

Absorb the New and Preserve the Old

**The changing patterns in Japanese eating habits and the consequences
on Washoku Culture**

By

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Table of Contents

1	INTRODUCTION	1
1.a	Food as “Culture”	1
1.b	The Globalization and the Change in Eating Habits	5
1.c	Fast Food and McDonald’s Case	6
1.d	Japan and the Era of Change	8
1.e	Research objectives and overview	8
2	JAPANESE CUISINE THROUGH HISTORY	10
2.a	Introduction.....	10
2.b	Japanese Cuisine Today	10
2.c	Japanese Cuisine and the West during the “Age of Discoveries”	12
2.d	Japanese Cuisine and the West during the “Modernization” Period	14
2.e	The Result of early Westernization: Washoku and Yoshoku.....	16
2.f	Conclusions.....	18
3	PRESERVING JAPANESE FOOD TRADITION	19
3.a	Washoku as a “Cultural Heritage”	19
3.b	Washoku Globalized	22
4	RESEARCH METHODS	25
4.a	General Survey and Data Tables.....	26
4.b	Conclusions.....	32
4.c	In-Depth Interviews.....	32
5	FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS.....	38
5.a	Limitations	39
6	REFERENCES.....	41
7	APPENDIX.....	43
7.a	Interviewees info	43
7.b	General Survey (Original in Japanese).....	44
7.c	In-depth interviews questions.....	47

TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1, General Survey's question n.5	26
Figure 2, General Survey's question n.7	27
Figure 3, General Survey's Question n.8	28
Figure 4, General Survey's question n.12	29
Figure 5, General Survey's question n.13	30
Figure 6, General Survey's question n.14	31
Figure 7, General Survey's question n.15	31

ABSTRACT

Studies on the influence of Western food in Asian societies, in particular Japan, are not new and those one focused on fast food are the most popular. However, most of these studies were made during the 1980s and 1990s, during the boom of fast food in Asian countries¹. This study wants be an update to the previous one and see how the situation changed, in particular there are two main goals. The first one is to demonstrate the changes that have influenced eating habits of Japanese people in the last fifty years, by showing the central role played by Western food introduction. The second goal is to analyze what has been done in order to preserve the traditional Japanese food, Washoku. Although a change of eating habits is a normal process in most modern societies, in Japan important internal and external factors caused a radical change in how food is perceived nowadays. The data collected through the survey demonstrated that a change in Japanese eating habits has took place and that it is due to a process of “Westernization” of the local cuisine. How Japanese culture itself played an important role in this change process, whose results are still far from being accurately predictable, will be addressed in this research; during this analysis it will be emphasized that even the apparently simplest problem, like having a clear definition of Japanese traditional cuisine, can results more problematic than expected. Finally, a hypothesis concerning Japanese cuisine and eating habits in the near future. Are they going to be radically changed? Or there will be an inverted trend?

¹ Some of these studies can be found in the book: Golden Arches East, 2006, edited by James L. Watson.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.a Food as “Culture”

When most of the people think about food, the first thing that comes to mind is a “need”.

We eat food because we need it in order to survive, to feed our organism. However when we eat food we do it for other several reasons that we do not even consciously realize. Of course, the first element is “taste”; there is food that we like to eat and food that we do not, and in most of the cases this choice is due to our individual taste. Our preferences change together with our place of origin, so the consumption of a particular foodstuff is also related to that particular society, and this makes food a cultural aspect of our life, not just a need.

Since ancient times food has represented one of the most important characteristics of human societies. The geographic position and the difficulties in connecting to other part of the world made the development of specific cuisine and local products possible. For example, olive oil and wine have always been part of the diet of several populations living in Mediterranean basin, like Romans, Greeks and Egyptians. In the same way, soy has been the essential element of nutrition for many Asian populations since the early Chinese Empire. It is easy to understand how food has not just been sustenance for these populations, but it has also become part of their culture. In fact, food has always been associated with special events or religious rituals and it still play the same role today. Religious celebrations such as Christmas, Easter, Halloween, Chanukah or Ramadan are all related to the consumption (or fasting) of traditional food that represents religious symbols. In this regard, Christmas Eve dinner as well as Easter Lunch are just two of the main Christian celebrations that involve a banquet, in which meat acquires an important meaning (Christ’s body) and in its place it is substituted with fish. Some religions consider the sacrifice of animals as an essential part of the ritual, while some others ban the eating of meat, as it consist in killing animals, which is seen as an anti-spiritual and violent thing (Anderson, E.N., 2004). The general idea is that

religions use food to mark and symbolize matters of communion and theology (Anderson, E.N., 2004). The spread of same eating habits in distant areas is also a consequence of the spread of religions. For instance, the diffusion of Christianity and Islam in Africa and Asia has changed part of the eating habits of local populations, like the consumption of different kind of meat like pork, which has decreased even in those countries where originally it was largely diffused.

Historical and political events are also often related to food. Sometime even in iconic protests we can find a correlation with food, which becomes a symbol. Good example is the “Boston Tea Party” protest of 1773², which has become an iconic symbol of the American Revolution. Another similar episode is the “Salt March”³ in India, where the protester started a campaign against British Tax on salt that forbade the private collection of salt around the Indian coasts. In this case too, food became a symbolic element of a big protest, which was considered important during the Indian Independentism Movement. Of course food had an important role also during conferences and international meetings, during which large banquets were often served to the attendees since ancient times. One example is the “dinner table bargaining” during the “Compromise of 1790” in the early period after the foundation of the United States of America, where a series of private dinners led to solve a political crisis that would have potentially undermine the young American nation.⁴

² The Boston Tea Party is the name of a protest held in Boston in 1773. It refers to a Tea act passed by the British parliament that consisted in the monopolization of tea trade. Following the indications of the law, the British colonies were supposed to purchase tea only from Great Britain. This led to a big protest, and later on to the beginning of American Revolution. Labaree, Benjamin Woods. *The Boston Tea Party*. Originally published 1964. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1979.

³ The Salt March, led by Mahatma Gandhi, was a march of nonviolent protest from Sabarmati Ashram to Dandi (around 400 km). During this march Gandhi symbolically picked up grains of salt, an action that was considered illegal by British law. *Gandhi's Civil Disobedience*. Gandhi & Dalton, 1996

⁴ The “Dinner Table Bargain” was a famous episode during the “Compromise of 1790”. It was a series private dinner between Alexander Hamilton (Secretary of the Treasury) and James Madison (a member of the House of Representative). After an initial failure, the influence of Thomas Jefferson (Secretary of State) helped to find a political settlement. Ellis, Joseph J. 2000. *Founding Brothers: The Revolutionary Generation*. Alfred A. Knopf. New York. P.48-51
Staloff, Darren. 2005. *Hamilton, Adams, Jefferson: The Politics of Enlightenment and the American Founding*. Hill and Wang, New York. P.313

National identity is another element where food is often involved. In particular, when we think about ethnic groups it is easier to understand, inasmuch they are characterized and sometimes defined by their food-ways. Food conscious groups such as Italians and Chinese are notable in this regard (Anderson E.N. 2004). In most of cases, however, traditional foods are more recent than people might think and their label of “traditional food” is attributed in order to help identifying a particular ethnic group. For instance, Pasta and Pizza are the two most famous foodstuff that identify Italy and Italian culture all over the world. Despite the attempts to associate these products to Italian past history (sometimes even to the medieval age), actually they were officially recognized only around the second half of XIX century, during the unification of Italian small kingdoms under The Kingdom of Italy in 1861. On one hand, it is true that previous variations of pasta and pizza were common in some specific places in the Italian peninsula since the medieval age; on the other hand, it is also true that they became a symbol of Italy just in the XX century, in particular after the end of World War II, and with several adjustments. For example, pizza Margherita is seasoned with tomato sauce (red), basil (green) and mozzarella cheese (white), which represents the colors of the new born Italian flag. This pizza was dedicated in 1889 to the new queen Margherita di Savoia, and soon became the basis of Italian pizzas. The same process has characterized the evolution of pasta, which has been very common in the Italian peninsula since the Roman Age, but very far from what today is known as Italian pasta. Considered that tomato is not originally from Europe, but it was imported during the XVI century, and only after the XVII century its cultivation started in the Italian peninsula. For this reason, the stereotype of the pasta with tomato sauce as traditional Italian food became part of the “national identity” building process.

However, there is one thing that must be considered: the age of Italian Nation itself. It is true that most of the Italian food culture is relatively recent, but it is also true that the establishment of Italy itself as a modern and united country is also recent (1861), therefore

despite some famous Italian foodstuff do not have ancient roots, they can be considered traditional “Italian” food.

Now let us have a look at Japan, the main theme of this research. In the case of Japan, the same pattern was found, though with some important differences. As it will be explained better in the next chapter, Japanese traditional cuisine was born in the early Meiji period, as a result of the efforts of the Japanese new government to create and strengthen its national identity. Like the case of Italy, old culinary customs were adopted, slightly modified and standardized, in order to differentiate Japanese food from the others. The creation of the term “*Washoku*” to refer to Japanese cuisine also date back to this period. However, there is a big difference between the Italian case and the Japanese one, making the latter one unique. If we exclude the northern island of Hokkaido and the southern archipelagos of Okinawa (which were annexed during late Edo/early Meiji period) Japan has been a united nation since ancient times⁵. If compared to European countries Japan has also experienced a relatively short “Middle Age”, when clans started fighting for the control over the Country. So how can we relate the Japanese traditional cuisine “*Washoku*” to the claim that it has been created only in modern age? I think there are two main reasons. The first one concern the peculiarity of Japanese people of assimilating culture from other Countries and make it their own. For example, Japanese language, religion, politics and costume have always been strongly influenced by neighbor Country (in particular China), and food is part of them too. As it will explained better in next chapter, Japanese cuisine assimilated eating habits from other cultures, adjusted them, and then made them part of the Japanese cuisine. This can be one reason that made possible not to have a distinctive Japanese cuisine since old times. The second reason concern the political situation of Japan at the end of XIX century. Western

⁵ During the Kofun Period (古墳時代 Kofun jidai, 250-538 AD) Japanese people already settled in most of Honshu (Japan’s main island) and part of Kyushu (the southern island). In this period the Japanese Imperial House was also established.

imperialism was spreading around Asia and several many countries such as China, Indonesia and Vietnam were under the rule of European Countries. In Japan the Meiji Restoration of 1868 was meant to put an end to the isolation policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate, restore the power of the Emperor, and make Japan a modern and strong enough to be recognized and respected by Western Countries. In this process of modernization, Western customs, political system and ideology, as well as food were strongly advertised and introduced in Japanese society. The creation of a Japanese distinctive food culture was also an important element of being a modern nation and it can be outlined as the reason why the concept of “Washoku” came so late.

1.b *The Globalization and the Change in Eating Habits*

If we think about food as something circulating around the world, going beyond countries and civilizations boundaries, then it results easy to understand its important role in the process of globalization. However, when talking about globalization there is always confusion about in which period of time it started, and usually people think about the last hundred years, during which connections between countries improved and distances reduced due to new technologies. In the case of food globalization started earlier. Exchanging food was a very common habit since ancient times, though limited at the regional level. The Roman Empire in Europe and Chinese Empire in Asia are two example of regional trade networks. In both cases, food products from remote areas of the Empire were available in big cities’ markets, making the sharing of eating habits possible from a place to another. However, the beginning of food globalization can be better identified with the Age of Discovery, when European Powers started exploring the rest of the world and importing new and exotic products to their home countries. If we think about European cuisines, we can see that many ingredients are from America (Inglis, Gimli, 2009). Potatoes, corn, tomatoes, chili pepper, tobacco, coffee and cocoa are just some of the multitude of products that were

imported in Europe from the New World (Americas) which became integral part of European cuisines until today. The culture of tea, another very popular product in Western countries, also reached Europe through the trade of British Empire in East Asia in the nineteenth century. This kind of trade, even though was made under colonial rule, made possible the spread of food culture in different areas, though it was just the beginning of a bigger phenomenon.

The improvements of transportation's technology in the late nineteenth century and the migration flows due to poverty and war were two of the most important factors that led to what today can be considered "globalized food culture". Chinese and Italian immigration to America are just two clear examples; some their food has become integrated deeply in American food culture, like pasta, pizza, or Chinese dumplings and noodles. The same phenomenon affected also other ethnic groups such as Germans, Greek, Vietnamese, and Japanese. The American case is the best model when we talk about globalized food culture, and not only because it assimilated various eating habits from other cultures but also because it spread its own one to all over the world, in particular the fast-food culture.

1.c Fast Food and McDonald's Case

If we have a look at the most famous fast-food brand, McDonald's, then we can get a better idea of the fast development and expansion worldwide of this industry. In 1995 the number of McDonald's restaurants was 18,380 of which 11,368 only in the US⁶ and the other almost seven thousands split over the rest of the world. In twenty years the number of McDonald's restaurant almost doubled, reaching quota 36,258 in 2014, with 14,350 restaurants only in the US (McDonald's Corporation)⁷. If in 1995 the 62% of McDonald's restaurants was exclusive of American internal market, in 2014 this data has dropped to 40%; however this

⁶ 1995 Annual Report, McDonald's Corp., through Watson, James L., 1997, *Golden Arches East, McDonald's in East Asia*, Stanford University Press, p.3.

⁷ 2014 Annual Report, McDonald's Corp., p.22;

is not due to loss in the internal market but to the growth on foreign markets, in particular in the Asia Pacific. McDonald's, however is not the only one actor in this process. Kentucky Fried Chicken, Burger King, Pizza Hut are other brands part of the globalized fast-food that spread on world market. If we think about the Asian market, where McDonald's started its business around 1970s and 1980s, the impact on local societies has been remarkable, though it did not replace local food. In Japan for instance, McDonald's is very popular and it is everywhere; in a city like Tokyo it is not difficult to see two or three McDonald's on the same street not far from each other. Compared to the US however, in Japan it does not have the same function of substitute of a meal, but it is perceived more like a snack. During a fieldwork in 1994⁸, Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney found out how McDonald was just a place where to eat and snack, and not a whole meal inasmuch McDonald's did not offer rice dishes, still considered the main part of the meal. Today, twenty years after that fieldwork, McDonald's is still not perceived as a full substitution of a meal. However, it still attracts a lot of people: early workers for breakfast, people who finished working late night, people who want to eat a snack or drink just a coffee while playing game, students who need a place to study for long time while drinking a coke, and sometimes also homeless who want spend some time in a warm place during winter. If twenty years ago McDonald's food was not perceived as a full meal substitute just because of the lack of rice, today the reason can be also another one. If on one hand Japanese people got used to fast food, on the other hand the rise of Western cuisines and consequently the increasing number of restaurants represent a strong competition for the fast-food industry. Today a lunch menu at McDonald's costs around 700 yen, the same price of a lunch set in a family restaurant and slightly cheaper than a lunch set in a normal restaurant, which starts usually from 1000 yen. This means that restaurants face a lot of competition during lunchtime. Therefore, nowadays we see Japanese

⁸ Ohnuki-Tierney, Emiko, 1994, McDonald's in Japan: Changing Manners and Etiquette in Watson, James L., 1997, Golden Arches East, McDonald's in East Asia, Stanford University Press, pp. 161-182

people opting for a lunch that includes pasta or rice, instead of hamburgers and fries. The establishment of McCafe and the changing of interior design of existing restaurants can be seen as efforts to diversify its products and change the perception of mere fast food. If we see the data of 2014, McDonald's Japan has recorded a significant loss and this trend is far to being over. Furthermore, recent food scandals and loss of appeal among Japanese people resulted in some restaurants going out of business (Monami, 2015) (Nagata, 2015).

1.d *Japan and the Era of Change*

As mentioned before, Japanese society during Meiji period, was strongly importing Western culture and habits in order to modernize itself. Of course, food and cuisine were also part of the process and after some decades eating habits already went through a change. Western style restaurants with tables and chairs started becoming popular, as well as Western products such as bread and dairy ones; even beef consumption, which was considered a taboo until then, soon became very popular among Japanese people. However, the biggest change, which is the main subject of this research, is taking place since the end of WW2 and it is still going on. Not only fast food, but also other Western and Asian cuisines became very popular in the last fifty years, causing deep changes in young generation's eating habits, and becoming a potential threat for local and traditional food consumption.

1.e *Research objectives and overview*

The objective of this research is to provide the reader with useful information that can help understand the change in eating habits of Japanese people. The data collected and the documents reviewed will make clear of what are the reason behind this process and what has been done to prevent or minimize this change.

Chapter 1 and 2 focus on the background of this research, giving the reader a brief overview on Japanese food culture, in particular its history and its ties with the political and economic

modernization of the last century. The ties between Japanese modern cuisine and Western food, as well as their consequences are also part of the literature review. The second part of this study, chapter 3, focuses on the importance of Washoku as a part of the Japanese culture, and consequently on the efforts of the Japanese institutions to preserve and promote Japanese traditional cuisine, whose future seems uncertain in a globalized Japan where all kinds of cuisines are mining or almost replacing it. The “Transtheoretical Model” theory⁹, also known as “States of Change”, is used to understand the process of promotion and preservation of Washoku culture.

As described in chapter 4, the research methods include a general survey and in-depth interviews with selected Japanese people of different age, region of origin and working background. These interviews will help to understand what Japanese people think about this change, what are their concerns and what are the solutions they proposed.

⁹ A theory developed in 1977 by James O. Prochaska and his colleagues of the University of Rhode Island.

2 JAPANESE CUISINE THROUGH HISTORY

2.a *Introduction*

To better understand the way in which Japanese people's eating habits have changed it is important to see, in the first place how Japanese food changed. Even though apparently it looks like a normal process, we will see how the Japanese case is very particular. This chapter is meant to give the reader a brief overview of Japanese food history, in particular from the medieval age until today. Firstly we will see the dimension of Japanese food today both in Japan and worldwide, and its peculiarities, and after that we will see which are the causes and the events in Japanese history that led to what today we perceive as Japanese cuisine. It will be also easier to understand the roots of the "westernization process" that is still affecting Japanese cuisine today. Two historical periods, which I think are more important in Japanese food history, will be analyzed. The first one refers to the age of discoveries, when European countries started building fleets to go exploring new and far lands around the world, while the second one is the Meiji period (1868-1912) when Japan under the pressures of Western countries, started a process of modernization that changed deeply its society.

2.b *Japanese Cuisine Today*

Japanese cuisine today is worldwide known for its particular taste, its low usage of fats and oils, and its aesthetic. The natural ingredients, as well as the cooking methods made the Japanese cuisine known for being one of the healthiest cuisines in the world. Due to the popularity of its most representative dish, Sushi, in the last two decades Japanese cuisine

spread all over the world, in particular in Europe and United States, where thousands of Japanese restaurants, most of which are Sushi bar, open every year. For instance, according to an estimation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) in 2013 there were around 55.000 restaurants serving Japanese food worldwide. This data, if compared to the almost 24.000 of the year 2004, shows more clearly the increasing popularity of Japanese food. However, several factors must be considered. The estimated number of Japanese restaurants overseas made by MAFF in 2013 includes, between the others, all those restaurants that serve Japanese food not as a main dishes. For instance, in European big cities such as Milan, Rome, Vienna, Paris and Barcelona, most of the restaurants serving Japanese food are owned by non-Japanese people and these restaurants also serve Chinese or other Asian dishes. These places, usually known as “Asian Fusion restaurants”, serve Chinese cuisine along with Sushi and some other Japanese side dishes, and they represent a big part of the restaurants serving Japanese food overseas. As we will see later in this study, this diffusion of less-original Japanese cuisine overseas has not been well accepted by the Japanese government.

Despite the originality of Japanese cuisine and its traditional characteristics, it must be said that influences from Westerners also played an important role. Like Ashkenazi and Jacob state in their book “The essence of Japanese Cuisine”, Japan has historically been a borrower, but at the same time it has always been an innovator too (Ashkenazi, Jacob, 2000). It means that Japanese people have always adopted foreign concepts, habits and stuff, but they reinvented them in order to be more Japanized. This “borrowing process” can be seen in the high-tech and the automobile industries, in the adoption and re-adaptation of Chinese writing system, and also in Japanese cuisine. In fact, the process that lead to the birth of Japanese cuisine has been long and marked by continuous external influences.

2.c Japanese Cuisine and the West during the “Age of Discoveries”

Until the XVI century, the only external influences to the Japanese culture have come mostly from China and Korea. However, since the discovery of America, European nations such as Spain and Portugal first and the Netherlands and Britain later, were looking for new territories where they could develop a profitable commerce and establish colonies, in order to build strong and rich empires. The first Europeans who found a way to reach Asia were the Portuguese, who first reached India and then South-East Asia, Macao and Japan. The first Portuguese that reached Japan in 1543 were castaways who were shipwrecked in an island near Kyushu. Few years later, in 1549, the Jesuit Francis Xavier landed in Japan with the intention of spreading the Christian religion (Boscaro, 2008). During the “Christian Century”,¹⁰ the commerce with Portuguese merchants flourished and new products such as cayenne pepper, sweet potato¹¹ and pumpkin¹² started being used by Japanese people (Ishige, 2001). A lot of dishes that today are famous as part of Japanese cuisine were born during this period, during which they were known as *Nanban Ryori*¹³ (Cuisine of the South Barbarians), in particular *Chikin Nanban*, *Tempura*, *Kastera*, *Tamago Somen* being the most popular ones. Bread was another new introduction to Japanese diet, however it was used only for religious purposes (catholic mass) and it did not become part of Nanban Ryori. Its popularity will increase during the Meiji period, as we will see in next chapter.

¹⁰ The “Christian Century” is the name of the period between the arrival of Francis Xavier in Japan (1549) and the Sakoku edict of 1639 that proclaimed the end of any commercial relations between Japan and Portugal or other catholic nations, and consequently the expulsion and persecution of Jesuits in Japan.

¹¹ Sweet potato in Japan is known as Satsuma Imo (薩摩芋, which means potato from Satsuma 薩摩の国, the old name of Kagoshima prefecture, where the Portuguese first landed). (Ishige, 2001)

¹² Pumpkin in Japan is known as Kabocha (カボチャ also wrote 南瓜, which means melon from the south, referring to the South Barbarians, the Portuguese) a name that origins from the name of the country from which it has been imported by Portuguese, Cambodia. (Ishige, 2001)

¹³ Nanban Ryori (南蛮料理 or Cuisine of the South Barbarians) is the name that Japanese people used when referring to the dishes inspired by Portuguese cuisine. The name Nanban (South Barbarian) is due to the fact that Portuguese entered Japan mostly from Kyushu Island, the southern of the archipelago.

In 1639, the Shogun Tokugawa Iemitsu proclaimed a new government policy called Sakoku¹⁴, which would have isolated Japan from the rest of the world for almost three centuries. The main target of this policy were the Jesuits, and consequently the Portuguese merchants, who were banned from Japan. The end of commerce with Portuguese however did not imply the disappearance of Nanban Ryori, whose recipes were included in Nagasaki regional cuisine (Ishige,2001). The survival of those recipes was due to the cultivation of the above-quoted vegetables imported by Portuguese.

Despite its tragic ending, like Ishige stated in his book, the impact of the Southern Barbarians on Japanese culture was not irrelevant. Not only Kyushu's local cuisine had received strong influence but also some habit changed, for instance during this period there has been a change in the frequency of meals, in particular from two to three times a day, in the same manner of the Western countries.

In the two centuries following the introduction of the Sakoku policy, the evolution of Japanese cuisine, free from external influences, had witnessed a period during which solid foundations of what will become traditional cuisine were based. In particular, two phenomena were particularly relevant: the spread of soy sauce and the emergence of restaurants and snack shops. Soy sauce, which was initially considered a luxury product, replaced Miso paste as common seasoning in Japanese houses and today, together with Miso, is considered an essential ingredient in Japanese Traditional Cuisine.

The emergence of restaurants in Japanese society, unlike what people might think, is not related to external influences; on the contrary, Ishige found that in Japan, as well as Europe (another region where restaurants were already emerged), there have been important social changes, like social revolutions in Europe (Ishige, 2001) and the end of the Sengoku

¹⁴ The Sakoku policy (鎖国政策) was promulgated by Tokugawa Iemitsu in 1639 to stop close the Country from external influences, in particular from the West. This self-locked status lasted until 1853, when Japanese was forced to open to commerce by the US.

period¹⁵ in Japan. In big cities such as Edo, Osaka and Kyoto, the number of restaurants, food stalls and snack shop was very high, and Edo in particular, during the first half of 19th century, was probably the city with the highest density of restaurants in the world (Ishige, 2001). Whether he is right or not, the emergence of restaurants and snack shops during Edo Period is very important in the study of Japanese food culture and history; it can also explain the trend of Japanese people eating out and the size of Japanese restaurant industry nowadays. Another curious phenomena of those days is the diffusion of books about cooking and restaurant during the 17th and 18th centuries (Ishige, 2001), which can be seen as forerunner of today's large internet industry of restaurants' information websites, known in Japanese as *Gurumesaito* (グルメサイト or gourmet websites).

We will see now the following step in the building of Japanese traditional cuisine and the role played by Western influences.

2.d Japanese Cuisine and the West during the “Modernization” Period

At the end of the Edo period, in 1853, the Black Ship of Commodore Matthew C. Perry entered Tokyo bay forcing Japan to come out of its almost three hundred years' isolation from the rest of the world. The difference of military power between Japan and Western Countries, the commerce treaties with the US and other Countries, and the general social instability due to natural disasters, led to a nationwide revolution that ended only in 1868. With the Meiji Restoration,¹⁶ the Japanese isolation came to an end and the priority of the new government was to build a strong nation that could compete with Western Powers. If we think for instance at the theory of modernization, switching from a traditional society to

¹⁵ The Sengoku Period (戦国時代, literally Warring States Period) refers to the period from the beginning of the Onin War in 1467 until the establishment of Tokugawa Shogunate in 1603. This period was characterized by social instability and military conflict for territorial control.

¹⁶ The Meiji Restoration (明治維新) refers to the restoration of the imperial power in Japan under Emperor Meiji. Despite the emperor being considered the ruler of Japan even in the past eras, he actually represented a mere symbol, as the effective power was in the hands of Shoguns. From 1868 the rule of the Shogun was abolished and the era of samurais came to an end.

a modern one, and we apply it to Asian countries during the nineteenth and twentieth century, we can see how the terms “modernization” and “Westernization” assume the same meaning. Japan was not an exception and one of the habits that the Japanese would have changed in order to be “modernized” was the diet. Not only Western style diet was seen as important to build a strong army, but also, like Ashkenazi and Jacob state in their book, in Japanese society “the desire of Western food was a phenomenon associated with the desire to be modern, to become internationalized” (Ashkenazi, Jacob, 2000). Its consumption was seen as part of “civilization and enlightenment process”¹⁷ (Cwiertka, 2006). During the first years of the the Meiji period Western food was adopted in formal diplomatic occasions and state ceremonies (Cwiertka, 2006). The adoption of Western food for this kind of occasions was not a coincidence, but it had a specific aim, that was to show Western people how capable were Japanese in imitating Western conventions (Cwiertka, 2006). Some of the newly designated national holidays such as the Emperor Birthday (still celebrated today) were celebrated with a Western banquet, in Western style dining room and wearing Western clothes. However, if the change and adaptation to new habits was fast in the higher classes of the Japanese society, the same could not be said for the lower ones. In fact, the Japanese population had no few struggles to adapt to the new diet, in particular regarding the consumption of beef. Since ancient times the consumption of beef was considered taboo, due to the Buddhist beliefs, and eating meat was a practice restricted to medicinal purposes (kusurigui 薬食い literally eating medicine). During early Meiji period, the consumption of meat, in particular beef, was strongly promoted by the Japanese high class, and the Emperor himself ate beef in public and during ceremonies, in order to dispel the taboo. Despite all these efforts, however meat consumptions remained low even in the following years. The demand of beef since the early Meiji period depended mainly from the Westerner

¹⁷ Bunmei Kaika (文明開化 literally civilization and enlightenment) was the name of the westernization movement promoted by Japanese government in the early Meiji Period.

communities living in the treaty ports (Cwiertka, 2006). Beef was firstly imported from China, but later it started being directly raised in Japan, in the region now known as Kansai area. This kind of beef in following years would become known as the Kobe beef (still known today as the best beef in Japan).

During the first two decades of the Meiji Period, there were not so many restaurants serving Western food, most of them were expensive, and high class oriented. However, we will see in the next chapter how a particular type of Western food, *yoshoku*, gained popularity among the new middle class.

2.e The Result of early Westernization: *Washoku* and *Yoshoku*

The introduction of Western food has changed the previous structure of home and professional cookery, in which Chinese food covered the role of prestigious cuisine for high-class people, and transformed it in what Cwiertka calls the Chinese-Western-Japanese Tripod (Cwiertka, 2006). In this tripod, there is a new actor, Western food, which at first would flank Chinese cuisine and later replace it as the most prestigious cuisine for Japanese aristocracy. In fact, as we have seen in the previous chapters the introduction of Western cuisine in early Meiji period was supported by Japanese high-class exponents as well as the emperor himself. However, there was the need to differentiate Western cuisine from the existing Japanese one, so two new words were coined: *Washoku* and *Yoshoku*¹⁸. On one side, *Washoku* comprehended only Japanese traditional dishes, but in the course of time, it assimilated some of the “foreigner” dishes that became very common in the Japanese diet. For instance, dishes like Ramen, Shabu shabu or Tempura, despite their Chinese, Mongolian

¹⁸ The kanji *wa* 和 refers to the name of the Japanese Yamato race 大和, while the kanji *yo* 洋 means Western. The second kanji of both words, *shoku* 食, means “meal”.

and Portuguese origins (Ishige, 2001), today are considered part of Japanese cuisine in Japan as well in Western countries.

On the other side, *Yoshoku* has a more complex history and development, which depend from the evolution of the Japanese society as well. At first Western cuisine was an exclusive of Japanese aristocracy and people living in Western communities in Japanese cities, and restaurants serving Western cuisine were managed mostly by foreigners. In few years however Japanese people realized that Western food restaurants could be a good business opportunity and started opening their own ones or adding Western furniture, such as chairs and tables, to the existing ones (Cwierka 2006). Despite these restaurants' main targets being foreign customers, Japanese people started appreciating Western food as well and soon it became very popular. *Yoshokuya* 洋食屋, the name used when referring to this new type of restaurant, were cheap versions of high-class Western cuisine restaurants. The main difference consisted in the use of cheaper ingredients and simple recipes. The dominant French cuisine of high-class restaurants was replaced by British and American style cuisine, and in order to make it more cheap, Japanese ingredients were used instead of imported ones. The main dishes consisted of beef cutlet, omelet, beefsteak, curry rice, pilaf and other Western inspired ones. Soy sauce, cabbage and other local available ingredients were also used to reduce the cost and to better adapt to Japanese people's taste. During the twentieth century and in particular in the post war period, *yoshokuya* spread all over the country and significantly changed Japanese people outdoor meal patterns. Today, due to the popularity of restaurants specialized in Western national cuisines such as French, Italian, German and Spanish, *yoshokuya* are not identified as Western food restaurants anymore but have become somehow part of Japanese cuisine, although it is still not considered purely Japanese like *washoku*.

Despite today's lower popularity of *yoshoku* among Japanese people, during the whole twentieth century its development and popularity had a central role in the process of

westernization of Japanese people's eating habits. In particular, if we think about daily meals such as breakfast, lunch and dinner, there have been changes in different ways. Ashkenazi and Jacobs found out that the biggest change in eating habits happened during breakfast and lunch; this can be due also to the change in Japanese working society, in which breakfast and lunch had become fast meals. In fact with the emerging of a new middle class of white collar workers, the time spent for lunch was not enough to come back home and have a normal meal. That is why people used to eat at the company cafeteria or in other places. It is during this period that the yoshokuya restaurants together with fast food chains and ramen shops became very popular, as they served good food in a short time. If breakfast and lunch saw the major change, however dinner remained a Japanese thing, since most of the interviewees preferred Japanese food for dinner. Ashkenazi and Jacobs during their field research in Japan have also found that more than 50% of the people interviewed used to eat bread for breakfast instead of rice, but their number declined following the age patterns (Ashkenazi, Jacob, 2000). This demonstrate that age of people played an important role in the assimilation of Western meal patterns, since younger people are more inclined to change their habits. Their data is interesting and helped a lot during the process of sketching out the research for this study. In fact using the same research approach we will see whether this trend has changed or not.

2.f Conclusions

As we can see, Japanese cuisine's history has been really complex and characterized by a process of assimilation that still goes on today. Cwierka, Ishige and Ashkenazi/Jacob works' main goal is to provide an overview of the relationship between Japanese culture and its own cuisine, and on a certain level, it results very useful to this study. What emerges from their studies is that there is not a single definition for Japanese Cuisine, but it is a mix

of local practices and customs, and imported elements (Cwiertka, 2006). However, what they did not consider is whether a change in eating habits could be a threat to Japanese traditional cuisine, and this is a much-discussed topic nowadays. In next chapters, some solutions to this delicate topic will be outlined.

3 PRESERVING JAPANESE FOOD TRADITION

3.a *Washoku as a “Cultural Heritage”*

Washoku has been the main focus since the first chapter of this research, and we have seen why and how this concept was born and what it represents to Japanese people today. As I mentioned before, on December 4 2013 Washoku became a part of UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage List. This is a very important accomplishment for Japanese food and Japanese culture in general. However, there are some issues that should be examined in depth; in particular, two elements must be analyzed. The first one concerns the reason “why” it was necessary to make Washoku part of UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage List. The second one concerns the methodology used to achieve this accomplishment.

In the same way it happened during Meiji period (see chapter 2), after the end of World war II Japan had to face another massive importation of Western food product and eating habits, in particular due to the occupation of Japan by SCAP¹⁹ until 1952. For the following fifty years any kind of food has reached the Japanese market, changing the daily diet of people, in particular of those living in big cities like Tokyo, and changing also the Japanese food itself. Those dishes that were considered Western food, like Yoshoku, slowly has become part of Japanese diet and somehow part of Japanese cuisine. At the same time, Japanese food has been evolving with new varieties with the risk to lose his own identity. In a society where everything that obtain good public approval is assimilated, the risk that new generations

¹⁹ SCAP or The Supreme Commander for the Allied Powers, title held by General Douglas MacArthur during the Allied occupation of Japan, also referred to the offices of occupation.

could forget the essence of Japanese traditional food is really high. In this background, resorting to apply to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List could be the only way to safeguard Japanese cuisine and its peculiarities. Japan is not the first case of a national cuisine to become part of UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, as Mexico, France and a group of Mediterranean countries (Italy, Spain, Greece, Croatia, Portugal and Morocco) obtained the title of Cultural Heritage for their respective cuisines or diet. However due to the difficulty to identify what should be included in Washoku and what should not, the Japanese government decided to apply not as a specific food but as a combination of eating customs and rules, and this is very clear when having a look at the nomination file submitted to UNESCO:

“WASHOKU is social practice based on a comprehensive set of skills, knowledge, practice and traditions related to the production, processing, preparation and consumption of food”²⁰

The president of the National Assembly on the Preservation and Continuation of Washoku Culture (also known as Washoku Association of Japan), Isao Kumakura said:

“what we proposed as washoku is not a specific cuisine or dish, but it covers all the following: the form of our daily home meals (consisting of rice, soup, side dishes and pickles), dietary customs for annual events, festivals and ceremonial occasions that strengthen the bonds among people in local communities (such as zoni and osechi dishes), and local specialty dishes”²¹

In particular a lot of effort has been put on explaining how washoku dishes should be eaten, the disposition of the dishes on the table, the order in which they should be eaten and the

²⁰ Nomination file NO. 00869 for inscription in 2013 on the Representative list of Intangible cultural Heritage of Humanity, UNESCO website (see bibliography)

²¹ Kumakura Isao, Washoku Joins UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List, The Crisis of Washoku, and Our Commitment to the Future

concept of “Umami”. Umami is what Kumakura calls the “fifth taste”, which refers to the flavour of glutamates. It is the core of Washoku in terms of taste and a dish to be part of Washoku has to be rich in Umami. To make a dish rich in Umami it is important to use few ingredients and season them with the essential elements of Japanese Cuisine: “Miso” (fermented soybean paste, very popular in Japan) and “Soy sauce”, which according to Kumakura are being used less than before, in particular when cooking at home. For this reason, the National Assembly on the Preservation and Continuation of Washoku Culture has designated November 24 as the Day of Washoku, during which people can learn more about the cooking process of essential elements of Japanese cuisine such as Miso and Dashi (traditional Japanese soup stock made from fish and kelp). Important targets of this initiative are young Japanese students, who are expected to learn the principles of Washoku and pass on to future generations. During the Day of Washoku basic cooking lessons with additional materials are held at those Japanese elementary schools that sent the application to the Washoku Association. All the necessary materials for both students and teachers are provided by the organization itself, which hopes this can help to increase the interest of young Japanese in Washoku. The same purpose is shared by another event that has been held since 2013, the “National Children’s Local Cuisine Summit” (from Japanese 日本全国子ども郷土料理サミット). By participating to this contest, children (participants can be only from elementary school) are encouraged to submit sketches, reports and presentations about local dishes of their birthplace, making them more informed about local products and the importance of traditional cuisine. After a selection, the best works are exhibited at United Nations University in Tokyo during a dedicated event.

Another important event concerning the preservation of Washoku culture is “WASHOKU-DŌ: The World Japanese Cuisine Show” held in January 2015, organized by The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Japan Tourism Agency and The Kyoto Prefectural

and city governments, with the cooperation of Fukushima Prefecture, Tsuruoka City and Japan External Trade Organization(JETRO). It is not just a case that the main events were held within Kyoto Prefecture, which is well known for its local traditional cuisine. Of course the main theme of the events has been the Washoku culture, the reasons that make possible its nomination to the UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List and the role played by Washoku in the world. Main protagonists of the event were Yoshihiro Murata and Alain Ducasse. Murata is one of the most famous Japanese chefs and experts of Washoku cuisine, he owns a century-old *ryotei* (traditional cuisine restaurant) in Kyoto and he is also the vice president of the Washoku Assembly. Ducasse on the other hand is a worldwide famous chef, who holds a total of 21 Michelin stars²² through his career, and his participation made the event itself more exclusive and media-covered.

Behind these events as well as the Nomination to UNESCO there is always Japanese Government, and in particular the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) as the main promoter of the preservation and spread of Washoku Culture. On the official website of MAFF it is possible to see how the section about food culture is rich in documents, pamphlets and other materials for education, all easily downloadable for personal use. Furthermore there is a list of Food Culture Centers around Japan, each promoting local product and dishes.

3.b Washoku Globalized

Although the preservation of Washoku Culture could be seen as a Japanese internal matter, however it required also to pay attention in other countries.

²² The Michelin Stars are awards given to the best restaurants and hotels according to the Michelin Red Guide. The maximum amount of stars given until today is three per restaurant or hotel.

In this framework, globalization assumes a central role. During the last century the realization of a global market, where products of any type flow from a country to others, made possible a fast spread of food products. In particular after World War II this process has become more intense, due also to the migration of people. The spread of cuisines like Italian or Chinese is mainly due to the migration process that involved Italy and China during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and then strengthened with the start of globalization. In case of Japan too, migration has helped making Japanese cuisine popular; however, globalization's role has been bigger than Italian and Chinese cases.

Since Japanese food popularity abroad has been increasing during the last two decades, MAFF felt the need to make sure that only real Japanese food and Japanese products would be served in Japanese restaurants overseas. When something becomes popular in other countries there is always the problem of "*Creolization*"²³ or the adaptation of that product to the local culture. The US are the best example when it comes to creolization of food products: Italian, French, Chinese, Mexican and Japanese are just some of the popular cuisines that were adapted to local taste. In some cases, new products were created just for the American market, like hamburger. Of course, Japanese cuisine, in particular sushi, was also part of this process of creolization during the last 20 years. On one hand, few authentic Japanese restaurants, with Japanese internal design, Japanese staff wearing traditional clothes and serving Japanese authentic food; on the other hand, multitude of cheap sushi restaurants, with non-Japanese chefs serving cheap food without any attempt to look real Japanese. Of course, the popularity of Japanese food made necessary the existence of places where local people could afford it at lower price, and in this case the creolization resulted a winning strategy (Befu, 2003) . The matter of authenticity however, is always been a big

²³ Creolization is a term that refers to that process of mixing cultures that occurred in the New World because of colonization. As a result, those mixed cultures were called Creole. In this case the term emphasizes the mixing of the *old* and *traditional* with *new* and *modern*.

concern for Japanese government. The Japanese Restaurant Recommendation Program was proposed in 2007²⁴ in order to make easier for people living outside Japan to recognize a restaurant that serve real Japanese cuisine. Of course, this kind of “regulation” can result difficult, in particular in Western countries, where “fusion restaurants” are very common and they usually serve Chinese cuisine, sushi and other Asian dishes. The program took inspiration from other countries such as Italy, which created the “Marchio di ospitalità Italiana” (Italian Hospitality Trademark) to make real Italian restaurants recognizable abroad. Major concerns have been expressed about the authenticity of ingredients used, the preparation of dishes, the culinary skills, the restaurant atmosphere and the customer service, all elements considered essential in a restaurant that self-proclaim to be Japanese. Following this proposal, in 2007 the Organization to Promote Japanese Restaurants Abroad (also known as JRO) was established as a NPO. Its activities include promotion of Japanese traditional cuisine by dispatching experts from Japan, training of local staff, promotion of Japanese original food export to other countries and carrying out meeting about Japanese Food and the ingredients. There are also several guides to the best Japanese food for big cities such as Shanghai, Amsterdam, Manila, Chicago and many others.

²⁴ Council of Advisors for the Recommendation of Japanese Restaurants Outside Japan, 16th March, 2007 (see references)

4 RESEARCH METHODS

During the data collection process, which lasted around four months from April until July 2015 both qualitative and quantitative approach were used. Since the study of eating habits requires a direct approach with people, a general survey and some in-depth interviews were the best option. The first step consist of a general survey conducted in Japanese language, which was distributed through both internet and conventional postal mail; this included 13 general questions and 2 specific questions with a free comment option for people older than 60 years. There were no specific requirements when choosing interviewees target, as long as the nationality and the minimum age were respected. Around 200 Japanese people have answered the survey from almost all prefecture within Japan and with a wide age variation; in particular the Age variable was divided in three slots: 18-29, 30-59 and 60+ years old. The first one represents the young Japanese generations, while the other two represent the “post WWII” generation and the “bubble” generation, who have witnessed the big change in eating habits that was described above. Other than basic information such as age, gender, occupation and birthplace, another focus was the preferences of people in their daily meals and on their experiences abroad. Despite the number of people who answered the survey could seem too small it can still be enough to get a general overview. Moreover, it has also been proved that in a quantitative research the variation get lower after 200 interviewees, which is a sample size sufficient to give scope for analysis of survey data (Thomas, 2004).

The second step consisted in a series of in-depth interviews with Japanese people without preferences regarding age, gender or occupation. In this way, it was possible to have a more direct contact with Japanese people, asking them more specific questions, and thus avoiding some of the inaccuracies that would originate by using only a general survey. Furthermore, it was possible to learn about people’s personal experience, their interpretation of events and other settings that would be inaccessible to us such as their private life (Weiss, 1995). These

interviews were conducted entirely in Japanese language and then translated into English in order to be included in this work. The cities chose for the small city of Beppu, in Oita prefecture, and in Tokyo. The first one is the city is the location of Ritsumeikan Asia Pacific University, where this research has been done, and despite its small size in the last 20 years has witnessed an internationalization process that is not common to other small cities in Japan, in particular because of the establishment of an international university. On the other hand, Tokyo is a big city and its area has a population of around 30 million, with most of the people coming from all over Japan. The capital of Japan has the characteristics to serve as the right location to interview people about eating habits: it is big and it can be considered the “entrance” for foreign trends in Japan. The data and documents concerning Washoku Culture, its preservation and Japanese government policies, have been collected through sources such Japanese media articles, governmental website (MAFF official website) and The UNESCO official website.

4.a General Survey and Data Tables

The time spent overseas is an interesting element to consider when talking about eating habits. In fact, one of the first thing that people experience when living in a new country is the local food. In

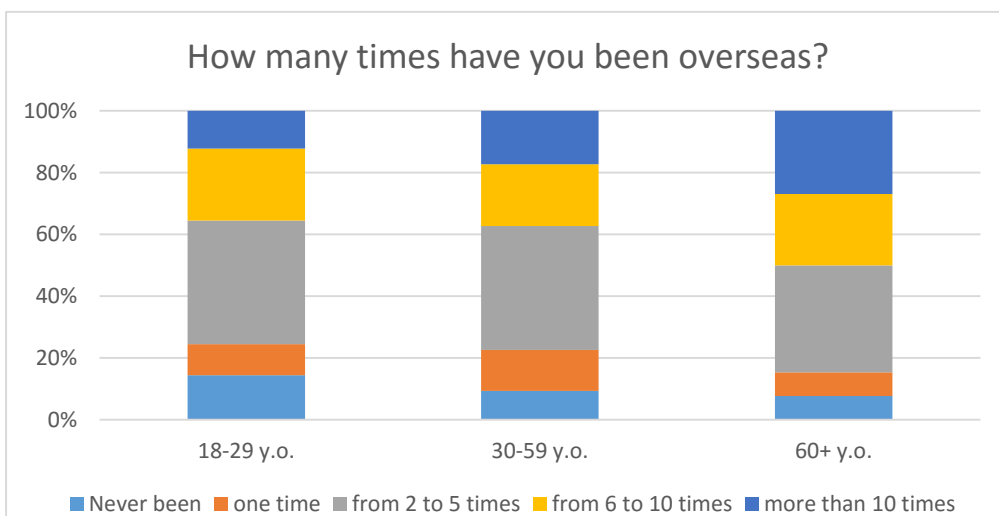


Figure 1, General Survey's question n.5

Fig.1, we can see the answers to the question n.5 (Fig.1). The answer were divided in three group depending on age. We can see how the percentage

of people been overseas more times increases together with the age of interviewees; in particular only 12% of the interviewees of the first group (18-29) have been overseas more than ten times, in contrast with 18% of the second group (30-59) and 28% of the third (60+). It could be normal to suppose that Japanese people who have been more times overseas are more familiar with foreign food and consequently they are more inclined to eat Western food also in Japan. However, the results show that the experience overseas, despite being decisive for some people to appreciate Western food, in general it is not an influential variable.

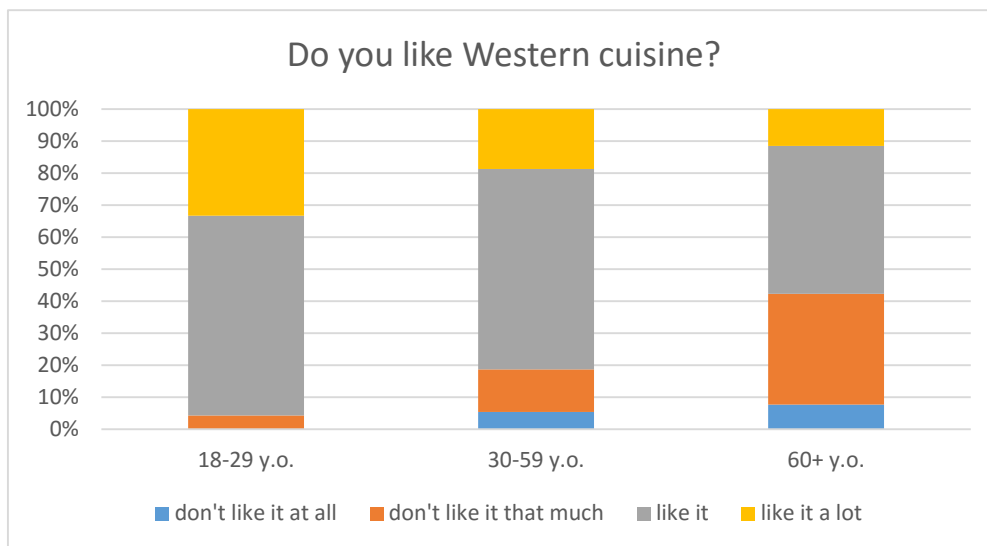


Figure 2, General Survey's question n.7

In fact, as we can see in the graph of question n.7 (Fig.2) the percentage of interviewees who “don’t like Western food at all” is 0% for the first group (18-29) and slowly

increase to 5% for the second group (30-59) and 8% for the third group (60+). The same trend can be found when analyzing the percentage of people who “don’t like Western food that much”; in this case the percentage is about 4% for the first group (18-29), 14% for the second group (30-59) and even 35% for the third group (60+). If we combine the data of people who don’t like Western food at all and people who don’t like it that much we will have a significant increasing trend with 4% for the first group (18-29), 19% for the second group (30-59) and 42% for the third group (60+). On the other hand if we have a look of the percentage of interviewees who “like Western food a lot” it is clear how the trend is opposite, with a percentage of 33% for the first group (18-29), 19% for the second group (30-59) and just 12% for the third group (60+).

We can see how the number of times spent overseas does not necessary affect the appreciation of Western food for the Japanese people, in particular if we consider the third group (60+), in which most of the interviewees have been overseas several times, do not like Western food as the younger people do.

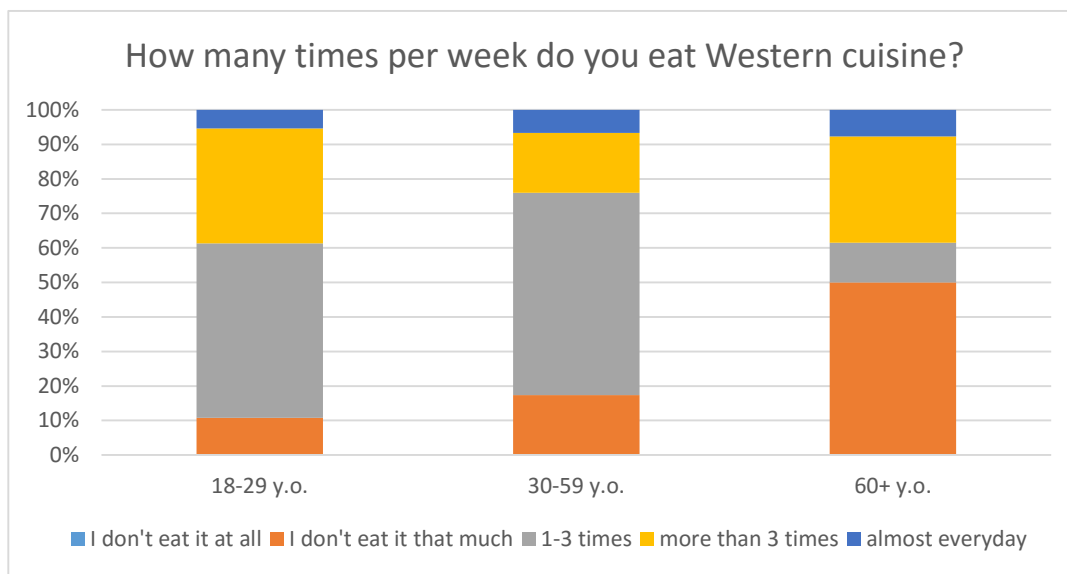


Figure 3, General Survey's Question n.8

Once knowing the preferences of the interviewees let us see the graph of question n.8 (Fig.3) and analyze the frequency of

Western food consumption in one week. The results indicate how young people eat more Western food than older ones. In particular, in the first group (18-29) only 11% do not eat Western food that much, while 34% eat it more than three times per week and 6% almost every day. It is surprising that in the third group (60+), nearly the same results were obtained, but it is also true that in the third group 50% of the people do not almost eat Western food. The second group places between the other two, showing some similarities with both. We can see how the consumption of Western food increases the lower is the age of the interviewees. The exception of the third group can be explained by the fact that a lot of Japanese people have been overseas and this make possible having a 50% of interviewees who eat Western food and a 50% who do not, or do less.

Question n.12 (Fig.4) and n.13 (Fig.5) are important as they relate to the second part of this research, the preservation of Washoku. In the graph of question n.12, we can see what Japanese people think about whether they should eat more “Japanese” than “Western”. Here too (like

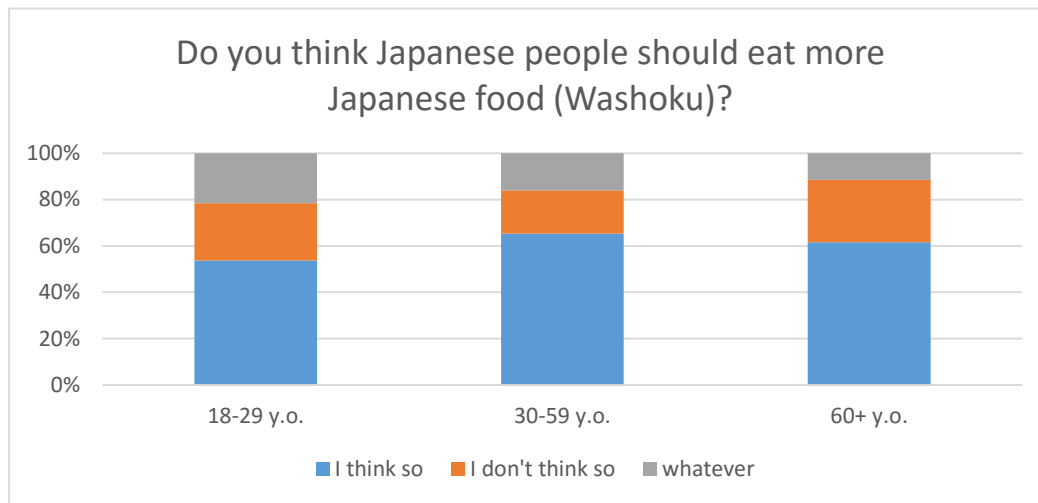


Figure 4, General Survey's question n.12

happened in question n.8) I found similarities between the first group (18-29) and the third one (60+). In both

cases more than 25% of interviewees do not think Japanese people should eat more Japanese food, with the second group on around 20%; however we can see big differences regarding the other two variables. In fact, almost the 50% of the interviewees of the first group (18-29) think that Japanese people should eat more washoku, while the other two groups exceed 60%. The percentage of people who do not care about the problem are 21% for the first group (18-29), 17% for the second group (30-59) and 11% for the third group (60+). In other words, almost 50% of young people interviewed do not really care or not consider necessary the increase in consumption of washoku over Western food, while the other two categories seem to be more concerned.

In light of the fact that a lot of effort has been put to make Japanese traditional food Washoku part of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, Japanese people were

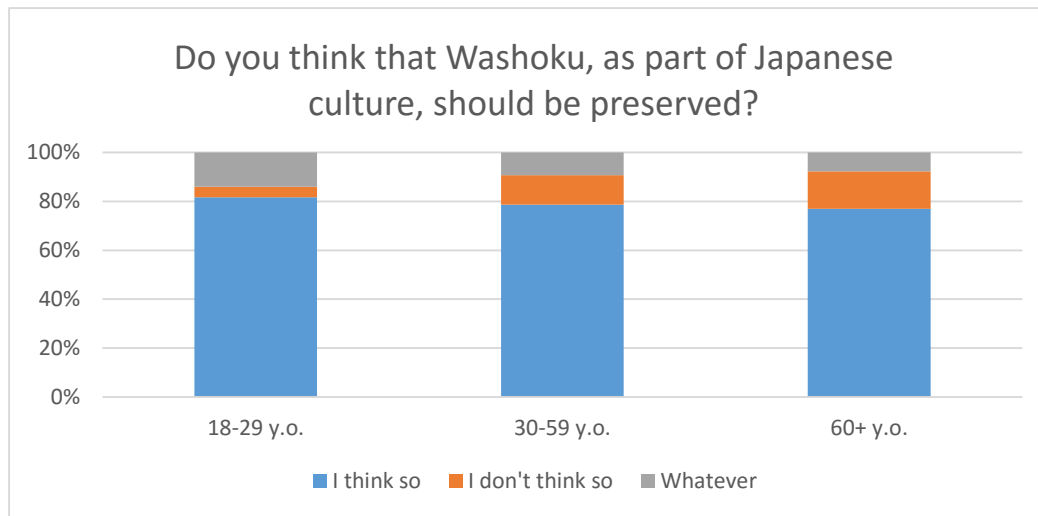


Figure 5, General Survey's question n.13

asked if they agree with the Japanese government in preserving Japanese Food Culture. We can have a look at

the graph above, which shows the data of question n.13. In the first group (18-29) there is the bigger percentage of people who do not really care, around 15%, while surprisingly in the third group (60+) the percentage of people do not agree in preserving Washoku is the highest of the three groups, around 16%. Despite some differences, however we can notice that in all groups around 80% of the interviewees agree with the fact that Washoku should be preserved. This makes clear that Japanese people are in general concerned by this issue, regardless age and eating habits.

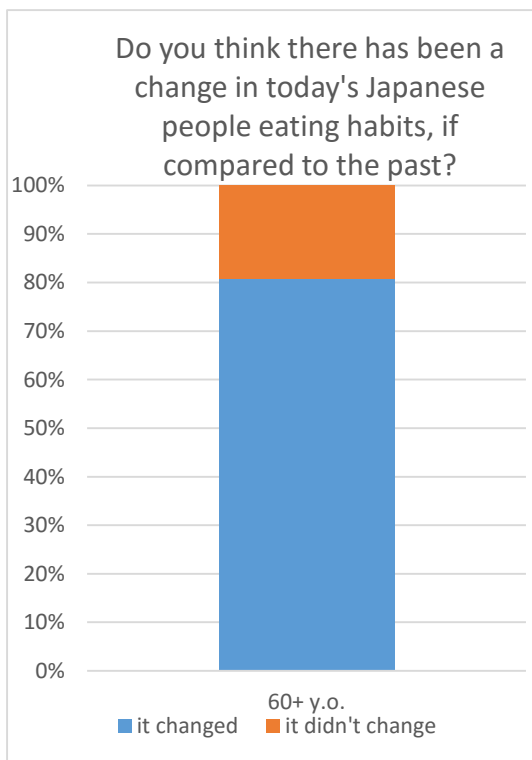


Figure 6, General Survey's question n.14

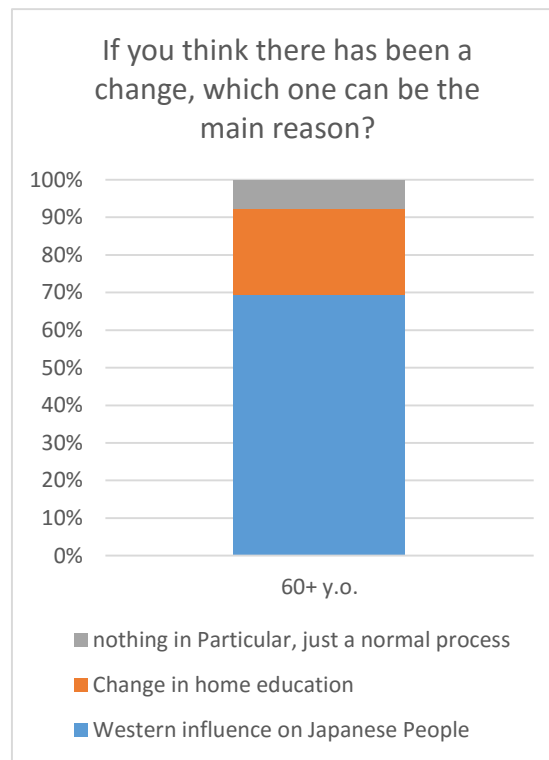


Figure 7, General Survey's question n.15

The last two questions of the general survey are destined for people of the third group only (60+), and they are

focused on the change the people felt through time. As we can see in graph of question n.14 (Fig.6), almost 80% of the interviewees see a change in today's Japanese people eating habits. When thinking about the reasons behind this change three possible main reasons were given and the interviewees were asked to choose one of them. The graph of question n.15 (Fig.7) shows that almost 70% of the interviewees see "Western influence" as main reason, while 23% think it is due to a change in home education. Only 8% of them think that the change is due to a normal time process. However, this is just a general overview there could be other important reasons behind this change in eating habits of Japanese people. In order to avoid this problem some in-depth interviews were conducted to see whether theory expressed at the beginning of this research, which see the influence of Western food as the main reason in the change of Japanese people's eating habits, is confirmed or not.

4.b Conclusions

The data collected through the survey helped to get a general idea of the change in eating habits in Japanese society. If it is true that some data can be less influential than expected (see the time spent overseas) it is also true that the age of the interviewees still results as the most important variable. In fact young people (18-29 y.o. group) as expected are the most used to Western food and willing to eat it. However it is surprising (even contradictory) how most of the young interviewees, despite their high consumption of Western food, still think that Japanese people should eat more washoku and that something should be done to preserve it.

4.c In-Depth Interviews

The second part of data collection is the one concerning in-depth interviews with Japanese people. As the number of people interviewed is not big, they cannot represent all Japanese population, however they can help to understand whether the data collected from the general survey are close to what Japanese people really think. The interviews followed a similar pattern of the general survey, with more focus on the part concerning the preservation of Washoku and its future. Considerable attention was also put on personal opinion and theories of the interviewees, who have different and interesting opinions concerning Japanese Eating habits. Although all of interviewees agree on the fact that there has been a change in the way Japanese people perceive and consume food today, however they have different opinions about the reasons behind this change and the possible solutions. The most interesting and significant extracts for this research are reported below.

CAUSES OF THE CHANGE

Most of the interviewees think that the main reason of the change in Japanese people's eating habits is the lack of time, which also leads to other consequent factors. Daisuke, 28 years old from Tokyo, considers instant food as the main responsible of the change in Japanese eating habits:

“Of course with the globalization process today it's easy to find food from all over the world. However what I find more interesting is that the quality and the perception of the so called instant food (like frozen food, ready food in convenience stores, precooked food in supermarket, and fast food chains) has increased a lot. When I was child eating frozen instant food was considered somehow unhealthy, but today it is considered normal because the quality has increased. I also think that the advertisement and the use of labels that emphasize the quality of the ingredients (in particular made in japan) helped to increase the popularity of these products. Basically, instant food has one important characteristic: it is easy to buy and to consume, in one word, it is convenient, and that is very important in Japan nowadays. For instance, due to the fact that more women need to work there's no that much time to cook at home, so in this case instant food is really convenient.”

He also states that not only normal restaurants, but also instant food have been influenced by what he calls a westernization process:

“...the cheap instant food that could be found in convenience stores when I was child, now changed in more OSHARE style instant food (simple meat sauce pasta has become Bolognese, pudding has become panna cotta, changing their

name and taste in order to be more Western). I think that's a process of SEIYOKA (literally "westernization")".

For Rikima and Sakuya, 24 and 25 years old from Tokyo, the change in eating habits is due to the lack of time in Japanese society and to the impossibility of Washoku to be "fast":

"I've never seen restaurant serving fast washoku cuisine, while there're a lot of places serving fast Western meal (like hambagu, tonkatsu, hamburger and so on). Of course there are Japanese style fast food restaurants (like yoshinoya) but what they serve cannot be considered purely washoku." said Rikima

"Even bento (Japanese lunch box) is becoming more Western (sausages, cheese and bread are common ingredients for a bento nowadays)" said Sakuya.

Tetsuro, 64 years old from Tokyo, also thinks that the complexity of Japanese food preparation makes Western food preferable, as it is fast and easy to get:

"Preparing Japanese food, and in particular traditional one, is very complicate. I think this is one of the reason of the popularity of bread in recent years. Eating bread is very cheap, fast and it doesn't need any cooking procedure, since you can buy it ready in supermarkets"

PERSONAL EATING HABITS

When the interviewees were asked to describe their own eating habits during childhood and now, it came out how traditional meal has been replaced by Western style one, in particular if we consider breakfast. Daisuke smiles while thinking about his past:

“in my case I wasn't a good kid so I didn't have breakfast that much, but I remember my parents eating Natto, steamed rice and miso soup every day. When I had breakfast I usually ate cereal and milk”

Jun, 37 years old from Yokohama, compares his eating habits with his sons' ones:

“Well, if I think of what I ate when I was a child and what my sons (5 yo and 2 yo) eat, I can see a lot of differences. Both my sons are used to eat bread, pasta, sweets and other kind of foreign food. I still prefer eating rice, vegetables and miso soup for breakfast, however, today things are changing.”

Rikima does not feel much difference in what he ate during childhood and what he eats now:

“In my case I didn't notice that much difference, because I was already used to bread consumption. However my parents' generation used to have (and still have) traditional meal, which is made by miso soup, rice, fish and pickles.”

Kazumasa, 45 years old from Beppu, sees a big difference when comparing his eating habits with his son's ones:

“I got used to eat bread since I was in high school; however I cannot start a day without my bowl of rice for breakfast. My son is just 6 year old and he likes bread and other snacks more than rice. I always try to give him a good education in term of food quality but I cannot avoid the fact that he wants eat different things, in particular Western food products like snacks, bread and sweets. In my case I think it also depends on my occupation; having a restaurant that serves Western cuisine (Italian) where my son come very often, made him getting used to food such as pizza or pasta even more than me.”

Tetsuro, on the other hand felt a big change in the last fifty years:

“Well, it changed a lot. When I was a child rice was the essential part of the meal during breakfast, lunch and dinner too. Now bread is the new standard, at least for breakfast and lunch.... now I eat both bread and rice, but I still prefer rice.”

We can deduct that despite the change in Japanese people breakfast habits, older interviewees still prefer traditional meal.

PRESERVATION OF WASHOKU AND FUTURE

The interviewees were asked their opinion concerning the preservation of Washoku and its future, whether the policies made until now are effective or not, or if they have some other solutions and idea. Daisuke already sees something changing in the way Washoku has been advertised to young people:

“I think that preserving Washoku culture is very important, and one way to do it is to teach to younger generations. Usually in Japanese school, it was taught how to cook curry, or hambagu, but now something is changing. I saw on TV that in Kyoto some small NGO are teaching to Japanese young students the basic techniques and recipes of Washoku (like the preparation of katsuo bushi, how to get konbu, or how to make miso paste). I think that is really a great effort and for sure it will help to preserve washoku culture”

Rikima and Sakuya, the youngest of the group, sees education as the main solution:

“I think that the best way to transmit washoku culture to younger generations is to teach it in school. During my nursing job, I always meet old people and sometime I heard from them about dishes that I didn’t even know they existed. Therefore, I think it is an educational problem, which can be solved only by the effort of both families and schools. Because learning it at school is important as learning from parents.”

Tetsuro, has the most interesting opinion about washoku and its future. He thinks that the solution can be found in Japanese society, where, in order to come back to the old eating habits and consume more Japanese products, a social change is needed:

“Of course I think that preserving Washoku is a good thing, however there are some elements that need to be considered... Nowadays most of parents are busy with their work life and they do not have time to cook a Japanese meal for their children, who end up in eating bread and other Western products, as well as instant food. In many families this happens in both breakfast and dinner time, which are the only meals that can be consumed at home. Because of this, it results difficult to teach to children the importance of Japanese traditional food.... As you know, a big part of Japanese population is represented by old people, with less new births every year. However, I think that in 30-40 years, because of this trend, there will be less old people and Japanese population in general will decrease. Japanese people work a lot in order to maintain the national pension system, which have to pay to old people. Without a high percentage of old people to maintain there would not be the necessity to work

more hours, and consequently people could have more time to spend at home with their family and have a Japanese meal.”

5 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the abstract, the main purpose of this research is to be an update of the previous works on the same field, provide some new data, and also focus on the preservation of Washoku Culture, a phenomenon that started in late 2000's. The results prove that the change in eating habits process is still going on and it is difficult to state whether it will stop in the future. The first research question partially found a positive response. On one hand, although the introduction of Western food in Japan cannot be considered as the only reason of eating habits change, it is of primary importance. After interviewing a considerable number of Japanese people, the data obtained from the previous survey can be confirmed, and it is clear that a change has occurred and that this change is mostly due to the introduction of Western food in Japan. Furthermore, both the survey's data and the in-depth interviews show how Japanese people are aware of the change happening in their eating habits, and also how they have clear ideas of what is going to happen in the future and what should be done in order to preserve the essence of Washoku.

The second research question is a consequence of the problem stated in this research. The process of Washoku Culture preservation has started as soon as Japanese people eating habits started changing. Some of the idea and opinion expressed by the interviewees are very interesting and can be a good starting point for further discussions. However, how this process will evolve in the future is still unclear and this can turn out as a limitation of the research. Making correct hypothesis may result very difficult, and many variables should be considered when analyzing the trend of Japanese eating habits change. As one of the interviewee said, social phenomena like population ageing or increase of the unemployment rate are elements that should not be underestimated and that could be relevant in future

changes. However, what everybody pointed as the biggest problem is the lack of time to spend at home. It is difficult to say that an increase of free time will definitively help Japanese people to eat more at home and in particular eating Japanese food. Metropolis like Tokyo or Osaka are filled with restaurants who serve Western food, and it is difficult to think about a big decrease of their number so easily, also because it would result in an employment problem.

5.a Limitations

Considering only cities as the main data source can also be a big limitation to this work.

Although the general survey covered most of Japanese prefectures, the in-depth interviews were held only in cities, not considering the rural areas of Japan, where the westernization process is more slow and a more traditional diet is followed.

Changes at global or regional level are also important elements of analysis. The Asia Pacific area for instance, is going through big social, political and economic changes and Japanese international relations will influence the change in food market trends, and consequently the eating habits of Japanese people. International or regional agreements such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership²⁵ could influence the flow of imported food products and their cost, making some particular product enough cheap to increase its popularity on Japanese market.

In conclusion, the process of promotion and preservation of Washoku culture still needs time and for sure the next two or three decades will be very important to see how the situation will evolve and whether an equilibrium between Western and Japanese food will be reached in local diet. It could be also an opportunity to make a new fieldwork and update current data. This work at the present stage cannot give a proper answer about the

²⁵ The Trans-Pacific Partnership (also known as TPP) is a trade agreement between twelve countries of the Asia Pacific Area, which promote economic growth, creation of jobs, reduction of poverty and low trade barriers and tariffs.

effectiveness of Washoku preservation policies; however, it can be considered a starting point for future research in the field of Japanese Food Culture.

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7 APPENDIX

7.a Interviewees info²⁶

NAME	AGE	CITY	OCCUPATION
DAISUKE YAMAGAMI	28	TOKYO	EMPLOYEE IN A COFFEE SHOP
RIKIMA YAMASHITA	24	TOKYO	EMPLOYEE IN A ELDER-CARE COMPANY
TETSURO KATAYAMA	67	TOKYO	DOCTOR AND OWNER OF A PRIVATE CLINIC
JUN ISHIKAWA	37	YOKOHAMA	CHEF AND OWNER OF AN ITALIAN RESTAURANT
SAKUYA FUJITA	25	TOKYO	EMPLOYEE IN A TRADING COMPANY
KAZUMASA MATSUYAMA	24	BEPPU	CHEF AND OWNER OF AN ITALIAN RESTAURANT

²⁶ In order to respect the privacy of the interviewees, pseudonyms are used instead.

7.b General Survey (Original in Japanese)

日本人の食習慣

*Required

1) 性別 * Gender

男 Male

女 Female

2) 年齢 * Age

1 8 - 29 歳 18 to 29 years old

3 0 - 59 歳 30 to 59 years old

6 0 歳以上 more than 60 years old

3) 出身地 * Birthplace

北海道 Hokkaido Area

東北 Tohoku Area

関東 Kanto Area

中部 Chubu Area

関西 Kansai Area

中国 Chugoku Area

四国 Shikoku Area

九州 Kyushu Area

沖縄 Okinawa Area

海外 Overseas

4) 職業 * Occupation

学生 Student

無職 Unemployed

勤め人 White collar

自営業・自由業 Independent Business

専業主婦・専業主夫 Housewife

その他 Others

5) 海外旅行経験は何回ありますか? * How many times have you been overseas?

海外に行ったことがない Never been overseas

1 回 1 time

2 - 5 回 2 to 5 times

6 - 10 回 6 to 10 times

それ以上 more than 10 times

6) 海外旅行経験がある場合、どこに行きましたか? * Where have you been?

複数回答可 Multiple choice possible

アメリカ North America

南米 South America

ヨーロッパ Europe

中央アジア Central Asia

東南アジア South East Asia

東アジア East Asia

オセアニア Oceania

アフリカ Africa

その他 Others

7) 西洋料理が好きですか? * Do you like Western Cuisine?

全然好きじゃない I don't like it at all

あんまり好きじゃない I don't like it that much

好きです I like it

とても好きです I like it a lot

8) 週何回ぐらい西洋料理を食べますか? * How many times per week do you eat Western cuisine?

あんまり食べない not that much

1～3回 1 to 3 times

3回以上 more than 3 times

だいたい毎日 almost everyday

全然食べない don't eat it at all

9) 西洋料理を食べる時は、どこで食べますか? * Where do you eat Western Cuisine?

外で食べます out

家で食べます at home

未決定 undecided

10) 西洋料理のなかでどれが好きですか? * Which kind of Western Cuisine do you prefer?

複数回答可 Multiple choice possible

フランス料理 French Cuisine

イタリア料理 Italian Cuisine

スペイン料理 Spanish Cuisine

ドイツ料理 German Cuisine

ヨーロッパのその他 Other European Cuisines

アメリカンファストフード American Fast Food

南米料理 South American Cuisine

Other:

11) スーパーで西洋食料品を買いいますか? (パスタ、菓子、ソースなど) * Do you buy Western food products at supermarket?

全然買わない Don't buy them at all

あんまり買わない Don't buy them often

たまに買います Buy them sometimes

よく買います Buy them often

12) 日本人は西洋料理より和食をもっと食べた方がいいと思いますか? * Do you think Japanese people should eat more Washoku Cuisine than Western one?

そう思います I think so

そう思わない I don't think so

無関心 I don't care

13) 文化の一部として和食を保護するのが大事だと思いますか? * Do you think that Washoku, as an element of Japanese culture, should be preserved?

そう思います I think so

そう思わない I don't think so

無関心 I don't care

14) 昔より現在の日本人の食習慣には変化があったと思いますか? 60歳以上の方だけ
Do you think there has been a change in Japanese people eating habits, compared to the past?
Only people with more than 60 years old can answer.

変わったと思います I think it changed

あんまり変わってないと思います I don't think it changed that much

15) 変化があったと思ったら原因は何ですか? 60歳以上の方だけ。Which one can be the reason of this change?

複数回答可 Multiple choice possible

日本人は西洋文化に影響されたこと Japanese people got influenced by Western culture

日本での家庭教育が変わったこと Food education at home has changed

特にない、ただ通常の過程です。 Nothing in particular, it's just a normal process.

Other:.....

7.c In-depth interviews questions

- 1- 自己紹介をしてください。Please introduce yourself.
- 2- 昔より現在の日本人の食習慣には変化があったと思いますか？何が変わりましたか？Do you think there has been a change in Japanese eating habits? What has changed?
- 3- 子供の頃より朝ご飯と昼ご飯が変わりましたか？Did your breakfast and lunch habits change compared to your childhood?
- 4- 和食を保護することについてどう思いますか？今まで決定された政策は正しいと思いますか？あなたはこれについて助言がありますか？What do you think about preserving Washoku? Do you think that Japanese government is moving on the right direction? What are your suggestion about it?