

The 2005 Kikkoman Food Culture Seminar

Edo Cuisine

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MC: We at the Kikkoman Institute for International Food Culture recently completed a project, initiated in 2003, in which we attempted to revive the soy sauce widely used in Edo (Tokyo) during the Edo period. At our request Mr. Yanagihara reproduced some Edo dishes using the soy sauce we created. We would like to take this opportunity to express our gratitude. In this seminar, Mr. Yanagihara will give us some insight into Edo cuisine.

Mr. Yanagihara: Hello, ladies and gentlemen. I oversee the Kinsa-ryu culinary discipline. The Kinsa-ryu discipline was established at the height of Edo culture (1603–1867), during the Bunka-Bunsei eras (1806–1829). Other Japanese culinary disciplines, such as Shijo-ryu, Ikuma-ryu, and Okusa-ryu, were founded during the Muromachi period (1394–1573). Books, handed down over the centuries from each of these disciplines, describe the culinary rules for ceremonies, including presentation and table manners, and give us an idea of what high-society banquets were like in those days.

The Edo-Period Cookbook in Which Soy Sauce Was First Mentioned

My favorite cookbook from the Edo period is *Ryori Monogatari*, published in 1634. Earlier cookbooks dealt primarily with ceremonial procedures. *Ryori Monogatari* was the first cookbook to offer a list of dishes, as well as being the first to mention seasonings. However, the very few references to soy sauce are difficult to find.

In most cookbooks, sections on sashimi and boiled or stewed dishes mention soy sauce. In *Ryori Monogatari*, however, we find just three or four references to soy sauce with regard to *namasu* (raw fish and vegetables seasoned in vinegar). Nonetheless, this book does include a section on making soy sauce near the end.

Through research in collaboration with the NHK broadcasting company, Kikkoman revived Edo-period soy sauce using the book *Bankin Sugiwai-bukuro* published during

that time. While this book calls for intense stirring of the *moromi* mash for sixty days, I remember reading in another Edo-period cookbook that the *moromi* should be stirred for just thirty days.

Bankin Sugiwai-bukuro is truly interesting because it gives detailed information regarding industries of the time. Based on the description of the method used to produce soy sauce noted in this book, Kikkoman revived “Edo soy sauce” and I used their soy sauce to reproduce Edo cuisine. Despite offering a number of appealing recipes, *Ryori Monogatari* was not appropriate for this project because it was published before *Bankin Sugiwai-bukuro*. Hence, I chose recipes that included soy sauce from some other books, published fifty to eighty years after *Bankin Sugiwai-bukuro*, in my reproductions of Edo cuisine.

Different Procedures for Cutting Fish in the Kanto and Kansai Regions

The procedure used to clean and fillet fish varies between the two leading regions of Japan, Kanto and Kansai. The Edo method (typical of the Kanto region), calls for positioning the fish with its back nearest to the chef, its head on the right and its tail on the left. The cut begins at the base of the head, ending at the tail, thus opening the back of the fish.

Standardization of this method began with the estab-



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ishment of the Nihonbashi fish market in the early Edo period. Such standardization in the direction in which the fish were laid out was important because transporting fish, in a time when ice was not available, was difficult. Because the meat under the innards spoiled faster than that above the innards, this standardization meant that the good meat was always on the same side. With manpower the only means of transportation, this minimized the decrease in the quality of the fish.

This standardization in the direction in which fish were laid out was applied to many types of fish, including sea bream, bonito, and tuna. With regard to tuna, the meat on the bottom side is somewhat compressed, making it worth less than meat from the top side. Thus, clear distinction as to whether meat was from the top or the bottom was made at the market.

Many such rules for the presentation of fish continue today. For example, *ayu*, or sweet-fish, are laid out with the bellies facing the customer and the heads to the left. Sea bream and other fish used for auspicious occasions are displayed in the same manner. Since sea bream was, and continues to be, often roasted and served whole, this method, initiated at the Nihonbashi fish market,

ensures the appearance of the upper side with no scarring from the fish monger's hook.

Eel is also cut open from the back in the Kanto region. Many believe this was to prevent any association with *hara-kiri* in the samurai society. This, however, does not make sense as a cut on the back indicates that the victim was running away, a true dishonor for the samurai.

In Japan, many types of fish are prepared by splitting them, or cutting them nearly in half, leaving just a small strip of flesh or skin connecting the two halves. The Kanto method of splitting fish from the back also

originated at the Nihonbashi fish market during the Edo period. Preparation begins by positioning the fish with its head on the right and its left side facing up so that the back is to the person preparing it. The first cut is made along the back, beginning at the base of the head. Turning the fish around so that its head was on the left would mean cutting along the belly, beginning near the tail.

On the other hand, in Kyoto, or the Kansai region, fish were split by cutting along the belly. Because Kyoto is an inland city that required the transport of fish from the coast, fish were cleaned and salted before they ever left



Tai Namban-yaki
(Namban-Style Fried Sea Bream)

Reference: *Shiki Ryori Kondate* (ca. 1750)

Frying sea bream slowly prior to stewing prevents the meat from breaking apart. Crispy sea bream lightly stewed with tofu, daikon radish, and Japanese onion (similar to Welsh onion) in a *kombu*(kelp) stock seasoned with soy sauce made a savory dish.

Recipe

1. Cut sea bream fillets into thick slices and brown in a small amount of sesame oil.
2. Stew browned fillets in seasoned kombu stock.
3. Add tofu cut into thin, bite-size blocks, rectangular slices of daikon radish, and chopped Japanese onion and stew until nicely flavored.



Kosho-meshi (Peppered Rice)

Reference: *Ryori Chinmi-shu* (1763)

The appearance and taste of this dish completely defied what I imagined from the recipe. I was afraid that it called for far too much soy sauce. However, the shorter brewing period required for "Edo soy sauce" gave the rice a light color and made the dish quite tasty.

Recipe

1. Cook rice in a quantity of water fifteen percent greater than the quantity of rice, a quantity of soy sauce that fills the lid of the serving bowl, and two teaspoons of black pepper.
2. Lightly season a bonito stock with soy sauce and shredded green *kombu*.
3. Scoop cooked rice (1) into a serving bowl and add hot, seasoned soup (2).
4. Serve with condiments such as grated daikon radish, dried orange peel, cayenne or chili pepper, and *wasabi*.

the shore. Until roughly thirty years ago, it was easy to tell where chefs had been trained by the manner in which they cut fish open. Today, however, such strict adherence to these regional methods has disappeared.

Sashimi Meets Soy Sauce

When do you think people began dipping their sashimi in soy sauce? During the middle of the Edo period, this was rarely seen, though soy sauce from the Kansai region was available in Edo. Perhaps the light color and flavor of Kansai soy sauce did not go well with sashimi.

It wasn't until the beginning of the 19th century that people really began eating sashimi with soy sauce. A number of cooking-related books published at that time refer to this custom. One such book refers to dipping sashimi in a deep cup of soy sauce. This manner is very similar to the way in which sashimi is enjoyed today, though nowadays the soy sauce is poured onto a small, individual saucer rather than into a deep cup. Another difference in the way sashimi and soy sauce are enjoyed together is that during the Edo period, sashimi was dipped in soy sauce that had been boiled once after it was brought home, rather than

Domestic Sugar Meets Kanto Soy Sauce

Why, at the end of the Edo period, did the stronger soy sauce produced in the Kanto region surrounding Edo displace the lighter Kansai soy sauce to become the preferred soy sauce? We in the Kinsa-ryu discipline believe the answer to be as follows.

To begin with, remember that Kyoto is an inland city. The fish and shellfish available in Kyoto were already lightly salted to preserve them during transport from the coast. Once the fish that would be eaten as sashimi arrived in

Kyoto, it was wrapped in *kombu* (a type of kelp) to enhance flavor and reduce saltiness. Edo, on the other hand, was blessed with an abundance of extremely fresh seafood. Therefore, the people of Edo preferred a stronger soy sauce to flavor their otherwise unflavored sashimi.

Another relevant aspect was the inferior water available in Edo, where street vendors sold drinking water and aqueducts were built to deliver better drinking water from the distant Tamagawa River to the central part of Edo. To disguise the flavor of the poor water, the people of Edo began using stronger soy sauce.

This stronger soy sauce

also led to the development of more delicious dishes. It was around this time that the people of Edo began using sugar in their cooking. Although Hiraga Gennai (1728–1779) devised a method to produce sugar domestically, it was not until nearly fifty years later that people really began to use sugar.

Recipes using Kanto soy sauce and sugar gradually developed in Edo. First of all, the strong Kanto soy sauce covered up the bad taste of the water used in cooking. What's more, domestic sugar and Kanto soy sauce greatly enhanced each other's flavors. However, most publishers



Nankin Hamaguri (Nankin Clams)

Reference: *Ryori Chinmi-shu* (1763)

Okara, or soy lees, cooked with soy sauce-flavored clam juice, is seasoned with a modest amount of soy sauce to maintain its light color. Japanese pepper and the clams are then added. This is a typical side dish in the spring, as both its appearance and flavor are rather mellow.

Recipe

1. Boil shelled clams in soy sauce just long enough to season the clams.
2. Stir fry okara with clam juice and soy sauce.
3. Add clams cut into bite-sized chunks and season with powdered Japanese pepper.



Konoshiro (Marinated Gizzard Shad)

Reference: *Shiroto Hocho* (1803)

This dish can be kept for quite some time due to the salt, vinegar, and soy sauce marinade. This characteristic was probably much more appreciated in the days before refrigeration than it is today.

Recipe

1. Cut each fish (*Kohada*) into three pieces (two side fillets and one with the spine and tail) and slice the bones off of the side fillets.
2. Salt the fish and let sit for several hours.
3. Mix equal amounts of vinegar, sake, and soy sauce and marinate the fish in this mixture with thin strips of burdock and daikon radish, one small pickled plum, and cayenne or chili pepper.

that straight from the bottle as it is today.

Before sashimi came to be dipped in soy sauce, it was flavored with a wide variety of vinegars or dressings made of vinegar or sake, known as *iri-zake*. *Tade-su*, vinegar seasoned with smartweed (or water pepper), was particularly popular and used in many Edo recipes. Other widely used vinegar dressings include *karashi-zu* (mustard vinegar), the standard dressing for bonito in Edo, *shoga-zu* (ginger vinegar), and *wasabi-zu* (Japanese horseradish vinegar).

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of culinary books in the 18th century were in the Kansai region and underestimated the quality of Kanto soy sauce. Naturally, people in the Kansai region, including Kyoto, believed that there was no substitute to their local soy sauce. Since the Kansai region had good drinking water, their lighter soy sauce was salty enough.

It is a popular belief that Kanto (Edo) dishes are saltier than Kansai (Kyoto) dishes. The fact is, however, that this is simply not true. Take, for example, the common light soups of both regions. Sodium content is the same at roughly 0.9%. However, because the color varies, people continue to believe Kanto soup to be saltier. By the end of the Edo period, the lighter soy sauce of the Kansai region had been replaced in Edo by Kanto soy sauce with its stronger flavor, richer aroma, and darker color.

The Emergence of Mirin

In the 18th century, a new variety of seasoning, *mirin* (sweet sake), emerged to dramatically change and enrich the cuisine of the time. A tea ceremony master named Katata Yuan marinated slices of fish in an original blend of soy sauce, sake, and *mirin*. Even today, dishes seasoned with this combination and then grilled are known as *yuan-yaki*.

During the Edo period, *mirin* was not considered a seasoning for cooking, but rather an extravagant alcoholic drink. The use of *mirin* in the traditional *toso* (New Year's spiced sake) is based on this concept. While the authentic *mirin* originally used in *toso* was made from fermented glutinous rice and *shochu* (a type of liquor commonly made from sweet potatoes, rice, or buckwheat), many people today use sake because they feel that *mirin* makes the *toso* simply taste sweet without any particular flavor. How things change over time.

Yuan was the first to use *mirin* as a seasoning in cooking. The combination of sake, *mirin*, and soy sauce, which neutralizes any fishy smell, enhances the aroma of the soy sauce, and gives broiled fish a slight glaze, must have appealed to the palate of the people. Yuan became famous and *yuan-yaki* dishes are still a part of modern Japanese cuisine.

Dried Bonito—A Flavor Breakthrough

The sauce in which soba (buckwheat noodles) is dipped before eating is very important. Sauce made from dried



Hamachi no Su-iri
(Young Yellow Tail Cooked in Vinegar)

Reference: *Shiroto Hocho* (1803)

Although this recipe is very simple, it has a delicious, sophisticated flavor and is very low in fat. Soy sauce and grated daikon radish contrast nicely with the light-colored fish and accentuate its flavor. Far Eastern sardines are a delicious substitute for young yellow tail.

Recipe

1. Cut young yellow tail fillets into rather large pieces and salt lightly.
2. Bring the vinegar to a light boil, add the fish, and simmer.
3. Serve the fish and simmered vinegar in a small bowl with a separate dipping sauce of soy sauce and grated daikon radish or *wasabi*.



Konnyaku no Iridashi
(Fried Devil's Tongue)

Reference: *Shiroto Hocho* (1803)

This cookbook recommends breaking *konnyaku* (konjac or devil's tongue) into chunks, rather than using a knife, to better absorb the flavor of stocks or soups. This is proof that the chefs of Edo had a clear understanding of the characteristics of individual foods. This dish, made with sesame oil that was just as expensive then as it is today, relatively speaking, would surely have been a luxury.

Recipe

1. Break the *konnyaku* into bite-sized chunks and rub with salt to remove the excess lime.
2. Pat dry and deep fry the konnyaku in sesame oil.
3. Serve hot in a bowl.
4. Garnish with grated daikon radish, finely chopped Japanese onion and chili pepper, and season with soy sauce.

shiitake mushrooms or dried *kombu* (a type of kelp) alone did not make a very good sauce. Dried bonito was introduced to make up for the lack in flavor. Although dried bonito has been around since the Heian period (794–1192), it was quite different from that we see today. Originally, bonito was boiled and then partially dried with the stock, drained off after boiling, used as a seasoning. Completely dried and aged bonito, which could be kept longer and transported long distances, was developed just before the emergence of the Kanto soy sauce that, gaining in popularity, would eventually replace Kansai soy sauce

as the preferred soy sauce in Edo.

A generous amount of soy sauce and a small amount of *mirin* added to a soup stock prepared with dried bonito flakes and *kombu* made a delicious sauce for soba noodles. Previously, the sauce was made with *miso* (fermented soybean paste). Before that, soba was served with grated daikon radish, a manner still common in the area around Fukui Prefecture. The sauce prepared with a dried bonito and *kombu* stock soon became the standard sauce used for soba, making soba a popular dish that remains so to this day.



Niyakko (Hot Tofu)

Reference: *Kinsa-ryu Hiden*

This is an excellent tofu dish handed down through the Kinsa-ryu discipline. Best served in the same pot it was cooked in, this dish reminds me that simple cooking with a focus on the natural flavors of individual ingredients is the essence of culinary art.

Recipe

1. Spread dried bonito flakes in an earthenware pot.
2. Cut a block of tofu into six cubes and place on top of the dried bonito shavings.
3. Season with a small amount of sake and soy sauce.
4. Simmer until the tofu is cooked and pour a beaten egg over the top.
5. Garnish with finely chopped Japanese onion.



Clear Soup Flavored with Soy Sauce

Reference: *Shiki Ryori Kondate* (ca. 1750)

This recipe, the origin of modern clear soup recipes, recommends flavoring the soup with soy sauce, which brings out the characteristic flavors of the cod and dried sardine ingredients. Seasoning the soup in this way gives it a more intense flavor.

Recipe

1. Blanch raw cod and dried sardines that have been cut into bite-sized pieces.
2. Cut *matsutake* mushrooms lengthwise.
3. Rinse raw nori seaweed in saltwater and drain.
4. Gently simmer all of the ingredients in a *kombu* stock and season with a small amount of salt and soy sauce.

Soba from the Shinshu region (traditional name for the region around Nagano Prefecture) was generally considered the best, but the sauce served in Edo tasted better. Since the particular combination of dried bonito flakes and soy sauce determines the flavor of the sauce, the savory aroma of Kanto soy sauce more than likely contributed to the significant increase in soba lovers.

Eel in Chunks during the Heian Period

Now let's take a look at eel. The standard method of preparation, known as *kaba-yaki*, is to split the eel open,

skewer it with bamboo sticks, and broil it over charcoal. Eel has been eaten in Kyoto since the Heian period. However, unlike the *kaba-yaki* we know today, eel in those days was not split open but chopped into round chunks and roasted on a skewer shishkebab style. According to ancient references, soy sauce was not originally used to flavor eel. The roasted chunks were basted in a *miso* sauce mixed with Japanese pepper. Eel and Japanese pepper (*sansho*) go well together, and many people continue to season their *kaba-yaki* with Japanese pepper after it is served.

Eel is seasoned with basting sauce after roasting. To make

a good basting sauce, soy sauce was a must for the people of Edo.

While the lighter Kansai soy sauce did not make a good sauce for basting eel, the stronger Kanto soy sauce did. This use of Kanto soy sauce helped to standardize seasoning methods in Japanese cuisine.

Portable Stalls Establish the Original Forms of Japanese Cuisine

The dishes generally regarded as the basics of modern Japanese cuisine seem to have been fully established around the turn of the 18th century. Sushi, soba, and tempura were all introduced from portable food stalls in the streets of

Edo and achieved the forms we see today while gaining popularity among ordinary people.

Edo was a city with a population in which men significantly outnumbered women. As a city plagued by great fires, numerous carpenters and craftsmen came to Edo to fill the rebuilding and restoring jobs that were always available. To these workers living away from their families, the portable stalls offered simple snacks at affordable prices.

Today we generally eat three meals a day. In the past, however, two meals a day was the norm in Japan, with a

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full day's portion of rice cooked at one time. Without steamers or microwaves, the people of that time commonly heated cold rice by pouring hot soup or tea over it. These gruel-like dishes of rice with a wide variety of additional toppings meant that a hot and nutritious meal could be made from cold rice.

At the demand of the shogun, most feudal lords of the Edo period were required to spend every alternate year in Edo. Each lord was accompanied by a large number of vassals, all of whom were separated from their families during their stay in Edo. Among these vassals, samurai of the lower ranks sometimes joined the carpenters and craftsmen at the food stalls. Just as each of these individuals brought souvenirs from home with them to Edo, they returned home with souvenirs from Edo. In this way all manner of things, including culture, information and skills, foods, cooking methods, as well as customs and habits were exchanged between Edo and other parts of Japan. With this exchange, the ways in which soy sauce was used in Edo were introduced to other regions.

Chefs of Edo Sought Additional Culinary Techniques from Other Parts of Japan

The biennial migration of lords and their vassals to and from Edo facilitated exchanges of products and cultures between Edo and other parts of Japan. Information traveled in the same way. To obtain information or products that they had heard of but could not find in Edo, some Edo chefs were known to travel to the source of the object of their search. One chef went all the way to Kyushu (the most southerly of Japan's four major islands) to learn the techniques used to create the sweet dishes typically eaten to celebrate the New Year since the end of the Edo period. By the end of the Edo period, foods, recipes, and techniques had been established to some degree. As the Kinsa-ryu discipline was founded around that time, its tradition reflects much of the style and flavor of Edo cuisine. One great benefit of the Kinsa-ryu discipline, and the subject of one of my books, is a wealth of

techniques for preparing traditional New Year dishes. While the preparation of traditional dishes involves elaborate procedures and is very time consuming, it is also truly enjoyable. The traditional Edo dishes I prepared using the revived "Edo soy sauce" are introduced on pages 4–7. I hope you enjoy the pictures and notes.

Soy Sauce Makes Flavors More Complex and Sophisticated

The method for producing soy sauce revived at Kikkoman was that used to produce the original lighter Kansai soy sauce, not the stronger Kanto soy sauce that later replaced

Kansai soy sauce as the preferred soy sauce in Edo. Because Kansai soy sauce was most popular until nearly the end of the Edo period, Kikkoman calls its revived soy sauce, "Edo soy sauce".

I was truly amazed that the brewers of the Edo period were able to produce soy sauce of such high quality when their only technical resource was their own experience. For example, how were they able to control the temperature?

Due to limited aging the revived soy sauce is naturally very salty. Yet, with little in the way of seasonings besides salt and miso, development of soy sauce of this quality must have tasted very complex and sophisticated at the time. I believe I have proven this, as the Edo dishes that I reproduced using the revived soy sauce are very delicious.

In tasting the revived soy sauce, I realized that the development of soy sauce was the result of many individual factors including soy beans and wheat from the fertile

Kanto plains, transportation via the Tone River and other waterways, and great demand from the consumers of Edo. Soy sauce is now a seasoning enjoyed the world over. It is the fruit of strenuous effort and ceaseless research by those involved in soy sauce production. With its rich and pleasant aroma, soy sauce is fit to be called the king of fermented grain sauces.

MC: Thank you very much, Mr. Yanagihara, for your informative lecture.



Formal Dinners Served on Individual Trays

Reference: *Ryori Chinmi-shu* (1763)

During the Edo period, formal dinners were served on one or more trays for each individual. Depending upon the occasion, each individual may be served as many as three or five trays.

I prepared both the main tray and one side tray, each consisting of several dishes. Some books from the early Edo period offer detailed instructions on table manners, and explicitly note that the dishes on the fourth and fifth trays should not be touched during dinner. These dishes were gifts, meant for the guests to take home. This practice was common at wedding receptions until just several decades ago.