

Traditional Japanese Health Food—Natto

日本の伝統的健康食—納豆

Natto Experience Interview

“I Want to Pass Along All of the Wonderful Things I Have Learned About Food Culture Throughout the World”

「世界で学んだ食文化のすばらしさを伝えたい」

Laurel Skurko Kao—The Culture Kitchen

Laurel is a friend of mine (the interviewer). Her husband is a Chinese businessman, and up to now she has traveled to any number of countries all over the world. She has become intimately acquainted with the foods of those travel destinations, learning and bringing customs back to her kitchen in a way that has continued over many years. More than that, it is no exaggeration to say that in fact she was born to live out her life in this way, passing through these scenarios. During her early childhood years, her father, who was employed as a college professor, aspired to moving with the whole family from America to live in Japan, and she spent her middle school years and college life in Japan.

At that time, her mother's philosophy was that “one should eat what the people of that country do, eating the local things,” so she learned Japanese cooking and fed it to the family. Embracing the policy of that kind of mother, today Laurel faces her own family and passes that on to them. “The other day I was staying in Singapore and I came back having learned Indian cooking,” she told me, then skillfully prepared an Indian lunch with Chai-Tea. This supermom of

three children is always smiling as she works in the kitchen, making dishes from all over the world. She presents a completely beautiful image as she does so.

Q: You had eaten natto fermented soybeans and you told me that you love it now, but in what manner of preparation do you eat them? And then, are there every occasions when you eat it at breakfast, and how is it?

A: At first, I was surprised at the distinctive sensation on the palate that *natto* has. Before I tasted *natto* for the first time, I had been told by various people, “(You are a foreigner, so) you definitely will not like it.” Therefore, it was some time before I had a chance to eat it, and I anticipated the kind of shock that I experienced when I ate *umeboshi* pickled plums for the first time. (With *umeboshi*, in my head I was thinking that I was just eating an onigiri rice ball, so I ended up feeling shocked when I tasted the *umeboshi*.) However, immediately liked *natto*. First, I like the elaborate packages that are made up of a set with things like *karashi*

ローレルさんは私（インタビューア）の友人である。中国人実業家のご主人を持ち、今まで世界のあらゆる国を旅し、その旅先で現地の食べ物に親しみ、学び、キッチンに持ち帰る習慣がこの何年か続いている。というよりも、実は彼女は生まれながらにしてそういった人生を歩くようにシナリオを歩んできたと言っても過言ではない。幼少時代に大学教授を勤めるお父さんの希望で家族全員アメリカから日本へ移住し、中学時代まで日本で過ごし、その後大学生活を送った。その時の母親は「その国の人が食べているもの、地元のを食べなさい」という主義で、日本料理を学びながら家族に食べさせた。そんなお母さんの方針をローレルさんは今、自分の家族に向けて伝えている。「先日のシンガポール滞在でインド料理を学んで来たの」という彼女はインド・ランチにチャイティーを手際よく私に作ってくれた。三人の子どもを持つスーパーママはいつも笑顔でキッチンに立ち、

世界中の料理を作っている。その姿がとても美しく見えた。

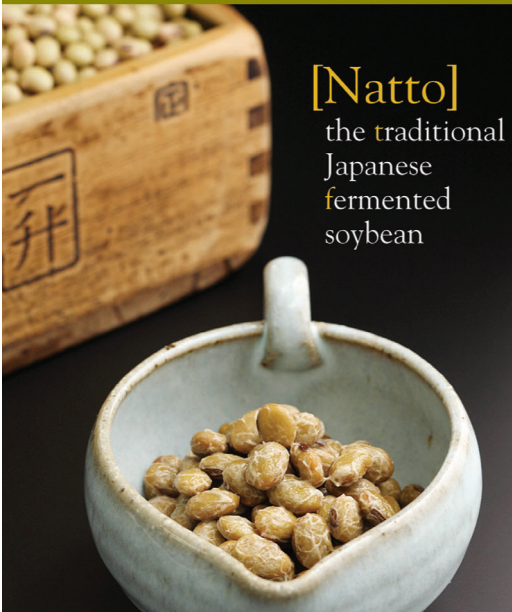
Q: 納豆を食べたことがあり、今も好きだと伺いましたが、どのように召し上がりますか？そして朝食として食べる場合はいかがですか？

I have heard that you have eaten Natto before. What was your first impression of natto?—what is your favorite way to enjoy Natto? How about it for breakfast?

A: 初めは納豆の持つ独特の食感に驚きました。納豆の味を体験するまで、色々な人に「あなたは外人だから」きっと好きではないと言われていたので、しばらく食べる機会が無かったのですが、梅干を初めて食べた時のショックを予想していたのです（梅干は頭の中でおにぎりだと思って食

The first Natto factory in America!
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冷凍輸入でないから新鮮な納豆の味わい！




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Japanese
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べてしまったのでショックでした)。でも納豆は、すぐ好きになりました。まず、からし等がセットになっている細かいパッケージが好きです。食べ方は乾燥海苔と温かいご飯といっしょに食べるのが最高です。それから納豆巻きです。やはり日本人の習慣のように朝食に用いて海苔、ご飯と食べるのが好きです。納豆ならどんな食べ方でも楽しめます。

The very first time, I was a bit surprised by the texture. Had been told I wouldn't like it, which has never stopped me from trying (however, the first time I tried *umeboshi*, I was shocked, thinking I was going to bite into a plain rice ball). Since I was warned, I ended up really liking it. My favorite way is how it is packaged – with the mustard, etc, and I enjoy it best with crunchy nori and rice, as a sushi, though I also like it at breakfast, but also prefer with



mustard in them. And the best way to eat it is with roasted *nori* seaweed and warm rice. That is how to make a *natto* roll. As might be expected, I like to eat it for breakfast according to the Japanese custom, using *nori* and eating it with rice. With *natto*, I enjoy it no matter what way I eat it.

Q: Japan Traditional Foods produces Megumi NATTO™ locally, and suggests various ways to eat natto in America. What way of eating it would you consider to be the one that would be most acceptable for Americans?

A: How about added to something roasted, I wonder? Or mixed along with *hijiki* seaweed and wrapped in a roll? And I also think that Americans like things that are a little bit salty and spread on bread, so a *natto* sandwich would also be good.

Winter Fancy Food Show: Educational Program “Miso and Natto”

On January 18 at the Winter Fancy Food Show, an educational program sponsored by the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) with the title of “Miso and *Natto*” was held to promote Japanese food ingredients. This was the first time that a lecture about *natto* fermented soybeans was given at the Food Show, and the attendees were Americans connected with food and the general public attending the show, but the majority had heard about it while never having eaten it. However, they had an interest in traditional Japanese fermented food products and unique questions came flying about.

Making the *natto* presentation was President Sato Minami of Japan Traditional Food, Inc., who introduced organic “*Megumi NATTO™*,” the only one of its kind in America, produced in California, along with lecturing in detail regarding the history of *natto* and its nutritional value. Following that, during a cooking demonstration, things like *natto* with tomatoes and onions and seasoned with olive oil and vinegar and placed on bread as a snack and *natto* mixed with Caesar salad dressing were presented and a food tasting session held. Attendees who were experiencing *natto* for the first time made comments such as, “I thought it had a more pungent aroma,” and “This is my first experience with it, but I liked the spreading taste sensation on the palate,” according to

Emily, who runs a catering business. She went on to express the opinion that, “From now on, I would like to teach Americans about the high nutritional values of traditional Japanese foods through catering.” In addition, during the question and answer period, it was striking how many technical questions were asked by owners and professionals in the industry who actually deal with *natto*. Among those were related to production such as whether it is possible to produce *natto* from black soybeans or other varieties of beans? Or the differences in the nutritional elements, as well as maintenance of temperature and time of fermentation. Many of the general questions concerned things like methods of preservation, length of storage time and ways of preparation. It will be interesting to see how deep the interest in *natto*, which is still unknown, will be in the marketplace in America in the future and how it will expand there.



the crunch breakfast *nori* and rice at the same time. However, I really enjoy it any way.

Q: Japan Traditional Foods は現地で納豆を生産し、アメリカでの納豆の食べ方で様々な提案をしています。アメリカ人に受け入れられる食べ方はどのようなものだと思いますか？

Japan Traditional Foods has been making Natto in California and they have come up with several suggestions for how to eat Natto in the US. Can you recommend other ways Americans would enjoy eating Natto?

A: 焼き物に加えるのはどうかしら。ひじきとも合うのでロールに入れたり、アメリカ人はちょっと塩気のあるものをパンにのせるのが好きだから、納豆パンも良いと思います。

Baked into things. Lately, *hijiki* is in rolls, and people seem to enjoy that salty taste in bread.

ウインター・ファンシー・フードショー: 教育プログラム「Miso and Natto」

1月18日、ウインター・ファンシー・フー



ドショーの教育プログラムにて「味噌と納豆」と題して日本食材を紹介する催しがJETRO主催で行われた。納豆の講演はフードショーでは始めてで、参加したアメリカ人の食関係者、一般参加者は聞いたことはあるが食べた事がないという人が大半だった。しかしながら日本伝統の発酵食品に興味を持ち、ユニークな質問が飛びあった。

納豆のプレゼンター、Japan Traditional Foods Inc.の社長、佐藤南氏は、カリフォルニアで生産しているアメリカで唯一の、オーガニック『*Megumi NATTO™*』を紹介すると共に、納豆の歴史や栄養価について詳しく講義を行った。続いての実演会ではトマト、オニオンをオリーブオイルとビネガーで味付けした納豆をパンに載せたスナック、納豆をシザーズ・サラダ・ドレッシングに混ぜたものなどを紹介し試食会が行われた。初めての納豆の経験に参加者達は「もっと匂いがキツイかと思った」とか、ケータリングビジネスをしているエミリーさんは、「初めての体験でしたが、ふっくらした食感が気に入りました。これからケータリングを通じて栄養価の高い日本の伝統食をアメリカ人に紹介していきたい」という意見が聞かれた。また質問コーナーでは、実際に納豆を扱っているオーナーや業者達による専門的な質問が目立った。中には黒豆や他の豆類での納豆は出来るか?とかその栄養素の違い、また温度管理、発酵時間などの製造に関する質問もあった。一般的に多かったのは保存方法や保存期間、調理の仕方等で、これからアメリカ市場に伸びていくであろう未知の納豆についての興味深さが伺われた。

Laurel Skurko-Kao

**Executive Director
Business Planning & Development
Estée Lauder in New York**

Laurel Skurko-Kao has an M.B.A. from Harvard Business School, and a B.A. in Human Biology from Stanford University. She has held positions as Executive Director, Business Planning & Development at the Estée Lauder Companies in New York, in brand management at Procter & Gamble, France, and in sales management at Yagami-Shinwa Medical in Japan.

Today, she is pursuing several projects relating to food and culture with The Culture Kitchen. She hosts cultural events, teaching guests about food and culture through in-depth cultural journeys into regional cuisines.

