

Japanese American Farmers and Food Retailers' Revolutionary Impacts on California Cuisine and Local Food Movements

Since the 1890s, Japanese American farmers in California have played a pivotal role in California and US agriculture. Prior to WWII, Japanese Americans controlled California's strawberry industry and held virtual monopolies over the production of lettuce, tomatoes, celery, spinach, peas, onions, garlic, snap beans, and more.¹ Most white farmers grew less laborious crops such as wheat and potatoes.² So, Japanese immigrants helped shift California agriculture from raising corn and grain crops to more "intensive agricultural crops," such as vegetables and citrus fruits.³ Thus, Japanese Americans improved the American diet, building up the foundation of California agriculture with specialized, diverse produce before World War II. Regardless, Japanese American farmers were never widely recognized for their achievements in America. Furthermore, in the period after WWII, a scarcity of academic studies on Japanese American farming exists, which discounts important trends led by these agricultural entrepreneurs.⁴ Japanese Americans who were able to return to farming and food retail after internment continued to have great impact on US food and agriculture. Indeed, because post WWII Japanese American small farmers and food retailers viewed farming through an artisanal Japanese mindset, these people led the way to the revolutionary California cuisine and compelled Americans towards local farm to table movements. In my paper, I will focus on three case studies of people who have made US food healthier and more tasteful: food retailer Bill Fujimoto

¹ Nina F. Ichikawa, "Giving Credit Where it is Due: Asian American Farmers and Retailers as Food System Pioneers," in *Eating Asia America*. (NYU Press, 2013): 274-287.

² Sarah D. Weld, "Japanese American Agrarianism in *Rafu Shimpo*, *Kashu Mainichi*, and Treadmill" in *The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming since the Dust Bowl*.

³ Keith Aoki, "No Right to Own: The Early Twentieth Century "Alien Land Laws" as a Prelude to Internment." *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 19 (1998): 37-72.

⁴ Nina F. Ichikawa, "Giving Credit Where it is Due: Asian American Farmers and Retailers as Food System Pioneers," in *Eating Asia America*. (NYU Press, 2013): 274-287.

from Berkeley, peach farmers David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto from Fresno, and the Chino family of farmers from San Diego. My research methodology involved conducting oral history interviews with my case studies as well as synthesizing primary and secondary sources.

History of Japanese American farmers in California

To contextualize my research, I will first give historical background on Japanese Americans in California. The *Issei*, or first generation Japanese immigrants, came to California in large numbers around 1895. Determined to improve their livelihoods, they took on bad weather, discrimination, hard work, and harsh living conditions not acceptable to white tenants. They were also willing to work for lower wages than white laborers, which made them desirable workers for many farm owners. However, during the early 1900s, California wheat farms were growing and becoming more industrialized. Farms that produced cotton, sugar beets, fruits, and vegetables, were smaller and relied on more manual farm labor—Japanese immigrants filled this need for labor.⁵ Furthermore, the Chinese Americans who originally worked as farm laborers became barred from immigration in the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. As a result, a shortage in agricultural labor might have occurred if it were not for the Japanese immigrants during this time.

Nevertheless, Japanese Americans did not only work as laborers. From the early 1900s to the eve of World War II, Japanese Americans worked extremely hard and gradually rose from laborers and sharecroppers to farm owners. During the early 1900s, Japanese American farmers “dominated the vegetable and berry regions of the Sacramento, San Joaquin, and Imperial

⁵ Masao Suzuki, “Important or Impotent? Taking Another Look at the 1920 California Alien Land Law.” *The Journal of Economic History* 64 (2004): 125-143.

valleys as well as of Los Angeles and Orange Counties.”⁶ In 1941, Japanese American farmers grew around an estimated thirty to forty percent of California’s commercial truck crops.⁷ Japanese American farmers held virtual monopolies in many truck crops since white farm owners did not want to undergo the truck crops’ intensive labor.⁸ Japanese Americans were especially skilled at working on smaller acreages of land but using more “intensive labor practices,” unlike large industrial farms.⁹ The *Issei* also had a crucial role in establishing a marketing system for fruits and vegetables, especially in LA, and they “dominated” retail distribution of fruits and vegetables before 1941.¹⁰

Many white American farmers became jealous of Japanese Americans’ achievements and falsely claimed the Japanese Americans had taken all of California’s fertile lands. However, *Issei* had actually taken up incredibly infertile lands but had worked to make them prosperous and thriving.¹¹ On these undeveloped lands, *Issei* “pioneered” the rice industry and produced the “first commercial crop of rice.”¹² They also planted the first citrus orchards in “hog wallow” lands in the San Joaquin Valley.¹³ In the 1900s, George Shima, the Japanese American “Potato King,” “reclaimed more than 28,800 acres of mosquito-ridden wastelands made fertile by

⁶ Valerie J. Matsumoto. *Farming the Home Place: A Japanese American Community in California, 1919-1982*. (New York: Cornell University Press, 1993).

⁷ Iwata Masakazu, “The Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture,” *Agricultural History* 36 (1962): 25-37.

⁸ Sarah D. Weld, “Japanese American Agrarianism in *Rafu Shimpo*, *Kashu Mainichi*, and Treadmill” in *The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming since the Dust Bowl*.

⁹ Sarah D. Weld, “Japanese American Agrarianism in *Rafu Shimpo*, *Kashu Mainichi*, and Treadmill” in *The Nature of California: Race, Citizenship, and Farming since the Dust Bowl*. (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2016), 77.

¹⁰ Noritaka, Yagasaki, “Adaptive Strategy of Japanese Immigrants and Occupational Sequent Occupance in the Development of Fresh Produce Marketing in Los Angeles.” *Geographical Review of Japan* 76 (2003): 894-909.

¹¹ Don and Nadine Hata, “George Shima: The Potato King of California,” *Journal of the West* 25 (1986): 55-63.

¹² Iwata Masakazu, “The Japanese Immigrants in California Agriculture,” *Agricultural History* 36 (1962): 25-37.

¹³ Iwata Masakazu, *ibid*.

centuries of silt deposits that had formed the delta.”¹⁴ To this day, Shima’s land reclamation project remains one of the largest reclamations in California.

Despite this large discrimination and envy, Japanese actually never owned more than “2 percent of the total, at maximum” of California’s agricultural lands.¹⁵ Moreso, in the 1930s, there were many more unskilled laborers than farm owners amongst the Japanese Americans. In fact, Japanese Americans’ population changed from 0.1 percent to 2.1 percent of the US between 1890 and 1940. Yet, discriminative legislation still arose in greater degrees between the early 1900s to WWII, specifically aimed at derailing Japanese Americans from succeeding in the farming industry and owning land.

The 1913 Alien Land Law made it illegal for Japanese immigrants, defined as “aliens ineligible to citizenship” to own land for more than three years.¹⁶ However, many *Issei* maneuvered around this Law by putting their American born children’s names under their land titles. The 1920 Alien Land Law, first passed in California, covered up many of the loopholes of the 1913 law.¹⁷ The 1920 law prohibited the Japanese to purchase or lease agricultural land, the right to buy and sell stock in land companies that owned or leased agricultural land, and disqualified them from being appointed guardians of minors who may take over the land. Reinforcing the 1913 law, it also prohibited the transfer or sale of agricultural land between aliens. Consequentially, Japanese American land ownership suffered a great drop after 1920.¹⁸

¹⁴ Don and Nadine Hata, “George Shima: The Potato King of California,” *Journal of the West* 25 (1986): 55-63.

¹⁵ Robert M. Jiobu, “Ethnic Hegemony and the Japanese of California,” *American Sociological Review* 53 (1988): 353-367.

¹⁶ Masao Suzuki, “Important or Impotent? Taking Another Look at the 1920 California Alien Land Law.” *The Journal of Economic History* 64 (2004): 125-143.

¹⁷ Masao Suzuki, “Important or Impotent? Taking Another Look at the 1920 California Alien Land Law.” *The Journal of Economic History* 64 (2004): 125-143.

¹⁸ Masao Suzuki, “Important or Impotent? Taking Another Look at the 1920 California Alien Land Law.” *The Journal of Economic History* 64 (2004): 125-143.

Systematic and institutional racism against Japanese Americans starting from the early 1900s land laws brought about WWII internment, not through a small group of racists' decision. The Alien Land Laws denied basic civil rights such as due process and property ownership to Japanese Americans "ineligible for citizenship," which represented "a step toward the cavalier denial of civil rights to citizens" through internment.¹⁹ Furthermore, the 1920 and 1913 laws forced Japanese immigrant farmers into shaky legal positions right before WWII.²⁰ Many Japanese tenant farmers who did not legally own land were in "some ambiguous sort of tenant/cropper/manager relationship with landowners."²¹ Consequentially, internees who owned land before WWII could return to their land and properties if it had been taken care of by family friends. However, internees landless by pre WWII laws lost almost everything.²²

Yet, more often than not, even Japanese Americans land owners lost their farms after internment. Many Japanese Americans could not find people to take care of their farms, orchards, homes, and property while they were interned. Meanwhile, many Japanese Americans who had arranged for someone to watch and run their farms found they had often put their trust in the wrong person; after internment, a common ending was they came back home to find their farm run to the ground, most of their property sold off, and possessions lost.²³ Thus, after the war, many Japanese Americans had to withdraw from the farming industry because of the loss of their capital and property. Their presence in California agriculture suffered a large decline. Yet,

¹⁹ Keith Aoki, "No Right to Own: The Early Twentieth Century "Alien Land Laws" as a Prelude to Internment." *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 19 (1998): 37-72.

²⁰ Yuji, Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Response to the 1920 California Alien Land Law," *Agricultural History* 58 (1984): 157-178.

²¹ Keith Aoki, "No Right to Own: The Early Twentieth Century "Alien Land Laws" as a Prelude to Internment." *Boston College Third World Law Journal* 19 (1998): 37-72.

²² Robert, Higgs, "Landless by Law: Japanese Immigrants in California agriculture to 1941," *Journal of Economic History* 38 (1978): 205-225.

²³ Edna Bonacich and John Modell, *The Economic Basis of Ethnic Solidarity: Small Business in the Japanese American Community*. (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1980).

there are Japanese Americans who did manage to return to farming, which is where my research comes in.

Japanese Culture of Hard Work Ethic and Artisanal Pride

My paper argues that the Masumotos, Chinos, and Bill Fujimoto's Japanese backgrounds and cultures have positively impacted US agriculture and the development of California cuisine. However, before I write specifically about my case studies' cultural backgrounds, I wish to make a certain number of cultural assumptions clear. Japanese culture is constantly in flux, and Japan is not a homogenous entity but composed of heterogeneous people who share different and competing cultural attitudes.²⁴ Furthermore, "Japaneseness" differs across countries as well as within a country's culture.²⁵ For example, Japanese Americans tend to differ from Japanese living in Japan when constructing their identity; that is, ethnic identities shift based on context.²⁶ Japanese Americans' assimilation into America as well as Japanese culture has impacted their culture and way of life. However, like many ethnic minorities in America, Japanese Americans have a "dual identity," which allows them to both adapt to their American environment but not lose their cultural influence from Japan.²⁷

While I do not want to overgeneralize or promote stereotypes of Japanese and Japanese Americans as a homogenous people, my case studies have exhibited Japanese cultural traits that informs their work as farmers and food retailers. My case studies are *Nissei* and *Sansei*, second

²⁴ Ryuko Kubota, "Critical Teaching of Japanese Culture" *Japanese Language and Literature* 37 no.1 (2003): 67-87.

²⁵ Jane H. Yamashiro, "Japanese as a Global Ancestral Group: Japaneseness on the US Continent, Hawai'i and Japan," in *Redefining Japaneseness* (Rutgers University Press, 2017).

²⁶ Jane H. Yamashiro, "Japanese as a Global Ancestral Group: Japaneseness on the US Continent, Hawai'i and Japan," in *Redefining Japaneseness* (Rutgers University Press, 2017).

²⁷ David Abe, *Rural Isolation and Dual Cultural Existence: The Japanese American Kona Coffee Community*. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan).

and third-generation Japanese Americans; *Nissei* and *Sansei* tend to more strongly identify as Japanese than the later generations.²⁸ Significantly, David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto both write extensively about how their Japanese background has led them to an artisanal approach to farming that treats their work not only as a job but a passion and way of life.²⁹

In all three of my case studies, I recognize shared cultural characteristics that I attribute to their background as Japanese Americans. They all hold a hard work ethic, a respect towards the land, an artisanal approach towards their work, and an enduring humility—these traits are Japanese cultural attributes. The Japanese historically cherished a number of values related to working hard and achieving one’s best work: *Gaman*, to endure, *gambaru*, to hang tough, *shimbo*, to persevere, and most importantly, *issho-kenmei*, to do one’s best.³⁰ Many Japanese hold a “tradition [where] one works primarily for pride in accomplishment.”³¹ Japan is known for its *shokunin*, which translates to artisans who work continually to improve their craft. Many *shokunin* are respected as national treasures due to the Japanese’s respect for their dedication to their work. Furthermore, Japanese also have a strong emphasis on a “self confident, egoless” humility, which some attribute to Buddhism’s teachings on the idea of no Self.³²

Many Japanese American establishments rely on a small scale, family based organization that values artisanal traditions, rather than solely focusing on economics. For example, *okazuyas*—which are Japanese American family run delicatessens that were prominent

²⁸ David Abe, *Rural Isolation and Dual Cultural Existence: The Japanese American Kona Coffee Community*. (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan).

²⁹ David Mas Masumoto and Nikiko Masumoto, *Changing Season: A Father, A Daughter, A Family Farm*. (Berkeley: Heyday, 2016).

³⁰ Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado’s Japanese Americans: From 1886 to the Present* (University Press of Colorado, 2005).

³¹ Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado’s Japanese Americans: From 1886 to the Present* (University Press of Colorado, 2005), 247.

³² Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado’s Japanese Americans: From 1886 to the Present* (University Press of Colorado, 2005), 249.

establishments during the 1960s in Hawaii—depend on the trust in family members who bring “dependability, responsibility, trust, long-term knowledge, quality control, and close camaraderie” to a business.³³ The *okazuya*’s emphasis on the family can also be applied to my case studies’ small family farms. My case studies do not believe in valuing profit and economics and expanding their farms to industrial ones, but rather want to stay small and hold onto family traditions. These farmers’ Japanese cultural backgrounds influence them to prioritize family practices valuing quality control of their produce rather than expanding their farms for more profit.

Similar to Japanese American establishments like the *okazuya*, Japanese retailers often run small scale store built on artisanal values. Small and medium sized retail and urban businesses, or *chusho kigyo*, far outnumber large corporations in Japan.³⁴ Important such small scale establishments are Japanese ramen shops. As of recently, ramen has become a strong, national symbol, internationally and domestically, of modern Japanese culture: from the 1990s, restaurant ramen in Japan came to represent “slow food symbolizing the value of hand crafted, old fashioned, and small scale production representing national tradition.”³⁵ Despite Japan’s extremely modern and industrialized society, most ramen shop owners do not conform to international fast food and corporate culture but work as small independent shops. The *noren wake* system, which operates through the sharing of a business’ trade secrets, allows for this small independent existence. This system allows for a ramen store owner to give a former employee with “at least a year of experience” his secrets of the trade: suppliers, food recipes, and

³³ Christine Yano, “Shifting Plates: Okazuya in Hawai’i.” *Amerasia Journal* 32 no. 2 (2006): 37-45.

³⁴ Yoshio Sugimoto, *An Introduction to Japanese Society* (Cambridge University Press, 1997), 79.

³⁵ George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014), 185.

advice.³⁶ Thus, small ramen shops are opened that follow other shops' work flows "without any pyramid-like corporate structure."³⁷ These small ramen shops do not garner an enormous amount of profit; instead, the ramen produced is unique to each shop, offering more variety of taste.

Like these small Japanese ramen shops, my case studies do not want to over-expand their farms. They see their work as growing or selling the best possible produce with unique taste. They also believe in quality and variety over quantity of produce. Interestingly, Solt argues that the ramen shop and its artisanal craftsman is a "national style of business in Japan," which reflects the Japanese appreciation and traits of artisanship around food production.³⁸ The fact that the small, independent ramen shops have continued to proliferate shows that Japanese culture, despite its modernization, still strongly values small, artisanship.

In addition to a devotion to unique taste and flavor as reflected in Japan's small restaurant ramen, the Japanese also value the seasonality and freshness of the food. This taste for freshness derives in part from Shintoism, the indigenous Japanese religion that emphasizes purity and naturalism.³⁹ It also derives from Japanese Buddhism, which advocates for a vegetarian cuisine ultimately leading to *kaiseki ryori*, or the sixteenth century Japanese tea ceremony and tea cuisine.⁴⁰ Many historians credit modern Japanese cuisine as originating in part from *kaiseki*. Tea ceremony master Sen no Rikyu created but did not coin *kaiseki*, a ritualized experience of drinking tea; the definition of *kaiseki* is a flexible one because the practice and serving of *kaiseki*

³⁶ George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014), 181.

³⁷ George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014), 181.

³⁸ George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014), 184.

³⁹ Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob, *The Essence Of Japanese Cuisine: An Essay on Food and Culture* (Curzon Press, 2000).

⁴⁰ Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob, *The Essence Of Japanese Cuisine: An Essay on Food and Culture* (Curzon Press, 2000).

changed countless times from its origins with Sen no Rikyu.⁴¹ A simple meal is served along with the tea. The menus change according to the season and are made using the freshest available ingredients, which ensures the best tasting meal. The Japanese believe in providing foods that hit their *shun*, “the peak of perfection” based on seasonality.⁴² *Hatsumono*, or the eating of the “first foods of the season” is an important activity in tea ceremonies; some believe that experiencing *hatsumono* extends one’s life by 75 days.⁴³

However, the tea ceremony was not the sole factor in shaping Japanese cuisine today.⁴⁴ The “myth” of Japanese cuisine based on *kaiseki* as timeless, exotic, and traditionally stuck in the past is inaccurate; the cuisine constantly shifts form.⁴⁵ Modern *kaiseki* has changed in many ways from the traditional tea ceremony. Despite these changes, modern *kaiseki* and many other non-*kaiseki* Japanese chefs continue to value the changes in seasons and a devotion to freshness when cooking food. For example, even mass produced take out items such as the *ekiben*, the Japanese station box lunch, are always made with fresh, local, seasonal foods.⁴⁶ Taking a similar approach to the seasonality and freshness of food, my case studies believe in growing and selling the freshest produce they can grow or find. Instead of conforming to conventional supermarket standards that sacrifice freshness and taste of produce by extending the shelf life of produce, my case studies refuse to use chemical fertilizers on their produce. They want to sell and eat fresh

⁴¹ Katarzyna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006).

⁴² Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob, *The Essence Of Japanese Cuisine: An Essay on Food and Culture* (Curzon Press, 2000), 75.

⁴³ Michael Ashkenazi and Jeanne Jacob, *Food Culture in Japan* (London: Greenwood Press, 2003), 20.

⁴⁴ Eric C. Rath, “Reevaluating Rikyu: Kaiseki and the Origins of Japanese Cuisine,” *The Journal of Japanese Studies*, Volume 39 no. 1 (2013): 67-96.

⁴⁵ Katarzyna Cwiertka, *Modern Japanese Cuisine: Food, Power and National Identity* (London: Reaktion Books, 2006), 179.

⁴⁶ Paul H. Noguchi, “Ekiben: The Fast Food of High-Speed Japan,” *Ethnology* 33 no. 4 (1994): 317-330.

produce in season. They also believe that to grow the best tasting produce, one needs to take into account seasonality and freshness.

History of California cuisine

Understanding how the generations of Japanese American farmers after WWII have impacted California cuisine involves first learning the history of the culinary movement and what the cuisine advocates. Although loosely defined, California cuisine always encompasses fresh, local produce.⁴⁷ California cuisine restaurants' focus on farm-to-table eating has allowed regional cuisine's emergence in California.⁴⁸ Today, a growing number of people are advocating for farm to table restaurants, partly because restaurants sourcing from local farmers allows for "relationships" between "chefs and farmers" as well as farmers and eaters unlike conventional fast food, and also allows consumers to support local, small family farmers.⁴⁹ Currently, discourses like eating local, organic, and seasonally grown produce are extremely well-known, but back in the 1970s when California cuisine was just emerging in the Bay Area, these ideologies were mostly nonexistent.⁵⁰ However, thanks to Alice Waters and other influential chefs, California cuisine's influence and ideologies around eating farm to table food eventually spread throughout America and thus changed how Americans eat and think about food: the movement has compelled people to place more value to their produce's source, production

⁴⁷ Joyce Goldstein, *Inside the California Food Revolution: Thirty Years that Changed our Culinary Consciousness*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

⁴⁸ Rose Garrett, "So What is 'California Cuisine'?" Nopa, Bar Tartine, Rich Table, and Joyce Goldstein Talk It Out," *Eater San Francisco*, Oct. 7, 2013. accessed July 2017. <https://sf.eater.com/2013/10/7/6358557/so-what-is-california-cuisine-nopa-bar-tartine-rich-table-goldstein>

⁴⁹ Sally K. Fairfax, Louise Nelson Dyble, Greig Tor Guthey, Lauren Gwin, Monica Moore, and Jennifer Sokolove, *California Cuisine and Just Food*. (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012).

⁵⁰ Bertram M. Gordon, "Shifting Tastes and Terms: The Rise of California Cuisine," *Revue Francaise D'etudes Americaines* 27/28 (1986): 109-126.

process, locality, and seasonality.⁵¹ All of these ideologies oppose large supermarket chains and industrial agricultural practices that have become dominant American institutions.

Many people credit chef Alice Waters and her Berkeley restaurant Chez Panisse as the “catalyst” for California cuisine and for shifting California restaurants’ focus to the quality of ingredients.⁵² Waters believes “California cooking is a philosophy, and a way of living your life. It isn’t just about the food. It’s about all the value of the culture—the artist and production, the terroir, the rituals of the table.”⁵³ With this statement, Waters implies that California cuisine follows an ideology that is more than just the taste of the food but encompasses what eating and cooking locally produced, seasonal food means to eaters and cooks. Significantly, Waters states that when she first started Chez Panisse, she was supported and inspired by a small Japanese American, Berkeley food retailer Bill Fujimoto whom Waters calls “the all question man.”⁵⁴ She credits him for referring her to all the local farms her restaurant sources their ingredients from today. Clearly, Waters could not have started a food revolution based around farm to table restaurants without relying on Fujimoto who sold fresh, unconventional, heirloom produce from small, local farmers in the Bay Area.

Case Study Bill Fujimoto

Berkeley food retailer Bill Fujimoto provided one of the catalysts for California cuisine during the 1970s because he, unlike large chain food retailers, cared about seasonality, locality, taste, health quotient, and unconventional produce. In 1961, Fujimoto’s parents established

⁵¹ Paul, Freedman, *Ten Restaurants that Changed America*. (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 2016).

⁵² Goldstein, *ibid*, 41.

⁵³ Joyce Goldstein, *Inside the California Food Revolution: Thirty Years that Changed our Culinary Consciousness*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 43.

⁵⁴“Eat at Bill’s: Life in the Monterey Market,” directed by Lisa Brenneis (Tangerine Man Films, 2009), DVD.

Monterey Market as a general grocery store and converted the store to an all produce market in 1978. From the early 1980s until 2009, Bill took charge of the market, selling a large variety of heirloom produce. He chose unusual, unconventional produce varieties not sold in supermarkets based on their unique tastes. His philosophy, inspired by his Japan born father Tom, required “know[ing] how everything tastes raw.”⁵⁵ Some examples of the precise, high taste sensitivity lessons Tom taught Bill was how to distinguish between an Italian and Japanese eggplant and when a crop was in season, immature, or overripe: since they trained their taste buds to this degree of sensitivity for every vegetable and fruit they could find, the Fujimotos clearly had high standards and an artisanal mindset for their work as food retailers. They took a craftsman’s pride in finding produce that was of extremely high quality and taste.

Furthermore, Bill sourced from local farmers who grew crops organically, which Bill believes contributes to creating better taste of produce. Bill states, “I personally think organic farmers know more about what's going on in the ground than regular farmers, because regular farmers are doing it [...] by external adjusting [...] and chemical fertilizing...”⁵⁶ Back in the 1970s when Bill first became head of the market, organic farming was not widely known or recognized. Most supermarkets sold only a few varieties of conventional produce that was grown with chemicals for long shelf lives but without regards to taste. When he could have taken the easy route and conformed to chain supermarket standards, Bill instead took on extra work to find, taste, and sell a large variety of unconventional produce from small, local organic farmers. Fujimoto’s store was a rare existence, but it was a boon for California cuisine chefs because they had access to a large variety of quality, tasteful produce.

⁵⁵ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

⁵⁶ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

Bill Fujimoto's advice and produce inspired many chefs crucial to developing California cuisine. When Fujimoto was in charge of the market, Monterey Market was "the first stop" for many Bay Area chefs, such as Alice Waters, Jeremiah Towers, Alan Tangren, etc., who were instrumental in the movement that became California cuisine.⁵⁷ When he ran Monterey Market, Fujimoto set up a large back room containing stacks of diverse varieties of produce for California cuisine chefs to browse through and taste. Fujimoto states that his back room was "never the same two days in a row," which implies the back room's produce was kept extremely fresh.⁵⁸ When reflecting on the chefs' hard work in navigating through his backroom's many produce boxes, Fujimoto recalls a statement from Waters: "Whatever's really good, find what's really good, and find a way to cook it."⁵⁹ Here, Waters suggests that finding quality produce is a crucial, necessary step to cooking good food. Thus, her statement shows that Fujimoto's role in providing a diverse range of tasteful unconventional produce was essential for developing California cuisine chefs' success in cooking. He provided these chefs with the best ingredients to cook the tasteful, revolutionary cuisine that impressed and ultimately changed the perspectives of so many Americans.

Despite his innovative market and backroom, Fujimoto modestly credits the California cuisine chefs' talents for their success. When listening to Fujimoto speak, he makes it sound as though the Bay Area chefs explored alone through Monterey Market's produce section and backroom. However, Fujimoto would let chefs know which produce was the freshest and inform them of deliveries of heirloom, unconventional produce, which he thought they would be interested in. Alan Tangren, a chef at Chez Panisse, also states that Fujimoto "may not say this

⁵⁷ Goldstein, *ibid*, 189.

⁵⁸ "Eat at Bill's: Life in the Monterey Market," directed by Lisa Brenneis (Tangerine Man Films, 2009), DVD.

⁵⁹ "Eat at Bill's: Life in the Monterey Market," directed by Lisa Brenneis (Tangerine Man Films, 2009), DVD.

but he really defines the cooking we do at Chez Panisse because he knows what's good and that's what we wanted."⁶⁰

Many Bay Area chefs credit Fujimoto for not just selling and making quality produce available for them, but for his intuitive advice and taste that influenced the ingredients and food on their seasonal menus. Fujimoto downplays his role in California cuisine, but so many chefs he has supported sing praises for his advice and guidance for helping them find quality produce. Not only chefs, but many small, local farmers around the Bay Area and throughout California also praise and feel indebted to Fujimoto for his support and unique work philosophies.

One important philosophy aiding small farmers played a key role in helping small farmers in the Bay Area succeed and establish themselves as a local community of farmers who cared about high quality produce. Fujimoto's selling policy was built around aiding small farmers. He paid top dollar to growers and then sold at the lowest price he could afford. Fujimoto states the best relationship with farmers is a "personal one" because he "was actually investing in their business. [He had] to make a commitment to support their crops. If [he] really want[ed] to keep a farmer, then [he] treat[ed] them well."⁶¹ Fujimoto saw that the success of farmers meant he would also benefit from selling good produce in his market. While some retailers might have compensated for the large prices they bought the produce for, Fujimoto did not try to take advantage of customers with his prices. When Fujimoto was in charge, most customers could buy "high end produce in season" at bargain prices.⁶² Fujimoto engaged and educated the public with an array of healthy, diverse produce and did not make Monterey Market into an elitist shop. He truly wanted small farmers to succeed as well as giving customers

⁶⁰ "Eat at Bill's: Life in the Monterey Market," directed by Lisa Brenneis (Tangerine Man Films, 2009), DVD.

⁶¹ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

⁶² "Best Produce for the Money: Do the Alice Waters Thing on a Budget," *East Bay Express*, 2004, accessed May 30, 2017.

opportunities to buy unconventional, fresh, tasteful produce. Fujimoto's work with Bay Area farmers and consumers shows he was advocating and supporting seasonal, local ways of eating that California cuisine advocated and ultimately, many Americans embraced.

Moreover, Fujimoto provided much guidance for beginning farmers and thus created and supported a community of small, Bay Area farmers who would all play their own roles in influencing the menus of Bay Area California cuisine chefs. Many of his suppliers say that Fujimoto knew everything about organic farming.⁶³ He taught farmers the right way to grow specific, unconventional crops and the logistics of selling to markets. Most importantly, many of these small farmers struggled to make a living selling their unconventional crops unsuited for large supermarket chains; they usually did not grow enough produce for large supermarkets' stocks and their produce did not meet conventional supermarket standards. Fujimoto's support and willingness to buy their produce when other stores would not have made these small family farmers' successful. If he had not supported these small, local farmers, most likely, they would have struggled to make a living in large supermarket chains and there would have been few local farmers from whom California cuisine chefs could source. Fujimoto's market made these small farmers' produce into gourmet ingredients and sustainable sources of income because many higher end California cuisine chefs prized these unique varieties. Fujimoto helped a community of small, Bay Area farmers thrive, which allowed California cuisine chefs to carry out their ideology of running farm to table restaurants.

Consequently, Fujimoto's guidance of farmers increased the diversity of California's agriculture. Many times, when farmers came to Fujimoto for advice about what crops to grow, he often encouraged them to grow unconventional, heirloom produce. Fujimoto modestly

⁶³ Deborah K. Rich, "Gardening for Fun and Profit: Monterey Market, Among Others, Buys Produce From Backyard Growers," *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 28, 2008. Accessed April 2018.

maintains that even with his advice, the farmer deserves more credit for carrying out the harvesting. Still, Fujimoto’s experience in the produce market allowed him to think of the best heirloom crops suitable for farmers to grow. When farmers came to him for advice, he would ask, “Well, what do you grow now? What are you good at? What do you like to grow?”⁶⁴ Fujimoto would thoughtfully take into account the farmers’ abilities and preferences. He would also visit farms to check the regionality and the soil quality and then think of crops suited for these growing conditions—his experience working with his father and on his own gave him this great knowledge of farming. His advice was all aimed for the farmers’ successful planting of diverse crops, which helped strengthen and diversify US agriculture.

An example of Fujimoto’s diversification of US agriculture is his support of “a conventional farmer [...who] did big farming.”⁶⁵ Fujimoto changed the direction of what that farmer was growing to focus on unconventional crops.⁶⁶ Fujimoto found out he grew lima beans so he suggested the farmer grow unique but obscure, heirloom strains of beans. Fujimoto gave him information on where to find the seeds and eventually, the conventional farmer “literally became the most well known grower of fine culinary beans.”⁶⁷ The formerly conventional farmer’s beans also brought him profits since California cuisine restaurants appreciated the unique varieties. Because Fujimoto tailored his advice to this farmer’s skills, he successfully grew these new crops. Most likely, this farmer would never have thought to grow these unique bean varieties without Fujimoto’s suggestion. There were many other farmers that Fujimoto helped in this way throughout California. Fujimoto, therefore, has opened the perspectives of

⁶⁴ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

⁶⁵ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

⁶⁶ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

⁶⁷ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

Californian farmers to grow different strains of crops, building up the diversity and thus, the strength of US and California agriculture.⁶⁸

In addition to furthering California cuisine's development and the diversity of US agriculture, Fujimoto's philosophies have permeated consumers' food discourses that circulate around knowing how their produce is grown.⁶⁹ Many Americans today realize with the advent of industrial agriculture and food, consumers are getting further disconnected from food production and no longer know how their food is grown and made. Although he is not a political revolutionary trying to upturn American foodways, Fujimoto has been thinking about such food-related issues since the 1970s. Fujimoto believed he had to "be able to defend everything [he] sold," which comes down to knowing the "story" of his produce: he states, "It's your responsibility to find out [the story], which makes it worthwhile. It keeps everything interesting."⁷⁰ Dominant, large, industrial farms tend to obscure their stories of their growing processes; they do not want consumers to know their processes create environmental pollution amongst other consequences.⁷¹ Combating industrial agriculture, Fujimoto cared deeply for learning about his farmers' growing processes. He did not see his work as impersonally selling commodities as do most supermarket chains.⁷² Fujimoto's philosophies around growing strategies shows he carefully considered and valued every item in his store. Today, many Americans follow Fujimoto's beliefs through the establishment of popular local farmers' markets and their attempts to inform themselves of the food production process.⁷³

⁶⁸ Liz Carlisle, "Mapping the Benefits of Farm Biodiversity," *Civileats*. April 3, 2017. Accessed Oct. 21, 2018.

⁶⁹ Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006).

⁷⁰ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

⁷¹ Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma* (The Penguin Press, 2006).

⁷² Ken Parth, "Of Produce and Taste," *Supermarket Business* 43 (1988): 5.

⁷³ Helena Norberg-Hodge, *Bringing the Food Economy Home: Local Alternatives to Global Agribusiness* (London: Zed Books, 2002).

Bill Fujimoto's philosophies and work ethic were largely influenced from his cultural background as a Japanese American and lessons he learned from his father, Tom, who was born in Japan. When Bill was growing up, Tom would wake him at three AM to take him to wholesale produce markets. Tom wanted to make sure they could get there early so they could snatch up the good produce before the markets became too crowded. Tom instilled his artisanal, work ethic to his son, Bill. When reflecting on his work ethic in his current consultant role in a San Mateo grocery store, Bill states, "I've only been there for three days so I haven't done anything yet except impress upon the boys how hard I can work. That's the Japanese way, right? Or the Japanese-American way post war."⁷⁴ Although it would be a generalization to say all Japanese Americans work hard, many Japanese Americans share a strong work ethic, combined with an artisanal craftsman approach and pride towards their work.⁷⁵ Bill's strong work ethic is reflected in his attempts to sharpen his sensitivity of the taste of produce and through his selling of a large variety of unusual, unique produce. Bill's Japanese influenced mindset have greatly improved Monterey Market's produce, and thus benefitted the Bay Area chefs and consumers who frequent the Market.

Another Japanese cultural trait Bill and Tom share is their caring, personal relationship towards others, which especially benefitted the many small farmers with whom Bill and Tom worked.⁷⁶ Bill states that Tom would "gamble on certain farms, give them a shot, and support that shot [by giving their produce a space in the store.] It took me a while to realize how many years some of these projects would take. What my father always understood and I learned was that once you started these communications with the farmer, you could see what they're capable

⁷⁴ Interview with Bill Fujimoto.

⁷⁵ Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado's Japanese Americans: From 1886 to the Present* (University Press of Colorado, 2005).

⁷⁶ Christine Yano, "Shifting Plates: Okazuya in Hawai'i." *Amerasia Journal* 32 no. 2 (2006): 37-45.

of, what they excel at.”⁷⁷ From Tom, Bill learned to give small farmers opportunities to succeed financially when other large supermarkets would not. Tom believed in giving small farmers’ produce a chance in his store. Bill saw that Tom’s Japanese background made him feel empathy for others. Bill did not try to charge consumers high prices for his produce, thus making local, heirloom produce used in gourmet restaurants accessible to consumers. He also did not try to gain all the profits over the farmers that sourced to him but tried to help them earn a sustainable living, thus allowing small family farmers in California to maintain themselves as an agricultural institution. The lessons from his father of valuing personal relationships amongst the people he worked with helped them all succeed and made Monterey Market a catalyst for California cuisine and local farm-to-table eating.⁷⁸ Therefore, the farmers, customers, and chefs whom Bill has supported owe much to his Japanese background.

Bill Fujimoto and Monterey Market succeeded in tying the process of produce consumption to relationships between consumers, growers, and chefs. Reflecting his family’s Japanese heritage, he never considered his job as selling a commodity, but rather as involving human relationships and respect for all the people his market impacted.⁷⁹ Goldstein explains that “driving the produce revolution [like California cuisine] forward required the efforts of a diverse group of individuals working in different corners of the state’s food system” and that one of these important players was Fujimoto who “connected growers and buyers and educated both groups in the process.”⁸⁰ Fujimoto helped foster closer relationships between the farmers, chefs,

⁷⁷ Joyce Goldstein, *Inside the California Food Revolution: Thirty Years that Changed our Culinary Consciousness*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 189-90.

⁷⁸ Joyce Goldstein, *Inside the California Food Revolution: Thirty Years that Changed our Culinary Consciousness*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 6.

⁷⁹ George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014), 185.

⁸⁰ Joyce Goldstein, *Inside the California Food Revolution: Thirty Years that Changed our Culinary Consciousness*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 6.

and consumers, not just through professional relationships but through personal connections to support one another in growing and cooking fresh, healthy, tasteful food. Fujimoto encouraged Bay Area farmers, chefs, and consumers to come together.⁸¹ This community symbiotically kept Monterey Market a viable community asset for the California cuisine movement. His modesty reflects how he was never looking for praise but truly wanted to make a selfless impact on small family farmers' livelihoods and help California cuisine chefs find the right produce for their restaurants.

Case Study David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto

Like Bill, third generation Japanese American writer and farmer David Mas Masumoto holds a similar selfless relationship-based approach to produce, but Masumoto has made his mark on US food and California cuisine through farming and writing. With his daughter Nikiko, Mas has become a symbol for small family farms opposing US industrial agriculture. They run an organic, family peach farm in Fresno, California, which was passed down to them from Mas's father. After being released from World War II internment, in 1950, Mas's father bought their family farm. In 1976, after he returned from college, Mas converted his father's peach orchards and grapevines to organic. Like Fujimoto who was an anomaly from other food retailers, Mas was converting his farm when organic farming was not a widespread, recognized practice. However, Mas thought organic farming "felt like the right thing to do."⁸² Mas knew his decision to farm organically and at a small scale resigned him to "a life of cutting losses instead of maximizing profits," yet he believed that sacrificing the quality of his peaches by using

⁸¹ "Eat at Bill's: Life in the Monterey Market," directed by Lisa Brenneis (Tangerine Man Films, 2009), DVD.

⁸² David Mas Masumoto and Nikiko Masumoto, *Changing Season: A Father, A Daughter, A Family Farm*. (Berkeley: Heyday, 2016), x.

chemicals would be a worse outcome.⁸³ The implications of his decision reached far beyond his own farm because he shared his stories through writing books and newspaper articles; many readers throughout America were inspired by Mas's decision, an ideological stance against industrial agriculture.⁸⁴ Mas helped build the foundation for today's common discourses against industrial agriculture through his and his daughter's public, symbolic, and inspiring storytelling.

Mas and Nikiko, both share a love for storytelling, a love that has given many Americans a new perspective on farming that argues for a healthier, more culturally guided way of producing food. When Mas first published his 1987 article, "Epitaph for a Peach, and for the Sweetness of Summer,"⁸⁵ in the *Los Angeles Times* and *New York Times*, he won over the support of many readers.⁸⁶ In the article, he wrote of being resigned to bulldoze his heirloom peach trees because it was the cost-efficient decision. He could not sell his delicate, tasteful peaches to large supermarkets because supermarkets prioritized appearance and shelf life over taste.⁸⁷ Supermarkets bought mostly from large, industrial farms, not small ones that cared for growing tasteful produce.⁸⁸ Mas's 1987 article reached a large group of people, nationwide, and changed how they thought about farming. Readers of the *LA Times* and *New York Times* wrote to him, saying they did not know of the struggles small farmers selling heirloom, unconventional crops faced. They recognized the irony in the fact supermarkets no longer cared about the taste of their produce. Mas states, "I got letters from Ohio, and Pennsylvania, and North Carolina

⁸³ David Mas Masumoto, *Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons in My Family Farm*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 210.

⁸⁴ Elaine Iwano, "Mas Masumoto's Memories Are Just Peachy," *International Examiner*, April 1, 2003. Accessed October 2018.

⁸⁵ David Mas Masumoto, "Epitaph for a Peach, and for the Sweetness of Summer," *LA Times*, August 16, 1987. Accessed July 13, 2017.

⁸⁶ Dan Charles, "The Family Peach that Became a Symbol of the Food Revolution," *NPR*. March 14, 2015. Accessed July 27, 2017.

⁸⁷ Ken Partch, "Of Produce and Taste," *Supermarket Business* 43 (1988): 5.

⁸⁸ Patrick Linder, "The Long Decline of the Family Farm," *Anthropology Now* 2 (2010): 74-80.

saying, ‘Keep that peach, keep that peach.’”⁸⁹ Mas’s positive, nationwide response gave him the resolve to keep growing his heirloom peaches. His article’s popularity also led him to write more influential books.

Mas’s resolve also inspired Nikiko to follow in her father’s footsteps to take over the family farm and share more of their stories and philosophies around small farming. Nikiko states that after she went to college and took an environmental studies class, she saw her family farm in a global context where her farm was “not just [her] home but...an incredibly powerful act of resistance.”⁹⁰ Her father’s decision to go organic was “a choice of [his] outlook on the world and how [he] saw [his] place in making the world a better place.”⁹¹ She respects her father’s decision to resist industrial agriculture nonorganic practices. She also feels inspired by her grandfather’s courage to buy land in America even after being interned and treated like an enemy. She deeply admires her grandparents’ “strength and resilience...required of them to survive through incarceration camps during World War II, and not be broken by that experience. And come back and decide to do something for public good.”⁹² In turn, Nikiko sees how her family farm can make a positive public impact on the farming industry through storytelling. Nikiko states, “I think there’s a continuing need to both share and explore the soul of farming [...] And what gifts of nature and ecology have to offer us that I think most people just aren’t [aware of]. They’re so estranged from how food is grown.”⁹³ She believes that sharing her family’s stories helps non-farmers understand how their food is produced—this understanding brings back a relationship between farmers and eaters that has been lost with the advent of large industrial farming. The

⁸⁹ Interview with David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto.

⁹⁰ Nikiko Masumoto, “What It’s Like to be a Mixed-Race, Queer, Feminist Farmer,” *healthyish*. September 24, 2018. Accessed Oct 21., 2018.

⁹¹ Interview with David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto.

⁹² Interview with David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto.

⁹³ Interview with David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto.

Masumotos' stories lead consumers to feel more connected to US agricultural systems and more invested in the quality and health quotient of their produce.⁹⁴

The Masumotos' writings around how they are committed to bringing out the highest taste of their produce has contributed to California cuisine ideologies that advocate eating and valuing quality produce. Mas's philosophy and fruit captures what peaches used to taste like before industrial conventional fruit became the norm in supermarkets. His peaches evoke nostalgia⁹⁵ by reminding people "of the orchards of their childhood and that warm sense of constancy of family found in their memories."⁹⁶ Mas's principles align with California cuisine where Mas describes the culinary movement as "elevat[ing] memory to a position that rewarded flavor and those of us on the farming side who were trying to grow flavor before it was too late."⁹⁷ In his statement, Mas expresses his belief that the culinary movement supports small farmers, but California cuisine chef Alice Waters argues that Mas also is a prime mover in the California cuisine movement.

Mas's article reached influential culinary leaders like Queen of California cuisine Alice Waters, demonstrating that his vision of farming paralleled California cuisine's ideologies. Reflecting on reading his article, Waters stated, "He was so eloquent, and I knew that I needed to taste his peaches [...] I have always wanted to support the people who are taking care of the land, and it's that personal story that connects the food to the people who come and eat here."⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Chizu Omori, "Reacquainting Ourselves with the Farmer's Soil and Toil," *International Examiner*, 1999. Accessed October 2018.

⁹⁵ Martha Stewart, "Peaches' Progress: Matsumoto's Orchard," *Martha Stewart Living*, July 2010, accessed July 13, 2017.

⁹⁶ David Mas Masumoto, *Epitaph for a Peach: Four Seasons in My Family Farm*. (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 1995), 210.

⁹⁷ Joyce Goldstein, *Inside the California Food Revolution: Thirty Years that Changed our Culinary Consciousness*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013), 191.

⁹⁸ Dan Charles, "The Family Peach that Became a Symbol of the Food Revolution," *NPR*. March 14, 2015. Accessed July 27, 2017.

Because Waters admired Mas's vision and dedication to quality, she then used his peaches in her restaurant. She credits Mas's contribution to California cuisine's food discourses and Mas's determination to make US food more nutritious and better tasting. Mas champions the principles of California cuisine through his nationwide influence on his readers.

As a small farmer against industrial, large scale agriculture, Mas's public storytelling compel Americans to take a second look at how they and the US industry view agriculture and food as a form of commodity, rather than a way of life. His writings inspire many Americans to look towards him as a leader of small, family farms.⁹⁹ Mas believes "farming as a way of life" is becoming lost and that farms "are becoming impersonal, that decisions are now based on business plans while personal responsibility is exiled from the fields."¹⁰⁰ Indeed, Mas states that "agriculture has become more of a business" where "decisions are made more and more by managers and not by owner-operations."¹⁰¹ He argues that such an attitude creates industrial peaches that are "not grown but made" and have "become a commodity produced for consumption."¹⁰²

Nevertheless, throughout his books and articles, Mas confesses his struggle to resist the desire for more profits and to turn his farm into more of a business that results in a commodity.¹⁰³ Ultimately, though, Mas writes of his determination not to conform to industrial agricultural practices even at the loss of profits. Despite the fact the Masumotos modestly deny

⁹⁹ Peter Day, "The Small Fruit with a Big Flavor," *BBC*. July 18, 2015. Accessed July 27, 2017.

¹⁰⁰ David Mas Masumoto, *Four Seasons in Five Senses: Things Worth Savoring*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 6.

¹⁰¹ David Mas Masumoto, *Four Seasons in Five Senses: Things Worth Savoring*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 4.

¹⁰² David Mas Masumoto, *Four Seasons in Five Senses: Things Worth Savoring*. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), 4.

¹⁰³ David Mas Masumoto, *Wisdom of the Last Farmer: Harvesting Legacies From the Land*. (New York: Free Press, 2009).

their iconic status, Mas's writings truly have become widespread throughout the United States because his desire to grow delicious, delicate peaches instead of the conventional peaches large supermarket wanted and "then to write about it became a symbol of resistance to machine-driven food production."¹⁰⁴ One may wonder how Mas came about to this understanding of farming as a way of life in America's industrial dominated agricultural field. Significantly, Mas's and Nikiko's symbolic status comes from their Japanese American backgrounds.

Instead of producing commodities, Mas and Nikiko live more like Japanese artisans who aim to grow a personalized, hand grown peach with great taste on their small, family farm. Mas states that during a gap year in college, he lived in Japan and worked on his family's rice farm, which changed his philosophy of farming.

He states, "I lived in this old 200-year-old farm house that [my family] were in. Literally worked the same fields my grandmother worked. [... There] is the business side of farming, but there's also this other aspect I call sense of place, this aesthetic, this relationship that you have when you build with the place you work. I think that's what changed my thinking so much more to realize this farm we have isn't just a piece of dirt. Our family history's embedded in it, the community is embedded in it, and everything that our parents and grandparents went through is part of this farm."¹⁰⁵

Mas's sense of traditions on his family's Japanese rice farm helped him place his own philosophy of farming in a new context of family history.

His Japanese background plays a huge influence on his artisanal approach towards farming as a way of life, rather than an impersonal means of producing a commodity; he takes pride in growing high quality, unique heirloom peaches.¹⁰⁶ Significantly, this Japanese-influenced philosophy has inspired many Americans who read his writings to rethink how they

¹⁰⁴ Dan Charles, "The Family Peach that Became a Symbol of the Food Revolution," *NPR*. March 14, 2015. Accessed July 27, 2017.

¹⁰⁵ Interview with David Mas and Nikiko Masumoto.

¹⁰⁶ George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014).

view US farming. His Japanese heritage has also greatly supported California cuisine's philosophies around valuing tasteful, quality produce and discourses against large, industrial farms. Through their writing and speaking on their Japanese influenced farming philosophies, Mas and Nikiko have also strengthened movements for preserving small, family farming. Similar to the Masumotos, the Chino family run a small, family farm that also has been recognized by Waters and other influential chefs as the antithesis to the industrial corporate farm, the epitome of a farm to table grower with a Japanese artisanal approach towards farming.

Case Study Chino Farms

San Diego's Chino Farms, run by the Chino family, is considered to be the greatest vegetable and fruits farm in America and has been recognized for "raising the bar" of American agriculture.¹⁰⁷ The Chino family's unique, artisanal principles of maintaining the quality and taste of produce are the main reason for their success. Significantly, Chino Farms does not ship to any customers. They believe the long distance travel and packing degrades the taste and freshness of their produce. Thus, the family sells their produce at their roadside stand, located right off their farm. Unlike most farms, Chino Farms is not concerned with producing large quantities of one crop that can travel long distances or selling to wholesale marketers. The Chino family's valuing of produce quality and taste reflects their artisanal, craftsmen pride in their work; they believe in doing everything they can to bring out the taste and freshness of their produce, even if it means going completely against all other farming practices by, for example, not selling to any supermarket and risking that customers will come to them. Many regional customers and even people outside of San Diego take the time and effort to travel to the Chinos'

¹⁰⁷ Reuters, "Celebrated Japanese American California Farms Sows Seeds for Next Generation," *Japan Times*, Nov 26, 2014, accessed June 3, 2017.

roadside stand because they are so impressed by their unique philosophies and tasteful produce.¹⁰⁸ The Chinos' famous produce greatly advanced the quality of American produce, thus making Chino Farms an important and inspiring small farm in the large realm of US agriculture. The Chino family has worked and continues to work extremely hard towards creating greater taste in their produce even when many people in the past did not understand their vision.

During the mid 1900s, the Chino family were innovators in carrying out local food and farm-to-table eating, which were ideas people in their time did not foresee would become important issues today in American agriculture. Far before farmers' markets were an accepted establishment, the Chino family broke away from wholesalers and supermarkets to directly sell to consumers with their roadside Vegetable Stand. There were other roadside stands at the time, but Junzo Chino, the first generation of the Chinos in America, saw that other farmers usually sold their "seconds" at their stands.¹⁰⁹ Breaking away from what other farmers practiced, Junzo realized he could attract customers by offering high quality produce. He also took advantage of his roadside stand's close location to his farm to sell the freshest produce, picked and sold in a timely period. Tom Chino, Junzo's youngest son and the current head of the Chino farm, explained, "A tomato that's ripened on the vine tastes better than a tomato that was picked at a hard green stage and then ripened in the process of transportation to a store. So we grew vegetables that were picked that day and sold that day."¹¹⁰ Furthermore, since the Chinos only sell their produce to local chefs who come to their roadside stand, the Chinos have helped farm-to-table movements develop in San Diego far before farm-to-table restaurants became recognized more broadly in American dining. In terms of today's food movements, the Chino

¹⁰⁸ Marian, Burros, "De Gustibus," *New York Times*, May 18, 1988, accessed June 2, 2017.

¹⁰⁹ Interview with Tom Chino, July 10th, 2018.

¹¹⁰ Interview with Tom Chino, July 10th, 2018.

family was ahead of their time. The Chinos' dedicated commitment to maintain the quality and therefore, the taste of their produce has helped set the stage for today's local food discourses.

The movement for small organic farmers selling directly to consumers undoubtedly was inspired by stands like the Chinos' Vegetable Stand. Tom constantly maintains, "We have the advantage of harvesting it out of the field, and washing and selling it."¹¹¹ Additionally, Junzo's distrust of using pesticides, which was a revolutionary idea in his time, was also meant to elicit the best tastes of his produce.¹¹² Junzo's practices and dedication to quality are still maintained by the Chino family today as well as by many other small, organic farms. Similar to the Masumotos and Fujimotos, the Chinos work like Japanese artisanal craftsman who take pride in creating their best pieces of work, which in this case is tasteful produce. The Chino family pioneered artisanal practices that were unusual for their time and went against the mainstream industrial model of farms.¹¹³ They were not revolutionaries, but their artisanal vision, as it turns out, was an extremely skillful and health conscious way to grow crops: a vision that most likely influenced and led to the local, organic, and farm-to-table food movements of today.

In addition to improving the taste of produce, the Chino family has focused on diversifying the marketplace rather than just focusing on the quantity of one crop, which has made US produce more diverse and specialized. Tom says his parents could not "hold land for more than two years, with the rent. And, so they had to go from place to place, and because of that, they would grow various different crops also."¹¹⁴ Tom's parents took pride in their large varieties of produce. Tom and his siblings built on their parents' artisanal pride in growing a

¹¹¹ Interview with Tom Chino, July 10th, 2018.

¹¹² Paul K. Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: The Transformation of American Agriculture Since 1929*. (Livingston, Kentucky: University Press of Kentucky, 2008).

¹¹³ George Solt, *The Untold History of Ramen: How Political Crisis in Japan Spawned a Global Food Craze* (University of California Press, 2014), 185.

¹¹⁴ Interview with Tom Chino, July 10th, 2018.

wide range of tastes and unusual produce by coming up with the revolutionary idea to import seeds from outside America. Tom and his siblings studied culinary magazines and ordered seed catalogues from Japan, France, Holland, Israel, and all over the world. Tom, who has a background in biology and cancer research, figured out how “to grow unusual varieties from around the world by figuring out what will succeed, given the conditions at his farm.”¹¹⁵ He and his siblings also learned how to utilize their mother’s greenhouse. They would grow the juvenile crops in the needed, specific temperature and sheltered environment in the greenhouses and “then plant them out in the field.”¹¹⁶

Tom and his siblings now grow on rotation more than 120 varieties of produce; clearly, the Chinos are no strangers to hard work. The greenhouse and seed catalog practices were both creative, innovative ideas, which show Tom and his siblings were not just doing the same as other farmers. They thought carefully about what they could do to improve their farm and their produce and were willing to put in an enormous amount of effort to do so.

Significantly, Chino Farms cultivates different vegetables and fruits that are diverse ethnic communities value. Tom explains, “I think broadening your cuisine [... improves] your appreciation of and gives you sensitivity to other people.”¹¹⁷ The Chinos have introduced different ethnic cuisines to their customers, partly because they hope to influence others to become more tolerant and appreciative of multicultural America. The Chino family and their unique, creative vision changed and expanded the possibilities of what can be done in California agriculture.

¹¹⁵ Linda McIntosh, “Harvest of Local Grower Reaps National Acclaim,” *San Diego Union Tribune*, November 24, 2011, accessed June 3, 2017.

¹¹⁶ Linda McIntosh, “Harvest of Local Grower Reaps National Acclaim,” *San Diego Union Tribune*, November 24, 2011, accessed June 3, 2017.

¹¹⁷ Linda McIntosh, “Harvest of Local Grower Reaps National Acclaim,” *San Diego Union Tribune*, November 24, 2011, accessed June 3, 2017.

The Chino family's artisanal commitment to taste and local distribution allows chefs and consumers to carry out California cuisine's philosophies. The Chino family delivers produce long distance only to Alice Waters out of respect for her approach and vision of cooking and eating. Waters explains, "We are bound to [Chino Farms]. We have such admiration for the way they work with their interns, the way they stay small at their stands, the artisanal way they make mochi every New Year. It's an inspiration too to me to see them doing their thing against the tide of industrial farming."¹¹⁸ Most importantly, Waters sees the Chino family's Japanese heritage and their artisanal farming as inspirational to her own work as a California cuisine leader. Furthermore, through the sourcing of their vegetables to Waters, the Chino family's 120 varieties have reached the many customers who come to her famous restaurant, thus opening up the perspectives of Americans to the possibilities of what US agriculture can entail: a diverse, array of tasteful, specialty crops, not just the few types of conventional produce sold in supermarkets.

The Chino family has faced much discrimination, yet they always strive to grow the best produce they can, raising the standards of American agriculture.¹¹⁹ Right before WWII internment, they entrusted their property to a friend, a white produce shipper. They had faith in him, but when they returned to their land after internment, they found he had sold everything they owned.¹²⁰ With help from friends, Junzo acquired land in Rancho Santa Fe. However, the area's white community were initially hostile to a Japanese farming family. They skewed boundary lines to force Junzo's children out of their school district. Despite this blatant discrimination, the Chino family have made great agricultural innovations. The Chinos have not

¹¹⁸ Joyce Goldstein, *Inside the California Food Revolution: Thirty Years that Changed our Culinary Consciousness*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2013).

¹¹⁹ Phylisa Wisdom, "From Internment Camp to Beloved Farm-One Family's Version of Achieving the American Dream," *Munchies*, Jan 19, 2017, accessed June 3, 2017.

¹²⁰ Mark Singer, "The Chinos' Artful Harvest," *New Yorker*, Nov 20, 1992, accessed June 3, 2017.

achieved a great “percentage of California’s gross agricultural revenue,” but they lead the only farm in California and most likely all of the US to commercially produce world wide vegetables and fruits such as Iranian basil, Japanese seedless yellow watermelons, and purple striped French green beans.¹²¹ Their Japanese farming traditions and artisanal practices have become “an essential part of the fabric of our country,” especially considering their influence on culinary leaders like Alice Waters, Wolfgang Puck, Julia Child, David Tanis, and many more.¹²² They have played a huge role in shaping and improving how people eat not only in San Diego, but all of the nationwide eaters who receive meals from the influential chefs inspired by the Chino family.

Conclusion

Even though the Chinos, the Masumotos, and Fujimoto have been integral to the success of Waters and other California cuisine chefs and contributed to how Americans think about eating and living through their food choices, they are rarely acknowledged in studies on California cuisine.¹²³ Most Americans credit Waters for being the catalyst for California cuisine and driving Americans’ focus onto ingredients, yet she did not grow the ingredients she used.¹²⁴ Fujimoto was the person, her all-question man, who led her to small, Bay Area farmers, thus fulfilling California cuisine’s movement for farm-to-table restaurants with fresh, local, seasonal produce. Chino Farms consistently provides high quality produce for Chez Panisse and other restaurants promoting local, seasonal, farm to table eating. When she first opened her restaurant,

¹²¹ Singer, *ibid.*

¹²² Wisdom, *ibid.*

¹²³ Nina F. Ichikawa, “Giving Credit Where it is Due: Asian American Farmers and Retailers as Food System Pioneers,” in *Eating Asia America*. (NYU Press, 2013): 274-287.

¹²⁴ Mai-Due, Christine and Parvini, Sarah. “California Cuisine Queen Alice Waters to be Awarded National Humanities Medal.” *Los Angeles Times*, September 3, 2015. Accessed May 29, 2017.

Waters states she “was never looking for sustainable farmers or organic food. I was really looking for taste.”¹²⁵ Although they are not often thought of as revolutionaries, the Chinos, the Masumotos, and Fujimoto quietly led Waters to a upturning of US food; thanks to California cuisine, the movement these Japanese Americans supported, people now care deeply about eating locally and seasonally, organic agriculture, and supporting small family farms.¹²⁶

Despite their obscurity to the academic and popular audiences of America, Japanese Americans have truly transformed the taste and health quotient of American food because their artisanal approach towards their work is influenced from their cultural backgrounds as Japanese Americans.¹²⁷ My three case studies are Japanese artisans who possess family traditions of maintaining quality, although many of their actions led to something larger than just tasteful produce. Japanese Americans like the Chinos, the Masumotos, and Fujimoto were not purposefully trying to spark a movement around US food. Indeed, Mas modestly claims that as organic farming became more popular, his farm was lucky to be in “the right place at the right time.”¹²⁸ However, it does not seem like my case studies achieved their success by luck. Due to their hard work and continual effort to work smarter, all three case studies were ahead of their time. These Japanese Americans’ innovation and foresight in agriculture and food retail shows how deeply they care for improving the quality, health, and tastefulness of their produce.

They put forth practices that implemented and supported organic, local farming and farm to table eating in a time when corporate farming and supermarket chains were dominant.

¹²⁵ Sally K. Fairfax, Louise Nelson Dyble, Greig Tor Guthey, Lauren Gwin, Monica Moore, and Jennifer Sokolove, *California Cuisine and Just Food*. (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2012), 129.

¹²⁶ Bertram M. Gordon, “Shifting Tastes and Terms: The Rise of California Cuisine,” *Revue Francaise D’etudes Americaines* 27/28 (1986): 109-126.

¹²⁷ Bill Hosokawa, *Colorado’s Japanese Americans: From 1886 to the Present* (University Press of Colorado, 2005).

¹²⁸ David Mas Masumoto and Nikiko Masumoto, *Changing Season: A Father, A Daughter, A Family farm*. (Berkeley: Heyday, 2016), xi.

Although they only served their produce to a small regional base, all three of my case studies impressed and provided produce to influential California chefs, including Alice Waters. They inspired California cuisine chefs who spread these Japanese Americans' food, principles, and beliefs to the diverse, nationwide group of people who ate at their restaurants. Increasingly more people in America today are becoming concerned with the future of our food. Japanese Americans like the Chinos, the Masumotos, and Bill Fujimoto have and continue to set inspiring examples of how to strengthen American food, eating, and produce for the benefit of all.