

The Meanings of Cookery: Everyday Life and Aesthetics in Meiji Japan

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The paper will be presented at '*The Meanings of Cookery: Everyday Life and Aesthetics in Meiji Japan*', International Conference of Asian Food Study, Zhejiang Gongshang University, Shaoxing, China. October 2013 and appeared in The Proceedings of 2013 Shaoxing Asian Food Study Conference, 'Health and Civilization' 2014, pp 467- 480.

Abstract

The aim of the paper is to explore the emergence of new women's domestic narratives of cooking and modern family life which accompanied the growth of consumer culture in Japan. Japanese haute cuisine had been largely produced by professional chefs who via the patriarchal apprentice system, but began to be democratized in the late nineteenth century. The first Japanese cooking school started in 1882 attracted the higher class women. Cooking began to be seen as a prestigious form of knowledge and status symbol. Around 1887, the influential Meiji reformers and other intellectuals presented the modern family as a sanctuary based on greater intimacy between the couple with the emphasis on the home (*houmu* or *Katei*) as opposed to the patriarchal conservative family system (*ie*). Women became seen as the domestic managers of modern family life with the key duty to produce and maintain healthy citizens, which fitted into the national project. In this sense, cooking became designated as scientific and rational, a part of women's domestic practice. With the growth of urbanization and industrialization in the 1900s, the new middle class modern family became presented as the ideal consumption unit. At the same time, the expanding commercial women's magazines started to provide, not only new recipes, but also new knowledge about aspects of food culture and lifestyle. Cooking became commercialised and popularized as systematised domestic knowledge as well as being seen as a form of home entertainment as part of a new consumer lifestyle. I will explore the relationship between wider social and cultural change and the configuration of cooking discourses in order to illustrate how cooking as a domestic banal practice and set of experiences was re- and de-contextualised in the wake of the Meiji Restoration, and the development of consumer culture and the emergence of domestic and vernacular aesthetic sensitivities late 19th century Japan.

Key words

Cookery, Aestheticization of Everyday life, Family, Woman, Japan, Modernity

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1. Introduction

In my earlier research on cookery, I examined ‘Cookery and the New Domesticity in Meiji Japan’ which concentrated on the linkage between cookery as domestic work and the (re)formation of femininity in modern Japan. In considering the topic, it is apparent that there are always many cultural meanings and discourses surrounding ‘cookery’ in all human societies and it could be useful to grasp the potential of cookery to address not just only from the perspective of gender identity, but also the wider historical social dynamics too.

There is a good deal of research on cookery, food, and taste which relate to the body and subjectivity (Lupton, 1996), domesticity and family identity (Kaufmann, 2005 translation in 2010), eating habitus and social class (Bourdieu, 1979=1984), taste culture (Korsmeyer, 2005), food and philosophy (Allohoff and Monroe, 2007; Kaplan 2012), consumption, food and taste (1997 Warde), cultural politics of food and eating (ed. Watson and Caldwell, 2005), sociology of food (ed. Germov and William, 2005; ed. Beardsworth and Keil, 1997), social history and manners (Mennell, 1985), food and sex (sexualities) (Probyn, 2000).

However, there is little research that focuses on the cookery discourse in modernity in relation to aesthetics at the turn of the twentieth century in Japan.

In this paper, I will attempt to examine the socio-cultural background of the reform of domesticity as part of the process of re-contextualization/diversification of discourses about cookery.

I will illustrate how cookery as a domestic banal practice and a set of experiences was re- and de-contextualised after the Meiji Restoration in the wake of modernity, and the development of consumer culture and the emergence of domestic and vernacular aesthetic sensitivities in early 20th century Japan. By doing so, we can focus on the emergence of interest in cookery from cultural specialists and intermediaries and discuss its relation to luxury, style and aestheticization.

2. Cookery and New Lifestyle

2.1 The first Cookery School in Japan

It was naturally understood that cookery was locked in the domestic sphere, as everyday work had to be carried out by women who learnt how to cook from their mother or elder relatives from generation to generation. Although there was little chance for women to learn cookery outside the home, the first cookery school in Japan was established in 1882 by Minekichi Akahori, a professional Japanese chef¹. (Shindo 2007:202). In his opening statement on founding the school, he stressed the importance of understanding the principle of equality of educational opportunities for not only men but also women. For women, in particular, knowledgeable cookery was seen as a way to contribute to society. Learning cookery was classed the same as learning other studies/subjects for women's education and women's self-development.

Akahori attempted to deliver professional skills and knowledge of Japanese exclusive cuisine (haute cuisine) to 'ordinary' women, who were largely in the upper and the new middle class. The great demand for cookery schools provided him with the opportunities to open another

¹ One of the contemporary leading cookery schools, *Hattori* cookery school started in 1885 just three years after Akahori started his school.

seven schools within ten years.

There were a number of social sociological reasons for increasing the popularity of cookery schools. Although cookery was regarded as a banal everyday practice, it became more formalised and taken into a distinctive activity which redefined the meanings of cookery for certain social groups at the turn of the twentieth century in Japan. In fact, cookery became an important practice, a set of disposition and bodily practices which was integrated into people's habitus and everyday life, which became seen as an indicator of social status.

2.2 The Meiji Restoration

Before the Meiji Restoration (1868), under the *Tokugawa shogunate*, under the *bakuhatsu* system², social mobility was strictly prohibited and contact with foreigners was restricted. However, internal peace was maintained for over two hundred years and therefore Japan's social structure was relatively stable. The samurai class as the dominant class was the top in the ranking of social stratus. The following class was the farmers, then the artisans and finally the merchants. (Although the farmers were in the second ranking, the people above them usually exploited them.) In fact though in the bottom rank, merchants had some economic power over the rulers and samurai by being financiers for the lords (*daimyo*) as well as merchandisers for supplying of products.

Due to the force of diplomatic demands for increased trade with the West since the mid-nineteenth century, Japan was faced with having to open the door to the outside world, the

² The political system which was organized along 'quasi-feudal' lines, with ties of vassalage linking every man to his lord and, ultimately, to the shogun.

west, and transform its entire social system. The so-called Meiji Restoration (1868) which also brought the end of *bakuhau system* and the establishment of the new government. The Meiji government abolished hereditary distinctions social status and allowed people to change their occupations. As a result, the samurai class virtually disappeared. The Meiji Restoration involved the transformation not only of Japanese society, but also Japanese traditional customs and the conventional value of life. The reformers who were intellectuals and politicians encouraged people to develop new lifestyles along with more pragmatic, scientific and rational knowledge.

2.3 Cultural Declassification and Cookery as status symbol

The abolition of the *bakuhau* social strata brought a form of cultural declassification (DiMaggio 1987). Paradoxically, the dissolution of the samurai class led to the popularization of the samurai class's lifestyle. Some wealthy merchants in particular sought out the enjoyment of higher standard lifestyles, especially those which used to be seen as the exclusive property of the samurai class. When it comes to the elements of the composite lifestyle, cookery was one of the most banal, but necessary ones. Women were responsible for domestic works and were most likely to cook for the family. Most women still lived within the constraints of domestic life, with cookery, one of the key everyday practices necessary for articulating their own roles to maintain their family's lives. Cookery was, therefore, an important symbolic exercise for constructing their own identities as well as an important opportunity to display their 'refined taste'. Hence, cookery became a key performative opportunity to show their new 'upper' class like-taste.

In fact that the students of the Akahori cookery school were not only wives and daughters of former samurai families, but also those of wealthy merchant families. These were the rising

class of women. For them, the cookery school was a significant information source about the upper class. With the growing 'new' middle class of wealthy merchants, cookery became more and more an important symbol of their social status. Hence, cookery became a socio-cultural symbol to legitimate their new higher social status.

Before the Meiji Restoration, it was common for wives of samurai families to have a cook or maid who had the responsibility to prepare food for both guests and family members. After the Meiji Restoration, the former samurai class was politically and economically weakened through the socio-political changes. To addition, a shortage of maids occurred with increasing urbanization and industrialization as girls' aspiration levels became higher and their job options wider – (see Shimizu, 2004:80). Given these conditions, former samurai wives had to start to learn how to cook for guests and family members. Hence, cookery could be regarded as a necessary new form of domestic activity for the former samurai class women. At the same time, women began to become aware that they have a great opportunity of self-realization through cookery.

2.4 The domestication of *haute cuisine*

Due to the sinking former-samurai class, some of the professional cooks who were formally employed in the kitchens of samurai family lost their jobs and were obliged to explore options for new businesses, such as opening restaurants or cookery schools, like *Akahori*. The emergence of cookery school fits in closely with these changes in the social position of cookery³. Hence, the cookery school became in demand for a particular social class, the

³ Interestingly, in France, after the French Revolution, there is a similar story. 'Male chefs of high *professional* reputation were to play a prominent part in the movement to improve domestic cookery' (Mennell, 1996:205, author's emphasis). They produced cookery books, which were directed at upper- and middle-class households. These books were 'suitable for use in the domestic as well as the professional kitchen'. (Mennell, 1995:205).

former-samurai class. In this process, the knowledge and skills of cookery were commodified and commercialized.

In this sense, it is arguable that the Meiji Restoration influenced the reformation of domestic work and amounted to a culinary turning point. Cookery was redefined from banal domestic work to an important everyday performance for women. Furthermore, the advent of cookery school allowed professional cookery into the domestic sphere. This process can also be linked to the domestication of *haute cuisine*. Yet, *haute cuisine* was still exclusively confined to the upper class.

3. Cookery and the ‘Modern Family’

3.1. Cookery and women’s socio-cultural expectations

Cookery was redefined as an important part of women’s domestic work as well as a symbol of social status in the changes in social mobility accompanying Japanese modernity. The redefinition of cookery was also closely related to new ideas about family life. The doctrine of the Japanese ‘modern’ family (*kindai kazoku*, 近代家族) was associated with the family-state ideology (*kazoku kokka shugi*, 家族国家主義), which functioned to sustain the patriarchal family as the basic unit of state rule (Ueno, 1990: 181; Muta, 1996: 60). The modern family, then, was seen as a state instrument for sustaining the family-state ideology, as part of the state integration process. With the Meiji Restoration (1868), the idea of the ‘*ie*’ system was extended from samurai society (which was institutionally abolished in the Meiji Restoration) to ordinary families through the invention of the modern family (*kindai kazoku*, 近代家族), which was usually nuclear, with the patriarchal hierarchy retained (Ueno, 1990:131). According to Ueno, the invention of the modern family with development of capitalism necessitates a clear division

of labour between sexes. Women in the patriarchal family had to take the role of maintaining the family life in the domestic sphere, while men had to go out to work in the public sphere to bring in the income. Hence, women tended to be confined into the domestic sphere and the modern family and consequently under ‘patriarchal capitalism.’ (Ueno, 1990)

The invention of the modern family (*kindai kazoku*, 近代家族) and family oriented-principles, made the expectation/responsibility of women’s roles in the family more significant. Women were required not just to be models of self-abnegation, but also to be well-educated and respectable. Women were also expected to be good managers and wise educators of family members. As a good manager of the household, one of the significant responsibilities was health management. In this way, cookery became an important element of domestic work to sustain healthy family members as ‘good’ citizens who through their works could help develop the national economy to increase the national GDP or contribute to the nation as soldiers. This fitted nicely with the government’s ‘rich country, strong army’ doctrine.

In his book, *Theory of Japanese Women* (Nihon Fujin Ron) (1885), Fukuzawa Yukiichi who was one of the most influential Meiji reformers insisted on the improvement of the physical constitution of citizens. He also argued that women were important for sexual reproduction and should be required to have a healthy body in order to help accomplish the improvement of the Japanese race (Fujino, 2002:378). Consequently, women’s bodies could be seen as a reproduction *machines*.

This process could understand in terms of Foucault’s notion of biopower. Foucault describes biopower as involving two poles of development in the exercise of power over the body.

One of these poles ... centred on the body as a machine: its disciplining, the optimization of its capabilities, the extortion of its force, the parallel increase in economic controls, all this was ensured by the procedures of power that characterized the *disciplines: an anatomo-politics of the human body* (Foucault, 1976=1978, cited in Donnelly, 1991: 199).

In this sense of the human body, Japanese people as machines were embedded in economic and military systems. Hence, it could be suggested that cookery was also seen as part of the government-led-disciplinary apparatus. It could, therefore, be ventured that cookery was an element in the set of political practices designed to produce a healthy and strong body in order to create an efficient labour power for the nation.

Foucault also states the other pole of biopower,

Formed somewhat later, focused on the species-body, the body imbued with the mechanics of life and serving as the basis of the biological processes: propagation, births and mortality, the level of health, life expectancy and longevity, with all the conditions that can cause these to vary. Their supervision was effected through an entire series of interventions and *regulatory controls: a biopolitics of the population* (Foucault, 1976=1978, cited in Donnelly, 1992: 199).

It was generally accepted that good cooking produce healthy bodies which would have high-fertility and long life expectancy. An increasingly healthy population was a basic factor in national power enhancement.

These processes can be seen in the Meiji government's biopolitical strategies to mobilise the Japanese population by making all bodies more efficient for state purposes. Women were encouraged and urged to take responsible to play a key role of contribute to this process to be 'a good wife and wise mother.' Eventually, cookery became part of women's social and national expectations. It is also found that the wide knowledge of techniques of food preparation and cookery skills becomes a crucial subject for women's education at the women's school. At this point, cookery was not jut only everyday practice; it turned into an institutionalised knowledge and practices.

As we discussed, cookery was always accompanied by the idea of the modern family along with the government led doctrine, 'a good wife and wise mother 'which was linked the government's political strategy, 'rich country, strong army'. Women and the family, then, were both interwoven into the governmental nation-state formation process through domestic activities, such as cookery, and in everyday life reform. The modern family was then can be seen as part of the outreach of the state apparatus, a key feature of the disciplinary apparatus of biopower. Hence, the modern family and women was significant elements in 'technology of government' (Coveney 2004: 223).

3.2 Women's education and Domestic Science – Cookery as a Science

After the China-Japan War (1894-1895), women's education became seen as an important vehicle for generating women who could fulfil these state-led requirements. A new law to establish girls' schools was authorised in 1899. The aim of girls' schools was to produce

women who would have a refined sense of taste, be thrifty, display a well-mannered and modest character and have a healthy body. More importantly, it was held that women should be taught domestic science along with nutritional knowledge.

In illustrating women's domestic science in US, Shapiro states,

The most popular way to refer to this approach (for women's education) was to call it 'scientific'. Indeed, one of the most impressive ways to describe anything in the latter half of the nineteenth century was to call it scientific, and terms like 'scientific motherhood', 'Scientific charity,' and "scientific cookery" were in constant use whenever women analyzed their modern responsibilities [() added by the author].

We can find a similar situation with women's education in Japan. Cookery as part of a domestic science was regarded as 'civilized' cookery. At that time in Japan, the term, 'science' suggested an index of civilization. The definition of civilized cookery was a well-organized, efficient and economic cookery practices coupled with the knowledge of 'hygiene' and 'scientific' nutrition. The term 'scientific' and the way of scientific thinking were supposed to be rational, and consequently they followed a more objective, practical and methodical structure. These characteristics were supposedly to be associated with the image of masculinity. Therefore, science was not generally considered as a female field, but a male one. However, domestic science was clearly an exception. Women were allowed to cross into the male domain, scientific world through domestic science, especially cookery which required a substantial knowledge of nutrition. This was the only 'science' open to women in Japan of this period (see Umesao, 1980:15).

Consequently in the modern Japanese viewpoint of women were accorded the status of ‘secondly’ citizens as managers of the household, entailing reproductive sex, the roles of caregiver and educator, with limited rights. Women gained some autonomy and greater responsibilities through scientific cookery, in other word, modern cookery or civilized cookery.

4. The Rise of Consumer Culture and Gourmandise

4.1 Gensai Murai and *Shoku Doraku (Gourmandise)*⁴

The scientific motivation can also found in the content of cookery books.

In fact that the number of cookery books increased in the 1900s and they provided recipes for domestic cookery with information on measurement of ingredients and cooking times. Although Akahori was allegedly the first person who started to use ‘measurement’, according to the research of cookery book in modern Japan by Ehara and Higashiyotsubayashi, western cookery books which were translated into Japanese influenced the format of Japanese cookery books in terms of measurement (Ehara & Higashiyotsuyanagi, 2008:16)⁵.

In the West, one of the most influential books, Fannie Farmer’s *Boston Cookery-School Cook Book* (1896) was arguably the best known as the first book to consider standard measurement for cookery (e.g. a level cupful, teaspoonful and table spoonful). In the preface, Farmer state,

‘It is my wish that it may not only be looked upon as a compilation of tried and tested recipes, but that it may awaken an interest through its condensed scientific knowledge

⁴食道楽 has two ways of reading in Japanese –*Kui Doraku* and *Shoku Doraku*. The paper applies the latter term

⁵ The first translation of western cookery books, the knowledge of western cookery (*seiyou ryouri tuu*) and western cookery guide (*seiyou ryoushi shinann*) were published in 1872 (Ehara & Higashiyotsuyanagi, 2008:16). These publications were ten year earlier than the launch of the Akahori cookery school.

which will lead to deeper thought and broader study of how to eat' (1896).

The primary Japanese cookery books targeted the upper and the middle class woman as their readership, however cookery books began to access to a wider social class audience through the increasing growth of the mass media. One of the best examples is '*Shoku Douraku (The Pleasure of Food-Gourmandise)*' which was initially published as a newspaper serialised novel by Gensai Murai in the early 1903. This novel style of cookery book had a big success with a broader readership.

The author, Gensai was born in 1863 as the first child of a samurai family and educated to learn Chinese classics as well as western scientific learning. He was a successful novelist, but also a prominent media business entrepreneur. His wider knowledge and sharp insights of society led to the expansion of readership of magazines (women's magazine *Fujin Sekai* [Women's world] and newspapers (*Houchi Sinbun*). One of his most successful business strategies was in providing practical knowledge for everyday life in order to improve the quality of life. Yet, his principle and style of literature were perceived as a inappropriate style for literature which at that time was seen as an 'art form,' for mainstream novelists. The predominant belief was that art should be something beyond practical value and therefore he was often criticised. Whereas the practical knowledge he provided through the mass media (largely print media) was appreciated by a wider readership of ordinary people. He believed that it was crucial to contribute to popularise new ideas and knowledge and to educate people. Hence, we can see that his contribution to the democratization of practical knowledge was demonstrated by his business success in media industry.

Shoku Doraku was a unique novel, which was a story of everyday life, love, marriage and family problems in an upper middle class family. It also introduced approximately 630 recipes along with images of consumer culture lifestyles, knowledge of food and cookery; e.g. manners, eating habits, the modern style of kitchen, modern kitchen utensils, nutrition science, medical science and hygiene issues. It was not clearly a typical so-called domestic novel, being more of an idealised everyday lifestyle - guidebook with a good deal of information based on 'scientific' ways of thinking and 'empirical' experiences. More importantly, in *Shoku Doraku*, Gensai emphasis on scientific and rational cookery, which was a symbol of civilization and therefore civilized cookery was inseparable from the 'civilized modern family'. Modern cookery was, thus conceived as an essential part of civilized way of life. *Shoku Doraku* also provided many illustrations of upper class lifestyles with well-designed aesthetic covers. Their visual impact worked well with modern consumers' perceptions. Their high-grade appearance and the general feelings of high quality living in *Shoku Doraku* evoked a sense of luxury and stimulated the imagination and dreams.

4.2 *Shoku Doraku*'s readership

At the time when *Shoku Doraku* became a best-selling novel in the early 1900s, the migration to cities, such as Tokyo was increasing rapidly, to be followed by suburban development along the railway lines. The new middle class, who were well-educated white collar salaried men, expanded dramatically. The majority of those who came from outside Tokyo established families and sought to live in new urban environments which required them to learn a new lifestyle. With the increasing urbanization alongside the burgeoning consumer culture, the new middle class family-centred lifestyle became based more on consumption and reproduction.

The reform of domestic lives was one of the most visible parts of this new lifestyle. In this process, women took the initiative. They had the capacity to realize the new lifestyles through domestic activities, such as cooking. Hence, *Shoku Doraku* became a very useful guidebook and basic data source for them. More importantly, the readership of *Shoku Doraku* was not only the new middle class woman, but also women who came from the groups below. Some evidence here is that *Shoku Doraku* used *kana* (phonetic characters) alongside *kanji* (Chinese characters) to make its reading easier in order to draw in more women from the lower classes with limited literacy. Many of them hankered to offer ‘middle class lifestyles’ and wanted to be upwardly mobile.

5. Cookery and Luxury

5.1 Practical Knowledge and Dream

The upper class lifestyle was not totally a dream, as long as you could afford to create scaled-down versions which elements of luxurious environments. Many female readers enjoyed consuming images and information about the upper class lifestyles, but it was, of course, impossible for them to be able to acquire the goods to live out the dreams. In his paper on cultural consumption, Bourdieu states that ‘in the intermediate position (between the richest and the poorest) are the practices which are perceived as *pretentious*, because of the manifest discrepancy between ambition and possibilities.’ (Bourdieu cited in ed. Korsmeyer 2005: 72)

More interestingly, the intermediate position not just imitates the upper class lifestyle, but also intends to distinguish itself from the lower class lifestyle. Here Simmel’s the philosophy of fashion could be useful to better understand their psychological dynamic of imitation and pretentious. He argues that while ‘fashion is the imitation of a given pattern and thus satisfies

the need for social adaptation', yet it is also 'satisfies the need for distinction, the tendency towards differentiation, change and individual contrast'. Hence, on the one hand, 'fashion signifies a union with those of the same status, the uniformity of social circle characterized by it, and in so doing, the closure of this group against those standing in a lower position which the higher group characterizes as not belonging to it' (Simmel cited in ed. by Frisby and Featherstone 1997:189). The uniformity could work to connect to people of the same status, at the same time, it could also work to disconnect from people of lower status. To create uniformity of the same status also means to create distinction from those of other status (Bourdieu, 1984).

This could resonate with Bourdieu's words, 'taste classifies and classifies the classifier' (cited in Featherstone 1991: 18). More importantly, we need to aware that as soon as the lower status catches up the upper status's styles, the upper status has to find a new taste in order to keep distance between them. And thus the distinction games continuously moves forward. Here, cultural specialists play a key role in this game (as I discuss in more details later) and help to inform lower status people about the upper status people's styles. Through this mechanism, the new middle class women started to imitate and pretend to consume the images of upper-class 'luxury' lifestyles.

Some of them, indeed, could only just consume dreams. Hence, *Shoku Doraku* was not only a practical instruction book for the upper class, but also a convenient dream book for the lower class to help simulate and enjoy the anticipation of the sense of luxury. The new forms of cookery then could become associated with the luxury lifestyles formed in upper class everyday life.

According to Featherstone,

‘Given the social restrictions on access to luxury goods, the sumptuary laws that operated in the past and contemporary exclusions via price, means that for many in the lower orders the pleasures luxuries afford cannot be experienced directly but only be simulated via the work of the imagination’ (Featherstone, 2010).

Here, we can have a better understanding that the imagination is a key facility to enable play with the sense of luxury for those who had limited access to ‘luxury’ goods and experiences. The pleasure of luxuries are not only associated with consumer goods and real experiences, but also could bring about luxury sensibilities with imaginary contentment in modern life.

5.2 The Aestheticization of Everyday Life

The notion of a luxury sensibility can be found in the process of ‘the aestheticization of everyday life’ (Simmel 1978; Featherstone 1991). According to Featherstone, we can identify the luxury sensibilities in the context of aestheticization of everyday life. He explained that we can find a cultural phenomenon of aestheticization of everyday life in the historical avant-garde and surrealist movement in World War I and the 1920s, e.g. Dadaism. The important thing here was that this movement broke down the boundary between art and everyday life and therefore commonplace everyday objects would become seen in different ways – mundane objects would deliver as aesthetic charge and bring about a new sensation. Hence, these artistic strategies rapidly become taken over by the mass media, advertising and consumer culture as the main way for displaying commodities. Consumer culture, the mass media and advertising were

increasingly the supply of new cultural goods and meanings along with new aesthetic sensibilities. In this process, the consumer objects started to have ‘sign-value’, which Baudrillard (1998) developed in his theory of the commodity-sign. Hence, these goods were stylized, designed and aestheticized. They also brought new types of sensations. Aesthetic sensibilities and the sensations of luxury goods and experiences are a variation of these modern consumer impetuses.

In line with this, we can see that *Shoku Doraku* was a key print media source which provided not just practical skills and knowledge (the training to make wonderful tasting nutritious food and beautifully displayed meals), but also imaginary experiences which involve more dream-like sensations - ‘luxury sensations’ through aestheticised cookery.

6. Vernacular aesthetic - conclusion

Cookery can be a banal experience in everyday life and of course all living things need to eat. Thus, food preparation and consumption are biological ‘necessities.’ Yet, as we discussed, cookery has become more than just a banal everyday experience through its multiple re-contextualizations. From one perspective, its transformation can be seen as part of the attempt by the Meiji government to rationalise and transform everyday life for the services of the state. Good nutritious food, knowledge of domestic science and hygiene would help to produce more efficient citizens to enable the nation to assert its role in the competitive world of nation-state struggles and colonial conquest.

At the same time, transforming food by cookery is also a socio-cultural ‘necessity,’ because cookery is a symbol of social status, which involves ‘technologies of the self’ (see Foucault in

Rabinow, 1984:369). With the growth of women's education along with the domination of scientific ways of thinking after the upheaval of the Meiji Restoration, new forms of cookery were developed and elaborated to become a part of women's socio-cultural expectations.

Furthermore, consumer culture offered new images of cookery via cultural specialists. These new images of cookery evoked the dreams/fantasies of the new middle class and helped a greater sense of the aesthetization of everyday life with the circulation of images of opulence and the sensibilities of luxury. Luxury goods and experiences became more visible in consumer spaces of growing cities like Tokyo, such as the department stores (see Tamari, 2006) and the success of *Shoku Doraku* shows that many women in the middle and lower classes wanted to consume the narratives and images of the upper class lifestyle with its new mode of cookery and its aesthetic enjoyment.

Cookery was no longer 'a mere routine necessity in the midst of everyday life,' but become one of the most important experiences for providing a set of important meanings revolving around sociability, sensory pleasure and aesthetic enjoyment, not always in actual practices, but evoking aesthetic sensations in the home. As a result, cookery can be seen as having become 'vernacular aesthetic.'

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