

Change of the eating habit of the young generations in Japan

日本語訳：日本の若い世代の食習慣の変化

2002—8—11

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1. Introduction

JCCU has published its annual survey for the food needs of working house wife -- specific Japanese expression. She works both in and out of her house, paid and unpaid respectively-- as the 2001 annual report. According to Fusako Chikamoto, researcher of CCIJ, this year the survey focused on the basic values of incidents which effect for the change of the eating habit. She said the eating habit reflects on not one factor but many factors of society as a whole, such as form of family, working style of husband and wife and their economic conditions, variation of supplied foods, people' s value and behavior and so on. So it may say that the change of eating habit, caused by pluralistic and various indicators, should not be judged as a negative direction but as an inevitable process or change of our society. We can not say what a correct and normative eating habit in our society. But at least we can say Eating for good health, for enjoyment for vitalization. Chikamoto asserted that we should valued new important indicators for seeing the change of eating habit, such as introduction of cheap and tasty semi-cooked foods or an intermediate foods industry, the change of consciousness of women for their household work and trend of long working hours in workshops. Chikamoto estimated after the survey that women' s work in the kitchen to prepare dishes would become diminished as in the category of household work, as if work for make clothing already almost has diminished in the household work. However it is true that humankind must eat for.

2. Generation gap for the eating habit

Hiroko Misawa, analyst for consumer' s problem, indicated some important aspect of the result of the survey. She said this survey applied two way of inquiry; one is focusing on consciousness of consumers and another one is on purchasing behavior of consumers. She indicate, based on the survey, an indicator of the difference of household income is less effective than that of generation difference to analyzing food market. In other word, economic indicator is not important than social and cultural indicator to analyze the eating habit. In geographic view, the remarkable difference of the eating habit can not find in the consumers behavior because of conformism of foods supply and demand by the big food distributors have develop chains of their supper market stores in regional and local levels.

According to the survey, the younger generation has a little concern for food security. This is partly because of their consciousness as a member of consumer cooperatives and they simply feel safety with trust for a cooperative's safe food supply and partly because of their trust for the national food certificate label system. However only 40 percent of them have assured safety of foods through foods guide for members issued by consumer cooperatives. Rest believes the food safety without any information.

Table 1. Foods cost of generations

	Age to 29	30-39	30-49	50-59	60-69	Over 70
Food Cost 1000 yen	202	219	263	316	355	351
E n g e l ' s coefeciency	20%	24%	25%	24%	28%	29%

In Japan mainly two styles of eating, namely Japanese style centering rice food and so called Western style centering breads. Many of older generation of course usually prefer Japanese style, which dishes normally should be taken while they are warm or hot. "Have them while warm!" was always heard at the table of ordinary family. So family members must have a breakfast or dinner together because dishes are not tasty when they become cool. Traditional style of having lunch with all family members derived from the reason of testy. On the other hand, nevertheless of the difference of generation, we can find that bread eaters also are increasing in all ranges of generations. Among the older generation over 60 year old bread eaters are increasing because of its easiness of cooking of processing. This new phenomenon may become a target of a new strategy of food marketing. Contrary to common sense, younger generation prefer to buy materialistic foods and older generation are likely to buy processed foods which are easy to cooking, such as "direct to mouth side dishes" and "side dishes no need to cook". Survey points a part of older people do not welcome cooking because of their degradation of physical ability to cooking.

3. Trend of eating habit of younger members

The survey showed that 60 percent of the surveyed members ordinarily prepare dishes by cooking materials and rest 40 percent utilize smartly processed foods and readymade side dishes. The sixty percent of the full time female workers utilize well processed foods. The younger women satisfy their cook as hand made dishes even though they utilized processed food materials. Among the young generation, the percentage of the family having same dishes in one table is 35 percent for breakfast and 50 percent for the dinner. The reasons of this tendency are length of commuting hours and working time of husband and working wife. The type of a breakfast is classified in three; 50 percent of them are rise eater, a quarter is bread eater and rest quarter has mixed style. Over ten percent of the surveyed members have no custom of cook fish with knife. Half of surveyed members daily prepare lunch box one or two times a week for themselves, their husband and their children including adult working children.

Table 2. For whom they prepare lunch box? (Plural answer)

	Me	Husband, or wife	Kid	elementary	Junior	High	Univ.	Adult children	Etc
Total (n=692)	32	48	20	6	19	18	3	12	2
Almost every day (553)	33	52	16	5	24	21	4	14	2
1 or 2 a week	29	32	37	8	2	6	1	3	4

According to the survey, less than 30 years old generation frequently utilize processed foods as main dish, frozen vegetable and half processed materials. Forty year old generation prefer a set of a la carte for dishes. Older generation utilize processed dishes which are no need to cook but only to enter electric melting box or warming box in order to eat. The seventy percent of the surveyed member gain information of how to cook from watching their family's cooking skill and fifty percent of them learn the skill from TV and cooking magazines. Young women often start to learn cook after their marriage.

4. Typical cases of eating habit among young generation

The survey has discovered some signs of the change of eating habit among the member families. People do not enjoy breakfast. It seems to be something like an obligation for nutrition. So variety of foods and number of dishes are decreasing on a table and many of them are prepared without using fire. For example, in a case of Ms A, house wife with husband and one year old baby, has so called European eating habit, namely having a cup of coffee and banana in Sunday, Corn flake and soft drink in Monday, yogurt and confectionary bread in Tuesday. Normally Ms A does not use gas fire in the morning in her kitchen. In much family, husband or father does not eat breakfast or dinner with his family because of long work hours. The labor system in Japan has given serious influence for the eating habit of ordinary family. In another case, Ms. B, 34 year old is full time worker with two children, frequently utilizing frozen foods and his husband does not cooperate in the kitchen. In the case of Ms. C, part time worker with three little children, she has no sufficient time to cook and depend on processed food.

We can see many house wife who is in nursing her little children, without receiving her husband help for growing, has no sufficient time to prepare good dishes for her family. On the other hand, families which share domestic work enjoy good eating habit based on well economic condition.