

For this issue's "A Day in the Life," we return to the theme of "rice" introduced in *The Japan Forum Newsletter*, No. 9, this time offering specific teaching ideas and a list of web sites related to rice.

Ideas for the elementary school level come from Catherine McCoy of Australia, who won the grand prize in the First Contest on Ideas and Examples of How to Teach Culture in Japanese-language Class. For the secondary school level, we asked for ideas from Cyrus Rolbin of the United States, winner of the Intercultural Understanding Prize in the same contest.

The list of web sites introduces Internet resources that can be tapped for teaching on this theme. Those seeking more detailed information should check such sites.

Also included are instructions on how to make *onigiri*. In most households in Japan today, rice is prepared using an electric rice cooker that automatically steams rice in the traditionally preferred fashion, but for the benefit of teachers overseas, we include instructions for cooking rice without an automatic rice cooker. For further information on *onigiri*, see also *The Japan Forum Newsletter*, Nos. 5 and 9.

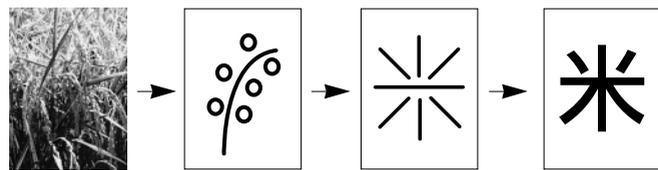
Suggestions for Classroom Use at the Elementary Level

The teacher asks students to share with the class what they usually eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. Give children three large sheets of paper with the headings "Breakfast," "Lunch," and "Dinner," and have them list foods that are common to their country or the country of their origin for each meal. For younger students, it may be a good idea to have them draw pictures of the foods they usually eat. Then, the children can cut out these pictures and paste them on large pieces of paper as study materials.

Talk about the different foods Japanese children eat at these times. Highlight how many of these dishes are made from rice. If you have pictures of these foods, show them and discuss how they taste. Talk about *senbei* crackers and other snacks made out of rice, as well as *onigiri*, *obentō*, and *mochi*. Have the students repeat the name of each dish when a picture or item is displayed. Make the children aware of how diverse these meals are in preparation, taste, purpose, etc.

How many rice dishes do we eat? Do many of these originally come from other countries? List the different rice dishes and make a display of pictures or drawings. Talk

about the words for rice: こめ (rice grain), ごはん (boiled rice) and ライス. Show students these words written in Japanese and have them repeat the words. Show students the character for rice in kanji. Talk about the origin of the kanji from its original picture.



Present all words in hiragana but explain that ライス is written in katakana and review the reasons. Make the kanji for rice the center of your growing display. This will make an attractive display and also encourage visual recognition of meaning.

Make sentences using the expression: ~をたべます. Review or introduce some words like まいにち, あした, どのよびに, etc. For the older children, revise or introduce past-tense sentences, ~をたべました.

Talk about how rice is associated with Japan, and have children discuss what kinds of things they identify with their own country. For example, Australia has Akubra hats, koalas, kangaroos, etc. For Japanese, images of rice fields and rice dishes remind them of home, family, and childhood.

Science

Japan's hot summers and heavy rainfall provide an ideal climate for growing rice. Its mountainous terrain leaves little room for pasture land. Rice can be grown on paddies terraced into steep terrain and built along path of river and stream-fed valleys. Talk about how rice is a staple food around the world, specifically in countries such as China, Indonesia, Mexico, Spain, etc. List these on a poster. Have children discuss the reasons rice is a staple food. (Is it easy to grow? Is it cheap to buy? Do people like the taste? etc.)

Have children discuss the different types of dishes in these countries and record them on a poster: *chaofan*, *nasi-goreng*, *kukpap*, *arroz con pollo*, *paella*, etc. Have pictures of these foods or ask the older children to collect pictures at the library. Add what they collect to the display.

Cooking

Prepare some Japanese dishes made of rice.

Before you make any of the rice recipes, highlight the importance of a rice cooker in Japanese homes. Talk about the texture and taste and how it differs from the way rice is made in our cooking. Discuss the difference between short-grain (*japonica*) and long-grain (*indica*) rice. Ways of cooking and serving rice clearly vary for each variety of rice.

Give the students the recipes to take home and share with their parents.

Social Studies

Rice is grown in all the prefectures of Japan. Japan produces over eleven million tons each year. Find out how much rice your country produces each year. Does Japan sell its rice to other countries? Why not do you think? Do we sell our rice? To what countries?

Make a list of the items we buy (import) from Japan and

sell (export) to Japan. Find pictures in magazines or by contacting local agencies.

Health

In Japan people eat at least one bowl of rice each day. A baby's first solid food is usually rice. When people are sick, they eat soft boiled rice (おかゆ). Rice is a highly nutritious food and a great asset to a healthy diet. Discuss the food group to which rice belongs. List other foods which we eat from this group. List down the other food groups. Have children draw and paste, or list the food they eat from each group.

Suggestions for Classroom Use at the Secondary Level

1. Write the kanji, 米 on the board.
2. Have students try to guess what it means (if you have Chinese or other kanji-reading students in your class, instruct them not to give the answer away).
3. Of course, it will probably be too difficult for your students to guess the meaning of an unfamiliar kanji. Quickly give them the following hint: What is the most important food in Japan.
4. Your students will most likely guess the answer right away, although there is a chance that some of them will first guess something like "sushi." After they guess "rice," ask them if they know the word for rice in Japanese.
5. Write on the board ライス, and have them read it. Explain that this word is currently used quite a bit in Japan, and write on the board examples such as カレーライス, オムライス, and チキンライス. This will be useful for a quick katakana reading review.
6. Explain that, while ライス is understood by Japanese and widely used in words such as the ones you listed, it is not the main word for rice and not the correct pronunciation for the kanji you put on the board.
7. Write こめ under or over the kanji character. Have students read it, and then add an お in front of it. Explain the お if your students don't know what it is for. Then, briefly provide a couple of examples such as おとうさん, おかあさん, and おしょうがつ.
8. Next, write the word ごはん on the board. Have students read it and then explain the difference between it and おこめ (ごはん being the word used when おこめ is cooked).
9. Explain some of the ways ごはん is served in Japan.
10. If you have the time, energy, and materials, you might consider having a pot of rice prepared for students to try.

If you have the time and interest to engage your students in a social studies-type activity, pass out copies of the "A Day

in the Life" essay from *The Japan Forum Newsletter*, No. 9 along with the following short- and long-answer questions about the essay. These can be distributed as an additional homework assignment, or can be used in class to generate discussion.

Short Answer Questions

1. Where is rice said to have originated?
 2. How long ago is rice said to have entered Japan?
- Bonus Questions:* Do you have any idea who was living in this country and what they were doing at that time? Do you know what those people were eating?
3. How many basic types of rice are there?
 4. What is the difference between the different types of rice?
 5. Which type of rice is grown in Japan? What conditions in Japan make this possible?
 6. In olden times, rice was used in Japan not only for food. What else was it used for?

Long Answer Questions

1. Why is rice said to be much more than just food, but also one of the foundations of Japanese society and culture? Things to think about before you write:
Think about society in terms of a congregation of people living together. Also, think about culture basically as the set of habits and customs that give a society its identity. What led people to form the first societies in the world? How did those societies develop into cultures? Do you have answers to these questions in your mind? With these things in mind, do you have ideas on how rice helped make Japan what it is? Then you're ready to write!
2. Rice is eaten by just about everyone in Japan, regardless of their personal lifestyles, political views, religious beliefs, or other distinguishing characteristics. Is there a custom in your culture, or another culture with which you are familiar, that is similarly practiced by everyone? If so, what is it? If not, why do you think there isn't one?

List of Web Sites Related to Rice (as of June 1998)

Rice in general

<http://www.kamedaseika.co.jp/kome>

Varieties of rice

http://www.komenet.or.jp/_qa/

http://www.mmjp.or.jp/tambo/DAIGAKU/komejp1_e.html

Japanese agriculture in general

<http://www.rim.or.jp/ci/ja/ejahome.html>

Japanese boxed lunches

http://www2.big.or.jp/~sugawara/lunch_world/lunch_world.html

School lunches

<http://www.nikonet.or.jp/~kana55go>

Fast food featuring rice

<http://www.mos.co.jp/united/menu/htm/mrbt.htm>

Rice paddy landscapes

<http://www.iip.co.jp/RialPhoto/album-1.html>

Attitudes toward rice in Japan

<http://www.rim.or.jp/ci/ja/kome1218.html>

Cooking rice

http://www.mmjp.or.jp/tambo/DAIGAKU/komejp2_e.html

Cooking with rice

<http://www.mitsubishi.com/japanese/rice.htm>

Translations for conversation on page 11

[Photo 1] Kōtarō and his mother are in the kitchen

Kōtarō: I'm home! Hey, I'm hungry! What's for dinner!

Mother: Hi there! We're having hamburgers. So, how was your soccer game?

Kōtarō: We lost, 2 to 1.

Mother: Really? That's too bad!

Kōtarō: But that one point—I kicked that goal!

[Photo 2] The evening meal

Kōtarō: *Itadakimasu.* Can I start? Oh! This looks good!

[Photo 3] At the dinner table

Sister: Mom, may I have another helping of rice?

Mother: Sure. Would you like more *miso-shiru*?

Sister: No thanks.

Father: Kōtarō, eat your vegetables.

Kōtarō: Okay . . .

[Photo 4] The empty dishes

Everyone: *Gochisōsama.*

Kōtarō: I'm full!

Mother: Kōtarō! You've left rice in your bowl. It's bad luck if you leave rice in your bowl, you know!

How to Cook Rice without a Rice Cooker: Let's Make *Onigiri*

(8 small *onigiri*)

Prepare:

- large, thick-bottomed pot (with lid)
- rice (3 *gō*)
- 2 t. salt
- 1 T. sesame seeds (white or black), freshly toasted if possible
- 3 T. salmon flakes (*umeboshi* and *katsuobushi* flakes, if available; you can also try canned tuna or sausages)
- 2 sheets of *nori* (cut into a total of 8 oblong pieces)



1

1. Measure the rice

The standard unit used for measuring out rice prior to cooking it is the *gō*; one *gō* is equivalent to 180 cc., or 3/4 cup. Every kitchen in Japan is equipped with measuring cups that hold exactly one *go* of rice. Measure the amount precisely. Measure out three *gō* (2 1/4 cups) of rice.



2

2. Wash the rice

Pour the rice you've measured out into a large bowl and add enough water to cover the surface of the rice. Then wash the rice briskly, rubbing the grains against each other in a kneading motion in the bowl. Pour off the cloudy water, add fresh water, and wash again. Repeat this process three or four times until the water is almost clear.



4-1

3. Cooking

Put the rice and 650 cc., or 2 3/4 cups of water in the pot, put the lid on, and place on medium-high heat. When the pot comes to a boil, turn down the heat to low. Cook for 10 minutes. Check rice by lifting the lid very briefly. If the surface of the rice is moist and puffy, with small steam-vent indentations, it is done. Cover, remove from heat, and allow to sit for 5 minutes.

4. Make salmon-stuffed rice balls

Put about half of the cooked rice while still hot in a bowl. Dampen hands and sprinkle hands lightly with salt, place a pile of rice on one hand, make a depression in the middle and fill with a portion of salmon flakes. Form into a ball slightly smaller than a baseball as you would in shaping a snowball. To make triangular *onigiri*, cup the rice in one hand with fingers closed and thumb circled; fold the other hand over the top in inverted V shape and press downward; rotate the ball around one third; press again in inverted V shape; turn again, press again, until a triangular shape, flattened on both sides is formed. When tightly packed, cut a piece of *nori* and cover rice ball.



4-2

5. Make sesame-garnished onigiri with remaining half of rice

Mix remaining half of the rice with 1 teaspoon of salt and 1 tablespoon of freshly toasted sesame seeds. Dampen hands and pack rice as described in 4 above.

If you find the rice is too hot, use a piece of saran wrap. Place the wrap over a bowl, put rice on the wrap, fold ends of the wrap over the rice and press into shape with the wrap. Remove wrap before covering with *nori*.

Handout



Photo 1

こうたろう: ただいま。おなかすいた。今日のごはん、なに?
 お母さん: おかえり。ハンバーグよ。
 サッカーの試合、どうだった?*
 こうたろう: 2対1で負けちゃった。*
 お母さん: そう、残念だったね。*
 こうたろう: でも1点はぼくが入れたんだよ。*



Photo 2

こうたろう: いただきます。おいしそう。



Photo 3

お姉さん: お母さん、おかわり。
 お母さん: はい。おみそしるのおかわりは?
 お姉さん: おみそしるはいらない。
 お父さん: こうたろう、野菜も食べなさい。*
 こうたろう: はい。*



Photo 4

全員: ごちそうさま。
 こうたろう: おなかいっぱい。
 お母さん: あら、こうたろう、ごはんつぶを残すとばちがあたりますよ。*

[Photo 1] Kōtarō is in fifth grade in elementary school. He loves soccer and his dream is to be a World Cup-rank soccer star. This day is a school holiday and Kōtarō has come back from a soccer game he played with his school club team.

まけちゃった: this is the conversational style (~ ちゃう) of ~ てしまう, expressing the completion of an action. Another function of this structure is to show regret caused by that action.

いれたんだ: ~んだ (~んです) is the reduced form of ~のだ (~のです). This expression adds stress to a particular part of a sentence. Here it emphasizes Kōtarō's sense of pride in his achievement (ぼくがかつやくしたんだ! We won that point because of me).

[Photo 2] Each member of the family has a rice bowl and *hashi* of their own.

Today's dinner consists of rice, *miso-shiru*, grilled fish, hamburgers, and salad. The truth is that Kōtarō doesn't like vegetables. What kinds of foods do you dislike?

[Photo 3] It is the weekend, so Father, who usually has to work late on weekdays, is eating the evening meal with the family.

[Photo 4] In olden times, eating polished (white) rice was a luxury for most ordinary people. Rice growing, moreover, was a strenuous and labor-intensive task for the farmers, so various warnings came into use, such as ばちがあたる, meaning you would be "punished" by the gods or ancestral spirits and めがつぶれる (you'll be struck blind), against leaving even one grain of rice in one's rice bowl.

To the teacher:

Reproduce these photos in enlarged copy, get the children to take parts and use the model conversation (asterisks mark expressed for advanced students), and invite the students to write a story of their own. Translations for conversation on page 9.