

THE STORY BEHIND SUSHI (すし)

HOW MUCH DO YOU ACTUALLY KNOW ABOUT SUSHI?

Almost everyone knows this originally Japanese delicacy. We come across it in Japanese restaurants and many times we have a problem with which kind to choose. They all look tempting¹! But have you ever wondered how sushi has spread from Japan to the whole world and has maintained its popularity among food lovers for years now?

HISTORY

It might surprise you, but the first food that gave rise to sushi as it is came from China and had its roots² already in the 3rd-2nd century BC. It was called narezushi and it was a dish of fermented³ rice and salted fish. This food did not reach Japan until the 8th century AD. The first mention of a dish called "sushi" appeared in the Yōrō Koda in 718. The food was so popular that in the 18th century, 3 famous restaurants were opened in the territory of Japan. They were called "Matsunozushi, Kenukizushi, and Yoheizushi." After these three restaurants opened, thousands of others started opening all over Japan due to the great popularity of the dish. However, sushi in the past was different from the one we know today. Sushi we recognize today is the work of chef Hanaya Yohei between 1818 and 1830.



TYPES OF SUSHI

Nowadays, we can meet all kinds of sushi, from the traditional ones to the latest ones. What they all have in common is the presence of rice, often vinegared grain⁴ rice. The rice is then supplemented⁵ with an endless variety of ingredients and prepared into various shapes. Some types are for example: Makizushi, Nigirizushi, Oshizushi or Inarizushi. We must not forget the Western sushi rolls, among which we include, for example, Uramaki. There are differences between Western and Japanese sushi, different cultures enjoy sushi in different ways, but that is what makes sushi so well known and popular. Everyone will find what speaks to them and suits them.



ROAD TO THE WEST

Sushi came to the West in the early 20th century thanks to Japanese immigration. At first it was popular only among the upper class of the population. Sushi became more popular only after the end of World War II. As for the United States of America, there is a debate about which restaurant introduced sushi to its customers first. It was probably a restaurant in Los Angeles called Kawafuku Restaurant. However, people in Western cultures did not like the idea of eating raw fish. That is why many restaurants across the US tried to come up with some suitable, tasty alternative. One of the most popular alternative variants became the California Roll, in which the following ingredients were used instead of raw meat: cucumber, crab meat and avocado. People have become very fond of sushi this way. And over time, independent sushi restaurants became a hit in Western countries as well.

MAKE IT YOURSELF

The base for preparing sushi at home is the right rice. It is brought to a boil in a certain ratio⁶ with water. But watch out! Sushi rice is never salted when cooking! After cooking, the rice should be allowed to sit for 20 minutes. In the meantime, prepare the rice vinegar⁷ mixture for seasoning. Then we put the rice into a wooden or glass container (do not use metal containers) and gradually⁸ add the rice vinegar mixture to it. Mix this all carefully and then set it aside for about 5 minutes to cool down.



Now prepare a special bamboo board for rolling sushi, seaweed⁹, ingredients to fill our sushi and a bowl of water on the table. A bowl of water is recommended for dipping your hands in for better rice handling. After cooling, the rice should be sticky and hold its shape.

The hardest part of making sushi is wrapping the roll correctly so it does not tear apart. The seaweed is always placed on the mat with the shiny side down. Rice and various ingredients are then placed on it. These are most often vegetables (cucumber, avocado, carrot, yellow radish), sea food (salmon, tuna, crab sticks, caviar) and cream cheese. Finally, the sushi is typically served with pickled ginger, wasabi and soy sauce. Do not forget to use Japanese chopsticks for eating! It is a funny experience trying to eat with them. どうぞお召し上がりください (Enjoy your meal)!

VOCABULARY

1. tempting - lákavý
2. had its roots - měl své kořeny
3. fermented - fermentovaný
4. grain - obilná
5. supplemented - doplněný
6. certain ratio - určitý poměr
7. vinegar - ocet
8. gradually - postupně
9. seaweed - mořská řasa