



JAPAN, MAN AND NATURE IN HARMONY

DASHI & SHOYU

Directed by Shohei Shibata

2 x 52min.

For centuries, the Japanese have learned to draw from the treasures of nature.

With no space to grow food for all, Japanese cuisine distilled, instead, the very best from its oceans, the forests and mountains that cover most of the archipelago's landmass.

To truly be nourished, they believe, you must open all your senses, become aware of the world around you and its transformative properties. And in paying thoughtful attention to the delicate and the rare, they discovered astonishing worlds beneath the visible.

To penetrate the secrets of this invisible world we must take a microscopic journey to the genesis of the pure and restrained art of Japan's cuisine whose twin pillars are:

- a delicate stock named 'Dashi'
- and the golden sauce they call 'Shoyu'

Without them, the delicate balance of textures and harmonisation of flavours which make up the genius of Japanese cuisine, would not be achieved...

The films:

DASHI, ESSENCE OF JAPAN

SHOYU AND THE SECRETS OF JAPANESE CUISINE

Please also ask for the info on the previous film by Shohei Shibata: GRANDMA'S ETERNAL FOREST.

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Dashi: Essence of Japan

52 min.

'Dashi' is the bedrock of Japanese cuisine. Deceptively simple, master chefs down the centuries jealously guarded its secrets and blended their aromas at night. In the philosophy of Japanese cuisine, Dashi is not fabricated or concocted but "drawn out" from the very stuff of nature. And the essential ingredients from which it is drawn are gathered from the waters that surround Japan's islands.

In the northern seas, Konbu, a species of seaweed, grows by absorbing the sea's nutrients through the entire surface of the plant. While in the southern seas, great shoals of Bonito arrive once a year on their annual migration north. But Dashi is also nurtured in the forest, where forest dwellers have for centuries developed the delicate craft of cultivating choice shiitake mushrooms from the humid trees.

The development of dashi came about as a result of a historical event that triggered a "food revolution". Buddhism arrived in Japan about one thousand five hundred years ago. Its philosophy forbids the destruction of life. After embracing Buddhism, the Imperial Court issued edicts prohibiting the production and consumption of meat, which spread from nobles and samurai eventually to the population at large. And was strictly enforced. Famished, the Japanese quickly sought other sources of 'umami' taste. And they found it in Dashi made with Konbu kelp, shiitake mushrooms and dried bonito.

Dashi is a distillation of the natural resources of Japan, the essence of its very nature.

*A co-production between
Asia / Point du Jour / NHK / ARTE*

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The Japanese discovered that a humble mould spore could transform soya beans into 'Shoyu', the soy sauce that is a pillar of Japanese cuisine. Sprinkle it on rice and the rice changes into sake and a sweet sake extract called Mirin. This mould is a tiny organism called 'Aspergillus oryzae' and mysteriously, it exists only in Japan.

To tell this story, we travelled to the imperial city of Kyoto where the ancient craft of brewing Shoyu is preserved. It's a delicate process that must begin in spring and requires one whole year to mature the soy sauce. The Shoyu brewer knows well how climatic conditions can impact the result of his work. It is all a question of balance and harmony...

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52 min.

Shoyu and The Secrets of Japanese Cuisine