

Essay
by
Agnes Choi

“Styling Osaka”



In throngs of crowds at the popular shopping area *Nanba*, arrays of eye-catching styles are modeled. Women with white makeup and attractive high heels strut down the busy streets. Men in distinct suits and casual T-shirts are found amongst the travelers as they hurry to their destinations. Tall buildings loom overhead with food, technology, entertainment, fashion, and lifestyle billboards perched neatly on top. These billboards illuminate Japanese trends and flaunt unique styles.

The aroma of food drifts to one's nostrils from the various restaurants. Osaka has a popular assortment in Japanese cuisine with a healthy diet based on seafood. Authentic Japanese and Chinese cuisines reflect the sophistication from the roots of the Japanese culture. On the less expensive end of the spectrum, popular foods include *Takoyaki*; these dumplings contain fresh octopus pieces that can be found in food stands near popular shopping areas in Japan. There are often long lines as consumers anticipate the distinctive flavoring that varies from different food stands. These grilled octopus balls are a mouth-watering delight.

Okonomiyaki is another famous specialty in Osaka. Ingredients can be chosen for this delicious grilled meal. Moreover, *Udon* and *Soba* are noodles that are always family favorites, especially in the summer time heat. Finally, hundred yen *Sushi* shops are becoming more and more popular for their good taste and reasonable prices. Hour-long waits are expected during holidays and weekends, as families and friends experience a variety kinds of *Sushi* that range from the unique fish egg *Sushi* to the original California roll. It isn't unusual to find assorted Japanese food pre-made at grocery stores or convenience stores for the busy, working families and for quick meals.

In addition, numerous overseas ethnic cuisines have impacted the diversity in Japanese culture. French, Italian, American, Indian, and Korean restaurants can be found amongst the infinite variety of food choice. Children enjoy both traditional dishes as well as foreign cuisines. Dishes of *Curry Rice*, *Ramen*, *Yakitori* (meat grilled on skewers), hamburgers, and spaghetti are some examples of popular food choices.

However, many of these foreign foods have been somewhat altered as Japanese styled ethnic foods. An example is *Yakisoba*, a combination of Korean roasted meat with Japanese noodles. Even Chinese take-out noodles come in a plastic bowl filled with typical Japanese seafood, instead of in a take-out box. Nonetheless, it is popular to have ethnic foods from different countries and many of them have become favorites in the Japanese culture.

Japan is well known for its spectacular advancements in technology. One of the most ubiquitous technologies is the cell phone. Although cell phones may seem banal compared to the new invention of the iPod, they are vital in the Japanese society. These high tech gadgets can capture high resolution pictures, surf the web, navigate around the city, make reservations at a favorite restaurant, and so much more. The actual cost to call someone exceeds the cost to send an email. Thus, most people are usually attached to their cell phone sending email. Moreover, some cell phone companies have special deals for students. Au is the most popular company among students because of their special discounts for high school and college students.

Imagine driving a car without worrying about getting lost. The GPS (Global Positioning System) help commuters finding their way around the city, especially in the busy and confusing streets of Osaka. This efficient invention can help find detours in major traffic jams and acts as personal televisions during long commuting hours. It can also work as a rearview mirror when the vehicle is in reverse to prevent new drivers from crashing into the garage. Although, this technology is used by numerous commuters all over Japan, it causes more automobile-related accidents. This drawback arises when technology is widely used by majority of the population.

The most salient technologies that are improving by the minute comprise of robotic technology. Robotic technology is improving quickly after the exhibition of robots at the RoboCup. Many countries computer programmed robots to compete in a game of soccer. Others programmed larger robots to do search and rescue. These robots are great attractions, but the popularity of these robots reflects the duty they will be able to perform in the future. In the near future, robot engineers hope to create robots to do everyday jobs such as broadcasting news or household chores.

Another propitious technology will be used to lead to conservation of the disintegration of environment. At Aichi Expo 2005, 121 participating countries showed their creative models for global society for the upcoming years for humankind to preserve the environment. This event drew thousands and thousands of visitors per day. This exposition was a good way to inform a large population and allow them to be aware of the changing environment. Special bullet train tickets and the various accessories help promoted this significant event that will encourage other countries to hold similar events in the future.

The well known J-pop music can be heard everywhere, but the movies are nowhere to be seen. The mixture of pop and rock music blasts from the speakers from the shopping arcade to the speakers from a car. Children recapitulate their favorite artist, memorizing the lyrics to the songs. Popular artists such as Orange Range and Aiko top the pop charts.

However, Japan is diversified by the ethnic foods and the music that is available. Well known American celebrities such as Green Day, Mariah Carey, and Jennifer Lopez also top the charts with these Japanese artists. New music draws more fans than the releases of new movies. It isn't popular to go to a movie theatre primarily because of its expensiveness. Families usually rent movies instead. In comparison to music, *Bunraku* (traditional puppet theater) and *Kabuki* performances does not seem to be trendy forms of entertainment. Furthermore, many middle-age women enjoy watching Korean soap operas. Korean drama is the current trend that causes many people visit Korea to explore tourist sites and settings of their favorite drama. The short distance between the two countries allows the Japanese to travel for an inexpensive price.

Fashion is the significant part of the Japanese culture and the different trends can be found all around Nanba. There are some girls with very big hairstyles, held together by liters of hair spray. Although this style is no longer trendy, people enjoy showing their unique sense of style. Teenage boys tend to wear their colorful popped collar polo shirts and mesh baseball caps.

This summer, it was stylish to wear a colorful *Yukata*, the summer kimono with beautiful patterns, matching *Geta* (sandals) and bags in celebration of the *Tenjin Matsuri* (summer festival). In general, people from both genders wore T-shirts with obscured meanings and jeans. For the working class, everyone is dressed formally in suits, dress shoes, attractive skirts, and glorious high heels. Students were dressed in their simple and modest uniforms. They tend to show their individuality through hairstyle, accessories, and bag decorations. Students on sports teams and other clubs wore smart, matching team uniforms complete with duffel bags engraved with the team or club name.

The sublime lifestyle of Japan is worth applauding. Children are trained at a young age to be responsible, to clean up after their own belongings, and to assist with household chores. It's amazing how some students can juggle chores, homework, numerous after school activities, and even English courses. Children at a young age learn how to handle many activities to train for success in the future. It is impressive how cogent these young children can be. It is vital that parents help their children participate in numerous extracurricular activities to find their talents without effort. In the school environment, students tend to establish close relationships with other students in their homeroom and with their *Senpai* (older student). Instead of the students moving from class to class, teachers move from class to class, avoiding large crowds in the hallways.

Therefore, homeroom teachers share a blithe connection with the students. Students learn how to respect their *senpai* that leads to respect for parents as well as leaders in their future. People do not usually have to worry about losing belongings or about children illegally buying cigarettes from cigarette vending machines. Altruism engenders the infrastructure of the moral values in Japan that most of the population follows. By being respectful, polite, and honest, this lifestyle brings tranquility to a stylish Japan.

Osaka's trends in food, technology, entertainment, fashion, and lifestyle all portray the chic Japanese trends. This high-energy city offers a breathtaking, unique character that will continue to be a styling Osaka, shimmering of individuality.