

SWEET AND SALTY

A Conversation with Asian American Women Chefs

Tuesday, September 1, 2020, at 5 p.m. PT
Live via Zoom
University of Southern California

ABOUT THE PARTICIPANTS

- **Cecilia Leung** grew up in a Cantonese restaurant family, but was banished from the kitchen by her chef father. Yet she watched, taught herself how to bake and cook, and became an executive chef, formerly at Little Flower Café and Lincoln, both in Pasadena.
- **Isa Fabro** is a critically acclaimed L.A.-based chef known for her pop-ups and Filipino-inspired dishes that have helped create a dialogue in the Filipino food movement. Her company IsaMADE showcases a varied repertoire of projects with creative industries, allowing for a cultural and gastronomic exchange of ideas.
- **Sonoko Sakai** has worked as a film buyer and producer and a freelance food writer. In 2009, she went back to Japan to study noodle making as a way to restore her energy and fell in love with soba. She is the author of *Japanese Home Cooking: Simple Meals, Authentic Flavors*.
- **Jean Trinh** (moderator) is an award-winning journalist who writes about L.A.'s food scene, culture, and history for outlets like *VICE*, *Los Angeles* magazine, *Eater LA*, *KCRW's Good Food*, and *LAist*.



“Every cook has an opportunity to express themselves through food. It is a form of art, and it’s such a beautiful thing.”—Sonoko Sakai in the *New York Times*



ISA FABRO



SONOKO SAKAI



JEAN TRINH

ARE WE THERE YET?

“Hopefully soon, people won’t automatically think of the ‘chef’ as a big burly white guy.”—chef

Niki Nakayama, who owns the L.A. restaurant n/naka, on NPR in 2014

- 77.6 percent of professional chefs and head cooks in the U.S. are male.*
- 43.6 percent of professional chefs and head cooks in the U.S. are white. 16.8 percent are Asian, representing the second-largest racial or ethnic group in the profession.
- Women chefs and head cooks in the U.S. made 76 cents to the dollar men earned in 2019.

Sources: Narrow the Gap, Data USA

* The available data uses the categories named here (male, female, white, Asian). We recognize that this fails to reflect the reality that there are people whose identities are not represented by these terms working as chefs and head cooks, who are likely categorized in ways they may not have categorized themselves.

“If I’m pitching a recipe to editors who have zero context of what I’m talking about, then they’re going to ask a lot of questions about every single ingredient. It’s not possible to fairly talk about global foods when the people on the masthead don’t reflect the communities where that food is coming from.

I think that there’s this feeling within these publications that they just discovered turmeric, or they just discovered palm oil. But no, millions of people eat this food every day. I’m here for a food world that reflects the actual world that we live in.”—

chef and cookbook author Yewande Komolafe in conversation with Priya Krishna in *Bon Appétit*, whose white editor-in-chief recently resigned after a photo of him in brownface sparked a discussion of racism at the magazine. In August, Krishna was one of three cooking stars of color who announced they would stop making videos for *Bon Appétit* after contract negotiations failed to achieve what they believe would be equitable compensation.

FOR FURTHER REFLECTION

- Sonoko Sakai has said, “Home cooking is the most essential cooking.” Do you agree? What does this mean to you?
- Who does most of the cooking in your home?
- Why do you think there is such a gender discrepancy between who is the main cook in most households and who is the head chef in most restaurants?
- Do you feel connected to any cooking traditions? If so, how does this play out in your life? If not, why do you think that is?

IF YOU LIKED THIS EVENT, YOU MIGHT WANT TO CHECK OUT:

- Little Flower Café and Bakery in Pasadena
littleflowercandyco.com
- Lincoln
lincolnpasadena.com
- Webinars and cooking videos by Sonoko Sakai
sonokosakai.com
- Isa Fabro online
isafabro.com
- Women Chefs and Restaurateurs
womenschefs.org
- Rasa Malaysia and Maangchi
maangchi.com/blog/gapshida-malaysia
- Flavorful Origins*
netflix.com/title/80991060
- Gwan-im
gwanim.com
- Jia! The Food of Swatow and the Teochew Diaspora*
jiacookbook.com





WONTONS

For Cooking Demonstration During Event
Makes about 36 wontons

INGREDIENTS

1 package	wonton wrappers, square
8 oz.	pork, ground
8 oz.	shrimp, raw, peeled, deveined
1 tbsp	ginger, finely chopped
2 tbsp	shallots, minced
2 tbsp	green onion, chopped
1 tbsp	garlic, minced
1 tbsp	soy sauce
2 tbsp	Shaoxing wine
2 tbsp	sesame oil
½ tsp	white pepper, ground
1 tsp	salt
2 tbsp	Oil (for pan frying method)
½ cup	Water (for pan frying method)
1 ¼ qt.	Vegetable stock (for boiling method)

EQUIPMENT/TOOLS

Food processor or meat cleaver
Mixing Bowl
Dinner spoon
Plastic wrap
Spider strainer (for boiling method)
Sauté pan or cast iron skillet
Sauté pan lid
Spatula

ASSEMBLING

1. Use food processor or meat cleaver to chop up shrimp into ¼-inch chunks.
2. Place ground pork, shrimp, ginger, shallots, green onion, and garlic in a bowl.
3. Drizzle soy sauce, cooking wine, and sesame oil on top of ingredients. Mix until combined.
4. Season with salt and white pepper. Mix well. Filling should be slightly sticky.
5. Place wonton wrapper in center of one hand. With the back handle of dinner spoon, portion 1 tbsp filling into center of the wrapper. Fold wrapper over and gather the edges together to rid of any air pockets in filling. Flatten and seal so that the edges form a fish tail.
6. Place assembled wonton onto a plate. Cover with plastic wrap.
7. Cook immediately or refrigerate up to 3 days until ready to cook. Assembled wontons can be frozen in a sealed container for up to 2 weeks.

COOKING

Boiling method:

1. Bring 1 qt. of vegetable stock to a boil.
2. Add wontons 8–10 at a time to boil for about 5–8 minutes or until wontons float up to the surface.
3. Use spider to remove wontons and place into bowls.
4. Ladle 8 oz. of hot vegetable stock over wontons. Garnish with sautéed vegetables, such as gai lan or bok choy. Serve.

Pan frying method:

1. Heat sauté pan or cast iron skillet over medium heat.
2. Add 2 tbsp oil into pan. Swirl to coat pan.
3. Place 9–10 wontons in pan in 3 rows.
4. Cook over medium heat until wontons are golden, about 3–5 minutes.
5. Pour ½ cup water over wontons and place lid on top of pan to steam for 5 minutes.
6. Serve on plate with plum sauce.

DISCOVER MORE AT THE USC LIBRARIES

KELSEY VUKIC of the USC Libraries selected the following resources to help you learn more about today's event. These are all electronic resources, which you can access through the search bar on the USC Libraries homepage at libraries.usc.edu.

BOOKS

- Counihan, Carole, and Penny Van Esterik. *Food and Culture: A Reader*. London: Routledge, 2012.
- Ku, Robert Ji-Song, Martin F. Manalansan, and Anita Mannur. *Eating Asian America: A Food Studies Reader*. New York: NYU Press, 2013.
- Mannur, Anita. *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010.
- Stalker, Nancy K. *Devouring Japan: Global Perspectives on Japanese Culinary Identity*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2018.
- Xu, Wenying. *Eating Identities: Reading Food in Asian American Literature*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008.

DATABASES

- [Academic OneFile](#)
- [Food and Drink in History](#)

JOURNALS

- *Food, Culture, & Society*. Baltimore: Association for the Study of Food and Society.
- *Gastronomica: The Journal of Food and Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- *Journal for the Study of Food and Society*. Tucson: Association for the Study of Food and Society.

STREAMING VIDEOS

- *A World of Food: Tastes & Taboos in Different Cultures*. Berkeley, CA: 2000.
- *Sushi: Global Catch*. Directed by Mark Hall. Kino Lorber, 2011.

