

はしがき

食材が比較的安直に入手できる現代において、その食材にまつわる歴史やエピソードを知り、いかに人類が食を求めて葛藤してきたかを知ることは、20世紀の後半から急速に展開を見せてきた「食育」という点からみてもきわめて重要である。食育とはより良い食生活を学ぶことであるが、食材をいかに調理し、どのようなマナーで食べるのかだけでは不十分である。その食材がいかなる経緯によって現在眼前にあるのかということを知ることは、食育の内容を一層豊かにしてくれるであろう。あるものはためらいをもって、あるものは争いの結果、あるものは激しい渴望の結果、食物として受け入れられたいきさつを学ぶことは、食材そのものを見ていただけでは推察できないことであるので、改めて学ばなければならない。

本書で取り上げた食材は、お茶、コーヒー、チョコレート、リンゴ、蜂蜜、チーズ、ウサギ肉、牛肉、イチゴ、キャベツ、タラ、ニンジン、ジャガイモ、トマト、レモン、タマネギ、パン、オート麦、七面鳥、ウナギである。いずれも日本においてもポピュラーなものばかりであるが、それに関するエピソードは知られているものもあるが、意外と知られていない事柄が多い。もちろん、著者が序文で述べているように、これらの食材に関する事項は挙げたらきりが無いであろうが、少なくとも著者の関心事は、知ることの少ない読者の関心事にはなりうる。

著者はスコットランド出身であり、したがって英語もブリティッシュである。日本ではアメリカ英語が標準視されているが、世界を見回したとき、いまだに大英帝国の支配は多くの国々に影響を及ぼしており、その支配言語であるブリティッシュ・イングリッシュに慣れておくことも必要であろう。

なお、本書に収録されたエッセイのうち数編は、ある大学の入学試験問題として過去に採用されたことがあるので、問題集などですでにおなじみの方があるかもしれないことを付記しておく。

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Introduction

A glance at the shelves of any reasonably well-stocked supermarket today shows the remarkable variety of foodstuffs available to the average household. Fresh fruit and vegetables are for sale outside of their normal seasons; meat, fish and poultry in
5 abundance can be bought at reasonable cost. The development of modern methods of transport means that fresh food can be brought by road, rail or air, not only from other parts of our own country, but also from all corners of the globe. It can be preserved in tins or by freezing. In winter as well as in summer we
10 can eat our fill of fresh and nourishing food.

How different life was for our ancestors! For most people, life was an unending struggle to find enough to feed themselves, and to preserve for the winter some of the surplus of summer and autumn. When spring came, wild shoots could be found and
15 eaten, but it was not until summer that new sources of nourishment became abundant. Many people went hungry for most of the year. In bad times they starved.

Food is the most basic necessity for sustaining life, so it is not surprising that it assumed a symbolic importance in culture, with
20 many beliefs and customs attached to it.

This book is a look at some of the foodstuffs that have been important in Western culture, and at how we have regarded them over the ages. It is not by any means an exhaustive treatment of the substances that make up our diet, nor of the varying

ways in which we prepare them. Rather, it is an idiosyncratic collection of themes that happened to catch my interest. Tradition and history, mythology and folklore all find a place here. Nor is it the end of the story. There are still many other similar tales to be told. 5

I hope that readers will find it as interesting to read these accounts as it was for me to research and to write them.

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My deepest gratitude is due to my husband, Takeshi Kotake, for his unfailing support and encouragement over the years, including in the writing of this book. Sadly, he did not live to see its publication.

This book is for him. 15

M. Heather Kotake

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1. The Cup that Cheers

1-02

Berthed in dry dock on the banks of the River Thames at Greenwich is a famous ship, the tea clipper *Cutty Sark*, the fastest ship of her day, and the last survivor of the swift and beautiful sailing ships that brought tea from China to 19th century Britain.



It is almost impossible to imagine life in Britain without tea, “the cup that cheers but does not inebriate”.

We sip the refreshing beverage from

breakfast till bedtime. Tea lubricates all our social activity.

Workmen pause for a morning tea break, ladies hold afternoon

tea parties. Some prefer it plain, others with milk, or sugar, or

both. Arguments rage as to whether the milk should be poured

into the cup first, or the tea. Some insist on “Russian tea”, with lemon, not milk.

Even after the liquid is drunk, the leaves may have some use.

Amateur fortunetellers predict the future from the pattern of

leaves left at the bottom of the cup. Larger quantities were used

in the past when sweeping the dust from unvarnished wooden

floors. Gardeners dig them into the soil around rose bushes, to encourage the production of larger, more fragrant flowers.

Tea was first introduced into Britain in 1657, but because of its cost did not become a popular drink until the price came down in the mid-19th century. In the early days, tea was infused in large quantities and stored in barrels, like beer. When it was to be drunk, a sufficient amount was drawn from the barrel and heated up for use. It was not until later that the Chinese system of making tea fresh in a pot was adopted, using one spoonful of tealeaves for each person and "one for the pot". Modern European teapots are remarkably similar to old Chinese ones.

Elegant silver-plated teapots, with matching milk jug and sugar basin, have from the beginning graced the tables of the well-to-do. However, purists maintain that to preserve its fine flavour the tea should first be infused in a brown china pot, and only then be transferred to the silver one.

Many British people appreciate a cup of tea when they wake up, to refresh them before they face the day. Sleeping cars on the overnight express trains between London and Scotland therefore provided this service to passengers on request, the sleeping car attendant awaking the passengers with a cup of tea and a biscuit before they reached their destination. In the 1950s a very popular gadget was an alarm clock fitted with a tea-making machine. The machine made the tea and automatically poured it into the cup just as the alarm rang. Thus the housewife too could enjoy the luxury of early-morning tea in bed.

While we think of tea-drinking as being a relaxing activity, accompanied by agreeable conversation, the tea trade itself has

not always been peaceful. In the 19th century, for example, it started the Opium Wars. The British East India Company was buying tea from China, but did not want to pay cash, if it could avoid it. Following the practice of the Portuguese and Dutch, it began bartering chests of opium from India for chests of tea from China. When the Chinese government tried to stop the opium coming in, British warships broke the blockade. It is one of the less edifying chapters in British history.

More famously, perhaps, the so-called Boston Tea Party helped to precipitate the American War of Independence. Britain had attempted to force the importation of tea into the colony through a monopoly, largely so that high taxes could be levied. In December, 1773, a group of irate citizens boarded the ships bringing it in, and threw the tea into Boston harbour, thereby raising the standard of revolt. What happened to the tea? Most of the chests were lost, others quietly retrieved and, probably, drunk. Some of this historic tea is on display today in a commemorative exhibit. It is unlikely that it would be drinkable.

It is tempting to speculate on whether this episode may have had other long-term consequences. While in most English-speaking countries the annual consumption of tea is high, being well over 4 kilograms per head in Britain, in the United States it is only a little over half a kilogram. Americans, however, consume 25 times as much coffee as tea. Could this imbalance in consumption result from the events of 1773?

Comprehension

1. What is the *Cutty Sark*?
 - a. A ship that sails up and down the River Thames from Greenwich.
 - b. The last sailing ship in Britain.
 - c. An old ship that has been turned into a floating bank.
 - d. A fast ship built for the particular purpose of carrying tea.

2. What is the meaning of “the cup that cheers but does not inebriate”?
 - a. Tea improves one’s spirits without making one drunk.
 - b. Tea can be served in many different ways.
 - c. Tea can be enjoyed on many different occasions.
 - d. There are uses for tea other than for drinking.

3. What was the Boston Tea Party?
 - a. A political group trying to improve the quality of tea.
 - b. A sociable afternoon gathering for drinking tea and talking.
 - c. A forceful protest about the price of tea.
 - d. An exhibition of historic tea.