Consuming Identities:
Contemporary Japanese Foodways in a Global Locale

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Synopsis

This thesis is the outcome of 12 months of fieldwork undertaken in a semi-rural community in Osaka, a major city in Western Japan, and examines how food and foodways are central to the articulation and maintenance of Japanese identity. My objective is to show how my informants understand and represent themselves and where they are in the world with food. A predominant theme is how local and regional foodways contribute to a sense of distinctive local identity. At the same time, I also seek to demonstrate the place of imported foods and international cuisines in everyday life. In this thesis I propose that ‘traditional’ cultural identity and contemporary globalised cosmopolitanism are mutually constitutive in that Japanese foodways reflect both a desire to maintain the distinction of local and national identity as well as the incorporation of the transnational. The Japanese appreciate the diversity of foreign influences and ingredients within everyday life but also value what are widely considered to be timeless and authentic representations of Japan. I argue that mundane everyday food habits demonstrate how Japanese identities are shifting products of peoples’ experiences of the global and the local world.
Declaration

This work contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution to Micah David James Peters and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to this copy of my thesis, when deposited in the University Library, being made available for loan and photocopying, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968. I also give permission for the digital version of my thesis to be made available on the web, via the University’s digital research repository, the Library catalogue, the Australasian Digital Theses Program (ADTP) and also through web search engines, unless permission has been granted by the University to restrict access for a period of time.

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