

Tofu Hyakuchin: A Hundred Delicacies of Tofu

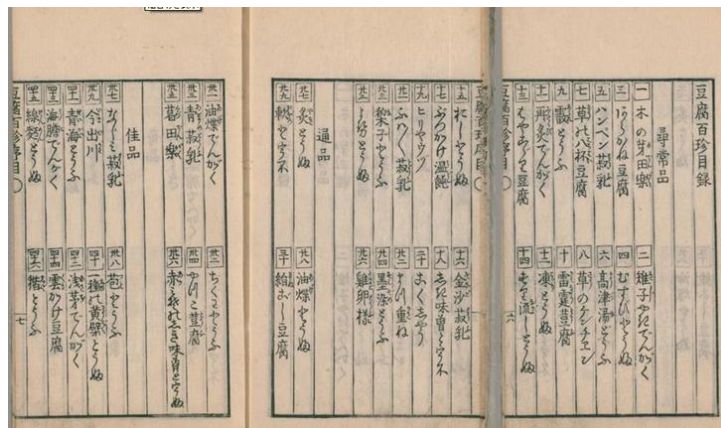
-Enjoying taste of Edo

Yasuyo Nagamura

Legislative Reference and Information Resources Division

Research and Legislative Reference Bureau

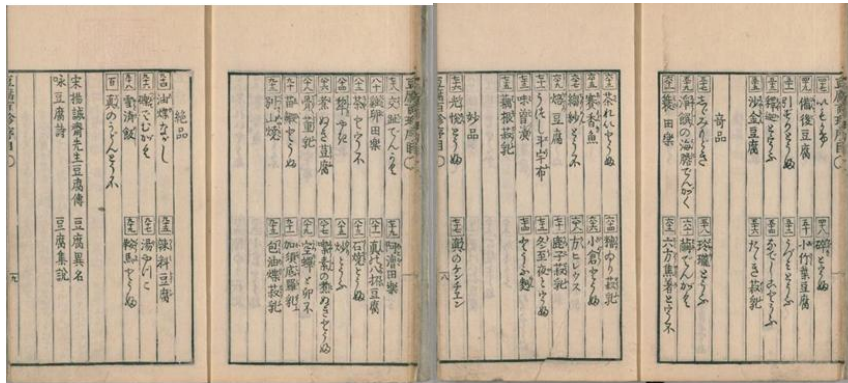
This is a translation of the article in Japanese of the same title
in NDL Monthly Bulletin No. 627 (June 2013).



<<Photo 1: Digitized pages of the "Tofu Hyakuchin" showing the list of tofu delicacies from 1 to 46

Seikyodojin "Tofu Hyakuchin," Osaka, 1782, 23cm <NDL call no.:特 1-2131>

[NDL Digitized Contents](#), frame number 7 to 8>>



<<Photo 2: Digitized pages of the “Tofu Hyakuchin” showing the list of tofu delicacies from 47 to 100

Seikyodojin “Tofu Hyakuchin,” Osaka, 1782, 23cm <NDL call no.:特 1-2131>

[NDL Digitized Contents](#), frame number 9 to 10>>

How many tofu dishes can you imagine? A book showing wondrously 100 kinds of tofu delicacies with their recipes was published in Edo period. The title is “Tofu Hyakuchin,” meaning a hundred delicacies of tofu.

The author’s name is given as Seikyodojin Kahitsujun (in Chinese characters, 醒狂道人何必醇). It is said that his real name was Sodani Gakusen (1738-1797), a seal-engraver in Osaka. Maybe because the author was not a professional chef, this book is totally unique and different from previous recipe books. The author was such an entertainer that the book contains not only 100 tofu recipes, but also enjoyable contents such as their respective ratings, Chinese poetry and trivia about tofu. Amusing contents like this, and the word Hyakuchin (lit. 100 delicacies) itself, must have been novel for the people of that time. This book had gained such popularity at the time that a follow-up, [“Tofu Hyakuchin Zokuhen”](#) (A Hundred Delicacies of Tofu: Sequel) was published in 1783. [“Tofu Hyakuchin Yoroku”](#) (A Hundred Delicacies of Tofu: Supplement) was also published in 1784, though it had actually been already published under the name of “Toka-shu” in Edo in 1782¹ and Fujiya Zenshichi, publisher of “Tofu Hyakuchin,” bought the copyright of it to republish it as an additional to the series.

Catching onto the popularity of this book, “a hundred delicacies” of other ingredients were published one after another. For example, titles such as “Tai Hyakuchin Ryori Himitsubako” (lit. secret box of a hundred porgy delicacies), “Imo Hyakuchin” (lit. a hundred sweet potato delicacies) and “Konnyaku Hyakuchin” (lit. a hundred konjac delicacies) were published.

¹ Its published year is based on “*Kyoho igo Edo shuppan shomoku*” (享保以後江戸出版書目)

National Diet Library Newsletter

In “Tofu Hyakuchin,” the author assigns six grades from “mediocre cuisine” to “superb cuisine.” The seven delicacies below are rated “superb.”

- Agenagashi: after frying tofu with sesame oil, blanch it to remove the oil and then boil in kuzu-yu (arrowroot gruel)
- Karami tofu: simmer tofu over low heat all day long in soup made from dried bonito and light-colored soy sauce with extra amount of ginger
- Tsubute dengaku: grilled small pieces of tofu dressed with vinegared miso (bean paste) with mustard and poppy seeds
- Yuyakko: boil tofu in kuzu-yu (arrowroot gruel)
- Yukigemeshi (lit. melting snow rice): after boiling noodle-shaped tofu with soy sauce and sake, serve it with grated daikon radish and twice-boiled rice
- Kurama tofu: after frying tofu, peel its coating and serve with umebishio (Japanese plum jam)
- Shin no udon tofu (lit. Genuine tofu noodle): after steeping noodle-shaped tofu in hot water, served in boiled water



<< Tsubute dengaku cooked by the writer >>

There are 16 grilled tofu dishes in the “Tofu Hyakuchin.” I used a small gas grill. This dish goes with vinegared miso with mustard very well and tastes elegant.



<<Yukigemeshi cooked by the writer >>

Although it is rather difficult to cut tofu like noodles and keep its shape, there are seven noodle-form tofu dishes in “Tofu Hyakuchin.” The taste accentuated by the grated daikon radish was appetizing.

The author's pen name, Kahitsujun (何必醇), means "not only rich tasting cuisine but a simple dish also tastes great." You can feel the author's spirit from the fact that "Yuyakko," very simple boiled tofu, is ranked as "superb."



<<Illustration of tofu vendor from "Morisada Manko (守貞謾稿) No.6," edited by Kiso KITAGAWA>>

This illustration compares pail's form in Edo area (left) with that in Kansai area (right).

In "[Morisada Manko](#) (守貞謾稿), depicting the customs of the Edo period of Japan, you can see tofu-related scenes in this period. One cake of tofu in the Edo area at that time was about one-tenth or one-eleventh of the original tofu made in a tofu mold of 55cm (about 22 inch) by 27cm (about 11 inch). Vendors in the Edo area sold quarter cakes of tofu at minimum. It says that tofu of the Kansai area was smaller, softer and whiter than that of the Edo area, while in Edo tofu was firmer and not white².

Tofu is so familiar for Japanese as an ingredient that "Tofu Hyakuchin" still enraptures the hearts of our people. "Tofu Hyakuchin" was republished and serialized in a magazine titled "Fujo zasshi" (lit. magazine for women) in 1893, with a prefatory note saying "to help you to plan dinner menus." From the Showa period, contemporary versions of "Tofu Hyakuchin" were published one after another. In "[Gendai Tofu Hyakuchin Tsujitome](#)" (lit. modern hundred delicacies of tofu in Restaurant Tsujitome), one of these books published in 1962, Toko KON, Buddhist monk and novelist, recalled his memory: "There is a rare book titled Tofu Hyakuchin. I was astonished to know that Junichiro TANIZAKI (谷崎潤一郎, 1886-1965, one of the major writers of modern Japanese literature) cooked and ate all the hundred of tofu delicacies shown in the book." In 2008, "[Tofu Hyakuchin](#)," the same title which recreates 100 tofu delicacies was published and you can easily cook and enjoy the tastes of "Tofu Hyakuchin" yourself.

² "Morisada Manko Koshu No.1" (守貞謾稿 後集卷 1), frame number 30 (<http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/2536674>)