

Facts Page

Let these facts about cultural foods and customs enhance your lesson.

The Food Guide Pyramid depicts many familiar foods, but there are countless others that could fit into a healthy eating pattern. It is important that children (and families) develop an awareness and understanding of how cultural foods bring variety and nutrition to the table. Here are some food facts that support the book *Yoko*.

Rice – Rice, a grain, is the primary food for half the people in the world. In many regions it is eaten with every meal, and provides more calories than any other single food. Rice supplies an average of 889 calories per day, per person in China. In contrast, rice provides an average of only 82 calories per day, per person in the U.S.

When rice is processed, the hull is removed, exposing the bran. Rice at this stage is brown rice. The fibrous bran of brown rice is rich in oil, protein, the B vitamins thiamine, riboflavin and niacin, and the minerals iron, phosphorus, and potassium. To make white rice, the bran is removed. White rice is less nutritious than brown rice and is often enriched with added vitamins and minerals.

Sushi – The defining element of sushi (soo-shee) is not raw fish as many think, but the rice. Sushi to the Japanese is synonymous with seasoned sticky rice. Sushi types are many, but all include rice. A Japanese specialty based on boiled rice flavored with a sweetened rice vinegar, a mixture called sushi meshi. Once cooled, the rice has a glossy sheen and separates easily. There is a wide

variety of sushi, including nigiri sushi (thin slices of raw fish seasoned with wasabi and wrapped around or layered with this rice), hosomaki (thin sushi rolls) and futomaki (thick sushi rolls). To make these rolls, various chopped vegetables, raw fish, pickles, tofu, etc. are enclosed in sushi rice and wrapped in thin sheets of nori (seaweed). The rolls are then cut into slices. Sushi are designed to be finger food and can be served as appetizers, snacks or a full meal. Soy sauce is often served with sushi for dipping.

(Source: Epicurious dictionary at <http://eat.epicurious.com/dictionary>).

Here are some equipment facts that might help:

Chopsticks were developed about 5,000 years ago in China. It is likely that people cooked their food in large pots, which held heat for a long time. Hasty eaters then broke twigs off trees to retrieve the hot food. Think of chopsticks as a pair of tongs, the only difference being that there are two separate parts or sticks. One stick is held steady, while the other is moved.

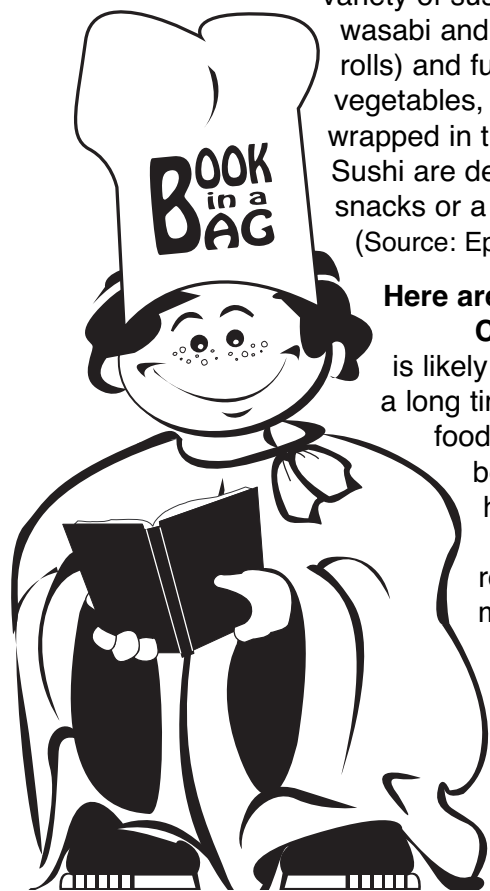
Sushimaki sudare is a bamboo mat or hot pad used to roll the sushi. *Yoko's* mother uses a bamboo mat when she makes sushi in the book.

Here are some related resources:

USDA for Kids page: www.usda.gov/news/usdakids/index.html

Rice Industry News: www.usarice.com

Cook, Deanna F. *The Kids' Multicultural Cookbook* (1995). Williamson Publishing, Vermont.



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