

Japanese Cuisine

Anzu Kawazoe

Designing Creative Technologies

The most difficult Japanese dish to make is Japanese simmered food. Simmered food is one of the traditional foods in Japan and the taste is different depends on families. The way to make is taught by parents and their children make simmered food in the future family. “Nikujaga” which is simmered potatoes and pork is the most popular Japanese simmered food. In making Nikujaga, there is a lot of the process and secret way to make the best Nikujaga. Specifically, the tenderness of ingredients and taste of the soup is the key to decide the taste of the Nikujaga. In this paper, I describe the analysis of my experience of making good Nikujaga.

My mother taught how to make Nikujaga including the secret techniques. As I described to make the best Nikujaga, we need to make ingredient best tenderness. First, my mother taught me how to cut vegetables and prepare pork. We have a lot of ways to cut vegetables. When we make simmered food, we need to cut vegetables larger to soak the flavor of source in and not to break easily during boiling. In the Nikujaga, we use carrots, potatoes, and onions. For example, when we cut the carrots, we put a carrot horizontally on the cut board and put a knife diagonally. This cutting technique is called “Rangiri.” Carrots are sliced larger and it is hard to break during boiling. Besides vegetables, meat also should be prepared to make it good tenderness. The tissue of the meat will be tough when we boil it longer but when we make simmered food, it is necessary to boil longer. Otherwise, the flavor of the source is not soaked in the meat. If we use expensive pork, we can solve the problem of tenderness. However, the budget for the dinner is limited. My mother taught the secret techniques to make pork tender. It is that before boiling the pork, we sink the pork into the Japanese Sake. Second, my mother taught how to make a source. The source is the most important key to decide the taste of Nikujaga. She taught me that we use soy source, Japanese sake, Mirin, fish broth and honey with a certain amount. The quantity of the ingredient of the source should be precise. Therefore, I still have a memo about the quantity of each ingredient of the source.

Like debuggng the programing code, we also have a process to approach the best Nikujaga. First, I made Nikujaga with my mother and tried several times by myself. During cooking, I kept on eyes what she is doing during cooking and sometimes she gave me advice. For example, when I made Nikujaga the first time, she taught me the

procedure. In addition, she adjusted the intensity of the fire in the stove. I watched her small action carefully and remember what I should do next time. Next, I tried making Nikujaga by myself. When I tasted my made Nikujaga, I found it was tasteless then I found that I need to put more soy source. Also, I found that tenderness is not good because I boiled it too much. Next, I served my made Nikujaga to my family. Actually, my family members are too strict about the taste of the dishes. Therefore, I could get great feedback from them. My brother said that if you cut potatoes smaller, it would be easy to eat. My father said that it was a little bit oily because oil came out from the pork so you should have scooped the oil often during boiling. From their feedback, I could learn what I should do to make the best Nikujaga.

In the Nikujaga cooking, the medium is ingredients which are vegetables, pork, and soup. Specifically, vegetables and pork have affordance to let them cut it free shape. If we use knife differently, we can cut them different shape. The different shapes of the vegetable and pork taste different because the different shapes of the vegetable and pork are soaked sources differently and they also change how to bite. The tactility of vegetable and pork is the tenderness. The tenderness is easy to adjust if we adjust boiling time too. The source is also medium too because we can change the flavor of the source when we chose different ingredients. For example, in Japan, we have many kinds of fish broth. One of the fish broth is made of dried skipjack. Seaweed and another type of fish are also used to get the fish broth. My mother taught me the way to make Nikujaga with the fish broth of dried skipjack. However, based on the favor, it is possible to choose different broth.

My former housemate really loves cooking and when I cooked Nikujaga, she was really interested in how to make it. I taught Nikujaga to an American housemate. I think it was a collaboration of making Nikujaga. There were some difficulties when we make Nikujaga together. First, there were language issues to teach how to do the process. In the cutting vegetable, I had to teach how to put a knife but I did not know how to teach verbally. Also, she asked me the reason why we need to soak the pork in Japanese sake. I had to check the online translation more often than my recipe memo. It made the duration of the cooking longer. Second, there are a lot of processes and it is difficult to remember so I had to write down processes for her to avoid forgetting. On the other hand, I had a lot of advantages when I collaborate in making Nikujaga with her. First, I really enjoyed teaching her. She impressed many procedures. For example, she impressed the cutting techniques, the secret way to make pork tender and Japanese ingredients. Her reaction made me really motivated to teach. It was also fun. Next, I could remember the

complicated process of making Nikujaga through collaboration. Teaching was the best practice to understand and remember the process.