Austere Aesthetics: Japanese Foodways

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Everyone eats rice
Yet no one knows why
When I say this now
People laugh at me
But instead of laughing along with them
You ought to step back
and give it some thought
Think it over, and don’t let up
I guarantee the time will come
When you’ll really have something worth laughing at

-Ryokan, *Great Fool: Zen Master Ryokan*
• **Ukemochi** (Goddess Who Possesses Food) is the Shinto Goddess of food who blesses the Earth with abundance. She was a kind and loving Goddess who made sure that her people never went hungry. **Ukemochi** thus stands for abundance in food, nourishment, kindness and also the maternal cord.
Food and History

- President Franklin Pierce named Townsend Harris the first Consul General to the Empire of Japan in July, 1856, where he opened the first US Consulate at the Gyokusen-ji Temple in the city of Shimoda, Shizuoka Prefecture, some time after Commodore Perry had first opened trade between the US and Japan in 1853.

Lithograph of "Shimoda as seen from the American Grave Yard" looking towards the harbor -- artist, Wilhelm Heine (1856).
Food in Japan

Food as a Public Matter

Selecting **Oden** at a street market. Oden is a Japanese winter dish consisting of several ingredients such as boiled eggs, daikon radish, konnyaku, and processed fish cakes stewed in a light, soy-flavored dashi broth.
Symbolic Food
Food Preference
Environment and Economy
Food Rules and Communication

CHOPSTICKS MANNER (TABOOS)

- **Saguri-bashi**: To look for contents in a soup with chopsticks.
- **Mayoi-bashi**: To wander chopsticks over several foods without decision.
- **Sashi-bashi**: To pick up food by stabbing it.
- **Neburi-bashi**: To lick the tips of the chopsticks.
- **Yose-bashi**: To pull plate or bowl around with chopsticks.
- **Hotoke-bashi**: To stand chopsticks up in rice.
- **Kaki-bashi**: To shovel food into one's mouth attached to plate or bowl.
- **Nigiri-bashi**: To hold two sticks together as one would grasp a knife to attack.
- **Hashi-watashi**: To pass food to another person, from chopsticks to chopsticks.
- **Namida-bashi**: To drip the sauce from the food or from chopsticks.
Classifying Food

Tempura
Sukiyaki
Yakitori
Nimono
Mushimono
Food as Social Relations

**Types of Sushi**

- **Nigirizushi**
- **Sashimi (not sushi)**
- **Sumeshi (sushi rice)**
- **Makizushi**

**Instructions for Sushi Making**

1. Cup your left hand to create the rounded edge. Press gently, turning with your right hand.
2. To finish, curve your right thumb and finger around the ball. Use your left hand to regulate the thickness.
3. Form the bottom with your left hand and the top corner with your right hand.
4. Pressing the triangle into the palms of your left hand, squeeze each corner of the triangle with your right hand.
5. Form the cylinder with your right hand while turning in your left hand.
6. Holding the cylinder in your left hand, press the top and bottom into shape with your right thumb and fingers.
Constructing Identity through Food

The Japanese tea ceremony developed as a "transformative practice", and began to evolve its own aesthetic related to a spiritual awakening by embracing imperfection – a reminder to cherish our unpolished selves as a first step to enlightenment.
Food and Status
Conclusion
Thank You - *Arigatou Gozaimasu*

Bibliography