I am asked many times these days if I cook Japanese food at home in America. The answer is yes. I cook rice almost every day and cook food in Japanese ways. We do enjoy American food and eat a lot of western food in various ways, but we have Japanese food much more frequently than western food. Why? Because I learned how to cook rice perfectly in Spokane for the first time in my life! It was such an eye-opening experience.

While attending a cooking class at JCC I realized I used to skip one step in cooking rice. You don’t have to buy high-quality first-grade expensive rice if you cook this way, said the Japanese chef, Ryuhei Tanaka, at the cooking class. And I totally agree with him.

First, measure out the rice carefully. It is important to measure because you need to know how much water you should put in. I usually just follow the cooker’s marks.

Then you wash rice. I usually wash three times. I knew the first wash should be gentle and quick. Ryuhei said it should be gentle, so that the rice grains would not break. Also it should be quick, so that rice would not get the smell of rice bran. Drain the milky white water, leave a little water and swish the rice. Add plenty of fresh water, and drain the cloudy water away. Repeat this step twice, or three times, until the water is almost clear. But it doesn’t have to be completely clear.

And the next step is the most important, which I used to skip, and which makes your rice completely different. As I have never seen my grandmother and my mother do this step at home, it never occurred to me that it is such an important step. After washing your rice, DRAIN the rice in a fine mesh strainer and LEAVE it for at least 15 minutes. Ryuhei said “at least 30 minutes”, but I say you leave it 15-20 minutes, then the rice will be completely different. This is the time when rice absorbs water slowly around the outer layer and each grain becomes cloudy white from transparent white. The pictures to the right shows the slight difference in coloration. The one on the top shows rice just washed. Then the one below shows how all the rice transformed into a nice, white cloudy colored rice after leaving it sit.

After this, it is not very difficult. Put your rice in a rice cooker, measure the water and leave it another 15 minutes. This is the time when rice is soaked in water and absorbs enough water. Ryuhei would say again, “Leave it for at least 30 minutes.” I know. But … I am a working mother and wife, and my starving son and husband are waiting for a meal. I want to cook good rice, but I can’t spend so much time. So my compromise is 15 minutes instead of 30 minutes. And it works! Trust me. (Sorry, Ryuhei!)
If you cook this way, that is, wash rice, leave it in a strainer for 15 minutes, soak it in water for 15 minutes, then cook, you will have fluffy, shining rice. (Of course, if you have enough time, please make it 30 instead of 15.)

Rice is very important staple food in our life, and you can see it in our language. You have only one word ‘rice’ in English, but we have three words for it in Japanese. When it is grown in the rice field, it is ine. When it is cropped and ready to be sold, it is kome. When it is cooked and served in a bowl, it is gohan. So we buy kome at a supermarket, not ine. ine, not gohan, is harvested when it turns to gold in autumn. We ask you, “Would you like some more gohan?” and we never ask you, “Would you like some more kome?” at the table.

So I hope you will cook rice in a perfect way and enjoy gohan! Also you can get more information about Japanese rice if you are interested at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jJbeesSWyc4.

---

**Summer Tea**

JCC at Mukogawa has a very nice tea room for a formal tea ceremony, or Chanoyu, in the library building. We have opened it to the students and the Spokane community every Tuesday. It is not a very formal tea ceremony, but the tearoom is open in a more casual way. We get together to enjoy drinking and making tea.

Open house in the tea room started in February, when it was very cold. We used the sunken hearth called ro (pictured to the left) during the winter time. It is just like a small fire place in an old Japanese house. During the summer, however, we use a portable type of open furnace called furo, covering up the sunken hearth. So if you haven't seen the summer set up, come and join our tea break.

**Please join us for Tea on either Tuesday, July 23rd or 30th. Tea time will be from 3:30pm to 4:30pm. Please call ahead (509) 328-2971 to sign up, reservation is required.**

---

**Japanese Cooking Class**

Saturday, August 24th, 11am to 1pm
4001 W Randolph Rd, Spokane, WA

MFWI students will teach how to make two Japanese dishes. Reservation and payment are required to reserve your spot. $10.00 per person. Call now! (509) 328-2971

---

**Ikebana - Summer Session**

Summer session started Monday, June 17th from 4pm—5:30pm at JCC. Classes are taught by Ellen Krehbiel. There is no cost for lesson, but a fee to cover the cost of flowers ($7-10). Nine more sessions to choose from! Limited Space. Call Candie at (509) 328-2971 ext 223 the Friday prior to reserve your space and flowers.

---

**Used Japanese Book Sale!**

July 19th @ JCC
1-5pm
3 books for $1.00

If you missed the last sale on June 7th, here is one more chance!