

A very good afternoon,

It's my greatest pleasure to warmly welcome you all to the today's Japanese sweets, "Wagashi", workshop. First, I have to say, the word "Wagashi" is composed of "Wa" and "gashi". "Wa" means "Japanese" and "gashi" means "sweets". You may know Japanese beef, called as "Wagyu". "Wa" means "Japanese" and "gyu" is "beef". So, "Wa-gyu" means "Japanese beef", and "Wa-gashi" means "Japanese sweets". For, example, 和楽、和式、和室、和食, all are Japanese ones. So, you learn today "Wa" means Japanese.

Japanese cuisine, Washoku, is the world intangible cultural heritage, awarded by the UNESCO in 2013. Since then, a Japanese word, Wagashi as well as Washoku have drastically gained their popularities.

OK, let's start the workshop now.

At the outset, I want to emphasize the "Wagashi" must be the typical example to tell what the Japanese culture is. Today, you'll enjoy watching, tasting and creating a core essence of the Japanese culture, Wagashi.

So, what is the core concept of the Wagashi? As the highest aesthetic value of Japanese culture, it has a fundamental sense of refined simplicity in rejection of any gaudiness and any lavishness. It seeks the concept of elegant simplicity. Many Japanese sweets are basically made of only two colors with their gradation, and shaped of simply just a round. But, it outstandingly expresses a concept "elegance".

Before going into the details, I would like to introduce you the variety of Wagashi. There are basically two categories of Wagashi, in light of cooking style as well as moisture contents. First one is called as “Namagashi”, which means freshly moist. As its name said, the moisture content is above 40%. The second one is named as “Higashi”, meaning the dried. Interestingly, a fundamental cooking method of both has never changed last hundreds years. Today, I would like to penetrate more about the traditional Namagashi.

Namagashi’s most uniqueness is, as I said, the higher moisture contents, that’s why it has very fresh taste, while it’s so delicate and perishable. You have to eat within a day or two. Also, as is used for of traditional tea ceremony, this is Japanese hearts and spirits.

Wagashi itself typically represents Japanese food culture. Every Wagashi is beautifully designed in detail using natural motif of flower or fruit to appreciate the four seasons.

The next remarkable characteristic of Wagashi is an art of excellence. Handcrafted through the expert skills, Wagashi is as beautiful as we are hesitate to eat. The exquisiteness is beyond our thoughts. It shows a flower motif more beautiful than natural flower. You can even see a little animal motif. Amazing, isn't it. This is a symbolic feature of how people feels warm hospitality as Japan is always proud of.

Now, I want to show you the ingredients of Wagashi. Basically, there are only three ingredients; (1) Bean paste, (2) mochi made of rice, and (3)

Japanese sugar. Additionally, as an optional item, it may include wheat flour, egg yolk, sesame and chestnuts paste, jelly made of seaweeds or grass roots, or fruit jelly to make a small accent of color, flavor and taste. But, again, basic ingredients are only three items, and master confectioners make it their imagination, skill and experience. One of the significant point is no use of animal ingredients. Only egg yolk might be used in a few case as daily.

That's why Wagahi is so healthy, even it is categorized in sweets. Needless to say, no fat is used, and less sugar is contained.

Now, I should like to show you the miracle of craftsmanship of Wagashi. Just, enjoy it.

*(Video, 42 seconds)*

Amazing skills, they have.

Today, you will experience the demonstration and actual cooking of "Daifuku". Daifuku means a big fortune in Japanese. This is a basic form of Namagashi, which has every core essence of Japanese sweets, respecting nature, extending hospitality, healthy nature, craftsmanship. You will experience making a traditional Daifuku.

This is how to cook "Daifuku". Later, you'll do it. So, carefully watch it.

*(Video, 58 seconds)*

Now, it's your turn. Please enjoy the Japanese aesthetic, elegant simplicity, by you hand, by your tongue, by your every sense.