

Special Report:**Asian Young Dietitian Network Representative Attended the Session “Culture and Gastronomy: Spotlight on Washoku” at the 2024 World Food Forum**

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About the World Food Forum

The World Food Forum (WFF), launched in 2021 as an independent network of partners hosted by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), serves as the premier global intergenerational platform to actively shape agrifood systems for a better food future, accelerating the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. Through youth action, science and innovation, and investment, the WFF forges new paths of action and multi-sector partnerships for agrifood impact at the local, regional and global levels to achieve a more sustainable, resilient, inclusive and hunger-free food future for all (1).

In 2024, the WFF flagship event was held from 14 to 18 October at the headquarters of FAO in Rome, Italy, and online. Like previous years, it was structured around three main pillars: Global Youth Action, Science and Innovation, and Hand-in-Hand Investment (1). Under the banner of “Good food for all, for today and tomorrow” the WFF rallied participants to engage in learning, knowledge-sharing and partnership-building. It celebrated innovative solutions, fostered investment in agrifood systems transformation, mobilized support for cutting-edge research, and forged connections among leaders and youth who are shaping a more resilient food future (1).

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Fig. 1 & Fig. 2: Photos of the 2024 WFF event at the FAO Headquarters Hall, Rome, Italy

Culture and Gastronomy: Spotlight on Washoku Session

Washoku was inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity on December 4, 2013. Washoku was recognized for its emphasis on respect for nature, the use of seasonal ingredients, and traditional culinary customs in Japanese cuisine.

In addition to ensuring a good and stable global food supply chain, FAO also recognizes that establishing healthy eating habits and balanced nutrition directly impacts human health.

Therefore, a session on Washoku was organized at the main stage on the first floor of the FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, at 11:50 AM on October 17, as part of the 2024 WFF flagship event.

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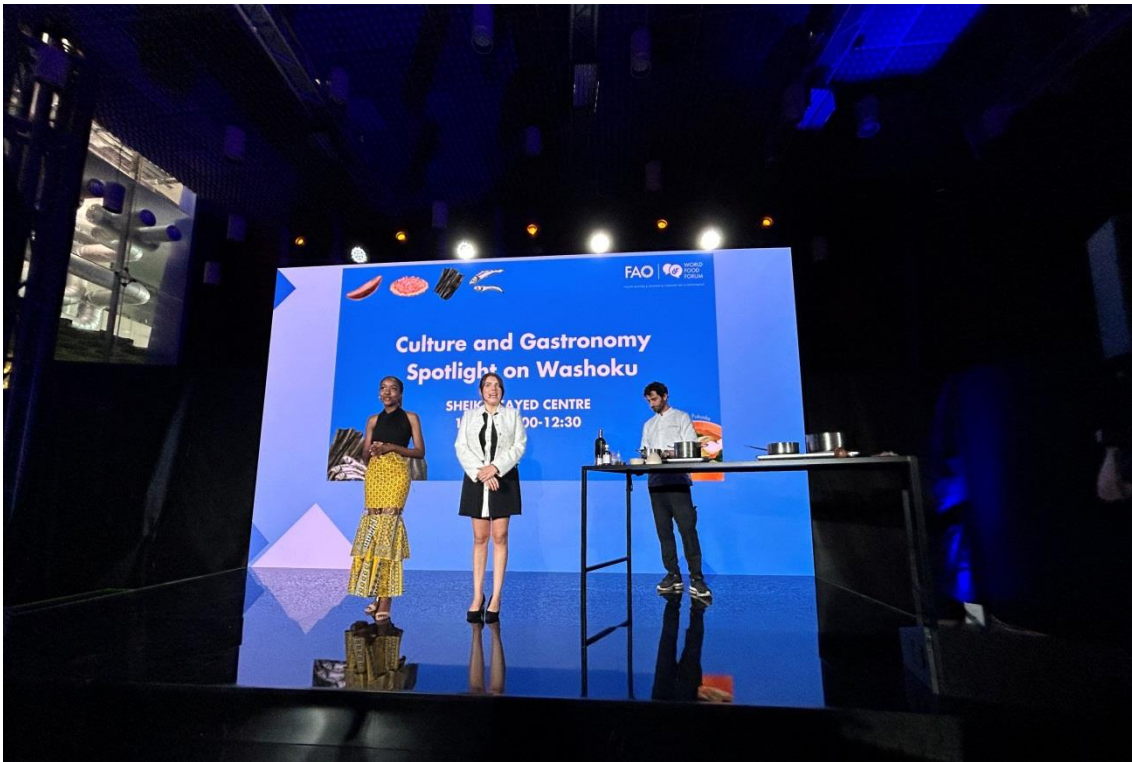


Fig. 3: Photo of Culture and Gastronomy: Spotlight on Washoku Session

The Asian Young Dietitian Network (AYDN) has proposed nominating a young dietitian to participate in the panel discussion of this event. AYDN was formally established on December 1, 2023, with the support of Ajinomoto and the Asian Nutrition and Food Culture Research Center at Jumonji University. The network was officially launched with the participation of twelve countries in Tokyo, Japan. Its objective is to enhance communication among dietitians across Asia to improve the region's nutritional status and elevate the reputation of dietitians (2). As a young dietitian who graduated from the first Bachelor of Nutrition program in Vietnam at Hanoi Medical University, I had the opportunity to pursue a Ph.D. in Japan, where I spent over five years researching Japanese

school meals. Consequently, I am honored to represent AYDN at this event. I shared my experiences and insights on traditional cooking methods and best practices of *Washoku*. Additionally, I provided a general comparison between *Washoku* and traditional Vietnamese cuisine in terms of technique, practice, and philosophy.

The panel discussion also featured three young representatives from Japan and the UK. They shared their perspectives on how to preserve and promote the traditional Japanese culinary culture, *Washoku*, in today's context, as well as how to engage and inspire younger generations to explore and practice *Washoku* in their daily lives.



Fig. 4: Photo of Panel Discussion

The final part of the session included a demonstration of dashi preparation by a Japanese chef and a European chef, followed by a tasting of the dashi by the participants.



Fig. 5: Photo of Dashi Cooking Demonstration

I believe this event was highly meaningful, as most of the attendees were young people from around the world, both offline and online. I hope that through this event, young people can truly recognize the significance of traditional Japanese cuisine, Washoku, in fostering a balanced and nutritious diet, thereby contributing to the improvement of health and longevity in Japan. (3)

Impressions of the 2024 World Food Forum

The 2024 WFF left a deep impression on me in many ways. It was inspiring to see a global platform dedicated exclusively to young people, enabling them to actively engage in discussions on food security, agricultural development, forest conservation, and the preservation of food culture.

One of the most remarkable aspects of the WFF was the strong emphasis on youth participation and leadership. The event showcased how young people's initiatives are not only encouraged but also supported by experienced professionals, senior experts, and key figures in related organizations. This mentorship and collaboration are crucial for ensuring that youth-led actions have a real impact.

Another key takeaway was the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration. For example, if the AYDN focuses on the nutrition and dietetic training program (4), it is essential to involve educational institutions, government ministries, and policymakers in discussions. Likewise, if we aim to influence policies or legal frameworks, engaging with relevant experts, health ministries, and government officials becomes indispensable. All discussions should be systematically documented and presented to authorities as evidence to drive meaningful change.

Additionally, I was particularly impressed by how WFF provides a space for young

professionals to connect, exchange ideas, and learn from one another. The event was short, but the friendships and networks built among young leaders from different countries were a significant achievement.

However, one aspect that stood out was the limited participation of Asian representatives at this year's event. Moving forward, I hope to contribute to enhancing information-sharing across Asia so that more representatives from different Asian countries can actively participate in future WFFs.

The 2024 WFF reaffirmed my belief that young people have a critical role in shaping the future of food and agriculture. I look forward to seeing more meaningful initiatives and hope to continue engaging in activities that benefit young dietitians across Asia, especially in Vietnam.

References

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