

Pulling Out the Best Flavor of Raw Fish by Using the “Ikejime” Technique

Outside Japan sashimi might be considered nothing but sliced fish, but it requires masterful techniques to pull out the best taste from fresh fish.

Although it's a common term in Japan, the technique called "ikejime" is relatively mysterious even among cooking experts in western countries. Literally meaning "killing while alive," ikejime is a technique that has been conducted in Japan for over 300 years, and it enables one to pull out raw fish's best flavor. The seventh installment of the Gohan Society's fish themed lecture and workshop series for culinary experts unveiled the mystery of this technique.

Master sushi chef Toshio Suzuki of Sushi Zen chose fluke to demonstrate ikejime's step-by-step process and to show its benefits. The first part is to cut the fish's artery and spinal cord, drain out the blood, and rinse it with water. The key here is not to give any stress to the fish during the whole process. In other words, you should kill the fish softly to avoid ruining its flavor. In order to

do this, you should know how the fish will react and the points where you can kill it with one sting. Most of the participants were especially unfamiliar with the long needle used to paralyze the fish's spinal cord. Greg McCarty, Executive Sous Chef of Bouley, said, "It was a little nerve-racking when the fish was flapping around in front me, but it was a lot of fun and a great learning experience. What I learned most is to respect the fish. We can definitely use this technique to improve our seafood here."

In the second part, the participants tried "Go-mai oroshi," a technique that sections the fish into five fillets, and in the third part they attempted "usuzukuri," or paper-thin sashimi.

Then the lecture event moved on to the fun part of tasting. The participants had a chance to compare the three different fluke

sashimi: one of freshly done ikejime and others that were respectively two and three days after the ikejime. Each has a different flavor and texture, thereby proving that the freshest one does not always produce the best flavor. Chef Suzuki revealed, "In this lecture, I want to emphasize that freshness is not always golden in terms of flavor, and how the fish's taste will change as it matures." The participants also tried the fluke sashimi with various condiments and sauces such as ponzu (soy sauce with citrus), su-miso (vinegar flavored miso paste) and special sashimi soy sauce, in which they showed great interest as much as they did in dissecting fish.

The Gohan Society

301 W. 57th St., #3C, New York, NY 10019
TEL: 212-385-3550
www.gohansociety.org

Time Line



▲ NY's top chefs focused on Chef Suzuki's ikejime technique demonstration. He makes it look easy, but in actuality it isn't.

▼ Paralyzing fluke with a long needle is a unique technique. Whether you do it right or not affects the flavor.



▲ Beautifully sectioned fluke by the Go-mai oroshi filleting technique.

▼ *Hirame no Usuzukuri* (paper-thin sliced fluke) is served like a flower. The participants could compare freshly done ikejime with ones from two and three days after the ikejime.

