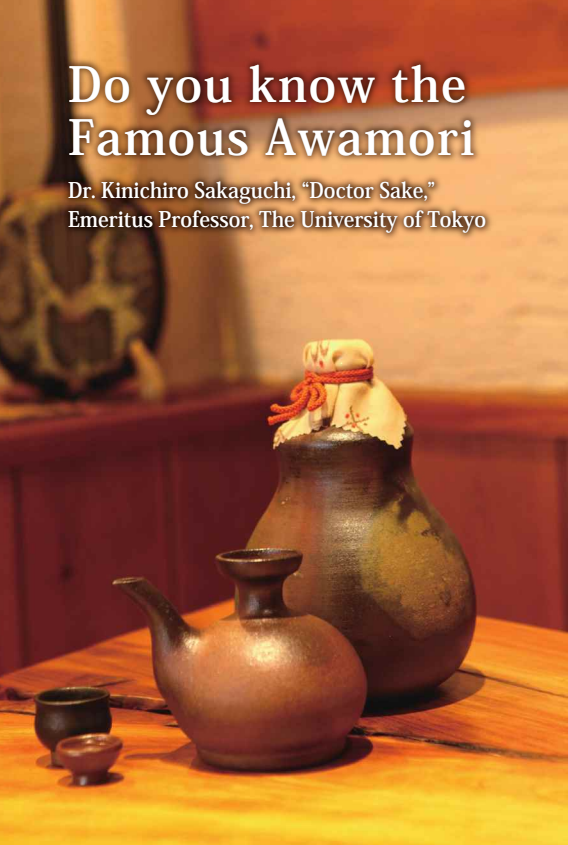


Do you know the Famous Awamori

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Awamori

Awamori is a special kind of Okinawan shochu made with rice and black koji mold. There is a theory that the name comes from a method of measuring alcohol content by allowing the liquor to bubble ("awa" = foam, "mori" = to fill).

Due to the similarity of its flavor and aroma to a Thai Liquor called Laolong, awamori is popularly believed to have been transmitted from Thailand in the 15th Century, but in recent years several other routes have come to light, including one connecting Fujian province in China.

During the Ryukyu dynasty, awamori was an indispensable precious item for diplomacy, used for entertaining Chinese envoys and presenting to the Edo Shogunate.

In addition to being enjoyed as a liquor, awamori is also used as a seasoning to produce unique flavors such as those characteristic of rafute, a distinctive Okinawan pork dish.

Kusu (vintage awamori)

When allowed to sit for 3 years or more after brewing, an awamori is known as "kusu" (vintage liquor). The quality of awamori improves through long aging and maturation, and is imbued with a deeper, more delicious flavor.

In the prewar days, it is said there was a kusu in Shuri from the Chinese Kangxi period (1662-1722 by the Western calendar), and so the legend goes that there is a bottle of awamori that is more than 300 years old. And it is inferred at the same time that the custom of cherishing and preserving awamori started during that era.

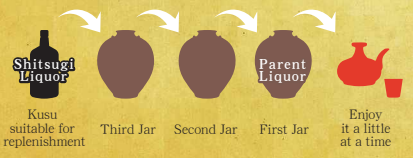


The Traditional Maturation Method, "Shitsugi"

Sho Jun, the fourth son of King Sho Tai, last monarch of Ryukyu, who was also a well known hobbyist, wrote essays concerning kusu that remain to this day. Among them is an indispensable introduction to the brewing of kusu, which lays out a method of preparing multiple earthenware jars to preserve the liquor in chronological order known as "shitsugi."

One begins by putting good liquor in the first jar as a parent liquor, and preparing a second and third jar separately.

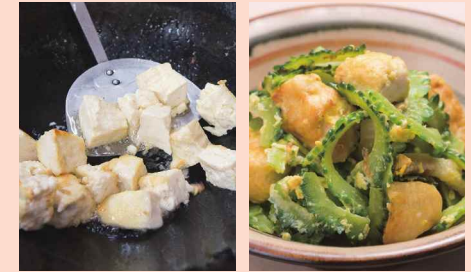
The parent liquor (from the first jar), called "ahya," which has been reduced by pumping and natural evaporation, will supplement the next oldest second jar. In this way, by transferring from the second jar to the third and so on, one can store liquor for hundreds of years without losing its flavor.



Characteristic Cooking Techniques of Ryukyu Cuisine

Champuru

Champuru is a way of cooking that combines tofu and seasonal vegetables. Tofu is an excellent source of vegetable protein, but it lacks vitamins and dietary fiber. This can be compensated for through a combination with vegetables, making champuru a nutritionally rational dish. Here we introduce goya champuru. Goya contains a lot of vitamin C, so it is often eaten in Okinawa as it is effective against heat exhaustion.



Island tofu is broken up by hand to allow for a fuller flavor, and baking to create a crispy exterior prevents moisture from escaping.

Main dishes : Chikina (pickled vegetable) champuru, mamina champuru, goya champuru, rakkyo champuru

Irichi

Irichi is cuisine that uses dried foods, root vegetables, and other low moisture ingredients simmered and stir-fried with stock. The ingredients along with stock and seasoning are thoroughly simmered in, giving the dish a distinctive rich taste. Here we introduce chidekuni irichi. Chidekuni (island carrot) is a soft-fleshed root vegetable often used in stir-fries, simmered dishes, and soups. It is rich in carotene and has long been used as a source of nourishment in Okinawan cooking.



Rather than putting the stock in all at once, it is repeatedly added from a saucepan when the moisture is depleted, allowing the flavor to soak through.

Main dishes : kubu irichi, kanpyo irichi, blood irichi, ukara irichi, sunshi irichi

Nbushi

Vegetables, tofu, pork simmered in miso. A dish that is about halfway between simmer and soup. Also known as ubushi, ubusa, and nbusa.



Stock is added to the stir-fried ingredients, red miso is added, and the dish is simmered as it is mixed in.

Main dishes : nsunabanbushi, goya nbushi, shibui nbushi, nabera nbushi

Putturu tasha

A crunchy, fluffy dish of melted starch: nmukuji putturu
Dishes stir-fried in oil: somin tashiya, nabera tashiya

History of Ryukyuan/Okinawan Food Culture

(Abridged Timeline of Food Culture History from the 11th Century to the Early 19th Century)

Period/Era	Major Events	
11th - 15th Centuries	Large amounts of carbonized rice, wheat and millets, as well as bones of fish, shellfish, snails, wild boar and dugong were excavated from the ruins of the Gusuku era. Ironware, Chinese pottery and Japanese stone pots were also excavated, suggesting the introduction of foreign culture.	Kamakura Period
13th Century (King Eiso)	It is said that Zenkan, a Japanese Buddhist monk, visited the Ryukyus and erected Gokurakuji Temple (introduction of Buddhism). Kissako (Zen term literally meaning "have a cup of tea") was introduced. There is no Buddhism-influenced ban on eating meat.	
1374 (Satto 25)	Trade with China takes place, and pottery and ironware are imported, while Ryukyuan horses and sulfur are exported.	Muromachi Period
1389 (Satto 40)	Relations established with the Korean Kingdom (Goryeo). The King of Chuzan dispatches envoys to the Kingdom of Korea (Kōra), offering sulfur and sugar produced in the Ryukyus. <i>tenjiku-shū</i> (<i>tenjiku</i> = ancient East Asian name for India; <i>shū</i> = liquor) of nanban origin (nanban = European/Western), pepper, clove, alum, celadon wares, sappan wood, etc. In return, the envoys receive ginseng, pine nuts, honey, etc. Since then, the Ryukyus also conduct trade with China under Li Qi (Chinese emperor).	
1392 (Satto 43)	Naturalized citizens from China (36 families from the Bin Kingdom (present day Fujian Province)) come to the Ryukyus, settling in Kume Village and engaging in trade. They follow the customs of the Fujian region.	Azuchi-Momoyama Period
1404 (Bunei 9)	Envoys (investiture envoys) sent by the Chinese emperor visit the Ryukyus and perform investiture rituals, recognizing Bunei as king of Chuzan (first investiture mission). After this, Chinese emperors dispatch 23 investiture missions to the Ryukyus.	
1420 (Shō Shishō 15)	Spices (such as pepper, clove, and turmeric), alcoholic beverages, and tin are brought into the Ryukyus through trade with Southeast Asian countries.	Edo Period
1456 - 1477 (Shō Shishō 15-Shō Shin 1)	Scenes of life in the Ryukyus experienced by shipwrecked Koreans who drifted there can be seen in the Chōsen Ōchō Jitsuroku (Veritable Records of the Joseon Dynasty), also once referred to as <i>Richō Jitsuroku</i> (also translated into English as <i>Annals of the Joseon Dynasty</i>). The shipwrecked Koreans including Kim Bi-ui drift to Yonaguni Island. As there were no iron pots, porcelain, pottery, and spoons on Yonaguni Island, cooking was done using earthen pots. In the Sakishima Islands, people raised cattle, chickens, and dogs, but pigs could not be seen there.	
1478 (Shō Shin 2)	The products of Shuri and Naha were rice, foxtail millet, barley, wheat, proso millet, and sesame. There were iron pots, and in Shuri, rice was filled in lacquered wooden utensils, while broth (soup) was filled in porcelain utensils. There were porcelain plates (small plates). Sake (liquor) and vinegar were made brewing rice, while miso was made using wheat. Salt was made by boiling seawater. Cattle, horses, pigs, sheep (goats), chickens, and dogs were raised for food. Beef was sold at markets.	
1534 (Shō Sei 8)	Chinese investiture envoys visit the Ryukyus. Chen Kan, the chief envoy, writes a record of their stay in the Ryukyus in a book titled "Shi Liu-chiu lu" (Records of the Imperial Title-Confering Envoys to Ryukyu). The following comments are written in this book: The Ryukyuan King hosted a series of banquets for us, including the Yusai-no-en, Sappo-no-en, Chūshū-no-en, and Ryūshū-no-en. The king also provided <i>taiō</i> (cattle, pig, and sheep) as offerings for the Yusai-no-en (funeral of the previous king). For the Sappo-no-en, the king provided us various dishes including culinary delicacies from the mountains and the ocean, as well as hot dishes of beef, pork, and sheep, and they were delicious. However, these dishes were prepared by Chinese cooks who accompanied us; it seems that in the Ryukyus, they do not know how to prepare banquets or how to cook for banquets. Dishes for the Chūshū-no-en are prepared by the imperial court ladies; they are simple but taste good.	
1562 (Shō Gen 7)	Chinese investiture envoys visit the Ryukyus. Guo Rulin, the chief envoy, writes a record of their stay in the Ryukyus in a book titled "Shi Liu-chiu lu." The following comments are written in this book: The daily diet of the common people is one or two bowls of rice with hardly any fish or meat. The islanders use conch shells for cooking.	
1579 (Shō Ei 7)	Markets are established in Shuri and Naha. Women conduct business at the markets, selling vegetables, salted fish guts, and salt.	
1600 (Shō Nei 12)	Kian, a monk from Senshūsakai (present day Sakai, Osaka), comes to the Ryukyus and becomes tea master for the royal government. The art of tea ceremony flourishes around this period.	
1605 (Shō Nei 17)	Sweet potatoes are introduced to the Ryukyus. Noguni Sōkan brings back sweet potatoes from China. The sweet potatoes are cultivated throughout the island by Gima Shinjo and become a major crop. Since then, they become the islanders' staple food.	
1609 (Shō Nei 21)	The Satsuma clan invade the Ryukyus.	
1631 (Shō Hō 11)	Satsuma clan establishes a zaiban (governmental office) in Naha. For entertaining the zaiban bugyo (resident magistrate) with food and drinks, Japanese cuisine is adopted such as shikisankon (three trays of drink and food) and honzen (the main course).	
1634 (Shō Hō 14)	Ryukyuan congratulatory envoys are dispatched to the Edo Shogunate for the first time (beginning of Edo nobori (missions to Edo).	
1666 (Shō Shitsu 19)	Haneji Chōshū (Shō Shōken) becomes a <i>sesshō</i> (a regent assisting the king and handling state affairs). He encourages young people aspiring to become government officials to study Yamato (Japanese) performing arts such as flower arrangement, tea ceremony, and cooking.	
1683 (Shō Tei 15)	Chinese investiture mission arrives in the Ryukyus. Wang Ji visits as the chief envoy and writes a record of their stay in the Ryukyus in a book titled "Shi Liu Qiu Za Lu (Miscellaneous Records of a Mission to Ryukyu)," which contains detailed descriptions of products, food, cooking methods, and customs. Women conduct business in the markets, mostly selling tofu, sweet potato, salted fish guts, and oils. Mostly kelp dishes are served at drinking parties.	
1694 (Shō Tei 26)	"Irihama-style salt production" introduced from Satsuma starts in the Ryukyus. Katabaru (Tomari) in Naha and Yagaji become major production sites.	
1697 (Shō Tei 29)	The Ryukyuan royal government issues a ban on the slaughtering of cattle and horses. Common people are forbidden to slaughter cattle and serve the meat for their funerals and wedding events.	
1706 (Shō Tei 38)	Tea utensils, ceramics, pots, rice, <i>shōchū</i> , tea, miso, soy sauce, vinegar, and salt are sold at the Oyamise, an office of the Ryukyuan royal government. Usanmi (festive dishes packed in lacquered multi-tiered boxes) are offered during seasonal events, while Kagami-mochi (round rice cakes) are offered on the seventh day of the new year (January 7).	
1709 (Shō Tei 41)	Famine takes toll of 3,199 people. Oku villagers transplanted <i>setetsu</i> (cycad) from Hedo and rescue people by supplying <i>setetsu</i> to Kunigami, Ogimi, Kushi, and Oma magiri.	
1713 (Shō Kei 1)	The Ryukyuan royal government sends notices to various villages, instructing them to raise chickens and pigs. "Ryukyu-koku Yurai-ki," the first official chorography of the Ryukyu Kingdom, is compiled. It describes the origin of the offerings and animal/plant food ingredients used during the royal government's events and rituals. Dishes consisting of bitter melon and sponge gourd, which were introduced from China, become popular among the common people from around this time.	
1719 (Shō Kei 7)	Chinese investiture envoys visit the Ryukyus. Vice-chief envoy Xu Baoguang writes an account of their stay in the Ryukyus in a book titled "Chuzan Denshin-roku." Tasting and evaluating the food and drinks served at a series of seven banquets hosted by the king, as well as daily meals, a delicacy dish consisting of dugong (a local specialty), and <i>sukuarasu</i> (salted juvenile rabbit fish), Xu praises them as being delicious. He also gives a detailed description of the lives of the common people, livestock and vegetables, manners and customs, and kissako. It is said in the book that during sightseeing trips, members of the <i>shizoku</i> (warrior class) use lacquered <i>sageju</i> (picnic baskets), while the common people use simple <i>jubako</i> (tiered food boxes). It is written in the book that at a Confucian temple on Kume Island, Chinese customs are incorporated in the rituals held there, such as providing <i>taiō</i> / <i>shōrō</i> (beef, pork, and sheep) as sacrificial offerings, and also that the investiture mission was accompanied by four cooks and two confectionery chefs.	
1725 - 1729	Ukانشin-udui (crown ship dances) began in the Ryukyus.	
1729 (Shō Kei 17)	Sai On became a member of the Sanshikan (Council of Three, a government body of the Ryukyu Kingdom). It is written in "Hitori Monogatari (Soliloquy)," that pigs were bred around this time, enabling procurement within the island when Chinese Ukanshin crown ships arrived.	

Period/Era	Major Events	
1731 (Shō Kei 19)	"Ryukyu-koku Kyū-ki" is compiled. It contains descriptions of official court positions (Usadō, Uryōriza, and Ohōchō), events, and <i>kotohajime</i> (start of things).	Edo Period
1734 (Shō Kei 22)	Sai On and others write "Nōmuchiō (Book on Agricultural Affairs)," encouraging the planting of <i>setetsu</i> (cycads) in preparation for times of bad harvest. The book also describes how to remove a toxic ingredient from <i>setetsu</i> , how to make miso, and how to cook it.	
1736 (Shō Kei 24)	Sai Bunbu's "Shihondō-Kareji" is compiled. It is the family code of the Sai family of Kume Village. There are descriptions of ceremonial events and rituals, as well as <i>usami</i> dishes for the Shiiiii Festival.	Meiji Era
1756 (Shō Boku 5)	Arakaki Kyoshun studies under hōchōnin (kitchen-knife master) Kanekadan Pechin to learn how to make Japanese-style confectionery. See "Shinsan Ka Family Records."	
1768 (Shō Boku 17)	The Shiiiii Festival is held for the first time at Tamaudun. Following Chinese customs, three sacrificial offerings (beef, pork, and sheep) are presented.	
1772 (Shō Boku 21)	Arakaki Kyoshun studies under a Satsuma culinary chef to learn about how to prepare <i>shikisankon</i> (triple round of drinks).	
1800 (Shō On 6)	Chinese investiture envoys visit the Ryukyus. vice-chief envoy Li Dingyuan writes a record of their stay in the Ryukyus in a book titled "Shi Ryukyu-ki (Record of Mission to Ryukyu)." Written in diary form, it contains comments on daily meals and detailed descriptions of food ingredients and dishes. It is mentioned in the book that the envoys tasted <i>erabu</i> black-banded sea kraits, dugongs, and <i>katsubushi</i> (dried bonito).	
1808 (Shō Kō 5)	Ukansen-ryōri (crown ship cuisine; i.e., cuisine for Chinese investiture envoys) is established. Qikun (chief investiture envoy) and Fei Xizhang (vice-chief investiture envoy) co-author a record of their stay in the Ryukyus in a book titled "Zoku Ryukyu-koku Shiryaku (Continuation of a Brief History of the Ryukyu Kingdom)." A document titled "Ryukyu Sapposhi Ikken" is published during this year. It contains "Sappō no Toki Chokushi Kondate narabini Taku no Zu," an illustration revealing the entire contents of <i>ukansen-ryōri</i> for the first time. It shows a five-tiered banquet dish consisting of Chinese ingredients such as edible birds' nests, shark fins, sea cucumbers, and abalone, as well as Ryukyuan and Japanese ingredients.	
1832 (Shō Kō 29)	Tokashiki Tsūkan writes a book titled "Gyozen Honzō (Edible Plants of the Ryukyus)." It is referred to as a book on dietary medical treatment. It describes the effects of 320 food ingredients and the combinations of the ingredients.	
1839 (Shō Iku 6)	Arakaki Pechin studies under Satsuma clan kitchen-knife master Ishihara Kaemon and receives a diploma for learning Japanese confectionery manufacturing methods. At the Ryukyu Kariya (Ryukyuan embassy), Arakaki makes Chinese-style dishes and confectionery and serves them to the lord of the Satsuma clan.	
1853 (Shō Tai 6)	Commodore Perry visits the Ryukyus. He is entertained at Ufumiudun. He is treated with court cuisine consisting of 12 dishes and confectionery.	
1861 (Shō Tai 14)	Maeshiro Pechin studies under Satsuma clan kitchen-knife master Ishihara Kaemon and receives a diploma for learning Japanese cuisine.	
1868 (Shō Tai 19)	Chinese investiture mission arrives in the Ryukyus. The investiture envoys confirm Shōtai as King of Ryukyu (final investiture mission to the Ryukyus). Chief envoy Zhao Xin writes a record of their stay in the Ryukyus in a book titled "Zoku Ryukyu-koku Shiryaku (Continuation of a Brief History of the Ryukyu Kingdom)." A document titled "Ryukyu Kansens Kiroku" is published. It contains a passage on <i>ukansen-ryōri</i> menu similar to that in the previously published "Ryukyu Sapposhi Ikken." In addition, there are records of items, quantities, etc., of ingredients of offerings provided at a <i>yusai</i> (funeral of the previous king) as well as the ingredients of dishes offered to the investiture envoys staying in the Ryukyus.	
1870 (Shō Tai 23)	A Shiiiii Festival is held at the Izena Tamaudun for the first time. Usanmi offerings can be seen in a document titled "Iheya-jima Kōjichō (Book of Official Events on Iheya Island)."	
1873 (Shō Tai 26)	"Bukubuku tea" starts to be consumed around the Naha area.	
1876 (Shō Tai 29)	Ministry of Finance surveys called "Ryukyu Han Zakki" and "Ryukyu Han Kan-nai Bussan Hyō" contain records of survey data on products, food (vegetables, seafood, fruits, and seaweed), drugs, and other items.	
1877 (Shō Tai 30)	Kawarada Moriharu writes books titled "Ryukyu Kikō" and "Ryukyu Bibō-roku" upon investigating and recording the living conditions and trade products of the islanders.	
1879 (Shō Tai 32)	Merchants from outside the prefecture, referred to as "kiryū shōnin (temporary resident merchants)," make inroads into the Ryukyuan economy through funding with private sector commercial capital. Coming to the Ryukyus mainly from Kagoshima, Osaka, Kyoto, and Hyogo and settling here, the merchants run businesses, dealing single-handedly with nearly all imported goods such as white rice, rapeseed oil, and soy sauce.	
1880 (Meiji 13)	Okinawa Prefecture is established. Full annexation of the Ryukyus (Ryukyu shobun) by the Meiji government takes place, and the royal government collapses. Shōtai hands over Shurijo Castle.	
1882 (Meiji 15)	"Okashidon manrei-chō" is compiled. The names and ingredients of more than 100 confectionaries are verified, trial products are made, and records are taken.	
1882 (Meiji 15)	"Matsuri no Toki Zenu Nikki (Banquet Menu During Festivities)" is compiled. This is a book containing a record of the menu of dishes served at family rituals held at Miyara Dunchi in the Yaeyama Islands as well as on the occasion of an assignment (by the royal government) to serve as a zaiban (guard) in the Yaeyama Islands. The records include offerings and food ingredients used in the menu of dishes for each event. The plates of offerings served during a Buddhist memorial service consist of Shōjin Ryōri, a vegetarian cuisine where no meat and fish are used at all. Among other things, food ingredients (dugongs, bird's nest fern, adan buds, and a type of seaweed called <i>murasaki nori</i> (or <i>ama nori</i>), as well as dishes unique to the Yaeyama Islands, can be seen in this book.	
1882 (Meiji 15)	Ozaki Saburō writes a book titled "Okinawa-ken shisatsu fukumei-sho." He goes around various magiri districts and writes down local products, customs, and farmers' living conditions.	
1883 (Meiji 16)	A breakdown of livestock in the prefecture is as follows: 20,153 cattle, 14,581 horses, 56,609 pigs, and 36,507 goats. The number of pigs slaughtered is the highest in the country.	
1883 (Meiji 16) - 1884 (Meiji 17)	The number of tofu manufacturers and retailers increases in Shuri and Naha. Ushinja tofu is the main product sold in the markets in Yogi and Kōhagura.	
1887 (Meiji 20) - Taisho Era	"Okinawa-ken Kyūkan Magiri Naihō" is compiled. This is a document on investigations conducted by the Meiji government and Okinawa Prefectural Office concerning old customs/practices. Customs, regulations, various institutions of various magiri, as well as celebrations/rituals being practiced there have been investigated and recorded. The size of tiered-box dishes and the contents of the dishes are controlled, and violators are fined. It became a valuable resource to learn about food served at events.	
1888 (Meiji 21)	Pottery merchants make inroads into the Ryukyus from Japan. Inexpensive and durable pottery products are introduced. A tableware called "sunkan makai" (rice bowl) is one of them.	
1889 - 1890 (Meiji 22-23)	A Western restaurant opens in Nishi-Shinmachi, Naha. Shopping districts such as Ufujo-me Dōri, Ishijo Dōri, and Mise-no-mae Dōri are bustling with people.	
1889 - 1890 (Meiji 22-23)	A milk store opens for the first time in Naha. It is said that since then, it became customary among people in Shuri and Naha to drink milk, and milk stores consequently increased.	
1893 (Meiji 26)	It is written by Basil Hall Chamberlain that on the occasion of his visit to the Ryukyus, he was invited to Prince Shō Ten's residence (Nakagusuku Udon) and entertained with Japanese cuisine, but the dishes he was entertained with at Prince Shō Jun's residence (Matsuyama Udon) at a later date was perfect Chinese cuisine.	
1901 (Meiji 34)	Full-scale bonito fishery starts in Zamami Village, and processing and manufacture of <i>katsubushi</i> (dried bonito) is conducted.	
1902 (Meiji 35)	Fukunaga Giichi starts offering "Shina Soba," which eventually evolved into Okinawa Soba.	
1908 (Meiji 41)	Offerings during Obon festival change from the fruits of adan (pandanus palm, or screw pine) and fruits of trees to pineapples, bananas, etc. Arakaki Shukukō opens a Ryukyuan confectionery specialty store in Nishizato. He is the grandson of and successor to Arakaki Shukuki, who was a kitchen-knife master working at the royal government in Shuri.	