

## **Japanese Cuisine in Taiwan: Sukiyaki and Community Life of Intellectual Class in Taiwan (1895-1960s)**

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### **ABSTRACT**

Sukiyaki (スキヤキ) is a type of Nabe Ryori (hotpot cuisine) developing during the Meiji Era. Served with beef as its major ingredient, which was viewed as a symbol of western civilization, it was a revolutionary nouvelle cuisine endowed with a sense of “civilization” to the Japanese of that period. This style of cooking was welcomed by the local intellectuals and spread quickly, it also developed into a particular consumer awareness, and even formed a specific consumer group.

Focusing on the sukiyaki experiences of Taiwanese during the Japanese colonial era and the post-war years, this paper analyzes how Japanese culinary culture became embedded in the daily life of Taiwanese. The consumption of Japanese cuisine, including sukiyaki, was motivated by the desire to learn the “Japanese way of life”. As sukiyaki tasted and was cooked like Taiwanese dishes, it was easily integrated with local foodways. In addition, sukiyaki was a cuisine well-liked by the intellectual class in Taiwan not only because of its own significance in cultural advancement, but also due to the affective sentiments aroused among peers sharing the food from the same hotpot, a realization of the attributes of freedom and equality in modern communities. It was even introduced to the household domain that it became an important cuisine for the intellectual class to foster happy family life. This situation indicates that the acceptance of Taiwanese intellectuals with modern ideological trend, including nutritional and health care knowledge, or community-life experiences was also important factors to guide changes in the household diet.

Along with the regime changed to the post-war period, the social meaning of sukiyaki also evolved. It became a medium for mutual comfort and the preservation of previous warm friendships for those who experienced the time of Japanese rule.

Sukiyaki on that meaning acted as a tool for seeking mutual understanding in the Japanese-style gatherings.

**Keywords:** Sukiyaki, Foodways, Intellectual Class, Community Awareness, Food Consumption, Japanese Cuisine