

Tenzo kyokun



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As hundreds of hungry customers struggle for a reservation in a high-class restaurant, the chef prepares for the day; cleaning his station, fixing his ingredients, briefing his assistants and preparing the menu for the day. In another part of the world, the tenzo takes the day to reflect upon his duties and carefully prepares the food to be eaten by the small community in which he serves. The chef masterfully cooks the dish, adding spices and flavors here and there and arranges the food to appeal to the eye as well as the appetite.

He shouts instructions to the other chefs in the kitchen as they prepare dishes as fast as possible. On the other hand, the tenzo starts the day with a prayer and consults with the officers of the community with regard the food to be prepared for the day and the week. As soon as the tenzo receives his instructions, he carefully selects the ingredients to be used and handles it with care. The duties of a world-class celebrity chef is somehow similar to that of a Tenzo kyokun, which is one of the six officers in a Buddhist monastery responsible for the nourishment of the community inside it.

Most chefs in the modern world apply discipline apart from the strict standards of quality and preparation. Also, most chefs do not entirely limit themselves in the kitchen as they also take part on how they would welcome diners into their restaurant. A good eating experience is just not about the food but also the hospitality one receives when dining, not far from the standards of a tenzo. The Tenzo The tenzo is not merely just the cook but also acts as an a integral part of a Buddhist community through a spiritual experience with food and preparation.

Everyday following the midday meal, the tenzo consults the administrator (tsusu) and the assistant administrator (kansu) and procures the next day's food necessities such as rice, vegetables, fish, etc. After having received the produce, the tenzo should protect and be frugal with the ingredients as though it were their very own eyes. The tenzo should also value every ingredient or dish as though it were being offered for an imperial meal. Following this, all the other officers of the monastery and the tenzo meet in the kitchen building in order to consider what vegetables should be eaten and how the rice should be prepared.

After the menu is decided upon by the officers, it is displayed on the board by the abbot's residence and the study hall (Dogen Zenji). In preparation of the meals, The tenzo has the sole responsibility of preparing the ingredients through the use of his own hands and administering the whole meal by himself. With rice, the tenzo carefully washes sand away from the grain and ensures that all food prepared and the work area is clean and orderly. The tenzo should also have proper concentration and must be ready to adapt to the situation at hand in order not to be careless for it will cause the imbalance in the food.

The tenzo also takes into account every bit of detail during the meal - the number of monks in the monastery either the young, sick, or elderly. Also, the ingredients are measured to exact proportions so that all members have equal portions in the meal. In the process of cooking, the tenzo has the duty to harmonize the six flavors of food (bitter, sour, sweet, hot, mild, salty) and the three virtues light (kyonan), clean (joketsu), dignified (nyoho). The tenzo

plans the food in advance as he prepares not only for the day but also for the week.

Also the assistants in the kitchen make it a point to chant the sutras whenever they would begin work. According to Zen Monastic Standards, if the tenzo fails to achieve these requirements then he is not truly serving the community. The Monastic standards also dictate that the tenzo should possess a way-seeking mind as any other member of the monastery. When carrying out duties, the teachings of the Way acts as a guide for the tenzo in realizing the full potential of his service to the community (Dogen Zenji).

The passages also narrate the experience of the author with tenzos in different Buddhist monasteries. He observed during the course of his visits an elderly monk drying mushrooms under a baking hot sun. When he asked if he had assistants to do work for him, the elderly monk replied that 'other people are not me. ' The author consequently asked if why was the monk drying the mushrooms at the time of the day, the monk replied: " if not now, when? " The author was moved by the importance of duties by the tenzo. Read also when delivering a briefing volume and rate are classified

Also, another elderly tenzo from a far away monastery travels many miles in order to buy Japanese mushrooms from traders. He travels that many miles in order to provide food for the community. When asked if he had other assistants to prepare the food while he was away, the tenzo replied that his responsibility is his own and not of others and if he did not prepare the meal himself, it would not go well (Dogen Zenji). The Way of the Tenzo The responsibility of tenzo is important for the way of life in the monastery as his duty is not to only feed and satisfy appetites.

The tenzo's duties and responsibilities are also of relative importance as they have to take into account every small detail of the meal process everyday as well as invoking a spiritual exercise and experience of the food. Food selection and preparation is a spiritual process for and it is essential for the tenzo to maintain such standards. Food is not viewed as a temporary pacification of hunger but a spiritual nourishment of the soul. Additionally, the ingredients used for the meals possess essential virtues that the tenzo utilizes in order to generate spiritual satisfaction.

It should also be observed that the three virtues of an ingredient or produce must be light, clean, and dignified. In western cooking, ingredients are flavored with different herbs and spices to accentuate or redefine the flavor of a dish. In Zen cooking however, herbs and spices are only used sparingly in order to add a hint of flavor but not necessarily overpower the essence of the food. Since Buddhist monks live life in a simple way, their food is also a reflection of that way of life. Zen cooking preparation revolves on simplicity and tasting the real 'essence' or flavor of food.

Rice is also a staple food for Buddhist communities as well as countries in the Asiatic continent. In the preparation of rice, the tenzo carefully handles every grain and cleanses the rice away from dust. Rice, among other food items in the Zen cooking ideologies is considered as a blessing and therefore should be treated with care. With regard to the cooking process, a tenzo should possess a true, sincere and pure mind when preparing the dishes. Even if blessed with succulent and fresh produce, if a tenzo does not possess the aforementioned qualities, then the food will taste terrible.

The tenzo should have such qualities since the state of mind also reflects the cooking process and consequently the taste of the food. Also, the food preparation must be handled by the tenzo itself for if the preparation process is neglected then the food will not possess the three virtues as well as the accentuation of the six flavors. Mass producing goods and services is a phenomenon on modern society today as the industry produces ready-made materials proffered upon the masses, that unconsciously influences lifestyle and perspectives of society today.

The aesthetic arts begin to lose its essence and uniqueness as the industry reproduces objects that can be readily be accessed by the masses. In the food industry, food is reproduced to mimic real life counterparts of flavors and taste so as to present another reality when experiencing food. Since the corporate world offers a routine lifestyle for most of its population, individuals may have little or no time at all when it comes to preparing home-cooked meals for breakfast, lunch, and dinner.

People often rely on ready to eat products instead of having to endure tedious hours while cooking that can be otherwise dedicated to work. In the context of Zen cooking, the tenzo remains responsible for the food of the community, ensuring quality with appropriate proportions. On the other hand, mass produced products are rarely handled by people themselves as they entrust the production process to machines which ensures quality, exact quantity, and minimum risk in errors.

As per the dietary concerns of mass produced foods, it uses artificial ingredients to give another perception of flavor and taste. It often becomes addictive and diminishes the nutritional intake of the body. Basing from Zen

cooking beliefs, mass producing food is similar to a tenzo that does not involve himself with the process of preparing food. Mass produced food lacks the three senses which are essential to Zen cooking. Furthermore, these foods lack the essentials of Zen cooking, as it is not prepared by a person who has a clear mind and understanding of the Way.

In essence, mass produced goods lack proper preparation, the essential earth-grown ingredients and the purpose of serving a community spiritually. Zen cooking has purpose to nourish not only the physical form but also the soul of the person and it is the tenzo's duty to serve that purpose.

Work Cited Eihei Dogen Zenji. Tenzo Kyokun: Instructions for the Tenzo. trans. Yasuda Joshu Dainen and Anzan Hoshin roshi. Great Matter Publications, 1996. July 11 2008. .