

An industry-academia-government food education project
of Gakushuin Women's College, part of the Gakushuin School Corporation

Project for FOOD Consciousness

学校法人学習院 学習院女子大学 産官学連携食教育プロジェクト

——「食べること」「食べもの」「食べ方」から考え、育てる、知の未来——

Project for Food Consciousness

Considering 'eating', 'what we eat', and 'ways of eating'
in order to develop our future culture

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Eating is an activity common to all humankind and essential to life.

Food is a resource required to support life.

The ways we eat shed light on various problems confronting modern society.

What can we do for future generations?

The Project for Food Consciousness is a joint industry, academy and government project to promote food education. Under the slogan, "**The Future of Culture, considered and brought into being with an awareness of eating, food and ways of eating,**" the project aims to help people of all ages, from children to adults, to sharpen the five senses they need to enjoy food, and develop their abilities to live, think, and create the culture of the future.

Gakushuin Women's College has been looking into various cultures through diverse approaches as part of its intercultural outreach activities. Our current project, undertaken with the cooperation of the administrative and industrial sectors, is an educational one focusing on "food". In this project, food is considered from the perspectives of taste and the ways it is acquired, consumed and distributed. Thus, cross-disciplinary studies will be promoted in fields ranging from biology, history, culture, environment, international relations, economics and religion to the arts, and international cultural exchanges will be further facilitated.

Food is also a theme that provides us an opportunity to think about ourselves as human beings. We believe that this project will make a significant contribution to society as a whole from various perspectives as well as benefiting our college.

President Yasuharu Ishizawa
Gakushuin Women's College



In this age of abundance, “eating” may seem to be merely a routine activity. You may not even pay attention to what you are eating or what it tastes like. Some people say that eating is just a way to fill up an empty stomach and that food is consumed merely as something to relieve hunger. In response to growing concern about this tendency, the necessity of providing food education has been increasingly stressed. However, food education can result in forcing one’s opinions or knowledge on others or merely providing superficial information. We have forgotten that “eating” provides us with many learning opportunities and that great wisdom and traditional culture lie behind food-related attitudes and customs.

I believe that it is time to thoroughly review the traditional food education system, shifting its emphasis from “teaching about food” to “enhancing food consciousness.” Under such a new food education system, we would endeavor to develop people’s abilities to live, think, and create culture and their future by reminding them to be grateful for food and aware of its connections to nature, and helping them to sharpen their senses to fully enjoy their food. With this project, we aim to promote education for the whole person that re-evaluates the Japanese sensibility now being abandoned by many Japanese, and to increase awareness of the idea: “Food is life, food is society, and food is the earth.”



Co-Chair for Project Execution: Professor Akira Shinagawa
Gakushuin Women’s College
Executive Director of the non-profit organization Real Science Education
Institute

Food education has long been argued for from various perspectives and academic disciplines. Although “taste education” should play an extremely important role in food education, there is not yet any systematic way of teaching about taste in Japan.

We define “taste education” as food education that helps people refine their senses and thereby invigorates them. For taste education, school vegetable gardens are indispensable. Through the administration and operation of such school vegetable gardens, students can develop an abiding curiosity about food and learn to appreciate it, along with all of those who provide their food, including their families, food producers, and nature itself. I believe that taste education and school garden activities will trigger a significant change in the present educational system and other areas, ranging from home life, the local community, food production, distribution and consumption (purchasing behavior = food selection and evaluation), to environmental issues.

I hope that this project will open up discussions on taste education and mark the beginning of taste education studies in Japan.



Co-Chair for Project Management: Professor Yasuhiro Eguchi
Gakushuin Women’s College
Vice President of the Japan Society of Foodservice Studies

Purpose of the Project for Food Consciousness

To propose the concept of “food consciousness”

We should all enhance our awareness of the importance of our everyday eating behaviors, the things we eat, and how we eat them. The Food Consciousness Executive Committee of Gakushuin Women’s College refers to increasing the awareness of food as raising “food consciousness” and proposes this concept. We believe that food consciousness will help people enhance their own vital forces, enjoy everyday life, and even improve the quality of their life.

Project promotion concept

Mission

Provide and promote educational opportunities to develop and enhance food consciousness

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Value

Provide education to restore the force intrinsic to human beings by sharpening the senses and focusing on improving taste education (development of new education methods)

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Vision

Shift emphasis from knowledge-based education to experiential sense-oriented education

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Strategy

Propose and provide training for educators (teachers) on the philosophy of food consciousness and methods of teaching about it

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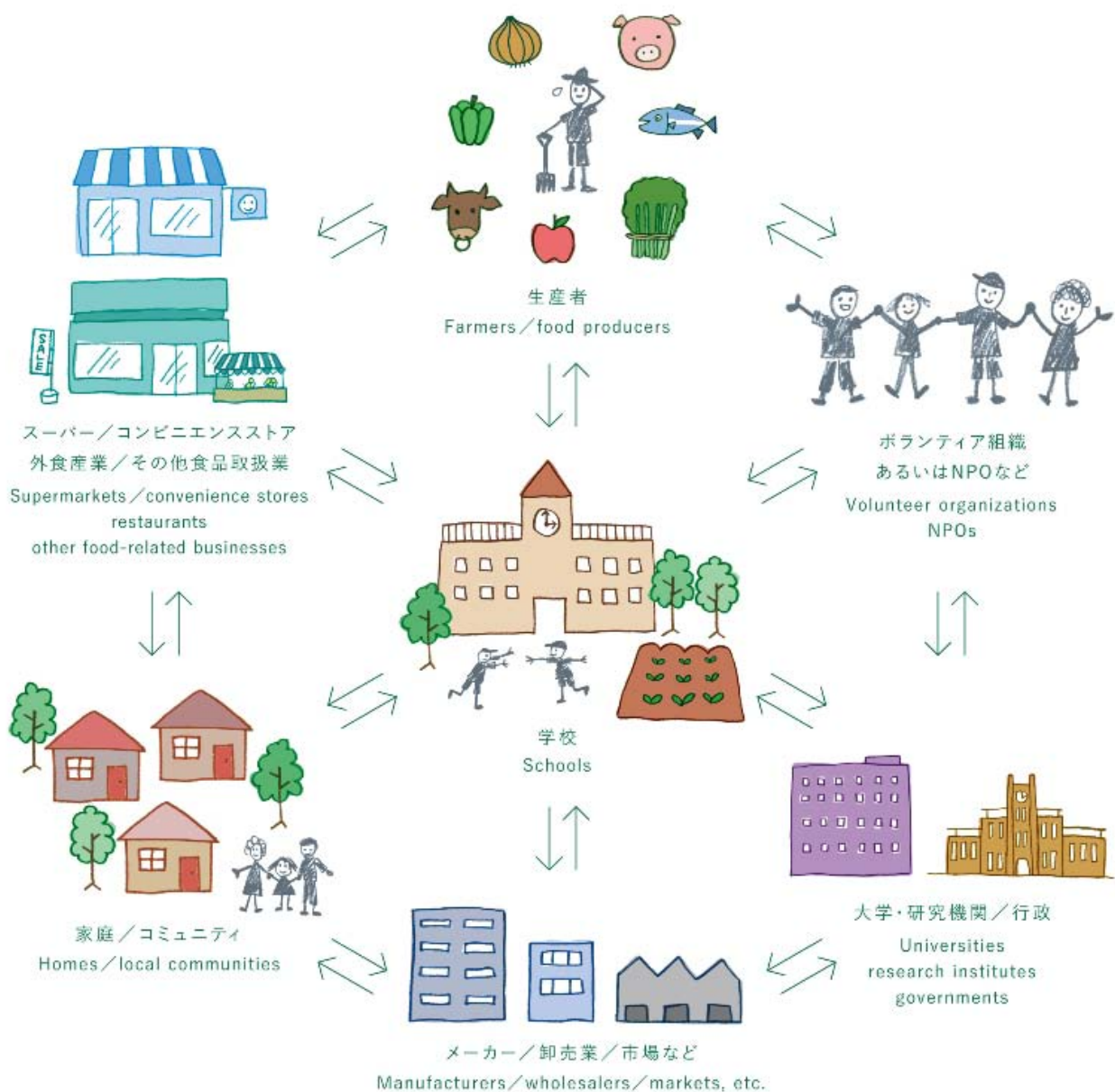
Execution

Hold workshops for elementary and middle school teachers; offer seminars for those responsible for school lunches, academics, and others involved with food services; give joint workshops and symposiums with representatives from Italy’s Center for Training, Research and Communication on Food and Taste Education.

“Education to Enhance Food Consciousness” yields results along the Educational Value Chain

It is indisputable that education in the schools is the linchpin to the development of future generations.

However, we believe that homes, local communities and society as a whole also have important roles in educating children. Education to enhance food consciousness in the schools would spread to the children’s families and local communities, eventually influencing all of society. We seek to improve the quality of life in society by taking advantage of this Educational Value Chain.



**To incorporate the idea of “food consciousness” in food education,
we should foster awareness of food by keeping in mind:**

The spirit of *Arigato*

Food is a blessing. We need to keep the spirit of *Arigato* (the spirit of gratitude) alive, remembering that it is a very happy and fortunate thing to be able to eat every day.

The spirit of *Itadakimasu*

Eating means taking the lives of animals and plants, blessings provided by nature. Sacrificing them for consumption is indispensable to the generation of new lives. Japanese express appreciation by saying *Itadakimasu* before meals.

The spirit of *Gochisosama*

Eating means enjoying a delicious meal, which the efforts of many people and sacrifice of the lives of plants and animals have made possible. We need to be conscious of such links and expand them. Therefore, we say *Gochisosama* to express gratitude after eating.

The spirit of *Mottainai*

Food is a delicious, valuable gift that we enjoy while appreciating the blessings of nature and the sacrifices of the precious lives of plants and animals. We need to be thankful for our food, and value the spirit of *Mottainai* (taking care to avoid waste).

We believe that it is necessary to shift the emphasis on food education from providing knowledge and information to enhancing awareness of food.

Since Japan’s enactment of the Basic Act on Food Education in 2005, abundant knowledge and information on food from the perspective of nutrition, hygiene, and neuroscience have been made available at home and in schools in order to improve dietary habits in an effort to prevent lifestyle-related diseases before they develop. But is it really effective to convey this sort of information to children, the citizens of the next generation?

We believe that the essence of food education should be to provide opportunities to raise awareness of the food we are eating: where our food comes from; how it was produced and by whom; why it is being served as a meal; what color, shape and smell it has; and what we feel when seeing, touching, smelling and eating it.

To this end, it is essential to provide food education that appeals to people’s senses. It is important to sharpen our senses, refine our sensitivity, and become aware of the feelings evoked by food. Think, for example, of the vegetables displayed in the supermarket. While we tend to see only

their surface, their background is enormously complex. Some vegetables are grown on hillsides, some near lakes or the sea. They were all grown in a natural environment, with its own particular air, water and soil. Every step in the production of our food, from field to table, involves serious efforts by farmers, processors, distributors and cooks.

We take it for granted that three meals a day will be available to us. From a historical and global perspective, however, it has been quite difficult for many people to manage to find even one meal a day. Being able to eat is our great good fortune; food is a blessing, links us to others, and sustains our lives. We seek to provide opportunities for thinking about where our food comes from, how it was produced and by whom, and the effort required to put it on the table. Tasting food means appreciating our food with our hearts and our senses. We urge people to examine the processes and the people behind the food on our tables.

This is the key concept of the food consciousness project. We are doing all we can to promote and implement “education to enhance food consciousness”.

FY2011 Project Objective

As the first step in promoting “education to enhance food consciousness”, we concluded an agreement with Italy’s Center for Training, Research and Communication on Food and Taste Education.

In October 2011, Gakushuin Women’s College and the Center for Training, Research and Communication on Food and Taste Education (hereafter, Taste Education Center) signed an agreement to cooperate in food education research. This has created a framework for Italian-Japanese cooperation through joint research and our Project for Food Consciousness. The project will explore the future of Japan’s education, industry and culture from the perspective of food in cooperation with the government and industrial sectors.

The food and taste education project A Scuola Con Gusto, a core education project developed and carried out by the Taste Education Center for the city of Viareggio, has drawn international attention as a sustainable food education project involving schoolchildren, parents, teachers, school staff, and local food producers. The Food Consciousness Executive Committee, launched by Gakushuin Women’s College to promote its Project for Food Consciousness, will introduce the Center’s efforts and activities to Japan by holding symposiums and seminars, and bring together people from various fields, ranging from education to food production, manufacturing and distribution to consider how “education to enhance food consciousness” should be conducted.

Major activities of the Project for Food Consciousness

- Train teachers in taste education.
- Develop experience-based lessons for students to develop their senses in relation to food.
- Develop “food and sensory classes” for teachers and parents.
- Encourage vegetable garden projects in schools.
- Promote seasonal foods and the use of local dishes in school lunches.
- Establish a network of local farmers who will provide crops to schools and host school field trips.
- Distribute materials related to food and food culture.
- Hold symposiums, lectures and workshops on food, agriculture and the environment.

Activities Conducted in FY2011

2011

June – July: **Study sessions on food education**

July – September: **Planting and harvesting at school vegetable gardens**

October 1: **Taste education workshop** (Gakushuin Women's College)

October 17 – 20: **Taste education visit to Italy**



Visit to food and taste education classes on enjoying local farm products conducted in an elementary school in Prato, Italy.



Visited the city of Viareggio's A Scuola con Gusto project



Observed model school lunch program in Viareggio which features "local production for local consumption" and local dishes

October 18: **Workshop "Umami Consciousness Laboratory 7"** (Prato, Tuscany)



Conducted workshop to introduce Japanese *umami* to people in Tuscany.

December 10: **Hatsune Sato Lecture "Kokoro wo musubu inochi no Omusubi" (Life-giving Rice Balls Link Hearts) and Symposium** (Gakushuin Women's College)

Hatsune Sato is renowned for her widely supported activities to help troubled people through the sharing of homestyle dishes. In addition to the lecture, the symposium featured the screening of a film in which Ms Sato appears, and a demonstration by her of rice ball (*Omusubi*) making. Her lecture and the rice balls conveyed to the audience the spirit of nurturing (*hagukumi no kokoro*) that can invest "eating, food and ways of eating."



Hatsume Sato

Born in 1921 in Aomori Prefecture. Founder of “Mori-no-Ischia” (Ischia in the Forest). She appeared in the Japanese documentary film Gaia Symphony II. Her long commitment to social welfare and community-based educational activities has earned her numerous awards, including one from Soroptimist International of the Americas and the Miki Women’s Grand Prize.

2012

February 11:

Japan-Italy Joint Symposium: “Future and Culture Built through Food – Food Consciousness and the Educational Value Chain” (for the general public / Yawaragi Hall at Gakushuin Women’s College) open to the general public

The symposium will explore the possibilities of food education, with participation by the director of Italy’s Center for Training, Research and Communication on Food and Taste Education, and Tuscany government officials.

February 12:

Experience-Based Class for Children on Food and the Senses, given by the Center for Taste Education



Vegetable guessing game

Seminar: “Edugastronomy – Regional Foodstuff Promotion through School Lunches” open to the general public

The experiences of those coordinating the A Scuola con Gusto project in Viareggio, Tuscany

February 13:

Taste Education Teacher Training Seminar, given by the Center for Taste Education open to the general public

February 14:

Umami Consciousness Laboratory open to the general public

Workshop given by the Food Consciousness Executive Committee

Laboratory to Experience Garum, the Legendary Fish Sauce of Ancient Rome open to the general public

Workshop to experience this product of ancient Luni, Liguria, and learn about it and the people who made it

February 15:

Taste Education Teacher Training Seminar, given by the Center for Taste Education open to educators

March 3 & 4:

Taste Education Teacher Training Seminar, given by the Food Consciousness Executive Committee open to the general public

[Italy's Center for Training, Research and Communication on Food and Taste Education]



The Center also offers

Food and the senses classes
for parents and teachers



The Center for Training, Research and Communication on Food and Taste Education is an educational institution based in the city of Prato, Tuscany (L'Associazione Centro di Formazione, Ricerca e Comunicazione sull'Educazione Sensoriale, Alimentare e del Gusto, or “Centro Educazione del Gusto”). The Center is headed by Alessandro Venturi, who has been a member of the Center since its founding. From 1998 to 2006, he led the Center's taste education project, and in 2007 was appointed director of the Center. The Center has dedicated itself to training taste education teachers.* More than 12,000 people have completed the Taste Education Teacher Training Program.

* Those completing the Center's requirements and certified as having sufficient skills for conducting classes regarding food and taste are referred to as “taste education teachers.” In Italy, people working in various school-related capacities, such as homeroom teachers and specialist teachers (those specializing in arithmetic, national language, science, society, music, home economics, etc.), as well as school nutritionists, have received certification as taste education teachers.



Alessandro Venturi is Director of The Center for Training, Research and Communication on Food and Taste Education.



Luisa Peris is Leader of the Taste Education Teacher Training Program at the Center.

School Vegetable Garden Project

As part of our efforts to promote education to enhance food consciousness, we encourage schools to create and operate school vegetable gardens. The objectives of the school vegetable garden project are to restore to students a healthy relationship with nature and food by creating vegetable gardens on the school grounds, and to generate a natural cycle of human relationships by involving school teachers and staff persons, parents and local communities. The project also enables integrated learning by encouraging students to learn about the special varieties of vegetables in their locality and when they are in season, and to create recipes for the vegetables they themselves grow and harvest. This project is expected to help students enhance their awareness of food in addition to developing their practical capabilities.

The project also has the potential to open schools to participation by the local community since it involves people from various sectors –such as graduates, students’ families, and elderly people – as supporters to help operate the school vegetable gardens smoothly.



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