

**Food for Communication:
Depicting the Role of Food in
Japanese Television Drama *Grand Maison Tokyo***

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Abstract

Popular culture exerts a profound and pervasive influence that extends into the realm of food, profoundly shaping our individual perceptions, representations, and our very social fabric. This research aimed to explore the cultural representation of Japanese cuisine within the television (TV) series *Grand Maison Tokyo*. The study is composed of two key components: a comprehensive literature review and in-depth data analysis. The literature review closely examined academic sources, relevant scholarly works, and previous studies focused on the portrayal of food in popular culture, Japanese gastronomy, and the cultural elements present in TV dramas.

The data analysis investigated the role of food as a communicative and expressive medium and evaluated the representation of Japanese food culture and its integration with French culinary traditions within the TV series. This analysis employed semiotic and reflexive thematic approaches. The data sources encompassed academic journals, books, TV programmes, and grey literature.

The main themes identified from the data are:

1. Food as a medium of communication and expression, encompassing “Struggle and Perseverance,” “Talent and Limitation,” “Redemption and Resilience,” and “Love and Passion.”
2. The integration of French and Japanese cuisine, highlighted by “The Tasting Menu” and “Culinary Beliefs.”

A semiotic lens is applied to analyse the dialogues and scenes from 11 episodes of *Grand Maison Tokyo*. The findings reveal that food serves as a powerful element in TV dramas, engaging viewers in gastronomy and allowing them to experience different cultures through food. It also helps viewers connect with nostalgic and emotional experiences. Through food, TV dramas create a deeper engagement, making the narratives more relatable and immersive.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signed:

Date: 31/07/2024

1. Introduction

“Food is ... about pleasure, about community, about family and spirituality, about our relationship to the natural world, and about expressing our identity. As long as humans have been taking meals together, eating has been as much about culture as it has been about biology.”

(Pollan, 2008, p. 8)

Food goes beyond its essential function as a source of sustenance, becoming a sophisticated and indulgent experience that satisfies both physical and emotional needs through its sensory and visceral qualities (Mueller et al., 2018). Food serves as a symbolic representation of cultural values, as well as a medium for expressing social relationships at various levels; from interpersonal interactions within the family to connections between broader regional and national communities (Gofton, 1996), food functions as a unifying force, facilitating the transmission of cultural heritage across generations through the sharing of narratives and culinary traditions. It evokes nostalgic recollections and occupies a vital role in upholding cultural practices and ceremonial observances (Gupta et al., 2021). Additionally, food permeates every aspect of our lives, from our most intimate personal moments to our professional undertakings. It is a crucial factor in shaping how we perceive ourselves and others, as it is deeply bound within social and political dynamics, while maintaining a ubiquitous presence in popular culture and media (Cramer et al., 2011).

In *Food and Communication*, Parasecoli (2010) contends that the familiar aspects of our culinary experiences, such as ingredients, dishes, and food-related practices, are often overlooked due to their ubiquity. We become so accustomed to these elements that we fail to recognize their

underlying meanings and the profound impact they have on our personal and social interactions. However, the specifics of what, how, when, and with whom we consume our meals are not random; rather, they are imbued with significations that can be interpreted to provide insights into the individuals involved. These food-related phenomena do not convey their full significance in isolation; instead, they are interconnected and can only be fully understood in the context of the larger system to which they belong.

Furthermore, Coff (2012) reinforces this perspective, arguing that food serves as a medium through which human relationships—from the personal to the global—are expressed. We employ food to articulate ourselves, comprehend others, and convey our emotions, opinions, preferences, sense of belonging, ethical and political stances, as well as our cultures. This form of communication often occurs through non-verbalized signs and actions rather than spoken words. Thus, it is safe to say that food and communication are deeply intertwined.

1.1 Research Positioning

Media narratives often feature memorable passages and scenes with elaborate and tantalizing descriptions of food, especially in visual media (Parasecoli, 2008). Narratives involving food allow for the exploration of various topics, which leads me to consider TV dramas. TV dramas were a significant part of my upbringing. My family and I would always watch TV dramas during dinner. From Monday to Friday, during the prime time of 8 pm to 10:30 pm, three different series were broadcast. We watched a variety of genres, including comedy, period dramas, and dramatic series. By the final episode, we often found ourselves captivated by the story, sometimes even relating to the characters' experiences.

When I was in culinary school, the TV series *Grand Maison Tokyo* (Kuroiwa et al., 2019) became a source of inspiration and motivation, especially on the long and demanding days from 7am to 11pm. The show's masterful portrayal of themes like ambition, passion, and the art of fine dining had a powerful emotional impact on its audience, leaving a lasting impression on both food enthusiasts and drama lovers.

It is believed that TV dramas centred around food possess a unique allure, resonating with viewers on a fundamental level. Given the limited research on the intersection of food and television (TV) drama, *Grand Maison Tokyo* warrants further exploration, pondering questions such as how food is utilized as a mode of communication and expression in the drama, and how the drama portrays the integration of Japanese food culture with French culinary traditions.

1.2 Overview of the Dissertation

This study is organized into five chapters. The present chapter, Chapter 1, introduces the dissertation topic, which outlines a topic for exploration and its significance. This chapter illustrates the topic's significance to the researcher and its broader context.

Chapter 2 comprises the literature review, which examines existing academic work on food, culture, and visual media.

Chapter 3 describes the research methodology and articulates the researcher's positionality. It explains the reason for adopting a constructivist ontology, a subjective epistemology, and an

interpretivist paradigm. Additionally, the use of semiotic analysis and thematic analysis as research methods is described.

Chapter 4 details the findings and presents the discussion, unearthing the soul of the dissertation by providing a detailed analysis of the outcomes, which is supported by dialogues and scenes drawn from from all 11 episodes of *Grand Maison Tokyo*. The findings are thoroughly discussed, drawing on insights from the literature review.

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter. It includes a summary of the findings and an epilogue reflecting on the research process.

2. Literature Review

“The universe is nothing without life, and all that lives takes nourishment.”

(Jean-Anthelme Brillat-Savarin, 1825/1994, p. 22)

Food is essential to human life, serving as both sustenance and a significant cultural and social phenomenon. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2024), food is “Any nutritious substance that people or animals eat or drink to maintain life and growth, nourishment, provisions. Solid nourishment, as opposed to drink.” This definition underscores the fundamental role of food in sustaining life and growth (Oxford University Press, 2024). Food plays a crucial role in human culture, sustenance, and physiological processes, thereby making food study pertinent across all branches of anthropology, including socio-cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics (Moreno-Black, 2017). Belasco (2008) notes that food is a basic necessity and the world’s largest industry, a source of pleasure, and a core element in social relationships.

2.1 Studying Food

Hauck-Lawson (2004) presents the notion of “food voice,” positing that individuals communicate aspects of their identity or emotional state through their dietary preferences and abstentions, transcending the limitations of verbal expression. Food choices serve as narratives of familial history, migration experiences, cultural assimilation, resistance to dominant norms, temporal shifts, and both individual and collective identity formations. Trubek (2017) further elucidates how inquiries within the realm of food studies are not constrained exclusively by

particular activities, such as consumption to the exclusion of production, nor by specific dimensions or levels of human organisation, thereby encompassing small-scale societies and individual behaviours. Consequently, the study of food invites a profound exploration of the act of eating, prompting a re-evaluation of its significance and implications within broader societal contexts (Almerico, 2014).

Long (2017) posits that “food is constructed on three fundamental levels: cultural, social, and personal” (p. 208). Each level offers insights into the types of meanings associated with food and how these meanings are attached. Cultural factors, such as beliefs, traditions, and customs, shape the perception of food within a society; social dynamics, including norms, rituals, and social interactions, influence how food is consumed and shared among individuals and groups; and at a personal level, individual preferences, memories, and experiences contribute to the significance of food in one’s life, as suggested by Long (2017). In addition to fostering enhanced self-awareness and facilitating the comprehension of others, such endeavours can dispel prevailing stereotypes and foster mutual acceptance among diverse individuals and groups (Almerico, 2014).

2.2 The Power of Food

“Food always has a social dimension of the utmost importance”

(Douglas, 1982/2013, p. 28)

Food serves as a base of cultural systems and practices and is intertwined with social inscriptions. Choices surrounding food consumption reflect individual preferences and constitute

a deliberate affirmation and articulation of social, ethnic, or national identity (Jacob, 2022). Long (2017) delves into the multifaceted meaning embedded within food, emphasizing its role as a carrier of memories, emotions, and relationships. Significance is attributed to food based on personal experiences, beliefs, and connections, shaping individual perceptions of what is edible, palatable, and meaningful. Therefore, food serves as a potent medium through which individuals convey aspects of their identity and emotions, imbuing eating with a communicative dimension that is impossible to overlook (Jacob, 2022). Still, what is considered meaningful extends beyond sentimental attachment, influencing decision-making and choices, and thereby underscoring the importance of understanding individual motivations (Long, 2017).

Bradley (2016) highlights the social functions of food beyond its intrinsic value, emphasizing its role in communication and identity expression. Food serves as a medium through which individuals communicate their personal identity and negotiate social protocols associated with class constructions (Bradley, 2016). Belasco (2008) echoes this sentiment, noting that the sharing of food is intrinsic to positive social experiences, fostering solidarity and building bonds in both private and public contexts. Bruno (2016) underscores the social norms surrounding communal eating, positioning it as a symbol of solidarity and a catalyst for building future bonds. Moreover, food acts as a conduit for nostalgic experiences, evoking memories of place and past, thereby contributing to individuals' identification with specific locales (Bruno, 2016; Poole, 1993). Scholars such as Goode (1992) further assert that food serves as a medium of communication, facilitating the construction and negotiation of cultural identity (Shugart, 2008). Food communicates positive identity and solidarity through its rhetorical function, reflecting broader cultural narratives and values (Shugart, 2008).

2.3 Food and Culture

Food is an integral component of culture, encompassing values, rituals, and communication practices that shape social interactions and identity. Stajcic (2013) depicts culture as “a mixture of values, knowledge, language, rituals, habits, lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, folklore, rules, and customs” (p. 6) which constitutes the identifying characteristics of a specific group of individuals within a given temporal context. Banks and McGee Banks (2019) propose a broader understanding of culture, extending beyond tangible artefacts to encompass intangible elements such as human values, symbols, interpretations, and perspectives. This inclusive view emphasizes the nuanced distinctions delineating one societal group from another within contemporary, modernized contexts.

As highlighted by Allison (2018), anthropological perspectives emphasize the symbolic construction of reality within cultural contexts. Cultural symbols endow individuals with power and influence social behaviour, shaping how individuals perceive and interact with the world (Allison, 2018). This dual construction of culture influences both the environment for individuals and their behaviours within that environment (Allison, 2018).

Belasco (2008) delves into cuisine’s cultural significance, noting its variation across different groups and its role in shaping cultural identity. Cuisines prioritize specific “basic foods” and adhere to unique “flavour principles” and eating practices which serve as markers of group identity and boundary (Belasco, 2008). Goode (1992) and Lévi-Strauss (1996) explore the complex meanings embedded in food as a cultural domain. It is accepted that food is a powerful signifier of cultural identity, status, and boundaries, with various modes of cooking symbolizing

the distinction between nature and culture. Thus, cooking practices are semiotically associated with cultural values and transformations of nature.

The contemporary preoccupation with food has transformed food culture into a multifaceted communication medium, as articulated by Stajcic (2013). Communication plays an integral role in the dissemination and configuration of culture, with communication practices being significantly influenced by cultural norms and values (Stajcic, 2013). The proliferation of cookbooks, culinary festivals, TV programmes, and blogs has not only redefined the significance of food but has also facilitated communication and bolstered social cohesion (Stajcic, 2013). Echoing this sentiment, Roland Barthes (1997) posits that food transcends its utilitarian function as a mere assemblage of consumable items for statistical or nutritional analysis. Instead, it embodies a complex communication system comprising a spectrum of images and a framework of social customs, situations, and behaviours (Barthes, 1997). As Barthes (1997) suggests, food encapsulates and conveys a particular context, serving as a repository of information and signification.

2.4 Food Symbolism

“If food is treated as a code the message it encodes will be found in the pattern of social relations being expressed. The message is about different degrees of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, boundaries and transactions across the boundaries. Like sex, the taking of food has a social component, as well as a biological one.”

(Douglas, 1975/2002, p. 161)

Food, characterized by its symbolic and multifaceted nature, is central in human experiences, encapsulating cultural, social, and emotional dimensions. Almerico (2014) argues that food embodies symbolic meanings derived from associations with other significant experiences. Poole (1993) draws a parallel between food and language, positioning both as integral modes through which individuals experience the world in blending cerebral and sensual elements. According to Poole (1993), food serves as a polysemous theatrical signifier, articulating abstract and internal aspects of life, and providing a concept and offering a language with which we can navigate the uncertainties and ineffable qualities of existence.

Douglas (2018) introduces the concept of food as a code, encoding social relations, hierarchy, inclusion, exclusion, and transactions within a cultural context. A code provides a framework for transmitting specific messages (Douglas, 1975/2002). When food is regarded as a symbolic code, the messages it communicates are embedded in the social relationships it signifies. These messages encompass different levels of hierarchy, inclusion and exclusion, and the boundaries and exchanges that occur across these boundaries (Douglas, 2002). Similar to sex, food consumption has both social and biological components, and thus, food encodes social events (Douglas, 2002).

Communication, in its broadest sense, involves the process by which we interpret the world and express that understanding to others using both verbal and non-verbal means. Food can be considered a form of communication as it serves as a non-verbal method of conveying meanings to others (Cramer et al., 2011). Roland Barthes suggests that food functions as a communication system, encompassing a complex set of practices, contexts, and behaviours (Barthes, 1997). Roy

(2020) expands on this idea by proposing that food can act as a substitute for emotional, physical, psychological, and social needs, addressing our desires and aspirations. Roth (1991) emphasizes the metaphorical nature of eating, connecting it to how individuals live and love. Jacob (2022) broadens the perspective by discussing the global phenomenon of expressing love through food. This expression is experienced universally and spans socio-cultural and economic differences. Whereas Matsuoka (2022) offers a unique insight into the Asian community's elevated use of food as a love language, tracing the historical roots of places where asking "Have you eaten yet?" served as a greeting equivalent to "How are you?", Pratiwi and Marfathonah (2023) elaborate on how Asians use food to share nostalgic experiences, creating a cultural bond.

Long (2017) supported the idea that food has long been recognized as a symbolic representation of various aspects of human experience, including identity, place, status, power, lifestyle, worldview, values, ideas, relationships, and emotions. As research has shown, the symbolic significance of food extends beyond its intellectual conceptualization to become deeply embedded in the emotional lives of individuals (Long, 2017). Additionally, food can be viewed as a social construct that mirrors structures, institutions, and power hierarchies, influencing concepts of taste, propriety, and order. Long (2017) has further examined the symbolic nature of food, emphasizing that individuals develop emotional attachments to food symbols, which shape the personal narratives and meanings they ascribe to such symbols. Ultimately, food is considered a form of communication through which individuals generate, manage, and share meaning with others (Cramer et al., 2011).

In addition to our personal connections with food, we utilize it as a medium to express our identities to others through our preparation and consumption practices. This relationship is context-dependent, as our use of food and related behaviours can vary based on the social situations we encounter (Cramer et al., 2011). Matsuoka (2022) reveals that, for historical reasons arising from events such as famine, saying “I Love You” held less significance than serving food as an act of love, which explained how food became the tangible expression of care and survival (Matsuoka, 2022). In many Asian cultures, the act of service has evolved to symbolize love, with food often representing this affection (Lewis & Ragan, 2022; Matsuoka, 2022). Various proverbs, such as “The people who give you their food give you their heart” and “The way to a man’s – and woman’s – heart is through their stomach,” highlight the role of food as an expression of love (Matsuoka, 2022). Stajcic (2013) concludes his study by stating that food operates symbolically as a communicative practice facilitating the creation, management, and sharing of meanings within cultural contexts.

2.5 Food Representation in Visual Media

According to Vallianatos (2017), the interdisciplinary field of film and food studies involves scrutinizing the depiction and significance of food within cinematic works and TV productions, and on other media platforms. This scholarly endeavour entails investigating both overt and subtle roles of food to discern how cultural representations and social values are conveyed through culinary elements (Vallianatos, 2017). In cinematic contexts, food frequently assumes the role of a prop or being in the background, wherein the food item or meal may remain unseen, or the actors may refrain from actual consumption (Lindenfeld & Parasecoli, 2017; Vallianatos, 2017). Moreover, Bradley (2016) points out that food is commonly utilized as a transitional

device, as evidenced by scenes depicting the commencement and conclusion of meals, and as a symbolic tool to elucidate aspects of narrative or character traits. By delving into the interplay among food, corporeality, and cultural contexts, scholars aim to provide comprehensive analyses that contextualize the utilization of food as a narrative device, conveyer of meaning, and expression of desire across various cinematic, televisual, and emerging media platforms (Bradley, 2016; Lindenfeld & Parasecoli, 2017).

In visual media, the representation of food serves as a powerful narrative device that engages audiences on a profound level. According to Batty (2016), visual storytelling, whether through character, setting, or object, stimulates deep engagement with the storytelling elements of a narrative, and this also applies to food, which may be seen as a visual aspect that adds to the narrative as a whole. Batty (2016) dives deeper into the role of food in film, emphasizing its importance as a plot device that supports and conveys a character's emotional journey; the visual potential of demonstrating initiatives such as growing, selecting, preparing, and serving food leads to a better understanding of character arcs. This use of food as a narrative tool is consistent with Baron's (2006) claim about the semiotic potential of food on screen, which transforms hidden or abstract elements into apparent representations.

In the cinematic context, characters serve as the lens through which audiences experience media. Batty (2016) underscores the importance of characters in shaping perspectives, providing narrative drive, and facilitating the understanding of both plot and theme. When integrated into a character's journey, food transcends visual pleasure to become a potent symbol of emotional growth and transformation (Batty, 2016). The character's exchanges with food transmit,

construct, and mirror numerous meanings through various societies and cultures (Cramer et al., 2011). As mentioned, food can be viewed as a potent medium for communication. One productive line of inquiry is to examine the concept of communication closely. For some scholars, communication entails a process aimed at generating a shared understanding shaped by diverse factors, including social and cultural context, the involved parties, their motivations, objectives, and goals (Cramer et al., 2011; Lindenfeld & Parasecoli, 2017). With that being said, communication has a formative impact and is more than just the process of generating something outside of the composition of a society or culture.

Hence, communication can also be defined as how components are given significance or as the setting in which symbols are located. Furthermore, for some, communication includes technology: the channels through which the interaction unfolds and through which we engage with others (Cramer et al., 2011). Bruno (2016) contributes to the discussion by emphasizing that food in multimedia materials operates as a tool of narrative communication; for example, the dinner table, laden with food, communicates a story to viewers, reflecting the social life and biography of the characters. Bruno (2016) further notes that the language of communication through food is dynamic, evolving with cultural and social changes over time. The notion that food transforms into a sign for the establishing character arc is particularly resonant since Batty (2016) suggests that food acts as a visual trace, allowing audiences to imagine and empathize with a character's emotional trajectory, which aligns with the idea that food communicates not only through its visual appeal but also through the symbolism embedded in its preparation, consumption, and contextual significance.

Furthermore, the representation of food in visual media transcends its utilitarian purpose. It becomes a dynamic element in storytelling, offering a visual language that communicates cultural, emotional, and narrative nuances. Scholars such as Batty (2016) and Bruno (2016) underscore the richness of this language, emphasizing its capacity to convey meaning and engage audiences in a multisensory experience. In his contribution to the discourse, Jacob (2022) posits that both food and film serve as modes of expression intended for consumption. He suggests that food, in certain instances, assumes a metaphorical role representing love, functioning as a meta-language to convey implicit messages. Whether food plays a central role in the narrative or occupies a peripheral position, it contributes additional significance and may even serve as an agent of transformative shifts within the storyline (Jacob, 2022).

Examining the cinematic portrayal of food events offers a valuable avenue for exploration, these visual depictions often mimic real-life behaviours, revealing insights into foodways that may be overlooked in traditional ethnographic and auto-ethnographic studies (Roth, 2005). As noted by Baron (2006), it has been established that food is intricately woven into films' scene-setting and plot development, influencing viewers' perceptions of characters, interpersonal dynamics, and the film's underlying themes. Significant studies in food and film currently focus on evaluating cinematic depictions of food and foodways, giving insights into individual films and broader cultural trends (Lindenfeld & Parasecoli, 2017). On top of that, current research reveals that studies on food and movie viewership might provide valuable perspectives into people's interactions with contemporary mass culture (Baron, 2006). It is said by Ferry (2014) that "film's narratives and images are a legitimate means of observing the changing structures of social interdependence and shifts in cultural identity" (p.2).

The scholarship surrounding food in cinema and the exploration of food within the context of film consumption share a common recognition: food and food-related behaviours can be analysed through semiotic frameworks, with food and food-related behaviours functioning as signifiers capable of articulating tangible representations of often internal, vague, or abstract concepts (Poole, 1999). Parasecoli (2015) contributes to this discourse by emphasizing the interplay between cinematic imagery and narrative constructions (personal and communal memories or individual and group identities) shaped within the contexts of cultural interaction, social phenomena, and political affairs.

2.5.1 Food and Onscreen Storytelling

In today's narrative-rich world, storytelling permeates every aspect of our lives, including our daily routines of dressing, decorating, purchasing, and cooking. Batty (2016) highlights our innate human desire to tell stories, whether explicitly or implicitly, through the choices we make; these choices not only reflect our identities but also convey our values and aspirations to others. Food in film is not only a visually captivating part of storytelling, but it also reflects the character's journey, contributing to a narrative that resonates with the audience (Batty, 2016). The representation of food in visual media, particularly in film and TV, serves as a rich and multifaceted narrative tool that transcends mere sustenance.

In food genre films, food assumes a prominent role, serving as a central aesthetic element wherein food items and meals are showcased as focal points within the cinematic narrative, often accompanied by depictions of individuals engaging in eating behaviours (Bower, 2004; Keller, 2006; Zimmerman & Weiss, 2005). Identifying pivotal narrative attributes within the growing

food film genre, Bower (2012) observes that such films prominently showcase protagonists who assume roles as either household or professional chefs. Additionally, Bower (2012) underscores the way in which these narratives consistently engage with themes of identity, power dynamics, cultural nuances, socio-economic status, spirituality, and interpersonal relationships, all mediated through the lens of culinary experiences. Furthermore, Bower (2012) highlights the prevalence of meticulous attention to food preparation and presentation as visual motifs throughout these films, often situated within dining rooms, domestic kitchens, restaurant kitchens, and culinary establishments where food is either crafted or sold.

The examination of a screenplay's underlying intent, coupled with an exploration of the craft tools at a screenwriter's disposal, such as plot development and visual storytelling techniques, is highlighted in the scholarly discourse (Batty, 2016). This emphasis underscores the significance of narrative poetics over the critical and cultural reception of the screenplay. Additionally, food is depicted as a symbol of identity, reflecting one's origins, aspirations, and self-perception (Belasco, 2008). Furthermore, within the framework of a screenplay, the depiction and utilization of food, from its cultivation and selection to its preparation and consumption, serve as integral elements contributing to a culturally specific expression of the narrative (Batty, 2016; McKee, 1999).

2.5.2 Food in Film

The various functions of food in film align with the literature on food as a form of data, where it is viewed as a medium for conveying specific information (Wang et al., 2016). Food can actually be used to convey cultural information by depicting dishes from various communities or as a tool

for expressing certain feelings, such as “bittersweet” (Velasco et al., 2018). Furthermore, food cues are used to represent features of people such as their social status, ethnicity, cultural background, and level of education, and they frequently serve as a significant thematic component of the plot. This establishes food as a significant yet frequently underestimated cinematic communication tool (Hamilton, 2014). Moreover, food can convey a spectrum of affective meanings (Piatti-Farnell, 2017). While food is seamlessly integrated into cinematic experiences, it is not always perceived as a complementary or integral component of the narrative (Velasco et al., 2018).

Though food functions primarily as a source of nourishment, its interpretation—whether as physical sustenance, symbolic representation, or a synthesis of both—is contingent upon the contextual dynamics within a given scene or dramatic setting (Poole, 1993). Exploring the linkages between status, race, gender, and the representation of food in films from diverse cultural backgrounds provides fascinating insights into social norms and perceptions of ourselves and others (Long, 2017).

One of the most notable representations of the diverse symbolic meanings inherent in food includes its roles as a symbol of civilization, a facilitator of reconciliation, a manifestation of affectionate labour, and an expression of artistic creativity (Poole, 1993). However, this symbolism has often been overlooked in analyses of contemporary drama (Bynum, 1985). Contrary to common perception, food in theatrical settings does not always serve merely as a tool for exerting control or generating tension. Previous research has shown that the appearance

of food in cinema often provokes an extensive range of emotions, encompassing hospitality and tension, friendliness and antagonism (Poole, 1993).

Communal dining scenes, in particular, can act as a unifying force, a marker of geographical identity, and a means of reinforcing social norms and class distinctions. The establishment and observation of communal eating practices give rise to gastronomic symbols and rituals that significantly shape interpersonal interactions, fostering either cohesion or discord among individuals (Poole, 1993).

Scholarly discourse surrounding food and film has extensively investigated the symbolic significance of food and the behaviours associated with it. Baron (2006) posits that images of food and depictions of characters' interactions with it serve as windows into their inner experiences, the development of dramatic conflicts, narrative progression, the social context of the story, and the underlying mood or perspective of the film. For instance, characters' eating habits and preferences can be used to express hospitality or substitute for nourishment (Baron, 2006).

Moreover, scenes depicting food preparation, presentation, and cleanup have been examined for their roles in establishing connections between characters and marking significant stages in their dynamics. These scenes highlight the nuanced ways in which food serves as a lens through which power dynamics and character relationships are deciphered within cinematic narratives (Baron, 2006). Thus, food, as a fundamental aspect of human existence, fulfils an important role in these narratives, acting as a powerful medium for storytelling.

2.6 The Power of TV Drama

“Television drama is a relay of cultural matter, say of national and local significance, transmitting ‘the DNA of its time.’”

(Jacobs, 2014, p. 316)

TV is a potent medium through which popular culture permeates the consciousness of mass audiences, shaping their perceptions of the world through the representations and images it disseminates (Chang, 2015). The widespread production, consumption, and dissemination of TV drama series can significantly impact mass audiences, influencing their perspectives and attitudes (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Long & Robinson, 2009).

Chang (2015) suggests that both TV drama series and movies can evoke emotional engagement among audiences. Previous research in film tourism indicates that viewers’ personal connections with on-screen narratives can engender profound feelings, emotions, and attitudes towards depicted locations (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Lee et al., 2008; Riley et al., 1998; Schofield, 1996). However, Chang (2015) notes that the level of viewer involvement differs between these two media forms. The attribute of openness inherent in TV drama series fosters a continuous stream of media portrayals and character progression, stimulating the viewer’s imagination (Kim & Long, 2012). Consequently, as viewers become emotionally invested in the storyline and strive not to miss any episodes, their sustained engagement with the series deepens (Chang, 2015). As per Bondebjerg (2016), the process of acquainting oneself with “the other,” whether through direct interaction or mediated narratives, holds the potential to engender novel configurations of cultural relationships and interactions.

Chua (2011) identified TV drama as an example of soft power. As defined by Nye (2004), soft power is situated in the power to influence the opinions of others; he further suggests that one of the most essential aids for wielding soft power is “culture,” which he defines as the set of beliefs and practices that provide meaning to society. Furthermore, Alvarado et al. (2014) state that TV drama has been debated within two overlapping frameworks. First, it is viewed as a means for representing, introducing, and conveying national or cultural understanding to a larger audience. This perspective contends that studying or analysing such information may reveal much about how an author, institution, or culture perceives and expresses itself. Second, TV drama is evaluated as part of a dramatic tradition made up of expressive artworks, allowing us to reflect on the creation’s artistic worth and its contributors’ contribution to an everlasting tradition.

Within this framework, TV drama emerges as a significant medium, embodying the mechanisms through which both media representations and quotidian experiences shape national cultures. Moreover, it serves as a means for examining how entrenched cultural constructs may be interrogated or transformed through exposure to narratives originating from divergent national contexts (Bondebjerg, 2016).

2.6.1 Food in TV Drama

Germov and Williams (1999) emphasize the importance of eating habits as social indicators of social status; this is particularly evident in Korean TV dramas where tensions between social classes are central to romantic relationships (Lewis & Ragan, 2022). In these dramas, male leads often belong to a higher social status than female leads, a contrast underscored by their eating

practices (Lewis & Ragan, 2022). Food consumption becomes a lens through which a cultural perspective on eating aligns with the inherent status contrasts within the plot (Germov & Williams, 1999).

Bruno (2016) further explores the communicative function of food in TV dramas, emphasizing its role in facilitating dialogue and conveying messages among characters. Eating is depicted as a performative act, with diners using non-verbal language encoded in their eating habits to engage in conversation and negotiate meaning (Bruno, 2016). Conversely, the cessation of eating signifies a communication breakdown (Bruno, 2016). Bruno's (2016) analysis suggests that food transcends its role as a mere commodity, becoming an integral part of characters' performative acts and interpersonal dynamics.

For instance, in the Korean TV drama *Taejanggŭm*, food takes centre stage in each episode, serving as the protagonist that speaks to viewers through its preparation and consumption (Bruno, 2016). The camera's focus on food preparation and dining scenes enables viewers to immerse themselves in the fictional world, fostering a sense of connection and prompting questions about the characters' identities, emotions, and relationships (Bruno, 2016).

Historical feature films and dramas tend to utilize food as a non-verbal code to convey emotions and meanings beyond verbal and visual cues (Bruno, 2016). Through examples like *Taejanggŭm*, it becomes clear that food is a dynamic narrative tool that enhances storytelling and engages viewers on multiple levels beyond the visual and auditory realms.

2.7 Japanese Food Culture

This study aims to explore the role food plays in Japanese-oriented TV dramas. Japanese food culture is deeply intertwined with aesthetic principles, natural symbolism, and cultural identity (Allison, 2018). Regarded as one of the most esteemed culinary traditions worldwide, Japanese cuisine's prominence is underscored by its inclusion in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list (UNESCO, 2013), a distinction shared only with the culinary culture of France (Nagashima, 2014). Japanese cuisine consistently offers a gratifying gastronomic journey renowned for its nourishing qualities beneficial to both physical well-being and mental health (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000). Allison (2018) notes that the visual presentation of food in Japanese cuisine is paramount. The meticulous arrangement and stylization of dishes reflect a commitment to aesthetics, where food is organized and stylized to create visually attractive designs. While taste and nutrition remain essential, the emphasis on appearance underscores the belief that how food looks is as important as its taste and nutritional value (Allison, 2018; Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000; Rath, 2016).

Furthermore, Japanese cuisine extends beyond mere sustenance; it is an art form that celebrates the beauty of nature (Allison, 2018). The concept of 'wabi-sabi' embodies a Japanese aesthetic and philosophical perspective that seeks to discern beauty and significance within nature (Mouritsen, 2018, p. 121). Rooted in Zen (Juniper, 2003), this concept permeates Japanese culture, advocating for a serene, reflective existence and promoting an aesthetic ethos that esteems a contemplative disposition. Often regarded as a holistic lifestyle approach, wabi-sabi prioritizes intuition over rationality and strives for symbiotic alignments between individuals and their environment (Suzuki, 2021). The container, or vessel, is as crucial as the contents,

emphasizing how food is made and organised to appear naturally beautiful and fresh (Prusinski, 2012). This stylization of nature is a testament to Japan's reverence for the natural world (Allison, 2018).

This naturalisation of food is accomplished by utilising two basic approaches, as Allison (2018) describes. Firstly, by incorporating seasonal reminders and serving in-season fruits and vegetables, Japanese cuisine maintains a connection to nature's cyclical rhythms (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000). Secondly, through meticulous preparation techniques, food is perfected to a degree that it appears more flawless than nature itself, blurring the lines between natural and artificial (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000; Rath, 2016).

Beyond its pragmatic function, Japanese cuisine carries profound symbolic meanings, particularly regarding national identity. As Allison (2018) suggests, food serves as a signifier of cultural identity, with Japanese individuals associating their nationality with consuming traditional Japanese food. Rice bears a profound symbolic import, particularly within Japanese culinary traditions, serving as a pivotal element of meals and signifying physical satisfaction and cultural enrichment (Ohnuki-Tierney, 2004; Rath, 2016).

2.7.1 On Japanese Religion

Cohen (2021) observes that varied beliefs offer chances to establish philosophical structures exploring the natural and socio-cultural development factors that created them. It is contributed that religion significantly influences the style and concept of Japanese food (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000). The primary religions that influence Japanese cuisine are Shinto and Buddhism.

Shinto, or “the Way of the Gods,” is Japan’s indigenous religion (Frazer, 1976/1924-25). According to Ashkenazi and Jacob (2000), it is founded in naturalism, and the sacredness of nature, with physical aspects of the universe revered as gods and goddesses, or Kami (Frazer, 1976/1924-25). Davies and Ikeno (2002) emphasize Shinto’s core values of pureness, balance, gratitude to nature, social respect, and individual relinquishment to the collective. These principles are reflected in the high value placed on offerings to the gods, which must be obtained from nature, symbolizing the essence of purity.

Buddhism also significantly influences Japanese cuisine. Davies (2016) explains that Buddhist religious theory in Japan became simplified and rationalized, focusing on faith, devotion, and daily life practices while discouraging excessive speculation and theorizing. Japanese Buddhism incorporates elements of sectarianism and nationalism that are not found in other forms (Davies, 2016). It shares several parallels with Shintoism, including a belief in the afterlife and the need for food offerings (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000; Davies & Ikeno, 2002).

Ashkenazi and Jacob (2000) acknowledge Buddhism’s direct and indirect inspiration for Japanese cuisine. For example, Buddhism’s need for flowers and sweet food has resulted in widespread admiration for chrysanthemums, cherry blossoms (Sakura), camellias, and a sizeable confectionary business. Buddhism’s most significant contribution to Japanese cuisine culture is its emphasis on vegetarianism. This fondness for vegetables has created one of the world’s most intricate and exquisite vegetarian cuisines. The apex of this vegetarian cuisine is Kaiseki Ryori, a multi-course meal served during extended tea ceremonies, which originated in Zen Buddhism, a branch of Japanese Buddhism.

Japanese religions have profoundly influenced Japanese food, serving as the conceptual and aesthetic foundation for its preparation and presentation. These influences are evident in the delicacy, harmony, and temperance of Japanese cuisine, featuring beautiful, contemporary, and simplistic presentations of dishes like sushi and sashimi, and promoting reduced meat and dairy intake (Baxter, 2014; Rath, 2016). Nevertheless, Japanese food culture is characterized by its emphasis on visual aesthetics, the stylization of nature, and the symbolic meanings embedded within culinary traditions (Allison, 2018; Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000; Ohnuki-Tierney, 2004). Understanding these elements gives an insight into the complex interplay between food, culture, and identity in Japan.

2.7.2 Exchange Between Japanese and French Cuisine

A new culinary tradition has emerged within Japanese food culture which can be understood as a historical phenomenon influenced by the Western presence in Japan towards the end of the nineteenth century. This transformation was intricately linked to industrialization, urbanization, and militarization that swept across the country (Cwiertka, 1998). During this period, the Japanese elite embraced the European model, actively assimilating and promoting Western cultural practices, including culinary traditions (Cwiertka, 1998). The growing influence of Western haute cuisine among Japanese elites had a considerable impact on society's perceptions of Western gastronomy, with a particular emphasis on French cuisine (Cwiertka, 1995, 1998).

The ascendancy of French cuisine within Japanese culinary circles can be traced to its integration into the Imperial court and subsequent adoption by the Japanese elite, driven by its veneration as a symbol of haute culture (Cwiertka, 1995, 1998). The incorporation of French culinary practices

into Japanese court protocols during that time was not only related to direct French influence, but also to the supremacy of French cuisine among the higher ranks of society in Europe, North America, and the colonial and semi-colonial regions of the British Empire. (Cwierka, 2003; Revel, 1982).

In 1960, chef Shizuo Tsuji established the first French culinary school in Japan, which greatly facilitated cultural exchanges between leading Japanese and French chefs, such as Paul Bocuse and Alain Chapel (Deroy et al., 2014). Additionally, chefs Michel Troisgros and Michel Bras have recognized the impact of Japanese culinary ideas on their work. Michel Troisgros was notably influenced by the Japanese approach to taste and flavours, while Michel Bras, who also has a passion for photography, incorporated Japanese visual aesthetics to create detailed food presentations (Deroy et al., 2014).

A significant milestone in the recognition of Tokyo's burgeoning culinary scene occurred with the release of the prestigious *Michelin Red Guide* in November 2007. Tokyo's restaurants garnered a remarkable total of 191 Michelin stars, surpassing renowned culinary capitals such as Paris and New York, which received 64 and 42 stars, respectively (Farrer, 2008). This accolade underscored the culinary prowess and diversity of Tokyo's gastronomic landscape, often surprising those unfamiliar with the city's vast array of dining establishments, which number over 190,000 (Farrer, 2008).

2.8 A Gastronomic Study of Japanese Food-oriented TV Drama

The existing literature concerning the portrayal of food in TV dramas, particularly within the context of Japanese food-oriented TV dramas is very limited. Fortunately, Nancy Stalker has contributed significantly to this area of study. Stalker (2015) discusses Japan's deep interest in food TV, linking it to the gourmet boom of the 1980s, a time of economic prosperity marked by a rise in the consumption of luxury foods and international cuisines. These gourmet TV dramas, which are often based on popular manga comics, reflect prevailing gender norms related to food. Male chefs are typically depicted as professionals and authorities on food, often taking on the roles of main protagonists (Stalker, 2015).

Stalker (2015, 2016) further suggests that the diverse landscape of Japanese food media offers a unique platform for conveying prevailing or emerging messages about food and culinary culture, potentially surpassing the instructional, critical, or competitive non-fictional food media prevalent in the United States. Unlike non-fictional cooking instruction or competition programmes that may simply inspire viewers to experiment with new dishes or dining experiences, dramatized narratives foster a deeper connection between viewers and characters, employing empathy and emotional engagement to encourage shifts in audiences' attitudes towards their food practices (Stalker, 2015).

A notable trend in Japanese food-oriented TV dramas involves the adaptation of manga series, such as Kariya Tetsu's *Oishin-bo* (1983–2014) and Ueyama Tochi's *Cooking Papa* (1985–present). These manga-based shows, exemplified by characters like a culinary journalist and a

family-oriented, middle-class salaryman with a passion for cooking, have become enduring fixtures in Japanese media, enjoying long-standing popularity and cultural significance (Aoyama, 2003).

Food has an impact on the emotional lives and identities of the characters in TV dramas. As evidenced by Nancy Stalker's findings (2015, 2016), food often acts as a surrogate for other forms of gratification, such as sex, companionship, or professional success, underscoring its centrality in the lives of these characters. Despite their profound attachment to food, these characters typically exhibit a preference for nostalgic and everyday meals over the extravagant or foreign cuisines favoured by culinary professionals and critics in earlier gourmet dramas (Stalker, 2015; 2016).

Analysing individual films through the critical elements of narrative design can significantly enhance discussions on the incorporation of food into narrative structures. These elements include the arrangement of scenes, the distribution of screen time among characters and story aspects, the recurrence of narrative components, the identification of characters who guide the narrative, and the portrayal of situations or environments that subtly present the film's ethical issues, thematic viewpoints, and overall mood (Baron, 2006; Guerlac et al. 1980).

In addition to adaptations from manga, Japan boasts a repertoire of original gourmet TV dramas, such as *Teppan-yaki Girl Akane!!* (2006), *Patisserie Coin de rue* (2011), *Izakaya Shinkansen* (2021-2024), *Chef wa Meitantei* (2021), *High School Restaurant* (2011), *The Solitary Gourmet*

(2012-present), *The Genre of Late Drinking* (2022-present), *Kantaro: The Sweet Tooth Salaryman* (2017), *Chef Three Star School Lunch* (2016), *Samurai Gourmet* (2017) which was studied by Stalker (2016) and Varmazi (2024), and notably, the focus of this dissertation, *Grand Maison Tokyo* (2019).

2.9 Summary of Literature Review

The literature review explores the complex role of food in human life, emphasizing its importance not only as a source of nourishment but also as a cultural and social phenomenon. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 2024), food is described as a substance consumed for nourishment, highlighting its crucial role in sustaining life and promoting growth. Beyond this basic function, food also has significant cultural and social dimensions, making its study relevant across various subfields of anthropology, including socio-cultural anthropology, biological anthropology, archaeology, and linguistics (Moreno-Black, 2017).

Food studies explore the meanings associated with food and eating, emphasizing the cultural, social, and personal levels at which food operates. Scholars like Long (2017) and Belasco (2008) argue that food is a core element in social relationships, a source of pleasure, and a marker of identity and boundaries. The concept of “food voice” introduced by Hauck-Lawson (2004) posits that individuals communicate aspects of their identity and emotional state through their dietary choices, which serve as narratives of familial history, migration experiences, and cultural assimilation.

Moreover, Trubek (2017) emphasizes that food studies are not limited to specific activities or levels of human organization encompassing small-scale societies and individual behaviours, which invites a profound exploration of the act of eating and its broader societal implications (Almerico, 2014). The review also discusses the symbolic nature of food, as noted by Douglas (2018) and others, who argue that food encodes social relations and cultural meanings. Food serves as a communicative practice, conveying messages about hierarchy, inclusion, exclusion, and social boundaries. This symbolic function extends to food representation in visual media, where food acts as a narrative device, engaging audiences and contributing to character development and plot progression (Batty, 2016; Bruno, 2016; Lindenfeld & Parasecoli, 2017).

Food is often used as a prop or symbolic tool in cinematic contexts to elucidate narrative or character traits, creating a richer understanding of character arcs and emotional journeys (Baron, 2006; Bradley, 2016). The representation of food in film and TV thus transcends its utilitarian purpose, offering a visual language that communicates cultural, emotional, and narrative nuances. The interdisciplinary field of film and food studies examines how food is depicted in media and how these representations convey cultural values and social dynamics (Vallianatos, 2017). Food in visual media becomes a dynamic element in storytelling, reflecting broader cultural narratives and personal experiences.

To sum up, the literature review underscores the profound significance of food as a cultural, social, and symbolic phenomenon. It highlights how food serves as a means for cultural dialogue, identity expression, and social cohesion, both in real-life contexts and through its

representation in visual media. This multifaceted approach provides a deeper understanding of the role of food in human culture and communication.

3. Methodology

TV narratives play a pivotal role as the primary storyteller of our society, mirroring our values and shaping our perceptions of reality (Fiske & Hartley, 2004). The enchanting power of TV shows has always captivated me, drawing me into intricately woven narratives that linger in the soul long after the screen fades to black. Unlike movies, TV shows have a unique ability to develop characters and storylines gradually, forming an unbreakable bond with the audience. Daily, viewers are immersed in tales featuring heroes and villains navigating the complexities of relationships or confronting extraordinary challenges (Porter et al., 2002). While audiences may enjoy the escapism offered by TV narratives, it is essential to acknowledge that these programmes also wield influence by promoting values aligned with the prevailing ideology (Porter et al., 2002).

One such series that has left an indelible mark on me is the Japanese TV drama *Grand Maison Tokyo*. Airing in Japan from October to December 2019, *Grand Maison Tokyo* centres on the character Rinko Hayami, a skilled chef driven by her passionate ambition to open a French restaurant in the bustling heart of Tokyo. The series captivates viewers with its engaging narrative, depicting Rinko and her teammates' culinary journey as they navigate the triumphs, challenges, and relentless pursuit of culinary excellence in the demanding environment of managing a prestigious restaurant.

The thematic depth of *Grand Maison Tokyo* extends beyond the culinary realm, delving into themes of ambition, passion, and the art of fine dining. Its ability to spark a 'blood boiling'

emotion within audiences is unquestionable, as it provides an enjoyable experience that appeals to both cuisine lovers and drama fans. With that in mind, this study evaluates the portrayal of Japanese food culture and its fusion with French culinary traditions within *Grand Maison Tokyo*. Through semiotic analysis, symbolic interactionism, and reflexive thematic analysis, this research aims to uncover the role of food as a nuanced form of communication and expression within the series. By dissecting the symbolism and narrative intricacies surrounding food, this study seeks to illuminate the deeper layers of cultural exchange and artistic representation embedded within the culinary tapestry of *Grand Maison Tokyo*.

3.1 Paradigms, Ontology and Epistemology

This dissertation adopts an interpretive paradigm within social science, guided by the notion that comprehending individuals' beliefs, motivations, and thought processes within a social context is essential for understanding the significance of the data gathered in relation to a phenomenon (Nickerson, 2023). Interpretive analysis is extensive and contextually grounded rather than simplistic and detached. This method enables researchers to offer explanations that emphasize language, signs, and meanings from the viewpoint of the participants engaged in the social phenomenon (Bhattacharjee, 2012; Black, 2006).

Furthermore, the examination and accumulation of data can be conducted concurrently and iteratively (Black, 2006). For example, a researcher could carry out an interview, code the data, and then proceed to the next interview. This simultaneous analysis allows the researcher to identify and correct potential weaknesses in the interview process, enabling adjustments that

better capture the phenomenon of interest. If the original study topic appears unlikely to yield new or valuable insights, the researcher may modify it, which underscores a benefit of interpretive research that is sometimes overlooked (Bhattacharjee, 2012).

Interpretivism highlights the importance of individual personalities and their engagement in social and cultural contexts (Elster, 2015). This perspective is philosophically tied to a researcher's worldview, fitting within a paradigm that includes fundamental assumptions about reality (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). Researchers adhering to interpretivism acknowledge that reality is perceived as accurate within a socially constructed environment, as interpretivist studies generally focus on meaning and employ various methodologies to capture different aspects of the research subject (Pulla & Carter, 2018). This study adopts the interpretive paradigm to examine and understand the cultural and gastronomic implications of food portrayal in TV dramas, which allows for an exploration of the subjective and cultural meanings ascribed to food (Levers, 2013).

Rowland (1995) posits that every research study embodies a specific worldview comprising at least three philosophical dimensions: ontological beliefs, epistemological assumptions, and methodological choices. Ontological beliefs pertain to our perception of reality and its nature; epistemological assumptions address the origins of our knowledge and the ways in which we comprehend the world; while methodological choices involve the strategies and techniques we employ to attain our research goals (Gichuru, 2017).

For qualitative researchers, the primary focus is on the concept of meaning. Qualitative researchers investigate how individuals create meaning from their experiences, reflect on and articulate those experiences, and participate in social practices that hold significance for them (Willig, 2016). Qualitative research frequently entails engaging with these meaning-making processes, with researchers recognizing that they also contribute to the construction of meaning throughout their studies. The centrality of meaning construction to qualitative research often leads researchers to adopt a constructivist perspective (Willig, 2016).

This project has adopted a constructivist ontology, which posits that reality, particularly in the context of food portrayal in TV dramas, is shaped by human experiences and interpretations. This perspective recognizes the multiple ways in which individuals and cultures perceive and construct reality, especially concerning the significance of food (Xie et al., 2022). Consequently, this study acknowledges the fluid and subjective nature of reality, highlighting the need to understand the diverse interpretations of food across different cultural contexts.

Additionally, this study has adopted a subjectivist epistemology, recognizing that the interpretation of food within a cultural framework is shaped by individual and cultural subjectivity. A subjectivist approach to epistemology denies the existence of a theory-neutral observational language (Rose, 1967; Burr, 2006). From this standpoint, there is no ‘absolute true knowledge’; instead, what we regard as ‘truth’ is derived from our intersubjective socio-cultural consensus. This consensus is perceived as ‘reality’ or ‘objectivity’ in the context of knowledge (Kamil, 2011).

In essence, the subjectivist epistemological perspective asserts that our understandings of reality are socially constructed through multiple frameworks such as language (Gontier, 2006), interests (Parsons et al., 1972), traditions (Gadamer, 1975), and worldviews (Botella & Gallifa, 1995). Employing a subjective epistemology allows for recognizing and exploring the subjective meanings attributed to food portrayal in TV dramas. Methodologically, this perspective may employ content analysis and cultural studies to uncover and interpret these personal meanings (Sturgeon, 1994). By embracing a subjective epistemology, this study acknowledges and values the diverse perspectives and interpretations surrounding the portrayal of food in TV dramas, enriching the analysis with nuanced insights derived from subjective experiences and cultural contexts.

3.2 Research Questions

The purpose of this research was to look into food in TV drama *Grand Maison Tokyo* in order to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: How is food utilized as a mode of communication and expression in *Grand Maison Tokyo*?

RQ2: How does *Grand Maison Tokyo* portray the integration of Japanese food culture with French culinary traditions?

3.3 Semiotics

This study adopted a semiotic approach to analysing the interplay between food and language, drawing from the theoretical frameworks of prominent semioticians and scholars in communication studies. According to numerous classical perspectives, the overarching field of semiotics revolves around the concept of signs as entities representing or substituting for other entities. As articulated by Eco (1976), semiotics encompasses anything interpretable as a signal, wherein a sign denotes anything potentially substituting for another entity, even if the latter does not physically exist or is not presently accessible.

Semiotics is particularly pertinent for elucidating static instances, revealing underlying structures rather than specific actions (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). However, these frozen moments are not detached from an individual's actions but instead serve as a resource. Thus, if semiotics proves beneficial in dissecting at least one aspect of human phenomena, it merits scholarly consideration.

Furthermore, semiotics holds promise in supporting the study of communication (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993; Eco, 2018). It predominantly explores connections rather than isolated facts, texts, or objects. Given that no single fact, text, or object exists in isolation, their examination necessitates contextualisation within a network of related elements, termed a system of relations (Culler, 1981; Eco, 2018). For researchers seeking insights into human behaviour and communication dynamics, a significant portion of their inquiry must revolve around creating and utilising signs

which is precisely the domain of semiotics. Thus, semiotic theory inherently provides a fruitful starting point for such investigations.

The influence of Roland Barthes in media studies has led to a heightened interest in semiotic analysis across various media domains, including advertising, cinema, and video clips (Bouzida, 2014). Within semiotic systems, food and language share several characteristics: they engage multiple senses and modes to convey meaning and exert influence within human societies, and they exist within diverse contexts (Riley & Cavanaugh, 2017). Therefore, the imperative to analyse their interplay appears self-evident, given the fundamental roles that speaking and eating play in human existence (Riley & Cavanaugh, 2017). As articulated by Peter Bogatyrev (as cited in Matejka, 1976), any object from nature, technology, or daily life can assume the status of a sign when it acquires significance beyond its existence.

Barthes (1997) proposes a conceptualisation of food as “a system of communication, a body of images, a protocol of usages, situations, and behaviour ... food sums up and transmits a situation; it constitutes information; it signifies” (p.21). Mary Douglas (2002) further applied semiotic principles to food within social contexts, emphasizing the symbolic messages encoded within food practices and patterns of social relations.

Roland Barthes’ approach has significantly influenced media studies, particularly in semiological analysis across various media forms including advertising, cinema, films, video clips, and caricatures (Bouzida, 2014). Recently, Barthes’ contributions have motivated semioticians within

communication and information sciences to analyse media images and explore the symbolic interplay between verbal and non-verbal signs. These researchers utilize semiology as a qualitative approach to uncover deeper meanings and interpretations (Bouzida, 2014).

Denotation represents the initial level of signification, referring to the literal or explicit meaning of a sign, independent of subjective evaluations (Bouzida, 2014). Conversely, as Barthes explains, connotation encompasses the emotional and cultural associations evoked by a sign, building upon its denoted meaning (Fiske, 1990; Jamieson, 2006). Connotation thus serves as a reproduction of the sign's message, incorporating "feelings or emotions of the users and the values of their culture" to interpret underlying meanings and implications (Bouzida, 2014, p.1005).

Greimas, on the other hand, is renowned for his work in structural semiotics; he aimed to create a comprehensive model capable of analysing all narrative forms, developing his ideas between the 1960s and 1990s (Pasini & Trimboli, 2023). Greimas' methodology focuses on organising narratives into surface and deep structures, with the narrative skeleton representing fundamental values and meanings, and surface elements comprising the visible storytelling aspects. He utilised tools like the semiotic square to analyse the relationships of meanings within semantic categories, facilitating the creation of a formal map of a text's functioning where semiotic analysis can proceed from surface to deep or vice versa, guided by the semiotic square's differential geometric structure (Pasini & Trimboli, 2023).

Food production and consumption are inherently social processes deeply embedded within cultural and historical contexts (Volli, 2021). Behind even the most basic culinary creation lies a web of cultural decisions with intricate roots dictating which organic substances are deemed suitable for consumption, under what circumstances, following what preparatory and social procedures, and delineating permissible taste combinations and dining practices (Volli, 2021).

From a communication perspective, food serves as a potent medium of expression, rendering it a pertinent subject for researchers in communication (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). A communicative approach to food analysis underscores the contextual nuances surrounding food consumption, acknowledges the implications of food choices, and highlights how individuals employ food to construct social identities and roles, thereby shaping social reality through communicative behaviours.

3.4 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism is a micro-level theoretical framework within sociology that helps explain how society is created and sustained through ongoing individual interactions (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Originating in the mid-20th century, this approach is influenced by Scottish Moralists and American Pragmatist philosophers, with George Herbert Mead being a pivotal contributor: Symbolic interactionism emerged as a reaction to the prevailing mainstream sociological theories of the time (Carter & Fuller, 2015).

The focus on subjective meaning over objective structure is central to symbolic interactionism, with the emphasis on how meaningful interactions among individuals tend to shape societal norms and identities (Carter & Fuller, 2015). Individuals behave in response to the meanings that things carry for them, according to Blumer (1986), and these meanings are derived from and articulated through social interactions within specific social and cultural contexts.

According to Blumer's symbolic interactionism, meanings are constantly generated and rebuilt through interpretative processes as we engage with others (Blumer, 1986). As actors, human beings constantly interpret the meanings of objects and situations based on their interactions with others, thus shaping their understanding of the social world (Blumer, 1962). Social institutions are conceived as "social habits" emerging within specific situations daily for those involved (Blumer, 1962).

Blumer's approach to symbolic interactionism is founded on three key principles: firstly, humans respond to things based on the meanings these things hold for them; secondly, the meanings emerge from social interactions; and thirdly, meanings are managed and adjusted through interpretive processes (Blumer, 1962). Understanding human behaviour and social processes necessitates grasping the meanings experienced by participants within specific contexts (Morris, 1977).

Symbolic interactionism, based on Mead's ideas of "I," "me," and "self," posits that meaning is a product of continuous social interactions (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1934). Blumer contends that,

while that conception may align with other philosophical views, it highlights the active role individuals play in shaping the social world (Jeon, 2004), while the ideas that follow from it emphasize the importance of interpretation in the use of meanings by actors, underlining the continual process of reflection and reaction to external factors (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1934).

In summary, applying Barthes' semiotics to studying food and language provides a robust framework for analysing the intricate interplay of signs, meanings, and socio-cultural contexts. Looking into the semiotic dimensions of food communication can unearth the underlying patterns and structures that shape human interactions and societal norms. In conducting this research, which is informed by symbolic interactionism, I have adopted a qualitative approach to understand the meanings individuals attribute to objects, situations, and interactions between food and characters within the TV series, which involves analyses of scenes to elucidate the symbolic meanings behind them (Aksan et al., 2009; Del Casino & Thien, 2020). Through this methodology, the researcher seeks to uncover the subjective perspectives and interpretive processes in which food plays a role.

3.5 Data Collection

The data collection strategy utilized in this dissertation follows an indirect, non-participant, and secondary observation method, as described by Flick (2009); this method can be used with films or series serving as the primary sources of investigation. While indirect observation may lack the flexibility of direct observation methods, it is characterized by reduced bias and enhanced accuracy (Leite et al., 2021). Additionally, the permanence of recorded data allows for iterative

reassessment, ensuring consistency in the observation protocol (Leite et al., 2021). This approach permits the qualitative extraction of both explicit and implicit meanings, using a reliable observation protocol. It visualizes concepts and theories in action and supports iterative data collection, enabling repeated analysis of observed scenes as necessary (Leite et al., 2021).

Acknowledging the descriptive nature of observational studies in film analysis, three aligned perspectives are considered. Firstly, Godoy (1995) posits that qualitative research inherently adopts a descriptive approach. Secondly, while qualitative analysis may inform explanations of phenomena, it is not inherently committed to explicating them (Leite et al., 2021). Lastly, Gil (1994) underscores the fundamental objective of systematically observing and describing chosen phenomena as they occur or have occurred.

Data was collected by watching the series on Netflix in Japanese with English subtitles. Each episode was watched 2 times to thoroughly record scenes, themes, events, and the timing of each scene across the episode. Following data collection through an observation protocol, in which scenes and dialogue were documented in detail, two primary strategies were employed for analysis. Firstly, data are substantiated against theoretical propositions, facilitating organization and alignment with the initial research questions (e.g., Yin, 1998). Secondly, themes within the data are identified to facilitate interpretation and reflection, while being mindful of the researcher's subjectivity and the inherent complexities involved in language and narrative interpretation (Leite et al., 2021).

It is important to note that the dataset for this research is derived from the Japanese TV series *Grand Maison Tokyo*, which serves as the primary source of observational data for analysis.

3.6 Data Analysis

This project employed a semiotic analysis lens to uncover the profound significance embedded within each meticulously crafted food scene in *Grand Maison Tokyo*. These scenes are infused with unique meanings that enrich the overarching narrative, adding depth and complexity.

Through the chosen methodological approach, the researcher sought to achieve a comprehensive understanding of how characters' engagement with food shapes their identity and cultural connections, thereby influencing the essence of the series (Parasecoli, 2011; Pratiwi & Marfathonah, 2023).

Semiotic analysis involves a deeper, more nuanced examination that extends beyond the immediate interpretation of individual signs (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993). This approach explores the intricate relationships and interconnections between diverse forms of signifiers, such as words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects. By unravelling this complex web of meanings, semiotic analysis provides a profound understanding that enhances our interpretation of the broader context and the surrounding world (Mutis & Issa, 2008), and in this study laying a solid foundation for understanding the multifaceted role of food in shaping cultural identities, social relationships, and media representations (Eco, 1976; Wang, 2009).

Parasecoli (2011) emphasizes that food codes must be interpreted within the broader context of cultural 'texts,' which form interconnected signifying networks, known as 'semiospheres,' or contribute to a larger semiosphere. The interactions among these networks highlight the competence of individuals engaged in semiosis. Examining food through a semiotic lens allows for a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of semiosis. The position and identity of each signifying element fluctuate with changes in the overall system and depend on its articulation with the other networks it becomes part of (Parasecoli, 2011).

Lévi-Strauss (2018) further explains the connection between cultural and semiotic realms by proposing a semiotic conception of human culture, wherein various communication systems are interconnected through functional analogies. To fully grasp the codes' significance, it is essential to analyse how it interacts with other discourses, practices, and cultural contexts (Aktaş-Polat & Polat, 2020; Parasecoli, 2011). Whether through the exchange of economic goods, linguistic acts, or human interactions, cultural phenomena are mediated by symbolic communication systems that imbue them with significance (Eco, 2018; Volli, 2016, 2021). Expanding upon Parasecoli's (2011) perspective, a semiotic analysis of food transcends mere sensory perceptions to encompass the entire embodied experience. This comprehensive approach to semiosis engages both the intellect and the full spectrum of sensory experiences, underscoring the interconnectedness between cultural practices and semiotic dimensions. It highlights the profound role of food as a medium for meaning-making and cultural expression (Blackman, 2021; Bordo, 2023).

Drawing parallels between eating and language, Roland Barthes (1997) posits that food functions not just as a collection of items for statistical or nutritional examination but as a communicative system. This system includes a repertoire of images and a framework of usage protocols, situations, and behaviours. Barthes (1997) advocates for an analytical approach similar to linguistic transformational analysis, where researchers collect extensive information about food within a particular society, including products, techniques, and habits, and explore the variations in meaning that emerge as food-related phenomena transition from one to another (Stano, 2014).

After the semiotic analysis, a reflexive thematic analysis was used. As outlined by Braun and Clarke (2019), reflexive thematic analysis offers a comprehensive approach to examining the TV drama series dataset, facilitating the identification of patterns while allowing for data interpretation informed by theoretical perspectives. This method enables the researcher to consider overt and subtle representations of food and culture within TV dramas.

Reflexive thematic analysis is inherently qualitative, being grounded in qualitative research techniques and values (Braun et al., 2022). In this reflexive analytical process, the researcher assumes the role of a storyteller, recognising that the narratives constructed about the data are influenced by their own positioning, lived experiences, assumptions, and expectations regarding the topic.

In reflexive thematic analysis, themes serve a dual purpose; beyond summarising data related to specific topics or issues, they also uncover patterns of shared cultural meanings that are centred

around core concepts or themes and provide narratives that illuminate the significance of these patterns (Braun et al., 2022; Kua et al., 2022). As such, the analysis has focused on identifying themes that emerge from the dataset, exploring their implications, and contextualising them within the broader framework of food and culture in the TV drama series.

3.7 Limitations

While employing a semiotic analysis lens provides useful information regarding the cultural relevance of food portrayal in *Grand Maison Tokyo*, it is essential to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in this methodological approach. One limitation is the subjectivity inherent in semiotic interpretation, as the researcher's perspectives and biases may influence analyses. As for reflexive thematic analysis, the researcher's subjectivity may impact the study's conclusions. Despite efforts to maintain reflexivity and transparency in data interpretation, the investigator's personal prejudices and viewpoints may unintentionally influence the analysis and conclusions gathered from the data.

Additionally, semiotic analysis may face challenges in capturing the full breadth of cultural nuances and contextual meanings embedded within food representations. Cultural symbols and meanings are often complex and multifaceted and can evolve over time and vary across different cultural contexts. As such, semiotic analysis may provide a partial understanding of the cultural significance of food within *Grand Maison Tokyo*, with certain subtleties and contextual nuances potentially overlooked or misinterpreted.

Besides, the scope of this research is limited to the analysis of food representation within a specific TV drama, *Grand Maison Tokyo*. While this focus allows for an in-depth exploration of food-related symbols and meanings within the show's context, it may only capture part of the cultural dynamics and food practices prevalent in Japanese society. Therefore, the findings of this study should be interpreted within the context of TV drama and may not necessarily be generalized to broader cultural contexts or other food-oriented media.

Despite these limitations, this study's semiotic and thematic analysis offers valuable insights into the cultural significance of food representation in Japanese food-oriented TV dramas. By acknowledging these limitations, it is possible to adopt a reflective approach to the analyses and strive to mitigate potential biases, thus enhancing the validity of the findings.

4. Findings and Discussion

Guided by semiotic and thematic analysis, dialogue from scenes of *Grand Maison Tokyo* were selected to maximize the alignment with the research methodology and address the core research questions. This approach enabled the identification of dialogue that conveys “Food as Communication and Expression” and “Integration of French and Japanese Cuisine”. The themes in my findings are expressed by considering the most dominant attributes of the characters (refer to Appendix C), dialogues, and food presented that speak to the essence of my research questions:

RQ1: How is food utilized as a mode of communication and expression in *Grand Maison Tokyo*?

RQ2: How does *Grand Maison Tokyo* portray the integration of Japanese food culture with French culinary traditions?

Understanding the context of the TV series is crucial for understanding how food acts as a force in storytelling. Data alone cannot create an optimal data story (Ren et al., 2023). Thus, before proceeding to data analysis, it is essential to grasp the narrative context within the 11 episodes of *Grand Maison Tokyo*. Selected scene descriptions and dialogues were meticulously recorded and reviewed (refer to Appendix A). The location of key (S)enes by (E)pisode and time are presented in the text as follows (E00S00, 00:00–00:00).

4.1 *Grand Maison Tokyo*: An Overview

The show begins with a Japan–France summit lunch in Paris at Escoffille, a two-Michelin-star restaurant. The preparation for the summit lunch underscores the use of food to communicate diplomatic relations (E01S1, 00:20–01:00). The main male character, Obana Natsuki, head chef of the two-Michelin-star restaurant, monitors kitchen operations and reprimands a chef for mishandling uni (sea urchin). Here, food (uni) is used to establish authority and communicate standards within the kitchen (E01S3, 01:43–02:29). However, during service, a guest experiences a nut-allergy reaction, abruptly ending the service (E01S6, 04:32–04:45).

The narrative then fast-forwards three years, showing how food is used to address the aftermath of the summit lunch allergy incident. As Escoffille was closed down due to the scandal, food becomes a means for the characters to rebuild their careers and lives, demonstrating how they cope with the fallout through their culinary endeavours.

Table 1: Cast of Characters in *Grand Maison Tokyo*

Character	Bio
Obana (Male Lead)	Former head chef of the two-Michelin-star restaurant Escoffille, which was closed down due to a scandal three years ago.
Rinko (Female Lead)	A dedicated female chef from Japan aspiring to earn a Michelin star.
Kyono	The restaurant manager who worked at Escoffille, then at Gaku, and eventually at Grand Maison Tokyo.
Aizawa	Previously worked under Obana at Escoffille; returned to Japan and became a celebrity chef after the allergy scandal.
Shohei	Obana’s apprentice at Escoffille; returned to Japan following the allergy scandal and became the head chef at a hotel banquet kitchen.

Serita	An apprentice at Grand Maison Tokyo.
Matsui	Worked as a pastry chef at the same hotel banquet as Shohei and was later recruited by Grand Maison Tokyo.
Kuzumi	A food writer with sommelier qualifications who eventually joins the team at Grand Maison Tokyo.
Amelie	Aizawa's daughter.
Elise	Aizawa's wife from France.
Linda	Chief Editor of a food magazine <i>Marie Claire Dining</i> .
Ushio	Obana's Mentor.
Eto	Owner of Gaku, the rival restaurant of Grand Maison Tokyo.
Tango	Head chef of Gaku.

4.2 Food as Communication and Expression: On Character Development

This study identifies four central themes related to food as a medium of communication and expression: “Struggle and Perseverance,” “Talent and Limitation,” “Redemption and Resilience,” and “Love and Passion.” Each theme is explored through the analysis of the experiences of the characters from the show (See Table 1 for character guide). A comprehensive discussion synthesizing these themes is presented at the conclusion of the analysis.

4.2.1 Struggle and Perseverance

“I used to think that I couldn’t obtain Michelin stars because I wasn’t talented enough at cooking. But it’s actually because I didn’t work hard enough. Obana and Aizawa have a conviction and passion about cooking that is admirable. Now I realized that aiming for a Michelin-starred restaurant requires this level of commitment. ... I feel the need to work harder.”

Rinko (E03S11, 20:55–23:35)

4.2.1.1 The Fallen Chef and His Lessons

Three years after the allergy incident, Obana meets Rinko, who travelled to Paris alone to pursue her Michelin dream. Obana, moved by her determination, offers to open a restaurant with her. When Rinko requests a dish, Obana serves her Tenaga ebi l’étuvée (quick braised Tenaga shrimp). Rinko takes a bite and has tears in her eyes, exclaiming that it was delicious, so delicious. Obana responds that it was not worth crying for (E01S12, 16:51–18:40). Rinko’s emotional reaction to the dish underscores food’s profound impact, while Obana’s humble response reveals his deep connection to cooking. This scene illustrates that creating food is not merely a technical skill but an emotional journey for chefs (Long, 2017). Obana’s decision to partner with Rinko is based on their shared appreciation for the emotional responses their food can evoke.

Back in Japan with Rinko, Obana reconnects with Kyono, a former restaurant manager at Escoffile. To apologise for past actions, Obana prepares couscous à la maison (homemade couscous) with five kinds of meat (oxtail, pork collar, pigeon wings, duck, chicken wing tips), a dish symbolising their shared history in Paris (E01S24, 44:54–45:39). This act highlights how

food encapsulates memories and personal connections, making the apology more poignant. As Rinko tastes the dish, she comments:

Rinko: “It’s a little gamey. How about adding some yuzu?”

Obana: “This is the flavour of our memories, don’t be nitpicky.” (E01S26, 45:40–46:35)

By insisting on preserving the dish’s original taste, Obana emphasizes its role in capturing the flavour of their shared experiences, which demonstrates how specific tastes and recipes are linked to personal and collective pasts, serving as tangible reminders of those times (Bruno, 2016; Long, 2017; Parasecoli, 2015; Poole, 1993). By expressing his remorse through food, Obana leverages his culinary skills to communicate sincerity and respect, underscoring the cultural significance of food in expressing complex emotions where words might fall short (Cramer et al., 2011).

In Episode 2, Obana’s choice of high-quality French ingredients and traditional cooking techniques reveals his identity as a classically trained French chef:

Obana: “I can’t make good dishes without good ingredients.” (E02S1, 03:19–03:50)

This statement underscores his belief in the fundamental importance of ingredient quality in achieving culinary excellence, a core tenet of French cuisine. However, Rinko points out that Obana’s choice of expensive French ingredients is impractical, suggesting a tension between the pursuit of culinary excellence and practical constraints, emphasizing the need for adaptability.

Aizawa: “This is Japan. Also, most people tend to steer away from expensive ingredients.

Times are changing.” (E02S5, 12:32–15:38)

When Aizawa explains his shift from elaborate, spice-heavy techniques used in Paris to a more ingredient-focused approach in Japan, he communicates a fundamental shift in his culinary

philosophy. This conversation highlights the adaptation and evolution of culinary practices across different cultures (Allison, 2018). Aizawa's acknowledgement that Japanese cooking celebrates the natural quality of ingredients over theatrical presentation reflects a deep respect for local culinary traditions (Banks & McGee Banks, 2019).

During a cooking face-off with Aizawa, Aizawa's student critiques Obana's use of truffle, an expensive and traditionally luxurious ingredient, for lacking innovation (E02S5, 12:32–15:38). Instead, they praise the combination of pasta and matcha as creative and well-suited to Japanese palates. This highlights a preference for creativity and adaptivity in modern Japanese cuisine. The appreciation for unique combinations, such as pasta and matcha, suggests an evolving culinary trend that values innovative fusion dishes over traditional luxury ingredients. It also emphasizes the importance of cultural relevance in flavour profiles, aligning new creations with familiar tastes that resonate with local diners. Through Aizawa and his students, Obana learns to accept and shift towards a more accessible and locally resonant cuisine.

In another scene, when Obana notices Amelie has no friends at school due to her foreign outlook, he volunteers to make her bento behind Aizawa's back (E03S9, 13:52, 16:21, 19:38, 40:54–41:45). The bento he prepares are Kyaraben (character bento), which helps Amelie become popular at school and more cheerful. In Japanese culture, bento signifies a way of communicating that includes direct engagements between the maker and the one receiving, and indirect messages uncovered by observation (Occhi, 2016). This action adds depth to Obana's character, showing him as attentive and considerate (Batty, 2016).

In Episode 5, when Shohei is about to confess his wrongdoings in relation to the allergy incident, Obana stops him and offers a meal. This moment of vulnerability is met with Obana's decision to cook a staff meal, a powerful non-verbal form of communication (Bruno, 2016; Cramer et al., 2011). Obana prepares the same dish Shohei made three years ago, showing a deep understanding and connection to Shohei's culinary journey (E05S16, 38:21–42:30), highlighting how food can convey complex emotions and support (Chang, 2015).

Obana: "You don't need to say anything, but you must never give up on French cooking." (E05S16, 38:21–42:30)

This remark conveys a profound expression of forgiveness and encouragement, implying that actions and continued passion are more important than words in culinary arts (Jacob, 2022).

In Episode 8, Obana's mentor, Ushio, comments on Obana's obsession with Michelin stars:

Ushio: "You only have eyes for Michelin stars and lost sight of what's important." (E08S3, 07:35–11:41)

When Ushio is hospitalised, Obana helps operate his restaurant and learns the importance of customising dishes for individual customers, akin to a mother's cooking (E08S6, 25:35-27:10).

This experience leads Obana to recall Ushio's culinary wisdom that one should always be thinking of his customers when one cooks:

Obana: "I've been too obsessed with Michelin stars; I forgot what you told me." (E08S9, 36:46–38:25)

This dialogue underscores the idea that food is not just about achieving prestige but about maintaining a connection with the foundational values of cooking. The Japanese emphasis on honouring one's roots and focusing on customer satisfaction is evident in Ushio's teachings,

which underscore respect, and dedication in the culinary arts (Allison, 2018; Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000; Ohnuki-Tierney, 2004).

Obana's struggle with the pressure of achieving Michelin stars and his subsequent realisation of the joy of cooking represents a journey of self-discovery. His admission of losing sight of why he cooked highlights the intense pressure chefs face and the necessity of rediscovering their original motivations (E08; 41:20-42:35). The mention of *Oishin-bo*, a gourmand comic (see Chapter 2, "Literature Review", p. 29), symbolises Obana's reconnection with his culinary passion and roots (E08S10, 40:25–40:40). Through his interactions and experiences, he learns that food is a medium through which he can express his authentic self and reconnect with his passion (Baron, 2006; Batty, 2016).

4.2.1.2 The Unconfident Chef and Her Michelin Dream

Rinko, the female lead of *Grand Maison Tokyo*, is introduced during an interview at a prestigious three-Michelin-star restaurant in Paris. In the interview, Rinko was questioned about her fixation on Michelin stars. She explained that for a French chef who aspires to continually create new and delicious dishes, aiming for Michelin stars is essential. She noted that everyone judges taste differently, in order to identify the best dishes, an objective standard is necessary. Rinko emphasized that, in the restaurant world, Michelin is the most well-known and trusted standard. Therefore, she felt that she could only challenge herself by striving for a Michelin star and requested to be tested on this basis (E01S7, 05:01–08:35).

Rinko's dialogue about Michelin stars reflects her identity and desire for external validation.

This emphasis on Michelin stars highlights the blend of Japanese culinary aspirations within the French gastronomic framework. Despite her initial failure in the trial, Rinko's journey showcases her relentless pursuit of excellence and her intense focus on Michelin recognition.

In a conversation with Obana, Rinko's detailed description of her culinary abilities and persistent efforts to achieve a Michelin star convey her deep passion for cooking (E01S10, 13:18–14:55). She shares her struggles, including her mother's death and the closure of her restaurant, which underscores the personal sacrifices and emotional challenges she faces (E01S16, 21:01–23:20). Food thus becomes a medium through which Rinko's personal narrative and emotional depth are communicated (Bradley, 2016).

Rinko's experience with Obana's tenaga ebi dish serves as a moment of epiphany. Her ability to discern ingredients and techniques signifies her expertise, yet her realization that talent, not just effort, is crucial for achieving Michelin recognition marks a significant turning point in her self-awareness (E01S16, 21:01–23:20). This moment is not merely sensory but an internal communication, revealing her limitations and potential.

After learning about Rinko's thoughts, Obana invites Rinko to open a restaurant in Japan and promises they will obtain three Michelin stars together. He uses food to express hope, partnership, and a shared dream. Food here becomes the language through which they bridge their aspirations into a common goal, suggesting that culinary excellence and personal fulfilment can be co-created (Jacob, 2022).

Rinko: “You can’t do battle on an empty stomach. Come, let’s eat. This is my mother’s signature dish.” (E02S19, 46:27–48:20)

In Episode 2, Rinko uses her mother’s signature dish to create a sense of comfort and reassurance. Offering the Soboro-Don (Ground chicken and egg rice bowl) with pickles to Obana before an important event is a gesture of care and support, communicating love, tradition, and emotional bonding (Matsuoka, 2022). By highlighting that the dish is her mother’s recipe, Rinko not only preserves family tradition and showcases the continuity of cultural practices but also takes on a nurturing role for Obana. In this context, food becomes a vessel for emotional support, cultural stories, and familial history.

In Episode 3, Rinko’s initial breakdown and subsequent conversation with Kyono highlight the intense dedication required in the culinary world (E03S11, 20:55–23:35). Her work with Obana and Aizawa teaches her that food preparation is more than a technical skill, it is an expression of dedication and conviction. The chefs’ pursuit of excellence and the emotional journey of striving for Michelin stars communicate their inner drive and passion. Kyono’s encouragement in saying that “a chef who has no confidence in herself will never get a Michelin star” (E03S11, 20:55–23:35) and Rinko’s determination to work harder demonstrate her personal growth and resilience.

Rinko: “I believe that delicious food can only be created when everyone works together and contributes their ideas ... anyone who can’t bring happiness to his family or coworkers will also not bring happiness to customers.” (E03S18, 42:52–43:55)

Rinko's acknowledgement of Aizawa's need to pick up his daughter challenges the traditional notion that chefs must sacrifice their personal lives for their careers. She advocates for a balanced approach where personal happiness and professional success are not mutually exclusive. Rinko believes that the best dishes emerge from a collaborative environment, highlighting the interconnectedness of personal well-being and professional performance.

Rinko: "It will not be for the sake of being awarded Michelin stars. It will be for our customers' sake. We will treat every customer with sincerity as we always do and provide our best food and service. ... Continuing to do the things that people expect of us is actually the most difficult, isn't it?" (E08S2, 43:22–45:00)

In Episode 8, after learning a valuable lesson on customer satisfaction from Obana's mentor, Ushio, Rinko's motivation for achieving Michelin stars evolves significantly. After Grand Maison Tokyo is ranked the 10th best restaurant in the world, she emphasizes the importance of treating every customer with sincerity and providing the best food and service. This dedication to genuine and heartfelt communication through culinary experiences reflects an ethos in which food becomes a vessel for expressing true care and respect for customers. Rinko's refusal to make superficial changes solely to gain Michelin stars, such as using expensive ingredients or trendy presentations, marks her commitment to authenticity. The food at Grand Maison Tokyo is a genuine expression of the chefs' skills, values, and cultural heritage rather than a contrived effort to impress critics. This philosophy ensures a consistent and reliable representation of the restaurant's commitment to quality.

Rinko: “I’ve changed since then and since I opened this restaurant. . . . I’ll use my dish to decide our success or defeat.” (E11S14, 52:10–54:00)

In the final episode, food is portrayed as an extension of the chef’s identity and self-belief. Rinko’s decision to serve her grouper dish despite Obana’s doubts underlines her growth and confidence as a chef. Obana’s ultimate respect for Rinko’s dish, roast grouper and hoisette anchois (hazelnuts and anchovy), signifies that true culinary excellence requires faith in one’s creations and the courage to present them under pressure, representing her culinary journey from failure to success. Rinko’s grouper dish, which almost moved Obana to tears, symbolizes the emotional power of food. A well-crafted dish transcends sustenance to become an emotionally resonant experience, communicating respect, admiration, and recognition between chefs and diners.

During the Michelin ceremony, Shohei’s recount of Obana’s parting words to Rinko emphasizes the importance of confidence and belief in one’s culinary vision (E11S15, 56:40–59:30). Obana’s departure was strategic to ensure Rinko’s independence and self-reliance, reinforcing the idea that personal faith in one’s culinary art is crucial for true excellence.

Rinko: “Food has the power to move and inspire people.” (E11S16, 1:05:25)

Rinko’s speech at the Michelin ceremony encapsulates the overarching theme of food as a universal language (E11S16, 1:05:25). She likens chefs to artists, politicians, and healers, underlining that food can inspire, bring happiness, and offer salvation. Each dish carries a message capable of transcending cultural and linguistic barriers to touch people’s lives globally. This perspective marks the power of food to communicate and connect on an emotional and cultural level, turning dining into a profound, universal experience (MacGovern, 2021).

4.2.2 Talent and Limitation

“When it comes to cooking, a person without talent can spend his whole life working hard and still not be successful, while a talented person can immediately create something delicious.”

Matsui (E04S1, 06:32–8:00)

4.2.2.1 Mont Blanc and The Arrogant Pastry Chef

In Episode 4, Matsui first asserts her belief in innate talent over hard work, illustrating a significant aspect of her character:

Matsui: “I have that talent. I can make a better dessert than anyone in this room can.”

(E04S1, 06:32–8:00)

This statement portrays Matsui as confident and somewhat arrogant, suggesting her conviction that exceptional culinary ability results from natural talent rather than relentless effort (Hamilton, 2014, p. 126). Matsui’s assertion that her desserts are superior because of her innate abilities sets the stage for a thematic exploration of talent versus hard work.

Obana: “But ... not everyone has that kind of talent. So, chefs all over the world continue to pour their heart and soul into their cooking.” (E04S1, 06:32–8:00)

In contrast, Obana values the importance of passion and dedication in the culinary arts, his response affirms his belief that while talent is significant, the dedication and emotional investment chefs put into their cooking are equally vital. This dialogue sets up a philosophical debate on what constitutes culinary excellence: natural talent or persistent effort (Baron, 2016; Parasecoli, 2015).

The narrative further develops this theme through a team challenge, where Matsui is tasked with creating a superior Mont Blanc dessert. Her failure to meet the team's expectations due to her personal pride is evident in the following exchange:

Matsui: "What's wrong with this perfect Mont Blanc?"

Obana: "If you're just looking to satisfy yourself, then go and open your own restaurant."

(E04S2, 08:27-10:21)

This dialogue contrasts personal satisfaction with professional standards, pinpointing that culinary creation must align with the restaurant's ethos. Obana's critique of Matsui's dessert continues as he remarked that while the dessert appeared visually appealing, he found the liqueur overpowering and the overall taste only average. He further noted that despite the opportunity to utilize whole chestnuts, the natural flavour and fragrance of the chestnuts were absent, which he identified as the dish's critical flaw (E04S2, 08:27–10:21). By mentioning the importance of preserving ingredients' natural flavours and respect for ingredient integrity reflects a core element in Japanese culinary philosophies (Allison, 2018; Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000; Prusinski, 2012). Rinko further emphasizes the restaurant's culinary principle, "Grand Maison Tokyo's specialty is showcasing Japanese ingredients' natural deliciousness in our dishes. That doesn't belong on our menu" (E04S2, 08:27–10:21), distinguishing the restaurant's culinary approach from Matsui's.

Afterward, the team gave Matsui a second chance to present a new Mont Blanc recipe, during which Shohei, a former apprentice of Obana, provided a crucial mentorship moment (E04S4, 12:45–13:40). Shohei's guidance marked the significance of each dish within the full-course menu, reflecting the cultural values inherent in French culinary traditions (Chevallier, 2020). His

mentorship helped Matsui appreciate the collective effort and dedication required to create the restaurant's menu, prompting her to engage in meaningful self-reflection. Ultimately, Matsui's character arc culminates in a moment of humility and growth:

Matsui: "I was too arrogant about my talent. I'm sorry. I still want to continue learning; I want to work harder. So, please let me work here!" (E04S11, 39:05–41:15)

Matsui's admission of her arrogance and her desire to learn and work harder illustrate how food can foster personal development and growth (Batty, 2016). Through these experiences, Matsui learns the value of humility, teamwork, and the importance of continuous improvement in the culinary arts.

4.2.2.2 The Restaurant Manager and His Signature Dish

In contrast, Kyono's storyline in *Grand Maison Tokyo* is particularly impactful, stressing the complex professional journey and identity struggles chefs face, and setting this storyline against the backdrop of high culinary standards inherent in Japanese and French traditions. Initially starting his career as a chef, Kyono eventually transitions to a front-of-house role. In Episode 1, when Rinko inquires about his decision to stop working as a chef, Kyono's explanation pointed out a central theme: while talent varies among individuals, hard work remains indispensable (E01S27, 46:33–47:19). Kyono's self-awareness about his limitations led him to abandon his culinary aspirations, finding a way to remain connected to the food industry by transitioning to the front of the house, where he eventually became a manager.

In Episode 10, upon learning that Shohei intends to give up cooking after confessing to being responsible for the nut-allergy incident, Kyono invites him for a meal with the team, marking the

only instance in the series where Kyono cooks. He presents his best dish, Honshu venison pie (E10S2, 04:40–09:55). Here, Kyono uses his dish to communicate his deepest efforts and passion. His exchange with Shohei transcends a simple request for validation, seeking instead an emotional connection.

Kyono: “I was aware of my limited talent, so I gave up on being a chef. I can’t make dishes that will change the world, that’s why I decided to work at my current job, so that I could at least bring great food to customers. ... You have a special talent that others do not have. Why are you choosing to give this up? This kind of behaviour is unacceptable to those of us who had to give up our dreams of being chefs!” (E10S2, 04:40–09:55)

Kyono’s confrontation with Shohei is not just about the taste of the dish but a demand for genuine, heartfelt feedback. He acknowledges Shohei’s unique ability to evoke emotions through cooking, asserting the profound emotional impact food can have. Despite his enduring passion, Kyono’s decision to cease being a chef illustrates his sacrifice and the deep connection between his identity and culinary arts. The food here symbolises Kyono’s unfulfilled dreams, and Shohei’s potential abandonment of his talent feels like a betrayal to those compelled to relinquish their culinary aspirations.

During that time, Obana’s commentary adds depth to the emotional scene. He remarked that the dish was still as bad as ever but insisted that everyone should eat it. He reminded them that when Kyono quit being a chef and put away his precious knives, he swore he would never cook for anyone again. However, Kyono had cooked for them that day, and if they did not eat it now, they would never get another chance to experience Kyono’s cooking again (E10S2, 04:40–09:55). Obana addressed that consuming Kyono’s food is a symbolic gesture of respect and closure,

representing a rare and final form of communication from Kyono to his colleagues through his cooking. Kyono's moment encapsulates the themes of dedication, sacrifice, and the enduring emotional resonance of culinary expression.

4.2.3 Redemption and Resilience

“Our job isn't a simple one, restaurants that copy others' recipes are everywhere. But if you want to be awarded three stars, you've got to rely on yourself to come up with original dishes. Serita, which one do you want to be? What type of chef do you want to become? It's up to you.”

Obana (E06S18, 35:09–39:35)

4.2.3.1 Fried Rice and The Impulsive Apprentice

In Episode 6, Serita volunteers to prepare the staff meal, offering “Parapara” fried rice made with 5mm diced vegetables. This choice reflects his dedication to improving his knife skills, having practised cutting 5mm vegetables ever since Obana gifted him a paring knife, symbolising offers of mentorship (E02S21, 58:10–58:19). His initiative to cook demonstrates his desire to contribute and be acknowledged by his peers. However, the feedback he received was not what he expected, including “This is bad”, “If you use a newly sharpened knife to cut ingredients, they will have a metallic taste”, and “Our job is physically demanding. Do you think we'd want to eat a meal with only rice and vegetables?” (E06S7, 15:00–16:48).

The immediate negative feedback from his peers indicates the high expectations and critical environment in the kitchen (Allison, 2018). It is not solely about the food quality but also about

maintaining and communicating standards and expectations within the team. The critique served as a tool for professional growth and upholding the culinary excellence they strive for.

Later, Kyono takes Serita to an Izakaya, a traditional Japanese bistro, to console him. This choice of venue is significant as it represents a comfortable and familiar space for Serita to relax and open up. The informal and relaxed setting of the izakaya contrasts with the formal and high-pressure environment at work, providing a space for console and encouragement:

Kyono: “Nobody knows right at the start whether they’re talented or not. Everyone who works hard at cooking will not know for sure if they’re talented to begin with. But the more you work hard and hone your skills, the more you’ll realise your talent.” (E06S8, 17:05–18:45)

Kyono’s guidance emphasizes the value of effort and personal growth, a theme common in Japanese beliefs (Davies, 2016). As a result, Serita decides to work part-time at the fish market to gain a deeper understanding of food (E06S11, 23:53–24:05). His attempt to help fillet the fish for his peers shows his eagerness to communicate and express his skills. Despite this, when Serita offers to assist Aizawa, he is rejected. Ignoring his peers’ warnings, he proudly debones the fish with the same knife he used for cutting burdock, leading to another confrontation which stresses the importance of respecting authority and safety in the kitchen.

Following Serita’s resignation, he is approached by Eto (the owner of a two-Michelin-star restaurant, Gaku) for the recipe for the seafood dish developed by the team at Grand Maison Tokyo. Serita is later invited to dine at Grand Maison Tokyo as a customer. Kyono asks Serita how the food is, to which Serita replies that it is very delicious and somehow seems even more

delicious than usual. Kyono explains that while he tries all new dishes when they test new recipes, they are different from the ones served to customers. He adds that in every dish served to customers, there is a bit of the chef's soul, and that is why a good dish gets even better when customers are there to enjoy it (E06S17, 32:15–33:05). Kyono's explanation addressed how food is a form of self-expression for chefs (Bradley, 2016; Jacob, 2022).

After dinner, Obana explains that he cannot accept Serita's money because the dish he was served was not intended for customers. Serita comments that the roast sawara had a fishy taste compared to the trial dishes. Rinko acknowledges Serita's observation and reveals that the fillet used for his plate was one that Serita had cut. Aizawa then explains that cutting fish with a knife previously used for bitter vegetables can transfer the taste and degrade the fish's flavour, advising Serita to remember this lesson (E06S18, 35:09–39:35). Through the fishy sawara, Serita learns the importance of attention to detail, and the impact of his actions on the dish served to customers.

After that, Serita admits his betrayal to the team. Obana then expresses his frustration, affirming their hard work and asserted that others could not simply copy a recipe they had worked so hard to create. He adds that, at their level of cooking, it was not just about following a recipe. The quality of the procured sawara influenced how it should be cooked; the aging duration and oven temperature had to be adjusted based on the temperature and humidity on the day of preparation.

Obana stressed that none of their dishes could be easily copied by others. Their job was not simple. He noted that restaurants copying others' recipes were everywhere, but to be awarded

three stars, one had to rely on creating original dishes. He posed a question to Serita, asking what type of chef he wanted to become and emphasizing that it was up to him (E06S18, 35:09-39:35). In the end, Serita asks for another chance to prepare a staff meal for the team. This time, everyone is pleased and finishes their plates, unlike the first time when they only took one bite. The team appreciates Serita's efforts and acknowledges his dedication to improving his skills, emphasizing the value of communication through food, which concludes Serita's growth from initially betraying his team to seeking redemption through hard work and humility.

4.2.3.2 The Talented Chef and His Guilt

Shohei was Obana's apprentice at Escoffile three years ago. After the allergy incident, he relocated back to Japan and became a head chef at a hotel. Despite his aloof attitude toward Obana when they met again, Shohei was a secret guardian angel of the team at Grand Maison Tokyo. He not only facilitated the team's funding by appealing to his girlfriend's father, but also secured fresh deer thigh when premium ones were all bought by Gaku, a rival restaurant, during the game meat competition. All this paved the way for him from seeking redemption from past mistake to ultimately reaffirming his commitment to cooking, this journey is marked by his interactions with food.

Obana's encouragement, such as saying that "you don't need to say anything, but you must never give up on French cooking" (E05S16, 38:21-42:30), and praise from others, like Tango's "Shohei, your cooking is amazing!" (E09S12, 44:36-45:05) and Kyono's "Hirako Shohei's cooking has the power to stir up emotions" (E10S2, 04:40-09:55), underline Shohei's talent and the significance of food in expressing and validating his skills and passion. These interactions

highlight the power of food to facilitate emotional healing and illustrate the transformative journey of Shohei as a chef.

In Episode 10, Shohei's confession about his mistake with the peanut oil three years ago is pivotal. His fear of admitting the mistake underscores the high stakes in the culinary industry, where a single error can jeopardize a chef's career. This moment of truth marks a turning point for Shohei, illustrating how coming clean, even after a long delay, is essential for personal redemption and rebuilding trust within the team. His admission, "I was scared. If I told the truth, I might never be able to cook again" (E10S1, 01:21–04:39), reflects the profound connection between food, personal integrity, and professional ethics in the culinary world.

The dialogue between Shohei and Obana further explores this theme. When Shohei groans, "Then what should I do?! There's nothing else I can do!", Obana responds, "I said, 'you are nowhere near being able to take sole responsibility for this,' didn't I?" Rinko adds, "That's precisely why you need everyone in this restaurant, right?" (E10S15, 58:50–1:01:00). This exchange, along with Kyono and Aizawa's descriptions of the dining experience, affirms the collaborative nature of high-end culinary arts. Each team member's role, from the calm and collected wait staff to the creative chefs and the sommelier, contributes to the overall dining experience, demonstrating how food acts as a unifying force, fostering teamwork and shared goals (Poole, 1993).

After Shohei's Kijibato demi en croûte (squab in a crust) dish was served to Linda for feedback on whether it was worthy of three Michelin stars, Linda remarked, "No, ... Michelin stars are

awarded to the restaurant and not decided based on the merit of a single dish” (E10S14, 52:04–57:40). Obana’s insistence that Shohei’s dish did not meet Linda’s standards, despite its technical merits, asserts the importance of collective effort and mutual support in achieving excellence (E10S15, 58:50–1:01:00). The narrative shows how food and cooking are central to building and solidifying the team at Grand Maison Tokyo. Obana’s assertion, “As long as all of us work together... We will definitely obtain three Michelin stars. Don’t sweat the small stuff. This is the kind of team we are,” coupled with Shohei’s heartfelt response, “I want to join you. I want to join this restaurant. I want to join Grand Maison Tokyo and Obana and all of you, I want to cook together with you!” (E10S15, 58:50–1:01:00), encapsulates Shohei’s personal and professional growth.

Shohei’s journey from contemplating resignation to earnestly wanting to stay and contribute to the team reflects his willingness to learn from criticism and his desire to improve. This growth mirrors the rigorous self-improvement ethos prevalent in high-end culinary arts. The support from his colleagues, combined with their shared commitment to achieving three Michelin stars, illustrates how food-related challenges can drive personal development and strengthen professional bonds.

4.2.4 Love and Passion

“When I tried that dish, I was very touched. The chef of this restaurant doesn’t view wine as just an accessory to dishes. But instead, creates dishes to complement wines. When I realized that a chef like this existed, I was really moved...”

Kuzumi (E09S10, 35:05–40:11)

4.2.4.1 The Return of the Resentful Wife

In episode 7, Elise, the wife of Aizawa, returns and demands to take their daughter Amelie back to Paris. Elise had left Aizawa and Amelie three years prior to the allergy incident. She finds out that Aizawa was working with Obana again and the reason behind it is their quest for three Michelin stars (E07S1, 02:57–06:30).

Food, particularly the quest for Michelin stars, symbolizes the characters' ambitions and their pursuit of excellence. Obana and Aizawa's relentless drive to achieve three Michelin stars is not just about culinary perfection but also their desire to prove themselves and redeem past failures. However, food also serves as a medium through which to explore the personal sacrifices made by the characters. The high standards and demands of achieving three Michelin stars often come at a significant personal cost.

Elise: "A chef who is aiming for three stars can't possibly have time for both his children and his work, right?" (E07S1, 02:57–06:30)

The line from Elise underscores the central conflict between professional ambition and personal life. It suggests that pursuing culinary excellence can lead to strained personal relationships and neglected familial responsibilities.

In the scene where Obana prepares dinner, food acts as a bridge between characters, facilitating intimate and meaningful conversations. Deep-fried tofu with Gruyère cheese is a creative fusion of Japanese and French culinary elements. The tofu, a staple in Japanese cuisine, represents simplicity and tradition (Ohyama, 2013), while Gruyère cheese is a hallmark of French

gastronomy (Produits Laitiers de France, 2016). This combination on the plate mirrors the blending of cultures and highlights the emotional complexities in the characters' relationships.

The presence of red wine, often used to accompany deep, thoughtful conversations, sets the tone for the following dialogue.

Elise: "At the start, he'd make me dishes to go with wine every night. We'd stay up all night talking about silly things. But because they were relentlessly chasing after those three stars, it was really tough for everyone. I hate Michelin. Chefs were pouring their blood, sweat, and tears, all for the sake of getting three stars." (E07S2, 08:00–10:13)

The detailed description of their initial bond over meals contrasts sharply with the later bitterness caused by the relentless pursuit of perfection, underlining the tension between personal and professional life. Food, in this context, symbolizes both the bond and the strain in their relationship.

Later in the episode, Amelie has a fever and wonders where her mother is. She refuses to eat anything, not even her favourite raspberry jelly that Obana made. Rinko comes to Aizawa's home and delivers the rice pudding that Elise made, Amelie eats it without hesitation.

Rinko: "Nothing beats the taste of your mother's cooking." (E07S6, 18:11–20:25)

The simple, homey dish, rice pudding, represents a mother's love and care (Pratiwi & Marfathonah, 2023). Despite its imperfections, it is what Amelie craves when unwell, emphasizing the irreplaceable emotional comfort of a mother's cooking. Compared to Obana's precise and technically perfect raspberry jelly, this dish underscores the emotional depth and simplicity of home-cooked food.

Obana: “A good chef is one who knows his customers’ preferences inside out.” (E07S8, 22:54–24:45)

As Aizawa and Obana develop a special dish for Elise, Aizawa’s insistence on adding more salt to suit Elise’s taste reflects his intimate knowledge of her preferences, demonstrating how food can be personalized and tailored to communicate understanding and care.

The creation of the Galette champignons (mushroom galette) by Aizawa and Obana is a dish made explicitly for Elise as an attempt to bridge personal gaps, showcasing the chefs’ dedication and creativity. When the dish was presented to Elise, Elise took a bite but then dropped it. Kyono noticed and asked if something was wrong. Elise responded that every dish was delicious, which was precisely what she hated. She questioned how much Aizawa had put himself through to create such delicious dishes, suggesting that he must have worked even harder than he did in the past, sacrificed more sleep, and had less time for Amelie. She concluded by stating that she could not leave Amelie with someone like him because of this (E07S9, 25:00–35:05). Elise’s reaction to the dish highlights the personal cost of such professional pursuits, questioning the worth of the sacrifices made for culinary perfection.

After that, Obana presented the final dish of the day, a raspberry jelly, to Elise. He explained that it was made by Amelie, specifically for Elise. When Elise asked if Obana had requested Amelie to make it, he clarified that Amelie had actually asked him to teach her how to make the dessert. Amelie hoped Elise would return and wanted to give her a special gift, putting significant effort into creating it on her own (E07S9, 25:00–35:05).

When Obana explains that Amelie made the raspberry jelly specifically for Elise, it reinforces the idea that food can be a heartfelt gift, encapsulating the giver's emotions and intentions. The raspberry jelly made by Amelie is a poignant example of food being used to communicate love and longing. Despite her young age, Amelie's effort in learning and preparing this dessert signifies her desire to connect with Elise and express her feelings through her culinary creation.

In the end, as the team says farewell to Elise and Amelie, Elise reflects on the past and expresses her mixed feelings about Aizawa's pursuit of Michelin stars.

Elise: "I still don't understand why all this hard work is worth it. But this time, you must achieve your goal. Let that man have his wish, his three stars. Although you didn't manage to get a ranking higher than 10th place this time. I can say for certain that Grand Maison Tokyo's food is better than Escoffile." (E07S10, 39:35–42:10)

Elise's speech conveys a mix of admiration, frustration, and hope. She recognizes Obana's talent and the quality of his food, yet she is burdened by the emotional strain of his relentless pursuit of perfection. Despite not achieving a higher rank, Elise's assertion that "Grand Maison Tokyo's food is better than Escoffile" is a testament to the restaurant's quality and the successful integration of Japanese and French culinary elements. This acknowledgement shows that the value of their culinary creation transcends rankings and external validation.

4.2.4.2 The Revengeful Sommelier and Her Passion in Wine

Kuzumi's initial motivation for joining Grand Maison Tokyo stems from a desire for revenge due to a nut-allergy scandal that affected her three years prior. Her intention to sabotage the

restaurant reveals a deep personal vendetta. However, her journey at the restaurant, particularly her interactions with Obana and Rinko, lead to a significant transformation.

The dialogue between Rinko, Obana, and Kuzumi in Episode 9 emphasizes the critical role of wine in the dining experience. Rinko highlights the importance of wine pairings, stating, “A restaurant’s wine pairings should complement the flavours of the food, but they might also diminish the flavours, so wine choices are very important” (E09S4, 09:15–11:32). This underlines the delicate balance in pairing wine with food to enhance the overall dining experience (Harrington, 2005).

Obana adds, “A wine that is favoured by chefs is one that immediately conjures the image of the dish at the first sip” (E09S4, 09:15–11:32). This statement encapsulates the symbiotic relationship between food and wine, where the taste of one should evoke the essence of the other. The practice of carefully selecting wines to complement the dish’s flavours has a deep origin in French gastronomy and has substantially affected culinary traditions worldwide (Jeans, 2024).

Incorporating Satou Winery’s Brise 2013 (in reality, Grace Winery’s Koshu 2013 from Yamanashi, Japan) into the narrative is a brilliant method to showcase Japanese wine. Kuzumi’s description of the wine, “It has refreshing notes of acidity with some lingering sweetness. It’s uplifting and tasty” (E09S4, 09:15–11:32), illustrates its unique characteristics and aligns with the episode’s theme of celebrating local wines.

The norovirus scare in the restaurant introduces a crisis that tests the integrity and commitment of the staff. Kuzumi's suspicious behaviour leads to accusations, but the team prioritises health and safety by temporarily closing the restaurant for thorough cleaning and inspection. This incident also reveals the potential dangers in the culinary industry, as Aizawa poignantly remarks, "Food can be beautiful and delicious, but it has a scary side too" (E09S6, 15:14–20:15).

Obana's request for Kuzumi to give a tour of Satou Winery further illuminates her deep passion for wine. Kuzumi's enthusiasm is evident when she says, "From now on, local wines will become more and more prominent on the international stage. I want to contribute to that" (E09S7, 21:35–23:45). This passion underscores her dedication to the field and her desire to elevate Japanese wines globally.

Kuzumi's admission of her initial intent to sabotage the restaurant reveals her internal conflict between personal revenge and professional respect for culinary excellence. Her expertise is affirmed in her critique of Obana's appetiser, Cod shirako poche (poached cod milt): "The shirako is too overpowering. The wine's delicate flavour is washed out" (E09S9, 32:50:35:00). Her suggestions for improvement demonstrate her profound knowledge and skill as a sommelier.

After all, Kuzumi's detailed description of the wine and dish pairing illustrates how food and wine can create a profound emotional impact (Danner et al., 2014; Desmet & Schifferstein, 2008). Her reflection on a memorable dish at Escoffile, "2008 Bon Ange, made with new wine barrels, a seafood and comté choux salés. ... When I tried that dish, I was very touched" (E09S10, 35:05–40:11), emphasizes the powerful sensory and emotional experiences that well-

executed pairings can bring out. This dialogue reinforces the notion of food and wine as mediums of artistic expression and sophisticated communication.

Despite her intentions, Obana's recognition of Kuzumi's passion for food is a testament to the mutual respect among culinary professionals. He acknowledges her expertise and passion, stating, "But you didn't do it, right? Because you didn't want to contaminate exquisite dishes with something dirty. Kuzumi, your passion for food is just as great as ours" (E09S10, 35:05–40:11).

This episode of *Grand Maison Tokyo* masterfully articulates the integration of food and wine as a sophisticated and emotionally resonant experience. Kuzumi's journey from seeking revenge to rediscovering her passion for wine and food illustrates the transformative power of culinary arts. The narrative celebrates the harmony of Japanese wine and French culinary traditions and portrays food and wine as universal languages that foster understanding, respect, and emotional connection.

4.2.5 Discussion

The findings from *Grand Maison Tokyo* underscore the multifaceted role of food as a mode of communication and expression, aligning with the literature that positions food as a symbolic representation of identity, place, status, power, lifestyle, worldview, values, ideas, relationships, and emotions (Long, 2017). The series demonstrates that food symbolism extends beyond intellectual understanding to acquire emotional significance in the characters' lives.

4.2.5.1 Symbolic Role of Food

In *Grand Maison Tokyo*, food functions symbolically to communicate and express complex emotions and personal narratives, as Long (2017) and Bradley (2016) discuss. Characters such as Obana, Rinko, Matsui, Kyono, Serita, Shohei, Elise, and Kuzumi use food to navigate their personal and professional struggles, highlighting themes of “Struggle and Perseverance,” “Talent and Limitation,” “Redemption and Resilience,” and “Love and Passion.”

Table 2: Semiotic Analysis of Key Themes

Key Themes	Character Arc (Signified)	Food (Signifier)	Development (Sign)
Struggle and Perseverance	Obana’s Struggle and Resilience	Character Bento (E03S9, 40:54–41:45) Roast Honshu deer thigh meat with consommé (E03S14, 32:30–33:54) European-style game curry (E05S8, 12:12–13:25) Deep-fried tofu with spring onions (E07S2, 08:00–10:13) Classic French-style beef stew (E08S8, 35:17-36:40)	Initially stubborn, Obana learns resilience through his culinary journey, reflecting his deep emotional connection to cooking.
	Rinko’s Perseverance and Self-Belief	Tenaga ebi l’ <i>étuvée</i> (E01S28, 56:38) Foie gras poele (E01S10, 13:18-14:55)	Rinko transforms from an unconfident chef to one who trusts her abilities, using food to

		Soboro rice bowl (E02S19, 46:27–48:20) Roast grouper and hoisette anchois (E11S14, 52:10–54:00)	assert her personal and culinary identity.
Talent and Limitation	Matsui’s Arrogance and Humility	Mont Blanc à ma façon (E04S10, 35:35–37:20) Cremet d’Anjou (E11S8, 16:15–20:20)	Matsui’s growth from arrogance to humility is mirrored in her attitude towards food and her evolving culinary style.
	Kyono’s Sacrifice and Realization	Honshu venison pie (E10S2, 04:40–09:55)	Kyono sacrifices his dream of being a chef to find his true calling of being a restaurant manager, with food symbolizing his journey.
Redemption and Resilience	Serita’s Realization and Recognition	“Parapara” fried rice made with 5mm veggies (E06S7, 15:00– 16:48) Roast sawara with crystal pomelo sauce (E06S18, 35:09–39:35)	Serita’s transition from impulsiveness to recognition in the culinary world is marked by his persistence and hard work in cooking.
	Shohei’s Redemption and Growth	Chestnut and mushroom parmentier (E05S16, 38:21–42:30) Kijibato demi en croûte (E10S15, 58:50– 1:01:00)	Shohei faces his past mistakes through food, which acts as a medium for his personal growth.
	Elise’s Love and Compassion	Rice pudding (E07S6, 18:11–20:25) Galette champignons (E07S9, 25:00–35:05) Raspberry jelly (E07S9, 25:00–35:05)	In Elise’s love for her family and her lesson on compassion towards her husband’s Michelin dreams, food moves from being the blockage to a

Love and Passion			bridge in their relationship.
	Kuzumi's Vengeance and Reconciliation	Satou Winery's Brise 2013 (E09S7, 21:35–23:45) Cod shirako poche chaud-froid (E09S9, 32:50–35:00) Bon Ange 2008 (E09S10, 35:05–40:11)	Kuzumi's journey from seeking revenge to finding a community passionate about food is her emotional healing.

Through the character arcs in *Grand Maison Tokyo*, food transcends its role as mere visual appeal or background prop to become a powerful narrative device. It serves as a symbolic tool that elucidates aspects of the narrative, relationships, and character traits, as noted by Batty (2016), Hamilton (2014), and Bradley (2016), which profoundly supports the key themes identified in the series. Food drives the story forward, reflecting social constructions and hierarchies of power, and demonstrating that individuals form emotional attachments to food symbols that shape their personal narratives (Long, 2017).

4.2.5.2 The Semiotic Function of Food

Parasecoli's (2010) semiotic perspective contends that all cultural phenomena can be viewed as forms of communicative expression within a given society. Humans continuously engage in the semiotic process of interpreting and putting meaning to their surroundings. Cultures consequently comprise various communicative and social codes, with food serving as one such system. This code encompasses the diverse elements of edible substances, practices, beliefs, and

norms that are interconnected (Stajcic, 2013). Semiotic analysis aims to uncover the deeper, underlying significances inherent within food (Barthes, 1997; Pasini & Trimboli, 2023).

In *Grand Maison Tokyo*, food allows characters to create, convey, and exchange meanings: Obana recreates couscous à la maison for Kyono; Elise makes rice pudding for her daughter Amelie; Kyono serves his signature dish, and so on. This aligns with Jacob's (2022) assertion that food serves as a meta-language, conveying implicit messages and embodying the characters' journeys and development. The series demonstrates how food can encapsulate memories, express complex emotions, illustrate personal growth, and repair relationships where words might fall short (Cramer et al., 2011; Piatti-Farnell, 2017; Velasco et al., 2018). Recognizing the diverse functions of food in various contexts equips us with the analytical tools needed to delve deeper into food-related communicative interactions and uncover their true meanings, objectives, and strategies (Parasecoli, 2010).

4.2.5.3 Significance of Food in TV Drama Storytelling

The representation of food in TV dramas often serves as a powerful means of shaping and reflecting the personalities and identities of the characters. It is not only a visually appealing aspect of storytelling but also represents the characters' journeys, contributing to narratives that resonate with the audience (Batty, 2016). As a form of communication and a language of its own, food facilitates dialogue, sets the atmosphere, and conveys messages among characters, weaving stories that communicate personal struggles universally (Barthes, 1997). *Grand Maison Tokyo* embodies the power of TV drama to evoke emotional engagement among audiences through the use of food, similar to movies (Chang, 2015). One of the most compelling aspects of

TV drama is the recurring presence of characters week after week. This continuity allows viewers to glimpse into the characters' lives and understand their upbringing (Thorburn, 1976). Regular viewers then get immersed in the characters' experiences, seeing them form connections, overcome obstacles, and evolve. The most captivating TV characters exhibit growth and change, adding layers of depth to their transformations (Porter et al., 2002). The open-ended nature of TV drama series encourages continuous character development and portrayal, stimulating the viewer's imagination (Kim & Long, 2012). This process of acquiring an understanding of 'the other' through direct interaction or indirect narratives might result in new forms of cultural bonds and exchanges (Bondebjerg, 2016).

In *Grand Maison Tokyo*, the role of food becomes irreplaceable in both storytelling and character development since it is a story concerning people who are passionate about food: themes of identity, power dynamics, cultural nuances, socio-economic status, spirituality, and interpersonal relationships are effectively conveyed through culinary experiences (Bower, 2012).

4.2.5.4 Overall

Character development in a TV series occurs gradually from episode to episode. Many characters start as two-dimensional, but some develop into well-rounded, three-dimensional characters with rich histories, weaknesses, and distinct personality features (Porter et al., 2002). The continual progression and growth of intriguing characters, which occur predominantly in the second phase of the narrative, are among the most captivating elements in TV dramas.

Food in *Grand Maison Tokyo* serves as a powerful mode of communication and expression through semiotic and reflexive thematic analysis. It reflects the characters' struggles, growth, and emotional connections. Acting as a non-verbal code, food conveys emotions and meanings beyond verbal and visual cues (Bruno, 2016). It delivers impactful messages and embodies the characters' journeys. By engaging audiences on a profound level, food in the series transcends its role as a mere narrative device, becoming metaphorical life lessons that deeply resonate with viewers (Stalker, 2015). This portrayal underscores the cultural significance of food in expressing complex emotions and personal narratives, aligning with broader literature on food symbolism and communication (Batty, 2016; Jacob, 2022).

4.3 Integration of French and Japanese Cuisine

This study identifies two primary themes related to the integration of French and Japanese cuisine: "The Tasting Menu," examined through the four tasting menus presented in the series, and "Culinary Beliefs," identified through dialogues in the series. These are followed by a detailed discussion at the conclusion of the analysis.

4.3.1 Through the Tasting Menus

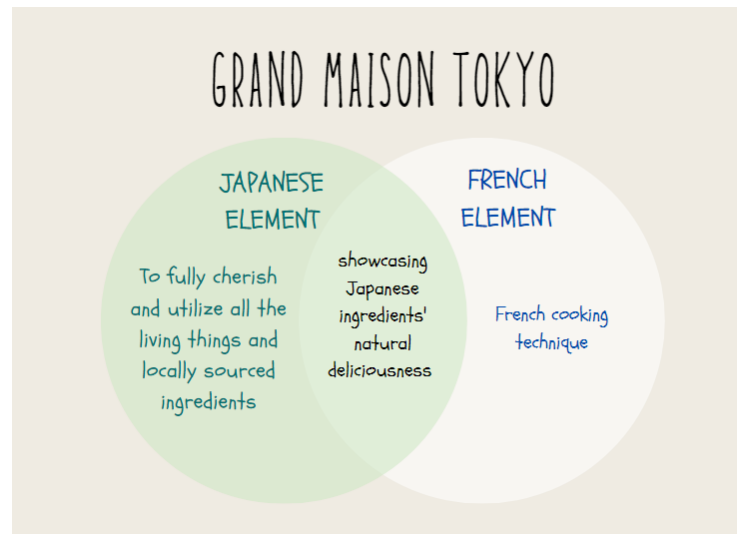
A tasting menu, also known as a degustation menu, is comprised of multiple, small-portioned dishes that are presented sequentially as a full dining experience. The term 'degustation' comes from French and refers to mindfully tasting various foods, emphasizing sensory enjoyment and culinary artistry (Kurtz, 2024). The primary distinction between a traditional menu and a tasting

menu is that the latter offers not just a meal, but a comprehensive dining experience (Kurtz, 2024).

Grand Maison Tokyo portrays the integration of Japanese food culture with French culinary traditions through nuanced and innovative tasting menus offered at the two French fine-dining restaurants, Gaku and Grand Maison Tokyo. Although both restaurants were aiming for three Michelin stars, the two restaurants had very different philosophies on the dishes they served, which showcases a blend of ingredients, techniques, and presentations from both cuisines. Therefore, in order to understand how *Grand Maison Tokyo* integrates French and Japanese cuisine in the series, a detailed analysis of the four tasting menus presented in the series has been carried out (refer to Appendix B).

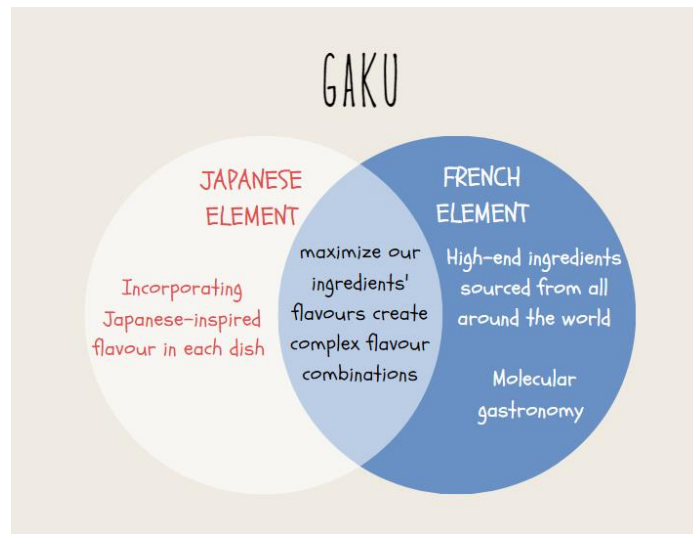
The contrast between the culinary philosophies of Grand Maison Tokyo and Gaku is identified in *Grand Maison Tokyo*. Both restaurants embody a distinct approach to Japanese and French culinary traditions, highlighting their unique perspectives on presenting and enhancing ingredients' natural flavours.

Figure 1: Culinary Philosophy of Grand Maison Tokyo



As stated in the series, “Grand Maison Tokyo’s specialty is showcasing Japanese ingredients’ natural deliciousness in our dishes” (E04S2, 08:27–10:21), and “We should fully cherish and utilize all the living things that we use for food and showcase their flavours” (E03S14, 32:30–33:54). The philosophy implies minimal intervention, allowing the natural tastes and textures of the ingredients to shine through, which aligns with the Japanese culinary tradition of respecting and highlighting the natural state of food.

Figure 2: Culinary Philosophy of Gaku



As for Gaku, according to Tango, “We won’t serve customers simple dishes with basic raw flavours. Our restaurant isn’t like yours. In order to maximize our ingredients’ flavours to the fullest extent, we process them thoroughly and combine them with our chefs’ inspiration and knowledge to create complex flavour combinations. That’s Gaku’s style of cooking” (E07S4, 14:50). Gaku’s approach involves significant culinary processing to extract and enhance the maximum potential of each ingredient, which includes techniques such as fermenting, brining, ageing, smoking, and drying, techniques that alter the original state of the ingredients (E07S4, 14:50). The focus on complex flavour combinations indicates that Gaku’s dishes are designed to provide a multi-layered taste experience, where different flavours interact dynamically.

As a result, Grand Maison Tokyo and Gaku represent two distinct culinary philosophies: one with a philosophy rooted in Japanese tradition that honours simplicity, purity and the natural flavours of ingredients with minimal intervention, and one that blends traditional and innovative techniques by leaning towards molecular gastronomy in seeking to produce sophisticated and

intricate dishes. This polarity not only highlights different approaches to cooking but also enriches the narrative of *Grand Maison Tokyo*, showcasing the diverse possibilities within the culinary arts.

4.3.2 Through Culinary Beliefs

French cuisine is the main focus of the series *Grand Maison Tokyo* but, because it is set in Japan, Japanese beliefs also play a big part; it is mentioned that “French cuisine started off as cooking for the royals; it favours theatrical plating and complicated techniques. But in Japan, ingredients are of high quality to begin with, Japanese cooking favours using simple techniques to showcase delicious ingredients” (E02S10, 22:57–24:01). The statement suggests three different aspects to the nature of the two cuisines: (1) French cuisine’s complexity contrasts with the simplicity of Japanese cooking where the former often involves multi-step processes and sophisticated techniques that require extensive training, while the latter employs straightforward methods to let the ingredients speak for themselves; (2) French dishes often prioritize visual appeal, with elaborate presentations that can resemble works of art, while Japanese cuisine, although also visually appealing, focuses on the natural beauty of the ingredients, arranging them in a way that emphasizes their innate qualities; (3) the emphasis in French cuisine on technique and preparation showcases the chef’s skill, whereas Japanese cuisine emphasizes the quality of the ingredients, showcasing the natural world’s bounty. *Grand Maison Tokyo* has profoundly illustrated both Japanese and French culinary culture within the series, as presented below.

4.3.2.1 On Japanese Beliefs

I. National Pride and Respect for Ingredients

“Japanese rice is still the best” (E01S22, 35:16–36:06) and “Japan’s fresh fish is world-famous” (E06S3, 05:05–06:25); these comments reflect a national pride in local produce and traditional practices. Rice is an intrinsic part of traditional Japanese cuisine; its cultural significance stems not only from its position as a staple but also from its significance as a symbol of Japanese identity, as observed by Ohnuki-Tierney (1993). The notion that “ingredients are of high quality to begin with” (E02S10, 22:57–24:01) and “Japanese cooking favours using simple techniques to showcase delicious ingredients” (E02S10, 22:57–24:01) indicates that Japanese cuisine prioritises the excellence and provenance of its ingredients, which in turn reflects a deep-seated cultural appreciation for the purity and inherent excellence of native produce (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000). This philosophy aligns with the broader cultural values of simplicity, respect for nature, and the idea of letting the natural flavours of ingredients shine through without excessive manipulation (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000).

This view is expressed by the game hunter in Episode 3, “I feel that it is important to respect the ingredients by making the best food possible out of them. We take the animals’ lives when we hunt (praying to deity). I will not give away the meat that I hunt to people who only come here to buy meat for their own convenience” (E03S7, 10:41–11:41). These comments encapsulate the Japanese principle of *Mottainai*, which conveys a sense of regret over waste and a commitment to making full use of resources. It is a centuries-old Japanese concept that encourages resource conservation and value while minimising waste (Sirola et al., 2019). Its name derives from ‘*mottai*’ (importance or holiness) and ‘*nai*’ (absence of something). Together, they make

the phrase “what a waste” or “don’t be wasteful” (Motley, 2024). Plus, praying to a deity before consuming meat signifies a spiritual and moral acknowledgement of the sacrifice, aligning with Shinto and Buddhist influences emphasizing respect for all living things (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000).

II. Creativity and Modern Preferences

“This is Japan. Also, most people tend to steer away from expensive ingredients. Times are changing” (E02S5, 12:32–15:38). This statement addresses the practicality and economic considerations in modern Japanese society. Japanese cuisine has thrived on making the most of available resources, often avoiding extravagance. The reference to changing times indicates an awareness of the evolving economic landscape and consumer preferences, emphasizing a shift towards more accessible and cost-effective culinary practices.

Along with the critique, “Even though you used truffle, it just lacks creativity; the combination of pasta and matcha is new and interesting; it suits Japanese taste buds” (E02S5, 12:32–15:38), these remarks speak to the evolving culinary landscape in Japan. While traditional Japanese cuisine is deeply rooted in simplicity and natural flavours, there is a growing appreciation for innovation and fusion (zenDine, 2023). This dialogue reflects a contemporary trend where younger generations and modern chefs seek to blend traditional flavours with new, creative combinations.

III. Hospitality and Cultural Roots

“Anyone who can’t bring happiness to his family or co-workers will also not bring happiness to customers” (E03S18, 42:52–43:55) and “As long as someone says ‘Welcome’ in the dining hall, all of us must reply with ‘Welcome’ and also when customers leave the restaurant” (E04S8, 22:11–23:57). These statements reflect the Japanese values of community, harmony, and exceptional hospitality known as *Omotenashi* (Kuraesin, 2021). This belief stresses the importance of creating a positive and welcoming environment for staff and customers (Toki, 2021). The practice of greeting customers collectively embodies the cultural emphasis on respect, collective responsibility, and the seamless integration of service with a personal touch (Ikeda, 2013). “I should never forget my roots, no matter where I may be. That I should always be thinking of my customers when I cook and that I should never forget it.” (E08S9, 36:46–38:25). These statements underscore the importance of cultural heritage and the connection to one’s origins in Japanese culinary philosophy (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000). The reminder to always think of customers and never forget one’s roots speaks to the enduring values of humility, dedication, and the pursuit of culinary excellence that honours cultural traditions (Kubota, 2003).

4.3.2.2 On French Beliefs

I. Pursuit of Excellence and Innovation

“If one wants to keep coming up with new and delicious creations as a French chef, of course one has to aim for Michelin stars! In the restaurant world, isn’t Michelin the most well-known and trusted standard?” (E01S7, 05:01–08:35). In the realm of French cuisine, the pursuit of Michelin stars is regarded as a paramount goal (Castillo-Manzano & Zarzoso, 2023). This

ambition reflects the broader French belief in striving for culinary excellence and innovation (Harrison et al., 2016). As highlighted in the dialogue, aiming for Michelin stars is seen as essential for a chef who wishes to continually create new and delicious dishes. This pursuit is not merely about recognition but about maintaining a standard of quality and creativity that is synonymous with the prestige of Michelin-starred establishments. The *Michelin Guide* is considered the most well-known and trusted standard in the restaurant world, reinforcing the belief that Michelin stars are a benchmark of culinary excellence (Bang et al., 2022). Obana's statement that "French cooking has unlimited possibilities" (E05S16, 38:21–42:30) reflects the dynamic and evolving nature of modern French cuisine (Durand et al., 2003). There is a recognition that innovation is a continuous process, with chefs constantly pushing the boundaries to create new culinary delights; this ongoing creativity ensures that French cuisine remains relevant and influential in the global culinary scene (Ferguson, 1998; Geyzen et al., 2019; Harrison et al., 2016). The reference to "the top 50 ranking as a precursor to Michelin" (E06S1, 03:01–03:20) further emphasizes the significance of accolades and recognition in French culinary culture. These rankings and awards are seen as influential indicators of a restaurant's quality and innovation, reinforcing the importance of striving for excellence and staying at the forefront of culinary trends.

II. Premium Ingredients and Cutting-Edge Dishes

French culinary culture focuses on the use of high-quality ingredients and the creation of innovative dishes (Ferguson, 2006). The belief that "we use premium ingredients, we serve only cutting-edge dishes" (E01S20, 33:41–34:27) suggests the importance of quality and innovation in French cuisine. This approach is rooted in the historical context of French cooking, which

originated as royal cuisine and has always favoured high-quality ingredients and sophisticated techniques (Murphy, 2018). Using expensive, traditional French ingredients signifies a dedication to maintaining the authenticity and integrity of French culinary heritage while also pushing the boundaries of creativity (Ferguson, 1998). French cuisine's theatrical plating and elaborate presentation are deeply ingrained in its culinary traditions (Deroy et al., 2014). Rinko's rhetorical question, "Are you planning to draw on the plates with sauce? Doing every dish in the Rococo style?" (E02S1, 03:19–03:50) alludes to the intricate and artistic nature of French culinary presentation (Styler, 2006). French cuisine, which started as cooking for royals, has always placed a high value on visual appeal and technique complexity (Albala, 2017). This belief is reflected in the meticulous and often theatrical presentation of Gaku's dishes, which aim to delight the senses and create a memorable dining experience.

III. Balance and Completeness in the Dining Experience

In French dining, desserts are crucial as the concluding part of a full-course menu (Hum, 2021). The belief that "desserts serve as an important conclusion to the dining experience" (E04S4, 12:45–13:40) highlights the comprehensive nature of the French culinary tradition. Desserts are not just an afterthought but are integral to the overall dining experience, providing a sweet and satisfying end to a meal (Hines, 2002/2014).

The consideration of wine pairings in French cuisine is another critical aspect of a meal, highlighting the holistic approach to dining (Carvalho et al., 2021). The belief that "wine pairings should complement the flavours of the food, but also acknowledging that they might diminish the flavours" (E09S4, 09:15–11:32) underscores the sophistication and thoughtfulness

in French dining. Choosing the right wine to accompany a meal is seen as an art form in itself, requiring knowledge and expertise to boost the overall dining experience without overpowering the taste of the food (Gupta & Katarya, 2024). The two practices underscore the French emphasis on balance and completeness in a meal, ensuring that every course contributes to the overall harmony and enjoyment of the dining experience.

4.3.3 Discussion

As discussed in the literature review, communication is integral to the dissemination and configuration of culture, with communication practices significantly influenced by cultural norms and values (Stajcic, 2013). The following discussion will focus on the representation of food culture and the voice of food.

4.3.3.1 Food Culture Representation

Grand Maison Tokyo effectively demonstrates the integration of French and Japanese cuisines, showcasing how Japanese chefs navigate the balance between preserving cultural heritage and embracing innovation. This balance is achieved through a deep respect for ingredients, ethical considerations, community values, and a commitment to hospitality, embodying the essence of Japanese culinary philosophy.

By incorporating French culinary beliefs—characterized by a relentless pursuit of excellence and innovation, the use of premium ingredients, theatrical presentation, the importance of desserts, continuous creativity, and the thoughtful integration of wine pairings—the series highlights the

nuanced interplay between these two culinary traditions. The food and characters in *Grand Maison Tokyo* exemplify this fusion, reflecting a broader cultural dialogue between Japanese and French culinary practices.

Our comprehension of food and its connection to the natural world is frequently communicated and understood through narratives and stories (Gupta et al., 2021). Food acts as a socializing tool, aiding in our understanding of our cultures, societies, and the groups we belong to (Cramer et al., 2011). Although this process happens on a small scale, discussions about food also occur within larger social frameworks such as government, media, and popular culture (Cramer et al., 2011). TV drama significantly contributes to this socialization process; actively participating in and relating to the story world, it allows us to internalize and personalize the narrative, reflect on our beliefs, engage creatively, and expand our very own worldviews by encountering diverse viewpoints (Green & Jenkins, 2014). This immersive engagement allows viewers to sensorially experience cherished narrative worlds and become part of the story.

Grand Maison Tokyo serves as a prime example of a TV drama that delves into themes such as personal narratives, cultural traditions, ingredients and culinary techniques, the pleasurable aspects of food, degustation, and gastronomy. This series showcases innovative dining experiences, allowing audiences to engage profoundly with the cultural and emotional aspect of food (Gupta et al., 2021).

4.3.3.2 The Voice of Food

Hauck-Lawson (2004) presents the idea of “food voice”, which refers to how individuals communicate aspects of their identity or emotional state through their dietary preferences and abstentions, transcending the limitations of verbal expression. Food choices serve as narratives of familial history, migration experiences, cultural assimilation, resistance to dominant norms, temporal shifts, and both individual and collective identity formations. This concept is vividly illustrated in *Grand Maison Tokyo*, where the characters’ culinary choices and practices are infused with personal and cultural significance.

Food in *Grand Maison Tokyo* successfully communicates the culinary cultures of both French and Japanese cuisines. According to Belasco (2008), cuisines prioritize specific “basic foods” and adhere to unique “flavour principles” and eating practices, serving as markers of group identity and boundaries. This aligns with portrayal of food in the series, where it acts as a powerful signifier of cultural identity, status, and boundaries. Various modes of cooking symbolize the distinction between nature and culture, echoing the theories of Goode (1992) and Lévi-Strauss (1996). Thus, the cooking practices depicted in *Grand Maison Tokyo* are semiotically associated with cultural values and transformations of nature. By integrating the culinary philosophies of both Japanese and French traditions, the series not only highlights the unique characteristics of each cuisine but also underscores the universal language of food as a means of cultural expression and identity (Allison, 2018; Belasco, 2008; Bruno, 2016; Stajcic, 2013). This multifaceted approach allows for a deeper understanding of how food serves as a conduit for cultural dialogue and articulates personal and collective identities, thereby functioning as a repository of information and signification (Barthes, 1997).

Grand Maison Tokyo masterfully integrates food into its storytelling, either through dialogue or presenting culinary scenes with meticulous, anatomy-style precision that reflects the producer’s commitment to showcasing food realistically. A list of examples is presented in Table 3, as follows:

Table 3: Integration of Food into Storytelling in *Grand Maison Tokyo*

Dish	Dialogue	‘Anatomy’ Scene Included
Oxtail with red wine sauce (E01S15, 20:12–21:00)	“I once visited Escoffile with my mother. I still remember it clearly; the main course was oxtail with red wine sauce. The oxtail was marinated with red wine, cognac and mirepoix (a base made with dice vegetables), it was stuffed with foie gras, chestnuts and croutons. The outside was seared to perfection and sealed all the flavours inside, it was cooked gently on low heat in an oven beforehand. The sauce was made with marinade and mignonette, right?” - Rinko	No
Tenaga ebi l’étuvée (E01S11, 15:30–16:50)	“Tenaga ebi l’étuvée à la minute. After the shrimp is quickly steamed, the capucine and saffron oil is quickly drizzled on top. Bon appétit!” - Obana	Yes
Eggplant and liver pressé (E02S20, 51:30–53:30)	“We used senryu eggplant from Nagano prefecture, liver from chickens reared in later prefecture. The wood sorrel used as a garnish was given to us for free by farmers ... the eggplant needs to be pickled in sherry vinegar before being seasoned with salt and then quickly cooled. The liver needs to be seasoned with cardamom to remove any gamey odours, the cocoa pastry needs to be bakes slowly on low heat to prevent the pastry from charring.” - Obana	Yes

<p>Consommé (E03S10, 15:35–18:26, 20:00–20:44, 23:40– 24:24)</p>	<p>“Consommé is made by reducing stock made with ground meat and tendons and vegetables. But because impurities will form during the process, egg white is used to remove them and only the clear liquid is kept. The steps seem simple, but it’s very difficult to control the heat, so one must pay very close attention. The flavour is also dependent on the types of vegetables and meat used. Making consommé requires a lot of technique and knowledge.” - Kyono</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Ushio’s beef stew (E08S5, 15:2517:40)</p>	<p>“This isn’t like the usual retro Western food at all. It’s so delicate, just one bite and you can feel the chef’s efforts. The tenderness of the beef tongue is superb. And this demiglace sauce, it has dried tomatoes and bacon. You must have spent so much effort on it. This is so much better than some dishes at high end restaurants.” - Rinko</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Kijibato demi en croûte (E10S14, 52:04–57:40)</p>	<p>“Kijibato is fragrant and delicious right after it’s roasted, but because it’s such a small piece of meat, it dries out very quickly. After adding the pie pastry, both its temperature and moisture are kept. The meat’s flavour can be enjoyed at its best.” - Shohei</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Roast grouper and hoisette anchois (hazelnuts and anchovies) (E11S10, 22:35-26:05)</p>	<p>“I roasted the grouper before adding the sauce I made with anchovies and hazelnuts.” - Rinko “The skin is crunchy, yet the original flavour of the grouper is retained. The fragrance and the anchovies are bursting with umami flavour. All the elements are powerful.” - Shohei</p>	<p>Yes</p>

This immersive presentation makes the audience feel as if they are participating in the cooking process, showcasing the joy of cooking and aiding viewers in connecting with “identity foods.”

These are ingredients, dishes, or traditions that play a crucial role in shaping individual and communal identities and hold special significance for various communities (Parasecoli, 2010). Examples of such foods include pizza for Italians, pretzels for Germans, kimchi for Koreans, dim sum for Cantonese, sushi for the Japanese, and terrine for the French. In *Grand Maison Tokyo*, “identity foods” are prominently featured in scenes (See Appendices A & B) with rice, sushi, ramen, wasabi, dashi, udon, sakura, the origin of ingredients, and Japanese wine (E09S4, 09:15–11:32), as well as traditions like praying to deities (E03S7, 10:41–11:41) and tuna auction (Kween, 2023) at the fish market (E11S1, 00:02–00:09).

4.3.3.3 Overall

As discussed in the literature review, TV and films significantly impact their audiences (Kim & Richardson, 2003; Long & Robinson, 2009), especially those who have never visited certain places. For many, their “knowledge” of foreign lands comes entirely from these on-screen representations. This ability to shape and influence perceptions underscores the idea that pop culture can be harnessed as an instrument of soft power to sway target audiences and consumers (Chua, 2011). *Grand Maison Tokyo* leverages this influence, using food as a powerful medium to convey cultural nuances and identity, thereby enriching the narrative and deepening the viewers’ connection to the story.

5. Conclusion and More

The research aims to explore the depiction of food in the Japanese TV drama *Grand Maison Tokyo*, addressing two primary questions:

RQ1. How is food utilized as a mode of communication and expression in *Grand Maison Tokyo*?

RQ2. How does *Grand Maison Tokyo* portray the integration of Japanese food culture with French culinary traditions?

All 11 episodes of “Grand Maison Tokyo” were subjected to semiotic and reflexive thematic analysis. During this process, food-related dialogue and scenes were carefully documented. This analysis focused on food symbolism and the characters’ interactions with food, interpreting these dialogues and scenes as texts comprised of multiple signs (Bouzida, 2014). This approach sheds light on the characters’ internal experiences, dramatic tensions, narrative progressions, and social contexts, and the show’s overarching mood or viewpoint. Character dynamics were analysed by examining how characters interact with food, convey messages non-verbally through food, use food to demonstrate hospitality, express passion and ambition, and reflect on past mistakes and relationships.

Exploring the connotations of food on-screen and evaluating the meanings that arise from scenes of preparation, consumption, and communication reveals that food holds the power to signify themes of national and personal identity, cultural and social differences, and power and class relations. *Grand Maison Tokyo* demonstrates that, like movies, TV dramas can use the

multifaceted components of foodways to illuminate cultural dynamics. Food in multimedia content utilizes a distinct communicative language, with its messages and meanings shaped by evolving cultural and social contexts. It can be concluded that TV dramas do more than just mirror a particular version of real life; they play an important role in enriching it so that it resonates with their audiences.

Grand Maison Tokyo presents chefs and their passion for food, wine, and cooking in an elegant manner, paying tribute to French cuisine while taking pride in Japanese culture. It is not just about food and culture or the careers of chefs; it addresses life's challenges and the lessons one needs to learn. Food becomes a metaphor for encouragement, love, care, passion, talent, nostalgia, hard work, struggle, mistakes, forgiveness, and more, resonating deeply with audiences from different backgrounds. *Grand Maison Tokyo* portrays the career of being a chef as almost sacred. From the first scene, as the church bell rings, we see the head chef putting on his apron, the screen then fades into a painting of Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper, and then a painting of St. Charles Borromeo feeding the poor (E01S2, 01:01–01:20).

In Japanese culture, the word *Ikigai* (a reason for being) refers to a notion that urges people to discover what is genuinely important to them and to live a life full of purpose and joy (García & Miralles, 2017). It is said that everyone has an *Ikigai* – their particular intersection of passion, talent, and potential to benefit others (García & Miralles, 2017). In the final episode, Rinko's speech echoes this concept:

Rinko: "Our job revolves around cooking and bringing happiness to customers. It seems simple. But just like politicians, we have the ability to change the world. Being a chef is

like being an artist; one can stir up emotions in customers. Just like doctors and nurses, we can offer salvation. I feel that this is a wonderful job. Each dish is a message that can be spread around the world. Standing here, I truly believe that it is possible. Food has the power to move and inspire people.” (E11S16, 1:05:25)

The characters in *Grand Maison Tokyo* have found their Ikigai, exemplifying the career of a chef as a dedication to what one is passionate about, a striving towards perfection and success, and an endless quest that provides a sense of fulfilment. *Grand Maison Tokyo* is not just a TV drama for entertainment; it is a love letter to chefs around the world and people who are passionate about food and cooking.

5.1 Epilogue

It is often said that one grows weary of a topic by the end of such an extensive project. For me, this sentiment is only partially true. While I am fatigued from the constant analysis and discussion, my appreciation for the drama has only deepened.

This dissertation project is deeply personal to me. Since its release in 2019, I have rewatched *Grand Maison Tokyo* multiple times. The series holds a special place in my heart, providing comfort through its narrative, portrayal of food, and richly developed characters during both the highs and lows of my life. I am genuinely fascinated by how food can convey a wide range of emotions on screen and its power to move and touch people. Food has always been a mode of communication at home, especially since I was brought up by my grandparents. At home, we

don't ask "How are you?" Instead, we express care by asking, "Are you hungry?" or "Have you eaten yet?" For me, the act of preparing food for others, or receiving food from others, is the warmest expression of love and care. When Kyono in the series said, "In every dish that we serve to customers, there's a bit of the chef's soul," it resonated with me deeply. This is how I wish to communicate with my family, friends, and like-minded people—by expressing gratitude and love through the food I make. As Maya Angelou (2011) said, "Eating is so intimate. it's very sensual. when you invite someone to sit at your table and you want to cook for them, you're inviting a person into your life". People generally don't cook for or eat with those they don't care about, which is why I believe wholeheartedly that food has the power to connect people and strengthen bonds.

Lastly, I am thrilled that the TV company has announced a special episode of *Grand Maison Tokyo* and a movie, *Grand Maison Paris*, which will be released later this year (2024) with the same cast. I can't wait to see how the story will continue to unfold and inspire audiences in new ways.

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Appendix A: Scenes and Dialogues

Episode 1

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E01 S1	00:20– 01:00	It started with a Japan France summit lunch in Paris, France at Escoffile, a two-Michelin- star restaurant. Prepping at the kitchen, putting away the nuts.	Manager: 10 guests from France, 8 guests from Japan. The French minister for foreign affairs has nut allergy. ... Let's showcase our best cuisine and service standards like always.	Obana Kyono	Lobster Tomato Zucchini Carrot Sage
E01 S2	01:01– 01:20	The bell of church rings, we see the head chef putting on his apron. We see a painting of Jesus and his disciples at the Last Supper, and a painting of St Charles Borromeo feeding the poor.		-	-
E01 S3	01:43– 2:29	The main male character, Obana Natsuki, being the head chef of a two-Michelin-star restaurant in Paris, was monitoring the kitchen operation since they were about to serve a VIP, political figure. One of the chefs was scooping uni out of its shells	Obana: Why are they out of their shells? Chef 1: Because it's easier to handle it this way. Rikutarō Kyono (Restaurant manager): 30 minutes until VIP arrives. Obana: You will follow my instructions while you are here. Do it again (slapping the station) Obana was furious and told him off, he started prepping a new batch of uni with his sous chef, Hirako Shohei.	Obana Natsuki French Staff	Uni
E01 S4	02:55– 04:20	Guests arrived; service began. Plating uni and serving uni.	Manager: The uni is flavoured with squid, soba seeds and olive oil, and a sauce made with hamaduri (clam).	Kyono	Plating uni Prepping clams Immersion blender

					Garnish with flower petals
E01 S5	04:21–04:31	Kitchen service	Manager: Ready for second course	Kyono	Lobster flambe Spring chicken in oven Plating with truffle
E01 S6	04:32–04:45	A member of the guests had a nut allergy reaction. Service ends abruptly.		-	-
E01 S7	05:01–08:35	Three years later in Paris at a three-Michelin star restaurant interview	<p>Interviewer: Madam Rinko Hayami</p> <p>Rinko: Yes</p> <p>Interviewer: Are you turning 50 soon?</p> <p>Young males: Laugh</p> <p>Interviewer 1: There are plenty of young and energetic chefs.</p> <p>Interviewer 2: Cooking has nothing to do with age.</p> <p>Interviewer 1: Why have you only approached us now?</p> <p>Rinko: I want to work at this restaurant because I want a Michelin star that's why I'd like to start anew at a three-star restaurant like L'Ambroisie and I came here from Japan</p> <p>Interviewer: Is a star really that important? That's not the only measure of the value of cuisine. Right?</p> <p>Rinko: That's just lip service. It's easy to claim that one does not care about Michelin stars. But that's just the excuse of a chef who can't get a star.</p> <p>Laughed at by young interviewees.</p> <p>Interviewer 2: Why you so hung up about Michelin?</p> <p>Rinko: If one wants to keep coming up with new and delicious creations</p>	<p>Rinko Hayami (Female lead)</p> <p>Along with three young male interviewees</p> <p>Two male interviewers, chef and manager</p>	-

			<p>as a French chef, of course one has to aim for Michelin stars! Everyone judges taste differently. To select the best dishes, an objective standard is required. In the restaurant world, isn't Michelin the most well-known and trusted standard?</p> <p>That's why I can only challenge myself with a Michelin star. Please test me.</p> <p>Interviewer 2: Alright then, show us what you got.</p>		
E01 S8	08:38–09:20	Obana barged in and asked to be hired again, indicating he used to work there, but got told off by the executive chef.	<p>Obana: Please let me cook again! Please!</p> <p>Chef: There's no place for you here anymore.</p>	Obana	-
E01 S9	09:39–12:00	<p>Trial test of Rinko, inside the kitchen of three-Michelin-star restaurant.</p> <p>Obana sneaked in to help Rinko. He made a capucine flower-infused oil.</p>	<p>Chef: Make a dish that suits our restaurant's style. You have 30 minutes.</p> <hr/> <p>Rinko: what are you doing?</p> <p>Obana: The test is to make an appetizer, right? I used to work at this restaurant. So, I know what the chef likes and I know the restaurant's concept.</p> <p>Make a tenaga ebi l'étuvée (quick braising). Place your minced garlic and olive oil in a cocotte...</p> <p>Rinko: What do you think you're saying? This is my test.</p> <p>Obana: If you really want to work here, then do as I say, and you will be hired.</p>	Rinko Obana	<p>Slicing Terraine Lobster Tomato Zucchini Artichoke Sage Fennel</p>
E01 S10	13:18–14:55	Rinko met up with Obana at a bistro after the trial.	<p>Obana: You passed, right?</p> <p>Rinko: No, I didn't.</p> <p>Obana: You've got to be kidding me</p> <p>Rinko: I made foie gras poele (pan-fried foie gras). It's my best dish.</p>	Rinko Obana	<p>Foie gras poele ingredients: Foie gras White pepper Ginger Nutmeg Cloves Red radish</p>

			<p>Obana: You're an idiot.</p> <p>Rinko: The chef said my fundamentals were sound and it was delicious, but the flavours were one-dimensional and not layered, he said that my skills aren't sufficient to be a chef at their restaurant. But he praised the oil you infused with capucine flowers.</p> <p>Obana: Told you already.</p> <p>Rinko: But I've spent 30 years working on that signature dish of mine. Yet he said that the oil which you took 30 seconds to make, was better! Do you know how hard that is for me to swallow?</p> <p>Obana: I don't know. Like you didn't try hard enough.</p> <p>Rinko: (Slapping the table) I tried my best! I'm in the kitchen from 9 AM to midnight, I'm used to getting blisters on my hands. I work so hard on my cooking that my bones ache every night when I go to sleep. I go to the suppliers on weekends to check ingredients. I spend all my pay trying out delicacies from all around. I've pressed on for 30 years, during which every single day revolved around cooking!</p> <p>Obana: Can you find someone else to complain to?</p> <p>Rinko: I'm here to try your cooking. Let me try a dish that a three-Michelin-star restaurant would be proud of.</p>		
E01 S11	15:30– 16:50	Obana making the dish		Obana	<p>Long-armed shrimp Smashed garlic Olive oil Dried thyme Spring onion Deglaze with white wine Some water Covered the lid of the pot</p>

					Served with capucine flower infused oil
E01 S12	16:51– 18:40	Obana served the dish to Rinko	<p>Obana: Tenaga ebi l'étuvée à la minute. After the shrimp is quickly steamed, the capucine and saffron oil is quickly drizzled on top. Bon appétit!</p> <p>Rinko took a bite and had tears in her eyes: Delicious... it's so delicious.</p> <p>Obana: It's not worth crying for.</p> <p>Rinko: Why can't I make something like this... (cries and keeps eating)</p> <p>Obana's expression changed.</p>	Obana Rinko	-
E01 S13	18:42– 18:45	Food market in France		-	<p>Crevette geante</p> <p>Crevette roses</p> <p>Places de tourleau</p> <p>Dried sausages</p> <p>Marinated food stands</p>
E01 S14	19:33– 20:11	Obana and Rinko's conversation in Paris with beer on how he ruined an important summit three years ago and became a shame to Japan.	<p>Rinko: I have a lot of respect for you. You're Obana Natsuki – a Japanese who obtained two Michelin stars in France! Everyone said you were on your way to obtaining your third star. But something happened ... at the summit meeting three years ago, there was a food allergy incident.</p> <p>Obana: Yes, I am a shame to Japan.</p>	Obana Rinko	-
E01 S15	20:12– 21:00	Rinko's memory of dining at Obana's restaurant with her mother.	<p>Rinko: Those judgmental critics have never tried your food. ... I once visited Escoffille with my mother. I still remember it clearly; the main course was oxtail with red wine sauce. The oxtail was marinated with red wine, cognac and mirepoix (a base made with diced vegetables), it was stuffed with foie gras, chestnuts and croutons. The outside was seared to perfection and sealed all the flavours inside, it was cooked gently on low heat in an oven</p>	Rinko	oxtail with red wine sauce

			<p>beforehand. The sauce was made with marinade and mignonette, right?</p> <p>Obana: Wait a minute, how did you know the actual recipe? I have never told anyone.</p>		
E01 S16	21: 01– 23:20	Rinko expressed her struggles, and Obana offered to open a restaurant with her back to Japan and obtain three Michelin stars together.	<p>Rinko: I have great faith in my sense of taste. With just one taste of a dish, I can tell what ingredients are in it and how it was made. Of course that's not enough. I'd like to get a Michelin star, but I've worked in Tokyo for 10 years and I haven't obtained a single star. Then my mother, who was living with me, passed away and my restaurant closed down. But I still can't give up my dream of getting a Michelin star, So I really hope to start afresh in a three-Michelin-star restaurant in Paris.</p> <p>But after trying your tenaga ebi dish, I realized that this has nothing to do with pedigree, I lack the talent that is necessary to obtain a Michelin star. There are people in this world who won't achieve their dreams no matter how hard they try. Thank you for inspiring me.</p>	Rinko	-
E01 S17	24:30– 25:55	Back in Japan, briefing session at a one-Michelin-star restaurant named Gaku before service.	<p>Head chef (Manabu Tango): Shie Yoshizuni from Nishi-azabu, Logie Frule from Shirokane, both had inspections last week. The inspectors from Michelin will come to our restaurant this week. Tokyo has about 100,000 restaurants, but only 230 of the were awarded stars last year, about 0.2% of the total. Among these, 55 are French restaurants, and only three were awarded three stars. As for three-Michelin-star French restaurants with Japanese head-chefs, there's only Quintessence from Shinagawa. No other restaurant has had that honour. Which restaurant will lead the next generation of French restaurant in Tokyo? It will be ours. Gaku from Minami-aoyama, awarded one Michelin star just one year after opening; we will obtain three stars in our second year.</p>	Tango	-

			<p>Owner: Of course, when this restaurant becomes number one in Tokyo, I'll reward everyone with bonuses.</p> <p>All staff clap.</p> <p>Owner: Don't rejoice too early ... don't forget that a Michelin-starred restaurant must avoid losing its stars at all costs. If such a restaurant loses its stars, it's finished.</p>		
E01 S18	27:50– 30:34	<p>Obana and Rinko paid a visit to Gaku for dinner and the Michelin inspectors were present as well, and they ordered the same dishes the Michelin inspectors did.</p> <p>Gaku's dishes showcase the ingredients' appeal in a whole new way</p> <p>Kyono (Escoffille's manager) has become Gaku's manager</p>	<p>Obana: Excuse me, we'd like to order the same items as those guests on the sofa over there, please.</p> <p>Server: Sure.</p> <p>Obana: Watch them (the Michelin inspectors, M+F). One of them will head to the restroom (one inspector left to the bathroom), the lady will drop her napkin.</p> <p>Rinko: How did you know?</p> <p>Obana: No doubt, they're inspectors from Michelin.</p> <p>Rinko: Eh! No one is supposed to know who the inspectors are.</p> <p>Obana: Nobody does, but they have a fixed pattern of action and word spread among famous Michelin-starred restaurants. This restaurant must have been preparing for a long time.</p> <p>Narrator: one star: if you happen to be around the area, the good food is worth a try; two stars: the wonderful food is worth travelling a distance for; three stars: exceptional food that is worth planning a trip for.</p>	<p>Monkfish liver terrine: The monkfish liver and soy milk have been vacuum treated and aerated before being frozen, together with the dehydrated haskap puree and the orange-peel-infused oil.</p> <p>Uni and golden chanterelle (Sea urchin, golden chanterelle, cabbage, parsley, sakura).</p> <p>Sea bream (sea bream, yuzu, barley, kihada seeds, habanero).</p> <p>Flowers in a pie (ruby moon hyacinth, begonia, marigold, black truffle paste, home-made miso).</p> <p>Seasonal greens, roasted yeast, rhubarb oil, salted salmon roe, rosehip, long pepper.</p> <p>A gummy-like sheet made by drying out plum juice.</p> <p>Lamb shoulder, scarlet runner beans, sour cassis capers, coastal hog fennel.</p> <p>Cooking technique: liquid nitrogen, vacuum, flash-freeze cooking, fermentation.</p>	
E01 S19	30:41– 32:30	<p>Kyono and Obana's convo after dining at Gaku. Obana tried to poach Kyono.</p>	<p>Obana: You said it before to treat all guests equally. Was that a lie? Is there a difference between the dishes you served the inspectors and those you served us? The plating was messy. You have us substandard plates, didn't you? But Tango's dishes have changed a lot, it's like eating the remnants of a science experiment.</p>	Kyono Obana	-

			<p>Kyono: They were actually delicious, right? You look at the ceiling in silence meaning your approval of the dish.</p> <p>Obana: I'm going to open a restaurant with her (Rinko). Will you be interested in joining? Are you proud of the dishes that you're serving to customers, those dishes that Tango made?</p>		
E01 S20	33:41– 34:27	Kyono and the owner of Gaku, their view on food and service is very different.	<p>Owner: It went well, didn't it? Michelin...</p> <p>Kyono: I think we upheld our standard of food and service today</p> <p>Owner: So the inspections for this year are over. From tomorrow onwards, let's use lower grade wines for our pairings.</p> <p>Kyono: Eh?</p> <p>Owner: Wine is our most profitable product. If we control the costs, we can reap huge profits. For the courses with our suggested pairings, no body would complain if the taste of the wines changed a little.</p> <p>Kyono: But...</p> <p>Owner: We have a chef of pedigree like chef Tango and we use premium ingredients, we serve only cutting edge dishes. We were prepared to be in the red for the sake of obtaining stars. So when Michelin inspections aren't in the picture, let me earn some money from this restaurant too.</p>	Kyono	-
E01 S21	34:40– 35:15	Shohei making breakfast			French omelette
E01 S22	35:16– 36:06	Obana made breakfast	<p>Rinko: Why is Obana Natsuki making Japanese food?</p> <p>Obana: We should eat Japanese food since we're back in Japan.</p> <p>Rinko and Obana: Itadakimasu.</p> <p>Obana: Japanese rice is still the best.</p>		<p>Traditional Japanese breakfast: Grilled salmon and rolled omelette. Miso soup with Japanese taro, shiitake mushrooms and lime, Pickles on side And a bowl of rice.</p> <p>Onigiri and rice bran.</p>

E01 S23	38:05– 38:35	Kitchen service at hotel, Matsui making prepping garde manger crafts		Shohei (head chef) Matsui (pastry chef)	Orange peel, flambe, French- style buffet setting .
E01 S24	42:22– 43:07 44:54– 45:39	Obana recreated staffie at Escoffille for Kyono	Obana: This is a meal in apology Rinko: A meal in apology? Obana: As a chef, of course I have to convey my apologies through food. This was Kyono's favorite dish when I was working with him in Paris. I made this couscous à la maison with five kinds of meat, Bon appétit.	Obana Rinko Kyono	Oxtail, pork collar, pigeon wings, duck, chicken wing tips. Pigeon gizzards, garlic, anise, cardamon, fennel, coriander, cumin, caraway, onions, tomatoes.
E01 S25	42:47	Shohei at buffet slicing meat for guest		Shohei	-
E01 S26	45:40– 46:35	Rinko, Kyono and Obana tasting the staffie at home	Rinko: It's a little gamey. How about adding some yuzu? Obana: This is the flavour of our memories, don't be nitpicky. Rinko: eh? But there are spices such as anise and cardamon in this, and you used garlic beef bouillon to cook the tomatoes, right? It will definitely go well with yuzu. Obana: Men like us still prefer this kind of strong flavour. Rinko: that's because both of you were still young at the time, right? Right now, I'm sure both of you would prefer it with yuzu. Also, if you're having it in Japan, white rice might go well with it, instead of couscous. Obana: No way.	Obana Rinko Kyono	-
E01 S27	46:33– 47:19	Rinko asking Kyono why he stopped working at a chef.	Kyono: For example, if we were to make an omelette with the same eggs and butter using the same method, it would taste different when made by different people. Rinko: It's amazing. Kyono: When I was working, I tried a staff meal made by an	Rinko Kyono	-

			arrogant junior of mine and realized that, there are some shortcomings that cannot be overcome no matter how hard you work.		
E01 S28	56:38	Obana telling Rinko his reason for offering to open a restaurant with her	Obana: When I made the tenaga ebi l'étuvée for you, it brought back memories from long ago, from when I first started cooking, I'd be so happy whenever someone said my food was delicious. That's the reason why I chose you to be partner. Also, you could tell the cooking methods and ingredients so perfectly just after tasting my dish, I have not met anyone else who can do that. You do have talent.	Obana Rinko	Obana left a pot of staffie with yuzu.

Episode 2

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E02 S1	03:19 – 03:50	At Rinko's home, Obana was cooking lamb ribs while discussing a budget plan and ingredients sourcing with Obana.	Obana: This bare-bone kitchen really restricts my cooking; the flames aren't strong enough either. Rinko: The problem is, you're using high-quality ingredients to create the menu. Obana: I can't make good dishes without good ingredients. Rinko: Look at the ingredients you've chosen. All are expensive ingredients from France, used in traditional French cooking. Are you planning to draw on the plates with sauce? Doing every dish in the Rococo style? Obana: Are you saying I am old fashioned?	Rinko Obana	Foie gras Caviar Mushroom Truffle
E02 S2	07:02 – 08:00	Rinko, Kyono and Obana went to pick up Amelie (Aizawa's daughter, around eight years old) with Aizawa (one of the chefs at Escoffille)	Obana: You like raspberry jelly, right? Amelie smiles. Obana: Ah, you remember, right? That jelly with the red sauce. You used to get it all over your face after eating it.	Obana Amelie	
E02 S3	08:30 – 09:04	Everyone went back to Aizawa's place, Rinko	Obana: You can choose your favorite dishes.	Amelie	Hamburger steak Raspberry jelly

		offered to cook dinner .	Amelie: Hamburger steak. Rinko: Got it! Aizawa: It's been a long time since I've seen Amelie so happy.		
E02 S4	09:51 – 11:40	Aizawa made finger food, and the four had a catch up on Aizawa's situation at the dining table with wine presence.	-	Aizawa	Finger food and wine
E02 S5	12:32 – 15:38	Obana assists Aizawa at his cooking classes. Obana brought truffle to add to the student's plates. Obana suggested that they both create a dish for the students to taste and compare.	Aizawa: Please don't bring in your own ingredients, this is my class. Obana: You'd get laughed at for this kind of cooking in Paris Aizawa: This is Japan. Also, most people tend to steer away from expensive ingredients. Times are changing. Students: Aizawa sensei's dish goes better with the wine. Obana: Why is that so? Student: Even though you used truffle, it just lacks creativity, the combination of pasta and matcha is new and interesting, it suits Japanese taste buds.	Aizawa Obana	Obana's dish mentaiko and truffle roast potato: Potatoes, olive oil, salt, mentaiko, butter, truffle. Aizawa's dish matcha cream cheese pasta: garlic, onions, bacon, milk, matcha, kelp tea.
E02 S6	15:46 – 16:43	Rinko made dinner for Kyono	Kyono: Delicious! To work with talented chefs and build up a good reputation for our restaurant that gives me much more joy.	Kyono	Grilled onigiri and pickles
E02 S7	20:24 – 20:46	Obana made dinner for Aizawa, his mother and his daughter		Obana Aizawa	Shabushabu Kobu Miso Raspberry pudding
E02 S8	21:26 – 21:33	On menu developing	Obana: I think Paris-style French cooking doesn't suit Tokyo tastes, we need to think of unique Japanese flavours.	Obana	
E02 S9	22:08 : 22:20	Troubled by getting funding to open the restaurant	Kyono: I am hungry. Rinko: Let me cook something then. Kyono: Don't bother.	Kyono Rinko	

			Rinko: It's alright, cooking will be a welcome distraction for me. Any request? I'll make pasta then.		
E02 S10	22:57 – 24:01	Obana and Aizawa conversation about ingredients	<p>Aizawa: When I came back from paris, I continued to work like I did in Escofille, I spent a lot on herbs and spices, making complicated sauces to impress customers. But they weren't popular at all.</p> <p>Obana: Why?</p> <p>Aizawa: French cuisine started off as cooking for the royals, it favours theatrical plating and complicated techniques. But in Japan, ingredients are of high quality to begin with, Japanese cooking favours using simple techniques to showcase delicious ingredients.</p> <p>Obana: And so, I should serve sashimi in a French restaurant? In Tokyo, where there are so many top sushi restaurants, relying on fresh fish for our dishes would be foolish...</p> <p>Aizawa: That's why I rely on good ingredient combinations and hidden techniques to compete.</p>	Obana Aizawa	
E02 S11	24:24- 24:34	Obana, Rinko and Kyono went to visit Shohei at hotel buffet	<p>Obana: You can try adding some fresh cream in the sauce with some vinegar and black pepper</p> <p>Shohei: I'm so sorry that our restaurant isn't a high-end French one. Large numbers of customers come to enjoy our food in a relaxed setting.</p>	Obana Shohei	<p>Slicing roasted beef</p> <p>Quiche</p> <p>Pudding</p>
E02 S12	26:49 – 27: 46 29:18 – 29:45	Obana trying to create a sauce for Shohei's roast beef using different Japanese flavour	<p>Aizawa: You're too old to be working through the night</p> <p>Obana: We had more than 100 varieties of butter and herbs to work with in Paris. But here, we're forced to start from scratch with just miso and shoyu. What a joke, huh?</p>	Aizawa Obana	<p>Black pepper Vinegar Fresh cream Soy sauce Miso Yuzu Wasabi</p> <p>Blending onion, garlic, ginger, soy sauce, sake, mirin, ponzu</p>
E02 S13	33:22 – 34:58	Obana came to Ramen shop to talk to the bank who didn't approve of the fund for them	Obana: I'll complete a dish from our new restaurant's menu, in a week's time. Would you like to come and try it?	Obana	<p>Ramen</p> <p>Katsuo (skipjack tuna)</p>

		because of their financial plan and Obana's bad record.			
E02 S14	36:51 – 38:12	Shohei having dinner with his girlfriend and her father (Someone powerful in the field) at a high-end Japanese restaurant.		Shohei	Sake Kaiseki Father doesn't want appetizer (formal) No one's eating Waitress wearing kimono
E02 S15	40:53 – 41:22	Rinko, Kyono, Obana are having a discussion on what ingredients to use for the dish they are serving the banker	Rinko: I'm going to make it clear now: you can't use expensive ingredients. Obana: Let's use eggplant (an ingredient Aizawa used in one of his dishes that Obana did not approve of). Kyono: Eggplant? Rinko: Are you alright? You've always been insistent on your high-end Rococo style. Kyono: Is eggplant too common an ingredient? Obana: There are so many varieties of eggplants in Japan, they are better than European varieties both in terms of texture and flavour. Rinko: Well, they're affordable after all. Obana: That's decided then (looking at Aizawa).	Obana Rinko Kyono	Tea presented in most of the home setting
E02 S16	41:27- 42:36	Rinko. Kyono and Obana went to source eggplant	Rinko: It has great shape and gloss. Look at the thorns. It has the fragrance of green apples Obana: And it's so juicy. It's ok. Rinko ordered 5kg of eggplants from farmer, Obana asked for the wood sorrel. Rinko: What's that for?	-	Many different types of eggplant Wood sorrel

			Obana: The acidity is good, and since it's grown from the same soil, the flavours might go well together		
E02 S17	42:42 – 45:06	Rinko, Obana and Kyono testing different cooking methods The recipe developing the eggplant wasn't going very well, Obana asked for Aizawa's opinion	Obana: Aizawa, what do you think? Aizawa: How about using chocolate? Obana: I see, like mole (traditional sauce in Mexican cuisine), huh?	Aizawa	Fresh Fried Boiled
E02 S18	45:38 – 46:25	Creating the dish In South America, there is a sauce called mole that is made with chocolate and spices. It's often cooked with eggplant.	-	-	Liver, liquid smoke – water, salt, coriander, grass pepper, bay leaves, thyme, cardamom Baked crisp: cacao nibs, egg white, cocoa powder, wheat flour, granulated sugar. Salad on the side: wood, sorrel, amaranth, purupie, cayratia, lemon juice, salt, olive oil.
E02 S19	46:27 – 48:20	The morning of the tasting day, Rinko made breakfast	Rinko: Eat this before we go. Obana: Never mind about our food. Rinko: You can't do battle on an empty stomach. Come, let's eat. This is my mother's signature dish. Obana: Although we can't really put this on our restaurant's menu, it's something one can eat every day without getting tired of Rinko: It's my mother's recipe, one that she used to entice her lover.	Rinko	Soboro rice bowl, pickle on side Tea
E02 S20	51:30 – 53:30	After tasting, Banker is still	Rinko: We gave up on our initial plan to import ingredients used in three-	Team	

		doubtful with their budgeting, profits and loss.	<p>Michelin-star restaurant in Paris. Grand Maison Tokyo will use Japanese ingredients to create French dishes.</p> <p>Banker: Japanese ingredients?</p> <p>Obana: In the dish you just tasted, we used senryu eggplant from Nagano prefecture, liver from chickens reared in Iwate prefecture. The wood sorrel used as a garnish was given to us for free by farmers.</p> <p>Kyono: The ingredients used in one plate costs about 500 yen.</p> <p>Obana: Of course, it requires much more effort and finesse to create the dish. The eggplant needs to be pickled in sherry vinegar before being seasoned with salt and then quickly cooled. The liver needs to be seasoned with cardamom to remove any gamey odours, the cocoa pastry needs to be baked slowly on low heat to prevent the pastry from charring. Our restaurant will compete with the basis of good ingredient combinations and hidden techniques, relying on chefs' ideas and skills</p>		
E02 S21	58:10 – 58:19	Obana gifted Serita a paring knife and asked him to practice chopping vegetables into 5mm cubes		Obana Serita	

Episode 3

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E03 S1	00:51 – 1:11	Developing dishes	<p>Obana: It's boring.</p> <p>Rinko: Ingredients' natural flavour are lost.</p>	-	<p>Main dish idea:</p> <p>Roast beef with bearnaise sauce: beef, white wine vinegar, fine herbs, mignonette, egg yolk, cracked pepper, clarified butter.</p>

E03 S2	03:28 – 03:33	Pitching idea for local game-meat French cooking contest	Obana: Grilling, smoking, low-temperature cooking, cooking in vacuum, confit, pan searing. Let's use everything we've got.		
E03 S3	03:37- 04:00	Sourcing game meat at supplier and found out the owner of Gaku had been buying all the good fresh, premium deer loin meat	Obana: I don't want something frozen, I'm looking for fresh meat. Rinko: Also, we don't want the tougher thigh meat, we want the loin meat.	-	
E03 S4	04:31- 05:10	Trying out the frozen deer meat. Frozen meat vs fresh meat	Obana: Not good Rinko: The texture isn't good after it's been frozen because the water content has changed. Rinko: Having poor ingredients is a fatal disadvantage. Obana: Eh? Who was the one who said that we shouldn't be obsessive about high end ingredients? Rinko: That's totally different	Obana Rinko	Deer meat
E03 S5	05:21- 07:00	Convincing Aizawa to join the team until restaurant opens at his home at the dining table. Obana is not at the table, but on sofa or computer desk, behind like always. Aizawa's mother advises Aizawa to say yes and she will be in charge of taking care his daughter, making bento etc.	Aizawa: But it's difficult for us to compete with our rivals on freshness if we're using frozen meat. Suggested a game hunter in Shizuoka prefecture, Hamamatsu-shi.	Aizawa	Tea
E03 S6	09:31- 10:40	Visiting the game hunter and tasting his game meat	Boss lady: Thanks for waiting, these are my husband's signature dishes, venison loin tataki and ribs. Rinko: Unbelievable, it doesn't taste gamey at all.	-	Venison loin tataki: Venison loin, homemade ponzu, soy sauce, mirin, sake, lime, orange, dashi, dried shrimp. Ribs seasoned with coarse salt and pepper, lemon and cherry tomato on side.

E03 S7	10:41- 11:41	Rinko and Obana went to thank hunter for his meal, and asked about why his game meat wasn't gamey at all	Obana: Thank you for the meal! Rinko: It was delicious. Truly! Hunter: Most hunters use shotguns to hunt. But I use traps, so that I'll catch the prey alive. After they are caught alive, I bring them here to let out the blood. That's why my gibier dishes do not taste gamey at all. I feel that it is important to respect the ingredients by making the best food possible out of them. That's why I do this. We take the animals' lives when we hunt (Praying to deity), I will not give away the meat that I hunt to people who only come here to buy meat for their own convenience.	Game Hunter Obana Rinko	
E03 S8	12:00- 12:30	Shohei improving the quiche pastry as Obana suggested, adding almond, adding the fragrance		Shohei	
E03 S9	13:52 16:21 19:38 40:54- 41:45	Obana noticed Amelie didn't have friends at school. He started making bento for Amelie who later became more cheerful. Aizawa went to pick up his daughter after school, he found that she became really popular at school because of her cartoon bentos, turns out Obana had been making her bentos.		Obana Amelie	
E03 S10	15:35- 18:26 20:00- 20:44	Kyono managed to get some fresh deer thigh meat. Recipe developing	Obana: Even though it's thigh meat, there should be parts that don't contain tendons.	Team	Cooking method mentioned: Pan-seared Charcoal grilled Confit Smoked

	23:40-24:24	<p>Ideas include adding sherry/tarragon</p> <p>Rinko suggested sauce au poivre (a peppery sauce in French cooking) after having a break. It's made using red wine vinegar and fruit puree together with pig blood, a sweet and sour sauce.</p> <p>Obana realized it's a really good idea to combine consommé with blood. They went to the game hunter to ask for fresh deer blood.</p> <p>Used the bone and remaining meat with tendons, together with vegetables and cooked it slowly for five hours. Usually egg white is used to remove impurities from the consommé, but it produces overly refined flavours, so egg white is replaced by fresh deer blood. Both blood and egg white contain protein.</p>	<p>Rinko: Mm, it's just as good as loin meat! This might even be tastier and interesting.</p> <p>Aizawa: It's difficult to control the heat, but this meat might do the trick. And with sauce.</p> <p>Obana: In that case, there's something I'd like to try. How about making a consommé with the leftover tendons?</p> <p>Kyono: Consommé is made by reducing stock made with ground meat and tendons and vegetables. But because impurities will form during the process, egg white is used to remove them and only the clear liquid is kept. The steps seem simple, but it's very difficult to control the heat, so one must pay very close attention. The flavour is also dependent on the types of vegetables and meat used. Making consommé requires a lot of technique and knowledge.</p>		<p>Cooked in a vacuum Cooked at low temperature</p> <p>Ended with cooking at low temperature in oven, sear for 3 mins, rest for 3 mins.</p> <p>(Vegetables: parsley, ginger, wild ginger, wild Japanese parsley, tomato, thyme, leek, tonka bean. Mineral water from Shirato mountains Hydrogenated water from Ryusen Takeda vanadium water.</p> <p>Clarify: Deer thigh meat (excluding topside cut), onion, carrot, celery, garlic, egg white, bouquet garni, Dutch gin, venison bouillon, salt, cracked black pepper).</p>
E03 S11	20:55-23:35	Rinko had a break down, and had a chat with Kyono	<p>Kyono: Are you alright?</p> <p>Rinko: Over the past 2 weeks, I've realized something after watching Obana-san and Aizawa-san. I used to think that I couldn't obtain Michelin stars because I wasn't talented enough at cooking. But it's actually because I didn't work hard enough. Both</p>	Rinko Kyono	

			<p>of them have a conviction and passion about cooking that is admirable. Now I realized that aiming for a Michelin starred restaurant requires this level of commitment. I feel so defeated.</p> <p>Kyono: And so, you lost confidence in yourself?</p> <p>Rinko: No, on the contrary, I feel the need to work harder</p> <p>Kyono: I'm sure of one thing, a chef who has no confidence in herself will never get a Michelin star</p>		
E03 S12	25:49- 26:14	Game contest dish development at Gaku	<p>Owner: The flavour should be more complex, add some trendy fermented ingredients to make it more impactful.</p> <p>Chef Tango: but we should allow this premium aged venison to stand out by showcasing its natural flavour, right?</p> <p>Owner: Our concept is to surprise and provide a new experience for customers, our niche ability is to create complex flavours that are beyond imagination.</p>	-	Aged venison loin, wild kinoko mushrooms, autumn fruits, blueberries, raw hazelnuts, miso reduction, parley oil.
E03 S13	28:37 – 35:07	<p>During the contest: Dish from contestants: Venison and foie gras (wellington) with truffle sauce</p> <p>Rinko's Roast Honshu deer thigh meat with consommé</p> <p>Gaku's dish: Venison tartare marinated with koji served with raw porcini and hazelnuts.</p> <p>Gaku won the contest.</p>			<p>Venison and foie gras wellington: Venison thigh meat, foie gras, Madeira wine, port wine, congac, truffle juice, fond de veau, truffle, butter</p> <p>Gaku's Dish: Venison loin, koji, raw porcini, hazelnuts, beets, marigold, rose geranium, smoked kanzuri (pepper) oil, deer tongue soy sauce, porcini oil.</p>
E03 S14	32:30 – 33:54	Obana made the contest dish for	Obana: Thanks to the deer blood, we made a consommé that retains	Obana	

		game hunter and persuaded him to be their supplier	the flavour that is unique to wild game. Hunter: You guys just want to win this contest, right? Why did you go to such great lengths? Obana: When we tasted your cooking, I was reminded of the fact that we should fully cherish and utilize all the living things that we use for food and showcase their flavours. And that is what a chef lives for. We are just doing our job as chefs.	Game Hunter	
E03 S15	36:17 – 37:16	Tango learnt about how only Gaku got all the premium meat in the market after winning the contest and he went to confront the owner.	Tango: The amount of fresh deer loin available in the market was greatly reduced. You must have done something, right? Owner: I'm willing to do anything for the sake of this restaurant, so I bribed them to vote for us. I do believe you can get three stars. But please don't misunderstand the stars are not awarded to the chef, it's the restaurant instead. I've done all sort of things to ensure Gaku's popularity. That's my job.		
E03 S16	37:20 – 38:35	Shohei was the one who got the fresh thigh for the team, Kyono went to deliver the deer dish to him and thank him. Shohei cried after trying the dish.		Shohei Kyono	
E03 S17	40:05 – 40:27	Finalizing the menu: 1. Sable with chanterelle mushrooms and himo red peppers 2. Mountain goat cheese bavarois 3. Eggplant and liver pressé 4. Cold Mont-Saint-Michel mussel soup 5. Kinoko (mushroom) and surf clam vol-au-vent (puff pastry) 6. Grilled cow's stomach 7. Sea urchin gratin 8. Honshu venison loin and blood consommé 9. Meringue ice cream 10. Mont Blanc cake Menu may change depending on daily fresh ingredients.		-	
E03 S18	42:52 – 43:55	Rinko officially asks Aizawa to join the team, saying he can keep pick up his daughter after school	Rinko: Obana san said that one has to dedicate his or her whole life to cooking, but I disagree because I believe that delicious food can only be created when everyone works together and contributes their ideas. Also,	Rinko Aizawa	

			anyone who can't bring happiness to his family or co-workers will also not bring happiness to customers.		
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Episode 4

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E04 S1	06:32 – 8:00	<p>Poaching pastry chef, Matsui from hotel.</p> <p>The team challenge her to come up with a recipe for the Mont Blanc dessert better than the one they had created since it's the final dish on the menu.</p> <p>Matsui appeared to be quite arrogant and confident in the beginning.</p>	<p>Rinko: Are you going to make one now?</p> <p>Matsui: it's quite impossible to make one immediately, but maybe if you give me five hours.</p> <p>Rinko: We spent one month coming up with this.</p> <p>Matsui: It's got nothing to do with time. When it comes to cooking, a person without talent can spend his whole life working hard and still not be successful, while a talented person can immediately create something delicious.</p> <p>Obana: Well, it doesn't matter about the hard work, as long as you can create something delicious.</p> <p>Matsui: That's right</p> <p>Obana: But ... not everyone has that kind of talent. So chefs all over the world continue to pour their heart and soul into their cooking.</p> <p>Matsui: But I have that talent. I can make a better dessert than anyone in this room can.</p>	<p>Matsui</p> <p>Obana</p>	
E04 S2	08:27 – 10:21	<p>Matsui's Mont Blanc</p> <p>It's not up to expectations and she challenges the team to give her another chance to come up with another recipe before pre-opening. And if her recipe is</p>	<p>Matsui: I always upload photos of my desserts on social media to get some reactions, it's going to get so many likes.</p> <p>Rinko: This thin sugar part looks new and refreshing.</p> <p>Everyone took a bite</p> <p>Aizawa: You come up with this in such short time.</p>	<p>Matsui</p> <p>Team</p>	

		better, they need to put it on the menu.	<p>Matsui: Yes.</p> <p>Rinko: But.</p> <p>Obana: It's not enough.</p> <p>Matsui: Eh?</p> <p>Obana: It doesn't live up to my expectations.</p> <p>Matsui: Wait a minute. ... What's wrong with this perfect Mont Blanc?</p> <p>Obana: Our restaurant doesn't specialize in desserts or buffets. A dessert in French cuisine needs to give a conclusion to the whole dinner. It's a very important dish, but this doesn't live up to that expectation.</p> <p>Matsui: But this looks so much prettier than the previous Mont Blanc, and it's much more stylish.</p> <p>Obana: If you're just looking to satisfy yourself, then go and open your own restaurant.</p> <p>Matsui: I get it now, you're just a sore loser.</p> <p>Obana: Your dessert does look very good indeed. But the liqueur is too strong and the overall taste is just passable. Also, you had the chance to work with whole chestnuts, but I couldn't taste any of the chestnuts' natural flavour and fragrance. This is the dish's fatal flaw.</p> <p>Rinko: Grand Maison Tokyo's specialty is showcasing Japanese ingredients' natural deliciousness in our dishes. That doesn't belong on our menu.</p>		
E04 S3	11:10 – 12:04	Kyono went to ask Shohei to mentor Matsui during her Mont Blanc recipe development. Shohei don't think	<p>Shohei: Even if we do make a better dessert, Obana-san will never admit defeat</p> <p>Kyono: That's not true</p>	Shohei Kyono	

		<p>Obana would approve of their dessert even if it's better.</p> <p>Kyono gave Shohei their menu and wondered what dishes he will create as the conclusion of the menu.</p>	<p>Shohei: Obana-san has never acknowledged my achievements before (at Escoffille).</p> <p>Kynon: Shohei, were you shocked when you came back to Tokyo? You were just an apprentice of Obana's. But did you feel like your skills were better than all your colleagues at the hotel? Three-and-a-half years at Escoffille enabled you to improve by leaps and bounds, you even became the head chef at a hotel. So, do you want to try?</p>		
E04 S4	12:45 – 13:40	<p>Shohei came to Matsui at the kitchen who's taking pictures of another Mont Blanc. He lectured Matsui and offered to help her with it.</p>	<p>Shohei: I know you're good, but don't go thinking that cooking is a simple affair. Desserts in a French restaurant are part of a full course menu and they serve as an important conclusion to the dining experience. Have you seen the menu? Besides Obana-san, other professional chefs also came together to contribute ideas and go through many rounds of trial and error before coming up with this exquisite course menu. Do you think you can serve your liqueur-laden and sickeningly sweet Mont Blanc at the end of all these monstrously impressive dishes?</p>	Shohei Matsui	-
E04 S5	15:17 – 18:05	<p>Matsui and Shohei during recipe development, struggling on what type of ingredients to add to improve the flavour, Shohei had an idea of using chestnut shell to enhance the flavour.</p> <p>Meanwhile, the team also thought of using chestnut shells.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Boiling the chestnut shell 2. Roasting the chestnut shell before boiling 	<p>Shohei: If we add fruits or vinegar, it will overpower the chestnut flavour.</p> <p>Matsui: But if we don't add other ingredients, we will only be using chestnuts.</p> <p>Shohei: No, there must be some ingredients that can complement and bring out the flavour of chestnuts.</p>	Matsui Shohei	

E04 S6	18:50 – 20:11	Matsui's creation is approved by the team.	Obana: Did you use roasted chestnut shells? Matsui: Yes. Obana: You actually thought of using the aroma of roasted chestnuts.		
E04 S7	20:45 – 21:40	On pre-opening day, chef uniforms: Gold for head chef, silver for sou chef, blue for chef de partie		-	Ranking of chefs: The kitchen hierarchy explained
E04 S8	22:11 – 23:57	Briefing before service	Rinko: We must let our customers enjoy the dishes we're proud of. I'm setting a rule here at Grand Maison Tokyo, No matter what we might be busy with, as long as someone says "Welcome" in the dining hall, all of us must reply with "Welcome" and also when customers leave the restaurant, we have an open kitchen, we share a common space with our customers. Let's serve our customers from the heart! Everyone: Oui Chef. Kyono: Let's present the best food and the best service, just like we always do.	Rinko	Semi formal French style table setting
E04 S9	24:57 – 35:30	Service starts: Amuse: Sable with chanterelle girolle mushrooms and himo red peppers Entrée: Goat milk bavaois made with mountain goat milk (star of the dish are the salt and olive oil) Entrée: Eggplant and liver pressé Entrée: Cold Mont-Saint-Michel mussel soup		-	-

		<p>Entrée: Kinoko and surf clam vol-au-vent</p> <p>Entrée: Grilled cow's stomach</p> <p>Poisson: Sea urchin gratin</p> <p>Viande: Honshu venison loin and blood consommé</p> <p>Dessert: Meringue ice cream</p> <p>Mont Blanc à ma façon</p>			
E04 S10	35:35 – 37:20	<p>After service, Rinko went to ask Linda, the editor in chief of a food magazine, a renowned food critic, about her dining experience that night.</p>	<p>Rinko: Thank you very much for dining at our restaurant today.</p> <p>Linda: Although the seafood dish was delayed, I understand it must be difficult on your first day. Otsukaresama.</p> <p>Rinko: What did you think of the dessert? Could you share your critique with the chefs in charge of desserts?</p> <p>Linda: Sure. The first dessert, meringue ice cream. It was treated with highly concentrated salt spray, right? It had a slightly different flavour with every bite. It looked deceptively simple, but it was not too heavy and was very interesting. But ... the Mont Blanc à ma façon... C'est magnifique! It was better than the first one. Did you use chestnut shells? It had the charred fragrance and bitterness of roasted chestnuts which brought out the natural fragrance of the chestnuts ... a splendid idea. It had a light aftertaste and was a great ending to the entire dinner. It suited the rest of the menu perfectly. Most importantly, the presentation was beautiful.</p>	-	-

E04 S11	39:05 – 41:15	Matsui's reflection	<p>Matsui: Actually, that Mont Blanc was created by Chef Hirako after tons of hard work.</p> <p>Aizawa: I see... But I could see the effort you put in from the moment I taste it.</p> <p>Matsui: No, all I did was design the plating. All of you worked so hard for this day. My dishonesty really let everyone down. I am really sorry.</p> <p>Kyono: But the Mont Blanc was delicious and really beautiful. That's why chef Rinko put it on our menu.</p> <p>Obana: Still, no matter how hard we worked, it doesn't influence the guests. This Mont Blanc made our guests really happy. That's enough.</p> <p>Matsui: I was too arrogant about my talent. I'm sorry. I still want to continue learning; I want to work harder. So, please let me work here!</p> <p>Obana: What should we do?</p> <p>Rinko: We're really strict, alright?</p>	Matsui	-
E04 S12	42:15 – 43:00	Shohei and Kyono's conversation when he's leaving the restaurant	<p>Shohei: I finally understand why Obana-san never acknowledged my capability. I was just incapable of creating delicious dishes.</p> <p>Kyono: Obana said, the quiche is so much better now, he said that adding almonds to the quiche is a good idea.</p>	Shohei	
E04 S13	44:32 – 45:21	Linda's review on Grand Maison Tokyo is out, not only has she praised the restaurant but she also mentioned that the restaurant's sous chef is Obana, who was involved in the food allergy incident scandal		-	-

		three years ago at Escoffille in Paris.			
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Episode 5

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E05 S1	00:01– 01:25	Flash back to Escoffille three years ago, they just received a call from Michelin for staying as two-star restaurant, but Obana was not happy about it so he went outside for a break. And Shohei served the staff meal he prepared.	Kyono: Regarding Michelin ... two stars. Staff1: Two stars again? Staff2: But I guess that's not bad. Everyone applauds. Obana slapped the table with documents: Is it worth rejoicing about? It's just Two stars. What is there to be happy about?	Obana	Parmantier with chestnuts and mushrooms
E05 S2	01:29– 02:15	The article Linda wrote had caught journalists' attention on the food allergen contamination three years ago, Obana and Rinko are being followed by a bunch of reporters who are eager to find out the culprit.		-	-
E05 S3	03:33– 05:01	Because of Linda's article, many customers cancelled their booking on the day of the grand opening.		-	-
E05 S4	05:04– 06:05	Shohei having lunch with his girlfriend and her father at traditional Japanese restaurant. The father was blaming Shohei for asking him to help Grand Maison Tokyo with the fund, but the scandal will affect his		Shohei	Grilled eel bento, miso soup and pickles on the side, and hot tea. Table setting, wet towel, chopsticks.

		reputation. He threatens Shohei to cut ties with everything related to those people or he will be fired from the hotel, since the father knows the boss of the hotel.			
E05 S5	07:20– 09:26	Shohei came to Grand Maison Tokyo. The team found out that Shohei was the one who helped them get the funding by asking his girlfriend's father and he also helped with purchasing the fresh deer thigh.		Shohei	
E05 S6	09:58– 10:35	Aizawa was wondering what's Shohei's plan now	Shohei: I intend to go back home and help out. Aizawa: Your family owns a gyoza factory, right? Obana: Shohei, are you really going to give up on being a French cuisine chef? Shohei: Yes. Aizawa: Didn't you say that you'd get three stars one day?	Shohei	-
E05 S7	11:00– 11:54	Because everyone cancelled their reservation, there's a lot of ingredients prepped in the fridge, Obana suggested making curry with those ingredients and selling it at a food festival.	Obana: It's decided. At a food festival, we'll sell ... curry. We just need to add spices and cook it slowly. Rinko: Then who don't we just buy less ingredients? Obana: Are you serious? If we do get customers, but we don't have enough ingredients to serve them, the situation would be even worse. Also, we should be thinking about how to get more people to try our food, right? Our food is great.	Obana	-
E05 S8	12:12– 13:25	Going to market to buy spices for making curry	Shohei: We need cumin from India and the cardamon should be as fresh as possible.	-	-

			<p>Rinko: Our goal is to become a three-Michelin star French restaurant, yet we are making curry. He always doing whatever he wants, I wonder if he feels any remorse at all.</p> <p>Aizawa: He's very remorseful, that's why he's making curry. Obana would never make lunch at Escoffille. He said that top chefs would never cheapen their food, But now he's aiming for a B-grade gourmet food festival. He is really giving his all, because he wants to save this restaurant.</p> <p>Rinko: Let's buy more coriander.</p> <p>Obana: Why? Us Japanese prefer European flavours to Indian ones.</p>		
E05 S9	13:25– 14:35	<p>Prepping European-style game curry: Lard, cardamom, cumin, coriander, cinnamon, red peppers, black pepper, bay leaves, garlic, ginger, celery, onion, carrots, venison stock.</p> <p>Roux: Wheat flour, curry powder, cumin powder, butter.</p> <p>String</p>	<p>Obana: The bones do need to be roasted in order to bring out more flavour.</p>	Obana	-
E05 S10	22:05– 22:30	<p>The team is prepping another batch of curry for the food festival at Rinko's place since there are no reservations for the next night.</p>	<p>Rinko: There were many children at the food festival today. So, Obana decided to change the recipe a little for tomorrow and chop the ingredients into slightly smaller sizes.</p> <p>Shohei: He made it slightly less spicy too.</p>	Obana	-
E05 S11	24:00– 24:22	<p>Breakfast scene Eating leftover curry with rice with hot tea, bowl.</p>		-	-
E05 S12	24:34– 25:00	<p>Rinko and Obana arrived at the food</p>		-	-

		festival and found out there are a lot of people queuing at their food stall because their food seemed to get rave reviews online on the first day.			
E05 S13	26:17– 26:23	Venison burger was created to sell at food festivals. Popularity was gained through social media.		-	Buns, venison loin, lettuce, tomato, onions, mushrooms, teriyaki sauce (bbq sauce, sake, mirin, sugar, soy sauce).
E05 S14	26:41– 27:00	Gyoza was made for the food festival.		-	Minced pork filling, Chinese cabbage, spring onion, garlic, ginger, salt, peppers, eggs, sesame, oil, squid, shiso, Japanese tiger prawn, Chinese leek, cow stomach (mino).
E05 S15	29:58– 32:15	Shohei went for dinner at Gaku and stayed to chat with Tango. And then, we found out Shohei was the person responsible for the food contamination by accident.	<p>Tango: I've always wondered. You worship Obana more than anyone, but when Obana opened a restaurant with Kyono and Aizawa, you didn't join them. Why is that so? Were you responsible for the nut ingredient contamination three years ago?</p> <p>Shohei stayed silent.</p> <p>Tango: What are you planning to do?</p> <p>Shohei: I'll quit my job at the hotel and I'll come clean about what happened three years ago.</p> <p>Tango: Once you tell the truth, you'll never be able to work as a French cuisine chef ever again. No restaurant aiming for Michelin stars will ever hire you. You'll be a pariah in this industry. I remember you once proclaimed that French cuisine is the king. Can you really bear to give it up?</p>	<p>Shohei</p> <p>Tango</p>	-

E05 S16	38:21– 42:30	Shohei was about to come clean on the things he did to everyone since the food stall was being investigated because someone reported them. Obana stopped him and offered to make staff meal, in which he made the same staff meal that Shohei made three years ago when they learnt about staying as a two-star restaurant at Escoffille, Chestnut and mushroom parmentier.	<p>Shohei: My recipe, you changed it.</p> <p>Obana: Ah.</p> <p>Shohei: Peanut oil.</p> <p>Obana: Ah</p> <p>Shohei (whispered): It was my mistake.</p> <p>Obana: Food festival was fun. I always believed that French cooking had unlimited possibilities. Someone, somewhere, will always come up with new creations. Will this be the birth of a new three-star restaurant? Isn't that a chef's dream?</p> <p>Obana: When I ate the staff meal you made at Escoffille, I felt so reassured. Hirako Shohei's food has the power to encourage and offer comfort. Not everyone has that kind of talent, it's uniquely yours.</p> <p>Shohei: I am sorry.</p> <p>Obana: You don't need to say anything, but you must never give up on French cooking.</p>	Shohei Obana	<p>Oxtail, garlic, onion, carrots, celery, eschallots, red wine, cognac.</p> <p>Oxtail and red wine stew, mushrooms, chestnuts, croutons, Gruyère cheese and parsley.</p>
E05 S17	42:55– 43:10	The online system of Grand Maison Tokyo started to be flooded with reservations. The team was surprised as they found out that are on the shortlist for Top 50 restaurants.		-	-

Episode 6

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E06 S1	03:01– 03:20	Explaining Top 50 ranking.	Kyono: The Top 50 ranking is seen as a precursor to Michelin. It's one of the most influential accolades in the world. Matsui: Do you mean our restaurant could be among the likes of El Bulli, Noma and Francescana?	-	-
E06 S2	03:45– 04:23	Shohei joined Tango at Gaku and improved the lamb dish.	Staff: Isn't this simply smoked meat? Shohei: Before smoking it, I wrapped it in kombu to tenderise the meat, the lamb rack was smoked using rice straw to make it more fragrant, I added shihochiku (a type of bamboo shoot) and flower kimchi. Tango: I think the kombu's umami taste can be stronger, but it's in a right direction.	Shohei	-
E06 S3	05:05– 06:25	Meanwhile, the team at Grand Maison Tokyo decided to change one new seasonal dish on the menu for the Top 50 ranking inspection.	Rinko: Why do you want to replace the seafood dish? Aren't we satisfied with the uni gratin? Obana: That dish is great, but Japan's fresh fish is world-famous. Don't you want to showcase that to the world? Rinko: That's true, Japan is known for being very particular about our sashimi. Then let's create a dish that shows sashimi to the best. --- Rinko: What do you recommend for today? Fishmonger: The sawara (Spanish mackerel) from Miyagi is extra-large today. Rinko: The females store fat in the winter before spawning which makes them more delicious.	-	-
E06 S4	06:30– 07:45	Gaku is also revising their seafood dish. Shohei and another	Staff: I tried using pumpkin seed broth to poach the grouper. There are also walnuts, beech herb and wheat koji in the sauce.	-	-

		staff member both came up with a dish for Tango to taste.	<p>Tango: The flavours will be acceptable to diners from all countries. Shohei, what about you?</p> <p>Shohei: I used fig leaves to wrap the monkfish and poached the papillote (enveloped in paper) in mushroom and seaweed stock. The flavours of monkfish and kombu blend together to provide an impactful combination.</p> <p>Tango: Let's improve on this idea.</p>		-
E06 S5	09:22– 10:09	Serita, an apprentice at Grand Maison Tokyo, is sick of practicing 5mm cubes and not being about to help the team as Obana said he isn't ready. Eto, the owner of Gaku, called him over to bribe him.	<p>Eto: Please get me the seafood recipe</p> <p>Serita: Are you going to copy it?</p> <p>Eto: Recipe do not have copyrights. An omelette made with eggs and butter ... that has been copied all across the world, hasn't it. The biggest difference between Gaku and Grand Maison Tokyo is funding. Even if we were to make the same dish using the same recipe, our restaurant would use more expensive ingredients and make a superior dish.</p>	Serita Eto	-
E06 S6	11:20– 12:45	Breakfast scene, Rinko and Obana brainstorming idea regarding the seafood dish	<p>Obana: About the sawara. It might taste really good if we smoke or age it. Compared to doing it carpaccio style, it might be better to give it some heat.</p> <p>Rinko: I think so too. Maybe meuniere (dredged in flour and fried) or something, I think...</p> <p>Obana: Not meuniere. That would get rid of all the fresh rawness.</p> <p>Rinko: No worries, it'll be ok as long as the amount of heat is suitable.</p>		Baked Toast with sausage, vegetables and cheese, seasoned with tabasco
E06 S7	15:00– 16:48	Serita volunteered to make staff meal. He made "Parapara" fried rice made with 5mm veggies.	<p>Serita: Will you let me make our meal for today?</p> <p>Matsui: But I want to eat something yummy.</p>	Serita	-

			<p>Serita: Don't worry, I've been working here for quite a long time</p> <p>Rinko: We'll leave it to you then ---</p> <p>Matsui: This is bad.</p> <p>Rinko: Hey... if you use a newly sharpened knife to cut ingredients, they will have a metallic taste.</p> <p>Aizawa: Our job is physically demanding. Do you think we'd want to eat a meal with only rice and vegetables?</p> <p>Obana: Clean this up.</p> <p>Matsui: I'll make us another meal.</p>		
E06 S8	17:05– 18:45	Kyono noticed Serita was not happy, so he brought him to dinner at izakaya.	<p>Kyono: Don't be shy, have some more.</p> <p>Serita: Why did you invite me out for drinks</p> <p>Kyono: I thought you seemed unhappy.</p> <p>Serita: Not really.</p> <p>Kyono: At first, Shohei was just like you too.</p> <p>Serita: It's always about Shohei. If you all like him so much, why don't you work with him instead.</p> <p>Kyono: Sorry, I didn't mean to compare both of you. It's normal that you'd misunderstand, I apologize.</p> <p>Serita: I don't care, I'm just lousy at it anyway. I don't have the skills or the talent, unlike all of you.</p> <p>Kyono: Nobody knows right at the start whether they're talented or not. Everyone who works hard at cooking will not know for sure if they're talented to begin with. But the more you work hard and hone your skills, the more you'll realize your talent.</p>	Serita Kyono	Beer, Yakitori

			<p>Serita: What should I do?</p> <p>Kyono: Obana and Rinko-san may not say this, but they see the effort you put in, Serita-kun. If I had to guess, I'd say that they do not want you to become a chef who can only follow orders. That's why they act this way. After all, both of them are more creative and work harder than anyone else.</p>		
E06 S9	19:00– 19:25	Obana and Rinko developing the new seafood dish.	<p>Rinko: The roasted version is the best, after all.</p> <p>Obana: Yes.</p> <p>Rinko: We had so many failed attempts though</p> <p>Obana: But now we know for sure that roasting is the best way to cook it.</p> <p>Rinko: Now we can confidently recommend this to our customer.s</p> <p>Obana: In order to showcase the flavour of the fish, we should go with a simple sauce.</p> <p>Rinko: We shall discuss this with Aizawa.</p> <p>Obana: But the most important thing is controlling the heat.</p>	Obana Rinko	-
E06 S10	23:05– 23:50	Aizawa had come up with a sauce to go with the dish.	<p>Rinko: Fennel, celery and Italian parsley, dill, capers and crystal pomelo.</p> <p>Aizawa: So as not to spoil the delicate flavour of the rare sawara. I made a light-tasting sauce.</p> <p>Obana: What accompanying elements will you use?</p> <p>Aizawa: It depends on the daily fresh ingredients. But there will be tardivo radicchio cooked with the poele method (the item is cooked in its own juices).</p>	Aizawa	Crystal pomelo, fennel, celery, Italian parsley, dill, capers, green peppers, lime, shimeji, mushrooms, poplar mushrooms, king oyster mushrooms, trumpet mushrooms, olive oil.
E06 S11	23:53- 24:05	Serita went to work part-time at the fish market and	Fishmonger: Try this ... this part is often thrown away but it's	-	Chargrilled

		learn from the fishmonger.	delicious too. No part of the fish should be wasted.		
E06 S12	24:16– 25:01	Completing the seafood dish.	<p>Obana: This is roast sawara with crystal pomelo sauce.</p> <p>Rinko: We've used female sawara with high fat content for this dish. It's been aged for a day and the fat had been rendered to intensify the umami flavour. This skin is crispy, but the centre is still raw.</p> <p>Kuzumi (sommelier): Incredible! Even though it's been roasted, it's almost like sashimi on the inside.</p> <p>Rinko: Aizawa-san's pomelo sauce also complements it perfectly. No, it was difficult to choose between this and girolle mushroom with white wine sauce.</p>	-	-
E06 S13	25:10– 26:40	<p>Serita was cutting burdock and he saw Aizawa prepping the sawara. He offered to assist Aizawa with the same knife and got rejected. Aizawa went to the storeroom, Serita deboned the fish with the same knife he used for cutting burdock and got caught.</p> <p>Serita quit.</p>	<p>Serita: Aizawa-san, let me help you.</p> <p>Aizawa: It's alright, don't worry about it.</p> <p>Serita: I can do it!</p> <p>Aizawa: It's dangerous.</p> <p>Matsui: Don't get in the way. ----</p> <p>Obana: What are you doing?</p> <p>Serita: How's this? Isn't it perfect? Look, it's just nicely done as Aizawa-san's fillet, isn't it?</p> <p>Obana: Are you kidding? It's completely different. We can't serve this to guests anymore.</p> <p>Serita: But it looks the same ... why can't you admit. I'm trying my best!</p> <p>Obana: Which knife did you use? You're not good enough for this restaurant yet.</p> <p>Serita: I get it. I've had enough.</p>	Serita	-
E06 S14	27:03– 28:05	Serita went to Gaku and gave Eto	Serita: I just quit my job at that lousy restaurant. You were right, Eto-san. There's no way I'll	-	-

		his note on the seafood dish.	become a top chef if I don't work in a top restaurant. Thank you for your help from now on .		
E06 S15	28:05– 28:30	Serita was drinking beer outside the convenience store, Kyono ran into him and invited him to dine at Grand Maison Tokyo.		-	-
E06 S16	28:35– 31:00	Shohei and Tango revising the monkfish dish. Monkfish on the bone and monkfish liver, with lemon thyme and butter Meanwhile, Eto asked his other staff to follow Serita's note to create the same dish.		-	Pan-seared monkfish with butter, adding lemon thyme, trifoliolate orange, kombu. Poaching monkfish liver in kombu, thyme stock. Miso on plate. Topped with sliced kombu circle.
E06 S17	32:15– 33:05	Serita dining at Gand Maison Tokyo	Kyono: How's the food? Serita: It's very delicious. Somehow... it seems even more delicious than usual Kyono: I try all new dishes when we try out new recipes, but they're different from the ones we serve to customers. In every dish that we serve to customers, there's a bit of the chef's soul. That's why a good dish gets even better when customers are there to enjoy it.	Serita Kyono	-
E06 S18	35:09– 39:35	After the meal, Serita learnt his lesson. And came back to the team.	Kyono: Thank you for visiting us today. Serita: Ah, no...I'll pay for my meal. Obana: I can't accept your money. Because that dish wasn't supposed to be served to customers. Serita: The roast sawara, when compared to the trial dishes, had a more fishy taste.	Serita	

			<p>Rinko: You really noticed, huh?</p> <p>Obana: We used the fillet that you had cut, for your plate.</p> <p>Aizawa: If you cut fish with a knife that was used to cut bitter vegetables that taste transfer onto the fish and it degrades the flavour of the fish. Remember that.</p> <p>Serita: That's why you said ... mine was completely different from Aizawa-san's.</p> <p>Obana: I knew that you asked the fishmonger at the market to hire you and teach you how to prepare fish. But that was something you were already supposed to do. This restaurant you're working at it's aiming for three stars. Don't underestimate what it takes to cook here.</p> <p>Serita: I am sorry! I betrayed everyone. I gave the seafood dish recipe to Eto-san from Gaku. I took his money and spied for him. I'm sorry.</p> <p>Obana: Don't you know the consequences of giving that recipe to other restaurants?</p> <p>Serita: They said that they would be sawara of higher quality, so if the recipe was copied, Grand Maison Tokyo would lose out. It's my fault, I put everyone's hard work to waste. I'm sorry.</p> <p>Everyone laughed.</p> <p>Obana: You've really underestimated us. How can others copy a recipe that we've worked so hard to create?</p> <p>Aizawa: At this level of cooking, it's not just about following a recipe.</p>	
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			<p>Kyono: A top chef will not care if his recipe is leaked to others because he is confident that the dish he makes is the best one.</p> <p>Rinko: The quality of the sawara that is procured also influences how it should be cooked. The duration for which it is aged, as well as the oven temperature, need to be adjusted based on the temperature and humidity on the day of preparation. If someone thinks they can copy us, they can go ahead and try.</p> <p>Obana: It's not just the roast sawara. The eggplant pressé and the roast venison too. Not a single one of our dishes can be easily copied by others. Our job isn't a simple one, restaurants that copy others' recipes are everywhere. But if you want to be awarded three stars, you've got to rely on yourself to come up with original dishes. Serita, which one do you want to be? What type of chef do you want to become? It's up to you.</p>		
E06 S19	39:36– 42:15	<p>Serita asked for another chance to make staff meal for the team.</p> <p>And everyone was pleased and finished their plate unlike the first time where everyone only took one bite.</p>	<p>Kyono: Delicious... it really is!</p> <p>Kuzumi: Yummy. The sawara is really tasty.</p> <p>Obana: But there's still something missing.</p> <p>Rinko: The heat control could have been more consistent.</p> <p>Aizawa: The zucchini seems redundant.</p> <p>Matsui: I would have liked it to be more colourful.</p> <p>Rinko: But Serita-kun, I can tell that you've put a lot of thought into this in order to try and please everyone. You applied all your skills and knowledge to come up with this dish and we appreciate it.</p>	Serita Team	<p>Rice</p> <p>Seasme oil</p> <p>Salt</p> <p>Pepper</p> <p>Soy sauce</p> <p>Carrots</p> <p>Onions</p> <p>Zucchini</p> <p>Red peprika</p> <p>Spring onions</p> <p>sawara</p>

			<p>Everyone: Thank you for the meal.</p> <p>Obana: After you're done clearing up, go and practice preparing sawara fillets.</p> <p>Serita: May I? Can I continue to work here?</p> <p>You're in charge of ingredient prep.</p>		
E06 S20	42:44– 43:55	Conversation between Shohei and Tango.	<p>Shohei: After working with you, I've understood once again. Tango-san, you're indeed a genius.</p> <p>Tango: Ever since judging for the Top 50 ranking started, I've been nervous every day. I wake up in the morning and look at myself in the mirror, I try to get myself motivated to come to work. If I were truly a genius, I'd be enjoying myself much more during this time.</p> <p>Shohei: It's normal to feel nervous.</p> <p>Tango: Obana is different. He's enjoying himself thoroughly.</p>	Shohei Tango	-
E06 S21	44:10– 44:40	Rinko and Obana discussing what to use as sides, chicory or wasabi green.		-	-

Episode 7

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E07 S1	02:57– 06:30	<p>Aizawa's wife, Elise, returned and asked to take Amelie with her back to Paris.</p> <p>Elise challenged Obana, if Grand Maison Tokyo can get a higher ranking than</p>	<p>Elise: Aizawa is working with you, right?</p> <p>Obana: Oui.</p> <p>Elise: Why did you invite him to do so?</p> <p>Obana: Because we need him in our quest for three Michelin stars.</p>	Elise Aizawa	-

		Escoffile used to get, which is higher than 10th, she will not take Amelie with her.	<p>Elise: You're talking about this again. Aizawa kept talking about it, "I must get three stars", "If we get three stars, I'll quit Escoffile" Those years he kept saying. In the end it never happened, and you just ran away, right?</p> <p>---</p> <p>Elise to Aizawa: Anyway, you're going to spend all your time cooking with Obana again, aren't you? Are you going to leave Amelie with more bad memories?</p> <p>Rinko: But Aizawa-san is now trying hard to take time off work to spend time with Amelie.</p> <p>Elise: A chef who is aiming for three stars can't possibly have time for both his children and his work, right?</p>		
E07 S2	08:00– 10:13	<p>Rinko lets Elise stay at her place. Obana was cooking dinner for them:</p> <p>Deep fried tofu with spring onions, (sake, mirin, sugar, soy sauce) miso and Gruyere cheese. Red wine presented.</p>	<p>Rinko: But actually, Aizawa-san is caring and gentlemanly. Didn't you feel so lucky to marry him?</p> <p>Elise: At the start, he'd make me dishes to go with wine every night. We'd stay up all night talking about silly things But because they were relentlessly chasing after those 3 stars, it was really tough for everyone. I hate Michelin. Chefs were pouring their blood, sweat and tears, all for the sake of getting three stars.</p> <p>Rinko: That's true. You've caused quite a bit of trouble for Aizawa-san too.</p>	Obana Elise	Deep fried tofu, miso, spring onions, sake, mirin, sugar, soy sauce, gruyère cheese.
E07 S3	12:02– 12:32	Obana asked the game hunter to bring them some fresh ingredients for Aizawa and him to make a new dish for Elise.	<p>Shiitake, Nameko, grey knight mushroom, lion's mane mushroom, oyster mushroom, olive oyster mushroom, wood blewit, brick cap mushroom, breech oyster mushroom, gypsy mushroom, Charbonnier</p>		
E07 S4	14:50	Tango invited Serita to take a tour of their kitchen since Eto asked him to spy	Tango: We won't serve customers simple dishes with basic raw flavours. Our restaurant isn't like yours. In order to maximize our ingredients' flavours to the fullest	Habanero miso: wheat koji, salt, yuzu peel, amur cork tree seeds. Pineapple caramelized for 14 weeks'	

		<p>on Grand Maison Toyko before.</p> <p>They have machines specifically for fermenting, brining, ageing, smoking, drying.</p>	<p>extent, we process them thoroughly and combine them with our chefs' inspiration and knowledge to create complex flavour combinations. That's Gaku's style of cooking.</p>	<p>Tomato, porcini, pine needles</p> <p>Salted sour cassis, ethanol yuzu peel, salted hibiscus, pickled fatsia sprouts, apple-vinegar-pickled sage flowers, apple vinegar pickled fennel flowers, salted parsley flowers.</p> <p>Yuzu peel, Curry leaves, Bergamot peel, Tumeric, Smoked kanzuri pepper paste, amur cork tree seeds, porcini, Japanese golden chanterelles, salted sakura, black togarashi pepper.</p> <p>Longtooth grouper.</p>	
E07 S5	17:20–18:10	<p>Aizawa and Elise went for a chat at a Japanese café for coffee, Elise asked to go to court. Obana and Rinko was present as well, Obana had creamy soda.</p>			
E07 S6	18:11–20:25	<p>Amelie had a fever and wondered where her mother was. Amelie refused to eat anything, not even her favourite raspberry jelly that Obana made. Rinko came to Aizawa's home and delivered rice pudding that Elise made. Amelie ate it without hesitation.</p>	<p>Obana: She didn't care about my jelly. (Tastes the rice pudding, aka riz au lait.) This is too sweet and it's not evenly cooked.</p> <p>Aizawa's mother: What's that?</p> <p>Obana: Rice pudding.</p> <p>Rinko: It's common in France, something that mothers make for their children when they fall sick.</p> <p>Aizawa: She is meddling again.</p> <p>Rinko: But Elise-san, she put so much effort into making this. After all, nothing beats the taste of your mother's cooking.</p>	<p>Amelie</p> <p>Elise</p>	<p>Rice, milk, sugar, lemon peel, cinnamon, vanilla bean</p>
E07 S7	21:59–22:50	<p>Rinko and Elise's conversation,</p>	<p>Rinko: This is ... too sweet!</p>		

		Rinko invites Elise to have a meal at the restaurant after Amelie recovers.	<p>Elise: I can't help it, I'm not a chef.</p> <p>Rinko: But Amelie was so happy.</p> <p>Elise: Whenever she had a fever in the past, she'd never be willing to eat anything other than this. Thank you, Rinko-san!</p>	<p>Elise</p> <p>Rinko</p>	-
E07 S8	22:54– 24:45	<p>Obana and Aizawa developing new dishes with the mushrooms at his place.</p> <p>Tempura: Gypsy mushroom, flour, dried yeast, water, salt.</p> <p>Fire torch: nameko, onsen egg yolk.</p>	<p>Aizawa: Hey, do you think I can use this (Japanese omelette pan) to make a galette (flat cake).</p> <p>Obana: That's interesting. Let's try it.</p> <p>---</p> <p>Aizawa: pass the salt please.</p> <p>Obana: You are adding too much.</p> <p>Aizawa: It'll be fine. For Elise, this is just right. Try it.</p> <p>Obana: No no no no.</p> <p>Aizawa: Yes yes yes. I know her better than you do.</p> <p>Obana: A good chef is one who knows his customers' preferences inside out.</p> <p>Aizawa: Just now, your jelly lost to her rice pudding. Amelie ate it like it was the most delicious thing. Amelie might really be happier living with Elise.</p>	<p>Obana</p> <p>Aizawa</p>	-
E07 S9	25:00– 35:05	<p>Aizawa, his mother, Amelie and Elise came to Grand Maison Tokyo for a special lunch. Three adult menus and one children's menu: Mini omu (Omelette) rice for Amuse.</p> <p>After three courses Aizawa's mother left with Amelie.</p>	<p>Obana: Here is your special dish, Galette champignons (mushroom galette). Please roll it up before eating it.</p> <p>Rinko: Aizawa and Obana created this dish specifically for you.</p> <p>Elise took a bite and dropped it.</p> <p>Aizawa: Elise?</p> <p>Kyono: Is there something wrong?</p> <p>Elise: Every dish was delicious. That's the thing I hate. How much did you put yourself through in</p>	<p>Elise</p>	-

		<p>The new dish created was served to Elise.</p>	<p>order to make such delicious dishes? You must have worked even harder than you did in the past and sacrificed more sleep. And you must have had less time for Amelie, right? Why must you do this to yourself? I can't leave Amelie with someone like you.</p> <p>Obana: This is the last dish of the day.</p> <p>Elise: I don't want to eat your food anymore.</p> <p>Obana: This isn't a dish made by our restaurant.</p> <p>Elise: What is this?</p> <p>Obana: It's raspberry jelly. It's made by a chef called Amelie. Just for you, Elise-san.</p> <p>Elise: Did you ask her to make it?</p> <p>Obana: No, Amelie asked me to teach her how to make this dessert. She hoped that you would come back, so she wanted to give you a present. Amelie really put a lot of effort into this and made it on her own.</p> <p>Elise: That child, when did she learn to make this?</p> <p>Aizawa: Ever since I started working from home, she often cooks with me.</p> <p>Elise: If only you had treated me this way in the past.</p> <p>Aizawa: Take Amelie back to Paris with you.</p>		
E07 S10	39:35– 42:10	<p>Grand Maison Tokyo ended up getting 10th place, which didn't surpass Escoffile and Amelie is going back to Paris with Elise. The team went to say farewell at the bus</p>	<p>Elise: Are you thinking of giving up on getting three stars?</p> <p>Obana: So annoying ... of course I'm not.</p> <p>Elise: In the past, I believed that you were capable of it too, because the food you make is really wonderful, but you never</p>	<p>Elise</p> <p>Obana</p>	-

		stop. Amelie told Aizawa that Elise will wait for her.	achieved your goal and I watched Aizawa going down a path of desperation. He was suffering. Then the scandal happened, I had enough of it, it was too much. I still don't understand why all this hard work is worth it. But this time, you must achieve your goal. Let that man have his wish, his three stars. Although you didn't manage to get a ranking higher than 10th place this time. I can say for certain that Grand Maison Tokyo's food is better than Escofille.		
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Episode 8

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E08 S1	02:11– 02:21	Breakfast scene: Minced okra, nattou and shredded garlic with miso soup, rice.		-	-
E08 S2	04:24– 04:37 43:22– 45:00	Linda came to Grand Maison Tokyo to interview Rinko after the restaurant being ranked 10th place in the Top 50.	Linda: The quest for Michelin- Chef Hayami Rinko's challenge. There are 484 Michelin restaurants in Tokyo. Among them, there are only three female chefs who have attained Michelin stars and not a single French restaurant. And now, what strategies will you and Grand Maison Tokyo take in your quest for Michelin stars? Rinko: For the sake of being awarded Michelin stars, Grand Maison Tokyo will not take any special action. Although we'll be giving our menu a facelift, it will not be for the sake of being awarded Michelin stars. It will be for our customers' sake. We will treat every customer with sincerity as we always do and provide our best food and service. Linda: Isn't that a given? Rinko: Continuing to do the things that people expect of us is	Linda Rinko	-

			<p>actually the most difficult, isn't it?</p> <p>Rinko: My staff, whom I highly trust, taught me that. As a restaurant becomes more famous, prices tend to get higher and more expensive ingredients will be used. For the sake of getting stars, some may even make the waitstaff wear bow ties in the trendy Northern European style or change all the cutlery and tableware to silver ones. But that's not the most important thing. We mustn't get caught up in superficial things like those. Our customers' satisfaction and praise is most important.</p> <p>Linda: All the top chefs in the world are now thinking hard about how they can be awarded Michelin stars. Excuse me for saying this, but do you think your idealistic words will get you a star?</p> <p>Rinko: Three stars. If we're going to get any stars, we're getting three! We will continue to focus on satisfying our customers' palates. By virtue of this, we'll become a new three-Michelin-star French restaurant.</p>		
E08 S3	07:35– 11:41	<p>Obana brought his mentor to dine at the restaurant.</p> <p>He only took one bite from every dish and stopped after the eggplant pressé.</p>	<p>Obana: Please sit and wait until the restaurant is open for business.</p> <p>Rinko: Who's that?</p> <p>Obana: He's my mentor from when I first started cooking in Japan, Ushio Suguru.</p> <p>Ushio: Natsuki, let me see what your restaurant can do. You said you're aiming for three stars, right? Before that, you've got to make dishes that can satisfy me.</p> <p>Obana: Ok. --- Ushio: I've had enough, I'm leaving.</p>	Obana Ushio	-

			<p>Kyono: Is there something you're not satisfied with?</p> <p>Ushiro: It's as I expected ... the food isn't pleasant to eat. Your skills have worsened Natsuki?</p> <p>Rinko: May I know how we can improve on our restaurant's dishes?</p> <p>Ushio: Everything needs to be improved, the food tastes bad. You're the head chef in charge, right? What drives your cooking? You amateur.</p> <p>Ushio (to Kyono): You're the biggest problem here. You're most often in contact with customers. What are you focusing on? It's unbearable... You only have eyes for Michelin stars and lost sight of what's important.</p>		
E08 S4	13:45–14:55	Obana and Rinko came to Ushio's restaurant. It's like a classic old downtown Western restaurant.	<p>Obana: Two beef stews</p> <p>Ushio: Ok.</p> <p>Rinko: Is that the restaurant's signature dish?</p> <p>Obana: Everyone orders it.</p> <p>Rinko: To be honest, I can imagine what it tastes like even before I try it. It's that familiar taste of a nostalgic Western restaurant's beef stew. A retro western dish that has the flavours of the Showa era. But that's how it is, people who are after affordable and good food will reject the idea of high-end French restaurants.</p>	Obana Rinko Ushio	-
E08 S5	15:25–17:40	Tasting the beef stew	<p>Rinko: Itadakimasu! This isn't like the usual retro Western food at all. It's so delicate, just one bite and you can feel the chef's efforts. The tenderness of the beef tongue is superb. And this demiglace sauce, it has dried tomatoes and bacon. You must have spent so much effort on it. This is so much better than some dishes at high-end restaurants.</p>	Rinko Obana Ushio	Demiglace sauce: beef tendon, mirepoix, bacon, dried tomatoes, starch, red wine, water

			<p>Ushio: Don't think that a roadside French restaurant can't compare to a high-end one.</p> <p>Rinko: Apologies. ---</p> <p>Customers came in and asked for their usual.</p> <p>Rinko: This reminds me of my previous restaurant. I'd think, I'll make this dish because this person is coming today and prepare à la carte dishes.</p> <p>Obana: But you persisted for 10 years and still didn't get a star.</p> <p>Rinko: But I was happy. The customers loved my dishes.</p>		
E08 S6	25:35– 27:10	Ushio went into hospital because of illness, he asked Obana to look after his restaurant for him. Obana called Kyono for help.	<p>Customer1: This is different from my usual order. I don't want fresh cream on mine.</p> <p>Kyono: Eh?</p> <p>Customer2: Mine too. Why does mine have carrots?</p> <p>Kyono: But this is the normal menu item.</p> <p>Customer3: Ushi-san tweaks each order for every customer. I wear dentures, so he cuts the beef up into small pieces for me.</p> <p>Customer2: Each dish is custom-made, just like a mother's cooking.</p> <p>Obana: I apologise, I will remake them.</p> <p>Kyono: I apologise for the inconvenience, do you mind repeating your order for me? Please tell me your preferences in detail.</p>	Kyono Obana	
E08 S7	28:24– 34:50	Kyono suggested inviting Ushio for a meal again to celebrate his hospital discharge, Obana and Kyono realized what they	<p>Kyono: Ushi-sama, could you start with telling me your food preferences? Also, since you have just been discharged from the hospital, may I know how you are feeling today?</p> <p>---</p>	Obana Kyono Ushio	

		<p>did wrong at first and intended to do things differently.</p> <p>Ushio finishes everything on his plate this time.</p>	<p>Kyono: The broccoli sprouts that accompany the grilled cow stomach ... I think we need to make some changes to it. When Ushio-san was having the cold soup, he seemed to really like the scent of lime. So I think we should incorporate some fragrance.</p> <p>Obana: What do you think we should add?</p> <p>Kyono: Something refreshing, like citrus herb ... lemon balm</p> <p>Rinko: Mm, will this fragrance be too overpowering?</p> <p>Obana: The voice of the hall (staff) is the voice of God. He gets the closest to customers, we should trust him.</p> <p>Rinko: What do you think of the food?</p> <p>Ushio: Yes, this is how it should be. It was delicious.</p>		
E08 S8	35:17– 36:40	Ushio's situation	<p>Ushio: When did you find out?</p> <p>Obana: When you made stew for me. You didn't taste it, right?</p> <p>Ushio: You could tell, just from that? My sense of taste is affected.</p> <p>Obana: The miso soup in the fridge is as bland as water. ---</p> <p>Kuzumi: Taste dysfunction?</p> <p>Kyono: Yes, no matter what Ushio ate, it would taste twice as salty to him.</p> <p>Aizawa: To a chef, that's a fate worse than death.</p> <p>Serita: No wonder he said our food tasted bad.</p> <p>Matsui: So did Obana make the dishes more bland for him?</p>	-	-

			<p>Rinko: Not just that, because he just got discharged from the hospital, he made the dishes more easily digestible and emphasized their aromas for Ushio-san's enjoyment.</p> <p>Kyono: Ushio-san's restaurant prepares each customer's beef stew according to their liking. We should be focusing on our customers more instead of the food.</p> <p>Serita: But we don't know all our customers' preferences.</p> <p>Kyono: Yes, but we should communicate better with them. I got complacent about our Top Restaurant ranking and neglected to treat each and every customer with sincerity.</p>		
E08 S9	36:46– 38:25	Obana and Ushio's conversation	<p>Ushio: My sense of taste is worsening. My time is coming.</p> <p>Obana: So, is this the last lesson that you'll teach me? The first time you bought me a knife for me to practice cutting 5mm cubes, you told me that I should never forget my roots, no matter where I may be. That I should always be thinking of my customers when I cook and that I should never forget it.</p> <p>Ushio: You still keep it.</p> <p>Obana: I've been too obsessed with Michelin stars, I forgot what you told me.</p> <p>Ushio: I used to aim to be the best too. I would keep trying all sorts of new and different ways of cooking. But everyone ages, you'll find that your purpose in cooking will change. Now, I'm happy as long as I have about 10 regular customers telling me that my food is delicious. Although it sounds like I'm just a sore loser, I see my customers' satisfaction as another "star".</p>		
E08 S10	40:25– 40:40	Obana stayed at Kyono's place and found that he still got all the issues of Oishin-bo, a gourmand comic.		Obana	-
E08 S11	41:20– 42:35	Kyono and Obana's conversation	<p>Kyono: I'm sorry, I blamed you for running away three years ago, Shohei came to look for me, he said you must have been trying to protect someone else.</p> <p>Obana: I did run away. I had only achieved two stars and I was so</p>	Obana Kyono	-

			pressured by all the things people were saying about me, I didn't enjoy cooking anymore, I lost sight of why I was cooking in the first place, I hate that feeling. So I ran away.		
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Episode 9

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E09 S1	00:35– 01:33	Breakfast scene: Udon		-	-
E09 S2	01:48– 04:40	Briefing on restaurant's direction in view of the upcoming Michelin inspections. Kuzumi was asked to lead the changing of the wine menu before she resigned.	<p>Matsui: Are we changing the entire menu?</p> <p>Obana: No, the bavarois appetizer and meringue ice cream's ingredients are not affected by the seasons. Also, they've received good reviews, so they'll remain as permanent menu items. Other than these two dishes, everything else will be changed.</p> <p>Kyono: Amuse, four entrees, seafood, main dish and lastly dessert. Eight dishes in total. Michelin inspections will start in a month's time, so we need to come up with a new menu before that.</p> <p>Obana: Ah, one more thing. I'd like to change something other than the menu. The wine needs big changes since we're using local ingredients in our dishes, we should use local wine too, right?</p>	-	-
E09 S3	05:05– 06:00	Tango and Shohei testing new dishes in Gaku, as Eto started pressuring Tango.	<p>Tango: We still can't bring out the complex flavours of Maitake (sheep's head mushroom)</p> <p>Shohei: It still tastes mediocre. How about ageing it.</p> <p>Tango: You are right. Let's try smoking it slightly and pickling it in koji oil. By trying all ingredient combinations, we'll find the recipe that best suits maitake.</p> <p>Eto (owner): Our ingredients are top of the line, Chef Tango's</p>	-	steaming Maitake mushroom with Pine broth (kombu dashi, pine needles) and miso water (Miso and water)

			skills are flawless too. What else do we need to add another start to our current two stars?		
E09 S4	09:15– 11:32	Kuzumi arranged a wine tasting, Serita and the apprentice made some canapé	<p>Rinko: Wines are part of what a restaurant offers too, right? A restaurant's wine pairings should complement the flavours of the food, but they might also diminish the flavours, so wine choices are very important.</p> <p>Obana: Also, a wine that is favoured by chefs is one that immediately conjures the image of the dish at the first sip.</p> <p>Kuzumi: It's Satou Winery's Brise (2013). It has refreshing notes of acidity with some lingering sweetness. It's uplifting and tasty.</p> <p>Obana: I'll come up with an appetizer that will go well with this wine.</p> <p>Rinko: An appetizer to suit the wine? Shouldn't it be the other way round?</p> <p>Obana: But since there's such a good wine, we can think of the wine as the main focus instead, when creating dishes. We can look at it from a different angle, right?</p> <p>Obana: I'd like to use ingredients from this wine's place of production</p>	Rinko Obana Kuzumi	-
E09 S5	11:30– 11:50	Matsui fainted during the tasting, she was sent to the hospital and diagnosed with norovirus. Aizawa found Kuzumi suspicious as Kuzumi was indeed spying for Linda.		-	-
E09 S6	15:14– 20:15	The team suspected that it was the raw oyster Matsui ate the night before which	Kyono: Right now, it doesn't seem like anyone else at the restaurant got infected.	-	-

		<p>was bought by Kuzumi, while Aizawa overheard her reporting to someone on the phone about Matsui being sick.</p> <p>After discussion, the team decided to close the restaurant for a few days to clean and disinfect the restaurant and ask the authorities to do a thorough inspection at the restaurant. On the other hand, Kyono was tracking down the customers who recently ate at the restaurant.</p>	<p>Obana: The customers are the main problem.</p> <p>Kyono: Norovirus has a latency period of 24 to 28 hours. Those who ate food that Matsui prepared might have been infected.</p> <p>---</p> <p>Aizawa: After the allergy incident three years ago, I think Obana now wants to do all he can to safeguard our customers' well-being. Although our restaurant has been meticulous in terms of food hygiene, accidents are bound to happen despite our best efforts. Food can be beautiful and delicious, but it has a scary side too.</p>		
E09 S7	21:35– 23:45	<p>Obana asked Kuzumi to give he and Rinko a tour at Satou winery.</p>	<p>Kuzumi: This area gets the most sun in Japan. It seldom rains.</p> <p>Obana: Then this land is perfect for growing grapes.</p> <p>Kuzumi: Yes, water travels quickly through this soil too. The grapes are usually grown on hedges, but the grapes used to make that particular wine are grown about 60cm off the ground, on a raised trellis. This reduces the amount of water flowing towards the roots and creates environmental stress on the grape vine.</p> <p>Rinko: This way, the grapes' colour and ripeness are improved. They become sweeter too.</p> <p>Kuzumi: The grapes grown here may exceed 20% sugar content. There are many wineries in Japan that make wine from grapes that are bought from farmers, but this winery owns that vineyard, so they can control every step of the planting process. And so, they can harvest at the optimal time and carry out the wine-making</p>	<p>Kuzumi</p> <p>Obana</p> <p>Rinko</p>	-

			<p>process. From now on, local wines will become more and more prominent on the international stage, I want to contribute to that.</p> <p>Rinko: You seem extra happy when you're talking about such things.</p>		
E09 S7	24:00– 26:21	Kyono delivered good news to the team as no customers were infected. The team decided to start focusing on coming up with their new menu.		-	First try: Jerusalem artichokes, Alaskan snow crab, shirako, garnished with dill, sorrel and chervil.
E09 S8	31:14– 32:47	Kyono figured out Kuzumi's background. Kuzumi and her parents were affected by the incident three years ago and have been living in the shadow of it since. Kuzumi lied about poisoning the food.	Kyono: Three years ago, Obana and I met your father. At that time, your father was still the general secretary of foreign affairs. The venue of the Japan-France summit lunch was decided by your father, right? When the incident happened, I heard that your father was blamed for it by the foreign affairs department, he was then hospitalized for exhaustion and was transferred to work at a rural area afterwards.	Kuzumi	Shirako, court bouillon (stock), salt, female snow crab uchiko sotoko (roe and innards) & miso, clam jus, olive oil, fennel, Japanese mustard greens, Jerusalem artichokes, eggplants lime zest & juice, chervil, dill.
E09 S9	32:50– 35:00	Kuzumi admitted that the reason she came to work was because she wanted to take revenge. As Kumuzi intended to leave, Obana asked her to try the appetizer and give advice.	<p>Kuzumi: Who wants to eat your food?</p> <p>Obana: It's an appetizer created specially for the wine you chose. How about taking some responsibility?</p> <p>Kuzumi: The shirako is too overpowering. The wine's delicate flavour is washed out.</p> <p>Obana: How do you think we should improve it? You're a sommelier, so you should have some ideas.</p> <p>Kuzumi: Raise the temperature of the dish. It will create a greater contrast with the chilled wine. Add aromatic ingredients and increase the bitter flavours that will bring out the sweetness of the wine.</p>	Kuzumi Obana	-

			Obana: But you didn't do it, right? Because you didn't want to contaminate exquisite dishes with something dirty. Kuzumi, your passion for food is just as great as ours.		
E09 S10	40:45– 42:04	Rinko, Kyono, Obana and Aizawa have hot pot at Rinko's place. They add rice to the remaining stock to turn it into porridge in the end.			
E09 S11	43:12– 43:40	Shohei admitted to being the person responsible for the incident three years ago to Linda, and the French Embassy people went to get him at Gaku. Shohei was finalizing the maitake dish.		Shohei	Maitake aged for five days, dried pickled Sakura. Pine broth: kombu dashi, pine needles. miso water: Miso, water.
E09 S12	44:36– 45:05	Tango tasted Shohei's dish while he was going to leave with the French Embassy people.	Tango: Shohei, your cooking is amazing!	Shohei Tango	-

Episode 10

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E10 S1	01:21– 04:39	Shohei comes clean to the team that he added the peanut oil by mistake three years ago. Aizawa couldn't forgive Shohei because of how he dealt with it after and how it affects everything. Shohei admits that he was scared that if he came clean at that time, he will never be able to cook again. He is	Shohei: I was scared. If I told the truth, I might never be able to cook again. That's why I didn't tell anyone. I'm so sorry.	Shohei	-

		prepared to give up being a chef now that he has come clean about it, he doesn't want to affect Grand Maison Tokyo.			
E10 S2	04:40– 09:55	Kyono invites Shohei to have a meal before he leaves with the team.	<p>Kyono: This is my best dish. How is it? What do you think, Shohei?</p> <p>Shohei: The chestnuts and sauce both go very well with the venison. It's delicious.</p> <p>Kyono: Is that so? Is it really delicious? Don't give me rubbish. People like you are the most infuriating! I tried my very best to make this dish. But still, you weren't moved, were you? The staff meals you made were all hundreds of times better than this. Hirako Shohei's cooking has the power to stir up emotions. I was aware of my limited talent, so I gave up on being a chef. I can't make dishes that will change the world, that's why I decided to work at my current job, so that I could at least bring great food to customers. I made up my mind, but what do you think you're doing? You have a special talent that others do not have. Why are you choosing to give this up? This kind of behaviour is unacceptable to those of us who had to give up our dreams of being chefs!</p> <p>Obana: This is still as bad as ever, but you guys better eat it. When Kyono quit being a chef and put away his precious knives, he swore that he'd never cook for anyone else again. But he did so today. If you don't eat it now, you will never get another chance to try Kyono Rikutarō's cooking ever again.</p>	Honshu venison pie	
E10 S3	11:20– 11:54 1:03:10 – 1:03:20	Obana explained that he wanted to take on the challenge of making tuna dishes	<p>Serita: Sorry, what's so special about tuna?</p> <p>Kyono: Tuna is an ingredient Obana has been trying to use for years, but he's never succeeded in making a French dish with it.</p> <p>---</p>	Obana	-

			<p>Aizawa: Once tuna is heated, it loses its unique fresh flavour</p> <p>Shohei: It's a taboo ingredient worst-suited for French cooking</p>		
E10 S4	11:55–12:55	Matsui suggested that Shohei can be like a ghost chef, so he can help develop dishes in secret.		-	-
E10 S5	16:18–16:45	Obana finalizing the appetizer, he tried to combine shirako with warm roasted pecans.		Obana	Shirako poche chaud-froid (poached, a meat-based jellied sauce)
E10 S6	17:01–19:16	Briefing	<p>Kyono: Everyone! Michelin inspections are 1 month away.</p> <p>Rinko: We need to hurry up with the other dishes.</p> <p>Kyono: We have three dishes now, seven left, we need to speed up Serita: How're Michelin inspections carried out?</p> <p>Kyono: Based on hearsay in the restaurant industry, there are only 10 Michelin inspectors who are in charge of Tokyo. They can't inspect all the restaurants so they'll visit those that have already been awarded stars or refer to activities and reviews of food critics to shortlist some restaurants for inspection.</p> <p>Rinko: They look just like normal customers. So we won't be able to tell who the inspectors are</p> <p>Obana: That's why we've got to give each and every customer our best.</p> <p>Kyono: We'll be judged on five criteria: Quality of ingredients used, mastery of cooking techniques, the personality of the chef in his/her cuisine, value for money and consistency between visits. These criteria are made public and are standard across all countries.</p> <p>Apparently, to get three stars, a restaurant has to clear three rounds of inspections. First, an inspector will visit a restaurant that has no stars yet. If the inspector approves, that restaurant gets one star. Next, there will be another two inspectors who visit the restaurant. If both inspectors approve, that restaurant gets two stars. Then, there will be another two inspectors paying visit, an inspector report will be done on the two-star restaurant. The inspectors and the <i>Michelin Guide</i> international directors will hold a discussion to decide on the new number of stars, if any. For a restaurant to get three stars, it must get the approval of every member in the meeting.</p>		
E10 S7	19:54–20:40	<p>Sourcing ingredients at fish market.</p> <p>Trying a broth at the market:</p>	<p>Obana: We don't have much time, but I hope we can approach local ingredients with a blank slate once again. I'd like to learn about the culture of local produce regions too.</p>	-	Kagokaki

		Seawater, aromatic shoyu, donko shiitake mushrooms, kame-no-te (a type of barnacle), whelk, miusa daikon leaves, natural shiitake mushrooms.			
E10 S8	20:50–22:25	The team developing dishes and tasting wine. The hunter brought in deer, wild boar, duck, kijibato (oriental turtle dove).	Obana: Strawberries are in season, but they'd but rather boring. Matsui: Something more impactful would be better. The meringue ice cream is rather sweet, so shall we try using yuzu. --- Kyono: The notes of honey and French oak are prominent.	-	Blending spinach, celery, chicken bouillon, court-bouillon (fish stock), salt. Ris de veau sweetbread (thymus/pancreas of calf), wheat flour.
E10 S9	22:00–23:20	Kijibato (oriental turtle dove) was chosen to be one of the main dish, since it's really hard to catch, it's a rare ingredients that is almost completely unavailable on the market. "The hidden treasures of Japanese ingredients," which fits the concept of the restaurant perfectly.		-	-
E10 S10	26:05–27:00	Aizawa completed an appetizer dish: Couscous salad with ris de veau.		-	Couscous cooked with blended spinach, celery, chicken bouillon, court-bouillon and salt, with deep fried ris de veau.
E10 S11	29:11–30:05	Tango creating a new dish: fresh yuba (tofu skin) and seasonal flowers (nasturtium flowers) with wheat koji mountain wasabi foam sauce (with salt-pickled unripe cassis and green yuzu).	Eto: It's refreshing to see yuba in French food.	Tango	-
E10 S12	45:25–49:50	Obana invited Linda to come taste the main dish once it's completed. Everyone is helping Shohei	Shohei: The kijibato is meaty yet tender. Also, his bloodletting technique really ensures that there isn't any unpleasant gamey flavour. It should be roasted. Obana: I already knew that. The question is how?	Shohei	Pomegranates, kijibato offal, beets, olive oil, salt. Sauce: red wine, food de veau,

		with the kijibato dish development.	<p>Shohei: In order to suit the wild nature and flavour of gibier, I think we can use charcoal fire. To bring out the wild flavour of kijibato, we can use the sweetness of pomegranates in season.</p> <p>Rinko: I think we can use chopped beet too.</p> <p>Aizawa: Let's not be too unconventional, we'll use red wine and fond de veau.</p> <p>Shohei: If it is possible, I'd like to use offal in the sauce and side elements. It'll make the flavours more complex, and we can reduce ingredients wastage.</p> <p>---</p> <p>Rinko: it's good, but I think it's not impactful enough.</p> <p>Obana: Still, this roasting method is probably the best suited to this dish.</p> <p>Aizawa: If the sauce were to be more impactful, it might detract from the natural flavours of the ingredients.</p> <p>Shohei: What if you made it warmer? When I was working at the hotel buffet, I found that Japanese dislike cold dishes the most. So the roast beef had to be carved and served hot. Let's serve this to customers while it's piping hot.</p> <p>Aizawa: But French cooking is mostly served at room temperature.</p> <p>Shohei: Indeed, we'd be going against convention. If we want to convey the beauty of Japanese ingredients, it might be a good idea to have one Japanese-style hot dish.</p> <p>Obana: The problem is how do we maintain a high temperature for such a small piece of meat?</p>		<p>venison jus, salt, corn starch, honey, butter, Campari.</p> <p>Kijibato demi en croûte.</p>
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			<p>Rinko: What about wrapping it in pie pastry.</p> <p>Aizawa: No, if we do that, we'll lost the crispiness of the skin.</p> <p>Shohei: I'll spread pastry dough on one side. We'll sear the kijibato skin and spread a thin layer of pie pastry on the other surface of the meat and sear on a pan. This way, we can retain the flavour of the skin while maintaining the temperature.</p> <p>Aizawa: I see... and there will be the added texture of the pie pastry.</p>		
E10 S13	49:56– 50:40	Shohei and Aizawa's conversation.	<p>Aizawa: The atmosphere is totally different here. Of course, the work is just as tough now, maybe even tougher than it was back then. It's really tedious to come up with new dishes, but Escoffille felt much colder than this. But if you hadn't made that mistake, Grand Maison Tokyo wouldn't have been born. It's a surprising world.</p>	Aizawa	-
E10 S14	52:04– 57:40	Linda came to taste the main dish.	<p>Linda: By only having the pie pastry on one side of the meat, the temperature of the meat is maintained.</p> <p>Shohei: Kijibato is fragrant and delicious right after it's roasted, but because it's such a small piece of meat, it dries out very quickly. After adding the pie pastry, both its temperature and moisture are kept. The meat's flavour can be enjoyed at its best.</p> <p>Obana: What do you think of this dish? Grand Maison Tokyo's new main course. Is this Kijibato demi en croûte worth three Michelin stars?</p> <p>Linda: No. In the first place, Michelin stars are awarded to the restaurant and not decided based on the merit of a single dish. Besides, I will never let a restaurant that hires Hirako Shohei get three Michelin stars.</p>	Shohei Linda	-

E10 S15	58:50– 1:01:00	After Linda left, Shohei was very guilty about what he did in the past. With everyone’s support, he expressed that he really want to join the team officially.	<p>Shohei: I think I should leave this restaurant after all. I shouldn’t cause trouble for all of you anymore. Thank you very much for everything you’ve done for me.</p> <p>Obana: Your dish couldn’t convince that woman. Are you just going to accept it?</p> <p>Shohei: I have no choice but to do so. No matter how delicious my dishes are, Linda will never admit that they’re good now.</p> <p>Obana: Wrong, wrong. What Linda said was right. The kijibato you made was indeed not satisfactory by her standards.</p> <p>Shohei: Then what should I do?! There’s nothing else I can do!</p> <p>Obana: I said, “you are nowhere near being able to take sole responsibility for this”, didn’t I?</p> <p>Rinko: That’s precisely why you need everyone in this restaurant, right?</p> <p>Kyono: Our calm and collected waitress will welcome our customers with the right degree of formality and show them to their tables. There will be a surprising amuse served with cold champagne which will capture their hearts, it will let them forget their worries.</p> <p>Aizawa: Next, there will be various appetizers created by our chefs to go with the wines chosen by our sommelier. Our seafood dish will let their imagination soar, our painstakingly created main dish will knock down their defences before our dessert rounds off this dream-like experience for them.</p> <p>Rinko: Lastly, the chef will ask “How was your meal?” and share the joy of that moment with the</p>	Shohei Team	-
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			<p>customers. This is the essence of a French full course meal, isn't it?</p> <p>Obana: As long as all of us work together, we can conquer even our current nemesis Linda. We will definitely obtain three Michelin stars. Don't sweat the small stuff. This is the kind of team we are. If you're still half-hearted, we don't need you. If you're always hung up on something, you might as well leave</p> <p>Shohei: I want to join you. I want to join this restaurant. I want to join Grand Maison Tokyo and Obana and all of you, I want to cook together with you!</p> <p>Rinko: We don't have much time. Let's hurry up and move on to the next new item on our menu, Shohei!</p> <p>Shohei: Oui Chef.</p>		
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Episode 11

Remarks	Time	Description	Dialogue	Character	Food/Technique
E11 S1	00:02– 00:09	Getting tuna at fish market		-	-
E11 S2	00:10– 01:40	The team at a sushi restaurant. Obana was fire-torching tuna sashimi.	<p>Rinko: Why must you cook here?</p> <p>Obana: Boss gave me permission.</p> <p>Boss: Tuna tastes the best when eaten raw. There's no way sushi will lose out to any French food.</p> <p>Aizawa: You're right, boss. Tuna's flavour comes from iron and acidity which contribute to the tastiness of blood, but blood coagulates when heated and its tastiness will gradually disappear.</p> <p>Shohei: In French cuisine, heating is a fundamental technique. Tuna is a taboo ingredient that is worst-suited for French cooking.</p> <p>Rinko: There are only two weeks until Michelin inspections. You've</p>	-	Chutoro (medium fatty tuna), pickled daikon, Japanese scallions, shibazuke (pickles made with shiso), avocado, capers, oobs (shiso leaves), soy sauce-marinated egg yolk, Tabasco, young spring onions.

			<p>tried and fall so many times in your experiments with tuna. Give up, ok?</p> <p>Obana: It's fulfilling because it's difficult. Imagine, If we come up with a French tuna dish that is even more delicious than sushi, won't that fulfil the requirements for a three-Michelin-star dish?</p> <p>Aizawa: But the number of kuro maguro (black tuna) in the seas of Japan are dwindling.</p> <p>Shohei: Yes, but we don't have to use exactly the same type of tuna that's used for sushi.</p> <p>Obana: Tuna, I'll use Atlantic kuro maguro, no problem. Atlantic tuna is more fatty and more suited for French cooking which involves heating.</p>		
E11 S3	04:36– 07:20	<p>Finalizing some new dishes.</p> <p>Amuse: uni pain perdu. Made with uni, salt dashi, brioche, locally produced caviar, black pepper.</p> <p>Paired with a crisp champagne.</p> <p>Entrée: Warm tenaga ebi soup.</p> <p>Obana challenge Rinko to come up with a main seafood dish as he would like to focus on tuna. He believes by having a tuna dish that could blow the inspectors mind, they will definitely overcome the obstacles and obtain three stars since they only have two in Escoffile</p>		Rinko Obana	-
E11 S4	08:40– 09:05	<p>Rinko went to the fish market with Shohei and the apprentice and bought back mahata.</p> <p>Obana experimenting with the jaw of tuna cooking at low temperature, since the part is fattier than the akami (red meat) of the tuna and will respond more favourably to heating, only he can't get rid of the fishy smell.</p>		-	-
E11 S5	11:58– 12:50	<p>Obana and Rinko each trial and error with tuna and mahata.</p>		Rinko Obana	

E11 S6	13:05– 13:25	Gaku got red king crab from Hokkaido. Tango asked for organic Japan celery.			
E11 S7	13:30– 15:31	Matsui cracking under the pressure of coming up with the dessert dish.	Matsui: I want to use cremet d’Anjou with cocoa. But no matter what I do, the acidity is overpowering. Shohei: Don’t use fromage blanc, try using ricotta instead.	Matsui Shohei	-
E11 S8	16:15– 20:20	Matsui made the dessert dish for the team to try, Cremet d’Anjou Obana noticed Matsui was bothered by something in her mind, in which he tried to help her overcome.	Obana: In cooking, everything depends on the quality of the ingredients and the chef’s capability and experience. But the chef’s mental state will somehow affect the flavour of his dishes. Take this dessert for example. If you make it in a calmer mind, it would taste mellow and sweeter. If the maker of the dish was angry or unhappy, the flavours would not be so harmonious.	Matsui Obana	-
E11 S9	20:54– 21:45	Shohei and Aizawa come up with another entrée: Tarte boudin (black pudding/blood sausage tart). While Matsui also finalized her dessert.		Shohei Aizawa	-
E11 S10	22:35– 26:05	Rinko making the main dish.	Rinko: Done, the seafood dish to replace tuna. Roast grouper and hoisette anchois (hazelnuts and anchovies). Matsui: It’s simple but so elegant. Rinko: I roasted the grouper before adding the sauce I made with anchovies and hazelnuts. Shohei: The skin is crunchy, yet the original flavour of the grouper is retained. The fragrance and the anchovies are bursting with umami flavour. All the elements are powerful.	Rinko	Anchovy paste, garlic, olive oil heated sauce mixed with hazelnuts and parsley. Puntarella tempura: Puntarella, wheat flour, eggs, water, sherry vinegar, verjus.

			<p>Obana: Rinko, do you think we can obtain three stars with that seafood dish?</p> <p>Rinko: I don't know.</p>		
E11 S11	29:00– 29:40	Obana's conversation with Linda and invitation to her to taste the new finalized menu.	Obana: The best food ever, that's what foodies travel the world in search of, but the search for that feeling grows more elusive by the day until one day, they're no longer moved by any meal they eat because nothing surpasses the best standard in their minds.	Obana Linad	-
E11 S12	30:30– 39:20	<p>Linda having dinner at Grand Maison Tokyo.</p> <p>Uni pain perdu. Crisp Champagne.</p> <p>Mountain goat milk Bavaois.</p> <p>Cod shirako poche chaud-froid.</p> <p>Brise, the wine has notes of citrus and green apple, lightly sour and refreshing.</p> <p>Warm teenage shrimp soup.</p> <p>Couscous salad with ris de veau.</p> <p>Tarte boudin (a pig's blood and apple tart, recommended to try with the liver as a sauce).</p> <p>Roast grouper.</p> <p>Kijibato demi en croûte.</p> <p>Meringue ice cream.</p>	<p>Rinko: Linda, what do you think about our food? I know you always trust your excellent palate. You've made many worthy dishes and restaurants famous in your career. Please let us know what you think about Grand Maison Tokyo's full course meal. Is it worth a special journey?</p> <p>Linda: Yes. I didn't think that I'd ever have that experience again. This meal was the best I've had so far.</p> <p>Rinko: Thank you so much!</p>		<p>Tenaga shrimp, onions, white celery, tomato, spinach, tardivo, court-bouillon, shrimp dashi, clam dashi, eschallots, fresh cream.</p> <p>Pig's blood, apple, pie pastry, granulated sugar, butter. With guinea fowl liver, pistachio, chives, olive oil.</p>

		<p>Crement d'Anjou Made with ricotta cheese which is less fatty and has a unique milky flavour, it's lightly sweet.</p>		
E11 S13	40:25– 41:25	<p>Team briefing for Michelin inspections</p>	<p>Kyoto: Michelin inspections will begin. The inspector will pretend to be a normal customer and make objective judgments. They are all knowledgeable and experienced food critics. Besides flavour, they will also analyse cooking techniques and plating and the chef's intent or message conveyed through the dish. They will summarize the above into a report. It's rumoured in our industry that if one inspector approves, the restaurant is awarded one star and will enter the running to be awarded two stars. For that, two inspectors will visit the restaurant, one of them will be a foreigner, they will have certain patterns of action. If both inspectors approve, the restaurant is awarded two stars. The report from that visit will be discussed by the committee to determine star selection. After this, two more inspectors will visit the restaurant and carried out final inspection.</p>	-
E11 S14	42:00– 43:31	<p>Meanwhile, inspection at Gaku.</p> <p>Scallop mousse and smoked scallop dashi.</p> <p>Raw white prawn and charcoal baked koji cake.</p> <p>Edamame, pumpkin seeds and preserved venison pot-au-feu (Mash up the preserved venison sausage)</p>	<p>Smoked scallop dashi, kombu dashi, scallop, soy milk.</p> <p>White prawn, butter, koji, rosa rugosa, marigold leaves.</p> <p>Edamame, pumpkin seeds, sake lees, miso, pumpkin seed oil, celery, truffle vinegar, chilli oil, venison sausage, herbs.</p>	

		<p>and mix in the herb bouquet).</p> <p>Red king crab, seaweed and charcoal-roasted rosa rugosa pie.</p> <p>Truffle and egg yolk sauce with herb smoked enoki (Banana leaves and lemon thyme were used to wrap the enoki stems before roasting).</p> <p>Wild duck breast with caramelized Japanese nutmeg yew and kombu oil (praline).</p> <p>Nanatsuboshi rice, wild beech seeds, green peppers, young pine needles, duck fat crisp.</p> <p>Palate cleanser</p> <p>Duck head/neck/foot meat, beets, pears, vinegar-pickled herbs, monkey pear, cassis leaf oil, young cassis.</p> <p>Coconut milk parfait and white truffle.</p> <p>Soymilk mousse, semi dried monkey pear, wood sorrel.</p>	<p>Red king crab, rosa rugosa, seaweed, pie pastry.</p> <p>Enoki stems, banana leaves, lemon thyme, koji oil, maitake soy sauce, butter, truffle, egg yolk.</p> <p>Japanese blueberries, brown sugar, young pine needles, hibiscus</p> <p>Soymilk, sponge cake, uwamizu Sakura oil, monkey pear, cassis leaf oil, wood sorrel.</p>
E11 S14	43:45– 46:00	<p>Obana finishing his tuna dish</p> <p>Flash-seared tuna</p>	<p>Churros: butter, milk, sugar, salt, medium-gluten flour.</p>

		<p>Using knife heating method to slice the tuna head and fire-torching tuna head tendon.</p> <p>Obana said to ditch Rinko's seafood dish and serve the tuna dish instead for the three-star inspection.</p>			
E11 S14	52:10– 54:00	As it came to the main course, Rinko insists on serving her own seafood dish.	<p>Rinko: To be honest, I think my grouper dish is better.</p> <p>Obana: When you were doing your test at L'Ambroisie, you didn't serve my tenaga ebi l'étuvéé, but made your signature dish instead and failed in the end.</p> <p>Rinko: I've changed since then and since I opened this restaurant. This is different from that foie gras dish. I'll use my dish to decide our success or defeat.</p>	Rinko	-
E11 S15	56:40– 59:30	<p>During the Michelin ceremony.</p> <p>Grand Maison Tokyo got three stars.</p>	<p>Kuzumi: Neither Grand Maison Tokyo nor Gaku have been mentioned yet.</p> <p>Rinko: Maybe we should have gone with Obana's tuna dish.</p> <p>Aizawa: No, even though I didn't say this at the time, your grouper dish was truly delicious and impactful, Chef Rinko. On par with Obana's tuna dish.</p> <p>Kyono: Nobody understood this more than Obana himself. When he first tried it, he was almost moved to tears because you created a dish that exceeded even his expectations.</p> <p>Rinko: But he thought that my dish wasn't good enough that's why he wants to serve his tuna dish.</p> <p>Aizawa: He was testing you.</p>	Rinko Team	-

			<p>Kyono: He wanted to see if you had confidence in your dish, in that situation whether you would confidently serve it to customers.</p> <p>Shohei: When Obana left the restaurant, he told me... “Three years ago, didn’t I crumble under the pressure of having two stars? One day, when this restaurant gets awarded Michelin stars, Hayami Rinko will face the same pressure as I did. When the time comes, she’ll need to have faith in herself and to believe that she obtained the stars by merit of her own cooking. An unshakeable faith. In light of that, the presence of Obana Natsuki will only hinder her.”</p>		
E11 S16	1:05:25	Rinko’s speech	<p>Our job revolves around cooking and bringing happiness to customers, it seems simple. But just like politicians, we have the ability to change the world. Being a chef is like being an artist, One can stir up emotions in customers. Just like doctors and nurses, we can offer salvation. I feel that this is a wonderful job. Each dish is a message that can be spread around the world. Standing here, I truly believe that it is possible. Food has the power to move and inspire people.</p>	Rinko	-

Appendix B: Tasting Menu Analysis

Gaku's 1st Tasting Menu

Menu Item	Japanese Influence	French Influence
Monkfish liver terrine: The monkfish liver and soy milk have been vacuum-treated and aerated before being frozen, together with the dehydrated haskap puree and the orange peel infused oil.	Monkfish liver (ankimo) is a traditional Japanese delicacy often referred to as the “foie gras of the sea” (Chen, 2023; Kolbeck, 2024).	Terrine is a classic French preparation (Fernandes, 2024; TasteAtlas, 2016b). The use of vacuum treatment and aeration followed by freezing adds a modernist touch, aligning with French molecular gastronomy (This, 2006).
Uni and golden chanterelle: Sea urchin, golden chanterelle, cabbage, parsley, Sakura.	Sea urchin (uni) is a prized ingredient in Japanese cuisine (Milner & Bartlett, 2017; TasteAtlas, 2016e). Sakura (cherry blossom) is also a significant cultural element in Japan, often used for its subtle flavour and symbolism (Cordon Bleu, 2016a).	The golden chanterelle mushroom is a luxurious ingredient in French cuisine, known for its rich flavour (Gaudry, 2018).
Sea bream, yuzu, barley, kihada seeds, habanero.	Sea bream (tai) is a common fish in Japanese cuisine, particularly in celebrations and traditional dishes (Government of Japan, 2023; Sushipedia, 2022a). Yuzu, a citrus fruit, is also widely used in Japanese cooking for its unique aroma and flavour (Japan External Trade Organization, 2024; McNamee, 2022).	The use of barley can be seen in French cooking (Roux, 2013).
Flowers in a pie: ruby moon hyacinth, begonia, marigold, black truffle paste, home-made miso.	The use of ingredients like ruby moon hyacinth, begonia, and marigold reflects the Japanese appreciation for aesthetics and the use of flowers in culinary presentations (Allison, 2018).	Black truffle paste represents the luxury and depth of flavour associated with French haute cuisine (Nowak, 2015; Peterson, 2012; Renowden, 2005).
Seasonal greens, roasted yeast, rhubarb oil, salted salmon roe, rosehip, long pepper.	Ingredients like salted salmon roe is elements found in Japanese culinary traditions, where preservation and natural flavours are emphasized (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000; Sushipedia, 2022b).	The use of rhubarb and rosehip suggests flavour profiles more typical of French cuisine.
A gummy-like sheet made by drying out plum juice.	Plum (ume) is a significant ingredient in Japanese cuisine, often used in pickled form (umeboshi) or as a flavouring in sweets and beverages (Nakata Foods, 2024).	The transformation of plum juice into a gummy-like sheet often associated with molecular gastronomy (The BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2015).
Lamb shoulder, scarlet runner beans, sour cassis capers, coastal hog fennel.	The use of coastal hog fennel, a rarely grown, perennial species in the Apiaceae family that is native to the coastal areas and seashores of	Lamb is more common in French cuisine, often prepared with herbs and earthy accompaniments (TasteAtlas, 2024).

	<p>China, Japan and Korea (Growild Nursery, 2024), the Japanese call it the “grass of longevity” (Chang, 2022).</p> <p>Reflecting Japanese foraging traditions and the integration of seasonal, local ingredients (Bird, 2021).</p>	
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Gaku’s 2nd Tasting Menu

Menu Item	Japanese Influence	French Influence
Smoked scallop dashi, kombu dashi, scallop, soy milk.	Dashi, a fundamental element in Japanese cuisine, is traditionally made from kombu (kelp) and bonito flakes, providing a umami-rich base (Stalker, 2018). The use of soy milk introduces a creamy texture, reminiscent of traditional Japanese soybean products like tofu and yuba (Ohyama, 2013).	The smoking technique adds depth and complexity, often employed in French cuisine to enhance flavour profiles (Jones, 2023).
White prawn, butter, koji, rosa rugosa, marigold leaves	Koji, a key ingredient in many Japanese fermented foods like miso and sake, brings a subtle sweetness and umami to the dish (Kondo, 2022; Taste of Japan, 2024).	Butter is a staple in French cooking (Bordier, 2019).
Edamame, pumpkin seeds and preserved venison pot-au-feu: Edamame, pumpkin seeds, sake lees, miso, pumpkin seed oil, celery, truffle vinegar, chilli oil, venison sausage, herbs.	Ingredients like edamame, miso, and sake lees (a byproduct of sake production) highlight Japanese flavours and fermentation techniques (Ohyama, 2013).	Pot-au-feu, a classic French stew, is reimaged with venison sausage, showcasing a blend of hearty French cooking and delicate Japanese ingredients (TasteAtlas, 2015b).
Fresh yuba (tofu skin) and seasonal flowers (nasturtium flowers) with wheat koji mountain wasabi foam sauce (with salt-pickled unripe cassis and green yuzu).	Yuba and mountain wasabi are traditional Japanese ingredients, with the latter providing a distinct spicy note (Ohyama, 2013).	The use of foam sauce, popularized by French molecular gastronomy, introduces a modern twist (The BC Cook Articulation Committee, 2015).
Red king crab, seaweed and charcoal-roasted rosa rugosa pie.	Red king crab is native to the Okhotsk and Japan Seas and common in Japanese cuisine, adding umami and a taste of the sea (Baxter, 2021; GRID Arendal, 2010).	The pie technique reflects French culinary methods, creating a crisp, flavourful crust (French Culinary Institute, 2022).
Truffle and egg yolk sauce with herb smoked enoki (banana leaves and lemon thyme were used to wrap the enoki stems before roasting).	Enoki mushrooms and maitake soy sauce highlight common Japanese ingredients and flavours (Chen, 2023).	The rich truffle and egg yolk sauce represents French element.

Wild duck breast with caramelized Japanese nutmeg yew and kombu oil (praline).	Kombu and Japanese nutmeg yew infuse the dish with traditional Japanese flavours (Umami Information Center, 2024; University of Tennessee, 2024).	Caramelization and praline techniques demonstrate French culinary artistry, adding sweetness and texture (TasteAtlas, 2016d).
Nanatsuboshi rice, wild beech seeds, green peppers, young pine needles, duck fat crisp.	Rice is a central element of Japanese cuisine, with Nanatsuboshi being a high-quality variety (Ohnuki-Tierney, 1993).	Duck fat crisp adds a touch of richness and decadence typical of French cooking (Hill, 2018).
Coconut milk parfait and white truffle.	Although it originated from France, parfait is extremely popular in Japan (Japan National Tourism Organization, 2024).	
Soy milk mousse, semi dried monkey pear, wood sorrel: Soy milk, sponge cake, Sakura oil, monkey pear, cassis leaf oil, wood sorrel.	Soy milk and Sakura (cherry blossom) oil bring a delicate Japanese touch.	Mousse is classic elements in French patisserie (TasteAtlas, 2016a).

Grand Maison Tokyo's 1st Tasting Menu

Menu Item	Japanese Influence	French Influence
Sable with chanterelle girolle mushrooms and himo red peppers.	The inclusion of locally sourced chanterelle girolle mushrooms and himo red peppers, a regional variety, incorporate a local Japanese flavour (Yamamoto, 2023).	Sable is a traditional French butter cookie, usually sweet and may be sandwiched in pairs with a filling (Goldstein, 2015).
Goat milk bavarois made with mountain goat milk (star of the dish are the salt and olive oil).	The use of mountain goat milk emphasizes the importance of high-quality, locally sourced ingredients in Japanese cuisine (Japan Educational Travel, 2020).	Bavarois is a classic French dessert, typically a mousse made with cream, gelatin, and flavourings (TasteAtlas, 2016f). It is known that Bavarian cream originated from either Germany or France (TasteAtlas, 2016f).
Eggplant and liver pressé: The eggplant needs to be pickled in sherry vinegar before being seasoned with salt and then quickly cooled. The liver needs to be seasoned with cardamom to remove any gamey odours; the cocoa pastry needs to be baked slowly on low heat to prevent the pastry from charring.	Pickling the eggplant in sherry vinegar and seasoning with salt is reminiscent of Japanese tsukemono (pickled vegetables) (Japan Guide, 2023).	The pressé technique, where ingredients are layered and pressed together, is a traditional French method used to create terrines and pates (Schler, 2023).
Cold Mont-Saint-Michel mussel soup.		Mont-Saint-Michel mussels are a prized ingredient in French cuisine (TasteAtlas, 2015a; Wietzel, 2024). Cold soups, such as vichyssoise, are a French culinary tradition (Herrick, 2014; MasterClass, 2023).
Kinoko and surf clam vol-au-vent.	Kinoko (mushrooms) and surf clams are common in Japanese cuisine, where they are valued for	Vol-au-vent is a classic French puff pastry dish, typically filled with

	their umami-rich flavours (Arora et al., 2023; NHK World, 2024).	savoury ingredients (Dowling, 2021; Suas, 2012).
Grill cow's stomach	The use of cow's stomach is more common in Japanese cuisine, where offal is frequently utilized and appreciated for its unique textures (Japanese Taste, 2023; Live Japan, 2017).	
Roast sawara with crystal pomelo sauce.	Japan's fresh fish is world-famous, it is known for being very particular about sashimi (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000). Sawara (Spanish mackerel) is a popular fish in Japan, often used in sushi and sashimi for its rich, oily flesh. The inclusion of crystal pomelo, a citrus fruit, adds a Japanese twist, likely inspired by the use of yuzu in Japanese cuisine (Japan External Trade Organization, 2024; Japan National Tourism Organization, 2024).	Roasting is a traditional French cooking method that enhances the flavour and texture of meats and fish (École Ducasse, 2023).
Honshu venison loin and blood consommé	Honshu venison highlights local Japanese game, and the use of blood in consommé is reminiscent of the Japanese beliefs on "fully cherish and utilize all the living things that we use for food and showcase their flavour" (E03; 32:30–33:54).	Consommé, a clear soup made from richly flavoured stock, is a staple of French cuisine (Escoffier, 2013; TasteAtlas, 2016c).
Meringue ice cream: It was treated with highly concentrated salt spray. It had a slightly different flavour with every bite.	Treating the ice cream with highly concentrated salt spray introduces a simple Japanese approach, where subtle seasoning can transform a dish (Yamamoto, 2023).	Meringue is a classic French dessert component (Cordon Bleu, 2016b). The technique of making French meringue, which involves whipping egg whites and sugar, is least stable and has the most volume compared to Swiss and Italian meringue (TasteAtlas, 2016g).
Mont Blanc à ma façon	The phrase "à ma façon" (my way) suggests a personalized twist, possibly incorporating Japanese ingredients or techniques to reinterpret this traditional dessert. In fact, Mont Blanc also inspired a devoted following in Japan. Rumour has it that, in the 1930s, Japanese pastry chef Chimao Sakota climbed Mont Blanc and brought back the dessert in honour of his accomplishment (Mills, 2023).	Mont Blanc is a classic French dessert made with chestnut puree, cream, and meringue, typically shaped to resemble the Mont Blanc Mountain (Mills, 2023; TasteAtlas, 2017).

Grand Maison Tokyo's 2nd Tasting Menu

Menu Item	Japanese Influence	French Influence
Uni pain perdu.	Uni, or sea urchin, is a delicacy in Japanese cuisine, often enjoyed raw in sushi or sashimi (Milner & Bartlett, 2017; TasteAtlas, 2016e).	Pain perdu (French toast) is a classic French dish (TasteAtlas, 2019).
Mountain goat milk Bavarois.		
Cod shirako poche chaud-froid.	Shirako, or cod milt, is a prized ingredient in Japanese cuisine, known for its creamy texture (Milner & Bartlett, 2017; TasteAtlas, 2016h).	Poche (poached) chaud-froid (hot and cold) is a classical French preparation where an item is poached and then served cold (Ruhlman, 2007).
Warm teenage shrimp soup.	Japanese cuisine often features fresh seafood (Jetro, 2024).	Warm soups are a staple in French cuisine, often emphasizing rich and layered flavours (Rothert, 2002).
Couscous salad with ris de veau: Couscous cooked with blended spinach, celery, chicken bouillon, court-bouillon and salt, with deep fried ris de veau.	The use of spinach, celery, and careful blending of flavours aligns with Japanese culinary principles of balance and health (Ashkenazi & Jacob, 2000).	Ris de veau (sweetbreads) are a classic French delicacy, often fried or sautéed (Cuisine et vins de France, 2021).
Tarte boudin (a pig's blood and apple tart, recommended to try with the liver as a sauce).		Boudin (blood sausage) and tarts are traditional in French cuisine (64 Parishes, 2024).
Roast grouper and hoisette anchois (hazelnuts and anchovies).	Grouper is a popular fish in Japanese cuisine, known for its firm texture and mild flavour (Hooper, 2013).	The use of hazelnuts and anchovies reflects French cuisine's focus in combining different textures and flavours (Richardson, 2024).
Kijibato demi en croûte	Kijibato (squab/wood pigeon) is a rare ingredient that is almost completely unavailable on the market. "The hidden treasures of Japanese ingredients" (E10, 22:00–23:20).	En croûte (in a crust) is a traditional French cooking method (Dufour, 2023).
Meringue ice cream		
Crement d'Anjou. Made with ricotta cheese which is less fatty and has a unique milky flavour, it's lightly sweet.	The use of less fatty ricotta cheese, aligning with Japanese preferences for lighter foods (Japanspecialist, 2023).	Crement d'Anjou is a traditional French dessert made with whipped cream and cheese (Branget, 2015; Lonely Planet Food, 2017).

Appendix C: Coding Concept Map

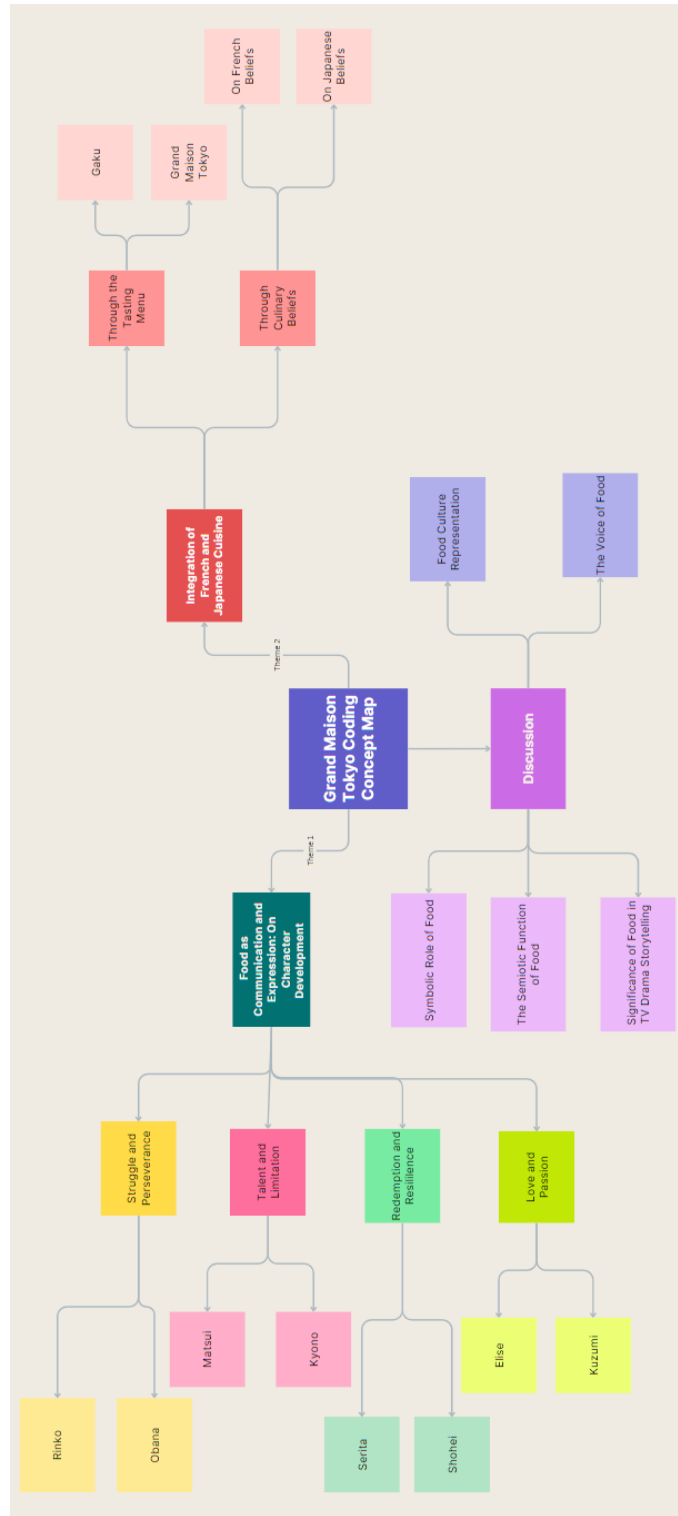


Figure 3: Coding Concept Map