron plate cooking”).<sup>86</sup> The style of entertaining customers by skilful moving and cutting of meat, fish and

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84. There are a myriad of names for *okonomiyaki*, and these will be covered in Course Three.

85. Misono Inc., “Our Mission,” <http://misono.org/en/concept/>

86. *ibid.*

vegetables, by flipping rice bowls, and by creating great bouts of flame to grill and amaze, has become popular throughout the world. This focus on entertainment is more for the foreign market, since in Japan, the focus is more on the taste of the food made in the style. A *teppanyaki* restaurant manager interviewee related that in Japan, the focus is on the fact that the meal is cooked on the iron plate, and the side dishes are what would normally be served with a meal — items such as rice, miso soup and pickles. In New Zealand, the side dishes served are small, providing a taste of Japan, while the main focus is on the entertainment of the cooking of the meal.

## 2.7 Conclusion

This Course explained the origins of the more popular dishes from Japanese cuisine that New Zealanders would know. Some of these dishes originated in Japan, others were of overseas origin. In Course Three, these dishes are again discussed, but in the context of how they have evolved in New Zealand.

## Course Three

# Simmered Dish: Japanese food in New Zealand.

### 3.1 Introduction

The modern cuisine of New Zealand, when compared to Japan's more than two millennia of cultural development, does not have the weight of history behind it. Also unlike Japan, New Zealand's mainstream culinary history does not begin in the country itself. The documented history of food in New Zealand might only go so far as the 1840s when it was first colonised, but even prior to this the Maori, who lived on the islands that form modern-day New Zealand since the thirteenth century, have their own cooking traditions. One of the early, and still practiced, methods of cooking is the 'hāngi'<sup>1</sup>, where an amount of food intended to feed an entire community is steamed atop hot stones placed underground. While Maori culinary traditions still flourish and most New Zealanders have heard of hāngi, there are little or no restaurants that would be able to provide a genuine, buried hāngi<sup>2</sup> let alone offer cuisine that is specifically Maori.

In the latter half of the eighteenth century, New Zealand became an agricultural colony of Great Britain and most of its culinary culture flows from this heritage. When gold was discovered in the South Island in 1860, many people came to New Zealand to make their fortunes, many prospectors coming from Britain, continental Europe, and China. Even so, racial discrimination and segregation did not permit much in the way of mixing cultures together. While Chinese and European people brought their cuisines with

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1. Joanna Paul, *The Maori cookbook* (New Zealand: HarperCollins, 1996), 1-10

2. A quick internet search at time of writing indicates that there is one restaurant aptly called 'The Hangi Shop' in Southeast Auckland, which to be noted is in an area where many Maori and Pacific Island communities are. The restaurant is where it's target audience is.



them, their restaurants were often targeted towards expatriates rather than the population in general.<sup>3</sup>

## 3.2 Restaurants

The expatriate Japanese population in New Zealand is relatively low: The 2013 census has 14,118 people who ethnically identify as Japanese.<sup>4</sup> With a total population of NZ at 4,242,048<sup>5</sup>, this means that 0.03% of the population were Japanese. However there are more Japanese restaurants and takeaway shops than would be expected to serve the expatriate community. Also, Japanese restaurants and takeaway shops are the only places in New Zealand where *washoku* are available to New Zealanders. For this reason a history of restaurants in New Zealand is just as important as the history of *washoku* in New Zealand, since without the restaurant to provide the cuisine, *washoku* would not have the presence it now has.

The term 'restaurant' is a word of French origin that originally referred to a small cup of soup broth intended for those too weak to eat an entire meal, which in English would be called a 'restorative'. These invalids would sit at a private table, offered by a restaurateur, or "someone who restores". "The fashionably feeble would alight to a restaurateur's room for a fortifying cup of consommé".<sup>6</sup>

The restaurant has evolved from a simple bowl of soup into a global industry, now a commercial venture that combines the concepts of food, service, and decor to deliver a fashionable and luxurious ideal.<sup>7</sup> Perrin states that these three concepts together define what restaurants are:

"The restaurant experience — the fashionable interpretation of food, service and decor — is a framework for an ever-changing process, [the restaurant's] social and cultural meaning changing over time because the concepts of luxury, entertainment and pleasure are relative to time and place."<sup>8</sup>

The culmination of these three concepts provide restaurantgoers with positive dining experiences. For instance, patrons of the earliest Japanese restaurants in the West might have been so impressed with the dining experience that the unfamiliarity of the dishes

3. Rowland. Perrin, *Dining Out: A history of the restaurant in New Zealand* (Auckland University Press, 2010), 10

4. Statistics NZ, *2013 Census Usually Resident Population Counts*, Web Page, 2013, [http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse\\_for\\_stats/population/census\\_counts/2013CensusUsuallyResidentPopulationCounts\\_HOTP2013Census.aspx](http://www.stats.govt.nz/browse_for_stats/population/census_counts/2013CensusUsuallyResidentPopulationCounts_HOTP2013Census.aspx)

5. *ibid.*

6. Perrin, *Dining Out: A history of the restaurant in New Zealand*, 7

7. *ibid.*

8. *ibid.*, 5

on offer was no barrier to having a good evening. Positive associations of good decor, service, and food pass from one set of people to another as cultural cues.

It is often said that in the Western world, restaurants as dining establishments began when the household chefs of French aristocracy lost their positions during the French Revolution.<sup>9</sup> The jobless chefs turned to opening their own businesses as a way of using their talents. While this is partially true, the food service industry has been active for as long as currency has. Before restaurants, food was served at public houses and eateries, although these focused principally on the sale of consumable goods, not necessarily placing much import on service or decor. Restaurants instead create an atmosphere where the focus is no longer on the food as just a form of sustenance. This type of established has continued to develop since the eighteenth century, and has travelled throughout the Western world.

### 3.2.1 History of restaurants in New Zealand

New Zealand's restaurant tradition is carried from this French tradition, brought by British colonists and settlers.<sup>10</sup> However, New Zealand's restaurant tradition has been tumultuous over the course of the country's history. Perrin Rowland's book *Dining Out*<sup>11</sup> provides an in-depth historical account of how restaurants in New Zealand have evolved with the cultural changes that the country has seen.

The earliest settlers in New Zealand, and the majority since, were from the British Isles.<sup>12</sup> Though they were made up in large number by members of the British lower and working classes, "after realising that food was abundant and wages were good in New Zealand, chose to eat what wealthier people in England ate"<sup>13</sup> in their new home. At the establishment of any settler town, the hospitality industry is one of the first to be set up. Because the majority of settlers were itinerant, many without families and thus not having particular need of a kitchen, hotels provided a place to rest, eat, and drink.<sup>14</sup>

As towns grew into cities, these hotels became more prominent dining establishments, opening dining and supper rooms to feed their regular clientèle and also the wider public. In the later half of the eighteenth century large urban centres such as Auckland were also home to luncheon and coffee rooms that sold hot lunches, providing soup

9. See Rebecca L Spang, *The invention of the restaurant: Paris and Modern Gastronomic Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2000)

10. Perrin, *Dining Out: A history of the restaurant in New Zealand*, 5

11. *ibid.*

12. William Fox, *The six colonies of New Zealand* (Dunedin, New Zealand: Hocken Library, University of Otago, 1851), 18

13. Perrin, *Dining Out: A history of the restaurant in New Zealand*, 11

14. *ibid.*, 12

outside of these hours since soup was affordable and easy to keep warm. One hotel, called the QCE Hotel (QCE stood for Quality, Cleanliness and Economy) advertised in the newspaper of the day that a feast could be bought for two shillings; “soup, fish, joints, poultry, game, pastry, English cheese and salads, all washed down with a glass of the best ale”.<sup>15</sup> This attests to how the cuisine of the wealthy citizens of the British Isles came with the lower classed colonists. As towns grew larger, the population looked towards eating establishments as being more than just mere vendors of food.

However, there were more than just Western influences to the cuisines. During New Zealand’s gold rush period in the latter half of the eighteenth century, towns quickly built to accommodate and service those who worked the mines. These towns supplied lodgings, bars, and food for the miners who had no means to cook for themselves. In the 1860s, lured by the promise of gold, many Chinese peasants arrived in New Zealand planning to strike it rich, but by this time most of the alluvial gold had already been taken. Many Chinese found themselves stranded in New Zealand without the means to return home. Some of the more resourceful opened businesses: Chinese hotels, billiard rooms, and laundries. A few opened restaurants.<sup>16</sup> With immigration numbers increasing, a growing anti-Chinese sentiment developed, resulting in Chinatowns developing in urban centres, and restaurants opening within them. Many non-Chinese “found their way to such establishments”.<sup>17</sup> This caused a moral panic with the press and the authorities: “Destitute and drunk Europeans flocked to such establishments for Chinese brandy and opium”.<sup>18</sup>

The restaurants were often raided by police for illegal gambling and trading.<sup>19</sup> Authorities were also concerned about many Chinese establishments’ lack of cleanliness. A newspaper article of a court case in 1868 described a sanitation report’s gruesome findings:

“The dining room floor was covered with straw and the kitchen and pantry littered with the heads of cocks and the entrails of fowls, and grease and dirt; however a witness did insist that the coffee was quite good.”<sup>20</sup>

However, there were those who enjoyed Chinese dining. Newspapers gave detailed accounts of Chinese-style service; how dishes were presented sequentially throughout the meal, instructions on how to use chopsticks, and how diners would sit “on stools at large square tables where they were presented with a small pot of boiling tea, ebony chopsticks, a porcelain spoon, a small bowl and a saucer of soy sauce — described

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15. Perrin, *Dining Out: A history of the restaurant in New Zealand*, 22

16. *ibid.*, 18-9

17. *ibid.*, 19

18. *ibid.*

19. *ibid.*

20. *ibid.*

as a chocolate fluid, a hybrid of salt and Worcestershire sauce".<sup>21</sup> The types of food differed from hotel cuisine, with such dishes as "cold roast chicken with pickled turnip, fresh fish fried in a dark sauce, dumplings, roast duck with carrot, stir-fried noodles, [and] steamed chopped pork accompanied with rice".<sup>22</sup> While Chinese restaurants are not from the French restaurant tradition, they also incorporate the three elements of food, service, and decor into their restaurants. In New Zealand, the specifically Chinese elements were exoticised.

In those times as in the modern day, Chinese cuisine is the first exposure that many New Zealanders have with East Asian food. As mentioned above, the Japanese population in New Zealand is very low, and they are concentrated in the major centres. Setting up sushi shops and other kinds of restaurants, modern day New Zealand is as familiar with Japanese cuisine as Chinese.

### 3.3 Japanese cuisine in New Zealand

To date, there are few studies of Japanese cuisine in New Zealand, with most research focused solely on sushi. For example, Allen and Sakamoto<sup>23</sup> speak on New Zealanders' perceptions of sushi are limited by the influence of a predominantly Korean-run sushi industry.

Japanese cuisine uses many ingredients that are peculiar to the cooking style such as *miso*, *mirin* (a sweetened low-alcohol cooking wine), and certain types of seaweed such as *konbu* or *nori*. These ingredients create the unique flavours that are essential to *washoku*. For example, if sushi was made without short grain glutinous rice, rice vinegar or *nori*, it would no longer be Japanese-style sushi, and Japanese sushi chefs would attribute it as another cuisine's variation.<sup>24</sup>

Having access to authentic ingredients as used in *washoku* is important to purists, although eventually inauthentic ingredients may be substituted according to local taste when a food is localised. In certain circumstances, authentic ingredients take a back seat authentic presentation, or some romanticised idea of what 'authentic' means; as will be discussed in Course Four, authenticity in food is a tricky concept, varying depending on who is talking about it and to what aim they intend to employ it.

21. Perrin, *Dining Out: A history of the restaurant in New Zealand*, 19

22. *ibid.*

23. Matthew Allen and Rumi Sakamoto, "White People Can't Sell Sushi: Unpacking Korean Influence Over Sushi Production in NZ," *New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies* 13, no. 2 (2011): 18

24. A non-New Zealand example of such localisation is Korean *gimbap* (김밥, literally "seaweed and rice"), while based on Japanese sushi introduced during the Japanese occupation of Korea (1910-1945), replaces rice vinegar with sesame oil, if the rice is seasoned at all, and emphasises Korean flavours by using local ingredients to create a new dish.

Naturally, Japanese food in New Zealand is different to *washoku* in Japan. The following pages build on Course Two's descriptions of the sashimi, sushi, and so on in Japan, describing how these dishes have evolved and shifted in taste and social meaning the in New Zealand context. These descriptions of how the Japanese dishes have changed in New Zealand are based on my interviews, described in Course Five and Six, and the way these dishes are prepared in current establishments selling them.

### 3.3.1 Sashimi

New Zealand, as well as most of the Western world, traditionally does not have a raw fish-eating culture. This may be due to the number of diseases and parasites that fresh-water and some seawater fish can transmit to humans.

Further explanation is given by the anthropologist Claude Lévi Strauss who in his work, *The Raw and the Cooked* (1964), used his titular theory of "the Raw and the Cooked" to explain the dichotomy of nature and culture by the state of preparation that has gone into the final product. In Western cuisines, most foods are only considered edible when they have been cooked in some way and fish is no exception; as Issenberg explains, "through the 1960s, to most Americans, fish was something that could be canned, battered, fried, grilled, steamed, boiled, roasted – but certainly not served raw".<sup>25</sup> Certainly this did not apply only to 1960s America but to much of the Western world, especially where there is a significant British influence.

Japanese cuisine, however, does not make this distinction. As mentioned in Course Two, raw food is not only considered edible in the Japanese culinary sphere, it is considered the epitome of traditional cooking, keeping the dish as close to its natural state as possible.

Sashimi, because of its simplicity in preparation, has not changed much in appearance at restaurants in New Zealand. When Japanese cuisine began to be popularised in New Zealand, smoked salmon was the nearest substitute for raw fish that New Zealanders would accept, but raw fish has become accepted with the growing acceptance of raw salmon on *nigirizushi*. While only some restaurants serve sashimi, at these restaurants salmon is a prerequisite, since it has now become synonymous with sushi and Japanese cuisine. The mainstay of Japanese sashimi, tuna is also served, albeit caught overseas, frozen, and shipped to New Zealand. Restaurants also serve fish from New Zealand waters, such as tarakihi and warehou if availability allows. Even so, the range of types of fish available for sashimi in New Zealand is significantly reduced compared to that of Japan, where practically any fish is ripe for preparation as sashimi.

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25. Sasha Issenberg, *The sushi economy: globalization and the making of a modern delicacy* (New York, N.Y: Gotham Books, 2007), 94

Since sashimi does not require much preparation, there is little difference between those served in Japan and those in New Zealand.

### 3.3.2 Sushi

While New Zealand sashimi is said to follow the Japanese tradition, sushi as it is eaten in the West may not have the same said about it.

In the United States during the 1980s, Japanese restaurants were seen as serving exotic foods, associated with fine dining and corresponding high prices, due to needing to import essential ingredients. Thus, up until the start of 1990s, sushi was perceived to be a high-class food. When later mass importation of ingredients made it possible for sushi to be made more cheaply, the opening of lunchtime and foodcourt sushi shops helped push sushi's popularity as an easy, healthy snack option. This perception of health came from the fact that Japanese people have the longest life expectancy in the world and this is attributed to the Japanese diet and that Japanese people's beliefs about healthy eating are "influenced by the traditional belief that eating behaviours, including eating styles and habits, are important for the promotion of good health".<sup>26</sup>

Sushi, sold as healthy, lunchtime snacks, eventually came to New Zealand. One of the most successful and longest running sushi shops in New Zealand, St Pierre's, has perhaps been the most influential in defining sushi in a New Zealand context. At time of writing, St Pierre's has 52 stores in major centres. In the late 1980s the owners of St Pierre's, the Katsoulis brothers, owned a seafood delicatessen in Wellington. In an interview with Nick Katsoulis, he explained that after a trade mission to Japan, he became enamoured with Japanese food. When he returned, he attempted to make sushi but could not find the necessary Japanese ingredients in New Zealand. At another trade mission, he made connections with Japanese trading companies and started importing the needed ingredients.

When they first introduced sushi at the delicatessen, it did not sell well, eventually being removed from the menu. Although they tried again in 1991, with Western chef making sushi at a table, "the majority of people [bystanders or customers] would just look and go, 'Sushi? Raw fish? Yuck!' and walk off... and when we got a Japanese chef, suddenly people were interested, so it was quite interesting. Probably the whole authenticity thing created that little spark at the beginning".<sup>27</sup>

This trial proved rather effective, and eventually the Katsoulis brothers opened specialty sushi shops. They also made trade connections with a Japanese company that

26. Rie Akamatsu et al., "Interpretations and attitudes toward healthy eating among Japanese workers," *Appetite* 44, no. 1 (2005): 128

27. Katsoulis, Nick. Interview by author. Audio recording. Auckland, 30 August 2016

had a distribution network in the United States. Using that business' experience and knowledge of how the industry operated in the United States, St Pierre's were able to benefit from the knowledge of what Western customers would accept. Thus, many of the trends that were popular in the United States were replicated to New Zealand, such as the use of raw salmon and avocado.

Another notable trend was use of a *makizushi* style known as *futomaki* (太巻き, "rolled thickly"), a sushi roll containing multiple ingredients leading to a thicker roll than Japan's tradition *hosomaki* (細巻き, "rolled thinly"), which normally has only one ingredient, usually a vegetable. Sakamoto and Allen explain that because of St Pierre's popularity and early success, their sushi has become a model for others in the New Zealand sushi industry, and is now considered the "Kiwi standard".<sup>28</sup>

In New Zealand, the typical *futomaki* will have lettuce, cucumber, and sometimes carrot as the vegetable component of the sushi, with Japanese mayonnaise added before the main ingredient.<sup>29</sup> Popular fish-based sushi roll ingredients are salmon, avocado, and/or cream cheese. The use of avocado follows the American trend set by the California roll, invented in the 1960s that popularised avocado, due to the then sporadic supply of tuna in California; avocado and mayonnaise mimic the creamy texture of tuna, whose own soft texture was popular in California as well.<sup>30</sup> In New Zealand, the local avocado industry was able to supply the ingredient in sufficient quantities, leading to its use here as well. The use of cream cheese treads a similar path, with its use as a ingredient in the Philadelphia roll, containing smoked salmon and cream cheese. Both of these American rolls are made in the *uramaki* (裏巻き, "reverse roll") style where, after placing the rice on the nori paper, it is turned upside-down such that the typical exterior of the *makizushi* is on the inside; hiding the nori paper on the inside made the dish more palatable to Americans.<sup>31</sup> Contrarily, Katsoulis explains that New Zealanders liked the nori on the outside, and it is *futomaki* rolled with nori on the outside became that which is considered the "Kiwi standard".

As mentioned, New Zealanders were initially averse to consuming raw fish. When sushi became more popular and widespread, more people were willing to try unfamiliar tastes, and raw salmon became popular. It is now the most popular sushi fish. In time, along with salmon, raw tuna and canned tuna became popular ingredients, as well as both prawns cooked in teriyaki sauce, and breaded deep-fried prawns.

28. Allen and Sakamoto, "White People Can't Sell Sushi: Unpacking Korean Influence Over Sushi Production in NZ," 22}

29. This Japanese mayonnaise brand is called 'Kewpie' and is sweeter and less tangy than Western mayonnaises. Also, with the addition of MSG (Monosodium Glutamate), it stimulated the umami taste buds and makes you want to eat more. The reason why this brand is used is because it is the only one Japanese food suppliers import into New Zealand.

30. Issenberg, *The sushi economy: globalization and the making of a modern delicacy*, 90-1

31. *ibid.*, 90

While seafood features highly as a popular sushi filling in New Zealand, it is only a subset of the varieties available. Different preparations of chicken, beef, and vegetables are also enjoyed as sushi fillings, more so than in Japan. Teriyaki chicken and teriyaki beef are popular, with *karaage* (空揚げ, Japanese-style deep fried chicken) also employed as a topping or filling. The use of mayonnaise and various sauces give a thick, creamy taste and texture. Also, in the last few years, vegetarian options have become popular, starting with seaweed salad made from *wakame*, a type of seaweed that has been cultivated in Korea and Japan for centuries. Other vegetarian roll options are mushrooms, *inari* (deep fried tofu that has been seasoned in a sweet soy sauce broth), and cheese. Otherwise, typical *futomaki* with the meat taken out is also sold.

While seafood features highly as popular sushi fillings in New Zealand, it is only a subset of the varieties available. Different preparations of chicken, beef and vegetables are also enjoyed as sushi fillings. Teriyaki chicken and teriyaki beef are popular, with *karaage* (空揚げ, deep fried chicken) also being enjoyed. All these have mayonnaise and various sauces within, giving it a thick, creamy taste and texture. Also, in the last few years, vegetarian options have become available, having started with seaweed salad, which is made from *wakame*, a type of seaweed that has been cultivated in Korea and Japan for centuries. Other vegetarian roll options are mushrooms, *inari* (deep fried tofu that has been seasoned in a sweet soy sauce broth), and cheese.

With the proliferation of sushi shops throughout New Zealand, competition is leading sushi shops to push the boundaries of what is considered sushi by combining ingredients in ways not found before. One such example is a beetroot and salmon *uramaki* sushi found at one Auckland sushi shop.

### 3.3.3 Ramen

New Zealand has known the Chinese noodle soup for many years, with many Chinese restaurants selling the noodles in a light broth. Japanese ramen, on the other hand, is little known outside of major urban areas.

Ramen shops have been present in New Zealand since before the sushi boom of the early 1990s. They were, and still are, run by expatriate Japanese, as opposed to sushi shops which are most often run or staffed by Korean or Chinese expatriates<sup>32</sup>, mainly in the Auckland urban centre. In Auckland, New Zealand's largest city by size and population, ramen shops have been established since the 1980s. By contrast, prior to 2010, Wellington had no specialised ramen shop; certain Japanese restaurants occasion-

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32. While I can not claim to have knowledge of every ramen restaurant in New Zealand, of the ramen restaurants that I enquired about interviews in Wellington and Auckland, all either had Japanese owners or head chefs.



ally put ramen on their specials menu. This is in spite of the fact that they appeared in New Zealand around the same period. As consciousness of ramen raised, more ramen restaurants opened in Wellington.

An Auckland-based ramen shop owner who was interviewed explained that when he had started his store in the late 1990s, he noticed that many first time customers would order from the non-ramen items that were more familiar at the time, such as *karaage*, grilled octopus, and teriyaki salmon. On subsequent trips, when they were more familiar with the menu, they would try something else and gradually work their way towards the unfamiliar items. For this reason, his initial ramen offerings resembled pasta. As people became familiar with ramen as it is usually served, the pasta-style offerings were phased out.<sup>33</sup>

Local restaurants started experimenting with ingredients, both to make ramen more appealing to New Zealanders but also to showcase various flavours of Japan. These evolutions include spicy variations of traditional ramen flavours, seafood ramen made with locally-available fish, and vegetarian ramen with shiitake and other vegetables as toppings. This evolution did not keep step with changes in Japan, however; as another ramen shop owner interviewee relates, ramen in Japan during the 1990s and early 2000s was in a state of culinary evolution. The traditional flavours of salt, miso, chicken and *tonkotsu* (豚骨, pork bone) were being experimented with in order to create new and interesting dishes that would make individual stores stand out and appeal to customers. New Zealand ramen, on the other hand, was made in more traditional ways since there was no competitive need to innovate. Eventually, the newer styles of Japanese ramen were imported to New Zealand, especially after 2010. It was around this time that New Zealand has had a ‘ramen boom’ with stores opening in major cities. For example Wellington had no specialised ramen shops prior to 2010, and in 2015, There are at least 5 that have been opened, serving innovative takes on the traditional flavours.

The term ‘ramen’ may also colloquially refer to what New Zealanders call instant or ‘2 minute’ noodles. This usage mimics the United States, where ‘ramen’ is principally used with this definition in mind.<sup>34</sup> Following the instant noodle-eating traditions of America and Britain, instant noodles are seen as a “quick meal” or “poor student food”. Other Japanese noodle styles such as udon and soba are available in New Zealand, and are found in the Asian ingredient aisles of major supermarkets, usually in the same area as the instant ramen.

33. Ramen shop owner interviewee. Interview by author. Audio recording. Auckland, 26 August 2016

34. See Merry White, “Ramen at Home and on the Road,” *Japan Forum* 27, no. 1 (2015): 114–120. Here, the term ‘ramen’ is used to mean both the fresh and instant varieties as it is expressed in the American context

### 3.3.4 Yakitori

As mentioned in Course Two, meat served on skewers is not unique to any country. Shish kebabs sold in New Zealand are usually made from lamb, chicken breast meat or kofta, a type of meatball.

*Yakitori* restaurants in New Zealand sell the Japanese variety of skewered meats. Many of these restaurants are owned and staffed by Japanese, and many have tried to continue *yakitori* traditions as they are in Japan. One interviewee, who worked at a *yakitori* restaurant in Auckland relates how they imitated an every day occurrence in any given Japanese *yakitori* shop: the staff made a new batch of their store's signature *yakitori* sauce everyday, and then added it to the previous day's sauce, supposedly creating a depth in the flavour.<sup>35</sup>

The difference between Japanese *yakitori* shops and those in New Zealand is the choice of meat. New Zealanders do not typically eat anything other than chicken meat at *yakitori* restaurants. Because of this, *yakitori* restaurants have many skewers with chicken thigh seasoned in different ways, or grilled with various other ingredients. Popular skewers include chicken thigh with spring onion, chicken thigh with cheese, or chicken mince balls. However, there are also more traditional items on the menu for those who feel adventurous, such as chicken hearts, gizzards, liver, or cartilage. All these are grilled with the *yakitori* sauce.

Despite the inclination of New Zealanders towards chicken skewers, other menu items do exist, including scallops, salmon, prawns wrapped in pork, beef tongue, pork belly with onion, kransky sausage, and a variety of vegetarian options such as kumara (sweet potato), sweetcorn, or ginko nuts. These restaurants, while specialising in *yakitori*, also have kitchen menus where customers may order other Japanese dishes such as *takoyaki*, beef *tataki*, rice bowls, as well as miso soup and various tofu dishes.

### 3.3.5 Other dishes

The dishes listed below are available at Japanese restaurants and at sushi shops. While in Japan there might be stores that specialise in the dishes explained below, these do not exist in New Zealand. One explanation is that since many of the restaurants and shops which sell these items get them from the same Japanese food supplier, there is no competition and therefore no need to specialise.

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35. Yakitori shop worker interviewee. Interview by author. Audio recording. Auckland, 27 August 2016

### 3.3.5.1 Tempura

As explained in the Course Two, tempura is seafood and vegetables that have been coated in a light batter and deep fried. Such preparation is not unknown in New Zealand, which imported the British tradition of “fish ‘n chips”: fish is coated in batter, deep fried, and served with deep fried potato chips (“fries”, for the benefit of any North American readers). This form of cuisine, now seen as much a New Zealand tradition as British, extends to deep frying battered sausages, squid, potato fritters, kumara fritters, and even chocolate bars.

Deep-fried battered food in the Japanese style, tempura, was introduced to New Zealanders at Japanese restaurants. It is enjoyed as starters or as side dishes, though not usually as a highlight item. When sushi shops became popular, tempura became a popular filling. One such popular filling is deep-fried prawns (エビフライ), whilst *kakiage*, a flat, deep-fried battered, vegetable strip fritter serves as a popular side dish.

### 3.3.5.2 Takoyaki

*Takoyaki* were introduced at Japanese restaurants as starters, under the name *takoyaki*. Using English naming conventions to describe the meal, that of calling them octopus balls made it less appealing to first-time eaters, and therefore the Japanese name is used.<sup>36</sup> While many restaurants and shops use imported frozen *takoyaki* from Japanese food suppliers, some sushi shops and market stall owners have gas-powered *takoyaki* makers and can make *takoyaki* fresh for customers.

### 3.3.5.3 Okonomiyaki

*Okonomiyaki*'s history on New Zealand matches that of other items, starting in Japanese restaurants as a starter. Its name is rather difficult for New Zealanders to say, and gets relegated to the list of rarely-ordered items except by those who have tried them before. Sometimes they are referred to as “Japanese pancakes”, “savoury pancakes”, or “cabbage pancakes” in English. In Japan, one advantage of *okonomiyaki*, and something that makes it popular commercially, is the ability for customers to choose their preferred ingredients. This is comparable to the construction of a Subway sandwich. However, because *okonomiyaki* is not as popular in New Zealand, this advantage is lost. Some sushi shops sell *okonomiyaki* as a side menu item, most often only as a vegetarian option or with prawns. Some Japanese restaurants have a wider selection, such as chicken, pork slices, and prawn with cheese.

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36. Sushi shop chef interviewee. Interview by author. Audio recording. Auckland, 28 August 2016

### 3.3.5.4 *Teppanyaki*

*Teppanyaki* took a slightly different route to New Zealand. While *teppanyaki* originated in Japan, the chef's showmanship proved more popular with foreigners. In 1963, Japanese-born wrestler Hiroaki Aoki opened a *teppanyaki* restaurant in New York. According to their website, this store, named *Benihara* became very popular and fashionable, and soon many *teppanyaki* restaurants with knife-wielding, entertaining chefs opened up worldwide.<sup>37</sup> New Zealand was no exception, and restaurants have existed in New Zealand since the 1980s, though these restaurants were limited to major urban areas. While the majority of *teppanyaki* restaurants in New Zealand are run by Chinese, Japanese-owned restaurants do exist.

The dining experience consists of customers sitting at a table with a large inset grill plate. The chef then introduces himself, and does tricks such as flipping spatulas, throwing eggs into the air and having them land on the corner of the spatula to break them open, flicking rice from one bowl to another, flambéing food with huge gouts of flame for visual effect. The menu consists of many well known Japanese dishes, such as teriyaki chicken, wagyu steak, as well as seafood such as prawns, salmon and scallops., all cooked on the iron plate all with dextrous use of the spatula to separate foods, all with the intention to entertain and amaze. While the food is cooked using Japanese ingredients and techniques, the focus is more about the cooking style than the cuisine.

## 3.4 Conclusion

This course explained the origins of Japanese cuisine in New Zealand, comparing the approaches of Japanese and New Zealand restaurants towards the same dishes.

New Zealand is a multicultural society, full of cultural cues from many places. From even the nineteenth century, Chinese immigrants brought their style of food to New Zealand, building acceptance of cuisines outside of the typical Western (or specifically British) delicacies, paving the way for Japanese food to enter New Zealand's collective consciousness.

As the examples of sushi, ramen and sashimi demonstrate, not only are Japanese foods in constant change in their native environment, but also in their overseas home of New Zealand. As these foods have grown more popular in New Zealand over the last twenty years, there have been mini-explosions within the food industry bringing Japanese cuisine to restaurants, street markets, stalls, takeaway shops, and supermarkets.

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37. Benihara National Corp, "History," 90

Until New Zealand's own ramen boom of the early 2010s, ramen served locally featured flavours that are considered by Japanese as 'classic', such as *tonkotsu* (pork bone), *miso* (fermented soy), and *shio* (salt). As mentioned in the previous course, Japan underwent a mini-boom of many new ramen shops being opened, necessarily inventing new flavour combinations to stay competitive in an increasingly saturated market. These flavours have found their way to New Zealand ramen shop menus under the notion that flavours such as spicy chicken, soy, and even kimchi might resonate well with modern New Zealand tastes, open to new experiences through the ambassadorship of cuisine such as sushi.

### 3.5 Conclusion

The next course goes into further detail on exactly how Japanese food changed as it entered New Zealand, exploring how and why these changes occurred in greater detail by reference to interviews with Japanese nationals and New Zealanders who have eaten *washoku* both in Japan and New Zealand. The methodology used to come up with interview questions, carry out the interviews, and interpret the data will also be introduced.

# Course Four

## Cooked Meal: Theoretical Framework & Methodology

### 4.1 Introduction

When considering how to best gather data about *washoku* in New Zealand, utilising an anthropological methodology is advantageous due to there being two quite different cultures involved: Japanese culture and New Zealand culture. As we are studying cultural cues from two cultures, taking an ethnographic approach which focuses on real people's lived experiences is an obvious choice.

This chapter explains the theoretical framework that forms the basis of both the design of the interview and the interpretation of the interview results.

### 4.2 Theoretical framework

#### 4.2.1 Ethnographic approach

Given the comparative nature of the study, involving as it does two cultures, it is important to look at cultural artefacts from an 'emic' as well as an 'etic' standpoint. Kenneth Pike, in his work on finding a unified theory of human behaviour based on linguistics, defines the two anthropological standpoints as being in opposition to each other:

"The etic approach treats all cultures or languages —or a selected group of them —at one time ...The emic approach is, on the contrary, culturally specific, applied to one language or culture at a time ...Descriptions or analyses from the etic standpoint are "alien" in view, with criteria external to the system. Emic descriptions provide an internal view, with criteria chosen from

within the system. They represent to us the view of one familiar with the system and who knows how to function within it himself.”<sup>1</sup>

Working with this explanation, those who see things from an etic viewpoint seek to compare artefacts of one culture with equivalent or similar artefacts of their own; while those holding an emic position examine the same cultural artefacts in isolation of the opposing culture, using only their own culture’s cues to inform how they interpret those artefacts. By way of illustration, imagine two gastronomic travelling New Zealanders heading off to Japan, one with an etic and one with an emic point of view: the former seeks to understand how a cuisine fits in with the local customs, traditions, and history, and attempts to enjoy the food in its own right; the latter is, at the strong end of the spectrum, frightened of new experiences, derides everything as “nothing but gross raw fish”, and wonders if there’s a nice place that sells battered fish and fried chips nearby.

Travelling and eating in other cultural spheres is a great way to begin to think etically, if one does not already do so, say through an upbringing in a bicultural household. There is also easy access to other cultures and their cuisines through both traditional and social media. In more traditional media, such as print and television, this access is gained through cooking and travel shows, recipe books, and tourist guidebooks; through social media, this access is gained through Facebook groups, specialised culinary smartphone apps, gastronomical video blogs on YouTube and the like<sup>2</sup>. Even outside of media, restaurants and takeaway shops selling foreign foods provide an opportunity to become acquainted with other cultures.

As shown in Course Two and Three, different cultures have different beliefs and relationships with food. When cuisine from one culture is placed in another cultural sphere, some changes are bound to occur, and the accommodating host culture effects changes to make the cuisine more palatable to suit local cultural cues. As Japanese food is mostly available at commercial enterprises, New Zealanders’ food preferences influenced the choice of ingredients and style of presentation. Since the owners of most Japanese restaurants in New Zealand, especially sushi shops, are not Japanese or New Zealanders, there is an added layer of cultural influence. To sum things up, New Zealand Japanese food is not the same Japanese food as sold in Japan, yet remains distinctly Japanese food in the minds of New Zealanders; to analyse a product that is simultaneously of multiple cultures also benefits from an etic approach.

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1. Kenneth L. Pike, *Language in relation to a unified theory of the structure of human behavior*, 2d, rev., ed. rev 2nd, vol. 24 (The Hague: Mouton, 1967), 37-8

2. Take for example *EmmymadeinJapan*, a Chinese-American video blogger on YouTube who started her online career by taste-testing Japanese candy kit-sets. Emmy later branched into other forms of Japanese cuisine, eventually to dishes from all around the world, including New Zealand. At the time of writing, Emmy has gained over eight hundred thousand followers, and published over eight hundred videos.

### 4.2.2 Orientalism

When discussing Asian culture from the standpoint of a Western observer, an inevitable result of the colonialist history of many Western countries is that Asian cultures are exoticised. How and why this exoticisation occurs was described and codified under the theory of Orientalism by Edward Said in his work of the same name<sup>3</sup>. Said's based the theory of Orientalism on the notion that since Ancient times the West has romanticised the East<sup>4</sup>; a concept that is romanticised is usually more fiction than fact, reflected in the thinking that the "the West is 'rational, developed, humane, superior,' and the Orient is 'aberrant, undeveloped, inferior' "<sup>5</sup>. Said argues that these romanticised notions of the East are used as justification for colonialist and imperialist political actions by Western powers. This theory was controversial for "its use of the abstractions 'Oriental' and 'European,' its prejudice in favor of the latter, and the relation in Orientalist thinking between past 'Oriental' greatness and present 'Oriental' degradation".<sup>6</sup>

Even though we are said to be living in a post-colonial era, these romanticised notions of the East still linger in cultural consciousness. This is because many Westerners maintain an emic viewpoint since, for them, their culture holds all the cultural cues they need to get through life. They see these false representations of Asian culture in the media and online, receive these skewed cultural cues, internalise them, and give them no further critical thought. Thus, Orientalism continues to this day.

In order to interact with the West politically or economically, people from Eastern cultures either attempt to correct these skewed cultural cues, or use them to their advantage. In order to do the latter, they must first understand what Westerners believe about the East, and adjust their own approach to Westerners to match Western expectations, however skewed they may be. According to Koichi Iwabuchi, the notion of 'Japaneseness' is an example of such a readjustment. He posits that "the western Orientalist discourse on Japan has supported the construction and maintenance of 'Japaneseness': Japan's own construction of 'Japaneseness' has successfully utilised the difference from the 'West' ".<sup>7</sup> This self-Orientalism is how Japan then displays itself to the West, using the West's own cultural cues.

New Zealand, having been a British dominion and also heavily influenced by American media, holds cultural cues that exoticise Asian countries. This is shown by how New Zealanders expect staff at Asian restaurants to be Asian or at least look as much, as mentioned in Course Three.

3. Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* / Edward W. Said (Harmondsworth: Harmondsworth : Penguin, 1985)

4. Keith Windschuttle, *Edward Said's orientalism revisited*, 2000, 32

5. Said, *Orientalism* / Edward W. Said, 300

6. Richard H. Minear, "Orientalism and the Study of Japan," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 39, no. 3 (1980): 507

7. Said, *Orientalism* / Edward W. Said, 300



### 4.2.3 Globalisation

‘Globalisation’ is a term that encompasses a range of academic fields. According to Ferguson and Mansbach, globalisation is a process that attempts to create connections between previously unconnected geographical areas, and in the process interact in the “often interrelated dimensions” of “ecology, disease, demography, economics technology, culture, politics, military, and society”.<sup>8</sup>

Globalisation is not a new process, and its effects can be seen throughout history, one example being that of the Ottoman Empire; it stands out in European and Asian history as being relatively prosperous and peaceful, lasting the fifteenth to nineteenth centuries, with its enduring success partly attributable to the conscious effort to integrate the ideals, practices, and cultural cues of the Empire heads alongside those of the countries it conquered rather than impose its ideals by force.<sup>9</sup> Thus, connections were made between the culture of the Ottomans and other nations within the empire. This is a good parallel since the world at the time was a much smaller place.

As contact between different parts of the world grew, and places around the globe became more interconnected, the boundaries between the local, national, and international spheres started to blur and distort. Today, we speak of global economies, world banks, international treaties, and so on. While early studies in this area focused on these changes in the political and economic academic sphere<sup>10</sup>, only in the last twenty years has it become an established topic of study in the anthropological sphere as well.<sup>11</sup> During this time, many, often competing, theories have been used to explain and understand the processes of globalisation.

#### 4.2.3.1 Three paradigms of Globalisation

Jan Pieterse, explains three paradigms relating to globalisation; the first two cover the the commonly-accepted notions of the theory, while the third develops Pieterse’s own ideas on how globalisation has changed and developed.

The first paradigm that Pieterse explains is Samuel Huntington’s controversial theory called “the clash of civilisations”, also called “cultural differentialism”. Huntington explains that in the post-Cold war era, “international politics moves out of its Western phase, and its centrepiece becomes the interactions between the West and non-West

8. Yale H. Ferguson, *The History and Dynamics of Globalisation*, vol. 25, 1 (2014), 135-6

9. *ibid.*, 136

10. See Eric Wolf (1982) ‘Europe and the People without History’, and Eric Wolf and Sidney Mintz (1957) ‘Haciendas and Plantations in Middle America and the Antilles’

11. Pieterse explains that Roland Robertson’s 1992 Book “Globalization: ‘Social Theory and Global Culture’ was one of the first anthropological forays into the field.

civilisations"<sup>12</sup>, divided according to religion, race, and geopolitical boundaries.<sup>13</sup> For Huntington, the centuries-old war on Islam and associated cultures by Western powers is a continuing example of this, in which "the paramount axis of world politics will be the relation between 'the West and the rest' ".<sup>14</sup>

The second paradigm Pieterse discusses is George Ritzer's theory of 'McDonaldisation'. According to Pieterse, McDonaldisation is a variation on the theme of cultural diffusionism, or convergence, that cultures subjected to the same global influences tend to grow more alike,<sup>15</sup> although Ritzer specifically deals with the influence of multinational companies.<sup>16</sup> Ritzer used the example of McDonald's restaurants being packaged and sold around the United States and later the rest of the world as an example of "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to[increasingly dominate] sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world".<sup>17</sup> The thinking holds that McDonald's exported its American-ness wholesale around the world, changing global expectations of fast food to specifically mean McDonald's-style restaurants, menus, and menu items; cultures that have assimilated McDonald's-style cultural cues relating to fast food, including New Zealand, demonstrates that there is a level of success to be had with a one-size-fits-all strategy. However, with McDonald's shares in the United States declining and an obesity epidemic drawing negative press and publicity to the company, the power of McDonald's as a homogenizing force is in question. Business studies is now moving toward the thinking that "corporations [only] succeed if and to the extent that they adapt themselves to local cultures and markets".<sup>18</sup> Pieterse explains it thus: "Firms may be multinational, but all business is local".<sup>19</sup>

The third paradigm, and the one of which Pieterse is a proponent, is hybridisation. According to Rowe and Shelling, Hybridisation is defined as "the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices"<sup>20</sup>. By way of example, take the way McDonald's started to localise its global products for markets where the stock standard Big Mac, in its original recipe, would not be accepted; in India, the prevailing Hindu faith forbids the eating of beef, so McDonald's substitutes it for chicken, lamb, and vegetarian options. Hybridisation goes against the

12. Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *Globalization and culture: global melange* (2009), 44-45

13. George Ritzer, *Globalization: the essentials* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 154

14. Pieterse, *Globalization and culture: global melange*, 45

15. Ritzer, *Globalization: the essentials*, 154

16. Ritzer's theory, being the application of Max Weber's theory of Rationalisation with the fast-food restaurant as the model, be considered the 'strong' viewpoint, emphasising the clinical and 'cardboard cut-out' like nature of McDonald's operational system.

17. George Ritzer and Chih-Chin Chen, "McDonaldisation," in *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, Second Edition, ed. James D. Wright (Oxford: Elsevier, 2015), 51

18. Pieterse, *Globalization and culture: global melange*, 52

19. *ibid.*

20. William Rowe and Vivian Schelling, *Memory and modernity: popular culture in Latin America* (New York; London; Verso, 1991), 231

ideas of the first two paradigms; it opposes the cultural differentialistic thinking of the purity of Huntington's proposed groups by focusing on the mixing of cultures, and opposes the notion of McDonaldisation because it shows the one-size-fits-all approach has proven limitations. Rather, hybridisation "represents a postmodern sensibility of cut-and-mix".<sup>21</sup>

Pieterse notes a common objection to hybridisation. He writes that:

"What is actually being mixed are cultural languages rather than grammars. The distinction runs between the surface and deep-seated elements of culture. It is, then, the folkloric, superficial elements of culture — foods, costumes, fashions, consumption habits, arts and crafts, entertainments, healing methods — that travel, while deeper attitudes and values, the way elements hang together, the structural ensemble of culture, remain contextually bound."<sup>22</sup>

While hybridisation attempts to combine elements of different cultures, Marwan Kraidy reminds us that "hybridity invokes the fusion of two (or more) components into a third term irreducible to the sum of its parts".<sup>23</sup> When the two cultural items merge, they lose their strict association with their respective, originating cultures. While Pieterse agrees with this analysis of hybridisation, he questions whether this loss is important, and argues that this is:

"a response to and negotiation of nineteenth century assumptions, categories and sensibilities that are out of sync with twentieth century trends by the same token, much of our hybridity talk is 'so twentieth century' and is likely to lose much of its distinctiveness or salience in the course of the twenty first century, for by then other boundaries and differences will emerge"<sup>24</sup>

Pieterse believes that what he calls the "unity separation hybridity" sequence of hybridisation is part of the historical process and its passing should not be bemoaned, but that the processes leading to its distinctiveness should be understood.<sup>25</sup>

#### 4.2.3.2 Authenticity

Allan Weiss describes the concept of "gastronomic authenticity" as a "'soft concept'", one without a widely agreed, concrete definition, that "[refers] to the appropriateness

21. Pieterse, *Globalization and culture: global melange*, 55

22. *ibid.*, 56

23. Kraidy, Marwan, As cited in *ibid.*, 92

24. *ibid.*, 92-3

25. *ibid.*, 93

of linking a specific ingredient, technique or recipe, or a relation between dishes or between a wine and a dish, to a particular time and place".<sup>26</sup>

In the case of this thesis, one might be tempted to use such a description to link elements of Japanese cuisine specifically with the country of Japan; Weiss disagrees, stating that authenticity is "not an indication of origins, but of configurations of cultural values"<sup>27</sup>, such that what an observer considers to be authentic is limited by their previous experiences of that phenomenon rather than necessarily whether or not the observer understands the artefact's place (or time) of origin.

Weiss also explains that authenticity is a dynamic notion; without keeping this in mind, a dish would be spoken in terms of whether it is 'indigenous' when analysed spatially, or 'traditional' when viewed temporally. Such a rigid view limits analysis of how the cuisine is perceived both outside its cultural boundaries and throughout its history<sup>28</sup>; otherwise, no dish prepared and sold/eaten outside of Japan could be said to have any level of authenticity.

Weiss concludes that this definition of authenticity looks less at whether a dish is authentic, but rather on *how* it is authentic. This is the definition I have chosen to use for this thesis, although other definitions are touched upon below.

Lu and Fine explained that during their research questioning Chinese customers at Chinese restaurants in the United States, many commented that the food served at these establishments differed from that in their homeland. When Lu and Fine asked the cooks and owners at these Chinese restaurants if it were possible to serve authentic Chinese food to Americans, all answered that it could not be done.<sup>29</sup> Lu and Fine believe that presenting authentic Chinese food is prevented by social, cultural, and economic restraints of the market. For the wider American market, Chinese food served in Chinatown is expected to have more authentic ingredients such as wax gourd and duck feet, while the food sold outside of those neighbourhoods, such as chow-mein and black-bean-and-pork dishes, is thought of as being less authentic although by no means less exotic. This is because "the meaning of food depends on the social location of those who consume it".<sup>30</sup>

Lu and Fine go on to explain that there is a discrepancy between the desires of those who choose to visit ethnic food restaurants, from outside the restaurants' cultures and those who are actual participants in those restaurants' cultures. As culinary tourists, they wish to engage with the exotic, and therefore "demonstrate to themselves and

26. Allen S. Weiss, "Authenticity," *Gastronomica* 11, no. 4 (2011): 74

27. *ibid.*, 75

28. *ibid.*, 76

29. Shun Lu and Gary A. Fine, "The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment," *The Sociological Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (1995): 540

30. *ibid.*

others that they are cosmopolitan and tolerant"<sup>31</sup>; in doing so, they desire that the food be authentic, but not so much that it is inaccessible or unpalatable to them. For this reason, restaurants have to "construct both the means of authentic food and a market niche, in the process creating an image of their cultural traditions for their customers, as they create images of their customers".<sup>32</sup>

Wood and Muñoz explain that "for many consumers, ethnic-themed restaurants may serve as their sole or primary contact with a foreign culture. An ethnic restaurant functions as a 'cultural ambassador', providing, for some, an initial exposure to and means of evaluating a country's food and people".<sup>33</sup> This would seem to fit the New Zealand Japanese restaurant model, since there is not a sizeable Japanese community to facilitate many other forms of cultural exchange other than through food (or the occasional cultural festival). Wood and Muñoz also posit, that:

"When consumers determine the authenticity of a restaurant, their evaluation is mediated by their own exposure to culturally related 'image formation agents' [that is, means of transmitting cultural cues between cultures]. They also decide when to 'apply this measuring stick', and [...] yet some consumers do not desire a 'true' authentic experience; for them, the 'illusion of authenticity' is often good enough."<sup>34</sup>

For Japanese restaurateurs, they must "construct an engineered environment that is in keeping both with consumers' cultural expectations and with what is economically feasible".<sup>35</sup>

Hirose and Pih, when analysing how perceptions of race affect how authenticity is viewed by the customer, explain that:

"Commonly identified cultural definitions of gastronomical authenticity can be observed in both the social scientific investigation of food [...] and the popular media. They often include factors associated with restaurants such as history, ingredients, menus, clientele, ownership, practitioners, locale, decor, price, and simplicity."<sup>36</sup>

It is therefore as Wood and Muñoz explain that restaurants intending to sell foods from foreign cultures are designed by people who are "acutely aware of how a restaurant's

31. Lu and Fine, "The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment," 539

32. *ibid.*

33. Natalie T. Wood and Caroline L. Muñoz, "'No rules, just right' or is it? The role of themed restaurants as cultural ambassadors," *Tourism and Hospitality Research* 7, nos. 3/4 (2007): 244

34. *ibid.*

35. *ibid.*

36. Akihiko Hirose and Kay K. Pih, "'No Asians working here': racialized otherness and authenticity in gastronomical Orientalism," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34, no. 9 (2011): 1489

culture is presented in the media and what symbolic motifs best depict and match consumers' cultural expectations of that culture".<sup>37</sup> For a New Zealand Japanese restaurant, the design would accentuate the differences between Japanese and New Zealand culture by displaying Japanese cultural artefacts — lanterns, wall scrolls, bamboo furniture — within the layout of the store. This effectively creates a cultural representation that is based on distorted cultural markers that have become simplified through localisation.<sup>38</sup> This practice is common throughout the restaurant industry, creating a stereotypical representation of the culture to be perpetuated by mass media; "rather than providing consumers with an accurate portrayal of a culture, the media often regurgitates consumers' cultural expectations".<sup>39</sup> Yet, for consumers, the end result is seen as authentic, or near enough.

Kwang-Ok challenges the usefulness of authenticity:

"When discussing foodways, the concept of authenticity does not seem particularly useful. Searching for authenticity can be a futile endeavour. The same Chinese cuisine, for instance, can change in its taste, ingredients, forms, and cooking process with time and place as all of these dimensions are constantly being reinvented and redefined. What is needed, in this regard, is to find a way to approach and understand food as a genre of cultural history by trying to illuminate the process by which a certain food acquires a particular position and definition over history, rather than approaching it as a stationary cultural item that is unchanging over time and space."<sup>40</sup>

Kwang-Ok's work highlights the fluidity that exists with food as it cuisines move across time and place. No matter how true this is, it is easier for humans to visualise certain aspects of culture as static objects, especially those that have no blatant outward displays of change. Less noticeable aspects of culture are those that change more slowly and often come to be considered as 'tradition'. However, culture is always in a state of flux; as Lu and Fine state, "cultures are never entirely closed systems: external changes affect cultural logics. Nowhere is this more evident than with regards to food."<sup>41</sup>

Culinary traditions are being invented, borrowed, or changed all the time. One New Zealand example is fish and chips. It is ingrained in New Zealand culture that fish and chips is an example of so-called "good Kiwi tucker", and eating them with Wat-

37. Wood and Muñoz, "'No rules, just right' or is it? The role of themed restaurants as cultural ambassadors," 244

38. *ibid.*, 244-5

39. *ibid.*, 245

40. Kwang-Ok Kim, *Re-orienting cuisine: East Asian foodways in the twenty-first century* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 3

41. Lu and Fine, "The Presentation of Ethnic Authenticity: Chinese Food as a Social Accomplishment," 538

tie's tomato sauce is considered by New Zealanders to be essentially Kiwi, or so Wattie's television advertisements would lead one to believe.<sup>42</sup> However, as mentioned in Course Three, fish and chips were brought to New Zealand by English immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century; however, British travellers to New Zealand might be bewildered by local fish and chips, as the lack of vinegar, brown sauce and mushy peas presents a completely different experience overall. Although most fish and chip shops in New Zealand are now owned by Asian owners, usually Chinese and Koreans, New Zealanders still think of fish and chips with tomato sauce as a quintessentially local dish, the authentic variety because the local variety reflects local cultural values.

*Washoku*, like fish and chips, is also a tradition that has been borrowed and changed. A misconception relating to authenticity would be that Japanese nationals would see *washoku* as a static cultural artefact of their culture, while New Zealanders would take any aspect of the cuisine to be authentic since it is relating to Japanese culture. The interviews will determine to what extent these misconceptions are true.

### 4.3 Interviews

In order to make the most etic possible analysis of the localisation of Japanese food in New Zealand, this study interviewed three distinct groups: those working in New Zealand in the Japanese restaurant industry, of either Japanese or New Zealand cultural backgrounds; Japanese nationals who have eaten *washoku* in New Zealand; and New Zealand nationals who have eaten *washoku* in Japan.

The interviews allowed participants to explain how they perceived *washoku*: both in general terms, and also in terms of the shift in Japanese cuisine as it moved from its country of origin, Japan, to New Zealand. The structured nature of the interviews, in which each subject was asked the same series of questions, allowed for the identification of repeating answers, analyse these patterns according to who said them, and thus determine if certain responses are the result of cultural cues.

By interviewing those who work in the restaurant industry, the specific means and processes of the localisation of Japanese food should become apparent, and what cultural cues influenced the decisions behind those changes. Interviewing Japanese nationals living in New Zealand who have experience *washoku* outside of its native context, as well as interviewing New Zealanders who have experienced both domestic and foreign interpretations of Japanese cuisine, highlights the way participants of either culture understand not only how the foreign culture operates, but also their own culture. This etic

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42. <https://youtu.be/-1gNMYSFGhE?t=168> or <https://youtu.be/C3ckKv50WTE>

analysis, comparing one's own culture with another, also exposes the specific cultural cues taken for granted not only of each culture but of the other culture as well.

The interviews address four main topics regarding Japanese cuisine in New Zealand: First, the differences between the two locales' Japanese cuisines; second, the availability of essential ingredients; third, the issue of authenticity; and lastly, the meaning of *washoku*.

#### **4.3.0.1 Differences between the two locales' Japanese cuisines**

Interviewees were asked to note whatever differences they had observed between the New Zealand and Japanese versions of *washoku* dishes. By focusing on the localised elements that particularly stand out to the interviewees, the cultural cues that inform to what they paid attention may be determined.

In the case of restaurateurs serving *washoku* in New Zealand, their observations on what they changed to accommodate local cultural cues will be interpreted through the lens of globalisation and orientalism theories. So too will other participants' observations of the differences between the two types of Japanese cuisine.

#### **4.3.0.2 Availability of essential ingredients**

This section deals with restaurant owners' difficulties getting access to ingredients (such as *kombu* kelp or lotus root). Where difficulties exist, it further seeks to determine whether they had to substitute for ingredients that they could not obtain, or even if they thought that these ingredients were essential at all.

#### **4.3.0.3 The issue of authenticity**

The interviewees were asked about the authenticity of the New Zealand form of *washoku*, such as whether or not they could think of any examples of authentic Japanese food, made in the traditional Japanese manner, in New Zealand. The interviewees' responses reveal what cultural cues inform their opinion of whether or not New Zealand *washoku* dishes are authentic.

Furthermore, interviewing both diners and restaurateurs from both nationalities allows an analysis of how the perception of authenticity is utilised by both groups when making decisions about New Zealand *washoku*. For instance, as mentioned in Course Three, some semblance of authenticity was a motivating factor for the public to accept sushi when it was first being demonstrated in Wellington in the 1980s; on the other hand,



authenticity may not be as important for New Zealanders anymore, as their preconceptions of what Japanese food means may have shifted.

#### 4.3.0.3.1 The meaning of *washoku*

The interviews ended with two open questions: “what does *washoku* mean to you?” and “if you could bring one dish or snack from Japan to New Zealand that you think New Zealanders would enjoy, what would you bring and why?”

By analysing answers to the former question, it is possible to determine what cultural cues arise when confronted with the word ‘*washoku*’. The second question was intended to formally end the questioning part of the interview on a note that allowed for a post-interview conversation; this informality sometimes yielded more information about what the participants felt were differences between Japan and New Zealand, or in some interviews with long-time restaurant owners, the history of Japanese restaurants in New Zealand.

### 4.3.1 Methodology

This section explains the methodology employed for the interview process, and also how the results of the interview will be related to the theoretical framework.

Twenty-three interviews were conducted over a five month period between June and October 2016. By canvassing local Japanese restaurants, both in Wellington and Auckland, restaurateurs were interviewed. This canvassing was done both by visiting restaurants in person and by electronic means such as emails found on the restaurants’ respective websites. Other participants were found through personal contacts, university colleagues, and word of mouth.

Interviewees were asked permission to be interviewed. Once they granted their permission, the interviewees chose the place and time of the interview. Additional, if permission was given, a voice recording of the interview was recorded on a using an iPhone app; otherwise, notes on paper were taken and later transcribed with a computer.

The interviews ranged from twenty minutes to an hour in length. Interviewees were asked a set of predetermined questions, often lead into informal conversation (though still on-the-record) about different aspects of *washoku*. These informal observations often yielded more examples of the sorts of cultural cues that informed their viewpoint than the responses to the predetermined questions.

#### 4.3.1.1 Questions

Each interview started with general questions about the interviewee's nationality and ethnicity, and their previous experience in the food service industry.

From this point if they had any food experience, the questions veered towards whether the interviewee had worked in a Japanese food establishment, whether this was in New Zealand or in Japan or both. They were then asked why they chose to open and/or work in a Japanese food venue; what in particular attracted them to the cuisine, and if appropriate, why they chose to sell Japanese food instead of food from their own cultural heritage. After these questions, the topics then moved on to the specific menu items, with a focus on why (or why not) they chose the particular items they had; followed by questions regarding whether they had to substitute ingredients, and then to any adaptations or alterations they made to a given recipe and why.

If they had not worked in the food industry, the above questions were omitted and then all interviewees were asked questions that were more comparative in nature.

Interviewees were then asked what kind of Japanese food they had eaten in New Zealand and to compare these food items to those eaten in Japan. These food items were described as sushi, ramen, *yakitori*, and *teppanyaki*.<sup>43</sup> Many interviewees, especially the Japanese nationals who have lived in New Zealand for a while, instead chose to use shops and restaurants in their respective cities to mark not only the taste differences between Japanese and New Zealand, but also to compare the stores alongside each other with relation to their authenticity.

Interviewees were then asked how they would be able to tell whether or not a Japanese restaurant's cuisine is authentic. They were also asked if they thought certain Japanese foods are under-represented in New Zealand.

## 4.4 Limitations

Due to the limited size and scope of a Masters degree research project, there were limitations to certain aspects of the research.

To start with the interviews, time and research funding only allowed for a limited number of interviewees to participate, and only from two main urban centres, Wellington and Auckland. Being able to interview more Japanese expatriates in a wider range of localities and working in a wider range of domains might have helped make Japanese cultural cues regarding food more explicit.

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43. As noted in Course 2, Japanese restaurants in New Zealand sell a range of Japanese dishes, so it covers many styles of Japanese food, some only available at the restaurants.

Because a lot of small businesses serving *washoku* are run by Korean or Chinese immigrants rather than Japanese, there was a language barrier; I speak fluent Japanese, but no Korean or Chinese. It was difficult to convince these small business owners, chefs, or cooks of the aims of my research. Even where it was possible to do so, many restaurateurs did not have the time to spare.

Having spent five years at Victoria University of Wellington allowed access to students who had completed cultural exchanges to Japan. This limited the demographic variety of the New Zealand participants who were not restaurateurs. A larger study would benefit from the participation of a wider age range of New Zealanders, possibly even those with no experience of *washoku* in Japan.

## 4.5 Conclusion

These interviews allow for both an etic analysis of the cultural differences that give rise to the need for localisation of Japanese food in New Zealand. In this course, the rationale for the interviews of Japanese nationals and New Zealanders who have eaten in Japan was explained, as well as the methodology for carrying out the interviews. Course Five of this thesis' *kaiseki* banquet is the hot pot stew, the results of the interviews; it is the forerunner to the main course, Course Six's hearty rice dish, discussing the results of the interviews through the lens of the theoretical framework.

# Course Five

## Hot Pot: Interviews

### 5.1 Introduction

Having interviewed twenty three people over the course of five months, this Course contains the data and results of these interviews.

### 5.2 Data

For this thesis, the following number of participants were interviewed:

Thirteen Japanese nationals were interviewed. Two were ramen shop owners, three owned Japanese restaurants, and three worked at or were working in New Zealand Japanese restaurants or sushi shops. A further four Japanese nationals have lived in New Zealand for an extended period of time. The final Japanese national is Sachie Nomura, a well-known celebrity chef, who not only owns and runs an Asian-cuisine cooking school, but also has published a recipe book and a range of easy to prepare meals.

Of the seven New Zealanders interviewed, five have been to Japan, and eaten there. One worked at a Japanese fusion restaurant, and one owned a group of Japanese restaurants.

There was also three people outside the two above mentioned groups; one who describes himself culturally Greek, but grew up in NZ, has eaten in Japan, and is a sushi chain shop owner. One who is first-generation Korean New Zealander, has worked in a Korean-owned sushi shop, and eaten in Japan, and one who is Chinese, and a sushi shop owner.

A key subset of the interviewees are restaurateurs working in either traditional or fusion Japanese restaurants in New Zealand. When it comes to consuming food, the experience is a sensory one and because the restaurant is the only place in New Zealand where New Zealanders can experience Japanese food, it is the restaurateurs that act as the gatekeepers of that experience. However, not all kinds of Japanese restaurants attempt to provide the same experience. Like any restaurant, they may be opened for different reasons, and these reasons play a major part in the type of experience offered to customers. In New Zealand, there are restaurants in major cities, such as Kura, a sake bar in Auckland, which employ Japanese cooking techniques and ingredients to create food in a way that showcases traditional Japanese style. There are also fast food style shops such as St Pierre's, a nationwide sushi chain which has locations on nearly every block in Wellington's central business district. There are also 'mom-and-pop' sushi shops and restaurants in suburban areas, that is to say smaller, private business often run by Koreans, Chinese, or other Asian nationals, using the popularity of Japanese cuisine to make a living in New Zealand.<sup>1</sup>

## 5.3 Results

### 5.3.1 Differences between the two locales' cuisines

#### 5.3.1.1 Overview

The Japanese restaurateurs and chefs all stated that Kiwis love sweet things and tend to enjoy heavy tastes. This is something that all of the interviewed restaurateurs and chefs have taken into consideration when creating their menus.

#### 5.3.1.2 Sushi

One major point of difference is that in Japan sushi is nigiri, pressed, while in New Zealand sushi is *makimono* rolls, usually the thicker kind. While Japan has *makimono*, Japanese respondents mentioned that in Japan the *makimono* would be filled with cucumber or raw tuna. In New Zealand however many interviewees have noted that the *makimono* are not only filled with a range of seafoods, but also filled with chicken, beef, and even vegetables. As an example, one of the sushi chef interviewees made *makimono* with a filling of deep-fried breaded pumpkin to appeal to the vegetarian culture he saw appearing in his city. One Japanese national said that she was surprised to

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1. For more information see Allen, Matthew, and Rumi Sakamoto (2011) "White People Can't Sell Sushi: Unpacking Korean Influence over Sushi Production in NZ."

see that *makimono* was so popular in New Zealand. In Japan the *makimono* are usually eaten by children, while the adults eat the *nigirizushi*. She also mentioned that vegetarian food is hard in Japan because *dashi*, which always contains some kind of fish, is used throughout the cuisine.

It was also noted that the rice was seasoned differently. Japan's sushi rice's vinegar taste was stronger and less sweet, while in New Zealand, sushi rice is sweeter, and the vinegar taste is less pronounced.

Another point that many Japanese noted is that *onigiri* sold in New Zealand are made with sushi rice, while in Japan it was made with plain rice. One Japanese restaurateur commented that Japanese people eat *onigiri* for the filling with the rice providing a clear mouth-feel, while New Zealanders like the sharper tastes of the vinegared rice. He did mention that this would not match the delicate palate of the Japanese people.

Sachie Nomura said that one cannot compare the tastes because the quality of the ingredients available in each country differed so wildly.

### 5.3.1.3 Yakitori

A few of the respondents saw that *yakitori* as a business venture in New Zealand that was hard to get wrong. Sachie Nomura agreed, and added that many restaurants in New Zealand and the chain restaurants in Japan have developed a signature sauce unique to their store. One mentioned that in New Zealand *yakitori* falls more into the area of street food, something you would eat at a music festival, however in Japan, it is more of a sit-down type meal.

One Japanese restaurateur mentioned that in Japan, not only the chicken thigh, but also the organs are eaten as *yakitori*. When asked why he thought this was, the restaurateur replied that New Zealanders did not eat organs or offal. On the whole though, the majority of Japanese chefs said that there were no major differences between how the two countries created and served *yakitori*.

### 5.3.1.4 Ramen

One Japanese national who has lived in New Zealand for 10 years, mentioned that it was only in the last few years that ramen has become popular in New Zealand. This boom is contributing to many new kinds of ramen being developed and sold throughout Japan. When he arrived, there were only a few ramen shops in Auckland, but they served the kinds of ramen that would have been served ten years before in Japan, such as *shio* ramen, *miso* ramen and *tonkotsu*. In the last few years, however, more shops have

opened throughout the country. Each shop has brought with it new varieties of ramen, many of which combine old and new elements in ways that fit the tastes of New Zealanders.

One ramen shop owner explained how he grapples with the perceptions and tastes of New Zealanders. He has two menus, one in English and one in Japanese. On the English menu, a certain ramen is labeled “seafood ramen” and the same ramen on the Japanese menu is labeled, “*shio* ramen”. Both ramen are the same, with seafood ingredients in a salt-flavoured *dashi* broth. The ramen shop owner noted that if he labeled it “salt ramen or salty ramen” in English, the dish would not appeal. This is because New Zealanders use salt as a topical seasoning, and would balk at a meal that purports to be solely salt flavoured, thinking it had no other flavour. A salty dish, especially a soup like one, may be unappealing due to a specifically New Zealand culture cue. There is a preconception that traditional New Zealand cuisine consists solely of boiling meat and vegetables in salt water; a menu item with a title like “salt ramen” may bring to mind this meal and its negative connotations.

Another ramen shop owner mentioned that when he opened his restaurant 12 years ago, he found that New Zealanders did not like that the noodle came in the soup. In response, he made flavoured noodles, by mixing noodles with a sauce, like an Italian spaghetti. This eventually led the customers to try actual ramen. This process of familiarisation and gaining trust was seen in other menu items. Customers would get something they recognised, such as teriyaki chicken, and after a few visits they would feel comfortable enough to try something new.

Sachie Nomura said that Japan was a ramen nation, and each area attempted to make a different tasting ramen. Because of all the competition in Japan, there is drive to create new and delicious ramen, and chefs hone their skills to create interesting ramen broths and experimenting with noodle size and shape. She mentioned that one could travel around Japan, just having ramen, and have a different flavour every time.

### 5.3.1.5 Other Dishes

#### 5.3.1.5.1 Teppanyaki

In an interview with a teppanyaki shop manager, he said that in Japan, only the meat is cooked on the *teppan*, the cooking plate, which imparts a certain flavour. Rice, salad, pickles, and other side dishes were served as accompaniments, as per any other Japanese restaurant. In New Zealand, however, rice and salads are served as small entrees which displays of the taste of Japan. The main focus for diners at New Zealand teppanyaki restaurants is the cooking of the meal by the chefs, and the showmanship with which this is performed. When asked about this distinction, he

replied that the focus in New Zealand is on the *teppan*. Some Japanese restaurants, even non-teppanyaki restaurants have a small teppanyaki that they can cook meals with, but for New Zealand teppanyaki restaurant, their customer drawing point is the *teppan*, and it is the focal point for the food experience.

### 5.3.2 Availability of essential ingredients

When asked whether finding ingredients was difficult, all of the restaurant owners replied that they could obtain all the base ingredients from Japanese food suppliers, such as Tokyo Foods. One mentioned that if they needed anything that was Japan specific, they would contact a supplier who would then try and import it. Tokyo Foods, is based in Auckland, and has a presence in most of the big cities in New Zealand. They supply almost all of the restaurants that were interviewed, except for two who had set up their own importing business.

When Sachie Nomura was creating the curriculum for her cooking school, she did a taste test of various dishes with twenty people of differing cultural backgrounds in order to determine which flavours and dishes were recognised by New Zealanders. Nomura explains that:

“So I have created a number of different dishes that are well known to Kiwis. I could do a lot of different things, but if they don’t know what they are and they can’t really connect they won’t say “Oh, yes, I know that dish, I wanted to learn it.” So I needed to have the dishes that connected to Kiwis, but I wanted to give them the authentic flavours of that dish.”<sup>2</sup>

Nomura also mentioned that since she was running a cooking school, her lessons cover cuisines from around Asia. As a result, she needed to make sure that her students could access the ingredients she used outside of the classroom. Nomura makes a conscious effort to use authentic ingredients from the locale where the cuisine comes from, such as miso for miso soup from Japan. As Japanese suppliers are increasingly supplying supermarkets, this has become a much more realistic goal. We only need to look at the advertisement campaign called ‘*Taste of Japan*’ spearheaded by 2010 Masterchef Australia winner, Adam Liaw, encouraging the use of Japanese ingredients to see how accessible Japanese ingredients have now become.

From the interviews it is clear that most restaurants tried to use as many local products as possible so that they could keep costs down. However, these chefs noted that the freshness of the ingredients found in New Zealand does not compare to that of produce sold in Japan. A former Japanese restaurant chef interviewee mentioned that it was a

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2. Sachie Nomura, interview with author, 29 August, Auckland



'culture shock' of a kind to see lower quality ingredients being sold at fish markets and vegetable markets, but after a few months he got used to it. A Japanese sushi chef related a tale when he took his father, a fisherman by trade, to look at a fish market. His father was shocked at how 'dead the fish looked.'<sup>3</sup> When asked if there were any ingredients that needed to be substituted for, the overall response was that there was no need. Many respondents said that if they could not get particular ingredients for a certain dish, then they would not use those recipes.

One Japanese sushi shop chef, however, said that when he was looking for ideas for their new sushi shop, he used the Japanese recipe site 'Cookpad' as a reference point.<sup>4</sup> If the recipe called for ingredients that could not be sourced locally or imported then he would not use it. Likewise, if substitutions could not be used that would make the dish more appealing to New Zealanders, then it was abandoned.

This concept of changing the flavours of dishes to match the tastes of Kiwis is an important one. There seems to be a few opinions on the matter.

One group, mostly consisting of Japanese nationals, both restaurant owners and those who are residents say that there is no problem with adapting flavours to fit local tastes, but both do it for differing reasons. Restaurant owners say that it is because they are in business and if the product does not appeal to customers, then it will not sell, and the business will soon fold. As one ramen shop owner commented:

"As long as people are enjoying it, and it has good taste, and you still make a profit, as far as business is concerned, I say, what's wrong."<sup>5</sup>

Sachie Nomura said that she was okay with altering dishes to fit Kiwi tastes because if she did not make the changes then her students would not have the opportunity to learn about the cuisine through connecting with the food.

Similarly, one restaurateur who had a Japanese food stall at a local market said that he did not have to make many changes, except for making his teriyaki sauce sweeter. He was happy to make these changes because it resulted in increased sales.

A few Japanese nationals remarked that having Japanese dishes that taste different to those in Japan means that travellers to Japan will be able to have new experiences when they eat food there.

When two cuisines interplay, elements from both cuisines start to effect each other, creating a blending. This phenomenon called 'fusion' is a cuisine style that has become

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3. In order to preserve the privacy of interviewees, they have been assigned markers based only on their occupation and/or nationality. The exception has been made for interviewees such as Nomura who agreed to have her details published here.

4. Cookpad is a Japanese-language online recipe sharing service that was founded in 1997. According to their website, they have a database of over 2.5 million recipes, and over 60 million people in Japan use the service every month.

5. Ramen shop owner, Interview by author, 29 August, Auckland

increasingly popular in the last twenty years.

A Japanese owner of a ramen shop, when asked about his feelings about Japanese fusion restaurants altering of recipes, he answered that it was only okay if the kitchen was run by a Japanese chef; if a Japanese fusion restaurant is opened by a Chinese or a Korean chef, and they have mapo tofu or something not Japanese on the menu, then he thinks that that is a bit weird.<sup>6</sup>

On the other side of the spectrum, an interviewee that manages a fusion food restaurant believed that a difference in taste of a dish made in either country was unavoidable, although it does come with challenges. It has become clear that most people think that the direction that Japanese fusion is heading is towards the pan-Asian style; and while this doesn't have to be the case, it is a preconception held by many customers.

“For us, and for other restaurants around here, we have to conform, to a certain amount, to what people are expecting. The only time I have ever seen pork buns on the same menu as sashimi was at a convenience store”<sup>7</sup>

He went on to say that this preconception is inversely proportional to the reputation of the restaurant. When customers come to his restaurant with no expectations, the customers can enjoy a food experience that they might not have anywhere else. These expectations were not limited to fusion restaurants. Restaurants with good reputations were shown to heavily influence New Zealander interviewees. They were more likely to see the dishes sold as more tasty than other restaurants or takeaways.

New Zealander interviewees tended to cook with ingredients found at supermarkets and Asian Marts. They generally would only use ingredients they could buy, and rarely made substitutions, unless they had previous experience in the food service industry.

### 5.3.3 The issue of authenticity

One restaurant owner used to work as a chef at a Japanese restaurant that served *chawanmushi*, a type of savoury egg custard. A common ingredient for this dish was *ginkgo* leaves, but this is not found outside Japan, and at that time, there was no way to import it. The restaurant decided to make the dish without it, and while the majority of customers enjoyed the *chawanmushi* sans *ginkgo*, one person complained that the lack made the dish inauthentic. The restaurant owner stated that the customer, after travelling to Japan, believed that *chawanmushi* should not have been on the menu if it was not authentic.

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6. Mapo Tofu is a Chinese dish from the Sichuan province. It is a meal of tofu, and minced meat, served in a spicy bean based sauce. It is interesting that he mentioned this as non-Japanese, since Japanese have altered the recipe to make it less spicy.

7. fusion restaurateur, interview with author, 27 August, Auckland

An interviewee from a different, highly acclaimed, Japanese fusion restaurant mentioned that there were times when customers would come in and complain that the food was not Japanese enough. Sometimes customers would even get annoyed when they requested something that they had had in Japan, only to find that the restaurant did not have it. In contrast, more than one Japanese national who lived in Wellington commented that, while certain Japanese sushi shops with Korean owners do not make authentic sushi, they liked the fact that these shops are creating food that are unique and different.

One of the sushi shop chefs gave an anecdote where he experimented with putting *tonkatsu* into a sushi roll because it was something that New Zealanders were aware is a Japanese food because of its popularity as a dish at Japanese restaurants. This popularity is evident when we see that many people who order the *tonkotsu* ramen at ramen shops call it '*tonkatsu*' due to the similarity of both words. *Tonkotsu* is a ramen broth made from pork bones, while *tonkatsu*, is a pork cutlet that has been breaded and deep fried.

One New Zealand owner of a long running Japanese restaurant said that he did not change his menu to match Kiwi tastes: "Otherwise you are not a true Japanese restaurant, are you?"<sup>8</sup> By using the experience of his Japanese wife, his Japanese head chef, and his experience at eating in Japan, he wished to showcase authentic Japanese cuisine in New Zealand.

The Japanese nationals who have lived in Wellington for some time have mentioned that they can tell the ownership of a restaurant by the taste of the food. When asked to rank restaurants according to their authenticity, these interviewees were more likely to assign authenticity based on whether or not they were owned by a Japanese national. This was the same regardless if they had lived in a city for many years, or had only just arrived.

Sachie Nomura had this to say on authenticity"

"To me, when you say authentic food, authentic Japanese food, I'll say food that I can get in Japan. I would say that is authentic. Very traditional restaurants in Japan serve very authentic Japanese food, not the fast food restaurants, none of the chain ones. But the food that my mom makes, that is authentic too, with Japanese flavours, so I would say what is authentic is the food that is being made from the local ingredients, using traditional ingredients and condiments."<sup>9</sup>

A market stall restaurateur interviewee said that authentic Japanese food is about sim-

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8. Japanese restaurant owner, Interview by author, 29 August, Auckland

9. Sachie Nomura, interview with author, 27 August, Auckland

plicity, and dishes such as sashimi epitomise this. However, he explained that many non-Japanese owners of Japanese restaurants tend to stray from this principle. He notes that Chinese owners of Japanese restaurants tend to make Japanese food with Chinese cooking techniques. For example, putting orange with stir-fried teriyaki chicken, and then adding onion, carrots, spices. Japanese chefs, however, would make teriyaki chicken with just teriyaki sauce and chicken.

The teppanyaki manager mentioned that it is not only the taste, but the presentation of the meal that adds to its authenticity. In a seemingly simple dish like sashimi, it is not only the fish, but the decoration of the side garnishes such as grated daikon, that make the dish authentic. Some non-Japanese owned Japanese restaurants sometimes serve kimchi with the meal. While kimchi is eaten in Japan, it is in a much milder form, and is never served with sashimi or tempura.

Presentation was something that was also mentioned by other interviewees as a marker of authenticity. This is firstly evidenced by Nick Katsoulis' quote cited in Course Three relating to how only after changing the sushi chef to one who looked more Asian that the public took any notice of sushi. As mentioned in Course Four, the layout and décor of the restaurant provides customers with the cultural cues to determine authenticity. One Japanese sushi chef commented that he was able to tell the ownership of a store by the amount of, and cultural age of, Japanese iconography. The more traditional style items that the store had, the higher the probability that the owners were not Japanese.

A Japanese interviewee, when asked what inauthentic representations of *washoku* does to the image of the cuisine for New Zealanders, she replied "Well, if they are enjoying the food, then that's good, isn't it?"<sup>10</sup>

### 5.3.3.1 The meaning of *washoku*

To Japanese nationals, *washoku* has a myriad of meanings. One Japanese national's immediate response was *oyakodon* (literally, "mother and child dish"), a rice dish made with a topping of chicken and egg, because it is something that is intrinsically Japanese, and is found throughout Japan. It is a dish in which the quality changes according to price. He did mention that others might say curry rice for the same reason.

The fusion restaurateur, when asked what *washoku* means, answered with an analogy:

"Japanese food is like a martini, If you are using rubbish products then you can't cut it [make a good one]. And a bartender who is rubbish can make bad martinis with good quality stuff. Other cuisines would be like midori splices, with fruit juice and cream, and all sorts of other things that hide the

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10. Japanese national, interview with author, 07 July, Wellington

main ingredient, whereas Japanese food is about stripping everything away so that the ingredients are just what they are.”<sup>11</sup>

He also talked about how glutamates from *shiitake* and *katsuobushi* add flavour and how the lack of oil all add to the aesthetics of Japanese cuisine.

A ramen shop owner answered with sushi. When asked whether sushi that strays too far from authentic sushi gave a bad impression of *washoku* to those who don't know about Japanese food, he replied that he used to think so, but because of the diversity everywhere:

“It took time to establish a culture [presence in another country] but now when you look at the world, it's getting smaller and smaller, because of technology and things, you don't even have to be there to know [about other cultures]. And people who come here are a mixture of nationalities. They bring their own culture here and it's like they put it in a pot. And if there is demand for it [fusion foods] then why not. That's how the economy works.”<sup>12</sup>

A New Zealander also answered with sushi. When asked about how Japanese food is represented in New Zealand, she mentioned the way in which the media and the selections available at sushi shops have shaped the preconception of New Zealanders:

“[The media] bastardise the culture, and makes it seem like this is all Japanese culture is. It should taste like this, and then when you get to Japan, there is a whole lot more and it's almost like an art form. And there are all the cultural implications that we in New Zealand don't hear about. There is so much more food there than we portray it in New Zealand, and here we only see a small part, and only the very traditional things like sushi.”<sup>13</sup>

The interviews provided many points of data, consisting of personal anecdotes, historical information, evidence of cultural cues, strong feelings towards cultural differences, personal opinions, and personal experiences that all coalesce to help form a general opinion of what these two cultures, Japan and New Zealand think about each other's version of *washoku*.

## 5.4 Conclusion

This course outlines the data and results of the interviews. The next course, using data from the interviews, and the differences between the cuisines as shown in Courses Two

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11. Fusion restaurateur, interview with author, 27 August, Auckland

12. Ramen shop owner, interview with author, 29 August, Auckland

13. New Zealand interviewee, interview with author, 2 October, Wellington

and Three, will discuss with regard to the theoretical framework, how localisation has taken place.

# Course Six

## Rice Dish: Discussion

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter will draw upon the courses relating to the history of the two locales' cuisines, the data from the interviews and the theories in Course Four to determine the extent that *washoku* has been localised. This Course will follow previous course's structure: First, the differences between the two locales' Japanese cuisines; second, the availability of essential ingredients; third, the issue of authenticity; and lastly, the meaning of *washoku*.

#### 6.1.1 General thoughts

Before discussing the results proper, two observations about the participants: That the majority of the specialised sushi shops in New Zealand were not Japanese owned, but many of the Japanese nationals living in New Zealand who were interviewed had worked or were working in sushi shops, and with the exception of the one Chinese sushi shop owner, all interviewees have travelled to and eaten food in Japan.

#### 6.1.2 Differences between the two locales' Japanese cuisines

##### 6.1.2.1 Sashimi

As indicated by the interviews, sashimi is an example of quintessential *washoku*, corroborated by Ishige said it is "an indispensable part of a first-class meal".<sup>1</sup>

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1. Ishige, *The history and culture of Japanese food*, 225

For the New Zealand interviewees, the experience of eating raw fish is definitely associated with Japanese culture, and not seen as part of the New Zealand culinary tradition. Some Japanese interviewees, especially restaurateurs and chefs, were shocked by how comparatively stale the fish produce is in New Zealand compared to in Japan. These are examples of cultural differentialism: the difference between New Zealand and Japanese cultural cues with relation to raw fish is vastly different and therefore there is little possibility for the hybridisation of sashimi to take place other than the type of fish served. There is still, as Huntington might say, a “clash of civilisation” going on in this domain.

### 6.1.2.2 Sushi

As a counterexample of a dish prominently featuring raw fish that has managed to find success in New Zealand, sushi is generally considered locally as the epitome of Japanese cuisine. Having existed in the New Zealand cultural consciousness through the restaurant industry for around thirty years, sushi has evolved through many stages towards its current place in New Zealand culinary thinking.

The reinterpretation of sushi throughout its timeline in New Zealand is a demonstration of how perceptions of Japan has changed over the last few decades. When sushi was first introduced to New Zealand, its exoticness and its exclusivity was its main selling point, a point that the interviewees noted when reflecting on the decor of Japanese restaurants that provide the exoticised image of Japanese cuisine. This advertising practice has not waned, and still advertising companies employ these tactics as a sort of shorthand to easily push positive cultural cues, albeit ones skewed away from reality.

With relation to theories of globalisation, various aspects of sushi in New Zealand are covered by the three paradigms laid out in the theoretical framework. Firstly, McDonaldisation is shown by the effect that national franchise sushi shops, such as St Pierre’s, have had on what New Zealanders perceive, and therefore expect, sushi to be; even though this effect is on a national rather than global scale, St Pierre’s imported their image of sushi directly from the United States, where sushi shop owners had already cultivated an exotic image.

Next, hybridisation explains two other elements of sushi in New Zealand. Firstly, the prevalence of *makizushi* (as opposed to *nigirizushi*, the more common and popular variety of sushi in Japan), corresponding to the image of sushi that was imported from the United States, already crafted to suit Western tastes. Secondly, the use of *neta* (fillings or toppings) other than raw fish, such as teriyaki beef or fried chicken, respond better to New Zealand cultural cues regarding food hygiene and flavours.



### 6.1.2.3 Ramen

As mentioned in Course Two, ramen has not attained the same level of popularity as sushi in New Zealand. According to the ramen restaurant owners interviewed, word of mouth was the main way that new customers found out about their businesses in contrast to the vast advertising and cultural presence of the more popular sushi.

While ramen flavours have not remained static, either in Japan or New Zealand, some specific adaptations have taken place in order to better respond to local tastes. Yet, Japanese restaurateurs and chefs, who dominate the ramen restaurant industry in New Zealand, still impose some notion that the cuisine is definitely Japanese through self-orientalism; the Japanese owners and chefs balance their a desire for gastronomical authenticity with the need for a viable business model, one that takes into account that their customer base consists predominantly of people largely unfamiliar with Japanese cultural cues. Iwabuchi explains it thus: “while Orientalism enjoys the mysterious exoticism of the Other, self-Orientalism exploits the Orientalist gaze to turn itself into an Other”.<sup>2</sup>

One ramen shop owner mentioned that when he started his restaurant in the 2000s, he had to experiment with different styles of noodle because noodles in soups (that consisted of more than just hot water) were strange to New Zealand customers. At this time, ramen was in the realm of cultural differentialism. With New Zealand now going through its own ramen boom, the opening of new stores around New Zealand means that new variations of ramen are being created and adapted using Japanese and local ingredients that match the tastes of New Zealanders therefore the hybridisation paradigm of globalisation is starting to take effect. As explained in Course Three, the ramen boom started about 5 years ago.

### 6.1.2.4 Yakitori

The Japanese interviewees note that New Zealand *yakitori* restaurants lack the range of chicken *yakitori* that Japan has, as well as having more menu items that are not available in Japan. *Yakitori* restaurants, like ramen restaurants, are also mostly owned and run by Japanese nationals, therefore also embodying elements of self-orientalism, but at the same time they have had to adapt their menu to suit their customer base which is an example of hybridisation. This is shown by New Zealand *yakitori* restaurants having such options as prawn and cheese skewers, kranisky sausage skewers, and skewers using local vegetables such as kumara and sweetcorn.

While the concept of meat on skewers is not novel in New Zealand, the presentation

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2. Koichi Iwabuchi, “Complicit Exoticism: Japan and its Other,” *Continuum* 8, no. 2 (1994): 49

style of the skewers coupled with *izakaya*-style atmosphere and décor are an example of orientalism. It is not enough for the food to just be meat on a skewer, but the restaurant goer must be left in no doubt that this is a Japanese cuisine served in a Japanese fashion in a Japanese restaurant run by Japanese people.

To summarise, New Zealand *yakitori* is a hybridisation of a food that has already been hybridised with the Japanese form of roughly the same dish. The means through which *yakitori* is promoted and sold, however, remain distinctive and exotic.

#### 6.1.2.5 Other dishes

The other dishes mentioned, namely *tempura*, *takoyaki*, *okonomiyaki* and *teppanyaki* are all still in the beginning stages of exoticism in New Zealand. They are understood to be Japanese in origin, but they are still too different from New Zealand mainstream cuisine to be as popular as sushi and ramen have become without further localisation. In most cases, cultural differentialism is the barrier towards greater acceptance and/or eventual hybridisation.

For instance, *tempura* is the deep-frying of vegetables in oil; for New Zealanders, deep-fried vegetables starts and ends with potatoes: hot chips. The term '*tempura*' is sometimes used in product marketing to refer to a style of batter, though this is just in opposition to other forms of batter, such as crumbs or beer batter.

When New Zealanders think of pancakes, sweet toppings are called to mind, not savoury fillings. Because of this, the relative unpopularity of *okonomiyaki* is also an example of cultural differentialism as the difference in preparation and presentation hinder hybridisation.

*Teppanyaki* restaurants have décor that emphasise traditional Japanese cultural elements, such as wall scrolls and hanging lanterns, though the affair is thoroughly exoticised. This is especially the case when one considers that the staff are usually Chinese, divorced from the implied culture. Even so, the fact that the chef works in front of the customers, surrounded by iconography meant to invoke Japan, the hybridised cuisine on customers' plates is associated with Japan leading to further exoticism and orientalism since Western *teppanyaki* is prepared according to American-Japanese tradition.

#### 6.1.3 The availability of essential ingredients

In many of the dishes explained in previous courses, many of the essential ingredients of *washoku* dishes remain the same in New Zealand as in Japan; for instance, sushi

in New Zealand still uses *nori* (seaweed paper), vinegared rice, Japanese mayonnaise, soy sauce, and so on. Where the choice of ingredients differ, aside from localisation to suit New Zealanders' tastes, the availability of those ingredients is a major concern to restaurateurs and chefs.

As interviewee statements show in Course Five, the trading climate of the 1980s and 1990s was not favourable to those wanting to import certain ingredients from Japan. Japanese restaurants aiming to provide, or at least merely present, an authentic Japanese culinary experience had no choice but to import the ingredients by themselves. In the case of St Pierre's, this was the chosen route, and some companies even went on to supply other restaurants in their area. It was not until the mid 1990s when Tokyo Foods, a company importing food and liquor from Japan, was established that essential ingredients become more widely accessible to the whole Japanese cuisine industry in New Zealand, which permitted the sushi industry to boom in the late 1990s; having access to the same key ingredients as used in Japan meant that there was no need to substitute, and as a result, New Zealand sushi could more closely match the flavours and styles of sushi as enjoyed in Japan.

While importing ingredients in the latter part of the 20th century was problematic, this is no longer a concern for the restaurateurs that were interviewed in terms of authenticity. Instead, a few interviewees, whose small restaurant businesses were owned and run by their families, commented that Tokyo Foods was their principal supplier, and they were therefore constrained to the prices that Tokyo Foods set. This in turn limited which ingredients they could affordably use; the restaurant moved from a Japanese *ryōri-shu* (cooking alcohol) brand to a significantly more affordable Chinese one, which fortunately had a negligible impact on taste.

Not all ingredients became available in New Zealand, or when they were available their prices were too high. This sometimes changed restaurant owners' minds about what constitutes an essential ingredient, even where customers may differ on the opinion, as per one interviewee's account of *chawanmushi* lack of *ginko* leaf. Many of the restaurants interviewed adapted their recipes to use local ingredients instead of importing what became considered non-essential Japanese ingredients. Some of these ingredients are from New Zealand, such as using kumara (sweet potato) as an ingredient in a *tempura* selection, or *teriyaki* chicken in or on sushi because most customers are aware of the Japaneseness of *teriyaki* products but are at ease with chicken as a *neta* (sushi filling).

While the aspects of Japanese *washoku* that are considered essential are kept in New Zealand *washoku*, the non-essential ingredients are of local origin. Creating variants of *washoku* using known ingredients that appeal to New Zealand tastes yet still remaining culturally Japanese because of the use of ingredients essential to the Japanese cuisine is an example of cultural hybridisation.

This awareness or familiarity with Japanese foods comes from previous experiences either at Japanese restaurants, from supermarket Asian food aisles, or from media representations of Japanese culture.

#### **6.1.4 The issue of authenticity**

Throughout the interviews, it became apparent that authenticity is prized by both nationality groups of interviewees, Japanese and New Zealanders alike.

For the Japanese nationals, who grew up eating Japanese cuisine in its place of origin, any Japanese food they eat in New Zealand is then judged against the standard they have set based on their previous experiences.

Of the New Zealanders who had eaten in Japan, all had eaten Japanese food in New Zealand prior to eating it in Japan, such as sushi. Like the Japanese nationals, these interviewees also judged the food they ate in Japan based on their previous dining experiences in New Zealand; many interviewees believe that the food they ate in Japan was more authentic because it was made within its originating cultural sphere.

A subset of the interviewees are owners of Japanese restaurant in New Zealand. Of my interviewees, all except one (the Chinese sushi shop owner who has not been to Japan) are either Japanese nationals or New Zealanders who have eaten in Japan. As explained in Course Three, because New Zealand does not have a sizeable Japanese community, the need to supply expatriates does not explain the proliferation of sushi shops and Japanese restaurants in urban areas in New Zealand. It is elements such as the supposed healthiness of Japanese food, the convenience and affordability of purchasing sushi as a lunch food, and, in the case of Japanese restaurants, the exoticness of the dishes that make the cuisine popular.

These elements are, as outlined in Course One, transmitted to the target culture through cultural cues spread by media, advertisements, word of mouth, and, more importantly, by how the cuisine is portrayed within the restaurants themselves. Course Three mentions how restaurants combine the concepts of food, service and décor, to perpetuate the social and cultural meanings of the cuisine being offered. It is the culmination of these three concepts that provides restaurant goers with pleasurable food experiences, allowing them to create positive cultural cues about the food being served. Japanese restaurant owners in New Zealand then, are able to use their control of these three concepts to provide cultural cues that impact favourably on what New Zealanders perceive Japanese cuisine to be. By using the layout and design of their store and advertisement, they not only provide cultural cues but also perpetuate common cultural cues about Japanese cuisine and culture. The service shown to customers by their staff define how

customers think of Japanese people, especially if the staff member looks Asian.<sup>3</sup>

Finally, the food itself provides the bulk of the cultural cues about the cuisine: what is presented to the customer will determine what they think about the cuisine. A customer with no experience other than the food eaten in New Zealand Japanese restaurants will, based on these experiences, emically assume that the food they are given is authentic Japanese cuisine. The restaurateur is therefore in a position to determine the level of authenticity they wish to portray. This is weighed against certain factors such as the availability of authentic ingredients (as mentioned above), their willingness to provide authentic food even though it might affect profit margins, as well as cultural cues about the cuisine already in circulation.

This research thesis has shown that in many cases, Japanese restaurateurs will set aside certain areas of authenticity, especially in the areas that differ between the two locale's food traditions. The overwhelming response from interviewee restaurateurs is that authenticity is upheld for as long as it is profitable.

#### 6.1.4.1 The meaning of *washoku*

Since its arrival in New Zealand *washoku* has maintained a certain level of exoticism. *Washoku* still has the air of healthiness that recipe books and popular opinion have assigned to the cuisine, regardless of whether or not this is true. As we have seen, this does not always apply with the way that New Zealand restaurants have altered recipes to match New Zealand tastes.

By asking the open ended question: "what does *washoku* mean to you," the macroscopic beliefs of the interviewees towards *washoku* can be obtained. The answers ranged from specific dishes, such as *oyakodon*, and the rationale behind this, to less concrete examples, with *washoku* as a holistic concept.

Most of the interviewees, both Japanese and New Zealander, used sushi as their example, since it is the most visible Japanese dish sold in New Zealand, and is therefore the strongest cultural cue towards what *washoku* is. Some Japanese interviewees spoke about traditional Japanese dishes such as *udon* and how it is intrinsically Japanese. New Zealander interviewees' answers focused mainly on how Japanese food has been changed in New Zealand. For Sachie Nomura, however, *washoku* is about place as much as it is about taste.<sup>4</sup>

*Washoku* has, to all those I interviewed, become a product of Orientalism in some way. New Zealander interviewees acknowledge that *washoku* eaten in Japan is exotic and

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3. See Allen and Sakamoto (2011) and Hirose and Pih (2011). This thinking is also bolstered by data from my interviews.

4. Sachie Nomura, Interview by author. Audio recording. Auckland, 29 August 2016

“more fresh,” while *washoku* in New Zealand is just “not as authentic.” One New Zealand interviewee mentioned the online “weird Japan” videos, and the cultural cues that they embody accentuate the exoticism surrounding the cuisine, and further Orientalise Japanese food. Some of the New Zealander interviewees found that when they ate the cuisine in Japan, it was not as it is portrayed online, and they found themselves enjoying it. For these interviewees, their experience of *washoku* in its originating culture, opened their eyes to the Orientalism in action in New Zealand.

When asked what about the current, actual representation of *washoku* and what affect it has on New Zealanders’ notions of the authenticity of Japanese cuisine as sold locally, a New Zealander interviewee explained that even though New Zealand says it is multicultural, if given one representation of something, that particular image is concretised.

This neatly describes how orientalism, and the cultural cues embodying its thinking, has moulded the meaning of *washoku* in New Zealand. By eating in Japan, these New Zealander interviewees were able to break the bonds of this thinking, stripping off their emic viewpoint. Due to their personal experiences, they gained a deeper understanding and were able to take on an etic viewpoint towards the cuisine.

The Japanese interviewees, having grown up in Japan, already have the personal experiences of eating *washoku*. Upon coming to New Zealand, they can then see the differences between New Zealand and Japanese *washoku*, unconsciously comparing the cuisines in both locales. The Japanese interviewees meanings of *washoku* related more to dishes and foods found in Japan. When asked about various New Zealand versions of *washoku*, many interviewees thought that it was strange that it was not the same as the Japanese food they grew up with. Although most said that if New Zealanders enjoyed these new variations, and they contributed towards a positive view to Japan, then there is no harm done.

Japanese restaurant owners, too, have a similar mindset; that it doesn’t matter how much the flavours change, as long as a good opinion towards Japanese food is maintained. In order to make a profit. These restaurateurs need to appeal both to what the customers expect (based on the previous cultural cues), and what the customer prefers (matching the customers tastes).

## 6.2 Conclusion

This section has analysed the two cuisines in their respective locales and interview data through the lens of the theories explained. It has made findings relating to how and why the cuisines differ based on their locale, how authenticity is viewed, and the meaning of *washoku* to those interviewed in an attempt to answer how *washoku* is localised

in New Zealand. The next course will be a light dessert, concluding the meal, that is, this thesis.

# Course Seven

## Dessert: Conclusion

Throughout this thesis we have seen the ways in which Japanese food has changed, both in Japan and New Zealand, how they changed, the reasons why, and how all of these are explained through the theories of orientalism and globalisation. To conclude the analogy of a *kaiseki* banquet, it is time for dessert. This final course summarises the discussion of New Zealand *washoku* and states the conclusion of the research.

### 7.1 Summary

As demonstrated in Course Two, food is not a static cultural constant, but rather something that constantly undergoes change. *Washoku* naturally evolved over Japan's history, facing the introduction and spread of Buddhist doctrine; influences from other locales, particularly China, Korea, and the Europe; and changes the availability of certain ingredients; advances in culinary technique, developed domestically or otherwise; and increasing competitive pressure in the twentieth and twenty-first century. Naturally, when *washoku* came to New Zealand, the changes did not stop.

Mainstream New Zealand cuisine is full of dishes of multiple foreign origins, modified to suit local tastes. Many of these foods originated in Western countries such as England or the United States, but increased global awareness especially since the 1980s coupled with increased immigration by East Asians has shifted the gamut of accepted cuisines to include Japanese food.

Yet, the cultural cues that imbue food with meaning within the Japanese culture are not present when the same food is eaten in New Zealand. Many Japanese dishes are instead brought to New Zealand without the attitudes and values associated with the dishes in the Japanese setting, usually because they do not apply to the New Zealand cultural context. While these dishes are still tethered to Japanese culture through asso-



ciation, new variations of the dishes served in New Zealand are now tied to what New Zealanders perceive Japan culture to be.

Orientalism and the three paradigms of globalisation described in Course Four explain the development of Japanese cuisine in New Zealand, as well as New Zealanders' perception of *washoku* and Japanese culture. Sushi provides a useful demonstration of these theories in practice.

When sushi was first introduced to New Zealand, its exoticness was part of the selling point. Huntington's "clash of cultures", or cultural differentialism, helps to explain that certain elements of Japanese cuisine, such as raw fish, were just so different to New Zealanders' culinary habits, even considered unhygienic or repulsive.

Yet, such differences do not necessarily prove an insurmountable barrier, as early exoticised, orientalist portrayals of Japanese cuisine were exactly what was required to pique the interest of interested New Zealand customers: sushi became divorced of its history in Japan, as a means to preserve fish, and started its life in New Zealand based on notions of healthiness and freshness.

Even then, the sushi of which the public came to be aware was a form of sushi imported from the United States, where sushi was already localised to suit Western tastes; from the beginning, hybridisation was a driving force for the acceptance of Japanese cuisine in New Zealand. Over the past thirty years, the American idea of sushi was spread throughout New Zealand, informing not only customers' but also sushi shop owners' notions of what sushi and sushi shops should be; this is McDonaldisation, or cultural diffusionism.

Still, the triad of globalisation paradigms do not apply to all aspects of the localisation of *washoku* in New Zealand. The presentation of localised dishes still mostly hides the New Zealand aspect under a veneer of exoticness. Restaurants selling Japanese food, whether or not the owners or staff are Japanese, attempt to portray an authentic Japanese experience; even then, the décor and presentation are based on skewed, exoticised notions of Japanese culture. Sometimes this is self-orientalisation, with Japanese business owners purposefully playing up the 'Japanese-ness' of their restaurant in order to appeal to the curiosity of New Zealand customers.

From a commercial standpoint, this a precedence in New Zealand, as St Pierre's employed this very strategy to give sushi an alluring appeal to the New Zealand public. The exotic images cut through New Zealanders' ingrained cultural cues by making the public mindful that different cultural cues are involved; it is unlikely to give New Zealanders a fully etic point of view, but at least suspend emic notions of disgust in exchange for curiosity.

As can be seen from the interview data, the Japanese interviewees are conscious of the

existence of a Japanese *washoku* and a New Zealand *washoku*. Their views towards the new locale's cuisines are then guided by globalisation's hybridisation theories. They understand that the food is different due to the fact that it is not in its originating culture. The Japanese restaurateurs also understand that authenticity is less important than whether or not the diner enjoyed the food, and so did the Japanese nationals who partake of the foreign-to-them form of *washoku*; they know that it is not the same as at home, but no less enjoyable, although noted that the New Zealand flavours would not be as accepted in Japan. A Japanese interviewee had remarked that if the food was being enjoyed then that creates a positive view towards Japan.

Before going to Japan New Zealand interviewees were conscious that a Japanese cuisine existed, but not that the New Zealand *washoku* differed to Japanese *washoku*. After eating in Japan and experiencing that locale's cuisine, they began to see the orientalism that coloured their earlier viewpoints towards the cuisine and its presentation. Having eaten Japanese *washoku* in its place of origin, the New Zealand interviewees are now aware of the localisation of the same dishes in New Zealand, and question the level of authenticity inherent in the dishes compared to the level of authenticity that restaurants try to portray. Some wondered if New Zealand *washoku* could match its form in Japan, though one participant observed that New Zealanders tend to become fixated on whatever they first experience of something from outside their culture.

As the proverbial equivalent of placing my chopsticks carefully on a *hashioki* (箸置き, chopstick rest) of this thesis' *kaiseki*, I conclude that the changes to *washoku* from Japan to New Zealand are inevitable. From the example of sushi, to the New Zealand tradition of which owes more to its hybridised form from the United States than Japanese tradition, to more relatively obscure dishes such as *yakitori*, *okonomiyaki*, or *sashimi*, all their present and past forms are explained through three paradigms of globalisation: cultural differentialism, cultural diffusionism, and hybridisation. Certain dishes have gone through the first phase, others through the second, and still others have traversed all three; for the latter, those dishes are as much New Zealand cuisine as Japanese. Nevertheless, despite losing their historical and cultural ties, these adapted foodstuffs will never stop being *washoku*.

### 7.1.1 Areas for future research

It will be interesting to see how these foods continue and grow and change in the face of new culinary fads. In a post-“Cool Japan” world, it remains to be seen if New Zealanders will further grow their acceptance of some *washoku* dishes that have yet to traverse the “clash of culture” barrier, or perhaps those dishes be put to the side in favour of other Japanese imports.

There have already been a number of articles written in the field of authenticity relating to ethnic cuisine, however, many of these do not seem to be undertaken ethnographically. More qualitative research on particular cuisines moving between specific cultures would be a useful contribution to the research pool. From this kind of research, further extrapolations may be made about what aspects of globalisation contribute the most to different cultures' importation or exportation of foreign cuisine. For instance, the process of exoticisation-hybridisation-diffusionism may be generalisable everywhere, or only to specific regions.

As mentioned in the limitations section of Course Four, I was not able to interview Korean or Chinese restaurateurs and chefs who sell Japanese food. It would be ideal to capitalise on their insights for future research as they own most sushi shops in New Zealand.

ごちそうさまでした ("I'm full!")

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