



壽司工匠 從心出發 SUSHI ARTISAN CREATES FROM HIS HEART

步進一間餐廳，往往著眼於內裡有什麼特別的新菜式、味道如何、廚師功架等等…然而，這天到高級日本餐廳「匠心」(Shoushin)採訪，原來除食物的味道或賣相以外，還能在老闆的飲食藝術之道，悟出人生道理。

A visit to Shoushin is much more than a delightful culinary experience. It's also an opportunity to learn about the taste and appearance of the food, as well as the owner's cooking philosophy.



眼前這位年輕人，謙卑有禮，縱然早已榮升主廚，也當上餐廳老闆，但仍自稱為「高級學徒」：「做人跟做壽司一樣，凡事用心，只要是真心喜歡做的事，永不言辛苦。」

他來自廣州，十多歲隨家人移民到多倫多，校內成績不算標青，在機緣巧合下接觸到日本壽司文化，無心插柳，卻成為今天北美頂尖的日本壽司師傅之一。他的名字叫 Jackie Lin。

This humble and respectful young man is the head chef and owner of Shoushin, yet he still calls himself an “advanced apprentice”.

“Making sushi is the same as being a good person,” he says. “You need to put your heart into everything. As long as you are doing what you like, it will never be too hard.” A native of Guangzhou, he emigrated to Toronto with his family as a teenager. In school, his grades were mediocre. However, he became acquainted with sushi culture by chance and serendipitously has become one of North America's top sushi chefs. His name is Jackie Lin.



餐廳選用“Omakase”形式，中文是「信賴」的意思，即客人所吃的都是由廚師全權作主。
The restaurant features omakase-style sushi, meaning everything customers eat is decided by the chef.



Jackie自從發現自己對壽司文化產生濃烈興趣，便毅然放棄學業，全心全意當上廚師。
As soon as Lin discovered his interest in sushi culture, he decided to leave school and devote his attention to becoming a chef.

十二年磨劍

過去12年，他一直於著名的日本餐廳 Zen Japanese Restaurant 工作，拜師學藝、努力學習做壽司、融入日本飲食文化。去年，他終於決定跳出框框，開設屬於自己的壽司店，致力將最優質的壽司帶給真正喜歡品嚐美食的朋友。

問到在12年的光陰裡，過程辛苦嗎？他說：「不會！工作時間雖長，但當你真正投入做自己喜歡做的事，沒有什麼辛苦、也沒有什麼難事。」現在說來輕鬆，但其實Jackie也曾經有難過的時刻，而那次的挫折，令他畢生難忘。「在學師初期由於經驗不足，表現不佳，難為了食客，我激動得立刻跑進廚房嚎哭起來。」身為堂堂男子漢，為了自己的工作表現而流淚，可見 Jackie是個對自己表現要求極高的人。「我不認為自己是個完美主義者，但我覺得凡事都要用心，真心真意盡力的去做，才對得起自己、對得起客人。」

憑著這套理念，不難理解餐廳名字「匠心」的由來。「誰來當匠並不重要，重要的是心！站得上這個台，就要以客人的滿足感為首要任務，多點從他們的角度、想法出發，這樣客人用餐時會覺得窩心，一定感受到的！」

Twelve Years of Training

Lin spent 12 years working at the famous Zen Japanese Restaurant, where he perfected his skills at sushi, as well as submersing himself into Japanese food culture. Last year, the 31-year-old decided to take the leap and open his own restaurant and devote his energy to producing the highest quality sushi.

When asked if it had been a tough slog the past 12 years, he said, “No! Even though the work hours were long, when you are truly immersed in something you love to do, it’s not hard and nothing is difficult.”

It all looks easy now, but in reality, Lin did experience some hard times, and one challenging episode is unforgettable. “When I first started my apprenticeship, because I didn’t have enough experience, my performance wasn’t good. There was a time that the customer was displeased, and I was so emotional that I ran into the kitchen and cried.” The fact Lin shed those tears is indicative of a man who demands the most of himself. “I don’t consider myself a perfectionist, but I think that you have to pour your heart into everything, and dedicate your whole attention and energy to it. Only that way will you be able to do justice to yourself and to your customers.”

Based on this philosophy, it is easy to understand the origin of the restaurant’s name, “Shoushin” (“the heart of an artisan”). “It is not important who the artisan is,” Lin says. “Most important is that there is heart in the work. To step onto this stage, you must consider the customer’s satisfaction as the most important assignment. You must work from their perspective and their thinking. That way, the customers feel the genuine sweetness of the heart in the food.”

江戶前壽司

Jackie所做的乃是日本江戶（現在的東京）時代興起的壽司，稱之為「江戶前壽司」，也就是現今最流行的一種做法，主要由「飯」和「魚」組成。而談到當中的技巧，Jackie竟謂壽司中的飯遠比魚重要！原來每位壽司師傅對於做壽司飯都擁有自己獨門秘方，不得外洩。追問下，Jackie只願透露他每天都會把所需的飯(20-30人份量)分開三次煮，而且只挑最好的部份來用。「一次煮太多米會不好吃，所以要逐少逐少煮，是麻煩點，但這是我對自己的基本要求。而且煮出來的飯，只取中間部份，接近煲邊的飯口感會有些落差，只好扔掉。」也許這就是日本人對飲食文化的一種執著吧！

至於魚，Jackie講來源尤其重要。他所選用的，80%都是從日本進口，而70%是野生的天然魚。「日本有豐富的天然資源，無論是海域流向、微生物的數量、火山礦物質元素等都是孕育優質魚的條件。」而江戶前壽司當中，就以「小肌魚」最為有代表性。「首先要加入適當的鹽醃、吸走水份，然後再用醋浸。份量方面並沒有一條特定的方程式，廚師要按照魚的體積大小、脂肪含量等去自行拿捏，全憑經驗，這就是表現功架的時候了。」

Jackie重申，握壽司中的魚是用來配合飯，飯是重點，因為飯有「果腹」之用，即是令人飽肚的意思。看完Jackie的訪問，也許你對江戶前壽司重新認識了吧！



餐桌上的一碗一碟都是由Jackie親自從日本選購的，而壽司吧的桌面更是選用罕有的檜木，價值不菲。
Every bowl and every plate on the table was personally selected by Lin in Japan. The sushi bar’s tabletop is made from Japanese hinoki cypress wood.

Edomae Style Nigiri Sushi

The type of sushi Lin makes was popular in Edo, Japan (modern day Tokyo.) It’s called Edomae style nigiri sushi (thin slices of raw fish over pressed vinegared rice) and is one of the most popular types of sushi today. Surprisingly, Lin says the rice is far more important than the fish!

Nearly every sushi chef has a secret formula he’s not willing to share. After much questioning, Lin is only willing to say he divides the rice he needs every day (for 20-30 customers) into three parts. “If I cook too much rice at once, it won’t taste good, so I cook it in small portions,” he explains. “This is more troublesome, but it is my basic requirement. Further, after the rice is cooked, I only take the middle portion, because the rice that is close to the edge of the pot has a less desirable texture.”

It’s this attention to detail that’s indicative of the Japanese dedication to food culture. As for the fish, Lin says its origin is most important and that 80 per cent of the fish he uses is imported from Japan while 70 per cent are wild-caught. “Japan has rich natural resources. Whether it is the flow of the ocean, the amount of micro-organisms, the minerals from the volcanoes, or other elements, these all contribute to the excellent conditions for high-quality fish.” Within Edomae style nigiri sushi, kohada (gizzard shad) is the most iconic one. “First, you need to marinate the fish with adequate salt to absorb the water,” Lin says. “Then you need to soak it in vinegar. The proportions do not have to follow a strict formula. The chef will adjust, based on the size of the fish, the amount of fat it contains, etc. It all depends on experience, and is a chance to show off one’s skill.” Lin reiterates that the fish in nigiri sushi is an accompaniment to the rice, which is the focal point. After speaking with him, one gains a new understanding of Edomae style nigiri sushi. 🍣