

Food Heritage in Japan: Case of green tea product in Kyoto

According to Japan Foundation and Kyoto University of Foreign Studies Grant for Field Research on Heritage Tourism program which was held on the 2nd – 6th November 2017 in Kyoto, we had a chance to visit Kyoto and do field research under the theme of Food Heritage. We, students of Chiang Mai University, choose to study about Green tea products in Kyoto

Japan is the country of our focus in studying about green tea and Kyoto is the area we conducted our research. To begin with its brief information, Japan or State of Japan (Nihon-koku) is a constitutional monarchy whereby the executive power is with the Prime Minister and his cabinet, and sovereignty rest with Japanese people (Wikipedia, “Japan” 2018). However, the Emperor is still respected as “the symbol of the State and of the unity of the people”. The Emperor of Japan is the head of the Imperial Family and the traditional head of state of Japan without the relationship with the government (Wikipedia, “Emperor of Japan” 2018). Japan is a sovereign island Asian nation consisting of numerous islands. Its total area is 377,972 km². Japan has four main islands including Honshu, Hokkaido, Kyushu, and Shikoku. There are around 126,672,000 of Japanese population. Japan society appears to be homogenous in terms of language, race and culture since 98.5 percent of population are ethnic Japanese (Wikipedia, “Japan” 2018).

Japan and China located close to each other separated by the narrow East China Sea and they had contacted and visited each other for more than two millennia. For this reason, Japan has been influenced by China in terms of writing system, architecture, culture, religion, philosophy, and law. History of Japan was first recorded in the 1st century BCE being mentioned in Chinese sources. In Chinese chronicles, Japan was mentioned as Wo. The first mention of the Japanese archipelago was in the Chinese historic text Book of Later Han, in the year 57, in which it was noted that the Emperor of the Han Dynasty gave a golden seal to Wa (Japan) (Wikipedia, “History of Sino-Japanese relations” 2017). For this research, the most interesting period of their relationship is between 7th and 9th century. In this period, Japan sent their people to China to learn from them and the objective of each expedition differed from one another. These expeditions were known as Japanese missions to Tang China (遣唐使, Kentōshi) (Wikipedia, “Japanese missions to Tang China” 2017). Those people brought back many significant elements including Buddhist teachings, Chinese customs and culture, bureaucracy, architecture and city planning (Wikipedia, “History of Sino-Japanese relations” 2017). One of those elements they brought from China was tea. All kinds of tea consumed in China and Japan are from the same species of plant which is *Camellia sinensis* (L.) O.Kuntze. This tree was believed that it was originally grown around Yunnan, China.

How tea was brought into Japan and invention of making tea method are very interesting to discuss. Tea historical timeline in Japan is quite different in each text; however

there are some identical details found. We find a booklet about Ujicha we got from an exhibition we visited in Kyoto. This booklet was published by Ujicha Cooperative (2014). There is a brief timeline of tea history in Japan on page 3. According to this booklet, tea history in Japan started in 850 A.D. which was during Tang period in China. The Japanese Buddhist monks named Saicho and Kukai brought tea seeds back from China and planted them at Mount Hiei of Kyoto. Next, the Kamakura period is now known as a significant period for tea drinking custom of Japan. In 1191, a Japanese Buddhist monk named Eisai returned from Song, China and promoted the custom of drinking tea in Japan. He introduced Tencha: the style of tea preparation which used Matcha or powdered green tea to Japan. Eisai also gave tea seeds to Myoe, a monk from Kousanji temple, to plant in Toganoo and Uji, Kyoto. This was the beginning of tea cultivation in Uji. In 1211, Eisai wrote a book “Kissa Youjyouki” (in English, Drinking Tea for Health) discussing about Matcha (Powdered green tea), its health benefits, how to cultivate and how to prepare it (Ricardo Caicedo, accessed 2018). Afterwards, all Japan knew the excellence of Ujicha in the Muromachi period. Next is the Edo period. In 1738, a man from Uji Tawarayuyatani named Nagatani Soen established the method for making “Sencha” or the Ujicha method. This method used “middle grade” green tea leaves. Then, in the latter part of the Edo period, he established the method making “Gyokuro”. Both processing methods are still used nowadays. Besides these two, according to the booklet by Ujicha Cooperative, there are 11 types of tea invented and consumed in Japan (page 6). These kinds of tea vary in cultivation, fermentation, and tea making method. We are interested in two types of tea including Sencha and Matcha.

Sencha and Matcha vary in the way they are cultivated, made and brew. To begin with, Sencha is grown in Rotenen way. Rotenen is a tea plantation that grows tea trees without covers so that they will expose to the sunlight naturally. Sunlight turns L-Theanine into catechin; thus the tea will taste fresh with slight astringency (page 7). Tea leaves from the Rotenen way of plantation are used to make around six different types of tea and Sencha is one of them. For Sencha, only new buds are picked and then steamed and kneaded as they are dried (page 6). Unlike Sencha, Matcha is grown in Oishitaen way by growing them under a cover to avoid direct sunlight in order to prevent L-Theanine from turning into catechin. Thus, the tea will taste mild, rich and less astringent compared to tea grown in the Rotenen way. Practically, Matcha is from Tencha. Tencha is a kind of tea grown in Oishitaen way, then steamed and dried without being kneaded. Then, Tencha will be ground by a tea millstone. That powdered green tea is called “Matcha” (page 6). Moreover, people brew Sencha and Matcha in different methods. People brew Sencha by soaking tealeaves in mixed boiled and cool water for 45 seconds to 1 minute (page 18). This is different from how people brew Matcha. The most obvious difference of Matcha to other types of tea is its form. Matcha is powdered green tea, so the method and tools used to brew Matcha are different from others.

On page 17 of the Ujicha booklet, a tea whisk and a sieve are special tools needed in brewing Matcha. Briefly, you should put around two teaspoons of Matcha powder in a cup and use a sieve to sift the Matcha powder in order to make it easier to create smooth foam. You then add some 80°C hot water and mix well with a tea whisk. You should move the whisk back and forth gently until they are well mixed and then move the whisk swiftly until the surface is full of creamy foam (page 17). Lastly, Sencha is like most types of tea that people will drink only tea and leave the leaves while Matcha that they consume tealeaves as they drink.

Interestingly, tea has a long tradition of consumption in Japan for more than a thousand years ago and it is also perceived as a form of art. It is called tea ceremony, chadō or sadō (“way of tea”), and cha-no-yu (“hot-water tea”). This ceremony has its root in Zen Buddhism principles. Back to Tang period, the Chinese writer named Lu Yu established form and structure to tea preparation and drinking. This was regarded as the beginning of the formality of tea drinking (Revolution Tea, accessed 2018). The development of tea ceremony was related to Zen concept since Lu Yu was heavily influenced by Zen-Chan Buddhism (Wikipedia, “Japanese tea ceremony” 2017). In Japan, Eisai, a Japanese Buddhist monk, was credited for bringing back Rinzaï school of Zen Buddhism to Japan. He was also remarked for bringing best tea seeds back and introducing tea ceremony to Japan as well. In that period, tea and tea ceremony could not be separated from the temple and religious way of practice. Zen monks first practiced ritual tea drinking in Kamakura period (1192-1333) in order to keep them awake during the long meditation (Britannica, “Tea ceremony” 2013). Then, Murata Jūkō was known as the founder of the Japanese tea ceremony who emphasized philosophy into tea ceremony. There are four main values in this philosophy including Kin (a form of humble reverence), Kei (a respect for the food and drink), Sei (purity of both body and spirit), and Ji (a Buddhist concept denoting calmness and freedom from desire) (Wikipedia, “Murata Jūkō” 2017). The next important person is Sen no Rikyū who influenced on Chanoyu (Way of Tea) the most. He was recognized for the tradition of Wabi-cha. He developed tea ceremony according to Wabi-Sabi principle which a Japanese world view centered on the acceptance of transience and imperfection (Wikipedia, “Wabi-sabi” 2017). Moreover, he also put the emphasis of rustic simplicity, directness of approach and honesty of self on tea ceremony (Wikipedia, “Sen no Rikyū” 2018).

Tea ceremony is an esthetic way to welcome the guests and it has various ways to conduct tea ceremony depending on school of thought, season, time of the day, venue, and other important factors. However, there are some required elements for the ceremony. First of all, venues can be both indoor and outdoor, but must be well arranged to set out all equipment and have enough space for hosts to perform tea making in front of the guests. Some houses have a room which is purpose-built for tea ceremonies called Chashitsu, while outdoor picnic-style venue is called Nodate (KPC, 2018). Numbers and types of equipment are different in

each event and season: however, there are five elements needed for most types of tea ceremony including:

“Chakin (茶巾). A small rectangular hemp cloth or linen to wipe the tea bowls.

Natsume (棗). A small lidded tea caddy that holds the tea for brewing.

Chawan (茶碗). A tea bowl. Chawans come in a wide range of styles and sizes. Shallow tea bowls are used in summer so that the tea cools easily, while deep bowls are popular in the winter.

Chasen (茶筴). Tea whisk to mix the hot water and powdered tea, usually made from a single piece of bamboo.

Chashaku (茶杓). A tea scoop, of bamboo, wood, or ivory, to transfer tea into the tea caddy.” (KPC, 2018)

Before the performance of the host, guests should gather in the waiting room until everyone arrived. Next, they have to wash their hands and mouths before they enter the tea room. The most important part is performance which also varies in formality and steps in each event. According to the performance we had a chance to join in when we visited Kyoto University of Foreign Studies, the host will serve some sweets and then perform according to the fixed order with graceful movement. The host start with perform the ritual of cleansing a tea cup in front of the guests before performing tea making. They have got to make and serve tea to each individual guest and then repeat the performance again and again for everyone. For the guest, they should rotate the cup before taking a sip. Then, they should give the host some compliments and finish all of tea and sweet.

Matcha Products

In the past, tea was used as a tool to show wealth and power in Japan. Therefore, it had a great influence on tea. Kyoto is the first city where tea was introduced from China over 800 years ago and the quality of tea is still known as the highest in the country. Through centuries of perfecting process, preservation, and fertilization techniques, Japan produces the highest quality green tea in the world especially Matcha which is become the famous in many tea ceremonies. Matcha has also gradually been used as a flavour and dye in many desserts and pastries in the modern centuries. Different regions in Japan have their own local specialties and the Matcha Green Tea is certainly one that represents Kyoto. From enjoying some Japanese tea in Kyoto's beautiful scenery to indulging in some unique green tea flavored confectionaries. Since Kyoto is known for its green tea, you can find matcha flavored food and beverages on nearly every street corner. While you're in the city, we definitely

recommend you try one or two... or five matcha flavored goodies. Here are some popular and interesting matcha flavored treats you can find in Kyoto (discoverkyoto).

Matcha Fondue

Dip some Japanese sweets and fruit into this sweet, delicious sauce made from matcha and white chocolate. Jouvencelle (Gion) 10:00-18:00



Matcha Parfait

Almost too beautiful to eat, this matcha parfait includes cookies, brownies, Japanese warabimochi, and of course, matcha ice cream. Every spoonful is a delight.

OKU (Gion) 11:30-21:00



Hisui Mochi - Saryo Hassui

the **Hisui mMochi** at Saryo Hassui. The **brilliant jade** green of this beautiful sweet reflects the greenery of Arashiyama that surrounds the store. This firm, jelly-like dessert is made with



luxurious amounts of matcha from Ippodo and arrowroot powder. Each bite is filled with the taste and aroma of matcha.

The highlight of our visit to Nishiki Market, Matcha kettle corn mixed with Matcha ice cream.



From the observations from Nishiki market and Arashiyama found that there are many stores that sell the products which made from green tea. Due to nowadays Japan green tea especially Matcha is booming around the world but their taste is quite bitter for foreigners or new generations. Therefore, there is an adaptation of green tea into the different desserts or beverages such as cakes, cookies or ice-cream to make their tastes are easier to eat for general people.

Nishiki Market

Nishiki market is the famous market in Kyoto. It has been opened for several centuries. The stores in this market have been launched by same families by generations. At first, this market started by opening fish shop around 1310 and at the beginning it was wholesale market. Later, according to the variety of the shop and goods, the area has been changed from wholesale market to the retail. Nowadays, the market has varieties of goods more than the past such as food, products and souvenirs in order to attract locals and tourists.

Variety of Green Tea products which are sold in Nishiki market

Sawawa

Sawawa is a small stall that has lunched the business for around 5 years. This shop is for the matcha lovers because the most of goods in this shop made of Matcha. The stall is recognized easily by the towers of Mochi cubes by entrance. The location of the shop is convenient for the customers because it located along the pavement that people can access easily. The most popular product is Matcha Warabimochi with chewy texture and remarkable



Matcha flavor. The fresh Warabimochi can be keep around three days. As Kyoto is known for green tea. Therefore, this shop chooses green tea as a signature of shop. The most customers of this shop are locals and tourists respectively.



Variety of Green Tea products which are sold in Nishiki market



Matcha Warabimochi tower with chewy texture and remarkable Matcha flavor



Green tea products in Sawawa stall

Moreover, many products made of Matcha are shown at the entrance of the shop. Many people both locals and tourists come to this shop and buy the products. From observing, the customers shop for the green tea products all most of the time especially at 5 in the evening.



The tourists waiting for buying Matcha green tea at the front of Sawawa shop

Arashiyama

There is a popular tourist attraction in Kyoto which is Arashiyama. It has been a famous destination for the tourists in Kyoto because you can enjoy natural setting with the beautiful atmosphere. For example, bamboo groves grow further apart from each other, allowing it to become thick and beautiful. There are the variety of stores along the street in Arashiyama.

Kyo Baum or Baumkuchen (Shop at Arashiyama)

Baumkuchen is spongy round cake with three layers, it is separated into three parts which are two Matcha and one soy milk. It is the best seller of dessert in Kyoto over the last several years. This cake cannot be seen in the several shops. From observing one of shop at Arashiyama, tourist attraction in Kyoto, the owner said that this cake use Uji Morihan Matcha as ingredients. The texture is moist. In the shop, there are also many Matcha product such as cookies which has Matcha flavor, this can be a good combination. Moreover, Kyo-Mochiya cookies is popular as well. These cookies offer a real taste of Uji Matcha with a rich Matcha made by Moriha which has long history from 1836. Besides the taste of Kyo-Mochiya, the package is outstanding as well in order to get attention from the customers. The package design base on “Kyo-Mochiya” which is traditional wooden houses in Kyoto. It can be representative of Kyoto. The price is around 500 Yen.



Baumkuchen , round cake with three layers, it is separated into three parts which are two Matcha and one soy milk



Kyo-Mochiya cookies, a real taste of Uji Matcha with a rich Matcha made by Moriha which has long history from 1836.

To summarize, tea has made its way to Japan for more than a millennium and it still stays outstandingly on this land. Its long history, health benefits and culture of consumption make it popular for Japanese from time to time. However, since the time passes by, people have started to find another way to use these precious leaves, trying to make them more interesting and delicious.

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