

# Japanese Government Effort to Preserve *Washoku* as National Culinary Heritage

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**Abstract.** Japanese food, such as traditional Japanese sweets ‘wagashi’, has a high prestige since containing 'Japanese tradition' symbols. In addition to high prestige, traditional Japanese food is also full of positive health benefits. *Washoku* is Japanese traditional food culture that has been developed with the background of the natural environment surrounding people and culture that is unique to the country or the region. Throughout its long history, Japan has developed *washoku* not only as pure food but also as something that transcends culture. This study aimed to elaborate the Japanese government’s efforts to preserve and introduce *washoku*, the traditional Japanese eating culture to the world. *Washoku* is recognized by the world through UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage since 2013. This is not a trivial matter since Japan is one country receiving the honor of having its eating culture recognized as a whole culture, not just as individual traditional dishes. This research used a literature study method, elaborating texts related to the research theme. Japanese government through Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Japan carry out several activities for preserving *washoku* as national culinary heritage, such as: Minister's award for overseas promotion of Japanese food; Certification of Japanese Food and Ingredient Supporter Stores Overseas, Certification of Cooking Skills for Japanese Cuisine in Foreign Countries, and Special Goodwill Ambassador and Goodwill Ambassador to Spread Japanese Cuisine. In addition to those activities, the “*Washoku* world of challenge” event was also set and set November 24 as *Washoku* day or *Washoku no Hi*. Those efforts are aimed at not only reviving Japanese traditional culinary culture (*washoku*) that is felt to be abandoned by the younger generation, but is also expected to be an aspect of encouraging national and international tourism.

**Keywords:** Cultural Heritage; Cultural Protection; Japanese Traditional Culture; *Washoku*

## 1 Introduction

Japanese culinary heritage, *washoku* was designated a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2013. This traditional culinary that the Japanese have practiced for hundreds of years focuses on balance nutrition, with preparation techniques that aim to get the natural

flavors out of the ingredients rather than hiding them in thick sauces. *Washoku* isn't just about food and ingredient. It includes the structure of the menu, the aesthetics of the food, the use of traditional Japanese lacquerware, and the impeccable "omotenashi" or hospitality provided. It is for this reason that people say "itadakimasu" before eating and "gochisosama deshita" after eating as a thank you (MAFF, 2020). At that time, there were about 55,000 Japanese restaurant overseas, but five years later (2018) it doubled to about 200,000, most of them are run by foreign (non-Japanese) owners (Murata, 2019). Due to the UNESCO designation of *washoku*, Japanese food received a lot of attention at the World Expo event in Milan on November 30, 2015. At that time the Japan Pavilion won a gold award for the best exhibition design attracting the attention of more than 2 million visitors during the exhibition. The theme of the event was *washoku* "Feeding the Planet and Energy for Life". Apart from presenting stunning computer graphic (CG) images of the activities in the four seasons in agricultural villages. The Japanese Pavilion, apart from presenting the stunning CG images of the activities in the four seasons in agricultural villages, attracts the most attention is the process of cooking traditional Japanese food, the results of which can be directly enjoyed by visitors <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/tag/expo-milano-2015/>.

Japanese efforts in preserving traditional culture have become a hallmark of Japan. It is known as a nation with advanced technology but still maintains its traditional culture that has been owned and passed down from generation to generation for centuries. It is the outcome of a very long process. Japan has paid attention to and protected its traditional cultures as ancestral heritage for over 150 years. This began with important events like modernization and restoration of Meiji in 1868 and democratization in the end of World War II in 1945 that affected the cultural protection process and the protection system. Preserving the properties of fallen aristocrats and abandoned temples were the initial objective of the cultural heritage protection in the end of 1800s, and in the period of pre-World War II the nationalism motivation was important (Kakiuchi, 2014:1). Later after World War II ended, the traditional cultures as ancestral heritage were treated as the national asset, but still deemed as small part of the community until quite a long time. However, the importance and existence of the traditional values as ancestral heritage are lately taken into account, and protective measures are thought of more seriously, along with Japan's established social and economic condition [Kakiuchi, 2014]. Since its declaration as part of the world's cultural heritage by UNESCO, *washoku* has provided another insight into Japanese culinary culture. Now the world community is not only familiar with *sushi*, *sashimi* or Kobe beef steak, the word *washoku* is become a word that relates to the concept of traditional eating dietary in Japanese culinary culture. Impact of *Washoku's* popularity can be seen from increasing number of Japanese restaurants around the world. Based on data from the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF, 2017a) the world's Japanese restaurants have increased dramatically from 24 thousand in 2006 to more than 117 thousand in 2017; In addition, food and agricultural exports increased from 445 billion yen in 2009 to more than 750 billion in 2016 (MAFF, 2017b:80) and in 2013 based on a survey conducted in seven countries, Japanese cuisine was ranked as a most popular "foreign food" (JETRO, 2013).

In recent years, scholar have approached *washoku* research starting from many aspect, such as the relationship between communication and language (Stano, 2014), the business world (Sato, 2018), health, nutrition, and diet (Gabriel et.al, 2018; Yatsuya & Tsugane, 2021), *washoku* and its relationship with cultural heritage and national identity (Cwierka, 2018), *washoku* as soft power (Farina, 2018), and *washoku* and the role of UNESCO on cultural heritage (Cang, 2019). As traditional culinary heritage, *washoku* has a strong promotional dimension carried out by the Japanese government. It has become a brand name that has been

widely used as part of the branding concept, which can broadly be regarded as a communication effort to promote the image of a nation (Olins, 2004; Fan 2006; Ahn and Wu, 2015). One of the promotional efforts made by the Japanese government is by stating that *washoku* is closely related to the level of public health (JETRO, 2020; MAFF, 2020). As a nation that commonly known as a nation that appreciates and upholds their ancestral cultural and traditional values, including, in this case, their eating culture. Also a common knowledge that Japanese people highly respects their eating culture, even the chefs or cooks there are considered as important people. We believe that we can find benefits by elaborate on the efforts made by the Japanese government to preserve its traditional culinary heritage. This paper examines how the efforts made by the Japanese government related to the preservation of Washoku's traditional culinary culture are ultimately not only known to the world, but also become Japanese cultural branding that creates a positive image for the country. This paper is divided in three part, first one, the concept of *washoku* and identity will be introduced; second, the process of registering *Washoku* as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the last is about Japanese government's effort to preserve *washoku*.

### 1.1 Food, Identity and *Washoku*

Food does not serve as the medium to satisfy hunger or nutrition only, but has naturally exceeded what is given to human body, since before food enters into the body through mouth, the process of thinking about food has occurred first in human's mind, like what the food is, its taste, its shape, and how we cook it, all of which can give us can describe ourselves and others, concerning our belief, perception and way of thinking (Lusiana, 2019:1). Ernest Cassirer (1874-1945) said that "To understand humans, there is no effort besides to understand their life and behavior" (1987:19). On this basis, that humans cannot be separated from eating, one of the ways of understanding humans is through eating. Furthermore, Warren J Belasco said that food often serves as an indicator to tell about "Who we are, where we are from, and what we want," thus, eating and type of food consumed by a community can tell what we are from, life behavior such as lifestyle, environment, health and supporting social system (Lusiana, 2019:1). Food as one product of culture can describe the social, religious, and ethnical identity of a community that characterizes their habit and environment. Eating is also said to be the indicator to determine an individual's position in a social, religious and ethnic group. Food, besides a biological need, is also human's social and cultural need in a community, and food choice is formed by the social and cultural factors that give food symbolic meaning. Examples of symbolic meaning: *pizza* as Italia's identity, *kimchi* as South Korea's identity, and *sushi* as Japan's identity.

In its long history, Japan has developed *washoku* as more than just a cuisine, but also a culture that represents Japan. *Washoku* (和食), adopted from Japanese language. First, we should distinguish *washoku* (or *nihonshoku*), composed of Chinese character for *wa* (和) (old Japanese name) and *shoku* (食) (depending on its use, can be defined as food, diet), from *nihon ryōri* (literally Japanese cuisine). *Washoku* has a broader meaning, not only referring to food, but also to all cultural aspects related to it (preparation method, cutlery, etiquette, etc.), while *nihon ryōri* usually refers to certain cuisine, such as Kyoto cuisine or *kaiseki* – Japanese "haute cuisine". According to Harada (2011:15), '*washoku*' is a term with obscure definition. From a narrower view, whatever the main dish, as long it includes a bowl of rice, a bowl of miso soup and pickle, the whole set can be called '*washoku*' if we define Japanese cuisine in a served form. Meat *hamburger* meat with radish and ketchup *mousse* can also be called '*wafū ryōri*' (Japanese cuisine) when we define Japanese cuisine with its taste (ibid.). From a wider

view, the term '*washoku*' was popular after the Meiji period aiming at distinguishing Japanese cuisine from Western and Chinese cuisines (Harada, 2011:16; Walravens dan Niehaus, 2017:5-6). However, Harada and Cwiertka said that many cuisines are deemed to be Japanese are actually from overseas, such as, *tonkatsu*, *tempura*, *ramen* and *castella* cake (a kind of Japanese muffin). both emphasize that Japanese Cuisines are not developed on their own (Cwiertka, 2006:8-0; Harada, 2011:14-16, 19).

The term *washoku* was just introduced during Meiji era (1868-1912), with the end of Edo era, and the end of the isolationist foreign policy of the Tokugawa Shogunate (*Sakoku* Policy). Many foreign cultures entered into Japan, including beef and pork consumption that was previously considered a taboo by Buddhist teaching, quickly spread among Japanese cuisines and fusion cuisines such as *Nikujaga* (肉じゃが), *Kari* (カレー), *Tonkatsu* (トンカツ), and *Kroket* (コロッケ). To distinguish traditional Japanese cuisines from exotic Western cuisines called *Seiyō ryōri* (西洋料理) and Japanese cuisine with Western influence called *Yoshoku* (洋食), the term *Washoku* is used. In its development has involved creation, adaptation, adoption and innovation. Japanese Cuisines are developed by absorbing culinary cultures from many, different regions and countries, making this part on its own by combining, adjusting and reforming the cuisines and culinary technology. The Japanese Government and Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) use the term *washoku* or *nihonshoku* to promote it abroad. In UNESCO's website, *washoku* is defined as "a social practice based on a set of skills, knowledge, practices, and traditions related to food production, processing, preparation, and consumption. This is related to essential needs, the passion of appreciating the nature, continuous use of natural resources, and it is confirmed that *washoku* is not a certain food or recipe, but Japanese food culture in its entirety. MAFF states that *washoku* is "based on rice harvest yield pursuant to the climate and composed of various side dishes like seafood, meat and pickle".

*"Washoku" is not simply one cuisine genre, but rather a unique food culture treasured by the Japanese that respect the seasonal abundance of nature, link families, relatives and communities through food and has advanced in a diverse in each region" (MAFF, 2015: 06).*

Basic concept in *washoku* is that the dish based on the *ichijū sansai* principle, with one soup and three side dishes served with rice and pickle. An example of *ichijū sansai* dish is presented in Figure 1. The figure shows that *washoku* is closely related to New year celebrations and other annual event (a); It emphasizes the beauty of nature and the changing seasons that reflected in the beauty of presentation (b), healthy diet that is nutritionally balanced (d); and a variety of fresh ingredient, and the taste of nature (d).





**Fig. 1.** Features of *washoku*  
 (Source: [http://www.maff.go.jp/e/pdf/maff\\_e\\_all\\_1215.pdf](http://www.maff.go.jp/e/pdf/maff_e_all_1215.pdf))

Japanese culinary culture has developed with environmental background around typical community and culture of the country or area. The Japan archipelago stretches widely across the north and south, surrounded by the sea and 75% of its national land is mountainous area. The four different seasons also plays an important role in Japanese cuisine. While season is not a typical characteristic, seasonal cycles are deeply pervasive in Japanese culture, displayed massively in traditional arts, poetry, clothing, and cuisine. The respect for the natural cycle can be seen in *shun* (which means “season”), that is the time in a year when a product reaches its peak taste and nutritional value. In natural environment, people gain seasonal foodstuffs from the sea, mount, and farm.

The real *washoku* dish requires a foodstuff that comes from the ground with mild Japanese climate with its four seasons, perfect quality water coming from the mountains, as well as a main course that came from various types of fish and seaweed from the surrounding sea. There are four main components that comprise *washoku* (MAFF, 2013:4). The first is foodstuff. In Japan, there are four different seasons, and tends to have mild climate. The agricultural products harvested in such climate greatly vary, including rice, vegetables, edible wild plants, and mushrooms. Japan is also surrounded by productive fish catching areas, where Japanese and Oyashio currents collide. Various types of fish are carried from the sea, and various local fish-eating community cultures are developed. As comparison, Norway that is also a country with big fishery sector only has 8 types of fish included into its annual catches, while in Japan there are 28 types of fish, showing abundant fish diversities in Japan. Its annual fish consumption is about 57 kg per person, that is twice that of the United States and ranks 6<sup>th</sup> in the world. Fish consumption is closely related to the characteristics of raw and fresh Japanese food. This is slightly contrary to scientific opinion which states that the cooking process has a significant impact on the body's evolution (Rosati, 2018).

The Japanese believe that fresh food is the most nutritious food, and humans can get the best nutrition from raw and fresh food. Therefore the Japanese are very fond of raw foods, such as vegetables, meat, but especially fish. This shows that the sea’s blessing is an important foodstuff for *washoku*. The second component is dish. A dish produced from the cooking method by using abundant water resource such as steaming and boiling, cooking utensils like Japanese kitchen knife fitting to process various types of fish, and enhanced *dashi* broth to prepare delicious food especially with vegetables and seafood, are the pillar of *washoku* dish. Japanese cooking method can be divided into five basic cooking method. They are “nama” (cut), “niru” (grill), “yaku” (grilled), “musu” (steamed) and “ageru” (fried). Especially the “niru” (simmering) technique, which is soaking food ingredients into *dashi* (*Japanese broth*), adding heat which can make the food softer and tastier.

The third is nutrition, *washoku* is of relatively low calories and allows different nutritional intake in a balanced way. This also makes Japan one of the countries with the highest life expectancy of 80 years for men and 85 years for women. The hallmark of *washoku* is the high consumption of fish products, soybeans and the low consumption of animal fat and meat, in addition to the use of umami flavor which is useful for increasing the delicacy of food. *Washoku* is one of the aspects that support the longevity of Japanese society (Gabriel, et.al, 2018). The fourth is hospitality. Carefully welcoming guests is not under the mindset of merely serving guests. By tasting dishes and appreciating the decoration of curves and cutlery used, guests also appreciate the host, the concept of which is known as *omotenashi* (hospitality) (Aziz, Lusiana & Hartati, 2019:61). The spirit of hospitality is fueled by great attention to context and detail. Which we can see from how to use chopsticks, community behavior, food presentation that expresses the season and feeling, and appreciative attitude, idea of understanding manners and purpose of preparing dining place, and care for each other, are the spirit of of *washoku*.

## 1.2 Registering *Washoku* as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage

Attempt to include Japanese culinary culture to the UNESCO's list as Intangible Cultural Heritage List took place from 2011 to 2013. Nomination were made by the advisory board from various fields who have a deep knowledge of Japanese food, such as academic experts, chefs, food industry, and business professional that shape the different area of Japanese cuisine (MAFF, 2011). The effort of committee of Cultural Council on World and Intangible Cultural Heritage sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the consideration that led to the proposal for registration UNESCO were a range of political project (Omori, 2017:1). Kumakura (2015) said that the inclusion of *washoku* in the UNESCO list is an excellent opportunity for the Japanese nation to help themselves to be more proud of *washoku*, and to seriously develop a legacy for future generations. These actions not only protect the traditional culture, but also protect the environment of the country, rediscover, and strengthening the identity of the Japanese people.

*Washoku* is the fifth culinary Intangible Cultural Heritage registered by UNESCO after gastronomy art of France, Mediterranean Cuisine, Traditional dishes of Mexico, and traditional kashkak of Turkey. Until now, only French and Japanese cuisine cultures are fully acknowledged, while that of other countries is only included as traditional dish individually into UNESCO intangible cultural heritage. According to Nagashima (2014), one of the features of *washoku* making it worthy of acknowledgement as a whole culture of food developed through the Japanese spirit to respect the nature, in which all foodstuffs are managed carefully so that none is wasted in their processing technique and cooking process. In response to entry of *washoku* into UNESCO intangible cultural heritage, the MAFF prioritizes preserving and passing *washoku* to future generation, and also creating new value through new ways in utilizing food, both domestically and abroad, based on the international world's attention to Japanese food culture.

## 2 Methodology

This research used a qualitative descriptive method, that it made use of qualitative data and described it descriptively. This research method was used to analyze the community's social phenomena, in this case the *washoku* phenomena, as part of Japanese traditional food. The

data were collected through literature review with an integrative approach with four stages of research process. The first stage was arranging key terms or words related to the research problem. The research's keywords were Japanese traditional culture, *washoku*, government, and cultural preservation (in this research 13 books, 15 journals, and 15 articles were found). The second stage was review implementation, where after obtaining references related to the keywords, the appropriate references were sorted (10 books, 12 journals, and 8 articles). Table 1 presents an explanation of the inclusion criteria for the study. In the third stage, analysis, the chosen references were read carefully. The fourth stage was coding the content of the reviewed articles based on the outline of the papers by elaborating them in a sentence, and when they had been collected, the underlying causes were sought for from the respective article for discussion and conclusion (Snyder, 2019).

**Table 1.** Inclusion Criteria

<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Inclusion</b>
Period	Years 1990-2021
Subject	<i>washoku</i> , Japanese traditional food
Language	Indonesian Language; English
Type of Article	Reference book, research journal, online article
Content Theme	Japanese traditional culture, government's effort, cultural preservation.

More specifically, this research focuses on the role of government in this case MAFF, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), and the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry (METI). These three government institutions are the institutions most involved in the promotion of *washoku* throughout the world. Then there are other organizations such as the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) and organizations that specifically promote Japanese Restaurants Overseas (JRO). The main sources analyzed are the data contained in publicly accessible documents, such as the MAFF White Paper, MOFA's Blue Diplomatic, and reports from other agencies. The focus of the research will be on how the Japanese government's strategy is in preserving and promoting traditional culinary culture *washoku*. This study also uses secondary data from books, journals, articles, and internet sites.

### 3 Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Japanese Governments' Effort to Preserve *Washoku*

Inscription on the UNESCO list as Intangible Cultural Heritage is the big step that Japanese government has done in order to preserving *washoku*. The spirit that became the government's decision to explore culture more as part of the national interest was the slogan of *bunka gaiko* or cultural diplomacy (Sakamoto & Allen, 2011:109). The process was begun in 2003 when Prime Minister's Office established the Task Force on Content (*kontentsu senmon chousakai*, コンテンツ専門調査会), which in charge of managing media content, like music, movies, games and animation. In 2004, the Japanese Brand Working Group (*nihon brando waking gurupu*, 日本ブランド・ワーキンググループ JBWG) collaborate with Task Force conduct further communication on making national brands. The collaboration between JBWG and task force resulted in report titled Japan Brand Promotion Strategy (2005) that has three main goals and twelve recommendations for creating attractive Japan. Japanese culinary culture classified as the most important content, followed by creating variety trusted local

brand and establish Japanese fashion as a global brand. The report also highlights the need for a strategy to improve dietary education at home and promote *washoku* in foreign land (JWBG, 2005). In the same year, a Committee for the Promotion of Research on Food Culture (*Shoku bunka kenkyū kondankai*) was formed under the coordination of the Strategy Council for Intellectual Property. In its written report, the committee emphasized the importance of food as a medium for promoting a positive image of Japan overseas, as well as providing a report on the state of existence of Japanese restaurants in foreign land (Committee for the Promotion of Research on Food Culture, 2005). They also recommended several practical actions that the government should take, such as creating texts on standard Japanese food culture, providing cooking class for foreigners, increasing cooperation between farmers and restaurants, as well as introducing traditional Japanese food to foreign tourist. In the following year, Japanese culinary culture was chosen as one of the nations's assets that represent 'gross national cultural power of Japan (Sakamoto & Allen, 2011:109-110).

Furthermore, the promotion of Japanese culinary culture was carried out massively, in October 2006, MAFF and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) collaborated to create the first major campaign about Japanese food and eating culture with the theme "*Washoku-Try Japan's Good Food*". The purpose of this campaign is to introduce Japanese cuisine through special events held by Japanese diplomatic representatives overseas as well as to create consumers demand via media. The campaign is carried out approximately 20 times per year. The food products promoted are not only traditional Japanese foods such as *rice*, *dashi*, *miso*, and various seafood, but as well as other agricultural products such as tomatoes, cucumbers, apples and peaches.

In addition to the campaign, in the same year, MAFF carried out an activity that aimed not only to foster a rich Japanese culture, but also to 'make Japan a nation loved and respected by the world community' (IPSH, 2005:126) by establishing a system certification for Japanese restaurants located overseas. This kind of supervision and monitoring of the 'authenticity' of cuisine abroad is widely criticized and known as the 'sushi police' (Farrer, 2015:11). In response to this criticism, in 2007, MAFF then changed the concept of "certification" to "recommendation" and transferred the implementation of the project to a non-profit organization called the Organization to Promote Japanese Restaurant Overseas (JRO). In August 2004, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs established the Department of Public Diplomacy, in which there are two divisions, namely, the Public Diplomacy Planning Division and the Cultural Affairs Division. This department has the objectives of collaborating public relations and cultural exchange more systematically (MOFA, Diplomatic Bluebook 2005:207), proclaiming the 'Japan Brand' as one of the main pillars of Japan's economic diplomacy in 2011 (Bergeijk et al., 3012:61), and establishing *washoku* as a medium to gain understanding and trust in Japan (MOFA, 2014:38). To share Japan's rich and varied appeal, MOFA organized big cultural events in big cities in the world, including Washington D.C (US), and Beijing (China), introduced *washoku*, Japanese food culture, to the world, and introduced broadcast content using Japanese language, such as animation and television drama in developing countries (MOFA, Diplomatic Bluebook 2016:281).

In 2009, the Intellectual Property Strategy Headquarters (IPSH) and Japan Brand Liaison Group (JBLG) officially included Japanese food culture along with other cultural industries as part of the "soft power industry". Japanese food promotion efforts are also supported by the METI and MOFA. In its 2020 report entitled "Towards National Development through the Cultural Industry," METI stated the importance of the cultural industry as part of the nation's "soft power". The report reveals the importance of exporting agricultural products, processed foods, and also food utensils as part of the problem of Japanese cuisine, so that promotion is



not only related to food but also brings with its elements of "authentic" Japanese culture (Farrer, 2015:11). Recently, in April 2017, the Center for Foreign Promotion of Japanese Products was formed within the JETRO, whose activities are to collect all information related to foreign markets, promote Japanese food and provide assistance to business people.

### 3.2 Minister Award for Japanese Food Promotion Abroad

In carrying out its mission to promote *washoku*, MAAF create official website (<https://tasteofjapan.maff.go.jp>) provide information related to Japanese cuisine, including Japanese restaurant around the world, recipes and grocery stores that handle Japanese ingredients, supporter store restaurant and Japanese food retail store. MAFF carries out several major activities for promoting *washoku*, first Minister's award for overseas promotion of Japanese food; second Certification of Japanese Food and Ingredient Supporter Stores Overseas, third Certification of Cooking Skills for Japanese Cuisine in Foreign Countries, dan forth are Special Goodwill Ambassador and Goodwill Ambassador to Spread Japanese Cuisine (<https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/market/index.html>).

First activities are The Minister Award for Japanese Food Promotion Abroad, is given to people who had given extraordinary contribution to introducing and spreading Japanese cuisine, Japanese food and Japanese agricultural and fishery products abroad. The objective was to introduce and expand export of Japanese agricultural, fishery and cuisine products. Foreign and Japanese citizens living abroad meet the requirement for this award. Both foreign nationals and Japanese nationals residing overseas are eligible. This award has been given to the person who made outstanding contribution from 2006. Those granted by the 14<sup>th</sup> Minister Award are presented in figure 2 below:



**Fig. 2.** Hideki Kishimoto (left), Tetsuya Wakuda (middle), and Kensei Tomita (right)  
(Source: <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/export/award/index.html> )

Hideki Kishimoto was given award for his service of introducing Japanese cuisine to Russia. He was one of renowned Japanese cooks in Russia and had worked for restaurant Ichibanboshi in Moscow for over 16 years. In the process of introducing Japanese cuisine in Russia, Kishimoto once organized a demonstration and event of tasting *sushi* and other Japanese cuisines at the Russian Embassy and in other local cities. Kishimoto proactively created the opportunity to promote Japanese cuisine and food culture via media, cooking lesson, and direct sale. In 2019, Kishimoto was appointed as the Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador in Japanese cuisine promotion and development in Russia.

The next, Tetsuya Wakuda obtained award for his service of introducing Japanese cuisine in Australia and Singapore. Wakuda's restaurants, Tetsuya's (Australia) and Waku Ghin (Singapore), were of high quality and received two stars in Michelin Guide and were listed in the World's 50 Best Restaurants, and greatly contributed to improving Japanese cuisine's

reputation in the two countries. Wakuda actively led the culinary world as one of the "Greatest three cooks in the world" chosen by French magazine *Courrier international* and as one of the "100 Most Influential People" chosen by *Time Magazine* in US. In 2005, he was the first Japanese person awarded the Order of Australia (OAM). In 2019, Wakuda was appointed as the Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador and was the Japanese cook who led the international culinary world.

Kensei Tomita, meanwhile, was given award for his service of introducing Japanese cuisine in Nepal. Engaged in textile export, Tomita moved to Nepal and opened a Japanese restaurant, *Kotetsu*, in 2006, upon seeing the high potential of and demand for Japanese food in Kathmandu. This restaurant was famous not only among Japanese people living in Nepal, but also among other foreigners, Nepal, and tourists, and its customers had spread to the entire Southwest Asia. He also invited cook from Japan to train Nepali cooks, and had sent Nepali cooks to Japan for apprenticeship. He had contributed in promoting Japanese cuisine and its culinary culture in Nepal and developed human resource in Japanese food sector. Tomita was appointed as the Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador in 2019 and kept improving local workers' culinary techniques and service quality. With the example like Nepali cooks who were trained by Tomita to open Japanese restaurants in London and other cooks sent to Japan for apprenticeship and participate in the "Sushi World Cup" organized by the Japanese Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery, he was the avant garde of Japanese cuisine sector and culinary culture in Nepal. As for the second activities are Certification program of Japanese Food and Ingredient Supporter Stores Overseas, this program was designated to certify overseas restaurant, bars and retailers which carry Japanese food and beverages as official "Japanese Food Supporters" in order to further promote Japanese agricultural, forestry, fishery and food products around the world. As of November 30, 2021, this program has certified 7,907 stores and restaurants (JETRO, 2021).

Third activities are Certification of cooking skills for Japanese cuisine in foreign countries, is an independent certification system for overseas Japanese chefs who have reached a certain level of knowledge of Japanese cuisine and cooking skills, offered by a private group following the Guidelines for Certification of cooking skills for Japanese cuisine in Foreign Countries as defined by MAFF. There are three types of certificates given, namely Gold certificates which is given to chefs with more than two years of experience, Silver certificates is given to chefs who have successfully passed Japanese cooking school or those who have more than one year of experience, and Bronze certificates is given to chefs who have studied short-term Japanese cooking. As of September 30, 2021, a total of 1763 people have received certificates, with 18 winning gold, 676 silver and 1069 bronze. By fostering foreign chefs with appropriate knowledge and skills regarding Japanese cuisine, the brand power of Japanese cuisine has been strengthened, and the use of Japanese agricultural, forestry and fishery product will be expand. The fourth main activity of the MAFF to promote *washoku* is "Japanese Cuisine Special Goodwill Ambassador" which is said to be suitable as a spokesperson to effectively convey the charm of Japanese food and dietary culture in Japan and overseas, and a "Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador" who is a professional expert in Japanese cuisine, capable of providing appropriate advice on how to spread Japanese cuisine and culture. They are 56 person in Japan as of December 2019, and 86 person in overseas as of Januari 2021 were appointed as "Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassadors. <https://www.maff.go.jp/e/policies/market/attach/pdf/ambassa-7.pdf>.

### 3.3 *Washoku* World of Challenge

Beside the four major activities previously described, based on the increasing popularity and interest of the world community in *washoku* since it was declared as part of the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage, MAFF then decided to hold an annual event with the theme “*Washoku* World of Challenge” (WWC) which has been held since 2013. WWC is a Japanese cooking contest sponsored by the MAFF for foreign chef who are passionate in method of cooking and want to improve their technical expertise and knowledge of Japanese culinary culture. The purpose of this competition is to train foreign chef who are interested in Japanese cooking techniques so that they can open their own restaurant and adapt the flavor of Japan to local consumer’s taste.

The inspiration for this contest was obtained from the development of French cuisine. French cuisine was originally eaten in Japan on special occasions and place. So Japanese people go to restaurants run by French chefs in luxury hotels and are willing to pay high prices to be able to taste this special cuisine. Gradually, Japanese chefs then traveled to France to study the art of French gastronomy. When they return to Japan, they adapt their cooking techniques to Japanese tastes and then open places to eat that are more accessible to many people, such as restaurants, canteens or in department stores. As a result, Japanese people become more familiar with French culinary culture (WWC, 2013). The WWC seeks to do the same. Making the world community more familiar with traditional Japanese culinary culture. The competition allows selected chefs to practice the techniques used in traditional Japanese cuisine. The first WWC in 2013 received as many as 106 finalists who came from 21 different countries around the world. Each year has a different theme, *umami* in 2015, *ichiju sansai* in 2016, and the theme that the WCC will carry in 2021 is “*Goho*-Five methods” or five ways to cook Japanese dishes.

Furthermore, in the year of the 7th WWC event in 2020, the theme carried was '*shokkan*, texture and taste in the mouth'. Yoshihiro Murata, a main judge who is also a chef at Kikunoi restaurant and president of the Japan Culinary Academy, said that in the Japanese language there are more than 400 words that describe food textures, including *mocchi* (springy) and *paripari* (crispy). The abundant vocabulary is a reflection of the attention that the Japanese people give to their traditional culinary culture. During WCC 7th contest, regional tournament tournaments were held in five cities around the world (Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Bangkok, and Osaka) and the final tournament with five finalists was held in Tokyo, Japan. In 2020 due to Covid-19 pandemic held online for the first time, planned to be back offline in 2021.

### 3.4 *Washoku no Hi*

One of the government's efforts to preserve *washoku* in the younger generation is to set November 24 as *Washoku* Day.

日本人の伝統的な食文化について見直し、和食文化の保護・継承の大切さについて考える日。... 日本の食文化にとって大変重要な時期である秋の日に、毎年、一人ひとりが「和食」文化について認識を深め、和食文化の大切さを再認識するきっかけの日となっていくよう願いをこめて、11月24日を“いい日本食”「和食」の日と制定しました。(和食文化国民会議, <https://washokujapan.jp/1124washoku/>)

*Nihonjin no dentōtekina shoku bunka ni tsuite minaoshi, washoku bunka no hogo keishō no okisa ni ōtsuite kangaeru no hi. ... Nihon no shoku bunka ni totte taihen juyōna jiki de aru aki no hi ni, maitoshi, hitori hitori ga 'washoku' bunka ni tsuite ninshiki o fukame, washoku bunka no taisetsu-sa o sai ninshiki suru kikkake no hi to natte iku yō negai o komete, 11 gatsu 24 nichi o 'ii nihon shoku' 'washoku' no hi to seitei shimashita.*

Based on the writing taken from [washokujapan.jp](http://washokujapan.jp), it can be said that the purpose of establishing Washoku Day or Good Food Day is to strengthen public awareness of the importance of efforts to protect eating culture. Take a day to reread and provide an opportunity to understand the importance of food and eating culture for Japanese society. The days in November are one of the months in Autumn that have a very important meaning for Japanese eating culture. Autumn days are a very important time in Japanese dining culture. It is hoped that by commemorating every year, everyone will deepen awareness and reaffirm the importance of 'Washoku', November 24 is designated as *Washoku Day* and Good Food Day.

UNESCO's recognition of *washoku*, as part of the Word List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, requires a commitment from the government to make concrete efforts to preserve *washoku*. The establishment of '*Washoku no Hi*' and the establishment of the National Assembly for the Preservation and Continuation of the Washoku Culture in July 2013 is one of the efforts to fulfill this commitment to UNESCO. Other measures are as follows: (1) provision of local dishes in each school at lunchtime and at local community event, (2) implementation of dietary education activities through parent-child classes, (3) holding a symposium on Japanese eating culture. These activities are not only relates to the preservatiob of the 'washoku' culture, but are also an inseparable part of invironmental protection and the rediscovery of Japanese identity through the culture of eating (Kumakura, 2015:5).

#### **4 Conclusion**

Japan's efforts to protect traditional culture are characteristic of Japan. Known as a highly technological country, it retains the traditional culture that has been passed down from generation to generation for centuries. It's the result of a very long process. Japan has been guarding and protecting its traditional culture as an ancestral heritage for over 150 years. Traditional Japanese food culture *washoku* since being listed as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, has provided new insights into Japanese food culture. The world not only familiar with *sushi*, *sashimi* and Kobe beef steak, but the term *washoku* has become associated with the traditional concept of nutrition in Japanese culinary culture. The popularity of "washoku" can be seen in more and more Japanese restaurants around the world. Japanese government's efforts to maintain the traditional culinary culture of *washoku* eventually become a Japanese cultural brand that will not only be known worldwide, but will also create a positive image for the country. The effort of promoting *washoku* is a collaboration between several government agencies, such as MAFF, MOFA, and METI. These three government collaboration effort to register *washoku* as part of UNESCO is a real effort to preserve traditional Japanese culture. Specifically, MAFF has a series or commitment to the determination, the government cooperates between ministries to carry out several activities such as: Minister's award for overseas promotion of Japanese food; Certification of Japanese Food and Ingredient Supporter Stores Overseas, Certification of Cooking Skills for Japanese Cuisine in Foreign Countries, and Special Goodwill Ambassador and Goodwill Ambassador to Spread Japanese Cuisine. In addition to these activities, the "*Washoku* world of challenge" event was also set and set

November 24 as *Washoku* day or *Washoku no Hi*. These efforts are aimed at not only reviving Japanese traditional culinary culture that is felt to be abandoned by the younger generation, but is also expected to be an aspect of encouraging national and international tourism.

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