“When Cooking Japanese Style, It Helps If You Have An American Friend”: American Cold War Discourse on Japanese Cuisine, 1945-1992

Eloi Salvail-Lacoste

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
History

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Master of Arts (History) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

January 2024

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY

School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Eloi Salvail-Lacoste

Entitled: An Empty Seat at the Table: American Discourse on Japanese Cuisine and the Erasure of Japanese-Americans, 1945-1992

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (History)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final examining committee:

_____ Chair
Dr. Andrew Ivaska

_____ Examiner
Dr. Matthew Penney

_____ Examiner
Dr. Theresa Ventura

_____ Thesis Supervisor(s)
Dr. Anya Zilberstein

Approved by _____

ABSTRACT

An Empty Seat at the Table: American Discourse on Japanese Cuisine and the Erasure of Japanese-Americans, 1945-1992

Eloi Salvail-Lacoste

This thesis explores the evolution in American discourse on Japanese cooking from the end of World War II through the end of the Cold War. During this time of important changes and tensions in US-Japan relations, Japanese cuisine went from a niche, exotic novelty to a monument of fine dining. Nevertheless, that discourse remained largely static throughout the period. This stasis is imputable to the fact that, at least on a national level, white, educated, upper-middle class writers —rather than Japanese-Americans— popularized Japanese cuisine in the United States. Those writers often perpetuated older Orientalist tropes and used Japanese cuisine as a mean to accrue cultural capital and perform a form of cosmopolitanism that had become fashionable during the Cold War era. This research is based on the analysis of cookbooks, restaurant reviews, mostly from the *New York Times*, and magazines articles from *Gourmet* and *Bon Appétit* published between 1945 and 1992.

DEDICATION

I would like to most sincerely thank Dr. Anya Zilberstein for supervising my thesis. You were always present when I needed help or guidance and offered me insightful comments and feedback which were invaluable in shaping my argument and the structure of my text. If not for you, this thesis would never have taken off. I'd also like to thank Donna Whittaker for taking the time to answer all my questions and for helping me reach the end of my graduate studies without getting lost in a labyrinth of administrative matters. I also want to express my gratitude to Drs. Rachel Berger, Matthew Penney and Theresa Ventura for accepting to be part of my defence committee. Finally and from the bottom of my heart, I want to thank my parents and siblings for their support and love. Writing this thesis felt like an eternity and I doubted I could finish it every step along way. You, on the other hand, never doubted I could do it. Thank you for everything.

Table of Content

Introduction

August 28th, 1945 marked the beginning of the American occupation of Japan following their official surrender on August 15th. In the early weeks of 1992, the bursting of the Japanese economic bubble would halt Japan's thirty years of phenomenal economic growth. During this fifty years period, the Cold War and the Japanese economic miracle profoundly impacted the relationship between Japan and the United States. For Americans, Japan went from a mortal enemy to be exterminated to a key ally in the containment of communism, a success story of the capitalist model to be emulate and an economic rival.

Those political and economic transformations were also accompanied by cultural exchange between the two nations, notably in the culinary realm. Over this half century, Japanese food in the US would transition from a novelty little enjoyed outside of Japanese ethnic enclaves to a monument of fine dining as well as an ubiquitous culinary phenomenon. By the turn of the twentieth century, Japanese restaurants in the United States came to surpass even French and nouvelle American cuisine restaurants in price; for instance, in 1987, the most expensive restaurant in Los Angeles was *Ginza Sushi* and, in 2004, *Masa* became the most expensive restaurant in New York. In the 1990s, sushi became available in supermarkets nationwide. Despite this rising popularity and status, American discourse on Japanese cuisine remained largely unchanged through the second half of the 20th century.

This stasis is partly attributable to the fact that Japanese food in the United States was not primarily an immigrant cuisine. This is not to say that Japanese-Americans did not cook or develop their own cuisine or that Japanese had no agency in the presentation of their foodways abroad. Rather, it has to do with the fact that Japanese cuisine was discussed and popularized by

white Americans for an upper-middle class audience. Furthermore, this popularization was made possible largely by Japanese chefs who came to work in the United States and by other Asian-American immigrant business owners rather than by Japanese-Americans who opened restaurants serving an increasingly wider range of patrons. The absence of Japanese-American voices in discourses on Japanese food in the US meant that the subject remained embedded in the exotic and alien vision that Americans had of Japan, a vision that had prevailed for over a century. In order to ensure their business' profitability, American restaurateurs offering Japanese cuisine, including restaurant owners who had emigrated from other parts of Asia, played on tropes and stereotypes that had been a common fixture of American discourse on Japan since the nineteenth century in order to appeal to what consumers perceived as authentically Japanese. Cookbook authors and restaurant reviewers often used well-worn Orientalist tropes throughout the period under study.

Nonetheless, the tone of these writings was positive and the dishes offered shifted from oddity to delight almost immediately after the war, as early as the 1950s. Furthermore, since these genres of food writing were produced by, and largely for, the middle and upper-middle class, even when economic tensions flared up between the United States and Japan, they remained largely unaffected by the impact, real or perceived, of this economic competition. As John Dower argued in *War Without Mercy,* assumptions about the Japanese underlying World War II propaganda persisted after the war's end but took on a more positive connotation before becoming aggressive once more when Japan began to be seen as an economic threat. But even as a more belligerent attitude rekindled in many sectors of US society, discourse on Japanese cuisine remained positive, laudatory even. The Cold War had led to the emergence of an

American tendency to promote multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism in an effort to fashion the country into a worthy and tolerant leader of the free world. These ideas of cosmopolitanism were reflected in food discourse, which can also help explain why people producing it were less affected by the trend of *Japan Bashing* which flared up in the economic and political spheres during the 1980s in the United States.

This disconnection between shifts in diplomatic or economic relations between the two countries and American discourse about Japanese cuisine suggest that the latter was not seen as a politically charged or menacing issue. Even as Americans complained of Japan buying notable American real estate and companies or about Japanese cars and electronic products, no one seemed to worry about sushi's rising popularity in the American foodscape. What frightened Americans was that Japan would supplant them as the richest, most innovative nation in the world. Since their fear stemmed from Japan's successful economy and technological advances, the overlapping of Japananophilia and Japanophobia isn't contradictory. Both Japan bashing and positive views on Japanese cuisine stemmed from the same core discourse and ascribed similar characteristics to Japanese culture. The sushi chef was described as having quasi-superhuman knife skills, being dedicated to his art, willing to undergo stringent training and uncompromising on quality; the Japanese worker was efficient, productive and willing to sacrifice long hours to assure their company's success.

This discursive trend echoed World War II propaganda where Japanese were presented both as super-soldiers possessing almost supernatural abilities and devoted to the point of fanaticism but also behaving more like a herd of animals than humans. Those superhuman traits were paradoxically part of a discourse presenting all Japanese as inferior beings, animals or

vermin, who needed to be crushed militarily or even exterminated entirely. After the war, these characteristics persisted in some form in the American discourse about Japan but they were more compartmentalized which allowed for the presentation of certain aspect of Japanese culture as positive. Those mystical skills could provide Americans with culinary delicacies but the herd mentality attributed to the Japanese workforce also threatened the American economy.

This thesis focuses on the 1945-1992 period because the context in which culinary discourse was produced underwent important changes in these decades. A poll conducted in 1989 showed that 69% of American considered Japan's economy to be a bigger threat to the US than the Soviet army.[1] In 1991, the Cold War, which had been so important in shaping US-Japan relationship, ended. Japan's miraculous economic growth of the last decades stopped in 1992 just as China was rising as a major economic player. Both factors contributed in shifting the focus of American foreign policy in East Asia. Scholars have therefore argued that, in retrospect, the trend of Japan bashing in the 1970s and 1980s was spurred more by an anticipatory fear of America's declining influence on the world stage rather than by a sustained economic threat.[2] Americans had blamed Japan for their woes without looking at the domestic reasons for the economic situation.[3] Then, through the 1990s, while Americans enjoyed a new period of growth associated with the Internet Revolution, Japan's economy began to struggle and was no longer seen as a rival to American prosperity.

---

[1] Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997): 381.

[2] Eqbal Ahmad, " Racism and the State: The Coming Crisis of US-Japan Relations". In *Japan in the World*, eds. Masao Miyoshi & Harry Harootunian (Duke: Duke University Press Book, 1993):41-42.

[3] Thomas W. Zeiler, "Business Is War in U.S.-Japanese Economic Relations, 1977-2001". In *Partnership: The United States and Japan 1951-2001,* eds. Akira Iriye & Robert Wampler (New York: Kodansha International, 2001): 226.

Paradoxically, the recession in 1990s Japan helped increase the globalization of its cuisine which was part of a new Japanese cultural diplomatic strategy known as the "Cool Japan" policy. From an economic marvel that inspired the envy and fear of American businesses in the 1980s, Japan shifted to a nation of trendsetters. Although the "Cool Japan" branding strategy debuted in 1980, it really came to the fore in the 1990s with the popularization of anime, manga, and Japanese fashion and music. After 1991, Japan began to emphasize much more its popular culture to gain traction internationally. In 2013, UNESCO added *Washoku* (usually translated as Japanese traditional or home cooking) to the Intangible Cultural Heritage list. The Japanese government and tourism board had spent the previous twenty years marketing Japanese cuisine abroad in an effort to attract tourists to the archipelago and boost the nation's global prestige. During the period covered in my thesis, American cooks, diners, and food professionals shifted from perceiving Japanese food as a marginal, if esteemed, cuisine to one of the most significant forces in the American foodscape.

Although this thesis examines American discourse, Hawaii is excluded from the analysis. Even though the US government had annexed the archipelago in 1898 and it officially became a State in 1959, Hawaii's demography meant that racial relations differed greatly in the archipelago from those on the mainland. In the 1920s, Asian immigrants accounted for 60% of the islands' population and, by 1940, Japanese immigrant represented a third of it.[4] Whites were a minority which controlled Hawaii economically and politically. Considering that this thesis focuses on how the white American majority perceived Japanese food, which was seen as thoroughly foreign, this ethnic composition, where Japanese-American where one of the most

[4] Ronald Takaki, Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans, 1st (Little, Brown and Company, 1989): 132; 382.

numerous group and Whites a minority, would warrant a different study dedicated entirely to Hawaii's specificities.

Methodology

The recent pandemic of Covid-19 and the sanitary restrictions accompanying it constrained the type of sources available to me. Considering they needed to be accessible online or via interlibrary loans, I decided to use published primary sources, like cookbooks and newspaper articles, rather than archival documents. This reliance on sources that were public in nature meant that I could not necessarily assess the more personal opinions of those who wrote them. It was also more difficult to assess what Americans without a public outlet thought of Japanese cuisine.

Although this thesis relies heavily on the close reading of cookbooks, restaurant review and newspaper articles, it also uses a statistical analysis of the New York Public Library (NYPL) Cookbook Collection. In order to judge the popularity of Japanese food relative to Chinese and French cuisine, I browsed the catalog using the terms "cooking" and "Japanese" (or Chinese/ French). I found eighty four titles for Japanese cooking, of which I eliminated seventeen which were either repeats or not cookbooks. I also added 2 books which I used in my research but were not in the Library catalog. Despite the shortcomings of this method, notably the fact that the NYPL clearly did not list all the cookbooks published between 1945 and 1992, and the fact that I did not sift through the result for the Chinese and French cookbooks in the same way I did for Japanese books, this exercise still demonstrated the relative interest accorded to those three cuisines during the period covered by my research. The detailed analysis of this search is presented in chapter 3.

This thesis opens with a review of the literature pertaining to U.S.-Japan relations during the period covered; the history of Japanese cuisine both in the US and in Japan; and the emergence of so-called ethnic food in the US and its consumer history. Chapter 1 describes the four main characteristics of the American discourse on Japanese food. Chapter 2 looks at the ways in which white Americans claimed authority over the development of Japanese cuisine within the United States as well as how the consumption of Japanese food in America reflected the identity formation of mostly white, urban, educated, and upper middle-class Americans. Chapter 3 contrasts the development of Chinese and Japanese cooking in the US in order to emphasize how the latter was not popularized by immigrant communities but rather in a top-down fashion by non-Japanese-American food writers and professional chefs.

Literature Review

Before going any further, two terms need to be clarified: "cuisine" and "American". I use the term cuisine interchangeably with "cooking" to refer to attitudes, values and practices surrounding the preparation and consumption of food as well as discourse about it. I follow the approach of sociologist James Farrer who describes cuisine as "[…]a type of discourse, a way of labeling and organizing the various bodily pleasures and sensations associated with food consumption and food preparation. By extension, the symbolism of cuisine is also a field of power relations exercised through discourse."[1] Although cuisines are also shaped by the material reality from which they stem, they are not merely a set of ingredients, dishes or techniques used by a certain group of people nor are they a simple reflection of their diet. Their existence is largely due to the fact that people write and talk about them rather than because people are cooking certain dishes in a certain way. The very idea of a national cuisine is a political project aiming to create the sense of a unified nation stretching back in history and overlooking the heterogeneous foodways of the people constituting that nation.

As for the term "American", I mostly use it as a term of convenience to refer to the non-Japanese and non-Japanese-Americans, most of whom implicitly identified as white, who authored the sources analyzed in this thesis. Likewise, Japanese-American is merely a term of convenience; it is not meant as an assertion that they are a homogenous group. Although food tourism and cosmopolitanism were not confined to whites, or to Americans for that matter, the values and attitudes underlining them emanate from white middle-class ethos and lifestyle. I am

---

[1] James Farrer, "Traveling Cuisines in and out of Asia: Toward a Framerwork for Studying Culinary Globalization," in *The Globalization of Asian Cuisines. Transnational and Culinary Contact Zones*, ed. James Farrer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015): 4.

interested both in how food consumption was used to signify the Americaness or the Japaneseness of a person as well as how it was used by Americans to differentiate among themselves based on their social status or cultural taste.

After I started research for my thesis, I realized that there were few monographs dealing specifically with Japanese food in the United States, especially when compared to the number of works addressing Chinese cooking in the same country. Some essay collections published in the last decade or so, such as *Eating Asian America* or *Chop Suey and Sushi from Sea to Shining Sea: Chinese and Japanese Restaurants in the United States* address the topic of different Asian cuisines in the US.[2] But, the bulk of this scholarship is about Chinese cuisine or the Oriantalization of Asian cuisines more broadly. Those concerning Japanese cooking are mostly about food within Japanese-American communities. Considering the current popularity of Japanese food, I found it strange that so little scholarly attention had been paid to the subject of its popularization in the US, especially since its popularity there played a pivotal role in its popularization globally. Looking at Europe, Katarzyna Cwiertka argued that although Japanese restaurants started opening and gaining popularity in the 1970s-80s catering to the Japanese business community, dishes like sushi became fashionable because of their booming popularity in the United States.[3] My thesis aims to address these gaps in the scholarship.

Amongst the most insightful essays in the aforementioned collections is Mark Padoongpatt's "'Oriental Cookery': Devouring Asian and Pacific Cuisine during the Cold War,"

---

[2] Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin F. Manalansan, and Anita Mannur, eds., *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader* (New York: New York University Press, 2014); Bruce Makoto Arnold, Tanfer Emin Tunç, and Raymond Douglas Chong, *Chop Suey and Sushi from Sea to Shining Sea: Chinese and Japanese Restaurants in the United States* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018),

[3] Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, "From Ethnic to Hip: Circuits of Japanese Cuisine in Europe," *Food and Foodways* 13, no. 4 (n.d.): 241–72.

based on research into how postwar US imperialism in the Pacific impacted the identity of white suburban American women. Padoongpatt posits that these women were agents of empire and that their cooking and writing about Asian foodways was both enabled and supported by US imperialism, notably through tourism. Food writing, restaurant going, and culinary tourism also gave the general public a more tangible sense of the abstract geopolitical concerns of the US government in the region. It allowed them to mentally map and be more invested in the conflicts of the Cold War. Central to his argument is the fact that food shifted from sustenance to commodity and that it was embedded in the larger geopolitical context of the era. The fact that he is looking at food specifically during the same time period I am researching, linking it with identity formation and how foreign cuisine were popularized by white suburban women, provides a solid framework to study Japanese food in the domestic realm.

Padoongpatt's essay constitutes a powerful example of how foodways were (and still are) tied with larger geopolitical issues and blur the division between public and private spheres. It demonstrates that the consumption of ethnicized food is not merely steeped in colonial attitude but also marked by colonial acts. The fascination the women he studied had for Asian cultures, the diversity they brought to their table and the status they could gain from them were celebrated as a triumph of the free market or of modernity (in the form of improved transportation or increasingly integrated economies) but were never acknowledged as the results of US imperialism. For instance, many of them developed an interest in Asian cuisine while traveling or living there and often with the help of local cooks, including domestic servants.[4] The results, be

[4] Mark Padoongpatt, "'Oriental Cookery' Devouring Asian and Pacific Cuisine during the Cold War," in *Eating Asian America*, ed. Robert Ji-Song Ku, Anita Mannur, and Manalansan (New York: New York University Press, 2013): 192.

it a Thai dish served at a dinner party or a cookbook, were built on American military and economic expansion in Eastern Asia and gave it a more sympathetic image and palatable taste.

Americans in the postwar period also justified their growing global hegemony through other media. Christina Klein has convincingly argued that middlebrow culture facilitated the emotional engagement of the American public with US Cold War policies as well as offering a platform for the expression of political ideologies (either to support or debate them).[5] She defined middlebrow as a shared sense of aestheticism connected through cultural institutions not emanating from the cultural avant-garde but not pandering to the lowest common denominator either. The works she studied, like James Michener's *The Voice of Asia* or the Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical *The King and I*, served to construct the United States as a world power in part by justifying its expansion in the Pacific. These cultural productions created "sentimental pathways" which then facilitated the expansion of economic, military and political pathways.[6]

The American Context

To understand the context in which the American discourse on Japanese cuisine was produced, it is critical to first look at US-Japan relations between 1945-1992. There is quite a large literature on this subject; some works, like Micheal Auslin's *Pacific Cosmopolitanism* focus on cultural exchange between the two countries, but the majority focus on the commercial and political nature of the relationship.[7] Though Auslin does not address foodways, he usefully

---

[5] Christina Klein, Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003).

[6] Ibid., 16.

[7] The works consulted for this research include Micheal Schaller's *Altered States: The United States and Japan Since the Occupation*; Akira Iriye and Robert Wampler's *Partnership: The United States and Japan, 1951-2001*; Makotot Iokibe and Tosh Minohara's *The History of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present* and Walter LaFeber's *The Clash: A History of US-Japan Relations*

contends that, even though commercial and political concerns were at the forefront of the relations between the two governments, cultural exchanges were more important to urban, educated, middle and upper-class Americans. Regarding politics and economics, his narrative converges with that of other authors who have identified two broad periods in US-Japan relations: the first stretched from the end of the occupation in 1952 up until the early 1970s while the second ended with the bursting of the Japanese economic bubble in 1991-92.[8]

The first period was marked by a desire to keep Japan from allying itself with the Soviet or Chinese communist regime. The US helped the country become an industrial powerhouse in East Asia and provided an export market for its products. By 1960, Japan had come to rely on the American market to sell its manufactured goods and it was the second largest export market for the United States. Despite tensions concerning the textile trade, rearmament and the US desire to see Japan take on a more active role on the international stage, notably during the Vietnam War, foreign relations between the two countries were good and their economies intertwined.

The relationship began to sour in the early 1970s. This change was largely due to the booming Japanese economy and the mounting trade deficit the US was running with Japan. Despite its crucial role as an economic partner throughout the period, Japan was increasingly accused of unfair trading practices and taking advantage of the United States. This sentiment worsened in the 1980s as the trade deficit grew and Japanese companies began to acquire major real estate in the US, especially conspicuous Americans landmarks such as the Rockefeller Center or the Columbia Corporation in New York City. Even if British and Dutch investors

---

[8] Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the Occupation*, 1st edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Walter LaFeber, "A Miracle Reappears: China Reappears (1960-1973)" and "The End of an Era (Since 1973)," in *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

owned more American real estate than the Japanese, these transactions were seen as an invasion and a sign that America was selling its soul to foreigners. Language presenting Japanese as enemies in a manner reminiscent of war time discourse began to reemerge. A 1985 Gallup poll showed that 85% of interviewees saw Japan as a serious threat to American workers.[9] Paradoxically, the same poll stated that 84% of the interviewees had a positive view of Japan.[10]

It was during this time of increased tension that Japanese food became more widely popular in the United States. Sushi, which was arguably the first Japanese food to become trendy in the US, started to spread to non-Japanese consumers in the late 1960s, rose in popularity in the 1970s but only really took off in the 1980s. A poll conducted by the New York Times in 1990 reported that 58% of its interviewees considered Japan's economy a bigger threat to America than Soviet military power.[11] The bursting of the Japanese economic bubble in early 1992 as well as a booming American economy during that decade greatly diffused this hostility.

This demonstrates the relevance of studying Japanese food in the larger context of international relations. Despite the persistence of racial tropes dehumanizing the Japanese, their position as economic rivals and the intermittent tensions between Japan and the United States, American consumers steadily embraced Japanese cuisine during the second half of the twentieth century. These seemingly opposing trends suggest that even if political and economic concerns shaped visions about Japan, other factors were also at play. Food served as a non-threatening way of engaging with the Other, especially compared to consumer products like home

---

[9] Robert Wampler, "Reversals of Fortune? Shifting U.S. Images of Japan as Number one, 1979-2000", in *Partnership: The United States and Japan, 1951-2001*. Eds. Akira Iriye and Robert Wampler (New York: Kodansha International, 2001): 253.

[10] Ibidem.

[11] Makoto Iokibe and Tosh Minohara, eds., *The History of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017): 215.

electronics or cars which were at the centre of economic tensions. It demonstrates the agency of individuals in making sense of diverging discourses. It should nonetheless be noted that Japanese cuisine's popularity was still largely confined to the urban, college educated, middle and upper-classes and that it would be naive to think that food allowed for the bridging of difference and the promotion of good relations. Just as Japanese cuisine grew more fashionable, Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American, was beaten to death by two Detroit auto workers who thought he was Japanese and accused him of robbing them of their job.

The generally positive, if stereotypical, discourse about Japanese-Americans coupled with Japan's role as America's closest ally in the Pacific and its economic miracle gave Japanese cuisine a more prestigious aura than that of other ethnicized foods situated lower on the socio-economic hierarchy. For instance, despite the widespread popularity of Mexican dishes like tacos or chili, Mexican cooking was not (and is still largely not) perceived as elevated gastronomy in large part due to the association of Mexican immigrants with lower class occupations like farm or domestic work. In the same vein, the fact that Japanese cuisine started to become popular after Japanese immigration to the US began to decrease is also telling since distance from representatives of a culture has, ironically, tended to facilitate the adoption of its foodways.[12]

This period was also marked by numerous and rapid changes in the American foodscape. Factors like changing gender relations, the rise of nutritional science, the development of the agro-industrial sector and advertising from corporations and the federal government constituted the main forces behind the emergence or decline of different food trends and concerns.[13] Initially

---

[12] Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*, First Edition, Revised edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003):216-17

[13] Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty.*

tied to a renewed interest in French cuisine in the 1960s, food and cooking would resurface more prominently as a source of social distinction. With what authors like Levenstein and Donna Gabbacia called an "ethnic food boom" in the 1960s and 1970s, the types of cuisine that could confer cultural capital greatly expanded beyond the scope of French cuisine.[14] Furthermore, for the members of countercultural movements like the hippies or the young professionals who most readily took an interest in ethnicized cuisines, this consumption marked a way to offset American cultural imperialism and the cultural homogenization it brought.[15] Those cuisines could be constructed as a form of resistance against the negative aspects of modernity, mainly those of the agro-industrial sector.[16]

Donna Gabbacia's *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of America* analyzes in depth the history of ethnic food in the US. She emphasizes that a tendency to try new foods and combine different culinary cultures has been a staple throughout American history but concedes that there were periods marked by more stringent food conservatism, at least at the discursive level. Gabbacia traces the history of individual ethnic cuisines, as well as interaction among them, in the US and explains the origin of a modern diet in which once foreign dishes, like chili or pizza, became integrated into mainstream American foodways. Although not solely concerned with Japanese food, her book offers a solid foundation upon which to further study the attitude of mainstream America (i.e: mostly white, native-born Americans) toward ethnic food and how immigrant communities integrated and adapted their food culture to American tastes

---

[14] Levenstein 217-218; Donna Gabbacia, We Are What We Eat, Ethnic Food and the Making of American (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000):213-215

[15] Gabbacia, *We Are What We Eat*, 213

[16] Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty*, 182-183.

and prejudices. Her discussion of enclave economies, by which she refers to the economic activities of immigrant communities situated within the neighbourhood in which they were concentrated, also helps to understand how ethnic cuisine disseminated from immigrant communities to the rest of the population. This trend underlines the difference of Japanese cuisine since it did not follow the same pattern.

Finally, considering the primary sources used for my research, studying the main trends and changes occurring in the food writing business at the time is important in order to better understand what was common in the industry and what might have been more particular to writing about Japanese cuisine. Megan J. Elias' *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture* offers a useful overview of the evolution of cookbooks in the United States. She advanced that cookbooks are a form of aspirational literature telling us more about the values and identity of the author and readers than about their dietary habits. For instance, even though "foreign" recipes had been included in the first American cookbooks, this trend only really took off in the 1950s. This tendency to cherry-pick and adapt recipes from allegedly non-American foodways was meant to give American readers a sense of familiarity and proficiency with other cultures, a way for them to symbolically assimilate foreign cultures.[17]

Furthermore, Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann found in their research that there was a gap between food discourse in mediums like cookbooks and magazines versus the opinions of self-identified "foodies". Written texts suggested that norm-breaking and risk taking in food consumption (e.g: eating bugs) conferred more status. For their part, interviewees showed far less interest for this sort of consumption and afforded more importance to being knowledgeable

---

[17] Megan J. Elias, *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017):114.

about a foreign cuisine and assessing its authenticity.[18] This demonstrates some of the limits of my own research and shows why thinking about it in a more hegemonic way by inscribing it in the context of Cold War liberalism and culture is more relevant.

Japanese Food in Japan and on the Global Stage

Although my thesis focuses on Japanese cuisine in the United States, looking at its history both in Japan and on a global scale helps better understand the specificity of the American discourse about it. Katarzyna Cwiertka's *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* charts the evolution of Japanese foodways during the modern era. She explores the formation of the national diet, which she sees as part of an imagined national identity and an homogenized culture used to bolster patriotic feelings, from the 1870s through the post-war era. Arguing against the idea that its multicultural elements, such as the popularity of dishes like curry or ramen, were due to a timeless and highly adaptive character of Japanese culture, she attributes them instead to the industrialization, nation-state formation and imperialist expansion. Besides offering a clear account of the modern evolution of Japanese foodways, Cwiertka's thesis is also a reminder of how ideas about national diet are highly discursive and political rather than merely a reflection of the actual consumption patterns of a population.

Nancy Stalker's collection of essays *Devouring Japan: Global Perspectives on Japanese Culinary Identity* also contains works relevant to understanding the historicity of Japan's national diet. Stalker's own chapter is about Kitaoji Rosanjin (1883-1959), a twentieth century multi-disciplinary artist most famous for his ceramics as well as a restaurateur. Rosanjin shaped the "hegemonic notion about Japanese cuisine" as centred around simplicity, the purity and freshness

---

[18] Josée Johnston and Shyon Baumann, *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*, 2nd ed., Cultural Spaces (New York: Routledge, 2015):104

of ingredients and the harmony between the dish and its plate even though his vision did not reflect the everyday reality of most Japanese. Although he remained more famous outside of Japan for his ceramics, his culinary discourse would mold the next generation of Japanese chefs and resonated with the Japanese government's desire to portray Japan as a culturally advanced nation after World War II. It was this romanticized vision of Japanese cooking that influenced many chefs during the Nouvelle Cuisine wave of the 1970s.[19] Stalker demonstrates how even Japanese could produce essentializing discourses about their foodways.

Japanese cuisine's place on a global stage and how it has been adapted abroad has also attracted academic attention. James Farrer and his coauthors chart the spread and increased popularity of Japanese food worldwide. They traced the spread of Japanese food in the US identifying some major factors and trends. For instance, despite the establishment of a Japanese population on the West Coast since the 1880s and some documented interest in Japanese cuisine at the turn of the twentieth century, it would only be during the 1970s that white Americans started patronizing Japanese restaurants in significant numbers. This popularity was linked to the increased economic affluence of Japan at the time. Like Cwiertka, the authors argue that Japanese food's growing popularity globally did not reflect a one-way movement from Japan outward. Its popularity in the US was a major factor in its worldwide popularization. Besides, Japanese food became so popular in the United States that other Asian restaurateurs started to serve Japanese food to command higher prices while filling in a niche left open by the lack of trained Japanese chefs in America. In doing so, they made Japanese food even more ubiquitous in the US. This suggest that the spread of Japanese cuisine was also enabled by the mobilities of

---

[19] Nancy Stalker, "Rosanjin: The Roots of Japanese Gourmet Nationalism" in *Devouring Japan*, ed. Nancy Stalker. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

other migrant groups. Besides, by looking at how American sushi trends were imported back to Japan, these scholars offer nuanced examinations of accepted ideas about national cuisine and how it has been adapted.[20]

There is also an array of case studies focusing on one particular dish, notably sushi and ramen. In his book *The Sushi* Economy, Sasha Issenberg looks at the global networks of capital, people and resources involved in the preparation of sushi to argue that despite being depicted as a time honoured tradition, sushi as we would recognized it in North America (i.e: a rice ball topped with fresh, raw fish or raw fish and rice rolled in seaweed featuring heavily fishes like tuna or salmon) is a fairly modern phenomenon.[21] Although he focuses on the bluefin tuna, since he claims it to be the most renowned sushi fish, he manages to raise some important questions about what it means for a dish to be associated with one nationality when its procurement and popularity were made possible by global networks. Eric Rath also sheds light on sushi's modernity by retracing its long history, from its origin as a means to preserve fish in China before its rise as a street food in nineteenth-century Edo. He also addresses the post-war phenomenon of the professionalization of sushi making and the much-revered training that restaurant reviewers often emphasized and presented as a long-standing tradition.[22]

Historical treatments of ramen include works by Barak Kushner and George Solt. Although the analysis of the former is squarely centred on Japan, Solt devotes more attention to the dish's dissemination in the United States. He also offers insights into some of the dietary

---

[20] For a more in-depth exploration of the bilateral trend in the sushi world, see Rumi Sakamoto and Matthew Allen, "Sushi Reverses Course: Consuming American Sushi in Tokyo," *The Asi-Pacific Journal/Japan Focus* 9, no. 2 (2011).

[21] Sasha Issenberg, *The Sushi Economy: Globalization and the Making of a Modern Delicacy*, Reprint edition (New York: Avery, 2008).

[22] Eric C. Rath, *Oishii: The History of Sushi* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021).

changes Japan experienced in the last decades of the twentieth century, notably due to an increased use of prepared and instant meals. Similarly to Issenberg, their works lead us to think about how a Chinese noodle dish made ubiquitous by US wheat export during the occupation came to be associated so strongly with Japan.[23] Both authors also highlight the more popular status of ramen compared with sushi which was a higher class dish even in Japan. Even though the two dishes changed greatly during the postwar era, the fact that sushi became popular earlier in the United States hints at the status associated with Japanese culture abroad.

These works on the history of Japanese cuisine and some of its more iconic dishes demonstrate the class and regional bias ingrained in the concept of "traditional" Japanese cuisine as well as pointing to the relatively modern origin of what is often described as a timeless tradition. Looking at how these images associated with Japanese cuisine came to be and influenced the discourse about it (both in Japan and in the US) helps to situate the texts studied for this research in a broader context. For instance, they show that even if discourse in the United States might have echoed that in Japan, it did not mean American writers' depictions were an accurate portrayal of Japanese cuisine, food scene and foodways. Japanese also romanticized their cuisine and history, as Stalker has shown. Besides, American influence on Japanese perception of themselves went far beyond the culinary realm, as John Lie has convincingly argued with respect to anthropologist Ruth Benedict's *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*

---

[23] Barak Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen: Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup* (Boston: Global Oriental, 2014); George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014).

(1946). Benedict's work, which presented an essentialized vision of Japanese history and culture, was widely influential in Japan, and shaped the way Japanese thought about themselves.[24]

Orientalism and America's vision of the Japanese

Edward Said's concept of Orientalism is central to my understanding of Western discourse about Asia in general, and Japan in particular. In *Orientalism* (1979), Said defined it as a Western style of discourse allowing the imagination, presentation and domination of the "Orient" by the "West". Said was mainly concerned with the European experience of and discourse about empire and colonialism in the Middle East and India, and he acknowledged the exclusion of the Far East from his analysis.[25] Nevertheless, the central tenets of Orientalist discourse as Said defined it are all present in American discourse about Japan during the second half of the twentieth century. These features includes the fundamental and unbridgeable difference between East and West, the feminization and sexualization of the Orient, and its depiction as a monolithic place and a culture frozen in time - all of which could be used to reaffirm the superiority of the West. My thesis thus joins scholars who have applied orientalism within an American context and focused on East Asia as well as Asian-Americans.

Historians Naoko Shibusawa and Christina Klein have shown how Orientalism featured in the US shift from seeing Japan as a racial enemy warranting total destruction during World War II to its closest ally in the Pacific. This shifting stance was typically expressed through the feminization and infantilization of Japan, which also perpetuated a racialized notion of fundamental cultural differences between East and West. American films, especially during the

---

[24] John Lie, "Ruth Benedict's Legacy of Shame: Orientalism and Occidentalism in the Study of Japan," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29, no. 2 (2001).

[25] Edward Said, *Orientalism*, 1st ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1979): 17.

1950s and 1960s, continued to exoticize and eroticize Japanese culture by presenting it as unchanging until its uplifting contact with the modern United States. Shibusawa posits that this reimagining of Japan did not occur through some master plan of the US government but resulted from a shared set of liberal beliefs among cultural producers and politicians during the Cold War. These images about Japanese culture, and Asia more generally, were present in a wide array of cultural productions like movies, books, musicals or travel writing. Cultural producers and politicians deliberately tried to break away from what they saw as antiquated imperialist discourses to counter the accusation of America as a neo-colonial power. As a result, more focus was put on tolerance and inclusion rather than on the unbridgeable difference between East and West. However, these productions remained embedded in an older, well established, orientalist tradition. Japan was still exoticized in many of the same ways as before and the intended message of tolerance was steeped in paternalism on the American part.[26]

Shibusawa and Klein concurred that the shifting depictions of Japan between 1945 and 1992 were part of an effort to make the United States appear more tolerant, multicultural, and cosmopolitan; they were designed so that ordinary Americans could understand themselves as belonging to a nation moving away from colonialism and imperialism to leading the free world. My thesis contributes to this scholarship by considering how culinary discourse about Japan emerged in the same cultural framework. Although the background and personality of individual authors studied cannot be simply dismissed, looking at their writing within this larger context of Cold War liberalism allows to link it to the broader American discourse about Japanese culture in general.

---

[26] Klein, *Cold War Orientalism,* 93.

It is also important to understand the specificities of Orientalism within food discourse. Scholars like Lisa Heldke and Lucy Long have explored how ethnicity, authenticity and exoticism intersect with concepts like cultural capital and how culinary discourse often perpetuate Orientalist and imperialist tropes. Heldke's concept of "food adventurism" refers to an attitude and a set of practices present when engaging with cuisine foreign to one's own cultural background.[27] It is based on two main elements: First, a quest for the exotic, the new or the unknown; second, a tendency to treat other cultures as a resource to be mined for pleasure, entertainment, or self-improvement. These elements are linked by the food adventurer's desire for authenticity when experiencing foreign cuisine. Food adventurism is saturated with values emanating from white middle-class Western masculinity, though was embraced and expressed by other groups as well.[28]

This type of consumption exoticizes other cuisines by assuming that white Americans are a neutral canvas against which foreign cultures can be evaluated. The white Western consumer becomes the arbitrator of the authenticity of a dish, a recipe or a restaurant. This attitude reifies other cultures by condemning exchange, adaptation or the use of industrial food products while celebrating the adaptability and diversity they give us in the West. It tends to present authentic, and thus good, cuisine as an ahistorical reality rather than a constantly evolving and heterogenous system. It also commodifies a culture by reducing it and its representative to a resource to be exploited to amass cultural capital. The problem is that this capital often derives from novelty and nothing stays new for long. This interest and the respect the public has for a

---

[27] Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer*. (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[28] Ibid., xxi.

certain culture can be highly whimsical and superficial. In the case of Japanese cuisine, even as the American discourse became more positive in tone, it still commodified the cuisine by presenting it as something American consumers could use to appear fashionable or cosmopolitan.

Food studies scholar and activist Lucy Long presents a more positive analysis of this kind of exchange. She developed the concept of “culinary tourism” which she defined as "the intentional, exploratory participation in the foodways of an other - participation including the consumption, preparation, and presentation of a food item, cuisine, meal system, or eating style considered to belong to a culinary system not one's own”. Long sees culinary tourism as a negotiation between producers and consumers with the former able to play on the latter’s expectation to tame or reinforce the feeling of otherness expressed by the food. Recognizing the polysemic nature of food and how it accrues different meanings depending on the context and background of both producer and consumer is important to understand how cuisine affects identity formation. Nevertheless, these negotiations occur on unequal footing. The consumption of diversity is more often than not made possible by unequal political and economic global system.[29]

These two authors clearly demonstrate how ethnicity, and its consumption, either through travel, restaurant going or the reading of text, can be key in the creation of cultural capital. Although consuming Japanese food was inscribed within a greater cultural context during the Cold War, it also fulfilled a role on the individual side of identity formation. People did not simply want to eat it because of a pervasive discourse encouraging Americans to open up to the world, which in turn offered them a way to acquire status vis-à-vis their compatriots. Besides,

---

[29] Lucy M. Long, ed., *Culinary Tourism*, Material Worlds (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004): 21.

since eaters derived cultural capital partly from the exotic appeal of a cuisine and since Orientalism exoticized Japanese culture in general, Long and Heldke highlight how the two concepts are linked and mutually reinforcing in food discourse.

Japanese-American experiences

A deeper look into Asian-Americans' experiences in the modern United States generally, and Japanese-Americans' experiences specifically, is necessary to understand the absence of their voices in the post-war discourse on Japanese food. In *The Making of Asian America,* Erika Lee offers an overview of the plurality of Asian-American experiences from the nineteenth century up to the present. She explained that despite this heterogeneity and diversity, both between and within those different ethnic groups, Asian-Americans have long been misunderstood by other Americans as a single monolithic group. Stemming from an Orientalist division between East and West, the first Asian immigrants to the US—Chinese in the nineteenth century—were seen as fundamentally different from Caucasians and characterized as an inferior, backward and submissive people. These notions were reapplied with minimal tweaking to all subsequent Asian immigrants. Even the rise of the model minority myth in the 1960s simply created new stereotypes obscuring the diversity of experiences across the many Asian-American communities. Despite this new positive, but still stereotypical, vision, Asian-Americans remain to this day perpetual aliens within American society.[30]

Some specificities about Japanese-American history help to understand why Japanese cuisine entered mainstream American foodscape only in the late twentieth century. In the late

[30] The wave of anti-Asian racism and hate crimes following the outbreak of Covid-19 demonstrated how Asian-Americans are still perceived as a monolithic group whose belonging and acceptance within American society are still questioned and contested.

nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Japanese-Americans, unlike Chinese-Americans, had access to more avenues for economic advancement other than restaurant and laundry work. They notably played an important role in the agricultural industry of California. In addition, the gender ratio of Japanese immigrants was more balanced compared to Chinese immigrants in this period. Japanese women who immigrated to the US were expected to cook for their family as well as for larger groups of workers. On the other hand, the displacement and interment of 120 000 Japanese-Americans during the Second World War, two-thirds of whom were American citizens, fractured long-established communities on the West Coast. It also divided them by pitting those who advocated for compliance to demonstrate their loyalty and those who felt robbed of their rights as American citizens. World War II opened new possibilities for Asian-Americans, except for those of Japanese ancestry, to prove their loyalty or Americanness.[31]

Japanese-Americans had to wait for the unfurling of the Cold War in order to access those opportunities. The flagrant racial injustice affecting all racialized people in the United States became increasingly embarrassing for the US government who claimed to be leading the free-world against communism and dictatorship. The Soviet discourse emphasizing American racism began to be perceived as a real threat to US influence abroad. Starting in 1952 with the Immigration and Nationalization Act, the government started to slowly repeal the exclusion laws it had previously passed.[32] Starting in the 1960s, the model minority myth, which presented Asian immigrant as model of assimilation and integration, took form. Asian-Americans

---

[31] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans,* 1st (Little, Brown and Company, 1989).

[32] Although the Magnuson Act of 1943 repealed the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and allowed for the naturalization of Chinese-American, Chinese immigration was still restricted by quotas imposed on all Asian immigration. In actuality, the number of Chinese allowed to come to the United States each year was limited to 105.

supposedly integrated well into mainstream society yet still maintained their "good" Asian traits like devotion to family and authority, hard-work and adhesion to normative gender role. This discourse was used both to project an image of a racially inclusive country abroad and also suppress demands for the racial justice of other marginalized groups, most notably African-Americans. This myth obscured the large difference in quality of life between different Asian-American groups and masked persistent inequalities between Asian-Americans and White-Americans or the fact that their acceptance within American society was still fragile and largely influenced by the relations between the United States and their "home country".[33]

Comparing the history of Chinese and Japanese cuisine highlights the specificity of the latter's rising popularity in America during the second half of the twentieth century. Haiming Liu's book *From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express: A History of Chinese Food in the United States* as well as many essays from the collections mentioned above provide a valuable analysis of the history and dissemination of Chinese cuisine in the United States. As I explore in Chapter 3, although both Chinese and Japanese cuisine in America were described with many of the same terms and tropes, the former became a fixture of the American foodscape much earlier than the latter. Both could rely on their exotic appeal to attract white customers but Chinese cooking became popular partly because of its cheapness which it retained across the twentieth century.

Food as a Status Marker

Apart from fulfilling a basic physiological need, food is also highly filtered by culture and serves many social roles. Anthropologist Mary Douglas characterized food as a code; the message of which was "[…] about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion,

---

[33] Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *The good immigrants: how the yellow peril became the model minority,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017)

boundaries and transactions across boundaries."[34] Food works as an identity marker both at the individual and group level. For instance, a vegetarian might forsake meat for moral reasons such as concern for animal welfare while another would refuse specific meats because of religious beliefs, such as Jewish or Muslim prohibitions on pork. Food cultures also differ by nation or region; for example, the various types of barbecue styles across the US or the deep associations between French identity and cuisine, which informs how the country is perceived both domestically and abroad. But, if food can mark inclusion, it is also use to exclude and denigrate. Our culture and upbringing are central to our very understanding of what food is and what is even edible. Foodways have often been used to separate the civilized from the uncivilized.

For instance, Asian immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were seen as an economic and social threat to white Americans. This fear and racial hostility was partly expressed through food. A rice-centered diet was considered unfit for white workers who required "real food" like beef and bread. Samuel Gompers, leader of the American Federation of Labor, explicitly equated Asian workers' diet with the economic threat they represented in his 1902 pamphlet *Meat versus Rice, American Manhood versus Asiatic Coolieism, Which Shall Survive?*. Food in itself was not the real issue, but it served to further alienate Asian immigrants and reaffirm the superiority of white Americans. During the Progressive era, Americans reformers deployed huge efforts to Americanize the diet of all new immigrants. They decried foreign food as inferior either on a moral or nutritional basis, preferring instead what they saw as traditional American fare, which mostly comprised middle-class fare from White New England

---

[34] Mary Douglas, "Deciphering a Meal," in *Myth, Symbol, and Culture*, ed. Clifford Geertz (New York: Norton, 1974):61.

pioneers.[35] They judged the diet of immigrants and the poor as unscientific and that clinging to it out of personal or cultural preference was backward.

Besides ethnic differentiation, food also serves as a factor of social distinction and a source of cultural capital. This concept was first developed by sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in his 1979 *La distinction: Critique social du jugement.* Cultural capital represents the cultural resources either material (e.g: books, works of art, etc.) or institutional (e.g: diplomas, etc.) and the cultural habitus at the disposition of an individual and which serve to bolster their status. This concept became widely influential and generated further study of how it manifests itself in specific cultural fields, like in the culinary realm.

Johnston and Baumann argued that even if food discourse in the US became more inclusive, it also maintained its role as a status marker. Since the 1970s, the category of "good food" vastly expanded through an embrace of more culinary traditions that were previously marginalized as "ethnic" and the valorization of affordable restaurant/food as potentially gourmet. But culinary discourse generally ignores the privileges necessary to enjoy such a lifestyle or the unequal system making this much lauded diversity available.[36] Concepts like authenticity (understood either as a geographical connection, the simplicity of a dish/ingredient or a historical/traditional connection) and exoticism are central to foodie discourse and are often tied to ethnicity.[37] Even if they are used to include an increasing array of cuisine into the gourmet foodscape, they also tend to associate non-white people with premodern lifeways and to present

---

[35] Helen Zoe Veit, "Americanizing the American Diet. Immigrant Cuisines and Not-So-Foreign Foods," in *Modern Food, Moral Food: Self-Control, Science, and the Rise of Modern American Eating in the Early Twentieth Century (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013): 126.*

[36] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*.

[37] Johnston and Baumann, *Foodies*; Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites*.

their cooking in an ahistorical way reminiscent of earlier colonial discourse. These elements were all present in American discourse on Japanese cooking.

Despite cosmopolitanism championing cultural diversity, this celebration is often merely skin deep. Scholars, like Gassan Hage, explored how it could be used to ignore racism, intolerance or the power dynamics making this diversity possible.[38] It is also related to the commodification of other cultures. Within cosmopolitanism, there is the idea of being proficient in another culture and not simply appreciating or engaging with it.[39] From this proficiency is derived cultural capital but it also leads people to see foreign culture as a kind of buffet from which one can pick and choose in order to self-actualize. It is also about performing tolerance and openness which is done by focusing on contrast to underline one's openness. One problem with this vision is that it reinforces the Otherness of the country one is visiting or of a cultural community domestically. Besides, this idea of claiming to be multicultural is often based upon experience within a restaurant and not of engagement with immigrants communities.

As previously mentioned, the notion of cosmopolitanism took a new importance in the United States during the Cold War. Although other ethnicized food could also allow consumers to signal their cosmopolitan nature, Japanese food, because it straddled the line between ethnic food and fine dining, had the added bonus of being associated with economic and cultural elites. It remained quite a niche phenomenon until the end of the 1980s, but this niche was composed of Hollywood stars, businessmen and college educated people. Eating Japanese cuisine in the US meant that you were not only open to the world but also served to associate yourself with high

---

[38] Ghassan Hage, "At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, Ethnic Food, and Migrant Home-Building," in *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sidney's West*, ed. Helen Grace (Pluto Press, n.d.), 99–153.

[39] Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 239

class taste. Americans writing about Japanese cuisine claimed to be cultural translator who made a foreign culture legible to their fellow countrymen. Notwithstanding their intentions or the genuine love they held for this cuisine, their actions contributed to further exoticize Japanese culture and to erase Japanese-American voices.

Chapter 1: Characteristics of an Unchanging Discourse

Between 1945 and 1992, authors writing about Japanese cuisine tended to focus on its visual aspect while largely eschewing its taste. They highlighted its longstanding historical roots and commitment to tradition and imbued it with spiritual, almost esoteric, qualities. Authenticity was also often presented as a marker of quality for Japanese food. These elements stemmed from previous Orientalist discourse and often were mutually reinforcing. For example, the focus on aestheticism served to underline the spiritual aspect of the cuisine.

Aestheticism dominated discourses on Japanese food. Some reviews described abundantly the plating or the serving ware but merely hinted at the taste.[1] The freshness and seasonality of ingredients were often mentioned and an occasional "flavorful" or "delicious" was added to the description of a dish, but reviewers did not expand much more when dealing with the gustatory aspect of the food.[2] Concerning his meal at *Mitsukoshi* in Manhattan, Jay Jacobs, a *Gourmet* writer, mentioned in parenthesis, as a sort of afterthought, that the food was delicious.[3] Similarly, Caroline Bates, a writer for *Gourmet* operating chiefly in Los Angeles and San Francisco, wrote of dishes served at *Mifune* in San Francisco that "even if the dish did not taste good-and it does-it would be worth ordering just for the pleasure of looking at it".[4] The plating was often described with details. For instance, Bates' review of *Akasaka*, another San Francisco

---

[1] Caroline Bates, "Matsuhisa," *Gourmet*, April 1988; Elizabeth Andoh, "Lunch at the Sanko-In," *Gourmet*, 1983: 97; Caroline Bates, "Akasaka," *Gourmet*, 1977: 46

[2] Craig Claiborne, "For Feasting on Sushi, There's a Restaurant in Osaka...," *New York Times*, December 10, 1968: 52; Craig Claiborne, "Dining Out Japanese Style," *New York Times*, May 8, 1970.

[3] Jay Jacobs, "Mitsukoshi," *Gourmet*, June 1990: 4.

[4] Caroline Bates, "Mifune," *Gourmet*, 1979: 113.

establishment, described the colour, shape and motif or pattern of nearly every plate of her meal but never explicitly addressed the taste of the dishes.[5]

This primacy of vision over taste was best encapsulated by the following article from 1965 titled "Oriental Dishes Taste as Good as They Look" in which Craig Claiborne, a famous reviewer for the *New York Times* and a pioneer of American food writing, presented two recently published cookbooks. This title speaks volume to where the interest for this cuisine laid. Although he stated that it also tasted good, the phrasing implied that the readers would assume Japanese cuisine's primary characteristic was its aestheticism. Besides, the first sentence read: "In the visual sense, there is nothing in the world of gastronomy to compare with the food of Japan".[6] The timing of this article is also important. It lavished high praises on Japanese cuisine early after World War II. Although Japan was right in the middle of its decade of miracle economic growth (its GDP increased by 10% per year throughout the 1960s), the first sushi boom which would really popularize Japanese food in the US would not occur until the late 1960s and early 1970s.[7] Yet this emphasis on the visual did not subside in the following decades.

In an article on Kyoto's cuisine, noted American food writer Jeffrey Steingarten mentioned the capital importance of plating in kaiseki and how it must echo not only with the food but also the season. He described in great length how the different courses were presented but only referred to taste thrice when he wrote about "sweetly caramelized fish", "bitter green

---

[5] Bates, *Akasaka*, 6,46.

[6] Craig Claiborne, "Oriental Dishes Taste as Good as They Look," *New York Times*, January 7, 1965: 35.

[7]Eric C. Rath, *Oishii: The History of Sushi* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021): 137; Sasha Issenberg, *The Sushi Economy: Globalization and the Making of a Modern Delicacy*, Reprint edition (New York: Avery, 2008): 87, 97; Theodore C. Bestor, "How Sushi Went Global," *Foreign Policy*, no. 121 (2000): 56.

tea" and the "perfume and sweetness" of a melon.[8] To be fair, he presented kaiseki as the pinnacle of refinement in Japanese cuisine and in the culinary realm in general. Besides, he stated that although he ate bad meals in Paris, he could not find a bad meal in Japan and that it was possible to eat well for as low as $6 per person (around $13,40 today).[9] He also devoted some space to taste in Japanese cuisine and how chefs approached the concept. He argued that flavors were more subtle and less bold than in the West; that different tastes were meant to be used as counterpoints rather than to harmonize in a dish.[10] In the beginning of the article, he implied that Japanese food was delicious but also delicate and not filling enough by saying he longed for a hamburger with fries and a Milky Way after his meal.[11] He argued that Japanese food in Japan was much better than any that was offered in the US which might explain why certain people found it bland.

It is not that taste was entirely absent in the sources I studied; overall, the experiences described by authors were positive, and some elements of taste, like the freshness and quality of the ingredients, were addressed frequently. In a minority of the sources, taste was even more present than the aesthetic of the dish. For example, in a review for Goro's Robata*,* located in San Francisco, Bates described the food as "succulent" and "delectable" and wrote of the "buttery taste" of a fish and the "haunting flavors" of grilled eels.[12] A review for Fuki-ya, situated in Peace Plaza, San Francisco, brought up the fragrant and aromatic sauces and how the grilling

---

[8] Jeffrey Steingarten, "Kyoto Cuisine," *Vogue*, September 1, 1991: 591-92.

[9] Ibid., 590.

[10] Ibid., 592.

[11] ibid., 590.

[12] Caroline Bates, "Goro's Robata," *Gourmet*, 1985: 132-33

enhanced the flavors from the oily flesh of a fish; it addressed the texture of grilled meat and the skill of the chef in grilling each ingredient to the correct doneness.[13] Furthermore, Elizabeth Andoh, a writer and instructor who held a pivotal role in the dissemination of Japanese food in America, refuted the assumption that Japanese always ate frugal and expertly platted meal, pointing out that they also indulged in large quantities of food presented unceremoniously.[14]

Other articles struck a more neutral balance between the visual and gustatory, in which both elements were addressed without one or the other clearly dominating the text.[15] Despite this, most of the sources, even those where taste was positively addressed, described the visual dimension of the cuisine in superlative terms and treated it as an art form in and of itself. Dishes were sometime said to be so beautiful that eating them would constitute vandalism; others were compared to poems, museum pieces or jewels.[16] Taste almost became secondary or merely a support for the presentation of Japanese food.

Most sources strongly associated Japanese cuisine with ideas about premodern Japan and long-standing tradition peppered with some recent and Western additions. Discourse on kaiseki especially tended to emphasized its deep historical roots going back centuries and how it evolved from Buddhist vegetarian cooking and the food served during the tea ceremony. This tendency echoed a well-established Orientalist trope of presenting non-Western cultures as unchanging, deeply traditional and with their heyday situated behind them. In the case of cuisine, Cwiertka argued that the definition of a Japanese cuisine was a modern phenomenon tied to the rise of the

---

[13] Caroline Bates, “Fuki-Ya,” *Gourmet*, 1982: 100.

[14] Elizabeth Andoh, *An American Taste of Japan* (New York : Morrow, 1985): 62-63.

[15] Caroline Bates, “Oomasa,” *Gourmet*, November 1979; Jay Jacobs, “Hyotan Nippon,” *Gourmet*, 1984.

[16] Caroline Bates, “Restaurant Katsu,” *Gourmet*, October 1985., 104; Bates, *Akasaka*, 6.

nation state and imperialism in the late nineteenth century and not the result of a timeless Japanese essence as most writers implied in the sources.[17] Concerning kaiseki, Eric Rath stated that this genre of cooking evolved through time and its contemporary definition was quite recent and heavily dependent on chefs trying to distinguish themselves in a competitive market geared heavily toward tourists.[18] Only one source simultaneously addressed the ancient origins of kaiseki (i.e: Buddhist temple cooking and the tea ceremony) while acknowledging that its contemporary form resulted from recent development though it was published right after the end of the period covered by this thesis.[19]

Although there is nothing inherently esoteric about situating something in the past, there is a spiritual aspect tied to consuming ethnic cuisine as a reaction against modernity. In the United States, the second half of the twentieth century saw rising concerns about food additives and the general healthiness and wholesomeness of the food supply chain as well as criticisms levied against agro-industrial corporations. Consuming ethnic food, and the search for authenticity that often accompanied it, can be read as a reaction against modernity in the sense that it presented a romanticized and nostalgic vision of the past when "things were simpler" and a quest for a less alienating lifestyle.[20] Furthermore, "Oriental" cultures were often imbued with a spiritual aura and authority in contrast with a more modern but more materialistic West. Even in the food realm, countercultural movement in the 1960s and 1970s looked toward Asia, as well

---

[17] Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity,* Reissue edition (London: Reaktion Books, 2015): 9.

[18] Eric C. Rath, *Food and Fantasy in Early Modern Japan* (Berkley:University of California Press, 2010): 26.

[19] Alan Brown, "Kinmata," *Bon Appétit*, October 1, 1993: 120.

[20] Robert Ji-Song Ku, *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014): 38, 228.

as Latin America and the Mediterranean, as a repository of more wholesome food practices.[21] In this context, authenticity can be read both as authentic ingredients (unadulterated) and authentic traditions harkening back to a better time.

A 1971 article titled "To Cook Japanese Style, It Helps If You Have Obliging Butcher" highlights this vision of Japan as more traditional society less affected by the more nefarious aspects of modernity and industrialization. The author described how a Japanese artist living in New York could easily find most ingredients necessary to cook Japanese dishes, but that she sometime had to settle for fish with a faint smell of "diesel oil".[22] The article stated that this issue also affected restaurateurs and that this was due to fishes soaking up the smell and taste of the waters they swam in. Although the article implicitly opposed more wholesome Japanese foodstuff to a more contaminated American food chain, it glossed over the fact that Japan's economic miracle had led to environmental disasters; one of which was the Minamata disease of 1956 caused by methyl mercury which accumulated in fishes consumed by local residents.

The aforementioned emphasis on the aestheticism of Japanese cuisine can also be interpreted as reinforcing this spiritual image. Japanese cuisine was depicted as almost closer to art than cookery; it was imbued with a search for the beautiful, the serene and a holistic vision bringing together the food, the plate and the season. This attitude was most clearly expressed when Claiborne, while discussing the beautiful plating of Japanese cuisine, wrote: "It also has to do with the national, almost ritualistic use for design and order, whether it is in creating a bonsai tree or participating in a tea ceremony. No other cuisine concentrates or puts so much emphasis

---

[21] Warren Belasco, "Food and the Counterculture: A Story of Bread and Politics," in *Food in Global History*, ed. Raymond Grew (Boulder: Westview Press, 1999), 276-78; Elias, 162.

[22] Craig Claiborne, "To Cook Japanese Style, It Helps If You Have Obliging Butcher," *New York Times*, March 4, 1971.

on menus that change visually and gastronomically with the seasons".[23] In this description, cooking was imbued with a ritualistic component stemming from a national essence and was associated with other ritualistic activities like the tea ceremony. Even when the food itself was described in more material terms, the overall experience of consuming Japanese food was ascribed with zen qualities. A review for *Mifune* presented the restaurant as a place for filling and nourishing fare rather for an elaborate meal. Nevertheless, spirituality was still present since the decoration of the establishment was described as a "Japanese mise-en-scène" which "delighted the eyes and refreshed the spirit".[24]

There were more explicit references to spirituality as well, especially when dealing with kaiseki. Many authors described it as much more than fine dining; it was a repast for the soul and a feast for the eyes as well. It was the pinnacle of Japanese cuisine, a celebration of freshness, seasonality and plating. In 1990, Jacobs wrote about the kaiseki menu at *Mitsukoshi* in Manhattan, saying eating it was akin to vandalism, or that he felt like he was in a museum.[25] His description focused on the artistic aspect of the meal and its soul soothing capability. He presented it as "an edible haiku" and as food for the soul rather than the body.[26] He praised the chef's knife skill in superlative terms, writing they almost defied human capability.[27] Similar descriptions already circulated as early as 1969. Rafael Steinberg conferred a special status to kaiseki, stating that "no one can understand Japan and its food without having kaiseki, and no

---

[23] Craig Claiborne, "The Ubiquitous Cuisine of Japan," *New York Times*, April 5, 1978: C1.

[24] Caroline Bates, "Mifune," *Gourmet*, 1979: 112.

[25] Jay Jacobs, "Mitsukoshi," *Gourmet*, June 1990: 4.

[26] Ibidem.

[27] Ibid., 6.

one can appreciate the nuances and rituals of kaiseki without some understanding of the origins of the tea ceremony".[28]

Kaiseki was not the only aspect of Japanese foodways associated with spirituality. When discussing the importance of seasonality in Japanese foodways, Steinberg explained that it was not only about the quality of the ingredient, but because eating seasonally was about communing with the universe.[29] He stated that the Japanese felt a deeply rooted desire to live in harmony with nature going back to the first settler who had arrived on the archipelago.[30] The elevation of Japanese food above the mere role of nourishment was reinforced when he wrote that "a Japanese is not merely taking in food, he is taking in a complete sensory experience".[31] For his part, Steingarten imbued his experience with Kyoto cuisine with a transcendental quality stating that, upon his return to the US, he lost his appetite and longed for Kyoto's food.[32] Jacobs also stated that kaiseki was more about nourishing the soul than the body.[33] Similarly, in an article describing shojin cooking, the food consumed in Buddhist temple, Claiborne presented it as a sort of medicine both for the body and the mind.[34] He was admittedly dealing with a very specific type of cooking, but considering the many references made to Buddhism in discourse on Japanese cooking, notably when addressing meat consumption, it stands to reason that this depiction would also be associated with Japanese cooking more broadly.

---

[28] Rafael Steinberg and Time-Life Books, *The Cooking of Japan*, Foods of the World (New York: Time-Life Books, 1969): 137.

[29] Ibid., 26.

[30] Ibid., 13.

[31] Ibid., 138.

[32] Steingarten, 594.

[33] Jacobs, *Mitsukoshi*, 4.

[34] Craig Claiborne, "Pleasures of the Japanese Table," *New York Times*, January 12, 1983: C1.

An article comparing Christmas and New Year's food and celebrations in six different countries illustrated how spirituality was seen to be pervasive in Japanese culture by Westerners. The coverage for Japan focused heavily on the spiritual aspect of the celebration referring to Buddhist and Shinto beliefs and practices. It mentioned that Japanese ate New Year's noodles which were associated with long life.[35] In contrast, when addressing the menu in Sydney for instance, the author mentioned they ate turkey but did not address the significance of the meal. Religion was addressed in the coverage for other countries as well but it was not tied to the food they ate. The author wrote that Dubliners went to church on Christmas Day and then went home for a family feast but the food they ate was not linked to any spiritual belief. Furthermore, even a celebration tied to Irish folklore, the hunting of the wren, was presented as loosing its superstitious aspect and transforming into a sort of festive pub-crawl.[36] Only Japanese foodways were strongly associated with spirituality which reinforced the impression that Japanese cooking fulfilled a higher purpose than sustenance.

Most of the articles dealing with Japanese restaurants emphasized authenticity of the establishment through elements like decoration, staff or the fact that other patrons were assumed to be Japanese. Some recurring elements were the kimono clad waitresses offering polite and ceremonious service, the broken English of the staff, the chef who trained and worked in Japan before coming over, koto or shamisen playing in the background, rice paper wall, tatamis, bare wood furniture and a traditional Japanese spareness in the decoration.[37] Quality and authenticity

---

[35] Scott Smith, "Capital Celebrations," *Bon Appétit*, December 1993: 129.

[36] Ibid., 124.

[37] Andy Birsh, "Umeda," *Gourmet*, 1990; Caroline Bates, "Goro's Robata," *Gourmet*, 1985; Caroline Bates, "Hamayoshi and Hamasushi," *Gourmet*, 1979; Andy Birsh, "Honmura An," *Gourmet*, 1992; Caroline Bates, "Fuki-Ya," *Gourmet*, 1982; Caroline Bates, "Fuku-Sushi," *Gourmet*, August 1981; Bryan Miller, "Cuisine of Japan and Vietnam," *New York Times*, December 6, 1985; Caroline Bates, "Nanbantei," *Gourmet*, 1984, 96.

were often synonymous and the discourse around Japanese cuisine remained steeped with Orientalist tropes.

To be sure, there were also positive reviews for restaurants that veered away from this "traditional style". A 1980's review for *Gin-Ray*, which the author presented as one of the best sushi bar in New-York, kept the "Sci-Fi" décor of the old discotheque in which it was opened and even had a private club in the back.[38] Besides, even if the owner was a "Tokyo-born entrepreneur" the manager was a "urbane second-generation Californian".[39] This is one of the only acknowledgement of Japanese-American as purveyors of Japanese food. Other positive reviews also emphasized the modern look of some restaurants with a focus on minimalism or the highlighting of the industrial elements of the architecture.[40] This modernity was also reflected in the clientele of those establishments which were frequented by "people of apparent refinement" or "denizens of the publishing or advertising worlds" and other young professionals.[41] Japanese restaurants started to be situated in gentrifying neighbourhoods and had been present in business district since the 1960s.[42] Nevertheless, Japanese restaurants, in Los Angeles at least, would not start opening outside of Japanese enclaves until the 1970s.[43] French-Japanese fusion restaurants were also praised. The fact they were not criticized for bastardizing either French or Japanese

---

[38] Jay Jacobs, "Gin-Ray," *Gourmet*, 1980: 20.

[39] Ibidem.

[40] "Nishi NoHo," *Gourmet*, June 1987; Caroline Bates, "Restaurant Katsu," *Gourmet*, 1985: 103; Caroline Bates, "Katsu 3rd," *Gourmet*, 1990: 107.

[41] "Nishi NoHo," *Gourmet*, June 1987, 114; Jay Jacobs, "Gin-Ray," *Gourmet*, 1980: 20; Jay Jacobs, "Yoshi's Café," *Gourmet*, October 1985, 143.

[42] Jacobs, "Yoshi's Café", 143; Jay Jacobs, "SoHo Robata," *Gourmet*, February 1980, 42; "Nishi NoHo", 114; Craig Claiborne, "Directory to Dining," *New York Times*, December 30, 1966, 29; Unknown, "Simplicity and Quietness Key to Japanese Restaurant Here: Restaurant Uses 'Sukiya' as Style," *New York Times*, October 23, 1963: 304.

[43] Rath, *Oishii*, 146.

cuisine could indicate that Japanese cuisine and techniques were esteemed enough to be considered part of the world of fine dining and were higher in the hierarchy of ethnic cuisines.

With that being said, the fact that most of the reviews used authenticity as a token of quality indicates that the notion remained important when evaluating "ethnic" cuisine. This trend is made more apparent when looking at the cookbooks of the era. All but one focused mainly on authenticity and situating the recipes within a tradition even if some of them also offered, variation, adaptation to American tastes or personal recipes. *Collette's Japanese Cuisine* was the only one explicitly presented as an individual's foray into a foreign cuisine; it used Japanese ethnicity as an inspiration or a resource to be used by the cultural outsider and contained many of the elements discussed above.

The design of the restaurants was not the only factor addressed or praised by reviewers. The freshness of the ingredients and the presentation were often praised despite the occasional fluke due either to poor preparation or the inclusion of a "weird" or "exotic" ingredient which displeased the reviewer. Claiborne even recommended the food from *Daruma* despite the awful and tacky decoration and the poor quality of the service.[44] Jacobs described the décor of *SoHo Robata* as "serene" despite the clash between the industrial aspect of the building and the traditional garb of the staff.[45] Interestingly, across all the articles, desserts left reviewers unimpressed apart from the occasional scoop of ice cream or nice fruit platter.[46] Ironically, the traditionalism so often emphasized or used as selling point and guarantee of quality could also be off-putting. Desserts like *yokan* (a jelly made from red bean paste, sugar and *agar-agar*) and

---

[44] Craig Claiborne, "New Restaurants That Offer Japanese Fare," *New York Times*, November 7, 1969: 54.

[45] Jacobs, *SoHo Robata*, 42.

[46] Jacobs, *Azuma-Ya*, 73; Birsh, *Sushiden*, 123

other using red bean paste received, at best, tepid comments from critics.[47] Similarly, in his otherwise laudatory article, Steingarten implied that Japanese sweets were thoroughly foreign to westerners when he wrote that he was served "a light brown Japanese sweet that seemed no more explicable than any other Japanese sweet I've tasted".[48]

Despite the high praises they received, Japanese restaurants still commanded lower prices than French or Italian cuisine. For instance, in 1969, Claiborne gave 2 stars to the Tokyo-Bangkok, a restaurant serving Thai and Japanese food while giving only 1 star to a French restaurant. This last one commanded prices ranging from $5,25 to $7,50 for a dish at dinner time whereas the prices at Tokyo-Bangkok ranged from $1 to $2,50.[49] Similarly, in a 1966 review, Claiborne gave 2 stars to a Japanese restaurant (Tamura) 2 stars, an Italian one (La Piazetta) and none to a French establishment (La Galerie). The prices at Tamura were between $1.50 and $2,75 for a dish whereas the Piazetta ranged between $2,25 and $5,85 and La Galerie were between $3,50 and $6,75.[50]

Even Kaiseki, despite the superlative praises, fetched lower prices. The price for the *Mitsukoshi* meal described above was $25 per person (about $58 today), though one could call in advance in order to give the chef free reins. In comparison, another review from *Gourmet,* also written in 1990, for *Le Madri,* an Italian restaurant, showed that prices for main courses varied between $21 and $27 ($48 to $62) and first course ranged from $6 to $9 ($14 to $21).[51] Reviews

---

[47] Jacobs, *Azuma-Ya*, 73; Jacobs, *Yama;* Jacobs, *Gin-Ray*, 22; Richie, 92,96.

[48] Steingarten, 592.

[49] Craig Claiborne, "Dining Out On Thai and Japanese Fare," *New York Times*, May 23, 1969.

[50] Craig Claiborne, "Directory to Dining," *New York Times*, December 30, 1966.

[51] Andy Birsh, "Le Madri" *Gourmet*, 1990: 56.

from 1986 indicated that *Sagano*, a Japanese restaurant, offered three kaiseki meal sets at either $40, $50 or $60 while a dinner at the *Campiello*, an Italian restaurant, would cost about $100.[52]

Nevertheless, prices commanded by Japanese restaurants did rise throughout the period. A 1963's review gave an average price of $2.50 for a main dish ($24.50 today).[53] A 1976's review for *Furyu* stated that their price, ranging between $3.95 to $7 for dinner ($21.44-$38), were "average, or a little less, for Japanese food".[54] Ten years later, prices could range from $8.95 to $15.95 ($25.61-$45,63).[55] This rise signals that Japanese cuisine came to be increasingly esteemed. Although its price still did not reach the level of French cooking, it was still well on the way to firmly establish its place within the fine dining world. The following chapter analyses how American authors writing about Japanese food used the elements described above to gain cultural capital. Furthermore, it explores how they fashioned themselves as translators of culture and how this trope echoed ideas of cosmopolitanism popular within the liberal discourse of the Cold War.

---

[52] Andy Birsh, "Sagano," *Gourmet*, June 1986.

[53] Craig Claiborne, "Restaurant on Review. Variety of Japanese Dishes Offered, But Raw Fish Is Specialty on Menu," *New York Times*, November 11, 1963.

[54] John Canaday, "In Yorkville, Pleasant Decor, Good Ideas About Food, and a Full Meal for 10$ or So," *New York Times*, January 16, 1976, sec. Restaurant reviews.

[55] Jay Jacobs, "Azuma Ya," *Gourmet*, 1986.

Chapter 2: Americans as Translators of Japan

In *The Cooking of Japan*, Rafael Steinberg wrote that "a Japanese who is cut off from his traditional diet for too long will become lost and listless".[1] He presented the Japanese as naturally bound to their diet almost like a plant or an animal would be. No such comments were made about Americans withering away if they were cut from their traditional diet in his or any other book. Some of their preferences were mentioned, but Americans were presented as versatile eaters who could eat from any culture in the world and actually be improved by it if only for the fun that there was to be had. It reinforced the idea that white Americans were not ethnic; that they were a sort of neutral norm against which other culture could be measured or inscribed to improve the individual. For its urban and upper middle-class consumers, Japanese cuisine was a way to perform cosmopolitanism.

Cosmopolitanism is generally defined as an attitude of openness, interest, and respect for culture other than one's own. Although the ideal of pluralism and respect it encompasses are laudable, the concept is not free from unequal power dynamics or ethnocentrism. At its core, it posits that cultures are distinctive and discreet entities.[2] Interactions with other culture and openness to alterity thusly focus on and reinforce difference rather than commonality between culture and are often tied to a sense of rejection from your own culture.[3] Individuals can pick and choose from different culture in order to self-actualize and shape their identities. Writing

---

[1] Rafael Steinberg and Time-Life Books, *The Cooking of Japan*, Foods of the World (New York: Time-Life Books, 1969): 22.

[2] Ulf Hannerz, "Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture," *Theory, Culture and Society* 7 (1990): 239.

[3] Ibid., 241.

specifically about food and cooking, Anne Murcott posited that an emphasis on worldliness and familiarity with different culture was based on an "awareness of national identity".[4]

The concept is also linked with the notion of authenticity. Cosmopolitan eaters want to experience foreign cuisine in an unadulterated way. Paradoxically, this often leads to them reifying this culture into a romanticized and exoticized vision rather than seeing it as a living and changing system permeable to outside influence. Thus, seeking authenticity leads them to act as arbiter of what is and is not authentic in a foreign cuisine.

Culinary discourse and cosmopolitanism intersect in other way. Food comes to embody a place and a cultural identity; it becomes a moveable and consumable sign of otherness.[5] A part of a cultural system is taken out of its context and presented as a short hand for that culture and a marker of the eater's tolerance. Cuisines are commodified and fetishized but the broader socio-historical trends making this consumption possible, like imperialism or economic inequalities, largely go unacknowledged.[6] Jennie German Molz argued that "culinary tourism", the practice of exploratory eating, especially of unfamiliar food, which is seen as an encounter with otherness, was "not necessarily [about] knowing or experiencing another culture but about performing a sense of adventure, adaptability, and openness to any other culture".[7]

On an individual level, this is one way in which cosmopolitanism intersects with identity formation. The commodification of food and performance of tolerance serve to reassert the

---

[4] Anne Murcott, "Food as an Expression of Identity," in *The Future of the Nation State: Essays on Cultural Pluralism and Political Integration*, ed. S. Gustavson and L. Lewin (London: Routledge, 1996): 66.

[5] Jennie Germann Molz, "Eating Difference: The Cosmopolitan Mobilities of Culinary Tourism," *Space and Culture* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 78.

[6] Ibid., 82; Ghassan Hage, "At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, Ethnic Food, and Migrant Home-Building," in *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sidney's West*, ed. Helen Grace (Pluto Press, n.d.): 142 .

[7] Molz, 82.

normality of the eater's culture and to position the others at the periphery. Ethnicity becomes a seasoning; a little extra added to your own cultural identity to spruce it up.[8] Encounters with different cuisines become less about engaging and learning about the Other and more about testing your own limits both physically (consumption of "weird" or "exotic" food) and culturally (openness). Besides crystallizing the alterity of other ethnic groups vis-à-vis yours, cosmopolitan eating also discriminates within a group. Familiarity, proficiency, and adventurousness with other cultures are all sources of cultural capital.

Starting in the 1960s, this kind of cosmopolitanism gained traction in the United States. The 15 years following the end of World War II were marked by largely conservative food taste in America. Trying "ethnic" food often meant going into ethnic enclaves, either to buy the required ingredients or to patronize a restaurant, which few were willing to do.[9] Middle-class status was tied more to the quantity rather than the quality of your food. The culture of eating out in restaurants also declined during those time. The rise of suburban life and the apparition of the television took patrons away from restaurants. Besides, the rising cost of labor at the time also meant that restaurateurs were cutting cost by using convenience food like frozen vegetables making restaurant fare more similar to home cooking.[10] Based on restaurant reviews of the times,

---

[8] bell hooks, "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance," in *Eating Culture*, ed. Ron Scapp and Brian Seltz (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998): 181.

[9] Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*, First Edition, Revised edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003): 121.

[10] Ibid., 127-130.

restaurant food was not highly esteemed either.[11] Rather than a decline in the quality however, Harvey Levenstein posited that critics favoured criteria like cleanliness over taste.[12]

In the 1960s, French cuisine made a comeback as a status marker, new cooking philosophy, like the Nouvelle Cuisine, burgeoned in the 1970s and an increase in the ability of Americans to travel internationally participated in broadening the culinary horizons of the nation. The 1960s and 1970s saw an "ethnic food boom".[13] Knowing how to cook and how to eat resurfaced as a status symbol and were especially important among people in their 20s and young professionals. Familiarity with ethnic cuisine and an emphasis on seeking/discerning authenticity afforded eaters cultural capital. It allowed for the creation of a kind of culinary elite which sought to distance itself from middle-class taste.[14] Among a widening class gap, cosmopolitan eating also made one's lifestyle a way to aspire to a certain social standing without necessarily having the same financial power as before. Food corporations also embraced wholeheartedly this "ethnic boom". They mostly gave an "ethnic twist" to old and familiar products by using spice or seasoning. This also allowed them to veer away from increasingly frowned upon additives like salt and msg without making their product tasteless.[15]

The tourism that fueled this rising interest in ethnic food was closely tied to American imperialism which contributed to the development of tourism itself in certain regions, most notably in Southeast Asia. Mark Padoongpatt argued that US hegemony and military presence in

---

[11] It should be mentioned that there were few critics in the 1950s. This type of writing really only took of with Craig Claiborne who wrote for the New York Times starting in 1958.

[12] Levenstein, 127

[13] Ibid., 217

[14] Ibid., 222.

[15] Ibid., 224

Asia during the Cold War made the region accessible for Americans. In 1959, of the 7 000 000 Americans who traveled abroad, 500 000 went to an Asian country.[16] He wrote: "the U.S. tourist industry created maintained, and justified unequal encounters based on race, gender, and class".[17] Tourism was both fueled by an increasing interest in Asia and contributed to this growth. The commitment of the US government to maintain a dominant relation with newly independent Asian nations led them to actively fund the development of tourist infrastructures (e.g: air strips) so that the economic interest of those nations would remain oriented toward the American consumers.[18] Organization like the Pacific Area Travel Association marketed insistently the idea of travel as a benevolent form of patronage the American consumer could bestow on less fortunate countries.[19] Added to this situation was the fact that there was a massive presence of American military in East and South Asia during the period who might developed a taste for Asian food while stationed abroad. Besides, travel writing like James Michener's *The Voice of Asia* piqued the interest of American at home. The increase in discourse about and accessibility to Asia contributed to make Asian food much more popular in America.

According to Padoongpatt, in the late 1950s and the 1960s, there was a fascination among white Americans, especially suburban women, with Asia and its different cuisines which predated the massive influx of Asian immigrants that was to occur shortly after. Others also drew a parallel between the enjoyment and elevation of a foreign cuisine and the small demographic

---

[16] Mark Padoongpatt, "'Oriental Cookery' Devouring Asian and Pacific Cuisine during the Cold War," in *Eating Asian America*, ed. Robert Ji-Song Ku, Anita Mannur, and Manalansan (New York: New York University Press, 2013): 197

[17] Ibid., 200

[18] Ibid., 197

[19] Ibid., 198

weight of this foreign group within the host country.[20] Cooking and eating Asian food granted cultural capital and authority, especially for the (white) women who taught cooking class and wrote cookbooks on the subject. But apart from the distinction they brought, those cuisine were also intimately tied to Cold War geopolitical issues. As previously stated, engaging with foreign cuisine allowed Americans to make more tangible the different regions and people involved in the Cold War and made them more susceptible to support US intervention and imperialism.[21]

Donald Richie exemplifies wonderfully the kind of person involved in presenting Japan to the United State. He was a writer who lived in Japan from 1953 until his death in 2013 and was most famous for introducing Western audiences to Japanese cinema, though he also wrote about Japanese culture and society at large including food. In an interview conducted in 2003, Richie stated that he valued his status as a foreigner in Japan. He mentioned that as an outsider, he could better observe the culture and form his own opinion on it. He stated that he had always written for non-Japanese readers with the goal of making sense of the culture he was immersed in.[22] His obituary stated that he actively sought to escape the provinciality of his native Ohio which was a major factor in his decision to go live in Japan.[23]

Richie explicitly fashioned himself as an in-betweener and critiqued what he perceived as a kind of cultural narrow mindedness in the US. In *A Taste of Japan*, he derided certain elements of the American foodscape such as Kentucky Fried Chicken.[24] This self-conscious break away

---

[20] Padoongpatt, 186; Levenstein, 216; Hage, *At Home in the Entrails of the West*.

[21] Padoongpatt, 188-189

[22] Jasper Sharp, "Midnight Eye Interview: Donald Richie," Midnight Eye, December 8, 2003, http://www.midnighteye.com/interviews/donald-richie/.

[23] Jasper Sharp, "Donald Richie Obituary," *The Guardian*, February 21, 2013, sec. World news.

[24] Donald Richie, *A Taste of Japan : Food Fact and Fable. What the People Eat : Customs and Etiquette* (Tokyo ; New York : Kodansha International, 1985): 28.

from America might explain why his book focused more explicitly on the differences between the two societies. Furthermore, the intended readership was clearly Western, and it was not meant to be a cookbook but an introduction to Japanese cuisine, which placed it within its larger cultural context. He saw himself not as a food writer but as a cultural observer and translator.

Although other authors were not as explicit, they perceived their role similarly, at least when it came to cookbook authors. Janeth Nix for instance wrote that a stranger in a foreign land was like a sponge which could soak up more of that culture in a few weeks than someone who lived in it.[25] She claimed to have acquired a "thorough grounding" in both modern and traditional technique after spending a day cooking with the mother of a friend while in Japan.[26] Furthermore, she stated that her goal was to render "oriental" cooking legible and practical for Americans and their lifestyle. Although the notion of adaptation present in her text differs from Richie's, the two of them still claimed to be cultural translators.

Japanese-Americans were also presented and valued as a cultural bridge between Japan and the United States during the Cold War. But this bridging capability seemed restrained to geopolitics. Although their duality was praised as a way for the United States to create and maintain positive ties with Japan, this kind of discourse excluded Japanese-Americans from the body of US society. They were perceived as having knowledge about Japan and Japanese culture even if they had been born and raised in the United States and had never been to Japan. Even if culture had replaced race in debates about assimilation, it was still used in similar ways to the former concept. Culture was still largely seen as immutable and something you innately

---

[25] Janeth Johnson Nix and Chevron Chemical Company. Ortho Book Division, *Adventures in Oriental Cooking* (San Francisco : Ortho Book Division, Chevron Chemical Co., 1976): 3.

[26] Ibid., 4.

possessed. Despite the emergence of the model minority myth and the new value put on multiculturalism, Asian-Americans were still perceived as somewhat alien; as people who were not completely American and whose belonging could always be questioned.

Culinary wise, this role of translator was taken by White or Japanese authors. It could be because in the case of food, contrary to geopolitics, the goal was less to bridge differences rather than to preserve what was seen as a discreet cultural entity, even though some authors talked about adaptation. Nix's case is particularly interesting considering, as discussed later, that she was quite dismissive of immigrants adapting their cuisine even if she herself saw no trouble in adapting their cuisine for American consumers.

Despite Richie's importance in American discourse on Japan, Stuart Griffin's *Japanese Food and Cooking*, published in 1956, offers a better starting point against which to compare subsequent cookbooks. It was reprinted at least 20 times up until 1969 which hints at its popularity. Besides, it was published before Japan's rise as an economic superpower, before the first American sushi boom and at a time when Japan still occupied an ambivalent position in the American imaginary. Although the reverse course of the occupation policies (starting in 1947 and lasting until the end of the occupation in 1952), Mao's victory in China in 1949 and the Korean War (1950-53) gave a new importance to Japan in US foreign policy which required the Japanese to become allies rather than mortal enemies, this rebranding was not completed at least until 1964.[27] Even then, many Americans remained suspicious of Japanese people.

Even if Griffin generally encouraged the reader to try Japanese food and list many dishes he liked, he was far less elegiac than later authors were. He was the only one who explicitly

---

[27] Naoko Shibusawa, *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006): 289.

addressed bad Japanese food or the disgust some Americans might have toward it, stating that some would refuse to eat it even if their live depended on it.[28] He nuanced this picture, conceding that the occupation led many men to develop an interest for it. Later authors would also address their dislike of certain ingredients, but they'd generally presented those as acquired taste rather than flatly dismissing them as unpalatable. Another point of departure with most of the other sources was the little emphasis put on the aesthetic aspect of Japanese cuisine or the importance of seasonality and nature. He stated that fish for sushi should be fresh and seasonal but apart from that and a passing reference to presentation made to suggest nature, very little was devoted to those characteristics of the cuisine that are abundant in later text. There was also little reference made to a timeless or ahistorical tradition.

These differences stemmed from the fact that this book was aimed at Americans living in Japan. The prices of ingredient were in yen, he referred to Japanese maid, and incited the reader to stroll Tokyo's avenues. It read like a guide to hosting other Americans and was less about gaining proficiency in another culture and more about a kind of colonial elite seeking entertainment abroad. This was made apparent by mentions of Japanese domestics doing the actual cooking and to entertaining guests at a party.[29] Although ideas of exoticism and adventurous eating are part of cosmopolitan discourse on food, they are often more subdued or even unconsciously included. In this case, they appeared front and centre and Griffin's attitude was more openly chauvinistic. He seemed to be very confident in the superiority, or at least the normality, of American culture.

---

[28] Stuart Griffin, *Japanese Food and Cooking* (Tokyo, Rutland, Vt: C. E. Tuttle Co, 1956): xii

[29] Ibid., xiv-xv, 34, 37

Even if he praised and enjoyed certain aspects of Japanese cuisine, he tended to present it as a quaint little thing; something that was enjoyable but thoroughly foreign and excitingly different rather than a tradition in its own right. He presented a mackerel recipe as an “oriental treatment for a beloved American dish” or a chestnut recipe as an “unusual” way to cook an American favourite rather than addressing the dish in its own context.[30] In the same vein, he encouraged readers to “explore” Japanese confectioneries which Americans were often ignorant about stating that there was a “rich variety of Japanese cakes and biscuits awaiting his [i.e: the American consumer] approval”.[31] Even if it was only a short passage, it presented Japanese cuisine as passively awaiting its discovery and recognition by the Western eater.

Despite the overall tone of the book veering more toward the colonial than the cosmopolitan, traces of the latter still appear. A recipe for vinegared scallops warns that it might not please everyone and that only a "special class" of gourmet will enjoy it. Though not explicitly stated, there is an idea that culinary taste is tied with worldliness and willingness to interact with other culture. This notion, as stated above, is central to cosmopolitan eating and would become much more present and important in later text.

This shift becomes more apparent when comparing Griffin’s book to Nix’s *Adventure in Oriental Cooking* which was published in 1976. Nix was a white woman born and raised in Los Angeles who moved to Kobe in 1967 for three years due to her husband’s job. Her book read more like a lifestyle manifesto than a cookbook. It is a bit lengthier than 100 pages, the first third of which is devoted to introducing “oriental cookery” (Chinese and Japanese) and the last 20

---

[30] Ibid., 129, 19

[31] Ibid., 140

pages explaining how to grow your own vegetables and greens. Furthermore, although she repeatedly emphasized the importance of vegetables and the smaller meat portions used in Japanese and Chinese cooking, the majority of her recipes included or primarily feature meat.

This organization and dissonance between her presentation and the recipes offered suggest a contrast between discourse and eating preference regarding Japanese cooking. A certain lifestyle (healthier eating, openness, etc.) was sold to the readers but it seems like their culinary preference might not align with it, hence the need to adapt the cuisine. Adaption and hybridization are normal parts of most cultural encounters but in this case, it seems less like gradual mixing and more like a way to fix a cognitive dissonance present among the majority white population. This is even more jarring considering that she derided or snubbed immigrant restauranteurs in the United States for adapting their fares to American palates in the same paragraph where she stated that her recipes were adapted for American taste, pantry, and schedule.[32] This showcases the type of engagement with a foreign cuisine available through cookbooks and how it could lead to cultural capital.

Many of the female authors studied here, like Nix or Elizabeth Andoh, lived in Japan and used this fact to claim authority over Japanese cuisine. Even those who did not live in Japan but traveled there, like Colette Rossant, were able to take advantage of their privileged position (i.e: White, American) to carve a space for themselves as women in the public sphere in the United States. They profited from their husband's mobility as professionals or military personnel to gain credibility and authority over a foreign culture which in turn helped them gain more notoriety domestically as cultural translators or tastemakers. Their texts, rather than making sense of

[32] Nix, 4-5.

Japan's new economic power and its relation vis-à-vis the United-States, integrated the spoils of US imperialism while also justifying it or making it appear as more benevolent. Furthermore, as was the case with Nix, it allowed them to erect themselves as arbiter of authenticity.

On the surface, Nix's attitude and tone were more positive and open than Griffin's. Nevertheless, her writing still contained Orientalist and colonial elements and undertones which exemplify the unequal power dynamics involved in the consumption of ethnic food. Liora Gvion argued that after the Second World War, cookbooks on ethnic cuisine sought to adapt them to American taste in order to facilitate their appropriation and the fashioning of America as a multicultural society.[33] Ethnicity and pluralism became central to the definition of American identity, the former being commodified to facilitate the latter. Furthermore, foreign cuisines still needed to be accessible to American cooks and palates which meant that some curating, shortcuts or workarounds were still necessary as exemplified by Nix's book.[34] The ethnicity of the "Other" needed to remain unspoiled by modern influence to preserve its authenticity. Yet, Americans could diversify their diet and dishes by "ethnicizing" them a bit with the addition of soy sauce, chilli or other ingredients.[35]

This focus on authenticity also led to history becoming a staple in explaining and presenting a country's cuisine.[36] The issue with this is that authors often presented authenticity and ethnicity as unchanging.[37] Both were seen as originating in a romanticized past and authors

---

[33] Liora Gvion, "What's Cooking in America? Cookbooks Narrate Ethnicity: 1850–1990," *Food, Culture & Society* 12, no. 1 (2009): 59

[34] Ibid., 68

[35] Ibid.,69

[36] Ibid., 66

[37] Ibid., 68

felt apt to assess if a contemporary iteration of it was valid or not. They saw immigrants as unreliable source of knowledge since they were too influenced by mainstream American culture. True authenticity came from abroad and from the past.

An article by Rossant describing her travel in Japan demonstrates how shallow concerns over authenticity could be. She began her account writing that she set out on "a quest for the wonders of Japanese food and tradition".[38] Ironically, she then stated that *ryokan,* traditional Japanese inn, were great for food and tradition but that Western hotels were much better for a prolonged stay.[39] This passage exemplifies how authenticity was commodified: by briefly visiting a business, you could acquire a better grasp of a foreign culture. Similarly, she told of a trip made to Asakusa (downtown Tokyo) which she presented as a place "bursting with people" and one of the most exciting shopping areas of the city".[40] She stated people went there to shop for antiques and curios from all around Japan. It is somewhat ironic that she went looking for antique and tradition in a highly popular commercial sector of a city which she had earlier described as Americanized.[41]

It is important to remember the aspirational nature of cookbooks. Despite the pragmatic aspect they have (i.e: giving instruction to cook a certain dish) they tell us little about what people ate and much more about the culture, values and desired lifestyle of those who read them. They are "reinforcing class identities, establishing communal historical narratives, providing,

---

[38] Colette Rossant, "Bon Voyage," *Bon Appétit*, October 1, 1986: 50.

[39] Ibidem.

[40] Ibidem.

[41] Ibidem.

like other kinds of fiction, a diversion from the reader's personal experience of the usual".[42] John D. Keys' *Japanese Cuisine: A Culinary Tour*, published in 1966, perfectly represents the idea of the cookbook as a lifestyle guide and a form of escapism from the quotidian. Keys was born in San Francisco where he had a catering business which focused on "the exotic and the unusual". He spoke Chinese and translated cookbooks in English and toured Japan with his wife prior to publishing this book which is the only one he wrote about Japan. Although identified as a cookbook, it could just as well have been labelled as a travel guide.

The first section of the book, entitled " A Culinary Tour of Japan", consist of the presentation of a region's or locality's gastronomic fortes and a recipe either of a famous dish from the region or one showcasing one of their ingredients. The other section of his book is 21 pages long and is entitled "Modern Tokyo Cuisine". It consists of a 3-page introduction where he addressed the foreign influences on Japanese cuisine followed by recipes. Nevertheless, apart from the use of certain ingredients like frankfurters and peanut butter, these recipes are very similar to the one presented in the first section.[43]

Overall, this book seems more geared toward the American traveler in Japan than the home cook. The recipes are fairly simple in that they did not include many steps or specialty ingredients (or ingredients period). Although things like miso and soy sauce might not have been widely available in US supermarkets in 1966, they are shelf-stable ingredients which are easier to import and store than certain fresh ingredients mentioned in other cookbooks. Nevertheless, the recipes were not introduced or contextualized further than their link to a certain region in

---

[42] Megan J. Elias, *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017): 4; 239.

[43] John D. Keys, *Japanese Cuisine; a Culinary Tour* (Tokyo, Rutland, Vt., C.E. Tuttle Co, 1966): 108, 106.

Japan. Most of the other cookbooks included a small paragraph which often gave an idea on when to serve a dish or how to save time by prepping some things ahead. The recipes were more about Japanese dishes in Japan rather than how to integrate them in your cooking.

Although this could be seen as an example of engaging with a foreign cuisine on its own terms, it also speaks volume to the prescriptive nature of cookbooks. Besides the elements noted above, there was also the fact that the glossary was just as long as the section about modern Tokyo cuisine and that it contained entries for ingredients or utensils not used in any of his recipe. Even if the recipes were accessible, the core of the book was more about becoming knowledgeable about Japanese food and foodscape rather than actually cooking it. The majority of the information is about Japan's foodscape and would not be very useful unless you were planning on making a gastronomical tour of Japan yourself.

The interest of this book resided in the familiarity you could acquire on Japanese cuisine by reading it. This desire for proficiency with the foreign is one of the key aspect of cosmopolitanism. This knowledge about some niche aspects of Japanese cuisine (e.g: that the best katsuobushi comes from Kochi) has very little use in everyday life. This kind of specialized fact is associated with cultural capital.[44] The description of the different regions emphasized a rural, almost pastoral, vision of Japan, but did not address the more urban and modern aspect of the country. To be fair, there was a section devoted to modern cuisine, but even it did not really address so much the contemporary realities of Japan and focus more on foreign influence on cooking during the Meiji period. This discourse tried to familiarize the reader with Japan at the

---

[44] Lisa Heldke, *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer.* (New York: Routledge, 2003): 76

same time as keeping the country and the culture foreign enough to be of value for the American consumer seeking distinction and escape from the mundane.

Oftentimes, interaction with the Other centered around food is limited to an interaction with an idealized or romanticized vision of a culinary culture rather than an engagement with people from that culture and take place in a setting where the consumer is more privileged than the producer. Even if you end up enjoying this "strange food" either because the only problem with it was your apprehension or because it was curated to the taste of the majority (either by being adapted or because it represented a selected item from a larger repertoire of dishes), it does not necessarily lead to a rethinking of your notions or prejudices about a particular culture or ethnicity. I can enjoy tempura and still believe that Japanese culture is particularly geared toward spirituality or that Japanese are more feminine than Westerners.

Discourses on ethnic cuisine contain the idea of a project where tolerance and multiculturalism can be achieved, or at least approached, through food. Two Gourmet articles in particular explicitly linked the consumption of Japanese food to the broader geo-political context between Japan and the United-States. A review from 1988 opened with "beautiful food is a bridge between culture" presenting it as the slogan for the restaurant Sushiden. It then followed by stating that the current economic tension between the United-States and Japan was the chasm that needed bridging premising that "Beautiful , expertly authentic Japanese food is much more pleasant to think about than a trade deficit or a weak dollar".[45] The author also wrote about his trip to Tokyo the year before and how his dollar allowed him few yen to explore the city's fine-

[45] Andy Birsh, "Sushiden," *Gourmet*, February 1, 1988: 118.

dining scene. Another article from the same year referenced the growing wealth of Japan stating humorously that buying skyscrapers was becoming a hobby for the Japanese.

This occurred one year before the Mitsubishi group bought the Rockefeller Centre. Around the same time, other Japanese corporations had previously bought American landmarks such as Columbia Pictures (Sony) and Pebble Beach Golf Links. Despite British and Dutch real estate ownership in the USA still surpassing that of Japan, Japanese foreign investment was singled out as representing a selling-out of America's soul.[46] Despite this acknowledgement of broader economical, social, or geo-political issues, the cultural bridging presented here was essentially hedonistic and superficial.

The cosmopolitanism presented here, which was conceived as leading to greater tolerance, was reserved for people rich enough to dine out or travel. It failed to address the economic and political discourse which contributed to antagonize Japanese due to their increasing global economic power. For instance, the Sushiden review mentioned above was published six years after the murder of Vincent Chin, a Chinese-American killed by two Detroit auto-workers who thought he was Japanese and accused him of stealing their job. Obviously, the goal of a restaurant review is not to give an in-depth analysis of trade deficit and racism. But, the kind of multiculturalism advocated for in this kind of text can give a false sense of tolerance and openness which omits the more violent aspect that can also come from cross-cultural contact.

Notwithstanding this superficiality, these sources demonstrated that the producers of these discourses where aware of the larger context in which they wrote even if, as will be discussed in the following chapter, their socio-economic status might have greatly insulated them

---

[46] Michael Schaller, *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the Occupation*, 1st edition (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997): 255.

from the impact of this situation or meant that they were not the primary target of the discourse demonizing Japan. Despite the shortcoming of the cultural pluralism they were championing, they saw food as a factor for the improvement of society. Although it was heavily geared toward pleasure, they conceived of food as political as well.

Cosmopolitanism had larger political implications beyond the cultural capital it conferred to individual. After World War II and with the start of the Cold War, the USA proclaimed itself leader of the free world. This led to discursive change within the country and abroad. Washington needed to overcome the isolationist sentiment held by many Americans as well as to fashion the country as a worthy world leader. Openness, multiculturalism, and tolerance became central to counter the images of the USA as an imperialist and racist power.[47] Culinary discourse fit within the larger trend of Cold War liberalism that Klein observed in other cultural productions of the era. For instance, she argued that for differences to be bridged, they had to be highlighted which often maintain the Otherness of Asians within the American imagination.[48] Culinary discourse also focused on differences to make a foreign cuisine appealing. But, even when this cuisine became accepted in the American mainstream, a balance between familiarity and difference had to be maintained for the cuisine to keep its role of status marker.

The discourse of cultural producers, like Hollywood studios or cookbook writers, aligned more or less naturally with Washington's. Klein and Shibusawa argued that it did not result from some central plan but rather reflected a "Cold War hegemonic bloc" which aimed to reframe

---

[47] Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003): 40-43.

[48] Ibid., 93

American identity.[49] But this new cosmopolitan identity was not necessarily accepted in its entirety. The introduction to Rossant's book *Colette's Japanese Cuisine*, written by the humorist/ columnist Calvin Trillin, derided persons who tried to broaden their horizon by mixing seaweed and bean paste and creating weird concoction which were not especially enjoyable.[50] He seemed to be taking a jab at yuppies, the young professional of the 1980s who used food as a status symbol. Although done humorously, it reflected a certain reticence vis-à-vis foreign cuisine.

Even if he did not personally strongly believe in it, for the joke to work, it implies that a large enough number of people perceived Japanese food as mostly composed of "weird" stuff from the sea and thoroughly alien to the American palate. Another similar example is an article written by Russell Baker titled *Fodders Knows Best* in which Baker, a writer known for his satirical tone, wrote small vignettes on different cuisine, including American cuisine. He presented Japanese cuisine as mostly composed of raw fish and other oddities which you had to eat sitting uncomfortably on the floor and which required constant interrogating of the waiting staff to comprehend.[51] He stated that it was a cuisine fit for yuppies and liberals. Interestingly, he also criticized the French for trying to make you eat weird ingredients like snails or brain.[52]

Baker clearly linked cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism and ethnic food with a liberal attitude. Yuppies would eat anything that was fashionable and allowed them to let the world know about it. On the other hand, conservatives were criticized for their provinciality and stubbornness. He presented them as only wanting to eat steak, potato, fried chicken, barbecued

---

[49] Ibid., 120

[50] Colette Rossant, *Colette's Japanese Cuisine* (Tokyo ; New York : Kodansha International ; New York, N.Y. : Distributed in the US by Kodansha through Harper & Row, 1985): 9-10

[51] Russell Baker, "Fodder Knows Best: Cuisines as Seen by a Conservative," *New York Times*, May 21, 1986.

[52] Ibidem

ribs, coleslaw and gin. He pointed the irony of people complaining about raw fish not sitting right in their stomach while praising heavy and greasy food like pizza, burgers and fries which made your belly sing "the music of America".[53]

Although humorous and caricatural, these article hints at how people outside of food media might have perceived Japanese food. In the same vein, the scene from *The Breakfast Club* in which Claire (Molly Ringwald) eats sushi for lunch which prompts John Bender (Judd Nelson) to say "won't accept a guy's tongue in her mouth but she will eat that!?" showcases how Japanese food was represented and perceived more generally. Despite the economic rise of Japan and its status as America's ally, Japanese food was still equated with raw fish and deemed wholly alien at least for certain segment of the population.

Apart from the implication that foreign cuisines served to enliven the drudgery of the routine, there was also an element of distinction to the consumption of Japanese cooking. This is apparent in Nix's book when she contrasted everyday cooking, where she focused more on efficiency and served foreign dishes in an American meal structure, with banquet or hosting cooking where she encouraged housewives to cook many dishes, use diverse and fancy plates and explicitly addressed the great amount of work and practice needed to pull it off.[54] The hinted unfamiliarity with Japanese cooking and her comments on using it to host meal with friends implied that foreign cuisine worked as a status symbol.

Iris Laemmerhirt compared the rising popularity of sushi to turn of the century's attitude toward Japanese art. She contended that ethnicity became interesting due to the divergence from

---

[53] Ibidem

[54]Nix, 11;16

the norm it provides and an escape from the "sameness" of mainstream culture.[55] Japanese food, like its art before, became a commodity; a shorthand for those wanting to display their commitment to a healthy lifestyle or their search for spiritual fulfillment. Japanese cuisine popularity coincided with other food trend and a reaction against the increasing awareness of some of the problems of the American agro-industrial complex.[56] In this context, ethnic food and the emphasis put on authenticity were a reaction against modernity. They indicated both a yearning for a romanticized past and an alternative to the alienation brought by modernity.[57]

bell hooks outlined especially clearly the complex interplay between commodification and appreciation by arguing that Otherness represents an alternative mode of being for disillusioned white youth. She advanced that this desire to "become the Other" rather than to shape them in your own image can be seen as an improvement to the previous disdain toward Otherness.[58] Nevertheless, this kind of discourse generally veers toward the fantasy and wish fulfillment perpetuating older racist tropes rather than a constructive form of pluralism.[59] It glosses over past and current experience of racism and transforms culture into a commodity which can easily be bought and sold without having to think about the power relations undermining this consumption. She wrote: "Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture".[60]

---

[55] Iris-Aya Laemmerhirt, *Embracing Differences: Transnational Cultural Flows Between Japan and the United States* (Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2014): 115; bell hooks, 183.

[56] Chapters 11 and 12 in Levenstein's *Paradox of Plenty* offer a good summary of this development.

[57] Ku, 36; bell hooks, 186.

[58] bell hooks, 185-86

[59] Ibid., 200.

[60] Ibid., 181.

Chapter 3: Japanese Food in America

The following chapter explores how Japanese cuisine was popularized in the United States. It compares its path to that of Chinese cuisine in order to highlight the top-down fashion in which Japanese food was disseminated. It also examines how people who claimed authority over Japanese cuisine using the discursive methods detailed in the previous chapter presented it to the American public and how this diffusion excluded Japanese-Americans.

Setting the Table: Japanese and Chinese presence in the United States and the popularization of their cuisine

The history Japanese-Americans highlights why Japanese cuisine spread from the top-down like it did. Comparing it with the history of Chinese-Americans and Chinese restaurants puts this specificity forward. Although Japanese immigrants opened restaurants and grocery stores, those were confined to Japanese neighbourhoods and catered to members of the community. Chinese immigrants came to the West Coast nearly four decades before the arrival of the first official Japanese immigrant in 1885. They helped settled the San Francisco area by opening business catering to white workers, in turn facilitating the subsequent wave of Chinese immigration. Chinese restaurants had been popular in the first years of the Gold Rush, had fallen out of favour by the last decades of the nineteenth century and rose up in popularity again starting in 1900 with the apparition of chop suey. Its cheapness and its marketing as an exotic oriental dish made it appealing for mainstream eaters. Chinese entrepreneurs rapidly expanded outside of Chinatown to bank on the popularity of the dish making it even more trendy. Even Japanese immigrants operated chop suey joints in the early twentieth century.[1]

---

[1] Haiming Liu, *From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express: A History of Chinese Food in the United States*, Asian American Studies Today (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015): 61

Although Japanese immigrants faced much of the same hostility and racism the Chinese did, their situation differed on many points. Tokyo was much more involved in defending the rights of its expatriates than Beijing. This meant that Japanese did not initially face the same immigration restrictions. For instance, in 1905, the San Francisco school board tried to bar Japanese from studying in white schools. This angered the Japanese government who spoke with Washington resulting in the cancelling of the board's policy.[2] Another example would be the Gentlemen agreement of 1908 between Tokyo and Washington which restricted the immigration of Japanese labourers while leaving a loophole allowing for the continued immigration of women. Between 1911 and 1920, women represented 39% of all Japanese immigration to the US.[3]

From the start, the Japanese government had encouraged women to emigrate to the United States. Some came as part of the picture bride system to marry migrants already in the country but others came as workers.[4] They entered wage labor but were also responsible for all domestic tasks, notably cooking for their family and, sometimes, for larger groups of workers.[5] This might explain the lower number of Japanese restaurant and consequently the smaller place occupied by Japanese food in American consciousness.

Another factor was the different status held by Japan and China at the turn of the twentieth century. Japan was a budding imperialist nation which had defeated Russia in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese war. It enjoyed a higher status than China in America's eyes, but

---

[2] Ronald Takaki, *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, 1st (Little, Brown and Company, 1989): 201.

[3] Ibid., 46.

[4] Ibid., 47.

[5] Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016): 117.

Japanese were also seen as a menace in the Pacific. Immigrants were feared as an insidious colonizing or invading force.[6] Although Chinese-Americans were denigrated as coolies threatening the standard of living of white workers, their exclusion from most economical sectors and their confinement to laundry, restaurant and domestic work rendered them less threatening. This could explain why Americans patronized more Chinese restaurants and why Japanese restaurants did not reached beyond Japanese communities until after World War II.

Though there were more Chinese than Japanese immigrants across the United States, this fact alone cannot explain the difference in the number of restaurant or how quickly their cuisine entered into the American mainstream. This is even truer for the West coast considering that in 1930, 138 834 Japanese-Americans lived there whereas Chinese-Americans approximated 70 000 in the region.[7] Japanese-Americans had more access to land ownership, at least before 1913 and up until the 1920s. Many of those who did not own land still worked in agriculture. By 1920, in California, their agricultural production was worth around $67M or 10% of the whole state production.[8] By 1925, 46% of all employed Japanese men worked in agriculture.[9] Even if they operated restaurants in the United States, those did not seem to reach outside their community nor were they as central as they were in Chinese-American communities.

The interment of the 120 000 Japanese Americans living on the West Coast in 1942 uprooted those communities which would takes years to grow back to what they were before the war. In 1900, there were around 40 Japanese restaurants in Los Angeles; by the 1950s, there were

---

[6] Ibid., 124.

[7] Takaki, 180.

[8] Ibid., 191

[9] Ibidem.

about five.[10] From 1900 to 1970, most Japanese restaurants were located in Los Angeles' Little Tokyo neighbourhood and would not spread outside of larger cities in a significant way before the 1990s.[11] In contrast, chop suey joints opened outside of New York Chinatown in the early years of the twentieth century.[12] They also spread quickly on the rest of the East coast. For instance, the number of Chinese restaurant in Chicago went from one in 1900 to 118 by 1915 with only five or six of them situated in the city's Chinatown.[13] Chop Suey was such an ubiquitous part of urban American culture that it appeared in songs, paintings and novels.[14] Chinese restaurant also reached outside of large cities during that time. As early as 1910, many were spread across Wisconsin and they had been present in the state since the 1890s.[15]

All the factors addressed above meant that Japanese food, contrary to Chinese, would not enter the mainstream American foodscape until well into the last decades of the twentieth century. One key factor in the rising popularity of Japanese food was Japan's economic miracle of the 1960s. Not only did it give Japanese cuisine more prestige but it also meant that many Japanese businessmen went to work in American branch of their company. Between 1968 and 1975, the number of Japanese employed abroad went from about 130 000 to around 450 000.[16]

---

[10] David L. Wank and James Farrer, "Chinese Immigrants and Japanese Cuisine in the United States: A Case of Culinary Glocalization," in *The Globalization of Asian Cuisines. Transnational Netwroks and Culinary Contact Zones*, ed. James Farrer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015):81.

[11] Eric C. Rath, *Oishii: The History of Sushi* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021): 146; Wank & Farrer, 80.

[12] Liu, 54-55.

[13] Ibid., 61.

[14] Ibid., 58-60.

[15] Susan Bolsego Carter, "How Chop Suey Came to Oshkosh, Wisconsin". In *Chop Suey and Sushi from Sea to Shining Sea: Chinese and Japanese Restaurants in the United States*, eds. Bruce Makoto Arnold, Tanfer Emin Tunç and Raymond Douglas Chong. (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2018): 57.

[16] Katarzyna J. Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity,* Reissue edition (London: Reaktion Books, 2015):185.

Although there were already Japanese-Americans operating Japanese restaurant in the US, the market expanded so much that corporations in Japan began to open business like travel agencies and restaurants in the United States to cater to those expatriates. Professionally trained chefs left Japan to work in the United States. Even if established Japanese-American communities played a role in the diffusion of Japanese cuisine in the US, nisei were the first operators of sushi bar in the United States after the war, it was this second wave of restaurants which brought Japanese food into America's culinary realm.[17]

Prior to this, Japanese food had mostly been consumed by Japanese-Americans, returning soldiers from Japan and members of the counter-culture which had taken an interest in organic and ethnic food.[18] This new high class image of the cuisine turned it into a status marker and a symbol of distinction. This was something evident even for commentators at the time. A 1963 review by Craig Claiborne pointed that a dish of *suppon* (a kind of turtle) was very popular among Japanese businessmen despite its price of $12 per serving ($117.60 today) whereas a main course costed around $2,50 ($24.50).[19] Furthermore, Japanese restaurants were present in the Wall Street sector as far back as 1961.[20]

This might also explain why Chinese and Japanese cuisine followed different paths, even though Chinese and Japanese immigrants came to the US in the second half of the nineteenth century. Chinese cuisine became popular at the turn of the twentieth century, much sooner than Japanese food did, partly because it was affordable and offered a sense of exoticism and

---

[17] Rath, *Oishii*, 144.

[18] Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, 182.

[19] Craig Claiborne, "Restaurant on Review. Variety of Japanese Dishes Offered, But Raw Fish Is Specialty on Menu," *New York Times*, November 11, 1963.

[20] Craig Claiborne, "Kabuki Is Japanese and One of Best," *New York Times*, April 4, 1961: 40.

entertainment to White consumers. In contrast, Japanese food started to become popular only in the late 1960s and was mainly restrained to cultural and economic elite before slowly percolating down over 30 years or so. This could be imputable to the fact the its spread was closely tied to Japanese businessmen and Japanese economic and diplomatic situation with the United States.

The Cold War made it important for the US government to transform Japan into a capitalist ally to curb the spread of communism in Asia. A very tangible manifestation of this containment was the extensive network of American military base situated in Okinawa and Japan. But this curbing was also meant to be economical. Japan was to assume the role of Southeast Asia's manufacturer. Its reindustrialization and the relaunch of its economy thus became a priority both during and after the occupation. This would eventually lead to the "Japanese economic miracle" of the 1960s, which saw Japan's GDP grow by about 10% annually.

The causes of this miracle are manifold and still debated by historians, but of chief concern to this thesis are the opening of the US market to absorb Japanese exports and the involvement of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI) in controlling the flow of capital in and out of the country, coordinating different sectors of the economy it deemed crucial as well as providing easy access to capital for private enterprise through the Japan Development Bank. Although the creation of MITI was encouraged by the US government in 1949 and the fact that Japan also served as an export market for American surplus foodstuff, these same reasons would, starting in the 1970s and especially in the 1980s, become a source of tension between the two countries. But, during the 1960s, and a good part of the 1970s, this economic boom boosted

Japan's international prestige and the country was heralded as a model to be copied in term of successful capitalism.

Paralleling these commercial and diplomatic issues, there were also liberal discourses in the US which made Japan amiable to the American public while reinforcing the image of the United States as a tolerant nation open to the cultures of the world.[21] They exposed Americans to what was thought of as a more positive image of Japan and its people, though they remained steeped in older Orientalist tropes of infantilization and feminization, as well as encouraging them to engage with Japanese culture.

The rising popularity of Japanese food coincided with an influx of Japanese businessmen, but also occurred simultaneously with a decline in Japanese immigration to the US. Between 1965 and 1984, there were 93 646 Japanese immigrants who entered the country representing about 3% of all Asian immigration.[22] About 4 000 Japanese entered the country yearly despite a quota of 20 000.[23] In contrast, between 1947 and 1975, 67 000 Japanese women came came to America as war brides, 30 000 of which migrated from 1947 until the end of the 1950s.[24] If in 1960, Japanese Americans accounted for 52% of all the American Asian population, by 1985, the represented 15% of it.[25]

This lower level of immigration from the 1960s onward, coupled with the economic and geopolitical factors addressed above, could partly explain the uptake of popularity Japanese

---

[21] See Naoko Shibusawa's *America's Geisha Ally* and Christina Klein *Cold War Orientalism* for an in-depth analysis of those discursive trends.

[22] Takaki, 421.

[23] Ibidem.

[24] Lee, 264.

[25] Takaki, 420.

cuisine went through. Many scholars studying migrant populations or multiculturalism have argued that it is easier to engage with a foreign culture when few representatives of that culture are present since they are less perceived as a threat (economic, moral, etc.). For instance, although he talked about Japanese restaurants in the early 2000s, Krishnendu Ray posited that their good rankings in review like Zagat could be partly due to the dwindling Japanese immigrations.[26]

On a discursive level, this facilitates a rhetoric in which multiculturalism and cosmopolitanism are extolled but without having to address the history of imperialism and racism which often made this diversity possible in the first place or the unequal power relations between immigrants and the host nation. Gassan Hage talks of a "multiculturalism without migrants" in which interaction with foreign culture are reduced to consuming their food rather than on migrants' life.[27] Multiculturalism becomes a commodified way of engaging with a culture rather than an actual ideology to create a more tolerant and open society. It serves to enrich members of the White majority population rather than focusing on how people from different culture cohabit in the same society.

Despite the positive description of Japanese cuisine, it remained a pretty niche phenomenon which did not enjoy the same ubiquity it does today. In 2006, there were 24 000 Japanese restaurants in the world whereas in 2017 this number had jumped to 117 500, 23 500 of which were in North America.[28] In the 1980s, ethnic restaurants represented only 10% of all

---

[26] Krishnendu Ray, "Ethnic Succession and the New American Restaurant Cuisine," in *The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat*, ed. David Beriss and David Sutton (New York: Berg, 2007): 103.

[27] Ghassan Hage, "At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, Ethnic Food, and Migrant Home-Building," in *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sidney's West*, ed. Helen Grace (Pluto Press, n.d.): 118.

[28] Rath, *Oishii*, 137. This number (117 500) excluded Japanese restaurants situated in Japan.

restaurants in the country with Chinese, Mexican and Italian comprising 70% of that number.[29] A quick search in the New York Public Library catalog, which holds a renowned cookbook collection, showed that between 1945 and 1992, there was 69 Japanese cookbooks published in English compared with 212 Chinese cookbooks and 433 French.[30] Even if Japanese cuisine was starting to be recognized as an example of refinement and inspired new and influential culinary trend like Alice Waters' *Nouvelle Cuisine*, it was not part of the culinary mainstream.

This was explicitly acknowledged by Elizabeth Andoh, in 1985 when she wrote in *An American Taste of Japan* that sushi were posed to become the next trendy food in the US.[31] Even though she stated that sushi had already found an eager audience in America, this passage implied that even in 1985, it was not a mainstream dish. Besides, she identified this audience as the "sophisticated American associates" of Japanese businessmen who lived mainly in the larger cities of the East and West coasts.[32] A 1981 review for *Teru Sushi* echoed her point. It presented the clientele as mostly non-Japanese, sophisticated and self-assured enough to ask for adjustment in their sushi order as well as combination off the menu.[33]

Even in its early days in America, Japanese cuisine was associated with a certain cultural elite. In an article from 1966, Mr. Frazer, an assistant professor of art at Wesleyan University, and

---

[29] Donna Gabbacia, *We Are What We Eat, Ethnic Food and the Making of American* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000): 217.

[30]As stated in the introduction, the search returned 84 results, 17 of which were repeats or not cookbooks. I also added 2 cookbooks which I used but were not held by the NYPL.

[31] Elizabeth Andoh, *An American Taste of Japan* (New York : Morrow, 1985): 127.

[32] Ibidem

[33] Caroline Bates, "Teru Sushi," *Gourmet*, July 1981: 94.

his wife who had both lived three months in Japan gave an okonomiyaki recipe.[34] Although the article stated that this dish was quite mundane, it was introduced by people with university education. Besides, a review for *Restaurant Katsu* mentioned that Hollywood had many good sushi restaurants perhaps due to the discerning palate of celebrities.[35] Scholars linked the rising popularity of sushi to celebrities consuming them.[36] Japanese cuisine was associated with an economic elite, but also with educated people, sophisticated young professionals and the star system. It also resonated with member of the counter-culture who had taken an interest in ethnic and organic food in the 1960s-1970s and who joined the middle-class in the following decade.[37]

Thus, Japanese food remained largely confined to an urban and middle/upper-class clientele, even in the 1980s. A 1982 article stated that "the ingredients for Japanese cooking are quite widely available in the New York Metropolitan area.".[38] John Keys' book included a list of shops where one could procure the ingredients and equipment necessary to cook the dishes presented. Although it covered the whole country, the longest list were for cities like New York, Berkley and San Francisco which had more shops listed than entire state.[39] Other books had similar list, the longest of which were for the state of California and New York.[40] Although stores

---

[34] Craig Claiborne, "A Japanese Version of Swiss Fondue Is Okonomiyaki, or What-You-Will," *New York Times*, 1966: 45

[35] Caroline Bates, "Restaurant Katsu," *Gourmet*, 1985: 104

[36] See for instance James Farrer et al., "JAPANESE CULINARY MOBILITIES The Multiple Globalizations of Japanese Cuisine," in *Routledge Handbook of Food in Asia*, ed. Cecilia Leong-Salobir, 1st ed. (New York: Routledge, 2019) or Sasha Issenberg, *Sushi Economy.*

[37] Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*; Gabbacia, 210.

[38] George O'Brien, "FRESH, COOL AND MADE IN JAPAN: A Japanese Cooking School Gives Lessons in Food Preparation and Presentation That Have Universal Appeal to Taste and to Sight.," *New York Times*, 1982, sec. Magazine: SM36.

[39] Keys, 147-152.

[40] Andoh, 320; Elisabeth Lambert Ortiz and Mitsuko Endo, *The Complete Book of Japanese Cooking* (New York : M. Evans ; Philadelphia : distributed in the U.S. by Lippincott, 1976): 237-240.

were named for Los Angeles, the city notably did not occupy a large place in those lists. Considering that other Californian cities were still well endowed in such shops, this might point toward a shift in the epicentre of Japanese cuisine in America, though not one imputable to the interment of Japanese-Americans and the uprooting of their community.

Some of those stores were not Japanese or even Asian groceries but health food store or gourmet shop which further demonstrate the limited place occupied by Japanese cuisine in the broader American foodscape and its association with certain food trend and people wealthy enough to consume such products. Even Chinese restaurants, which were associated with affordability, were mostly confined to urban areas in the Northeast and on the West coast.[41] It would not be before the 1990s that Japanese culture in general would become less of an elite phenomenon and penetrate deeper into the American mainstream.[42] Of the 69 cookbooks mentioned above, 35 were published during the 1980s. Dish like sushi would not become mainstream until the 1990s when they began to be sold in supermarket across the country.[43]

Creating Japanese Food in Japan

The niche status occupied by Japanese cooking could partially explain the static discourse about it. Americans who wrote about or consumed Japanese food were urban, cultured and well-off economically. Their privileged status meant that they were probably less affected by factors like economic tensions between Japan and the United States which affected political and economic discourses on Japan during the late 1970s and 1980s. The urban setting in which they

---

[41]Liu, 132-133.

[42] Nancy K Stalker, "Cool Japan as Cultural Superpower," in *Japan: History and Culture from Classical to Cool* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018): 362.

[43] Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, 182.

evolved made them more open to interact with new culinary cultures. Although, as discussed above, this engagement was most likely superficial and predicated on the betterment of the consumer's self rather than some meaningful interest for or tolerance of migrants, it nonetheless created circle in which ethnic restaurant open in more cosmopolitan loci making them even more cosmopolitan thus inciting more restaurateurs to open shop.

Furthermore, the relatively small place occupied by Japanese cuisine meant that people writing about it held proportionally more power over its representation. Japanese restaurants were less numerous than Chinese one and the food was less engrained in the mainstream American foodscape. It meant that their discourse was likely less scrutinize or faced less competing vision. This is not to say that there were none but simply that considering the niche status of the cuisine, publishers or newspapers might not have deemed it profitable or relevant to air them. Finally, since the American discourse was positive and largely echoed those of reputed Japanese chefs, refutations from Japanese themselves were not likely to be raised.

The prevalent images of Japanese cuisine in America were not necessarily false but they were misleading. Most of the elements used to characterized Japanese cooking both by Japanese and non-Japanese commentators derived from the cuisine of the elite, either at court or in Buddhist temples, and did not reflect the diet of the majority of the population. Furthermore, these elements did not stretch back to times immemorial but were fixed during the Edo period (1603-1867) and were much more marked by changes than by continuity. The very concept of a national cuisine only came into being after the Meiji restoration (1868) and was not established straightforwardly. For instance, during the Meiji period, the State sought to modernize Japan by looking to the West and debated the importance of meat eating to create a strong nation. During

1930s and 1940s, amidst Japanese imperialist invasion of China and World War II, the authorities emphasized rice as the core of Japanese diet. They presented it not only as an essential but a basis for the superiority of the Japanese race even if, ironically, it was only with military conscription in the twentieth century that most Japanese were able to consume rice on a daily basis. The promotion of an "authentic" Japanese diet and the romanticization of the past within Japan stemmed from the rapid social and dietary changes of the post war decades. The war had levelled large part of the country which pushed different localities to try and promote their "traditional" food in order to distinguish themselves from their neighbours and boost tourism in their region. At the same time, urbanization and a demanding work culture meant that people consumed more instant food and were increasingly exposed to foreign dishes.[44]

For instance, between 1965 and 1976, the annual consumption of instant ramen rose from 2.5 billion to 4.55 billion servings.[45] Other convenience food like instant coffee, curry cube and frozen food were also increasingly consumed during that period. Although some commentators perceived a danger to established social and gender norms, others praised the nutritional and scientific value of such items.[46] By 1996, Japanese consumed in average 31.8% of their diet in the form of fresh foodstuff prepared at home compared to 41.6% of food bought in prepared form.[47] This proportion marked a declined in fresh foodstuff consumption of 17% between 1965 and 1996.[48] Rice consumption, which was often presented, at least symbolically, as central to

---

[44] Barak Kushner, *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen: Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*, (Boston: Global Oriental:2014): 216-218.

[45] George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2014): 90.

[46] Ibid., 112-115.

[47] Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*,161.

[48] Ibidem.

Japanese meals had also been declining since it reached a per capita high of 360g per day in 1960 to about 170g in 1996.[49]

The school lunch program, launched in 1951, helped to expose Japanese to food like bread and milk which were almost never consumed before the war.[50] It also exposed children and their family to new dishes which were often a mix of different culinary tradition. Besides, the popularity of American culture and lifestyle combined with an upward trend in restaurant going in the 1970s help to explain the massive popularity of fast-food chains like McDonald or Kentucky Fried Chicken that opened in Japan during the same decade.[51]

Besides those domestic factors, Japanese vision of themselves was also influenced by America's idea of Japan. In *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword,* Ruth Benedict analyzed the national character of Japan. Her book, published in 1946, was hugely influential; it sparked a wave of national character studies and defined America's vision of Japan for decades to come. It broadly opposed the West as the antithesis of Japanese society which was presented as an homogenized culture which had not evolve much over time and was centred around the notion of honour and shame. Her work also found an audience within Japan and even among social scientists which were hugely influenced by American intellectual culture during the postwar era.[52] Although her book did not address Japanese cuisine, it still bears noting that the essentialized and homogenized vision of Japanese society she painted shared many

---

[49] Ibid., 158.

[50] ibid., 162.

[51] Ibid., 165.

[52] John Lie, "Ruth Benedict's Legacy of Shame: Orientalism and Occidentalism in the Study of Japan," *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29, no. 2 (2001):256.

commonalities with discourses on Japanese cuisine produced by Japanese and non-Japanese alike and was popular in Japan.

The Erasure of Japanese-American in Culinary Discourse

Magazines and newspapers pointed to Japan as the birthplace or the training ground of the chefs they reviewed. Cookbooks relied heavily on the experience of the author who had lived, or at least traveled in Japan, and others, like John Key, Donald Richie, or Stuart Griffin, explicitly wrote for an audience of foreigners visiting Japan. Although focusing on Japan while discussing Japanese cuisine is not strange in and of itself, it becomes somewhat problematic when considering the erasure of Japanese-American from those discourse especially considering that Chinese cuisine did not receive this treatment.

The Chinese cookbook of the TIME-LIFE Foods of the World Series situated authentic Chinese cuisine within Taiwan, Hong Kong and, to some degree, Chinatowns across America.[53] The author presented these places as the repository of real Chinese cooking after Mao's victory in 1949 and the communist attack on bourgeois culture, which included food. This rhetoric of declining culinary culture in mainland China was also used by the Nationalist government in Taiwan to portray itself as the true beholder of Chinese culture.[54] The claim that food in communist China was thought of mostly as a necessity was not completely baseless. But the assumption that culinary culture simply stopped under Mao or that its true essence was preserved elsewhere put forward a static view of Chinese cuisine and revealed the tensions between the United States and communists during the Cold War.

---

[53] Emily Hahn and TIME-LIFE books, *The Cooking of China*, Foods of the World (New York: Time-Life Books, 1968): 187.

[54] Michelle T. King, "The Julia Child of Chinese Cooking, or the Fu Pei-Mei of French Food?," *Gastronomica* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 18.

Furthermore, even if Chinese cooking was praised as fit for a king's banquet, the author also stated that it could never reach the status of French cuisine. She wrote that truly delicious French food might be unattainable outside of France whereas decent Chinese cooking was available worldwide.[55] Its main appeals were its cheapness and healthiness. In other sources, the description made of Japanese cuisine resembled more closely her description of French food. Although not as esteemed as French gastronomy, it would still be very influential in shaping fine dining in America in the following decades. Besides, even if Japanese restaurants in America were praised, some still argued that Japan was the only place to get really delicious Japanese food and that the one offered in the United States was a pale imitation.[56] As the example cited in chapter 1 about fishes bought in New York sometime tasting of diesel demonstrates, even the ingredients available in America might not be deemed fresh enough to cook Japanese food.[57]

The chefs of nearly all of the restaurants reviewed in my sources were born in Japan. The articles always focused on their birthplace and did not mention if he had grown up in the United States except for one Nisei manager.[58] Others clearly were professional chefs and recent immigrant which had worked in different country before coming to America while other operated an American branch of a restaurant in Japan.[59],[60] Considering these restaurants were reviewed by

---

[55] Hahn, 183.

[56] Steingarten, 594; M.F.K Fisher, "Introduction". In *Japanese cooking : a simple art*, Shizuo Tsuji (Kodansha International Ltd, Tokyo: 1980): 10.

[57] Craig Claiborne, "To Cook Japanese Style, It Helps If You Have Obliging Butcher," *New York Times*, March 4, 1971.

[58] Jay Jacobs, "Gin-Ray," *Gourmet*, 1980: 20.

[59] Jay Jacobs, "Yoshi's Café," *Gourmet*, October 1985; Jay Jacobs, "Yama," *Gourmet*, 1985; Jay Jacobs, "The Gibbon," *Gourmet*, October 1980; Jay Jacobs, "Azuma Ya," *Gourmet*, 1986.

[60] Andy Birsh, "Honmura An," *Gourmet*, 1992; Caroline Bates, "Nanbantei," *Gourmet*, 1984; Caroline Bates, "Mifune," *Gourmet*, 1979; Caroline Bates, "Akasaka," *Gourmet*, 1977.

Gourmet, which had authority in the culinary realm, or the *New York Times*, which enjoyed a large readership, it demonstrates that although Japanese-Americans operated restaurants, Japanese food was popularized mostly by Japanese chefs who came to America with the specific goal of working in the food industry rather than by established migrant communities. Besides, the fact that culinary publications chose to review those restaurants further contributed to erase Japanese-American from discourse on Japanese food and reinforced the idea that true Japanese food came from Japan hence strengthening its exotic appeal.

A quick study of the list of books mentioned above showcases the little space occupied by Japanese-Americans in cookbook publishing while highlighting Japan and Japanese authors' important involvement. 19 of these were published by Kodansha International Ltd. and then distributed in America and four other were written by institutions like Japan's Travel Bureau, a Japanese hotel or the New York Japan Society. 24 of the inventoried books were written by 21 authors with Japanese patronym. Doi Masaru, a well-known chef living in Japan, wrote three, Shizuo Tsuji, a chef and culinary educator, two and a zen priest wrote one. There were 19 authors with non-Japanese patronym and seven books were published by duos with at least one author having a Japanese patronym, three of which were written by the same couple, Robert and Yukiko Haydock. Elizabeth Andoh, a non-Japanese author, wrote three of the counted books.

Although it is hard to assess if all the remaining authors were Japanese-American based solely on their names, it is telling that the one of the only two books making an explicit reference to Japanese-American in its title (*Japanese-American Cook Book: Hibachi Cookery in the American Manner*) was written by someone described in the introduction "an unassuming

American" named George E. Engler.[61] This book was written in both English and Japanese which might mean that it was aimed at Japanese-American. Even without information on each author, when we take into account what we know about some of them like Tsuji, Andoh, Nix or Rossant, it seems like Japanese-Americans had little power in the representation of Japanese cuisine, at least in cookbooks.

Besides, even when Japanese or Japanese-American authored books, they could remain object rather than subject in the culinary discourse.[62] A good example of this objectification and commodification of the Other is *The Complete Book of Japanese Cooking* published in 1976. The cover named Elisabeth Lambert Ortiz and Mitsuko Endo as authors, but Lambert Ortiz is the only one with a voice in the book. She thanked Endo in the foreword for her help during her time in Japan and the development of the recipes, but she herself is not present. She gave credence to Lambert's discourse on Japanese cooking but never spoke for herself.

Japanese chefs and other operators of Japanese restaurant painted a very similar picture to those of American writers. Chefs interviewed by American media emphasized much of the same element of freshness, seasonality, presentation and long-lasting tradition described above. For instance, Shizuo Tsuji, a renowned Japanese culinary instructor, declared that Japanese cooking, like its painting and poetry, was "the result of an acute awareness of the seasons".[63] Chieko Kobayashi, a New York based cooking teacher, also stated that the paucity of ingredients in Japan had forced them to "put much thought into the visual aspect of food to partially

---

[61] George E. Engler, *Japanese-American Cook Book: Hibachi Cookery in the American Manner* (Rutland, Vt. : Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1968): ii.

[62] Ibid., 65.

[63] Shizuo Tsuji and Mary Sutherland, *Japanese Cooking : A Simple Art* (Tokyo ; New York : Kodansha International Ltd. ; New York : distributed in the U.S. by Kodansha International/USA through Harper & Row, 1980): 19.

compensate for their lack of abundance".[64] Koei Hoshino, a Buddhist nun, explained in an interview that traditional temple and court food required only the freshest of ingredients and emphasized the importance of the "ethereal" nature of the presentation putting on par with the taste and texture of the dishes you ate.[65] Even if their discourse perpetuated much of the same stereotype as that of American writers and was not necessarily more historically informed, I believe that it demonstrates some degree of agency in how Japanese represented their cuisine. As stated above, they were evolving within a social context in Japan with led to the emergence of this kind of myth making narrative and did not simply mimic American discourse.

There were also voices contrasting this image of Japanese cooking, but they were the exception rather than the norm. Mifune Tsuji, a violinist, wrote a cookbook which aimed to present simpler more homy Japanese cooking to Westerners stating that the fare offered in restaurant was not what most Japanese ate on a daily basis. She acknowledged that presentation played a great role in Japanese cooking but that most people did not bother with it in their everyday life. Even if she brought nuance to the discourse, hers probably was not a voice with much weight in the culinary realm. She was not a chef or a renowned cook and did not benefit from the wide readership of the *New York Times*. Furthermore, her book was published in 1995 at a time when more lowbrow Japanese food began to be popularized in the West. Thus, it is inscribed in a more general shift in the discourse rather than being an outlier.

Overall, most sources simply did not bring up Japanese-Americans. Had they been published in a country without a Japanese diaspora, it could have been understandable. But

---

[64] Craig Claiborne, "The Ubiquitous Cuisine of Japan," *New York Times*, April 5, 1978: C1.

[65] Craig Claiborne, "Pleasures of the Japanese Table," *New York Times*, January 12, 1983: C1.

Japanese immigrants had been present on the West coast since the 1880s. This omission further exoticized Japanese cuisine, and culture more generally, by focusing on its remoteness, its foreignness rather than addressing its long-standing presence in the United-States, even if it was not widely consumed outside of Japanese enclaves before the 1970s. It also allowed Americans to ignore their own history of anti-Asian racism and exclusionary policies.

Steinberg argued that the following reasons explained why few Americans appreciated Japanese cuisine before the 1950s: Americans confused Japanese and Chinese, Japanese immigrants were few before 1900 and Americans preferred their way of cooking as well as those from Europe (France, Germany and Italy). He stated that World War II forced Americans into contact with Japan and other culture and gave rise to a desire for more adventurous eating.[66] Nevertheless, he attributed this reticence largely to the Japanese themselves. Even if they readily adopted Western technology and foods, they perceived Americans as unable to really appreciate Japanese culture, saying that the two groups were "lovers without a common language".[67]

He tellingly avoided mentioning the sheer hatred expressed by the American public only 20 years before he wrote his book, the internment of 120 000 Japanese-Americans during the war, two thirds of which were American citizens, or the exclusionary policies which curbed and then abolished Japanese immigration during the first quarter of the twentieth century. Racism was barely even obliquely mentioned by stating that American confused Japanese and Chinese together. This same omission was also present in the Chinese cookbook form Time-Life. Furthermore, it also laid part of the blame on Japanese chauvinism for not presenting their food

---

[66] Rafael Steinberg and Time-Life Books, *The Cooking of Japan*, Foods of the World (New York: Time-Life Books, 1969): 23

[67] ibidem.

in a better, more understandable way to foreigners. This discourse fitted neatly within the idea of Cold War cosmopolitanism described by Klein. Even if it may present Americans as a bit boorish or provincial in taste, it obscures American racism and imperialism and give the image of a country ready to open itself to the world. Although it was the only book which so explicitly occulted racism, most simply did not even talked about it, it probably was one of the most widely read source in all my sample.

Time-Life was the book publishing division of Time Incorporated Corporation who also published the Time and Life magazines, two of the most popular magazines in the US during the twentieth century, especially among the middle and upper class.[68] Although it remained independent from the magazines, the books they published still benefitted from the same brand recognition. The section, which sold books directly to consumers via mail order, was also very successful in its own right.[69] Besides, the cookbooks from its Foods of the World Series pioneered the genre of cookbook as decorative object and entertainment.[70] Nika Hazelton, an author for the series, criticized them, stating they were packaged by a media company rather than written by an author due to the lack of cooperation between the writer, the recipe developer and the photographer.[71] It is true that the structure of the books on Japanese and Chinese cuisine made them feel less like cookbooks and more like pamphlets aiming to introduce a culture to a new audience. All chapters opened with a long introduction which often occupied half of the chapter before giving any recipe.

---

[68] James L. Baughman, "Henry Luce and the Business of Journalism", *Business and Economic History Online*, 9 (2011): 6

[69] Denny Hatch, "The Rise and Fall of Time-Life Books," *Target Marketing* 24, no. 6 (June 2001): 51–58.

[70] Elias, 184.

[71] Ibid., 183.

As mentioned, most book simply did not address at all the issue of intolerance or racism. Even if they are not neutral texts divorced from broader political concerns, cookbooks are not essays whose role is to edify the readers about socio-political issues (or they are not perceived as such). Nevertheless, this cultural amnesia and the absence of Japanese-Americans from discourse on Japanese food reveals something about the cultural context in which they were written. Shibusawa and Klein argued that although there was no top-down master plan from the government, cultural production during the Cold War tended to align itself with the State's interest and share a similar discourse. In this instance, one of the goal of the US government was to transform Japan, which had been an enemy during the war, into an ally against the spread of communism in Asia. The goal was very much to sell Japan to the American public and not so much the Japanese-Americans. Neither was the goal to address or heal the injustices inflicted on the Japanese-Americans during the war. Addressing their interment by the government would have undermined the country's claim to being a tolerant and democratic nation as well as its claim of multiculturalism and integration since the interment was based on the idea of Japanese being unassimilable and completely alien.[72] As previously discussed, they were not absent from the public discourse, but they were mostly valued as cultural bridges or translators between Japanese and American culture especially as Japan's economic power grew in the last four decades of the century. This might partly explain their absence from the sources studied.

Some sources mentioned Japanese-Americans, but they were the exception rather than the norm. Furthermore, they were often treated as a resource rather than as a community with their own traditions and history. An article from 1979 began by commenting on the renovation of

---

[72] Klein, 262.

the Little Tokyo neighbourhood in Los Angeles and of its Village Plaza, which offered a glimpse into the Japanese tradition. The author seemed to use the fact that Japanese families patronized the commerce there as an indicator of its authentic nature.[73] Ironically, by 1980, 72% of the Japanese-American were citizens by birth with few third and fourth generation speaking Japanese.[74] Furthermore, a decreasing volume of Japanese immigration combined with their move to the suburbs meant that Japantowns were not culturally renewed.[75] Bates' assumption demonstrates how Japanese-Americans were still perceived as foreign and exotic despite their long established presence in America. A passage from Nix's book contrasted with the one cited above. She wrote that her Asian-American friends adapted their cooking from one generation to the next which gave a glimpse of how Japanese cuisine might not be only one rigid thing but a malleable and diverse category.

A 1988 article from *Bon Appétit* demonstrates both this malleability as well as the commodification of ethnicity. It offered a laudatory portrait of Roy Yamaguchi, a chef presented as "an American of Japanese ancestry born and raised in Japan," who successfully blended Japanese, French, and Californian influences.[76] It presented him first as an American and focused more on his professional training than his ethnic background, although it also addressed his Japanese heritage. Oftentimes, ethnic chefs were (and still are) pigeonholed to their own ethnicity and judged on criteria of authenticity rather than on their creativity or culinary skills. Yamaguchi was praised for mixing different traditions rather than criticized for bastardizing his

---

[73] Caroline Bates, "Oomasa," *Gourmet*, November 1979: 14.

[74] Tataki, 421.

[75] Ibidem.

[76] Merrill Shindler, "Best of Three Worlds," *Bon Appétit*, June 1, 1988: 72.

heritage or another cuisine. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the dishes presented in the article leaned heavily on the French side and might have been deemed Japanese mainly due to Yamaguchi's ethnicity.[77] This could be interpreted as a form of commodification in which ethnicity is used to add value or boost the interest for a product or as a sign that all his cooking was inherently Japanese due to his ethnicity. But we cannot disregard the fact that he might simply have been cooking whatever inspired him at the time or even that he took advantage of this kind of discourse and self-orientalized his cuisine in order to maximize his profit or fame. The issue here is not so much the food he cooked but rather how it was presented by the magazine.

Restricting chefs to an ethnic niche stemmed from a perceived opposition between the professional expertise of the haute cuisine chef versus the embodied expertise ascribed to the "ethnic" chef. For most of the last 200 years, gastronomic eating was synonymous with French cuisine with the result that cooking schools mostly, if not solely, taught French techniques and recipes. In contrast, the cooking of most other ethnicities, especially non-whites, were seen as something one naturally learned growing up, like language. This rested on the assumption that cooking, at least at the domestic level, was a more or less innate skill. It obscured the skill developed mostly by women who worked day after day for years feeding their family.

Starting mainly in the 1980s, qualities like innovation and originality were increasingly valued and emphasized when talking about chefs working in haute cuisine and in cookbooks.[78]

---

[77] The menu consisted of a Beef salad with pepper dressing, Vegetable dumpling with red bell pepper sauce, Lemon-thyme fettuccine with grilled chicken and corn, Rack of veal with ginger-lime sauce, Spicy mussels in black bean sauce with crispy noodles, Grilled lamb with balsamic vinegar sauce, Shrimp shao-mai with red wine butter sauce, Grilled tuna sashimi with grapefruit mustard sauce, John Dory with Cabernet and basil sauces, Grilled squab salad with beet relish, Grilled sweetbread with madeira sauce and a Seafood cassoulet.

[78] Elias, 185; Krishnendu Ray, *The Ethnic Restaurateur* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2016): 161.

For white chefs, eclecticism and an affirmed personal cooking style became a mark of talent. Ethnicity was something they could seek inspiration from to elevate their cooking style while non-french techniques were deemed inappropriate for fine dining.[79] Authenticity was tied to individuality and being true to the self rather than to a tradition. Ironically, at the same time as publisher increasingly profited and fueled the "celebrity chef" trend with this kind of discourse, they also published a growing number of books focused on particular regional or national culinary traditions.[80] The authenticity and the quality of "ethnic" chefs were based on their adherence to tradition or nationality.[81]

The Politics of Japanese Restaurants in the United States

Just as this opposition between ethnic and gastronomic cuisine deprived ethnic cooks from professional opportunities, ethnicity proved to be profitable for food corporations. In the 1970s, Americans spent about $29 billions per year in inexpensive "ethnic and regional mom-and-pop restaurants" but that cheapness remained the pillar to immigrants' business success.[82] The 1960s also saw the revival of cooking as a status symbol and an ethnic food boom. Exploring rather than shunning other cultures' cuisine became a sign of sophistication and a status marker for the American middle-class.[83] Food corporations started to add "ethnic seasonings" like soy sauce or chili powder to their products. By commodifying ethnicity, they

---

[79] Ray, The Ethnic Restaurateur, 166.

[80] Elias, 194

[81] Elias, 197.

[82]Gabbacia, 218; 208.

[83] Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*, First Edition, Revised edition (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003): 217-218

simultaneously profited from the new and growing popularity towards ethnic food and also offset the loss of flavor inherent to food processing at the time.[84]

Other immigrant groups, mainly Chinese and Korean, operated Japanese restaurants. Since Japanese food fetched higher prices, many Chinese restaurants added Japanese dishes or sushi counter to their establishment or, since they could pass as Japanese, opened Japanese restaurants. They had no interest in contesting the existing narrative which allowed them to make more money by playing on existing tropes and stereotypes to boost their profit. For instance, the restaurant *Azuma Ya* was described as having a very Japanese décor with a "traditional Japanese spareness", an accomplished sushi chef with 40 years of experience and a kitchen staff which could serve any Japanese dish on demands if the ingredients were available. This restaurant was owned by a Chinese couple who also owned a Japanese buffet in New York. Even if the sushi were positively assessed, the specialty of the house was said to be "Cantonese lobster" and the establishment even offered a dim sum buffet.

Despite it all, the restaurant was still described as giving the feeling of being transported to "some obscure, serene quarter of Tokyo".[85] Although this review nuanced the notion of authenticity and testified to the heterogeneity of the Japanese food scene in the US, it also showed how ideas about Japan could be used by non-Japanese. Thus, while perpetuating stereotypes, these restaurateurs also nuanced them. It also suggested a certain acquiescence to a globalized foodscape in which mixing was beneficial. The food was positively described and presented as somewhat eclectic with the author voicing his surprise to see butter in a Japanese

---

[84] Ibid., 224.

[85] Jay Jacobs, "Azuma Ya," *Gourmet*, February 1986: 72.

dish though he also pointed that tofu had become an accepted staple in the West.[86] The article shows how culture can be commodified and how elastic authenticity can be when applied to food.

Self-orientalization seems to have been a profitable strategy for restaurateurs. As alluded to in the previous chapter, almost all reviews praised the authenticity of restaurants and equated it with quality. However, this did not mean that everybody took these representation of Japanese culture at face value. In a review for *Robata,* John Canaday poked fun at a line in their menu inviting the customer to travel back 1 000 years in the past since the décor imitated a Japanese farmhouse. Although Canaday confessed to finding the design and the clothing of the waitresses, who wore kimonos, very charming, he also stated that "Robata is more Tokyo than countryside and perhaps more New York than Tokyo".[87] He also doubted that the sake martini on offer was especially traditional. This article demonstrates how restaurateurs tried to strike a balance between pandering to the expectation of their customer (i.e: the faux rural décor) while also appealing to contemporary taste trend (i.e: new cocktail). It also highlights the perspicacity of a segment of the public in understanding that what they consumed was as much a performance as a real part of Japanese culture.

If one's only interaction with a culture is in a restaurant where the staff's job is to be nice, polite and serviceable and where the experience is highly curated so that restaurateurs can maximize their profit, the vision you get from this culture is even more eschewed. This is not to say that ethnic restaurateurs are powerless in how they are represented but simply that the power

---

[86] Ibidem

[87] John Canaday, "A Neotraditional Japanese 'Farmhouse' That Delights in Good Food and Service," *New York Times*, December 5, 1975: 55.

dynamics at play are uneven especially with regard to class and ethnicity. Restaurateurs can decide what food they cook, how it is presented and they can pander to the fantasies and notions of authenticity held by the clients in order to attract more customers.[88] But in the end, they are running a business. Their job is not to be the curator of a culture; it is to serve enough food to earn their livelihood.

Bryan Miller's review of *Chikubu* highlighted how ethnicity could be commodified to the advantage of a restaurateur while also maintaining unequal power dynamics. He opened stating that the restaurant was unassuming enough that he only went after some of his "Western Friends" recommended it.[89] He then stated that, based on the décor and the presence of six tipsy Japanese businessmen, his first impression was positive. Both of these remarks are somewhat at odds since, on the one hand, Japanese presence is used to evaluate the authenticity and quality of the place but he only went there on his Western friends' recommendation. Here, the Japanese patrons were reduced to element of the décor. Besides, although there was a large diaspora of Japanese businessmen in the United States at the time, and it was indeed tied to the burgeoning of Japanese restaurants, Miller simply assumed that the patrons in questions were Japanese and not Japanese-American, increasing the Othering of this community in America.[90] A similar erasure occurred in a review for *Fuku-Sushi* where the author simply assumed that the Japanese patrons were businessmen and not Japanese-American.[91]

---

[88] Hage, 144.

[89] Bryan Miller, "Cuisine of Japan and Vietnam," December 6, 1985.

[90] Rath, *Oishii,* 146.; Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine*, 181-182.

[91] Caroline Bates, "Fuku-Sushi," *Gourmet*, August 1981: 72.

Furthermore, the fact that he specified this recommendation came from Westerners entails that foreign culture needed to the validation of the West to be worthy of consideration. It echoed a review from *Gourmet* in which the reviewer started by complaining about a sort of ethnic solidarity stating that when you received a recommendation from an ethnic restaurateur, it was most likely because he knew the other restaurateur rather than because of the quality of the restaurant.[92] These articles implied that Westerners were impartial reviewer of a culture since they were outsiders to it. Culinary wise, this translated to the notion that ethnic cuisine and persons were "Other" whereas American (i.e: white Americans) were somehow neutral and normative. This gave them the authority to arbitrate and evaluate other cultures. For example, an article compiling the *New York Times* reviewers' notes named "the most" as well as "the least Japanese" Japanese restaurants in New York.[93]

[92] Jay Jacobs, "Yama," *Gourmet*, 1985.

[93] John Canaday, "The Best and the Worst, the Most and the Least In 20 Star-Filled Months of Dining Out," *New York Times*, August 1, 1975: 16.

Conclusion

Despite many geopolitical shifts and developments in the relationship between Japan and the United States between 1945 and 1992, the great changes occurring in the American foodscape during the same period and even the evolution of Japanese food itself in both countries, American discourse about this cuisine remained largely static during this half century. It tended to emphasize its aesthetic aspect over its gustatory quality, to present it as a long-standing tradition closely tied to nature, and to imbue it with an almost spiritual aura. This status was at least partly imputable to the fact that Japanese cooking in the US was largely popularized by white authors rather than by Japanese-Americans. Furthermore, until the 1990s, the cuisine was mostly consumed by a relatively small segment of urban, middle to upper middle-class Americans. For them, Japanese cuisine was a source of cultural capital. Like other ethnic food, it allowed its consumers to perform a kind of openness and tolerance that was part of a broader Cold War discourse aimed at branding the United States as a multicultural nation. But Japanese cuisine, because of its association with cultural and economic elites, also allowed those in the know about it to perform a sort of cosmopolitanism, which distinguished them from their fellow Americans.

Ironically, Japanese cuisine started to become more widely popular in the 1980s at the same time as Japanese started to become less involved in producing Japanese food in the United States. Prior to the 1980s, most Japanese restaurants were operated by Japanese chefs. But in the 1980s, the growing demand and diminishing influx of Japanese chefs coupled with the greater profit to be made in the industry meant that other Asian immigrants opened Japanese restaurants. Besides, sushi — a food that in the following decades became so closely associated with Japan

that it is often used as a shorthand for all its cuisine — first became a pervasive fixture of the American foodscape in the 1990s, when they began to be widely available in supermarkets. Both Asian migrants entrepreneurs and American food corporations took advantage of the high class association of Japanese food developed during the previous decades to increase their profit which in turn further popularized Japanese food.

Nevertheless, this thesis should not be seen as an erasure of Japanese-American agency in the spread of Japanese cuisine in America. Even if they were not patronized in significant numbers by white Americans or received the same media coverage as those addressed during the same period in this thesis, it does not mean they did not change the American foodscape. In fact, the first sushi restaurants in the US were opened by non-professional Japanese-American cooks before sushi's popularity began to rise in the late 1960s. Although they might not have been at the forefront of this wave, they still contributed in laying the groundwork for it and their restaurants deserve a fulsome treatment in their own right.

Japanese businessmen played a pivotal role in popularizing Japanese cuisine in the United States. Not only did they help cement the association of Japanese food with high social status; but they also started an influx of professional Japanese chefs who came to the US and opened restaurants which further popularized Japanese cooking especially in large cities on the East and West coast. Nevertheless, it is important to acknowledge that Japanese-Americans also operated restaurants even outside of those area. For example, Suzue Tilton, a Japanese woman, married an American electrical engineer working for the US army during the occupation of Japan and followed him back to Tucson in 1955. Over the next 20 years or so, the couple opened two Japanese restaurants, which catered to both White and Nikkei customers. They helped introduced

White customers to Japanese food and served as a social venue for the growing Japanese-American community in Arizona.[1] Even if the impact on the dissemination of the cuisine was smaller, Japanese Americans still participated in the process, at least on a local level. This hints at the existence of a multitude of ways in which Japanese cuisine was popularized rather than a single process of dissemination. The argument developed in this thesis is more focused on the spread of Japanese cuisine on a national level and lacks this local component.

The end of the Cold War and the bursting of Japan's economic bubble also led to its diminished importance in US foreign policy and to a mellowing of Japan bashing. With its economy stagnating and the American economy on the uptake, Japan ceased to be seen as a threat. It also led to a shift in Japan's foreign policy where its popular culture rather than its economic power was used to gain influence globally. This trend, which began in the 1980s but took off in the 1990s, came to be known as "Cool Japan".

In the realm of food, it led to the emergence of ramen and other more popular, less gourmet food taking hold outside of Japan. Although instant ramen had been sold in the United States since the 1970s and was popular, restaurants serving ramen seem to have been virtually unknown in the US before the 2000s. American consumers still sought something authentically Japanese, but felt that tempura, teriyaki and sushi had become common place. Although authenticity was still part of the discussion, the kind of Japan people sought was different; younger, more urban, and less about the elite culture which was put forward in the previous decades. Even if older images of geisha, samurai and Buddhist temples lingered, newer

---

[1] Bruce Makoto Arnold, "The Problem with Persistence: The Rise of Tucson's Japanese Cuisine and the Fall of Its Nikkei Community". In *Chop Suey and Sushi from Sea to Shining Sea: Chinese and Japanese Restaurants in the United States* (University of Arkansas Press, 2018): 176.

narratives and images focusing on manga, anime and video games came to represent Japan for the American public.

Considering all the shifts occurring in American-Japanese relations, as well as the booming popularity and diversification of food media at the turn of the 21st century, I felt that ending my research at that point made sense. Ramen in many ways crystallized these changes. It was never mentioned in any sources published before the 1990s but in about a decade, it had become a cultural phenomenon. Food discourses are not produced in a vacuum. If the context changes too much, it stands to reason the discourse would change as well. Nevertheless, if despite these changes discourse remained stable, it would raise interesting questions about the relations between geopolitical concerns and culinary discourse. What influence do they have on each other and is the influence unidirectional? Do the changes in discourse on Japanese cuisine point to a more nuanced comprehension of Japanese culture or is it simply that Japan came to be seen as a land of robots and ramen instead of shinto and samurai?

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Secondary Sources

Abarca, Meredith E. "Authentic or Not, It's Original." *Food and Foodways* 12, no. 1 (2004): 1–25.

Ahmad, Eqbal. "Racism and the State: The Coming Crisis of US-Japan Relations". In *Japan in the World*, eds. Masao Miyoshi & Harry Harootunian. Duke: Duke University Press Book, 1993.

Arnold, Bruce Makoto "The Problem with Persistence: The Rise of Tucson's Japanese Cuisine and the Fall of Its Nikkei Community". In *Chop Suey and Sushi from Sea to Shining Sea: Chinese and Japanese Restaurants in the United States, eds. Bruce Makoto Arnold, Tanfer Emin Tunc, Raymond Douglas Chong*. University of Arkansas Press, 2018.

Auslin, Michael R. *Pacific Cosmopolitans: A Cultural History of U.S.-Japan Relations*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2011.

Barbas, Samantha. "'I'll Take Chop Suey'': Restaurants as Agents of Culinary and Cultural Change." *Journal of Popular Culture* 36, no. 4 (2003): 669–86.

Belasco, Warren. "Food and the Counterculture: A Story of Bread and Politics." In *Food in Global History*, edited by Raymond Grew, 273–92. Boulder: Westview Press, 1999.

bell hooks. "Eating the Other: Desire and Resistance." In *Eating Culture*, edited by Ron Scapp and Brian Seltz, 181–200. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1998.

Bestor, Theodore C. "How Sushi Went Global." *Foreign Policy*, no. 121 (2000): 54–63.

Cwiertka, Katarzyna J. "From Ethnic to Hip: Circuits of Japanese Cuisine in Europe." *Food and Foodways* 13, no. 4 (n.d.): 241–72.

———. "War, Empire and the Making of Japanese National Cuisine." *The Asia-Pacific Journal/Japan Focus* 5, no. 7 (n.d.): 1–6.

———. "Popularizing a Military Diet in Wartime and Postwar Japan." *Asian Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (2002): 1–30.

———. *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity*. Reissue edition. London: Reaktion Books, 2015.

Dower, John W. "From War to Peace." In *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War*, 293–317. New York: Pantheon Books, 1993.

Elias, Megan J. *Food on the Page: Cookbooks and American Culture*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2017.

Farrer, James, Mônica R. de Carvalho and Christian Hess, and Lenka Vyletalova, "Japanese Culinary Mobilities Research: The Globalization of the Japanese Restaurant," *Food & Food Ingredient Journal* 222, no. 3 (2017): 257–66.

Farrer, James, Christian Hess, Monica R. De Carvalho, and Chuanfei Wang. "JAPANESE CULINARY MOBILITIES The Multiple Globalizations of Japanese Cuisine." In *Routledge Handbook of Food in Asia*, edited by Cecilia Leong-Salobir, 1st ed. New York: Routledge, 2019.

Gabbacia, Donna. *We Are What We Eat, Ethnic Food and the Making of American*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2000.

Germann Molz, Jennie. "Eating Difference: The Cosmopolitan Mobilities of Culinary Tourism." *Space and Culture* 10, no. 1 (February 1, 2007): 77–93.

Gvion, Liora. "What's Cooking in America? Cookbooks Narrate Ethnicity: 1850–1990." *Food, Culture & Society* 12, no. 1 (2009).

Haas, Scott. "Hashiri, Sakari, Nagori: Toward Understanding the Psychology, Ideology, and Branding of Seasonality in Japanese Gastronomy." *Gastronomica* 15, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 3–9.

Hage, Ghassan. "At Home in the Entrails of the West: Multiculturalism, Ethnic Food, and Migrant Home-Building." In *Home/World: Space, Community and Marginality in Sidney's West*, edited by Helen Grace, 99–153. Pluto Press, n.d.

Hatch, Denny. "The Rise and Fall of Time-Life Books." *Target Marketing* 24, no. 6 (June 2001): 51–58.

Heldke, Lisa. *Exotic Appetites: Ruminations of a Food Adventurer.* New York: Routledge, 2003.

Iokibe, Makoto, and Tosh Minohara, eds. *The History of US-Japan Relations: From Perry to the Present*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2017.

Iriye, Akira, and Robert A. Wampler, eds. *Partnership: The United States and Japan 1951-2001*. New York: Kodansha International, 2001.

Issenberg, Sasha. *The Sushi Economy: Globalization and the Making of a Modern Delicacy*. Reprint edition. New York: Avery, 2008.

Johnston, Josée, and Shyon Baumann. *Foodies: Democracy and Distinction in the Gourmet Foodscape*. 2nd ed. Cultural Spaces. New York: Routledge, 2015.

King, Michelle T. "The Julia Child of Chinese Cooking, or the Fu Pei-Mei of French Food?" *Gastronomica* 18, no. 1 (Spring 2018): 15–26.

Klein, Christina. *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

Ku, Robert Ji-Song. *Dubious Gastronomy: The Cultural Politics of Eating Asian in the USA*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2014.

Kushner, Barak. *Slurp! A Social and Culinary History of Ramen: Japan's Favorite Noodle Soup*. Boston: Global Oriental, 2014.

Laemmerhirt, Iris-Aya. *Embracing Differences: Transnational Cultural Flows Between Japan and the United States*. Bielefeld: Transcript-Verlag, 2014.

LaFeber, Walter. *The Clash: A History of U.S.-Japan Relations*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997.

Lee, Erika. *The Making of Asian America*. New York: Simon & Schuster, 2016.

Lee, Robert G. *Orientals: Asian Americans in Popular Culture*. Asian American History and Culture. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999.

Levenstein, Harvey. *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America*. First Edition, Revised edition. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2003.

Lie, John. "Ruth Benedict's Legacy of Shame: Orientalism and Occidentalism in the Study of Japan." *Asian Journal of Social Science* 29, no. 2 (2001).

Liu, Haiming. *From Canton Restaurant to Panda Express: A History of Chinese Food in the United States*. Asian American Studies Today. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

Long, Lucy M., ed. *Culinary Tourism*. Material Worlds. Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2004.

Matsumoto, Valerie J. "Apple Pie and Makizushi Japanese American Women Sustaining Family and Community." In *Eating Asian America*, edited by Robert Ji-Song Ku, Martin F. Manalansan, and Anita Mannur, 255–73. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Morris, Narelle. "Paradigm Paranoia: Images of Japan and the Japanese in American Popular Fiction of the Early 1990s." *Japanese Studies* 21, no. 1 (2001): 45–59.

Mosby, Ian. "'That Wonton Soup Headache': The Chinese Restaurant Syndrome, MSG and the Making of American Food, 1968-1980." *Social History of Medicine* 22, no. 1 (2009): 133–51.

Murcott, Anne. "Food as an Expression of Identity." In *The Future of the Nation State: Essays on Cultural Pluralism and Political Integration*, edited by S. Gustavson and L. Lewin, 49–77. London: Routledge, 1996.

Padoongpatt, Mark. "'Oriental Cookery' Devouring Asian and Pacific Cuisine during the Cold War." In *Eating Asian America*, edited by Robert Ji-Song Ku, Anita Mannur, and Manalansan, 186–207. New York: New York University Press, 2013.

Rath, Eric C. *Oishii: The History of Sushi*. London: Reaktion Books, 2021.

Ray, Krishnendu. *The Ethnic Restaurateur*. Bloomsbury Academic, 2016.

———. "Nation and Cuisine. The Evidence From American Newspapers Ca. 1830–2003." *Food and Foodways* 16, no. 4 (2008): 259–97.

———. "Ethnic Succession and the New American Restaurant Cuisine." In *The Restaurants Book: Ethnographies of Where We Eat*, edited by David Beriss and David Sutton, 97–114. New York: Berg, 2007.

Said, Edward. *Orientalism*. 1st ed. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

Sakamoto, Rumi, and Matthew Allen. "Sushi Reverses Course: Consuming American Sushi in Tokyo." *The Asi-Pacific Journal/Japan Focus* 9, no. 2 (2011).

Schaller, Michael. *Altered States: The United States and Japan since the Occupation*. 1st edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 1997.

Shibusawa, Naoko. *America's Geisha Ally: Reimagining the Japanese Enemy*. Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2006.

Simpson, Caroline Chung. *An Absent Presence: Japanese Americans in Postwar American Culture, 1945–1960*. Duke University Press Books, 2002.

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

Stalker, Nancy K. “Cool Japan as Cultural Superpower.” In *Japan: History and Culture from Classical to Cool,* 362–400. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018.

———. “Introduction.” In *Devouring Japan: Global Perspectives on Japanese Culinary Identity*, ed. Nancy K. Stalker, 1-30. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

———. “ Rosanjin: The Roots of Japanese Gourmet Nationalism”. In *Devouring Japan: Global Perspectives on Japanese Culinary Identity*, ed. Nancy K. Stalker, 133-149. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018.

Takaki, Ronald. *Strangers from a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*. 1st. Little, Brown and Company, 1989.

Tunc, Tanfer Emin. “Dining at the "Oriental Garden": The cultural politics of American Chinese restaurant Menus, 1940s-1970s“. In *Chop Suey and Sushi from Sea to Shining Sea: Chinese and Japanese Restaurants in the United States,* eds. Bruce Makoto Arnold, Tanfer Emin Tunc, Raymond Douglas Chong. University of Arkansas Press, 2018.

Wank, David L., and James Farrer. “Chinese Immigrants and Japanese Cuisine in the United States: A Case of Culinary Glocalization.” In *The Globalization of Asian Cuisines. Transnational Netwroks and Culinary Contact Zones*, edited by James Farrer, 79–99. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Wu, Ellen D. *The Color of Success: Asian Americans and the Origins of the Model Minority*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

Yamashita, Samuel H. “The ‘Japanese Turn’ in Fine Dining in the United States, 1980–2020.” *Gastronomica* 20, no. 2 (2020): 45–54.

Yu, Henry. *Thinking Orientals: Migration,Contact, and Exoticism in Modern America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Primary Sources

Cookbooks

Andoh, Elizabeth. *An American Taste of Japan*. New York: Morrow, 1985.

Engler, George E. *Japanese-American Cook Book: Hibachi Cookery in the American Manner*. Rutland, Vt.: Charles E. Tuttle Co., 1968.

Griffin, Stuart. *Japanese Food and Cooking*. Tokyo, Rutland, Vt: C. E. Tuttle Co, 1956.

Hahn, Emily, and TIME-LIFE books. *The Cooking of China*. Foods of the World. New York: Time-Life Books, 1968.

Keys, John D. *Japanese Cuisine; a Culinary Tour*. Tokyo, Rutland, Vt., C.E. Tuttle Co, 1966.

Nix, Janeth Johnson and Chevron Chemical Company. Ortho Book Division. *Adventures in Oriental Cooking*. San Francisco: Ortho Book Division, Chevron Chemical Co., 1976.

Ortiz, Elisabeth Lambert, and Mitsuko Endo. *The Complete Book of Japanese Cooking*. New York: M. Evans; Philadelphia: distributed in the U.S. by Lippincott, 1976.

Richie, Donald. *A Taste of Japan: Food Fact and Fable: What the People Eat: Customs and Etiquette*. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International, 1985.

Rossant, Colette. *Colette's Japanese Cuisine*. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International; New York, N.Y.: Distributed in the US by Kodansha through Harper & Row, 1985.

Steinberg, Rafael and Time-Life Books. *The Cooking of Japan*. Foods of the World. New York: Time-Life Books, 1969.

Tsuji, Mifune. *A Gift of Japanese Cooking*. New York: Weatherhill, 1995.

Tsuji, Shizuo, and Mary Sutherland. *Japanese Cooking: A Simple Art*. Tokyo; New York: Kodansha International Ltd.; New York: distributed in the U.S. by Kodansha International/USA through Harper & Row, 1980.

Magazine Articles

Andoh, Elizabeth. "Lunch at the Sanko-In." *Gourmet,* July 1983.

Bates, Caroline. "Akasaka." *Gourmet,* July 1977.

———. "Hamayoshi and Hamasushi." *Gourmet,* July 1979.

———. "Mifune." *Gourmet*, June 1979.

———. "Oomasa." *Gourmet*, November 1979.

———. "Teru Sushi." *Gourmet*, July 1981.

———. "Fuku-Sushi." *Gourmet*, August 1981.

———. "Fuki-Ya." *Gourmet*, February 1982.

———. "Nanbantei." *Gourmet*, May 1984.

———. "Goro's Robata." *Gourmet*, February 1985.

———. "Restaurant Katsu." *Gourmet*, October 1985.

———. "Chaya Brasserie." *Gourmet*, February 1986.

———. "Matsuhisa." *Gourmet*, April 1988.

———. "Katsu 3rd." *Gourmet*, January 1990.

———. "Robata." *Gourmet*, May 1990.

Birsh, Andy. "Sagano." *Gourmet*, June 1986.

———. "Sushiden." *Gourmet*, February 1, 1988.

———. "Umeda." *Gourmet*, March 1990.

———. "Honmura An." *Gourmet*, February 1992.

Brown, Alan. "Kinmata." *Bon Appétit*, October 1, 1993.

Jacobs, Jay. "Kegon." *Gourmet*, April 1979.

———. "SoHo Robata." *Gourmet*, February 1980.

———. "The Gibbon." *Gourmet*, October 1980.

———. "Gin-Ray." *Gourmet*, December 1980.

———. "Takesushi." *Gourmet*, July 1983.

———. "Hyotan Nippon." *Gourmet*, 1984.

———. "Yama." *Gourmet*, 1985.

———. "Yoshi's Café." *Gourmet*, October 1985.

———. "Azuma Ya." *Gourmet*, February 1986.

———. "Mitsukoshi." *Gourmet*, June 1990.

Rossant, Colette. “Bon Voyage.” *Bon Appétit*, October 1, 1986.
Smith, Scott. “Capital Celebrations.” *Bon Appétit*, December 1993.
Steingarten, Jeffrey. “Kyoto Cuisine.” *Vogue*, September 1, 1991. ProQuest Central.
Unknown. “Nishi NoHo.” *Gourmet*, June 1987.

Newspaper Articles

Baker, Russell. “Fodder Knows Best: Cuisines as Seen by a Conservative.” *New York Times*, May 21, 1986.

Canaday, John. “The Best and the Worst, the Most and the Least In 20 Star-Filled Months of Dining Out.” *New York Times*, August 1, 1975.

———. “A Neotraditional Japanese ‘Farmhouse’ That Delights in Good Food and Service.” *New York Times*, December 5, 1975.

———. “In Yorkville, Pleasant Decor, Good Ideas About Food, and a Full Meal for 10$ or So.” *New York Times*, January 16, 1976, sec. Restaurant reviews.

Claiborne, Craig. “Japanese Restaurant Here Exception in Oriental Dining.” *New York Times*, March 19, 1959.

———. “Kabuki Is Japanese and One of Best.” *New York Times*, April 4, 1961.

———. “Restaurant on Review. Variety of Japanese Dishes Offered, But Raw Fish Is Specialty on Menu.” *New York Times*, November 11, 1963.

———. “Oriental Dishes Taste as Good as They Look.” *New York Times*, January 7, 1965.

———. “A Japanese Version of Swiss Fondue Is Okonomiyaki, or What-You-Will.” *New York Times*, February 17, 1966.

———. “New Yorkers Take to Tempura and Chopsticks WIth Gusto.” *New York Times*, March 10, 1966.

———. “Japanese Cuisine Invades Gotham From All Sides.” *The Arizona Daily Star*, March 14, 1966.

———. “Directory to Dining.” *New York Times*, December 30, 1966.

———. “Dining Out On Thai and Japanese Fare.” *New York Times*, May 23, 1969.

———. “For Dining in CIty: Touches of Japan.” *New York Times*, June 27, 1969.

———. “New Restaurants That Offer Japanese Fare,” November 7, 1969.

———. “Dining Out Japanese Style.” *New Yor Times*, May 8, 1970.

———. “To Cook Japanese Style, It Helps If You Have Obliging Butcher.” *New York Times*, March 4, 1971.

———. “The Ubiquitous Cuisine of Japan.” *New York Times*, April 5, 1978.

———. “A Japanese Chef With Classic French Taste.” *New York Times*, December 31, 1980.

———. “Pleasures of the Japanese Table.” *New York Times*, January 12, 1983.

Miller, Bryan. “Cuisine of Japan and Vietnam,” December 6, 1985.

O'Brien, George. "FRESH, COOL AND MADE IN JAPAN: A Japanese Cooking School Gives Lessons in Food Preparation and Presentation That Have Universal Appeal to Taste and to Sight." *New York Times*, 1982, sec. Magazine.

Unknown. "Simplicity and Quietness Key to Japanese Restaurant Here: Restaurant Uses 'Sukiya' as Style." *New York Times*, October 23, 1963.