

On the Rice in Switzerland. I. Consumption, Kinds, Prices and the Way of Eating

Yuko AKINAGA

Department of Home Economics, Fukuoka University of Education

(Received September 10, 1990)

Abstract

The amount of the rice consumption in the recent year in Switzerland is over 30,000 t. It seems reasonable to consider that most of these rice are consumed by foreign workers and immigrants who have a habit of eating rice usually and a little are consumed by native Swiss. The kinds of rice obtainable in daily life and the countries from which Switzerland imports rice were found so many. Most Italian rice and some kinds of American rice could be bought at the price not exceeding 200 yen per 1 kg. What is called Californian rice and Asian rice were comparatively expensive. Investigating the dishes prepared using rice, we can see the tendency that the dish of which rice itself is almost a main material was most popular. Rather many kinds of soup-, meat-, fish-, vegetable-, flour- and fruit-dishes were prepared with rice.

1. Introduction

In Japan, the total self-sufficiency rate of edible agricultural products has been already gone down to 70 %¹⁾, which is extremely low ranging with that of Switzerland and the Netherland in comparison with the other industrialized countries. Nevertheless, it is said that Japan is urged to open the agricultural products market. Especially, it is regarded that Japan is under more and more heavy pressure from the United States who expects him to liberalized his trade of rice. Rice is the only food that has maintained its position as staple food in Japan for long time since agriculture began. In the case that rice is imported at liberty, it is natural that Japanese people should expose themselves to uneasiness. Because it seems obvious that the consumers' opinions should not be reflected in the price, quality, safety, stability of supply of rice and other important points.

As for Switzerland, the people of this country are facing difficulties in producing food because of its severity in climatic conditions and in geographical ones. Then the state-level efforts are made to promote developments in agriculture. For example, the federal government, based on the "Farm Act", took steps to ensure that the domestic farm products will meet the demands as much as possible, took measures to optimize the prices and to compensate for the running expenses of the farm households that are endeavoring to rationalize their operations and made use of the agricultural trade policies in promoting the sales of home-produced farm products²⁾. This country has decision to endeavor toward self-sufficiency in food supply.

The situation of Switzerland where people mainly eat flour products like bread and noodle, and potatoes may be different from that of Japan where they live on rice. However, the knowledge about the condition of the rice in Switzerland where rice is in demand and imported from foreign countries must furnish Japanese people with much important information, who cannot see the rice from other country in daily life.

Author has studied on the rice in Switzerland and investigated the price on the market in 1987. Here we report on the results of the investigation, the state of consumption of rice and the way of eating it in Switzerland.

2. Method

2-1 Kinds and prices of the rice obtainable

The investigation was carried on by visiting three of the supermarkets, two of the department stores and the only Japanese food shop in Lausanne. They were comparatively big stores which are available for many people, except Japanese food shop. Matters for investigation were the price, producing country, packing weight, package and the shape, about polished nonglutinous rice. The investigation was done in October, 1987. Lausanne is the fifth largest city in population, where people speak French.

2-2. Dishes prepared using rice

Dishes which are commonly made with rice at home were investigated by using four textbooks. With these textbooks, students of 14 or 15 years old learn cooking and knowledges about food in Switzerland. Two of them were written in French; A³⁾ and B⁴⁾, which are used in French-speaking area in Switzerland. The others were written in German; C⁵⁾ and D⁶⁾, which are used in German-speaking or Rhaeto-Romanic-speaking area in Switzerland. In grouping the dishes by items, we adopted the way of grouping by which more textbook among the four do, about each item.

3. Results and Discussion

3-1. Rice consumption

In Switzerland, there are very few land areas suitable for the agriculture. Only one-fourth of the total land area consists of farmland, artificial pastureland and fine arable land producing a large variety of farm products. The next one-fourth is natural pastureland, the third one-fourth is covered with forests, and the remaining one-fourth is barren and is totally unsuitable for farming²⁾. Then the domestic cereal product can only fill 47 % of the people's requirements and no rice is produced in this country⁷⁾. Therefore the all of the rice consumed in Switzerland are supplied from other countries.

Table I. Rice consumption in Switzerland. (Unit: 1,000 t)

Year	1962-63	1966-67	1967-68	1969-70	1975	1978	1982	1985
Consumption	16	21	14	10	23	0	33	34

(From "Summary of International Statistics"^{7,8)})

Table I shows the rice consumption in the past years. We can see the amount of the recent consumption, over 30,000 t. It means that one person consumed the rice of 5 kg per one year when we simply derive it by the Swiss population, about 6,500,000. As compared with

the value, about 90 kg by Japanese who lives on rice, the rice consumption by Swiss people is reasonably small.

However the value of the rice consumption rate by Swiss people looks beyond our guess from another viewpoint that Swiss people eat same amount of the rice through one year as that Japanese eat for 2/3 month. Because Switzerland has a history that rice has not been produced originally, there has been no reason to use the rice and no custom to eat it in most areas except for special canton, for example Ticino. This canton neighbors Italy whose people eat rice much and it has been affected greatly by Italian culture.

On the other hand, many people from foreign countries live in Switzerland. Especially as many Italian workers as 3 % of total population and immigrants from China, Vietnam and other rice-eating countries also live there. Then we think that the people living in Switzerland are divided between a few people who consume much rice and much people who eat rice a little. In another words, it is supposed to be said that rice are imported not for native Swiss but for the people mentioned above. Consequently, the former people must be thought to eat rice in their each traditional manner and may affect the latter in a aspect of the usage of rice. We will discuss how much and in which manner native Swiss eat rice later.

From Table I, we can say that the rice consumption in Switzerland was not constant throughout past 30 years. In 1978, the value shows "zero". It is not confirmed that the year is unique or not because we cannot get the data in each one year. But it is clear that "zero" in 1978 is not due to no need but due to no import. Such a situation never happens if they have a domestic producing system of rice. The value of "zero" consumption is much interesting for Japan who is now growing up to a great food-importing country.

3-2. Kinds and prices of the rice obtainable

Table II shows the results of the investigation about the polished nonglutinous rice in Lausanne.

(1) Producing country

Table II shows that kinds of the rice obtainable in daily life are so many. We also notice that the countries from which Switzerland imports rice are many, at least five. Being observed number of the kind by country, the most is Italian rice, eight brands, and the next is American rice, seven. These two countries surpass, and others are Thailand, India and Pakistan in Asia.

One of Italian rice and two of American rice are parboiled rice, which needs less time for cooking and rather dry and tough after cooking. Two of American rice are enriched with vitamine. "Nishiki" and "Kokuho Rose" are produced at California in the United States, to which Japanese people pay attention as tasty and cheap rice. "Riz parfumé" is one kind of scented rice which has stronger aroma than traditional rice and preferred as "Kaori mai" or "Nioi mai" at some region in Japan. In addition, being not showed in the table, glutinous rice from the United States and Thailand, unpolished rice and wild rice are noticed at these stores.

The fact that various rice is sold and comes from various countries is considered to substantiate the view that the rice is imported for Italian and Asian people live in Switzerland. For the same reason, rather many kinds of rice may be obtainable at cities in other regions as well as Lausanne where people gather to secure employments. On the other hand, less kinds of rice are conjectured to be sold at agricultural district where foreign workers and immigrants don't live.

(2) Packing unit

As for packing unit, 1 kg is common, and 1.8 kg is at most except the rice sold at Japanese food shop. They seems very little for us Japanese. Hence we anticipate that they rarely eat

Table II. Kinds and prices of the rice in Lausanne.

Brand	Producing country	Packing unit (kg)	Price (SFr.)					Jpn. food shop	Package	Shape of grain
			Supermarket			Dep't store				
			A	B	C	A	B			
Originario	Italy	1	1.60					Bag	○*	
Camolino	Italy	1				1.80	1.50	Bag	○*	
Vialone	Italy	1	1.70	1.80	1.60	1.90	1.35	Bag Carton	○*	
		1	1.70							
Siam	Italy	1			1.40	1.95	1.75	Bag	Long	
Arborio	Italy	1	1.70	1.80	1.60	1.90	1.75	Bag Carton	○*	
		1	1.90							
Riz Long Grain	Italy	1	1.90					Carton	Long	
Vialone, Parboiled	Italy	1		1.90				Bag	○*	
Super Vilone	Italy	1				4.50		Bag	○*	
Carolina	U.S.A.	1		1.70				Bag	Long	
U.S.A. Carolina Rice Vitamine, Parboiled	U.S.A.	1		1.80				Bag	Long	
U.S.A. Parboiled Vitamine Rice	U.S.A.	1.8	3.30					Carton Carton	Long	
		1	1.90							
U.S.A. Vitamine Golden Rice	U.S.A.	1	1.80		—*	2.10	1.90	Bag	Long	
		1.8	6.95			7.00		Carton Carton	Long	
		0.9 0.45	2.95 1.85			3.20 2.15	2.75 1.75			
Nishiki	U.S.A.	10					38.00	Bag	○*	
Kokuho Rose	U.S.A.	4.5					20.00	Bag	○*	
		1					4.50	Bag		
Riz Parfumé	Thailand	1	2.80	2.40	—*	2.95	2.50	Bag Bag	Thin	
		1	3.95							
Oriental Basmati	—*	1	4.90					Bag	Thin	
Riz Basmati	India	1		4.80	—*	5.55		Bag	Thin	
Rajah, Basmati Rice	Pakistan	0.45	4.70					Bag	Thin	

○* Quite close to the Japanese rice

—* Not confirmed

rice or use very little rice at a time. Rice is sold in 4.5 kg or 10 kg of packing unit, at only Japanese food shop that does business mainly with Japanese as a customer.

(3) Prices

More than half of all kinds of rice shown in Table II are priced less than 2 SFr. per 1 kg. At the exchange rate of about 97 yen to the Swiss franc in those days, 1 kg of rice can be bought at the price not exceeding 200 yen with a large choice. All Italian rice except "Super Vialone" and American rice of "Carolina" and "Vitamine Rice" come under this price. Only Italian rice can be transported by land route like Simplon⁹⁾. Hence it can be said admirable that the United

States can supply rice as cheaply as Italy.

But on the other hand, "Uncle Ben's Rice" and two Californian rice that come from the United States and all Asian rice are rather expensive. At the rate mentioned above, "Nishiki" is priced 3,700 yen per 10 kg, and "Kokuho Rose" is calculated at 430 yen per 1 kg using the price marked on the article of 4.5 kg of packing weight. Under this circumstance, the word "Cheap" does not fit Californian rice. Asian rice is also expensive in spite of the low price at their own producing countries. These expensiveness of Californian rice and Asian rice is supposed to be caused by the smallness in quantity of the trades. These facts are thought to suggest, in the case that Japan begin to import rice, that he should not rely on imported rice and that it should not limit the countries from which Japan import it, especially the United States, but accept it from various countries. Or, it must easily that the price of rice will be raised seriously and turned to be unexpectedly expensive.

The rice of same kind is offered at different price at different store. The reason is supposed to be in the differences in distribution channels, importing routes, quality of articles and so on.

(4) Package

As the material of the package of bag, what is like cellophane paper which is sometimes used as a wrapping of confectionery was used, due to the small quantity of packing unit. Only Californian rice that is sold at Japanese food shop is wrapped in several sheets of paper of fine quality. In the case of the package of carton, rice is put in a box made of cardboard, without another wrapping.

The package of the rice of same kind is sometimes different at different store and at other times quite same. Particularly as for the rice packed in a carton kind of package is only one for each kind and packing unit of rice. Then it is apparent that price is different at different store about it. The cause for this difference might be proper to be considered that the course of pricing does not reflect the difference in quality of articles but reflects the individual character of each store as well as the difference in distribution channels.

(5) Shape of grain

It is found that there are many kinds of Italian rice that is quite close to Japanese rice, Japonica, which is short and round grain. Before cooking, it is rather transparent. When cooked, though it is somewhat soft and lacked stickiness, it tastes comparatively good for Japanese.

Table III. Number of the dishes prepared using rice which appeared in the text book.

Dish	A (French)	B (French)	C (German)	D (German)
Soup	11	9	2	2
Meat	3	3	3	1
Fish	1	0	0	0
Vegetable	1	1	4	2
Cereal (Rice)	24	6	13	15
Flour	1	0	0	1
Fruit	1	3	0	0
Total	42	22	22	21

This makes it understandable that there are many Japanese people who live on Italian rice in Europe.

The grains of other Italian and American rice were long and those of all Asian rice were extremely thin.

3-3. Dishes prepared using rice

Table III shows the number of the dishes prepared using rice which appeared in each textbook in grouping the dishes by items. We can see the tendency that the dish of which rice itself is almost main material, rice-dish, is most popular ("Cereal (Rice)" in the Table). In the textbook A, C and D such a rice-dish occupies 60-70 % of all dishes introduced to use rice in the textbooks. It is unexpected that there are many kinds of dishes using rice.

Only in the textbook B, most large number is 9 in "soup-dish" and next 6 in rice-dish. Many kinds of soup-dish using rice are introduced even in the textbook A. On the contrary to this, only two kinds of soup-dish are introduced in each textbook written in German. This difference suggestively comes from the difference of the linguistic sphere.

The meat-dishes using rice are also frequently introduced and fish-, vegetable-, flour- and fruit-dishes using rice appear in the textbooks. It can safely be said that the dishes prepared using rice are very various in spite of less consumption of the rice in Switzerland.

In Japan, as a typical rice-dish we can easily visualize "Gohan-mono" and some person may remember "Mochi" or "Dango" where rice is used changing the grain shape to another. In every these dishes rice itself is almost main material. There are very few dishes using rice as sub-material. For example, we scarcely mix a little rice into a soup not in manner "Zohsui" which is a "Gohan-mono".

For a further investigation of the dishes prepared using rice in Switzerland, it is necessary that the details of the dishes are studied and the volume of used rice in the dish are clarified. In the forthcoming paper we will do so and compare the results above-mentioned with the results for the Japanese textbook.

Acknowledgement

The author is grateful to Prof. K. Hori (Fukuoka University of Education) for his advice, and all the members of the Department of Home Economics, Fukuoka University of Education. She also expresses thanks to Prof. G. Berthoud (University of Lausanne) for his help.

References

- 1) Association of Agriculture and Forestry Statistics: Diagrams of Agricultural White Paper (in Japanese), Association of Agriculture and Forestry Statistics, Tokyo (1990).
- 2) Kümmerly + Frey Geographical Publishers: Switzerland, Kümmerly + Frey Geographical Publishers, Bern (1985).
- 3) M. Bourquin and Ch. Vouga: Recettes Culinaires et Hygiène Alimentaire, Département de l'Instruction Publique du Canton de Neuchâtel, Neuchâtel (1984).
- 4) Laure Mellet-Briod: Nos Bonnes Recettes, Payot, Lausanne (1975).
- 5) Interkantonale Lehrmittelzentrale and Staatlicher Lehrmittelverlag Bern: Tiptoph, Staatlicher Lehrmittelverlag Bern, Bern (1987).
- 6) Gisela Brunner-Gerdes and Esther Naegeli-Streuli: Kochen Braten Backen, Lehrmittelverlag des Kantons Zürich, Zürich (1984).
- 7) Statistic Bureau, Management and Coordination Agency: Summary of International Statistics (in

- Japanese), Statistics Bureau, Management and Coordination Agency, Tokyo (1988).
- 8) *ibid.*, (1965—1987).
 - 9) Sandri Massimo: *Le Commerce Extérieur de la Suisse per le Tunnel Ferroviaire du Simplon*, Payot, Lausanne (1983).