

WITH LOVE



When I hear the word “bento,” I get kind of excited. Field trips, field days, picnics, and dates come to mind. The cook puts his/her heart and soul into cooking, envisioning the smiles of family, friends, and loved ones, and packs the finished dish with color, nutritional balance, and a sense of the season. The *bento* is also a great opportunity to show your lover that you are a good cook, and perhaps make them like you more.

「お弁当」と聞くと、なんだかワクワクしてきます。遠足に運動会、ピクニックにデート……。作る人は心を尽くして、家族や友達、恋人の笑顔を思い描きながら料理をし、彩りと栄養バランス、季節感を取り入れたお料理を詰めていきます。お弁当は、恋人に料理上手をアピールする絶好のチャンスでもあり、もしかしたらそのお弁当で自分の株が上がり、もっと好きになってくれるかもしれません。

When I think of *bento*, I think of these special occasions, but of course there are many people who take *bento* to school or work for their daily lunch. Especially now with the Corona disaster, more and more people are bringing homemade lunches to work. The reasons for not eating out are varied: “I don’t feel comfortable eating out to prevent infection,” “I can save money,” “I’m on a diet,” and so on. Taking a *bento* for lunch is not limited to Japan, but it is the Japanese who pack a variety of thoughts into their *bento*.

お弁当というと、私は、こうした特別な日を思い浮かべますが、もちろん、日常のお昼ご飯にお弁当を持って学校や職場に行く人も大勢います。特にコロナ禍の今は、職場に手作り弁当を持っていく人が増えています。「外食するのは感染防止の観点から抵抗がある」「節約できる」「ダイエットのため」など理由はさまざま。ランチにお弁当を持っていくのは日本に限りませんが、そのお弁当にさまざまな思いを詰め込むのが日本人です。

What we want to keep in mind with homemade *bento* lunches is that they should be tasty even when cold, easy

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to eat, hygienic, and safe. We want to make it quick, healthy, and appetizing in the busy morning hours. If I am making something not only for myself but also for my family, I make it with that in mind, so that the people who eat it will be happy when they open the lid.

手作り弁当で心がけたいのは、冷めてもおいしく、食べたべやすく、衛生的で安全であること。朝の忙しい時間に、手際よく、健康的で、食欲がわくようにしたい。自分用だけでなく、家族のために作るなら、ふたを開けた時に食べる人が喜んでくれるような、そんなことを考えながら作ります。

If you are skilled, you can be proud of your aesthetic sense by seeing how well you can make your *bento* look, or you can satisfy your creativity by making what is called “*kyaraben*,” which is a kind of artistic work that expresses the cook’s character through a *bento* box. However, it may be difficult for those who are not good at making colorful dishes or planning menus, or for those who cannot get up early in the morning. Furthermore, for those who aren’t skilled and cannot give their children a *bento* they would like to show off, it is also true that it can come with a sense of inferiority and guilt.

器用な人であれば、どれだけ見栄えよく作れるか美的センスを誇ったり、「キャラ弁」と呼ばれる、キャラクターをお弁当で表現する芸術作品のようなものを作ったり、創作意欲も満たせそう。ただ、作ったり献立を考えたりするのが苦手な人や、朝早く起きられない人にとっては、つらいところです。さらには、不器用で、見せびらかしたいようなお弁当を子どもに持たせられない人にとっては、劣等感や罪悪感と隣り合わせであることも事実です。

An attempt to have children who normally eat school lunches experience making their own lunch boxes began in 2001 at an elementary school in Kagawa Prefecture. Parents watch over the children as they plan, buy, cook, pack and eat their lunch boxes, and clean up afterwards. This “Bento Day” is now spreading to elementary and junior high schools throughout Japan as a way to raise children’s



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interest in food, instill a sense of appreciation for family and foodstuffs, and foster independence.

普段、学校給食を食べている子どもたちに弁当作りを体験させる試みが、2001年に香川県の小学校で始まりました。親は見守るだけで、子どもたちが自分で献立を考え、買い出しをして調理し、弁当箱に詰めて食べ、そして後片付けまで一人で行います。この「弁当の日」は、子どもたちの食への関心を高め、家族や食材への感謝の気持ちを芽生えさせ、自立心を育むとして、今では全国の小中学校に広がっています。

If you are looking for a casual way to buy *bento*, you can find them inexpensively at convenience stores and *bento* specialty stores. Moreover, each season brings a different product, and new items are introduced one after another to keep the customers coming back for more. In addition, you can't underestimate *ekiben* (*bento* sold at the train station). *Ekiben* with rich regional flavors are very popular, and I heard that department stores' "Ekiben conventions" featuring *ekiben* from various regions are the most popular of all the events.

お弁当を気軽に買うならコンビニや弁当専門店が安価に手に入ります。しかも、季節ごとに手を変え品を変え、新しいものが次々と出てきて飽きません。さらにあなごれないのが駅弁。地方色豊かな駅弁は大人気で、各地の駅弁を集め

たデパートの「駅弁大会」は、催事の中でも一番人気だと聞きます。

Bento lunches are also a must for *kabuki* theatergoers; my most recent *bento* was a *makunouchi bento* from a restaurant in the Kabuki-za. A colorful array of seafood and mountain delicacies are served in a lacquered stacked box. Nowadays, with the Corona disaster, the only place to eat inside the Kabuki-za is the restaurant, but Japanese people have long looked forward to spreading out their lunch boxes in the audience between acts of a play and enjoying the delicious food while chatting and laughing.

また、歌舞伎の観劇にはお弁当がつきもので、私が最近食べたお弁当は、歌舞伎座にあるレストランの幕の内弁当。漆塗りの重箱に、色とりどりの海の幸、山の幸が入ります。今はコロナ禍で、歌舞伎座内で食事ができるのはレストランのみですが、日本人は昔から、芝居の幕間に客席で弁当を広げて談笑しながら美味しくいただくのを楽しみにしていました。

It is said that the word *bento* was coined in the Azuchi-Momoyama period (16th to 17th century). The Japanese-Portuguese dictionary "Nippo Jisho" (published in 1603-04) already has an entry for *bento*, which means "a box similar to a stationary box with drawers, in which food is placed and carried."



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お弁当という言葉ができたのは、安土桃山時代（16～17世紀）だと言われています。日本語 - ポルトガル語辞書「日葡辞書」（1603-04年刊行）に、すでに Bento という項目があり、「文具箱に似た箱で引き出しが付いており、その中に食物を入れて携行するもの」という意味の記述があります。

In the Edo period (17th to 19th century), *bento* culture developed rapidly. *Onigiri* (rice balls) and dried rice were taken along when traveling, and also accompanied people to cherry blossom viewing and theater performances to enjoy their daily lives. It was around this time that the existing stores specializing in folded boxed lunches in Nihonbashi, Tokyo, appeared.

江戸時代（17～19世紀）になると弁当文化はどんどん発展しました。旅をする時にはおにぎりや干し飯などを持って行き、また、暮らしを楽しむための花見や芝居見物にもつきものです。現存する東京・日本橋の折詰弁当専門店が登場したのもその頃です。

Bento are now popular around the world. One person who has played a role in this is Bertrand THOMAS, a Frenchman living in Kyoto. Japanese food has been booming in France for a long time, and “BENTO” has been attracting attention because of their beauty, convenience, and health consciousness. There-



fore, Bertrand opened “Bento & co,” a French-language website specializing in *bento* boxes, in 2008. The mail order site now has English and Japanese versions, and a physical store has opened in Kyoto, Japan, selling to 105 countries.

いま、BENTO は世界で人気です。これに一役かったのが、京都在住のフランス人、ベルトラン・トマさん。フランスではずいぶん前から和食がブームで、その美しさや利便性、健康志向から BENTO は注目されていました。そこでベルトランさんは、弁当箱を専門に販売するフランス語サイト、Bento&co を 2008 年に開設。通販サイトには現在、英語版、日本語版が加わり、京都に実店舗もオープンし、105 カ国に販売しています。

Take-out *bento* stores have now sprung up in countries all over the world, with lines forming at lunchtime. People enjoying Japanese *bento* culture are spreading around the world.

今ではテイクアウトの弁当店が世界各国にでき、ランチタイムには行列ができるほどだとか。日本の弁当文化を楽しむ人たちが世界に広がっています。

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