

MACROBIOTICS:

Alive in the East, and Well (also) for the West

Maria Sagi¹

A practice of nearly 30 years in the healing profession has convinced me that nutrition plays a crucial role in the preservation and restoration of health. In any therapy – conventional or complementary – individual nutrition is of vital importance. Every human being is unique and unrepeatable; thus his dietary needs are also unique. Even if we group individuals within overall categories, individual needs within each category must be considered, since it is these differences that can ensure the optimal functioning of his or her organism.

Due to its variability within a general scheme, macrobiotics can serve the specific dietary needs of the individual. It is the task of the macrobiotic therapist to assist patients to make the right choices and monitor their changing physical condition. As we all know, change is in the center of every healing process; healing consists of a series of stages until recovery is attained. Naturally, dietary needs also change during this process. The proper nutrition for a person varies according to climate, season, hour of day, age, state of health, gender, activity and, of course, his or her individual endowments and faculties. A disregard of these factors could lead in the long run to damaging the integrity of the organism. To illustrate the great variation in individual needs, consider a man engaged in a strenuous task in the Arctic being offered a dish prepared for a child in the tropics. He would not obtain adequate nutrition from it. And if we would offer a dish suitable for the man to the child, he would become sick even if he ate a small portion of it.

How can we explain this variability, seeing that the human organism has fairly uniform biochemical requirements, such as intake of water, carbohydrates, vitamins and essential amino-acids? We need to recognize that the human organism is not only a biochemical system, but is also a part of its environment, and its dietary requirements vary with its relations to the environment. Moreover beyond the biochemical requirements of basic health, also the information supplied by nutrition to the organism is a factor, since food is utilized not only on the basis of its biochemical components, but according to the information it conveys. It is known that the eggs or milk of one animal may be beneficial for an individual

¹ Dr. Maria Sagi has been practising macrobiotics for more than twenty years, treating patients and giving seminars in her native Hungary, as well as in Austria, Switzerland, and Germany. She studied originally at the Kushi Institute in Amsterdam, worked with Mr. Kushi personally, and served as consultant for Mr. and Mrs. Kushi during their visits to Hungary in 1989 and 1990. She has edited the Hungarian translation of their book, *The Cancer Prevention Diet* (1991).

while the milk or eggs of another animal may not be, even if the animals were raised in the same livestock. Chemical analysis alone could hardly differentiate between the milk and eggs in this case, although the information conveyed by them differs greatly. The same applies to plants, such as wheat, rice, millet and oat grown in one and the same location, and of course even more if they are grown on different locations.

As its name indicates macrobiotics takes into consideration the entire system of information pertinent to health, that originating in the body as well as information relating to the environment. Thus macrobiotics serves the needs of a particular patient on the basis of his or her age, and living and health condition. Macrobiotics can respond to the requirement for individual variability because with the help of fermented vegetables as condiments it can offer a very large variety of diets within its basic grains–beans–vegetables regime even within a single meal.

I first came across the enormous variety of macrobiotic cooking during a six weeks' seminar at the Kushi Institute in Amsterdam. During each meal we were offered between nine and twelve dishes--I could hardly keep a record of all of them. In spite of having studied the literature on macrobiotics, I did not realize at the time the importance of cultural factors, in this case, the fact that the basis of the variety I experienced is the Japanese culinary tradition.

I learned, and thus I knew intellectually, that Ohsawa and Kushi created today's macrobiotics on the basis of traditional Japanese cuisine, nonetheless for my Western sensibilities the enormous daily variety of macrobiotic foods was surprising (although by this time I was practicing macrobiotic cooking for five years) since it is so different from what I was used to in Europe.

The Western diet is so different, as it is based on the consumption of meat, and hopes to satisfy the needs of the organism by large quantities of proteins and carbohydrates, while it neglects the colorful palette of possible side-dishes, contenting itself mainly with salads and potatoes.

I recently had the opportunity to give seminars on sociological research and alternative healing in Japan and in Korea. I was eager to encounter the dietary traditions I had studied beforehand, but my experience exceeded all my expectations. It was a great experience that the everyday cuisine in both countries conforms to the macrobiotics I learned at the Kushi Institute. The great variety of dishes and their quality in the everyday context suddenly made perfect sense. This became clear when I was served meals consisting of 18-20 tiny dishes where the great variety of fermented vegetables serving as condiments supplements the grain-

based staple foods. Places that offer traditional cooking, such as Buddhist monasteries and specialized traditional restaurants, offer menus of astounding variety and of superb quality.

A Brief History of Macrobiotics

Earlier civilizations recognized the primacy of food and agriculture and enshrined dietary concerns in their household practices as well as in their religions, literature, and art. Nutritional therapy formed the core of medical understanding and practice. Cooked whole grains, in particular, have constituted humanity's staple food for thousands of years, and, until fairly recently, were eaten as the staple food throughout the world. For example, rice and millet were principal foods in the Orient; wheat, oats and rye in Europe; buckwheat in Russia and Central Asia; sorghum in Africa; barley in the Middle East; and corn in the Americas. In fact, the English word for food is *meal*, or ground grain, while in Japanese, the term used for meal is *gohan*, which means cooked rice.

Using a natural diet as medicine was a widespread practice in the Far East as well as in the West. In the medical book of the Yellow Emperor his physician Quibo – the “Hippocrates of the East” – suggests that chronically ill patients should take whole rice soup for ten days as medicine. In the 5th century BC, Hippocrates himself healed with correct nutrition, among other things with full-grain barley. He wrote, “Let your nutrition be your medicine, and the medicine your nutrition.” The hypocratic oath contains a paragraph stating, “I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment, I will keep them from harm and injustice.” Even the term “macrobiotics”: was first used by Hippocrates. Other classical philosophers, including Herod, Aristotle, Galen, and Lucian, insisted on a balanced diet as the basis for natural lifestyle and active old age.

The scriptures of the world religions, such as the Bible, the Tao Te Ching, the Bhagavad Gita, the Kojiki, and the Quran, contain prescriptions for a sensible diet and natural therapies. Some of these prescriptions have become part of religious doctrines.

Similar ideas crop up in the Modern Age. For example, in the year 1714 Ekiken Kaibara Japanese doctor and Confucian scholar added to *Jojokun*, the book of long life and health, the science of applying a diet of whole-grain rice, instead of attempting to cure the symptoms of sickness with medication or surgery. In the West in 1793 Christoph Wilhelm Hufeland German doctor and philosopher published a book entitled *Macrobiotics or the Art of Long Life*, outlining the relationship between nutrition and health.

Macrobiotics experienced a revival in the 19th century in Japan, as a consequence of the history of Japanese culture. A diet based on natural foods was part of the culinary tradition of Japan. The Japanese was a traditionally a mainly vegetarian culture; people did not consume meat until the middle of the 19th

century. The Japanese diet was composed of vegetables and grains, especially rice, millet, bean, fruits, algae and various seafood. As other oriental people, the Japanese did not eat dairy products, since the genetic makeup of Oriental and African people is not suited for digesting lactalbumen and lactose. Instead of dairy products, they consumed a wide variety of bean-paste (“tofu”) based on soybean. The daily diet also included miso and shoyu (made of fermented soybeans); these contain all essential amino acids needed by the organism. Teas (both green and bancha) were likewise part of the diet; Bancha, a tea dried on the bush for three years, contains eight times the amount of calcium found in cow’s milk. Bancha tea served before and in the middle of meals, as well as green tea served at the end, was and still is an indispensable elements of Japanese cuisine.

The spreading of meat consumption in the last third of the 19th century posed a challenge to the digestive system of the Japanese people. Before their organisms became adjusted to it, the consumption of meat created serious problems of health. Overcoming this problem was made difficult by the pronounced influence on Japan of European culture and science; physicians used almost exclusively therapies borrowed from Western medicine.

Going against this trend, Sagen Ishizuka (1850-1909) a high-ranking Japanese army doctor, though trained in Western medical science, criticized the adoption of Western healing and dietary theories, and recommended the Japanese traditional diet. This was due to his own healing experience, as well as his research in biochemistry. He was born with a weak constitution and suffered from kidney and skin disease. The Western healing methods did not succeed in curing him, thus he returned to the traditional Japanese healing and diet. This way he could cure himself.

After Ishizuka left the army, he founded a private clinic. He cured many patients by having them use a traditional diet based on brown rice, and a variety of land and sea vegetables. Since his method was unique at that time, and effective, many patients visited his clinic; so many in fact that he had to limit his practice to one-hundred persons per day. Such was his fame, that inquiries by mail reached him even when addressed to "Vegetable Doctor, Tokyo," or "Anti-Doctor Doctor, Tokyo."

Based on his lifelong experiments and practices, Ishizuka created a theory of nutrition and healing based on the traditional Oriental diet, complemented by elements from Western chemistry, biology, biochemistry, and physiology. He compiled the information and conclusions of his work in two books: *The Chemical Theory of Longevity*, published in 1896, and *Diet For Health*, published in 1898. Both books appeared in Japanese, and were not translated into Western languages to this day.

Ishizuka’s philosophy is based on five basic principles:

- Food is the foundation of health and happiness.
- The sodium (NA) and the potassium (K) salts are the primary complementary elements in food. They determine its yin/yang" quality.
- Grain is the staple food of a human being.
- Food should be unprocessed, whole, and natural.
- Food should be grown locally and eaten in season.

While western nutrition (then as now) was emphasizing protein and carbohydrates, Ishizuka maintained that *minerals*, especially sodium and potassium, are the most crucial. The ratio between them determines the body's ability to absorb and utilize other nutrients. The healthy functioning of the entire human organism depends on proper balance of Na/K. Human health and sickness depend on diet above all. The basis for physical well-being is food that provides a proper balance of minerals. Sickness begins with an imbalance of Na/K caused by poor diet. Both contagious and degenerative diseases, Ishizuka asserted, originate in food. Bacteria and viruses afflict only those who are weak and susceptible because of their Na/K imbalance. A truly healthy person, even when coming into contact with such pathogens, will not become sick. Thus allopathic medicine, seeking only to destroy disease-causing micro-organisms, rather than strengthening the person against them, is based on a misconception.

In 1907 Ishizuka founded with a group of his followers an association called Shoku-Yo-Kail. The co-founders of this association were noblemen, congressmen, councillors, representatives, and successful businessmen of the day.

Following the death of Ishizuka in 1909, it was George Ohsawa 1893-1966 (born Joichi Sakurazawa) who among the members of Shoku-Yo-Kail carried on Ishizuka's intellectual heritage.

At the age of 18, Sakurazawa was suffering from a supposedly incurable tuberculosis. Looking for a cure, he happened on one of Ishizuka's books in a library. Ishizuka had died two years previously and Sakurazawa did not know him personally. Sakurazawa tried the recommended diet of brown rice and cooked vegetables, with small amounts of oil and salt; soon his malady improved, and then completely disappeared. Sakurazawa continued to practice this basic diet.

As of 1916 Sakurazawa joined the *Shoku-yo* group and in the period 1923-29 he served as general superintendent and head of publications. In 1927 Sakurazawa, who was then 34, wrote with Manabu Nishibata his first book, *The Physiology of the Japanese Spirit*. Here he began to use the terms *yin* and *yang*, which Ishizuka had used to refer generally to sodium and potassium type foods. In 1928 Sakurazawa wrote an authoritative biography of Ishizuka.

A new chapter in Sakurazawa's life opened in 1929 when, at the age of 36, he set out for Paris to introduce the philosophy and practice of *Shoku-yo* to the Western world. In 1931 his first book in French was published, *Le Principe Unique de la Philosophie et de la Science d'Extreme Orient*. It was well received and he began to move in cultured circles. In 1934 wrote *Acupuncture and Chinese Medicine*, the first book on this subject in English. His work influenced writers on acupuncture in Europe, including Lawson-Wood.

In 1936 Sakurazawa returned to Japan, where much of his time was devoted to individual consultations on health. He stayed in Japan for 17 long and turbulent years. As president of the Shoku-yo group during 1937-39 he actively opposed Japanese ultranationalism, militarism, and expansionism. In 1939 he was asked to resign, however, because of conflicts largely provoked by his antigovernmental political activities, and to some extent also by his personal philosophy. In January 1945, due to his antiwar activities, he was imprisoned, questioned, and severely mistreated. He thought he would die, but finally, one month after the bomb fell on Hiroshima, he was released—gaunt, crippled, and nearly blind.

After the war, Sakurazawa recovered slowly. He worked to make *shoku-yo* the guiding principle for the reconstruction of the nation. In 1949 he changed his name from Joichi Sakurazawa to George (or Georges) Ohsawa. At the same time, he began to call his philosophy and teachings "macrobiotics." He sent his disciples, who were eager to spread the teachings, to foreign lands. They included Michio Kushi, who was at the time a law student in Tokyo University. Kushi went to New York to study at Columbia University, later Herman Aihara went to New York and others went to France, Brazil, Germany, and to other countries.

In October 1953, a few days before his 60th birthday, Sakurazawa—now known as Ohsawa—and his wife embarked on the most adventurous trip in their life, hoing to spread macrobiotics as well as the principles of personal and spiritual health around the world. They spent 18 months in India teaching and studying macrobiotics and then went to Africa for several months. He again managed to heal himself from a reputedly incurable tropical disease through the macrobiotic diet and lifestyle. Ohsawa and his wife moved to Paris in early 1956. There the most important phase of his teaching and writing began. The last decade of his life was spent mostly in Western Europe and America, were he developed a small but dedicated following. In the next 10-15 years Ohsawa and his followers laid the foundation for the production and marketing of macrobiotic foods in America, Western Europe, as well as in Japan.

During his life Ohsawa wrote more than 300 books and pamphlets. He published a monthly magazine for over forty years, and more than thirty of his books have been translated into English, German,

French, Swedish, Flemish, Portuguese, Italian, Spanish, and Vietnamese. For a period of more than 40 years, Ohsawa developed the philosophy and daily practice which he called "macrobiotics" or the "Unique Principle." It was based on a new formulation of the laws of change and balance according to the ancient Chinese unifying principle of yin-yang, which saw the paradoxical and dialectical unity of opposites. More specifically, it emphasized the application of yin-yang to food, health, and medicine. In short, he saw macrobiotics as the practical biological and physiological application of the basic principle of Oriental philosophy. For Ohsawa macrobiotics was emphatically not "a diet" but rather an approach to diet, a comprehensive philosophy of the principles of nutrition. Like the posture of yoga, food was only a vehicle, a sacred vehicle. Eating was a sacred and ritual act.

After Ohsawa's death, his disciples continued to teach macrobiotics in Japan, Europe, North America, and South America. Michio Kushi has lectured in the United States and around the world on diet, health consciousness, and the peaceful meeting of East and West. In 1971 his students founded the *East West Journal*, and in the following year the East West Foundation was started to spread macrobiotic education and research. In 1978, Michio and Aveline Kushi founded the Kushi Institute in Boston, an educational organization for training the future leaders of society, including teachers of macrobiotics, counselors, and cooks, with affiliates in London, Amsterdam, Antwerp, Florence, Barcelona, Lisbon, and other European capitals and, of course, in Tokyo. They described the macrobiotic system in a series of books.² They were highly effective in continuing Ohsawa's legacy.

Differences between Eastern and Western Dietary Regimes

The chart of Table 1 situates both Eastern and Western foods within the range of yin and yang. This enables us to gain an overview of the differences between Eastern and Western dietary regimes. The most yang foods are salt and meat, and the most yin items are sugar, drugs, and alcohol.

² Michio Kushi with Alex Jack: *The Book of Macrobiotics*, 1977; Michio Kushi: *The book of Do-In*, 1978; Michio Kushi: *Natural Healing through Macrobiotics*, 1978; Michio Kushi: *How to see your Health: Book of Oriental Diagnosis*, 1980; Michio Kushi with Alex Jack: *The Cancer Prevention Diet*, 1983; Michio Kushi: *Macrobiotic Home Remedies*, 1985; Aveline Kushi with Alex Jack: *Complete Guide to Macrobiotic Cooking*, 1985.

JIN															
Chemical substances	MSG		Preservatives and food additives				Artificial sweeteners			Legal and illegal drugs			Chemical substances		
Alcohols	Beer		Malt		Liquor		Wine		Champagne		Sherry		Alcohols		
	Rice honey		Malt		melasz,		Maple syrup		Honey		Brown sugar				
Sweets	Ginseng tea		Chicory coffee		Herbal tea		Mineral water		Coffee		Fruit drinks		Sweets		
	Raisins		Grain coffee		3 Year tea		Artificial dyed tea		Soft drinks		Cocoas				
(Sub)Tropical fruits	Grapefruit	Lemon	Banana	Orange	Pineapple	Date	Fig	Kiwi	Avocado	Mango	Papaya	(Sub)Tropical fruits			
	Safflower	Sesame	Corn germ	Sunflower	Olive	Cashew	Peanut	Palm	Coconut	Margarine	Shotaring				
Oil, Nuts	Chestnut		Apple	Apricot	Cranberry	Strawberry	Gooseberry	Currant	Raspberry	Cherry	Plum	Pear	Melon	Grape	
	Seaweed		Kelp		Hiziki	Nori	Wakame	Kombu							
Vegetables	Garlic	Watercress	Cabbage		Broccoli		Squash		Zucchini		Peppers	Tomato	Vegetables		
	Lotus	Burdock	Pumpkin	Cale	Endive	Lettuce	Carrot	Dalikon	Black radish	Radish	Leek	Onion		Beetroot	Potato
Roots and Tubers	Goat's cheese		Goat's milk		Cow's cheese		Cow's milk		Butter		Cream		Sour cream		Yoghurt
	Milk & milk products														
Beans & beanproducts	Tamari	Miso	Azuki beans	Chick peas	Kidney beans	Lentils	Navy beans	Pinto beans	Yellow soy	Beans	Tofu	Beans & beanproducts			
	White rice	Buckwheat	Miller	Barley	Brown rice	Wheat	Oats	Rye	Corn	Sprouted	Grains				
Grains	Sardine	Salmon	Herring	Shrimp	Prawn	Sole	Red snapper	Trout	Carp	Eel	Squid	Mussel	Oyster		
	Fish														
Meat	Hare	Rabbit	Venison	Elk	Lamb	Beef	Pork								
	Egg		Pheasant	Pigeon	Chicken	Duck	Goose	Turkey							
Poultry	Meat														
	Poultry														
Salt	Salt														
	Salt														

Table 1

Jan van Baarle, Gazelle Book Services
White Cross Mills, Hightown, Lancaster, United Kingdom.

The key issue is what kind of foods compose the typical meal in the West and in the East. Traditional oriental teachings call for a balance between yin and yang, with due attention to climate and the condition of the given person. The macrobiotic regime based on this tradition is based on whole grains and vegetable-based foods in the following proportions: 50-60% boiled whole grains, 25-30 % vegetables, and 5-10% soup made of miso or tamari soy sauce. Supplementary foods are fish, regional fruits, seeds, nuts, cold-pressed oils, sea salt, as well as condiments and naturally fermented pickles.

The same as the traditional Japanese regime, the macrobiotic diet aims at maintaining the balance of yin and yang in the middle range: it avoids the consumption of foods at the extreme range of yin and yang. In a temperate climate macrobiotics places emphasis on grains and vegetables on the yang side. In Table 1 these foods are within the sun yellow stripe. They are completed by foods within the lemon yellow and orange stripes. One is to choose within these stripes from different grades of yin and yang according to the season: for example, melon in summer and apple in winter. This offers an ideally balanced regime that reduces the toxic burden on the organism. It may seem monotonous for Western people but it is not: there is a nearly infinite variety macrobiotic meals, far above the diversity of the Western sugar- and meat-based diet.

In contrast to macrobiotics and the tradition of the Orient, Western cuisine creates a balance between yin and yang through foods located at the extremes of the respective scales.

Our busy lifestyle makes us neglect the foods in the middle; purchasing and preparing them is often more time-consuming. The result is a meat/potato/bread/beverage-based regime supplemented by salad and fruit. The principal spice is salt, which covers unwanted flavors. Alcohol is consumed together with salty foods and is followed by sweet deserts.

By consuming too much of the extremes of yin and yang and neglecting more moderate foods, one is often full yet the essential nutrients have not been consumed. Detoxification becomes difficult, meat and sugar are consumed excessively, and in consequence a part of the excess is stored as a toxin. This leads to obesity and can entail a number of chronic degenerative diseases.

Modern Japan is not free of these problems. Due to mixing the traditional regime with Western dishes, an increasing number of patients suffer from allergy and neurodermitis. The remedies of Western medicine alone cannot counteract the negative consequences of this trend. In consequence a growing number of healers, doctors and consultants now suggest returning to the traditional dietary regime. Not surprisingly, traditional cooking and macrobiotics are becoming increasingly popular. Traditional recipes are given on the Internet and on television, and the existing, still relatively few, macrobiotic restaurants are so popular that tables have to be booked weeks in advance.

Macrobiotics: Alive in the East

In Japan, many people observe traditional meal-times: lunch is served around noon and dinner around 6 p.m. Attention to the time of year is an organic element of nutrition: people prefer foodstuffs grown in the given season. Various culinary preferences coexist: most Japanese eat both traditional and modern dishes.

Traditional people, dressed mostly in traditional clothing (mainly elderly people and a large proportion of women) tend to favor traditional dishes. Young people, especially men, prefer meat-based Japanese dishes, as in Japan meat has now been integrated into the mainstream cuisine. Different types of meat are served together with various combinations of steamed and fermented vegetables pickled in salt. Rice is still the main ingredient. Apart from modern dishes young people favor beef and the national or ethnic dishes of other countries, such as Italian pasta among others. Even though cocoa and chocolate were not part of traditional Japanese cuisine, young people like to eat chocolate cakes.

During a working day most people consume mainly Western-style food: dairy products, meat, sugar. If both kinds are available they avoid mixing the two: for breakfast, for example, they either eat the traditional Japanese breakfast, or they take ham-and-eggs and drink milk.

The different traditions coexist side by side. Let me cite as illustration a few typical dishes. First, some examples from the buffet of major international hotels during the month of May. The traditional Japanese breakfast consists of both hot and cold dishes. On the table for hot dishes we find rice soup made of white rice, steamed white rice, roasted whole sesame seed, miso soup, different kinds of chives, steamed buns made of white rice flour, steamed pumpkin or other steamed vegetables, steamed potatoes, fried sweets made of dried fruits and bread, and fried sweet potatoes. On the table for cold dishes there are raw and fried tofu dishes, fried tofu sacks filled with vegetables, and fermented vegetables with fried tofustripes.. There are also raw salads, and herbs such as grated ginger, grated green horseradish, shoyu, bean salads, a large variety of fermented foods and fish dishes.

For the Western palate the wide variety and combination of fermented dishes is surprising: it includes umeboshi plum, ginger, daikon, carrot, Chinese cabbage, and marine algae, pickled with salt. Beverages include both bancha and green tea. In the spring the selection of fruit includes grapefruit, orange and sweet cantaloupe (the variety that is green on the inside, it is grown in Southern Japan).

In the same buffet the table with Western dishes is laid with a likewise rich selection that includes green salads, egg dishes, and meat dishes. There are also different types of bread, buns, cakes, mueslies, milk, yogurts, coffee, and tea.

At lunchtime the Japanese as well as the Western tables offer a still greater selection, with modern Japanese dishes being dominant. There are more types of salad, Italian pasta, pizza, fried meat, and fish with garlic. Traditional Japanese dishes include tempura, that is, deep-fried lightly battered vegetables, sweet potato, and seafood. These days baby sausages are also served in this way.. The tempura is not oily and heavy, but crunchy; it is eaten by dipping it into green horseradish or ginger shoyu. Apart from fresh salads, the cold dishes include different steamed and boiled vegetables, such as broccoli, cauliflower and spinach, served as cooked salads. Salad dressings include Italian, French, as well as traditional Japanese dressings: sour shoyu with roasted sesame oil, ginger shoyu, green horseradish shoyu, among others.

The traditional miso soup is replaced by a boiled vegetable soup with large chunks of vegetables. The menu also includes potato croquette, fried potato cut in four, a colorful mix of different types of boiled beans, tiny meat pieces lightly battered with rice flour and steamed. The fruit selection is completed by grapes and strawberry.

At dinner the miso soup returns to the table, and besides white rice there is also steamed brown rice and bean rice. A new dish on the menu consists of mixed vegetables

sautéed with shoyu, and beans and fish served hot. Often the cook prepares thin slices of pork or beef immersed in boiling water at the table. Fermented vegetables are also indispensable; they serve as condiment and act as energy balance.

The selection of Western dishes is also increased by a number of fish and meat dishes. The salad and fruit selection is much the same as at lunchtime.

There are both traditional and Western cakes; the latter cut into 2x2 cm cubes. The green tea ice cream that completes the meal is considered a national delicacy.

Home Cooking in Japan

There is access to almost any food in Japan today: traditional Japanese, modern Japanese, as well as Western. In food shops freshly made traditional Japanese sweets include at least twenty different types. In supermarkets they are displayed on separate tables, marked according to region of origin and labeled to be consumed within one or two days. None of these sweets contain milk or yeast.

Dumplings are made of different types of rice flour and filled with a sweet purée made of adzuki beans and covered with various flavors, some of them dipped in roasted sesame seeds or rice sugar. One kind of flavoring is a mix of white or black sesame seeds in rice batter.

Another delicacy is a soft, flat biscuit made of mochi (sweet rice) served on leaf with sweet white, red, and black bean purée filling. Traditional sweets can be found everywhere in Japan, and vary only in regard to shape and flavor. Every region is proud of its own specialty; small maps demonstrate their origin.

Fermented vegetables and fruits present a similar picture: there are virtually infinite variations and combinations, making up more than 4,000 recipes. Vegetables and fruits fermented with salt are especially favored; they usually come at the end of the meal. Their collective name is Tsukemono, meaning “food prepared by mother.” The name suggests motherly love and care.

Fermented foods have notable health-giving properties. The salutary properties of fermented umeboshi plums are known throughout the world. Fermentation balances even the otherwise extreme yin properties of figs, as shown by the delectable dish prepared of fermented figs from the Narita region. Here fermentation balances the natural sweetness of figs and counteracts their extreme yinness.

Japanese housewives preserve fruits and vegetables fermented in salt and allowed to ripen. During the fermentation process lactic acid is produced, which increases the appetite, aids digestion, and strengthens the intestines. The various flavors of pickles contribute variety

to the otherwise uniformly sweet world of grains, beans and vegetables by adding flavor, color and energy. In the Far East where the principal food consists primarily of whole grains and vegetables that are naturally sweet, salted pickles help to balance this predominant taste. The biological effect is irreplaceable as it helps the reabsorption of decomposed nutrients in the bloodstream. The pickles are situated on the yang side of the yin and yang spectrum, unlike pickles preserved in vinegar and sugar in Western cuisine.

Macrobiotic foods sold in stores are generally of excellent quality. Special mention should be made of brown rice dumplings offered in a great variety, together with vegetables, seitan, tofu, marine algae and pumpkin purée spread on brown bread. Even the smallest shops sell excellent rice sandwiches made of steamed white rice, wrapped in nori and filled with vegetables (umeboshi plum or cucumber), as well as salmon and tuna.

Traditional Cuisine in Korea

Traditional Japanese and Korean cuisines differ only in regard to condiments and the use of garlic. In traditional Japanese cuisine garlic is not used as a spice, unlike in Korea, where it is used heavily. This is one way that Koreans differentiate themselves from the culinary culture of Japan. Instead of the “monotonous” flavors of Japanese cuisine, Koreans eat similar dishes with garlic and hot red pepper. They use both raw and fermented garlic.

The use of garlic has a traditional root in Korea. Poor Koreans used garlic—both raw and fermented with salt in a wooden tub—as medicine. Even today some Koreans eat garlic four or five times a day. The use of all kinds of red pepper (as fermented pulp) became widespread at the beginning of the 20th century. This, too, is preserved with salt in wooden barrels.

Traditional cuisine in Korea is just as varied as it is in Japan. Similarly to Japan, in Korea as many as 18-20 different dishes make up a complete festive meal. The vegetables and marine algae of the season is prepared in various ways: steamed, fried, breaded (in tempura), as a salad in fermented form, and seasoned with seeds and spices. Next to various side-dishes of ginger (which is native to the Far East), there are eight or ten vegetables seasoned with garlic and red pepper. The Korean national dish, Kimchi, is a garlic-flavored version of fermented Chinese cabbage and is generally a part of every meal. Only tempura, rice, red rice (boiled with adzuki beans) and other grains are prepared without spices. Meals usually end with miso soup made spicy by fermented red pepper pulp.

Among Korean sweets and sweet drinks a lightly fermented sweet-rice drink is especially favored as well as fermented sweet-rice deserts, and various rice wines. In Korea,

the same as in Japan, tea drinking is an essential part of festive meals. Its importance is highlighted by traditional tea ceremonies.

... and Macrobiotics is Well (also) for the West

As we have seen, traditional cuisine is alive and well in Japan as well as in Korea. Traditional Japanese cuisine is essentially the same as what Oh^sawa and Kushi named macrobiotics. Thus inasmuch as traditional cuisine is alive in Japan, macrobiotics is alive there as well (the same cannot be said without qualification for Korea: the heavily spiced Korean cuisine does not fully accord with the macrobiotic principle of achieving yin/yang balance without using foods at the extremes of the yin and yang scale). The great merit of the founders of macrobiotics is to show the health-maintaining and healing properties of traditional Japanese cooking, with a precise indication of which foods have the indicated health-giving and healing properties in regard to which particular climatic and health conditions. The system of macrobiotics is a natural outgrowth of traditional Japanese cuisine, especially adapted to stressful and otherwise unhealthy modern ways of living.

Due to the propensity of traditional Japanese cuisine to provide optimally balanced nutrition, its acceptance and adoption would also serve well Western people and societies. Here not the entire Japanese culinary tradition is meant, but only macrobiotics, its systematically elaborated regime, where the best of this tradition is integrated with the best of alternative healing and holistic medicine.

The macrobiotic regime is not simply a vegetarian diet. There are a number of different vegetarian traditions in the world, varying with geographical, climatic, cultural differences. The climate influences the spices used in the various diets. Spicy and hot vegetarian diets, such as those in India, Africa and Mexico, are adapted to provide nourishment to entire populations under the particular geographic and climatic conditions.

The modern economic system and its spreading consumerism changed the diet of Western and Westernized peoples. They neglected their inherited, climate-dependent, and health preserving foods and replaced them with standardized items that, due to heavy reliance on artificial substances, have lost much of their nutritional value. Such foods characterize much of the diet in Europe, North America, and throughout the industrialized world.

Macrobiotics is a mainly vegetarian regime able to restore and preserve the health of people living in modern industrial societies in temperate climates. It constitutes a “return to nature” through daily nourishment -- a return that is intellectually sound and emotionally

satisfying. It heals the spirit through the body and heals the body through a more balanced and natural way of eating. It satisfies a deeply felt craving for simplicity and wholeness in life.

The key to full macrobiotic nutrition is yin-yang balance achieved without relying on foods at the extremes of the yin and yang scale. Because of the importance of this principle I now reiterate and summarize the elements that are decisive in temperate climates for restoring and preserving our health.

1. *Eat in a healthy way in harmony with the time of day.*

The two main meals of the day follow the movement of the sun across the sky: the midday meal is to be served when the Sun is at the zenith, around noon, and the evening meal around the time the Sun sets or is nearing the horizon, around 6 PM. The body benefits optimally from nourishment during these times. Proper chewing is essential to digestion and it is recommended that each mouthful of food be chewed fifty times or more or until it becomes liquid in form. It is best to leave the table feeling satisfied but not full.

2. *Eat local foods, preferably organically produced.*

In connection with plants and fruits this is an essential consideration because it ensures that we obtain the full nutritive and energy value. This strengthens our natural immunity to diseases in our own local environment. If these products are transported from distant regions or countries, they need to be harvested half-ripe or unripe in order to preserve them. Bananas are artificially ripened, the same as watermelons, where CO₂ is added to hasten the process. Fruits that appear fine on the outside but are unripe and hard on the inside contain too much acid and are harmful for the organism. And if they are treated with chemical preservatives, we get a much diminished nutritive value. Fruits ripened on the tree or bush and freshly picked are the most beneficial for health as they contain an optimal proportion of elements such as sugars, minerals, acids and enzymes. On the other hand such fruit cannot be transported or stored for an extended period.

3. *Eat foods according to the season.*

There are two main reasons for eating seasonal foods. The first is ideal maturity and avoiding transportation, and the second regards the energy provided by the food. Far Eastern teachings claim that every season has an energetic character due to the ambient temperature and the quantity and quality of sunshine. These promote the natural functioning of the organism. For instance spring is the time for cleaning the body and integrating new forces, and this can best be carried out by eating green leafy vegetables. Autumn is the time for collecting and storing food in preparation for winter, thus it is the time for eating long-lasting vegetables and fruits harvested in the autumn. The energies contained in annual cycles

support the organism's cyclically tuned functioning. Hence it is advisable to eat local fruits in summer, and locally grown apple, walnut, almond and peanut in winter. The energy of melon or tomato consumed in winter and transported from distant countries is contrary to the objective of obtaining the energies of the season.

4. Proportion also the basic foods of your meal according to the season.

The proportion of the foodstuffs that compose one's meal influences the above-indicated energy-factor. In a hot summer we consume more yin (that is, cooling) foodstuffs, such as green salads and fruits than yang (heating) foods such as grains. In winter the opposite holds true. In cold weather we are in great need of yang grains that offer heating energy, and we eat less yin fruits providing cooling energy. Occasionally one apple a day suffices to satisfy our basic need.

Grains, too, need to be chosen according to the season. In winter we need to eat more oat, millet, wheat and rye, and eat more corn and barley in summer. Rice is consumed in all seasons, since there are many kinds of rice, some for winter, others for summer. Fruit consumption is based on similar principles: we eat sweet and juicy fruits in summer (since that is when they grow), while we eat smaller, harder and longer-lasting apples or pears in winter. Of the foods that contain essential amino acids we eat the more salty ones in winter, such as long-fermented miso. In summer we eat less salty foods, and this can include short-fermented miso.

5. Use fresh foodstuffs as the basis of your meals.

Use fresh foodstuffs and avoid parboiled or processed ingredients, even if they are produced by the biodynamic method. This consideration applies also to the quality of the energy we derive from food.

6. Choose fermented vegetables to flavor your food.

The use of fermented condiments in every meal is essential. Macrobiotics suggests the use of various salt-fermented vegetables, fruits, and their combinations. In this way all five basic tastes are included in one's meal (salty, sweet, sour, bitter, and hot), and their proportions should reflect the given season.

The sixth principle is a typically Eastern recipe that has proven its worth over the centuries. Despite the fact that in most geographical regions the use of fermented vegetables is widespread, for example, sauerkraut in Russia and fermented cucumber pickles in Northern Europe, this element of the diet appears only occasionally and is not a standard element of every meal for us, as it is in the traditional cuisine of Japan. The inclusion of fermented vegetables in meals merits special attention and is recommended for the Western diet as well.

* * * * *

It is remarkable that five of the six here outlined macrobiotic principles figure explicitly in a biblical teaching: the so-called *Essene Gospel of Peace*. In the segment entitled “On the Miraculous Healing of the Son of Man and on All Secret Things of Heavens and of Earth” (based on a third Century Aramaic manuscript and old Slavonic Texts translated by Edmond Bordeaux Szekely and published in 1937) we find the following parallels.

1. *Eat in a healthy way in harmony with the time of day:*

... *”Eat only when the sun is highest in the heavens, and again when it is set. And you will never see disease.”* *”And when you eat, never eat unto fullness.”* *”So give heed to how much you have eaten when your body is sated, and always eat less by a third”* *”Shun all that is too hot and too cold.”* *”.. chew well your food with your teeth, that it become water.”* *”And eat slowly, as it were a prayer you make to the Lord.*

2. *Eat local food preferably organically grown.*

”Eat not unclean foods brought from far countries, but eat always that which your trees bear. For your God knows well what is needful for you, and where and when. And he gives to all peoples of all kingdoms the food that is best for each.”

3. *Eat foods according to the season:*

”Eat always when the table of God is served before you, and eat always of that which you find upon the table of God. ... God knows well what your body needs, and when it needs.”

4. *Proportion also the basic foods of your meal according to the season:*

”From the coming of the month of Ijar, eat barley, from the month of Sivan, eat wheat, the most perfect among all seed-bearing herbs. And let your daily bread made of wheat, that the Lord may take care of your bodies. From Tammuz, eat the sour grape, that your body may diminish and Satan may depart from it. In the month of Elul, gather the grape that the juice may serve you as drink. In the month of Marchesvan, gather the sweet grape, dried and sweetened by the angel of Sun, that your bodies may increase, for the angels of the Lord dwell in them. You should eat figs rich in juice in the months of Ab and Shebat, and what remain, let the angel of Sun keep them for you eat them with the meat of almonds in all the month when the trees bear no fruits. And the herbs which come after rain, these eat in the month of Thebet, that your blood may be cleansed of all your sins.”

5. *Use fresh foodstuffs as the basis of your meals:*

”... the foods which you eat from the abundant table of God give strength and youth to your body, and you will never see disease. For the table of God fed Methuselah of old, and I tell

you truly, if you live even as he lived, then will the God of the living give you also long life upon the Earth as was his.”

ANNEX

Two Traditional Menus in Japan

A complete traditional dinner

A traditional Japanese (and also traditional Korean) dinner consists of 18-20 courses. Sometimes fish is served between the courses. Most of the small dishes consist of vegetables prepared in a vast variety of ways. Each dish, though small in itself, has at least three to five components. Despite this abundance of food, the meal does not create a sensation of overeating; one leaves the table with a feeling of comfort.

A traditional seafood dinner

The many seafood dishes are small in themselves, with the exception of the fish soup served at the beginning of the meal and white rice and miso soup at the end. A great variety of pickles and other seasonings accompany most of the dishes. Sake (Japanese rice wine) usually complements the meal.

旬味会席

Seasonal "KAISEKI" Course Menu

¥7,350

前菜

かすご鯛兜寿司 稚鮎唐揚げ 床節 牛肉旨煮 うすい衣和え
白瓜昆布 蛸のゼリー寄せ

"ZENSAI"

Assorted Japanese Appetizer
Snapper Sushi, Sweet Fish, Baby Abalone, Braised Beef.

座付

鱸 加賀瓜 鮑茸 茗荷 小メロン 木の芽
Clear Bonito and Seaweed Broth with Sea Bass and "KAGA" Melon

向付

旬魚三種盛り 妻一式

"MUKOUZUKE"

Fresh Sashimi from Local Market

炊合せ

穴子 豆腐 独活 ヤングコーン 丸人参 青味 針生姜

"TAKIAWASE"

Simmered with Sea Eel, Tofu and Baby Corn

焼き物

かます若狭焼き 蓬麩山椒焼き 矢羽根蓮根 焼き茄子胡麻浸し 山桃蜜煮

"YAKIMONO"

Grilled Pike, and Eggplant

揚げ物

太刀魚唐揚げ 野菜二点 薬味 煎り出汁

"AGEMONO"

Crispy Fried Hair Tail Fish and Vegetable Tempura

食事

鮎御飯 赤出汁 香の物

Steamed Rice with Sweet Fish, Miso Soup, Japanese Pickles

水菓子

赤肉メロン 無花果

Cantaloupe Melon and Fig

おまかせ会席

¥6,700

前菜 / 座付 / 向付 / 炊合せ / 焼物 / 合肴(揚げ物) / 食事 / 水菓子

※会席のご注文は21時までとさせていただきます。
The last order for the course menu will be at 21:00.

※表記の料金は税込価格です。別途サービス料として10%頂戴いたします。
Includes local taxes, subject to 10% service charge.

MENU

- SAKIZUKE Soused Egg plant, Garland chrysanthemum, Surf clam seasoned.
With Kelp, SHIMEJI mushroom and HIRATAKE mushroom
In soup put grated Ginger on this
- ZENSAI Walnut curd topped with Walnut look alike Bell on broth
Sweet shrimp and Yam mixture of Sea urchin
Salted Salmon roe on grated Radish flavoring of soy sauce
With AMITAKE mushroom and stem of MITSUBA green
Rolled Yolk with Salmon with Caviar and Crab sushi
Ginkgo nut on a Pine needle
Sheet of dried sardines
Garnished Pumpkin cut like Ginkgo nut leaf and Ear of Rice plant
- SUIMONO Clear soup flavoring of MATSUTAKE mushroom in an earthen pot
MATSUTAKE mushroom, Pike conger, Prawn and
MITSUBA green
Served SUDACHI citrus
- TSUKURI Sliced raw Sea bream, TUNA fish and Spiny lobster
Garnished with vegetables
- YAKIMONO Grilled on charcoal
MATSUTAKE mushroom, grilled Tile-fish with Rice wine
And Sweet potato
Served SUDACHI citrus and soy sauce with DAIDAI orange juice
- NIMONO Simmered Turnip cut like Chrysanthemum flower fill up with
Sea eel, Soy-milk skin, Lily bulb and SHIMEJI mushroom
Dressed with starchy broth
Scattering shredded YUZU citrus peel
- TOME Vinegared dish
ZAKANA Vegetables in autumn season and Chrysanthemum flower
- SHOKUJI Cooked unpolished rice in a traditional pot
TOMEWAN Red miso soup
KONOMONO Assort of Japanese pickles
- DESSERT Persimmon sherbet, KYOHO grape and Pear in Persimmon case
- KANMI Japanese confectionery made like Chrysanthemum flower

NADAMANHONTEN-SAZANKASOH

2006 4th October