

LOOK TOWARD THE MOUNTAIN, EPISODE 4 TRANSCRIPT

ROB BUSCHER: Welcome to *Look Toward the Mountain: Stories from Heart Mountain Incarceration Camp*, a series about life inside the Heart Mountain Japanese American Relocation Center in northwestern Wyoming during World War II. I'm your host, Rob Buscher. This podcast is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

ROB BUSCHER: The fourth episode titled, "Prison Food" will explore how the more than 10,000 Japanese American incarcerated at Heart Mountain coped with the distasteful army rations they confronted when they first arrived in camp, and the important role that food played in their daily lives during the incarceration.

INTRO THEME

ROB BUSCHER: Food is central to all family gatherings, but for immigrant communities it plays an important role in maintaining cultural traditions in the next generation. Like in many cultures, the Japanese relationship with food speaks to the nature of their unique identity. For some Issei immigrant parents who had trouble relating to their American children, family dinners were some of the only time they regularly spent together, expressing love for their children through the food they prepared for them. Japanese food also gave the Nisei children a tangible connection to a culture that seemed foreign to them, experienced through the flavors of their ancestral home.

ROB BUSCHER: Prior to camp, the Issei mostly ate the food they knew from life in Japan. When most of them left Japan in the first decades of the 20th century, Japanese food culture had already been influenced by a number of outside sources. From the Portuguese traders in the early Edo period came fried dishes like tempura and croquette. The Japanese word for bread - pan - is also taken from the Portuguese language.

ROB BUSCHER: During the Meiji Restoration when commercial trade opened to the British Empire, British sailors brought with them curry from their colony in India. Centuries of trade with China and recent Japanese imperial incursions in the Modern age had brought a variety of dishes like gyoza dumplings and ramen - how Japanese pronounced the Chinese word for lo mein. The Issei who lived in Japanese cities prior to their migration would likely have been familiar with all of these dishes, in addition to the cuisine that was native to Japan.

ROB BUSCHER: In the countryside where many Japanese adhered to more bucolic lifestyles, their diets typically consisted of *washoku* - traditional Japanese cuisine. A traditional Japanese meal usually consists of one main dish and several small sides of fresh or pickled vegetables, and a bowl of white rice, sometimes served with a small bowl of soup. Fish was the main source of protein until the postwar occupation of Japan brought the meat-heavy diet of American soldiers. Beef is still less common than pork or chicken in traditional Japanese dishes, like those that the Issei would have eaten regularly.

ROB BUSCHER: As the Nisei became more Americanized through their education, school lunches broadened their palates beyond what they ate at home, but their family meals mostly consisted of traditional foods. For many Nisei, home meals were the only time they tasted Japanese flavors in an era before Japanese restaurants were popular. The food memories of subtle dashi broth infused traditional washoku cooking encapsulated a connection they shared with their parents to Japan, and family dinners were an important way of maintaining the family bond.

ROB BUSCHER: Those bonds were frayed and ultimately broken at the various assembly centers and in the early days of life at Heart Mountain. In one sense, the food rations that were provided to incarcerated mess hall chefs were woefully inadequate. Beyond the low grade quality of much of the food, chefs lacked key ingredients necessary to produce even the most basic of Japanese dishes.

ROB BUSCHER: In a more literal sense, family bonds eroded as they no longer ate their meals together. Children ate with their friends, and adults congregated together to socialize over dinner. Some parents worked in the mess halls, which made it difficult for them to share meals with their children.

ROB BUSCHER: The mess halls at Pomona and Santa Anita assembly centers set the bar pretty low, and eating became a means of sustenance rather than something to be savored. The prisoners knew what they could expect at Heart Mountain. Frank Emi was 25 when he arrived at Heart Mountain. Before he was

incarcerated, he had owned and operated a grocery store in Los Angeles. Emi remembered the first meals in camp as mostly inedible.

FRANK EMI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, I can remember one thing, we had some funny-looking fish that people called "three-boned fish" that nobody could eat. It was terrible. And I didn't like fish anyway so I don't think I ate maybe one or two bites of that, and that was it. But we had a lot of pastry. We had spaghetti and macaroni, and they had rice, and I believe they made *tsukemono*, cabbage *tsukemono*, etcetera. And as far as the rest of it, I really can't remember too well, but I remember we were having some tofu cooked with vegetables and maybe little pieces of meat, but actually, I can't remember what we had for breakfast -- probably had some oatmeal or something.

ROB BUSCHER: Other prisoners remembered times when they got nothing more than canned tomatoes piled on rice. Although the nearby towns of Cody and Powell had benefited from Buffalo Bill's irrigation project, a new channel would have to be dug before the land around Heart Mountain was capable of yielding fresh produce to improve or supplement the dreadful food rations. Decades later, memories of the monotonous food served in the mess halls stuck with former prisoners like Kats Kunitsugu.

KATS KUNITSUGU RECORDING FROM FRANK ABE COLLECTION: Rutabagas and apple butter. I still don't eat apple butter because I remember it from camp. We didn't have any other kind of jam but apple butter.

ROB BUSCHER: Margaret Saito remembered several dishes that most prisoners found distasteful.

MARGARET SAITO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: The things I remember that I don't like are canned spinach, things that they would give us over and over and apple butter, we never had apple butter before that. And there were lots of canned things that probably to this day I won't eat. And they had things like rutabaga and things that we never heard of. But you know, that's how it was. I don't know, some was good and some wasn't. I don't remember anything that was a favorite.

ROB BUSCHER: Suzie Sakai couldn't even look at certain foods without feeling nauseous after she left Heart Mountain.

SUZIE SAKAI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We had a lot of mutton, I had never tasted mutton before in my life. I can't say that it was my favorite dish. We had horse meat. They did manage to have rice. And of course by that time, things like coffee and sugar were rationed, they were also rationed in camp. Lots of canned food, canned green beans. To this day, I can't stand to look at canned green beans. Oh, the other thing that I remember very vividly was they somehow thought that we'd like squid. Unfortunately at that point in time, they didn't know how to prepare it, so they forgot to take the ink sacks out, and so you got this plate with the rice all black from the black stuff from the squid. I don't think I'll ever forget that.

ROB BUSCHER: Ike Hatchimonji was 14 when he arrived at Heart Mountain. He remembered running from mess hall to mess hall looking for more food with his friends.

IKE HATCHIMONJI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well, interesting, because you had to eat in the mess hall that you were assigned to in your block, but in those days, they were still not well organized, so we were able to go from mess hall to mess hall. We would run from one mess hall to another, the neighboring mess halls, to get enough to eat because we were growing boys. In a way, it was a lot of fun as well.

ROB BUSCHER: Not everyone hated the food. Children like Bill Shishima just ate what was in front of him.

BILL SHISHIMA RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Food, I never was too particular about food. So I was, okay with me. And I think every once in a while, especially in the summer, we used to get watermelon treats. So my friends knew I didn't care for watermelon so they always tried to sit next to me on Sundays when we had watermelon treats.

ROB BUSCHER: Yuriko Yamamoto agreed. While her friends and family disliked mutton – a cheap cut of meat from older sheep that was often served in camp – she liked it.

YURIKO YAMAMOTO RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I'll eat anything, so it was no problem for me. I love mutton. I love lamb, see, so I used to enjoy stew. It's smelly, but I just love lamb. So I didn't mind it at all.

ROB BUSCHER: Regardless of the quality of the food, the large group setting of mess hall dining was one of the biggest shifts for the incarcerated. Prior to camp life, family dinners were an important daily ritual for most Japanese Americans. In the mess halls children began sitting with their friends, eating separately from their parents. A 30-year-old from San Jose, Eiichi Sakauye, would become one of the leading farmers in Heart Mountain. He noticed early on the toll that mess hall life had taken on traditional family life.

EIICHI SAKAUYE RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We don't have any family table anymore. These kids or youngsters eat by themselves. There's no child-sized plate or men-sized plate, it was all one size. You can see the amount of food is placed on the plates. It was very sad that table manners were not kept up. You can see the, just the children are eating by themselves, and later on, you see parents eating by themselves.

ROB BUSCHER: Dillon Myer, the director of the War Relocation Authority, observed that Japanese American family life was disintegrating because of how the mess hall schedules were structured. In a memo dated March 1943 he warned the Roosevelt administration of the problems caused by the mess halls.

DILLON MYER VOICE OVER: "It is not the American way to have children growing up behind barbed wire and under the scrutiny of armed guards. Living conditions in the centers almost preclude privacy for individuals, and family life is disrupted. Family meals are almost impossible in the dining halls, and children lack the

normal routine home duties which help to build good discipline. One of the major worries of parents in the relocation centers is the way the children are "getting out of hand" as a result of the decrease in parental influence, and the absence of the normal regimen of family economy and family life.

ROB BUSCHER: Although Ike Hatchimonji often ate meals with his friends, he remembered the negative effect that mess hall dining had on the adult men in camp.

IKE HATCHIMONJI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I think we did eat with our friends once in a while. I think that was quite common in the mess halls. Kids tend to eat with their friends, it's a natural thing. Which I don't think was good for the unity of the family or the authority of the father. His authority was pretty much emasculated anyway when they all went to the camps. Kids sort of ran wild, because they really didn't need the parents. Only to sleep in the same room.

ROB BUSCHER: Some families found ways to avoid the mess halls altogether, as Jimi Yamaichi remembers.

JIMI YAMAICHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: "As you know, there's approximately about 250 to 300 people per block, depends on the way the buildings are chopped up. There was four families in our block that never ate in the mess hall. They bought half their food from the canteen. The canteen had anything you wanted. You name it, you got, the manager of the store lived in our block, Block 27, Tsujimura, and he would tell them, "Hey, sashimi's gonna come in. Tofu's gonna come in, beef's gonna come in. You want some?" My dad told him, says, "We eat what everybody else eat."

JIMI YAMAICHI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: In the meantime, you hear the kids talk about it, like this one family from Seattle -- I won't name them -- but they lived on an end barrack room, and the kids on the far end there, the block manager's kids, block manager didn't have too much. He was on the, what you say, low income side. And everybody asked the kids' dad, said, "Can we eat what they're cooking?" They're on the last, hundred feet away, the smell, no ceiling right? The smell travels, and whatever they're cooking, chicken or eggs or bacon or ham, whatever it may be, on the stove, it smells good regardless of what it is. So the father, how the father's gonna tell the kids, "We don't have no money. We don't have enough money, like they must have more money that we could to go to the canteen and buy all this stuff." I mean, you hear those kind of things, 'cause he told my dad, says in Japanese, "What can I tell my kids? What can I tell my kids? I don't have the money to -- I have a hard enough time buying clothes, let alone buying surplus food."

ROB BUSCHER: Some Heart Mountain incarceratedees who couldn't stand the mess hall food used hotplates to cook their own meals in the barracks. Camp authorities constantly warned against using hotplates, because they were prone to causing fires if too many were plugged into the already overloaded barracks wiring. The October 2, 1942, issue of the Sentinel included this warning.

VOICE OVER OF SENTINEL BULLETIN: Warning against unauthorized uses of hot plates was issued today by Richard Busteed, communications head. He added that the fuse replacement has reached an average of 50 per day. Instead of one plate per barrack as erroneously reported in a recent issue, only four permits will be issued per block with not more than one in any barrack. Since overloaded wiring

constitutes a serious fire hazard, colonists are asked for their cooperation to prevent enforcement of drastic measures.

ROB BUSCHER: Despite the warnings, some incarceratedees continued to prepare their own meals in the barracks, as Tad Ito remembered,

VOICE OVER TAD ITO: We would get our evening rations and take them back to our barrack and my mom would doctor it up. There were many families that did that. We kept our extra food and condiments in a wooden box nailed to the outside of the window closest to the stove. The box was an apple box and covered with burlap sacking, that was kept soaked in water. The hot sun would evaporate the water and take the heat away. And the boxes were on the backside of the barracks.

ROB BUSCHER: Although its proximity to the Shoshone irrigation project was one of the main reasons the Heart Mountain camp site was selected, the land it was built on had little access to water before incarceratedees began to settle there. Building a pipeline to supply enough running water to sustain a population of over 10,000 required a considerable amount of engineering. Like the green wood used to construct the barracks, construction on the pipeline cut many corners in the rush to complete camp infrastructure prior to the prisoners arrival. The pipeline was riddled with problems, as a bulletin published in the October 3, 1942, Sentinel shows.

VOICE OVER FROM SENTINEL: Repair on a serious break in the pipeline, which caused water shortage for three days, was completed late Friday afternoon, Ben B. Lummis, project engineer, announced. The break was caused by the contraction of the welded joints in the pipe between the center and reservoir. The pipe was laid in the heat of last July, it was explained. A huge hole was dug around the break to facilitate repair work. To prevent it from filling with water the reservoir was emptied. Due to the difficulty in maintaining an exact balance between the supply and demand, water shortages were occasioned at times in blocks with high elevation.

ROB BUSCHER: Aside from providing the basic necessity of clean drinking water, the War Relocation Authority believed that incarcerated could irrigate the dry desert plains and produce crops to supplement government food rations. Although many Japanese Americans at Heart Mountain were farmers by trade before the war, some found it distasteful that they should have to work to feed their families while being imprisoned against their will. In this respect, it was similar to other prison farms in the carceral system worked by inmates as penal labor. There were also many who eagerly volunteered their expertise to the Heart Mountain farm project. Their first task would be to complete the irrigation canal, which took place in early 1943. Eiichi Sakauye remembered.

EIICHI SAKAUYE RECORDING FROM DENSHO: When the evacuee went to Heart Mountain, that was the first job the evacuee must complete the irrigation project. They had canals set, but wasn't finished. So they had already planned that we gotta grow crops there. Well, the CCC boys already had this project going, because

I think they were gonna open up that area, which was never opened up before us, it was just a Buffalo Bill country.

EIICHI SAKAUYE RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Water was coming from a dam near Cody. Quite a large lake, and that's for the town of Cody, and they had a generator there to give us light, and fuel was, during the wartime, I thought there's, those strategic areas were prohibited. And being Japanese, probably wouldn't go down there. But they took us down there and showed how the generator works and everything else. Never thought of sabotage, I think, here on the West Coast.

ROB BUSCHER: Once irrigation made farming possible, few populations were better able to feed themselves than the prisoners at Heart Mountain. Before the war, many of the prisoners had farmed land throughout California and the Yakima Valley of Washington, raising crops that often required intense and detailed cultivation on subpar plots of land allocated to the immigrant farming community.

ROB BUSCHER: Issei farmer Iyekichi Higuchi had a raspberry farm in San Jose. Nisei, James Ito, had earned his agricultural science degree from the University of California, Berkeley before the incarceration. His father, Chotaro, worked as a gardener and landscape architect in California, having previously worked the sugar cane plantations in Hawaii. Eiichi Sakauye had run farms throughout Santa Clara County before the war. Others, like Roy Matsumura and Keijiro Hoshizaki in Los Angeles, had owned specialty grocery stores that catered to the Japanese American community.

ROB BUSCHER: In short, the Japanese American community at Heart Mountain knew good food and how to produce it. Water from the irrigation channel enabled them to succeed at coaxing profitable crops from this marginal land. During their first months at camp in the Fall of 1942, Ito and two other prisoners tested 250 soil samples from around the camp property to determine which areas had the best soil composition for specific crops. The soil matching technique enabled Heart Mountain's farm crew to coordinate their planting better than the local farmers, who often planted crops unsuitable for the area.

ROB BUSCHER: Ito and his team analyzed the average crop yields in Wyoming and matched them with a projected population of six thousand people at Heart Mountain, about 75 percent of the total camp population. They also studied the Cody and Powell weather reports to determine the exact length of the growing season. Ito's team concluded that the Heart Mountain soil lacked nitrogen and "certain organic matter, as is the case in most desert areas." One challenge was that much of the land near the camp had never been farmed, as Eiichi Sakauye noted.

EIICHI SAKAUYE RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Of course, the ground has never been tilled, so we grew some cover crop in order to equalize the fertility of the soil, and the texture of the soil. These equipment were used by CC camp, the old plow, you could see there were plows that needed repairing, and we had mechanics in the camp, and blacksmiths that repaired these plows.

ROB BUSCHER: Although there were many Issei farmers in the Heart Mountain community, many were initially unwilling to cooperate with the Nisei farmers who led the agricultural project. They proved difficult to recruit, but Sakauye eventually convinced them it was in the community's best interest.

EIICHI SAKAUYE RECORDING FROM DENSHO: We have all sorts of talent behind the barbed wire fence. And these talents are the Isseis. We had to convince them to help us to grow and harvest crops. They said, "They put us in here. Why should we work? It's their responsibility, not ours. They got to support us." But we had to convince them that the type of produce or type of produce or vegetables, whatever it is, that we would like to eat, we have to grow. Because they'll tell us what they can ship us, but we cannot ask them to ship certain things."

ROB BUSCHER: The work of starting the farm was much easier once the Issei decided to support the project. Another factor that contributed to the success of the farm was the geographic diversity of Heart Mountain's prisoner population. Some came from the Los Angeles area, and were used to growing in warm weather conditions. Others were from Santa Clara, which had a consistently mild climate. About 1500 incarcerated were from Wapato, Washington, in the state's Yakima Valley where agriculture was the primary industry. The climate there was the most similar to northwestern Wyoming, and the techniques these farmers brought with them helped immensely. Emily Anderson is an exhibit curator at the Japanese American National Museum and an independent researcher working on topics related to Japanese American food culture. Anderson elaborates on the significant role that Yakima Valley farmers played in the Heart Mountain agricultural project.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: One of the things that actually was important in Heart Mountain was the arrival of the Yakima Valley, folks. And they, those involved in hot capping. So it's a way of farming that protected produce from, from the you know weather, the inclement weather, from the cold. And so the arrival of that group of Japanese Americans who were used to farming in a lot harsher conditions, made it more possible to farm in Heart Mountain.

ROB BUSCHER: The camp farmers adhered to a strict planting schedule to make the most out of Wyoming's short growing season. At best, the season was 109 days from start to finish. Even during the season, farmers had to cope with the area's unpredictable weather, particularly as the Summer turned to Fall. Sudden storms could rush in and lead to massive crop losses. In October 1944, a hail storm followed by a sudden frost wiped out about one square mile of crops in under five minutes. It destroyed 40 acres of sweet corn, which was ready to be canned. Some of the damaged corn was salvaged for the mess hall. Also lost were 15 acres of cantaloupes, 6 acres of tomatoes, 6 acres of watermelon, one and a half acres of popcorn and 13 acres of peas.

ROB BUSCHER: The camp's farm program engaged the entire camp, as high school students were often pressed into action during harvest time. Many left school for two weeks to make sure all of the produce was brought in and stored. Finally, the farm supplied the camp with specialty Japanese produce the incarcerated craved like daikon radish, mizuna greens, and gobo root. The farm was so productive that they were able to send surplus produce to other camps.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: There seems to have been a lot of pressure for the camps to be self sufficient and any surplus therefore, would be sent to other, other camps. You know, so they sort of, whatever was left over would get redistributed. But in the case of Heart Mountain of course, it's just a much more limited growing season. But what you can grow, if you can store that then you can of course keep people fed off of that year round. And so the ability to have long term storage for especially root vegetables that keep, you know for a long time in sort of a dry, cool climate.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: The other thing is Heart Mountain, of course, because it gets so cold. I'm sure having the root cellar was a really good environment. Some places would just be, I mean I can't imagine being like in the desert at Poston or Gila [River] or these places, like would just probably be really hot. But for all of the challenges that the weather created in Heart Mountain, probably it made for really ideal conditions for the root cellar.

ROB BUSCHER: Although the farm project gave Heart Mountain incarcerated more of the fresh produce they wanted, other key ingredients for Japanese cuisine were still missing. To fill these needs, incarcerated began to draw from a network of outside suppliers, including members of the Japanese American community who had either fled during the so-called "voluntary evacuation" or lived outside of the exclusion zone and were therefore not subject to incarceration. Friends and family members of the incarcerated, and even distant acquaintances living outside of camp went to great lengths to assist those suffering the incarceration ordeal.

ROB BUSCHER: One example can be found in my own family. My great grandfather Masaichiro Marumoto scraped together what little savings he could from his sharecropping job in Utah to send sacks of mochiko rice flour, Japanese short grain rice, and other staples that were difficult to obtain at the commissary, to his relatives and friends in camp.

ROB BUSCHER: On a larger scale, the lengths that Japanese Americans went to in order to supply the Heart Mountain residents with shoyu demonstrates the tight bonds across the nationwide community, and the ingenuity of community leaders in camp who adapted under the circumstances to supply the needs of the greater incarcerated population. Shoyu, or soy sauce, is a staple of the Japanese diet. Aside from being used as a condiment for dishes such as sushi or sashimi, shoyu is used as the base for many soup stocks and sauces. The Heart Mountain incarcerated craved shoyu and suffered in the early days of camp, because they couldn't get it.

ROB BUSCHER: Uhachiro Teshima knew the needs of the Heart Mountain community. In 1942, he and his wife were forced from their home in Los Angeles to Heart Mountain. By early 1943, they were allowed to relocate to Denver, where he started the Rafu Shoyu company that supplied shoyu to Heart Mountain and other camps. In Columbia City, Indiana, Shinze Ohki ran the Oriental Show-You company. Ohki moved to the United States in the early 1900s and eventually found his way to Indiana. His shoyu was featured in multiple advertisements in the Heart Mountain Sentinel, which often contained ads from Japanese food suppliers who shipped to camp.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: One of the things that is important to remember, I think, is that there was already a very active network of these import/export

shops and dry goods stores and grocery stores, run by Japanese immigrants throughout the Intermountain West. You know, places like Ogden, Denver for sure, but even Cheyenne Wyoming had very, you know, in Wyoming much smaller. Some in Missoula, certainly and, you know, parts of Idaho.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: You have these small sort of groups of Japanese immigrants and their children who were usually farmers or merchants who, whose specialization was in procuring things that came into the coast, getting them inland, and then redistributing them to other Japanese Americans that were sort of in these far flung places. I mean, you had Japanese immigrants who were working at mining camps in central Utah, who were able to, through these networks, get some Japanese food. You had people who were brewing soy sauce and selling it in Denver and Salt Lake City and these other areas, Glendale Arizona.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: So wherever the Japanese went, they figured out how to make their own food, and they're importing sort of the basic elements, right. If you have soybeans, you can make sort of 80% of what gives Japanese food its flavor. You get shoyu, miso, and tofu, and so if we get into this more deeply, you know, there's a possibility of finding sort of how the existing networks helped people get things to camp.

ROB BUSCHER: Because the Issei incarcerated were not U.S. citizens, the U.S. government considered them enemy aliens and treated them in accordance with

conventions governing prisoners of war. Working through the Spanish government who maintained neutrality during the war, the Japanese government communicated with the Issei, who they considered Japanese citizens.

ROB BUSCHER: Remarkably, despite the intense hostility in the US-Japan conflict, some incarcerated' relatives in Japan, as well as the Japanese Red Cross, sent care packages of food and supplies to the Issei in Heart Mountain. These shipments were carried on the Swedish ocean liner Gripsholm, which had earlier ferried some Japanese nationals back to Japan at the start of the war in a prisoner exchange for U.S. citizens residing in Japan, China, and Southeast Asia. Aboard the Gripsholm came a precious cargo of Kikkoman shoyu from Japan. Its arrival at Heart Mountain caused great rejoicing among the incarcerated. Years later, many remembered the large wooden casks of Kikkoman that lined the mess halls as a small taste of home.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: They make a huge deal about the Kikkoman shoyu delivery. It's a really - it's something that comes up in a lot of memoirs. Because I'd heard the story about the Kikkoman barrels of soy sauce and what a big deal it was, I just assumed that people went without soy sauce, and it was this like, really important thing. But as it turns out, you could get soy sauce from Glendale Arizona or Denver Colorado. So, it actually, it was more symbolic. It was this sort of sense that, like, the homeland remembered their existence and that was very

heartwarming. But practically speaking, they didn't need Kikkoman to get their soy sauce.

ROB BUSCHER: Another essential ingredient in Japanese cooking is miso, a traditional seasoning made of fermented soybeans and salt. Like shoyu, miso was used in many soup stocks and sauces that were eaten daily by Japanese Americans before the war. Heart Mountain had its own miso factory where it was locally produced, and incarcerated also received care packages from the outside. On March 2, 1944, the *Sentinel* reported that 70 pounds of miso sent by the Japanese Red Cross had arrived in camp for distribution. Like the Kikkoman shoyu, it was gladly welcomed by a community desperately seeking the flavors of their previous lives.

ROB BUSCHER: Heart Mountain incarcerated also used soybeans to process their own tofu, supplementing the bland camp food with another essential element of the Japanese diet. Frank Emi, who owned and operated a grocery store in Los Angeles, remembered making tofu at Heart Mountain.

FRANK EMI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: I worked in the tofu factory. We made tofu at five in the morning, you know. And just myself and another older gentleman that was in the tofu business. We got up there and I used to make it for the camp. We made some good tofu there. Yeah, we ground up the soybeans, you know, and squeezed it out. And it looked like milk, and then you add a little bit of calcium chloride to solidify it. It tasted like real tofu. In fact, I used to bring home samples, you know, and I used to take some over to Jack Nishimoto, my friend, you know. Not knowing that he was there spying on me.

ROB BUSCHER: Jack Nishimoto would later testify against Emi when the Fair Play Committee, who organized draft resistance in camp, was brought to trial. We will explore this story further in a future episode.

ROB BUSCHER: In addition to the Japanese ingredients that incarceratedees had shipped in or produced locally in camp, fresh fish was an important commodity that the government was not prepared to accommodate them with. Emily Anderson explains how the community sourced their own fish supply from outside of camp.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: So this isn't fish served in the mess halls. This is fish that is actually brought into these camps and then sold through a fish market or, in some cases, the canteen. I was going through the Gila News-Courier and came across an article, which I pulled, that says the headline is "Ika," which is squid, "Ika 10 cents a pound." And I thought, "what?" And not only did they have ika. So this one, the Gila River one was run out of one of the laundry rooms. I think the or I'm sorry, it was the ironing room. Block 6 ironing room at Canal and block 42 at Butte included sea bass, bonito, pike, mackerel, sardines, oyster, shrimps, and sundry others, but it didn't say where this came from.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: So there are a couple questions. Where's this coming from? How is it being stored? And then, where is it being cooked, right? Because I mean, I love fish, but I don't want to cook it in my bedroom, which is essentially what you would do if you cook the fish in your barracks. So were they setting up like, hibachis between the barracks? Or were they just going ahead and like, cooking it like on their pot bellied stove?

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: But you know, I think what it points to is just how important it was for many Japanese Americans to have access to fish. And this isn't you know, freshwater fish. I mean, in a lot of these places people lived, they could actually just like, in Heart Mountain I know from talking to people who were there that they would just, you know, sneak out they put a hole through the fence and sneak out and go down the Shoshone river right to go fishing.

ROB BUSCHER: Richard Murakami remembered that the land around Heart Mountain was mostly desert, except for the nearby Shoshone River, where his father would slip off to go fishing. By 1945, after the government had removed many of the restrictions that kept Japanese Americans from the West Coast, incarcerated moved freely in and out of camp. The Shoshone river was a popular destination for leisure swimmers and fishermen alike. However, the Wyoming legislature passed a law prohibiting Japanese Americans from fishing in the state's waterways. Still, many of the incarcerated found ways to catch their own fish while at Heart Mountain or on excursions away from camp. Bacon Sakatani remembers fishing as a highlight of his Boy Scout troop's trip to Yellowstone.

BACON SAKATANI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: Well when I was in the Boy Scouts we went to Yellowstone in 1944. It was a beautiful place, I mean. We went on trucks and then we were taken for a tour of Yellowstone. I remember there was a place called Grand Canyon you know, with a beautiful fall and we saw all those geysers, and it was a pretty good trip. My father made me a fishing pole, something like a five foot pole. When I got to Yellowstone I dug for worms and I put it on the hook and I

couldn't catch anything, so I left the worm in the water overnight, and the next morning there was a trout on it, so then I took that to the cafeteria. But then later on I found out that that's against the law to leave a line in the water unattended.

ROB BUSCHER: Although it is unclear exactly where the Heart Mountain residents sourced their fish supply, many former incarcerated do remember fresh fish beyond what was served in the mess halls. Ocean fish in particular was an important link to their Japanese identity, as Emily Anderson explains.

EMILY ANDERSON INTERVIEW: The importance of fresh fish, and fresh ocean fish for this particular population. I mean, Japan, I think there's only about eight prefectures that are landlocked. It is a country of island folk, used to ocean fish. Not every camp seems to have had a fish market, but about six or seven of them did for sure. If anybody listening to this has more information please tell me. I don't know some of the answers and I want to know more.

ROB BUSCHER: One key ingredient used in both Japanese and Western cuisine was sugar, which was also in short supply inside camp. After the Japanese Empire invaded the Philippines, America's principal supply of sugar imports disappeared and rationing went into effect. Although thousands of Heart Mountain prisoners participated in the sugar beet harvest across the region, sugar derived from that process was converted into industrial alcohol and used in the production of munitions and synthetic rubber. In a statement written in 1943, the United States

Beet Sugar Association famously proclaimed, "...every time a sixteen-inch gun was fired, 1/5 of an acre of sugar beets went up in smoke."

ROB BUSCHER: In 1943, camp authorities told prisoners that their sugar rations were being cut to half a pound per person each week. Sugar is used in many sauces, and is a vital component of *okashi*, Japanese sweets such as mochi made from pounded rice or manju baked confections made with flour. Both are typically filled with *an* - a sweet paste made from adzuki beans and sugar.

ROB BUSCHER: The Kito family of Los Angeles were masters makers of mochi and manju. Since 1903, they had operated the Fugetsu-Do mochi shop in the heart of Little Tokyo. Seiichi Kito immigrated to the United States in 1903 and soon after started his business. His son, Roy, followed in his footsteps, joining the family business in the years before the war. They had barely two weeks to close down their shop in 1942 after President Franklin Roosevelt signed Executive Order 9066.

ROB BUSCHER: Eventually, word spread at Heart Mountain that Roy and his father Seiichi were pastry chefs. Fellow incarcerated brought Seiichi their sugar rations so he could make mochi and manju for them. The pastry business at Heart Mountain also led Roy to meet his future wife, Kazuko, whom he married in camp. Their son Brian Kito is now the third generation owner of their family business, and shared the following story about his family's sugar supply chain in camp.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: When I was younger I remember a lot of people coming to the store, especially ladies that recalled you know, as little girls being asked to take part of the sugar and then pick up some sugar from some other barrack number, family. They all kind of networked on getting the sugar to my grandfather.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: Of course he had to makeshift things to make the products themselves. Some of the ingredients in the early days, my dad said that he had to kind of bootleg in. My dad was at one point I think, the manager of the mess hall. The story he told me was that he was friends with the civilians that would deliver the food rations that they needed for the commissary or for the kitchen. And that's how he was able to get some of the materials to make the mochi.

ROB BUSCHER: Years later Brian finally learned where the outside supply of sugar came from.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: I received a letter of congratulations on our hundredth anniversary from a Motoyama Market, which is in Montana. I mean, I was just totally shocked and I've never really gone to meet them, but they wrote me a letter to explain to me that, when they were able to get enough sugar, actually they were buying the sugar from this market. And it was being shipped to camp for my grandfather.

ROB BUSCHER: Although they were ultimately able to find sugar, some of the other ingredients would have to be substituted.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: I would think they would have a really hard time trying to get adzuki beans, of course. So they must have substituted certain beans for the bean paste. That's probably not that difficult to do, but it definitely wouldn't taste authentic like what they would be used to making. They make the white bean paste with lima beans, and we still do to today. But I don't know if that was the original bean that they decided to use, because in Japan they don't use a lima

bean, they use a white bean it's called. But here in the United States we use lima beans to make the white bean paste.

ROB BUSCHER: When they returned from Heart Mountain, the Kitos struggled to rebuild their business, starting by retrieving their equipment. They had four years of back rent to pay before they could get the equipment back. To save money they slept at the nearby Koyasan Buddhist temple in Little Tokyo and eventually reopened the shop on May 5, 1946. Fugetsu-do remains an important part of the Los Angeles Japanese American community today.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: When they first came back to Little Tokyo, of course all the temples were still here, and the churches. And that's probably the whole true reason why Little Tokyo was really started, basically because the churches were here. And Koyasan Temple is the one my parents stayed at, they slept there. Until this day we're indebted to the temple. My dad has always annually, like Obon time, supported them. And made it a given for me to carry on the payback to Koyasan until this day.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: In fact, every New Years Eve we donate mochi to them, to do their service. This year of course they didn't have a New Years service [because of the COVID-19 pandemic], but they did let people come in just to do incense offerings. So I donated about 250 pounds of mochi for them to give away to those that were coming. People were still coming to you know, make their small donation. I thought giving them mochi on the way out since they couldn't have a service was a great payback. I think my dad would be happy to know that.

ROB BUSCHER: Like many Sansei, or third generation Japanese Americans who were born after the wartime incarceration ended, Brian and his siblings didn't hear much about their parents' years behind barbed wire. What they did hear was largely euphemistic. Brian remembers when his parents finally opened up about the negative aspects of camp life.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: You know we didn't hear much about camp when we were growing up. And I know a lot of customers would come to my store and say, "oh we know your parents from camp. Yea your grandfather used to make the mochi." I think as a young JA [Japanese American] we weren't given an understanding of just how horrible this was. It was more of a, almost a pleasant type of place, you know, in the way that people reminisced about it.

BRIAN KITO INTERVIEW: But finally, we did a special with the BBC where they wanted to interview my parents and my family over dinner. This is probably about 1990-1991. And that was the first time that they were confronted with questions directly about camp, in front of the whole family. And it was quite startling. One of the things that my mom brought up was how she - she had a really big sweet tooth, and that when she got to camp the only sweets they had was bread pudding. And my mom just despised bread pudding, she hated bread pudding. She said she remembers that it would stick in her throat when she had to eat it at camp. I think it's the first time... I guess it's the first time that we actually heard the negative points about camp.

ROB BUSCHER: Aside from the Kito family's mochi and manju operation, other incarcerated took to making contraband alcohol, which was forbidden at Heart Mountain. Some intrepid prisoners were willing to take chances making sake, the traditional Japanese rice wine, and other types of home brew.

ROB BUSCHER: Sake or Nihonshu is an important part of Japanese food culture as both an ingredient in sauces, marinade for meats and fish, and of course to be enjoyed as a pairing with many traditional dishes. Some incarcerated smuggled sake inside if they could find it while on work leave trips away from camp, while others created illegal stills to make it with leftover rice they brought from the mess hall. Bacon Sakatani remembered his father's creativity after leaving Heart Mountain for a job outside of camp.

BACON SAKATANI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: In 1945 - my father is a drinker. You know he loved to drink, and he even used to make his own Japanese wine before the war. And so in 1945, I think when he went out to work in Colorado, he brought back with him some special wine rice. You can't just use ordinary eating rice, but you got to get this special rice [koji] to make wine, so he got this rice and I helped him make these special boxes to steam cook rice on the, top of the stove, and once you cooked the rice then we would dump it in this big vat, and then he would let that ferment. And after a while it'll start smelling and my, I remember my sister saying that she didn't want to bring her friends over because it was so smelly.

BACON SAKATANI RECORDING FROM DENSHO: And then once the rice was fermented to the right stage, my father put it into a big canvas bag and then we made a box, size of a apple box, and he got some paraffin wax and we got the wax and melted it on top of the stove and then we coated this box so it'll be waterproof,

and then we got this canvas bag full of this fermented stuff, put it in that box and put a weight on that bag, and then this pure *sake*, the wine would come dripping out. And my father was pretty good in making that. I read in the newspaper later on that people were getting arrested for making wine, but that was pretty good of my father, because alcohol was not allowed in the camp.

ROB BUSCHER: Incarcerees had to hide their stills from the guards and camp administrators. Although the incarceree operated Heart Mountain police force was mostly known to turn a blind eye to bootleggers, they did on occasion arrest prisoners who made alcohol in their barracks with stolen ingredients. In January 1943 camp police arrested two Issei men, Toshihara Tachi and Kanda Okubo for stealing raisins, sugar, and kitchen utensils to make alcohol.

VOICE OVER FROM SENTINEL ARTICLE: Toshihara Tachi, 57, steward, and Kanda Okubo, 61, cook's helper in mess hall 8-27, learned definitely that raisins in Heart Mountain are for eating purposes only. Both were charged this week by the police department with using mess hall sugar, kitchen utensils and raisins to make 'home brew.' They will be tried by the judicial commission.

ROB BUSCHER: Two years later, camp guards arrested Yasutaro Oku after they discovered 20 gallons of mash, five gallons of sake, and brewing equipment. He pleaded guilty and was sentenced to 15 days in jail, although the judicial commission of fellow incarcerees suspended his sentence. The relative lenience of camp authorities was one of the main reasons many incarcerees were willing to take the chance and make their own alcohol, or at least enjoy the fruits of another bootlegger's labor.

ROB BUSCHER: For many incarceration survivors, recollections of the foods they ate are among their most vivid memories from their time at Heart Mountain. Some experienced lifelong aversions to particular foods they disliked in camp. Others developed a taste for camp dishes like weenies royale or gravy over rice that have since become staples of Japanese American cuisine. The flavors of Japan continued to permeate the lives of Nisei who resettled back into life on the West coast after the war. For others who relocated outside of a Japanese American community, the limited Japanese cuisine they ate in camp was perhaps their last taste of pre-war life, before they began assimilation into the broader American society.

ROB BUSCHER: *Look Toward the Mountain* is presented by the Heart Mountain Wyoming Foundation and is funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Written by Ray Locker and Rob Buscher. Produced, Edited, and Hosted by Rob Buscher. Voice overs sourced by Darrell Kunitomi. Special thanks to Densho: The Japanese American Legacy Project. Many of the oral histories used in this podcast series were provided by Densho. Visit the Heart Mountain website for a full list of credits. Join us for the next episode titled "Commerce in the Camp."