

Japan's Food Scarcity to Food as Healthy, Delicious Intangible Cultural Heritage

Across the Continental or Oriental cuisines, among all traditions, there is no country that has no appetite for Japanese Food, rather Japanese cuisine is one of only two national food traditions recognized by the UN for its cultural significance. With High level of Stress in Japan, Long working hours, including massive consumption of alcohol and smoking, Japanese people have high expectancy, average life spans crossing 85 years. It's all about diet!!. Japanese food concepts have captured worldwide attention for long time.

To name a few dynamics of Japanese Cuisine; low oil, low cholesterol, low sugar, high dependency on natural and fresh foods are the foundation of any dishes, Be it Sushi or sashimi or Guilt Free Noodles, Every Menu comes out with an art of 3P [Planning, Production, Presentation]. Agricultural soil Planning to, Seed sowing, cooking, chef certifications, processed foods, packaging, labelling, specific logistics, waste management and so on. Food Scarcity, Crisis is never ending in Japan

During the Second World War in Japan, Food Crisis was the major Impact and number of factors affected food production, the reduction in farmland work force, since all men were drafted for the war, the reduction in the supply of fertilizers, including weather and soil that affected Japan's Food almost to ZERO Production. Common people began to describe white rice as "silver rice," as so much scarcity of other foods, rice was only available and valued so much that without that people would not have survived, even few bought it in black market.

Close to 150 famines have occurred during 1600 to 1900, causing severe food crisis throughout nation, and not to forget, Japan has hardly any land resource that could be used for Self Agricultural production, Arable land is below 20% of total land mass, Thus Making Japan to import almost 60% of its food requirement.

The list of for food crisis would not end ,without mentioning on earthquakes in japan, every year there are more than 1500 earthquakes, anytime a single quake of Magnitude 8 plus would cause severe damage in food supply chain. In the past 1924 Kanto to Most recent ones 2011's Tohoku quakes have had it all derailing the food supply chain.

Yet, for some or most of the Japanese lovers, Japanese Cuisine is at its best! The secret of Success lies behind not only in the food taste thinking, but rather stiff Food safety Controls at all levels. Food is very serious business in Japan. Food Safety is very Delicate and Sensitive Topic among consumers and regulators. For any of the issues raised from the end buyer, it is very common to see The CEO of food Manufacturing Company bowing with apologizes on national TV channel, and print media covering it up for longer period. Even in some cases Manufacturer has completely winded up the operations.

Standards, Rules – controls the Etiquette of Diet

According to Food Technicians in Japan, Japan is five years ahead of the rest of the world in dealing with food quality problems especially imported ones. The Japanese health ministry does a random testing through private laboratories and about 10 percent of all food shipments entering the country does not pass the criteria's. Therefore making it very tuff for suppliers as at any stage the samples will be collected for testing and has to pass all criteria's set by each stage.

Both government and private sector set standards and requirements for the suppliers. The consumer's sensitivity to food safety has made food supply chain companies, increasingly keen to achieve food safety in Japan at all levels. These companies are fully aware that if they mishandle food safety requirements, such as mislabeling, using hazardous chemicals for packaging and so on, they will be closed out of business, far more quickly than before, by the government, business partners, and consumers. Therefore, ingredients tracking, documentation of each process and tracing becomes a mandatory requirement in Japan.

In addition to the Government food safety standards, Japanese Retail and department store chains set their own specific quality standards. Retailing Company quality standards mainly relate to parameters such as size, uniformity of size, appearance, and freshness visibility. Furthermore, they often differ from each retailer, and retailers usually are very strict, thus every distribution line is different and complex for manufacturer but easily traceable for end user or agencies. Hence

it is not easy for suppliers from developing countries to become new suppliers to Japanese buyers, particularly, with regard to the high standards aspects of every step in food supply chain.

Many Japanese consumers recognize the dangers of fast foods that are hugely making profits in Japan, and they deliberately shifting to traditional foodways. However Japan is not free from Food scandals or quality issues. While the Japanese diet is held up as high as natural eating, Japan is also home to the world's foremost imitation flavor, MSG [monosodium glutamate]. Though highly controlled and used in all process foods in Japan MSG based foods itself so far do not have any issues, however mis-labelling and claiming high standards has been some of the challenges that have grabbed attention from all stakeholders in Japan.

The consumers, government and Companies ensure that food safety and food self-sufficiency in Japan go hand in hand with no room for compromise. As they say here Food makes Man, Man Makes Food – If Food is for thought, then make the food thee best. Best has to be World's best. So much so best that Japanese Cuisine Washoku" traditional Japanese cuisine has been added to UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2013.

India's recent issues on imitation flavor and other food safety related issues that could possibly stir to set the standards. Perhaps Japan could share its knowledge, technical capabilities in monitoring and controlling every stage of food processing to end user consumption.

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