

Lee-Sean Huang's Writing Samples

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Classic Japanese Inns & Country Getaways by Margaret Price

For Margaret Price, author of *Classic Japanese Inns & Country Getaways*, traditional Japanese inns (ryokan), are not just a place to stay while traveling the country, but a destination in their own right. The Japanese have a proud inn keeping tradition that dates back to the Edo period. Staying at a traditional Japanese inn is like immersing oneself into a facet of traditional Japanese culture that foreign travelers seldom see. Entering a classic Japanese inn is like stepping into a an oasis of tranquility, soothed by the soft light seeping through paper shoji screens and the elegant minimalism of tatami-floored rooms. The ryokan experience is worlds away from the staying in sterile, concrete block hotels with flickering fluorescent lighting that mar the landscape of modern Japan.

Almost all ryokan include dinner and breakfast along with the price of lodging, and many of the inns featured in the book are notable for the quality of their cuisine as well as their charming atmosphere and refined service. They are the perfect getaway destination for intrepid travelers searching for something off the beaten path, residents in Japan looking for a retreat from the hustle and bustle of urban life, and for adventurous epicureans in quest of local delicacies in lush surroundings.

Classic Japanese Inns & Country Getaways contains a brief history of Japanese inns, a short introduction to inn architecture and gardens, and a good guide to inn etiquette and protocol. The book profiles inns across Japan in both urban and rural settings, and indicates whether or not English is spoken at a given inn. A handy list of Japanese phrases is included, but it might be easier to solicit the help of a Japanese-speaking friend when making reservations. All in all, *Classic Japanese Inns & Country Getaways* is a solid primer to the enchanting world of traditional Japanese inns.

Lee-Sean Huang

Washoku: Recipes From The Japanese Home Kitchen
by Elizabeth Andoh
Photography by Leigh Beisch

Longtime expatriate in Japan and graduate of the prestigious Yanagihara School of Classical Japanese Cuisine in Tokyo, author Elizabeth Andoh is considered one of the top experts on Japanese food culture in the English-speaking world. Nearly 40 years ago, Andoh left America for Japan, where she was first introduced to Japanese home cooking or washoku, which literally translates as the "harmony of food," by the matriarch of her host family who would later become her mother-in-law.

In *Washoku*, Andoh presents the philosophy and practice of traditional Japanese home cooking in a clear and concise manner. First, she introduces readers to the five principles, which form the foundation behind washoku. These five principles, which are further subdivided into groups of five, are comprised of the five colors (balance and variety of colors and food presentation), five tastes (balance of flavors), five ways (variety of cooking methods), five senses (importance of sight, sound, and touch in addition to taste), and five outlooks (rules concerning the partaking of food based on Buddhist teachings).

After the philosophical introduction, Andoh takes readers through a detailed and exhaustive overview of Japanese ingredients and cooking techniques and offers up more than 140 practical and gimmick-free recipes, which have been adapted to modern conveniences and American kitchens but yet still capture the essential spirit of balance and harmony in Japanese cuisine. Andoh incorporates the important concept of seasonality into some of her recipes by providing seasonal variations, which take into account the availability and freshness of ingredients. Andoh also demonstrates the frugality of the washoku kitchen by teaching ways to reuse and refashion leftover ingredients and sauces into new dishes.

While Leigh Bleisch's photographs of raw ingredients and some of the finished dishes beautifully capture the understated elegance of Japanese home cooking, the addition of more photographs of finished dishes and of the more complicated techniques would greatly benefit more visual learners and less experienced cooks, especially because presentation is such an important aspect of Japanese cuisine. Nevertheless, Andoh's straightforward explanations and rich commentary, which feature personal anecdotes and historical background, make *Washoku* a welcome addition to the collection of a serious home cook or Japanese food aficionado.

Lee-Sean Huang

Loving the Machine
Kodansha International
by Timothy N. Hornyak

Did you know that Japan produces half of the world's industrial robots and is the most automated society on earth? Or that robotic baby seals have been used in research as a way of promoting the mental wellbeing of Japan's rapidly increasing elderly population? Robots certainly have a special place in the hearts, minds and daily lives of the Japanese. They hold a prominent place in the pages of manga read by millions as well as share an honored position alongside humans in factories and workshops across the archipelago.

In *Loving The Machine: The Art and Science of Japanese Robots*, Timothy N. Hornyak explores the history and development of robots in Japanese culture: from the proto-robotic clockwork automatons of the Edo Period to Aibo, Sony's robot pet dog, to Mighty Atom, the popular superpowered robot boy manga character. The book traces the history of robot making in Japan as well as surveys the depiction of robots in art and media. Hornyak also compares and contrasts the attitudes towards robots in Japan and the West and explains the massive popularity of robots in Japan as, "Simply because they are simultaneously science and fiction." The field of robotics is indeed where science and imagination, the present and the future intersect.

The full-color photographs throughout the book are a perfect complement to the text. A perfect addition to the home libraries of science geeks, robot otaku, fans of Japanese popular culture, or anybody interested in cutting-edge technology.

Lee-Sean Huang

The Japanese Kitchen: 250 Recipes In A Traditional Spirit
by Hiroko Shimbo; foreword by Ming Tsai

In the foreword to *The Japanese Kitchen*, celebrity East-meets-West chef Ming Tsai praises Hiroko Shimbo's "belief in traditionalism and purity of cuisine," but also recognizes that Japanese gastronomy is a living art that does not exist in an isolated time capsule. The Japanese-born and New York-based Shimbo is well aware of her North American audience. She incorporates "international" ingredients like olive oil into some of her recipes and gives US-based sources for harder to find Japanese ingredients. Shimbo succeeds in transmitting the "traditional spirit" of Japanese gastronomy in an elegant and accessible way to contemporary Western readers.

The Japanese Kitchen contains over 250 recipes as well as discussions about Japanese food etiquette, ingredients, and techniques in a paperback tome the thickness of a phonebook. While there are plenty of helpful black and white illustrations of Japanese ingredients and techniques, there are no photographs to accompany the recipes. However, this is more than compensated for by Shimbo's writing style, which at the same time informative with interesting cultural and historical background to various recipes and warm and personal as she shares anecdotes and memories of certain dishes.

Equally interesting are Shimbo's coverage of the basics from making sushi rice and nabe one-pot stews to more contemporary innovations such as "Soybean Hummus," "Abura-Age (fried tofu skin) Pizza," and "Japanese-Style Braised Spareribs" (Spareribs are not a traditional Japanese ingredient). Despite this branching out from purist notions of Japanese cuisine, Shimbo still gives the reader a solid foundation in traditional methods and techniques and manages to avoid the pitfalls and excesses of faddish fusion.

In addition to the admiration of Ming Tsai, Shimbo has also attracted the esteem of her colleagues in the culinary establishment. The book is a finalist in the IACP (International Association of Culinary Professionals) Cookbook Awards. Chef and author, Mark Miller declares, "Hiroko Shimbo's The Japanese Kitchen is to Japanese cuisine what Julia Child's Mastering the Art of French Cooking is to French cuisine." Indeed, The Japanese Kitchen has something to offer to professional cooks and amateur enthusiasts alike as a definitive and encyclopedic oeuvre of Japanese gastronomy.

Lee-Sean Huang

Nobu: The Cookbook
by Nobuyuki Matsuhisa
Preface by Robert De Niro
Foreword by Martha Stewart
Photographs by Fumihiko Watanabe

With restaurants on three continents and a loyal, star-studded clientele, Nobu Matsuhisa is perhaps the most internationally renowned Japanese chef/restaurateur of our times. Nobu: The Cookbook is his first book in any language and is more than just a cookbook; it is a monument to his culinary skill and ingenuity. It also traces his life story, from his apprenticeship at a sushi restaurant in Tokyo to his time running Japanese restaurants in South America, the tragic loss of his Alaska restaurant in a fire, and then his meteoric rise to become an innovator in contemporary Japanese cuisine and chef to the stars. Like the décor of Nobu's restaurants and the presentation of his food, the book is

impeccably presented, from the simple clean lines of the layout to the sumptuous full-color photographs.

Nobu's recipes reflect the influence of his time in South America with the use of ingredients such as cilantro (fresh coriander) and chili peppers and in his interpretation of Peruvian classics such as tiradito (a kind of Peruvian seafood carpaccio) and ceviche. His time in Los Angeles and New York has also added further cosmopolitan influences to his cooking, but at the same time, he has succeeded in maintaining the simplicity and restraint of traditional Japanese cuisine. The recipes are peppered with background information about exotic ingredients and anecdotes about what inspired Nobu's culinary creations. There is also a section on sake-based cocktails and another that reveals the secrets behind Nobu's signature sauces.

Ingredients and preparations techniques are thoroughly and clearly explained. Nobu even explains how to eviscerate an eel and how to cut the beak off of a live octopus and how to de-slime and tenderize it; although very few readers would actually get the opportunity to try these techniques for themselves. Nobu uses many expensive and hard-to-find ingredients as well as difficult knife techniques in many dishes, making it difficult to try them out at home. However, Nobu classics like the New Style Sashimi (a carpaccio-like presentation that is partially cooked with hot oil) and Seafood Ceviche, Nobu Style are actually quite simple to make and readily accessible to the home cook.

Some may find all of the celebrity name-dropping in the book a bit excessive, while other may object to the liberal use of controversial ingredients such as foie gras, caviar and the nearly endangered Chilean sea bass. However, for anyone who has experienced Nobu's food firsthand, it is difficult to deny his gastronomic genius and Nobu: The Cookbook is an excellent guide for understanding the chef and his culinary vision.

Lee-Sean Huang

Harvard Crimson Letter to the Editor

<http://www.thecrimson.com/article.aspx?ref=180918>

Ex-Gay Movement Preys on Vulnerable Students

Letter to the editor

Published On Monday, April 08, 2002

By LEE-SEAN HUANG

While we appreciate the greater attention that The Crimson has given the queer community and the Bisexual Gay Lesbian Transgender Supporters Alliance (BGLTSA) this semester. However, the piece by Regina Griggs (Op-Ed, "Accepting Ex-Gays," Feb. 26) buttresses the cruel onslaught of intolerance.

Griggs attacks the gay community for its "intolerance against ex-gays," but we suggest that "ex-gay ministry" is intolerant at its roots. For decades, its advocates have attempted to change sexual orientation with shock therapy and brain-washing sessions. Coupling ex-gay outreach with religious indoctrination preys on students who are unsure of themselves socially and spiritually. Harvard is supposed to model tolerance, not self-rejection.

We object to Griggs' derogatory reference to "that [gay] lifestyle" as if it were one, well-defined way of life. In reality, queer individuals have as many varied lifestyles as others. Nor is queerness a disease warranting "reparative therapy." We do not need regeneration, fixing or repair.

Evidence shows that gays can almost never change their sexual orientation. We cannot create unnatural sexual attraction any more than straight individuals can feel homosexual attraction. As young bisexual, gay, lesbian, and transgender individuals, we have already heard too much about needing to change ourselves. Griggs' insistence that homosexuality should be "overcome" hurts us and angers us. Of course we encourage tolerance for individuals who identify themselves as ex-gay, too. But we still know that being gay is okay.

Lee-Sean Huang '02-'03