

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Global Standards

January 9, 2019

- FUSION OF EAST AND WEST -

A new breeze has been blowing through Japan's food culture in recent years.

With the addition of new elements, conventional and traditional Japanese flavors are metamorphosing into modern forms in numerous products that are gathering popularity.

Examples in sweets include azuki beans with custard, *matcha* powdered green tea with cream, and parfaits based on *hoji* tea.

In meals too, there is an increasing amount of *washoku* that incorporates foreign foods in new forms, such as snacks that combine miso paste and cheese, and western-style *osechi* New Year's dishes prepared by famous Western-food restaurants.

Ingredients previously only employed in foreign cuisine are being used and arranged to build them into *washoku*, generating new demand in Japan. These combinations also make it possible to serve *washoku* dishes that will appeal to the tastes of foreign visitors, who numbered over 30 million in 2018, a new record.

Let's take a look at some of the new Japanese food that fuses East and West.

The first is "cheese pickled in *miso*", from the venerable pickle seller Ginza Wakana. This finger food dish has cream cheese pickled in miso paste. Delicious as it stands, it can also be used, for example, to stuff the heads of *shiitake* mushrooms for oven baking.



(Photos from Ginza Wakana website)

The second is the “olive *daifuku*” (olive rice cake). Pour the olive oil provided over the sticky rice cake to make a *wagashi* (Japanese cake). The unusual novelty of this idea prompted foreigners living in Japan, as well as Japanese people, to buy it as a souvenir gift.



(Photo from the Taneya website)

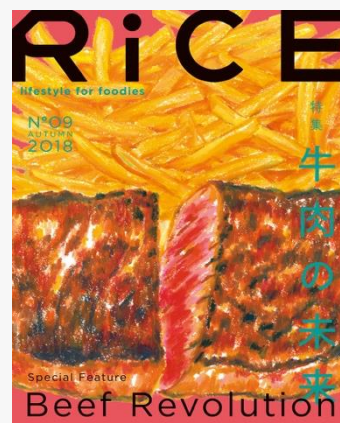
“*Osechi*” dishes are an essential staple of Japan’s *o-shogatsu* New Year season. In *osechi*, every ingredient is imbued with its own meaning, and it has always been made with traditional Japanese ingredients. More recently, famous French and Italian restaurants are moving into the *osechi* market, offering *osechi* dishes that are eclectic blends of Japanese and foreign.

Dean & DeLuca, a deli and cafe chain with its headquarters in the USA, markets *osechi* dishes based on the theme of “Japanese tradition with the delicious flavors of the world’s foods”. They are becoming hit products.



(Photo from Dean & DeLuca website)

New trends such as these in food culture are supported by the emergence of new media. “Rice”, the Japanese-English bilingual food magazine, published its inaugural issue in Fall of 2016, with the aim of disseminating Japan’s culinary culture to the world. It presents topics such as “A Map of the World’s Rice”, which use food to make links between Japan and the world. Articles describe the advantages of incorporating elements from around the world into Japanese food even though they are unfamiliar in Japan. Cooking rice in carbonated water was one example.



(See RICE- <https://www.rice.press/eat/4405>)

Convenience stores and other retailers are launching a succession of cakes which augment wagashi with foreign-style elements. This food trend looks set to continue for some time.



(Sticky Chocolate Pancake)



(Fluffy Bracken and Italian Chestnut, Mont Blanc Style)



(Pure Cream Daifuku Rice Cake With the Fragrance of Black Sesame)



(Dorayaki Stuffed Pancake with Cheese and Cheese Whip)

(Photos from Seven-Eleven Japan and Lawson websites)

(End)