

JAPAN – Your Hands Too Warm to Box with Cod (Gr. 6-12)

The making of sushi has long been the domain of men in Japan and it is still largely male-dominated. But, recently, an all-female sushi-making establishment opened in the Akihabara, a district known primarily for its video games stores and its maid cafes. A maid café is a café where the waitresses dress like, umm, maids: It's an aspect of Japan's culture of cute or *kawaii*. And, in fact, this sushi-making establishment started out as another cute girl thing but, the manager, Yuki Chizui, a woman who spent years as a hostess observing sushi chefs at a traditional restaurant, is serious about sushi and is working to move her restaurant away from this profile. Here's a link to the article:

<http://www.bbc.com/travel/story/20151130-are-womens-hands-too-warm-to-make-sushi>

There are a lot of interesting topics for discussion. Here are few to get you started:

** The maid café: What do your students think of this as a job for women? Does it objectify them? (Link to some maid images here:

https://www.google.com/search?q=maid+cafe&tbm=isch&tbo=u&source=univ&sa=X&ved=0ahUKewjp1uiourJAhWSnoMKHa15AQAQsAQIOQ&biw=1332&bih=767#imgrc=IIY0d_fTuOdaxM%3A)

** The myths explaining why sushi-making is not suitable for women: What do they think of those? (Link here to the top 5 myths: <http://blogs.wsj.com/japanrealtime/2011/03/04/top-five-old-wives-tales-why-women-cant-cut-it-as-sushi-chefs/>)

** Japanese women have been struggling for years to gain equality. Even though the restaurant began as just another way to exploit *kawaii* women, is the all-girlness of it legitimized by the fact that a glass ceiling is being broken? In other words, does the means justify the end?

** What about the effect Chizui's restaurant has already had on business? Because she had some trouble getting fishermen at Japan's Tsukiji Fish Market to sell her fish, she began to buy fish from a woman-owned fishing boat in the Yamaguchi Prefecture.

And, by the way, cod is known as *tara* among sushi-makers and is considered at its best in winter.

BONUS:

Below, a link to a Postcard from Asia, explaining the difference between sushi and sashimi:

<https://audioboom.com/boos/829029-0127-sushi-crashcourse>

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