

# Food Workers as Individual Agents of Culinary Globalization: Pizza and Pizzaioli in Japan

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## *Abstract*

According to the Italian restaurant guide of Japan, published in 2006 by the Italian Trade Commission, there are 3974 restaurants serving Italian cuisine, or at least dishes inspired by Italian cuisine, all over the Japanese archipelago. Pizza is among the most popular dishes.

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the state of pizza in Japan, based on the experience and the knowledge of pizza chefs (i.e. pizzaiolo) and Italian restaurateurs in Tokyo. The emphasis on the producers' side is based on the assumption that studies on food in Japan have paid attention to the Japanese customer, to the way foreign food has been "glocalized," and to the way eating habits have changed since the introduction of new foods (Tobin et al. 1994, Ohonuki-Tierney 1997, Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000, Cwiertka 2006), while the role of food workers seems to have been overlooked. But prior to being eaten, food and cuisine must be crafted and prepared. Thus, this paper looks at the globalization of a foreign culinary product from the perspective of food creators, investigating the role they play in spreading globalization and making the culinary product desirable. The focus on the creator side highlights at least two significant issues:

1) Food is not a mere commodity but an artifact of human ingenuity, a creative product shaped through the accumulation of knowledge, skills, and experience. Food does not travel only in response to consumer demands or by the will of multinational corporations, but also thanks to food creators.

2) There is a double-flow of transnational food workers. One is the flow of Italian pizzaiolos going to Japan to ply their trade, having the cultural and human capital necessary to recreate Italian food in Japan while coping with environmental differences and restraints. The other one is the flow of young Japanese traveling to Italy to learn how to make pizza. They move to Italy in order to build and/or reinforce their culinary knowledge. When they come back to Japan they have acquired the necessary forms of capital (i.e. cultural, symbolic and institutionalized as in the Bourdiean perspective) to enter the Italian restaurant world of Japan.

To illustrate these issues this paper presents qualitative data collected through interviews with Italian and Japanese pizzaiolos working in the Tokyo restaurant business.

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According to the Italian Restaurant Guide of Japan, published in 2006 by the Italian Trade Commission, there are 3,974 restaurants serving Italian cuisine, or at least dishes inspired by Italian cuisine all over the Japanese archipelago. Pizza is among the most popular dishes. The purpose of this paper is to give an overview of the status of pizza production in Japan based on the experiences and knowledge of the people who prepare these pizzas, namely “pizzaiolos,” and the Italian restaurateurs who work in Tokyo.



Tasting Italian food at the Italian Pavilion. Foodex Japan 2009.  
Photo by Rossella Ceccarini

This emphasis on the food producer’s experience is based on the assumption that researchers on food consumption in Japan have paid considerable attention to the Japanese customer and the way their eating habits have changed since the introduction of new foods (Ohonuki-Tierney 1997; Ashkenazi and Jacob 2000; Cwiertka 2006) but little is known about those who produce it. The paper also notes the way foreign food has become “glocalized,” that is, how international foods have become domesticated or tailored to local contexts (Tobin et al. 1994). Prior to being consumed, food and cuisine must be crafted and prepared. Thus, this paper looks

at the glocalization of foreign culinary products from the perspective of the food creator, in other words, how the worker as an individual agent of globalization, plays an important role in spreading glocalization and making the culinary product desirable. The first part of the paper introduces the background of pizza restaurants in Tokyo, and the second part focuses on the pizzaiolos.

Before moving to the above issues, let me first write about the qualitative data rendered in this paper. All quotes are based on open-ended interviews with pizzaiolos and restaurateurs involved in the Italian restaurant business. The interviews were held in Tokyo between winter and autumn 2008 and have been digitally recorded and transcribed. The interviews were held in Italian, Japanese and English, but due to limited space and other practical reasons, I'm presenting only English translations of the original-language quotes. I have tried to respect the privacy of my informants by omitting their names where possible. Some of the informants are popular actors in the restaurant business and easily recognizable; hence their names have not been changed. Information has also been obtained from printed and on-line sources as well as from personal visits to Italian restaurants in and around Tokyo.

## **Pizza and Pizzerias in Tokyo**

A fast search on Google will show that pizza, as a food and a term, has truly gone global. However, the thousands of pizza titles popping out from the Internet as a search result evokes in the reader different images and tastes. One person could be thinking of wedge-shaped slices topped with cheese and pepperoni, while someone else could be thinking of red tomatoes and white mozzarella covering a soft crust; then another person might be thinking of some kind of crunchy Italian food.

To categorize the variations, we can begin by distinguishing between a standardized pizza and a handcrafted one (Helstosky 2008). The standardized pizza originated in the United States, and for this reason I will refer to it as American pizza in this paper, even if there are hand-made American pizza establishments as well. Generally, the American pizza maker uses industrial preparation techniques and is sold by pizza chain restaurants that usually deliver to their customers. It is a large sliced pizza, heavily garnished, baked in pans, and the taste is homogeneous, so a Domino's pepperoni pizza ordered in Chicago should taste the same as one ordered in London or in Paris. The handcrafted pizza, on the other hand, originated in Italy as the food of the poor and slowly became an emblem of Italian national cuisine. It is made by an expert pizzaiolo using artisanal methods. The pizza is baked directly on the stone of a wood-burning oven, and is garnished with only a few fresh ingredients. There are precise rules to be followed in the making of the artisanal pizza, so no pizza will taste exactly the same. Flavor and crust texture depends upon the pizzaiolo him



or herself, the quality of the ingredients, the oven, and other elements. As noted by Helstosky (2008), McDonald's & Co. have left no room for small, independent hamburger shops, but pizza chains have not replaced the artisanal pizza. All over the world, including Japan, standardized and handcrafted pizza seem to coexist without any particular problems.

The escalation of the pizza's popularity in Japan and its link to the Italian restaurant scene, can be broadly traced through three main periods: the 1950 - 60s, 1970 - 1980s, and 1990s to the present.

## 1950 - 1960s

The darker side of Tokyo's underworld can account for much that happened during the post-war period, as seen through the eyes and the questionable life of Nicola Zappetti. As written by Robert Whiting (1999), Mr. Zappetti was an American marine of Italian descendants who made his way into the Japanese underground economy and became involved with the *yakuza*. In 1956, following his release from jail, he opened "Nicola's pizza house" in the Roppongi area. He was neither a chef nor a restaurateur. Thus he built his knowledge of pizza relying on his sense of taste, a few cookbooks, and what he used to eat back home in New York. While he lost his restaurants through a series of unfortunate events (e.g. gambling losses, wrong investments, wrong business partners, divorce), his name and his mustached figure holding a stack of pizzas is still prevalent. Part of his pizza parlor business went to his ex-wife and another part to Nihon Kotsu, one of the largest taxi companies in Tokyo. Nevertheless Zappetti played an important part in spreading the popularity of pizza in Japan.



Nicola's Pizza House in Seibu Department Store, Ikebukuro.  
Photo by Rossella Ceccarini

In the same area and period, Mr. Antonio Cancemi opened his Italian restaurant. Antonio was a trained chef, born in Sicily in 1916. He graduated from a culinary school and joined the Italian navy as a chef. In 1943 he reached Japan onboard an Italian military vessel during the month of September, when Italy surrendered. As a Japanese ally, Antonio was by classification an enemy to the U.S., but his cooking expertise led him to cook for General McArthur on a train trip around Japan in 1946. In 1957, Antonio moved his operations from Kobe to Tokyo,

and almost immediately pizza became one of his restaurant's most popular dishes. Today, Antonio's is the oldest family owned Italian restaurant in Japan. Its flagship restaurant is in Aoyama accompanied by many other restaurants, delicatessens and cafes throughout Japan.

## 1970 - 1980s

In the 1970s and 1980s pizza chains began to make their way into Japan, taking advantage, we can assume, of the Foreign Capital Law, which was revised as follows in 1969:

In March 1969, Japanese Foreign Capital Law was revised so that foreign-capital restaurants in Japan could operate freely. Restaurant businesses from abroad penetrated the Japanese market openly through direct investment or by operating agreements. Under that law, it became easy for Japanese companies to make an alliance of technology and capital with foreign corporations. From the end of World War II until 1969, Japan made it impossible for private retailers and restaurant businesses to take in foreign capital, because Japan promoted national-sector businesses rather strongly. The revised Foreign Capital Law was welcomed by the restaurant industry. (Doi 1992,73)

We can learn through various corporate websites that Shakey's Pizza and Pizza Hut opened in 1973, followed by Domino's pizza in 1985. The first *Japanese* shop called "Pizza La," opened in the Mejiro area of Tokyo in 1986.<sup>1</sup> To the present day, American chains are marketing an American pizza style while Pizza La seems to favor the Italian style. Even if Pizza La sells a product that no Italian would recognize as Italian, Pizza La's TV commercials use the word "*buono*," the Italian term for "good." In one television ad, three young Japanese girls place their index fingers under their cheek bones, twisting them while saying, "*Buono*." It is a gesture usually used in Italy when addressing children to indicate something delicious.

In the 1970s and mid 1980s we could witness the continued spread of pizza chains, and along with it the success of Italian cuisine in general. Such terms as *イタ飯* (*itameshi*) and *イタ飯ブーム* (*itameshi boom*), indicated that Italian food and Italian cuisine were now popular and friendly words of the 1980s. Among the restaurants and people partly responsible for the boom was Carmine Cozzolino.

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1. For the first opening dates see the following websites: Shakey's <http://www.rkfs.co.jp/shakeys/history.html#35th>; Pizza Hut <http://www.pizzahut.co.uk/restaurants/our-history.aspx> and <http://www.pizzahut.jp/more/effort.php>; Domino's <http://www.dominoseastgrinstead.co.uk/funfacts.htm> ; Pizza La [http://www.four-seeds.co.jp/corporate/history\\_1980.html](http://www.four-seeds.co.jp/corporate/history_1980.html)

Carmine Cozzolino was born in Calabria, southern Italy, and arrived in Japan in 1978, holding a cultural visa and a lifetime ambition to become an *aikido* master. He first lived in a monastery near Mount Fuji and then moved to Tokyo. Though *aikido* remained his main interest, he started working in various Tokyo restaurants in order to make a living. But he was not satisfied with the dishes he was required to make:

In those days, most Japanese restaurant owners requested you to put some sort of sauce in the Milanese [fried cutlet dipped in egg and breadcrumbs] because it was the French way. I mean, yes, French do cook in that way, but we don't! So it was something like...I was taken by a sort of anger like...“I will show you how it is supposed to be in the restaurants” ... At the end... I opened up my own restaurant and it became a boom....It was bizarre. You needed months and months of reservations. (Interview with Carmine Cozzolino, April 2008)



Exterior and interior of the first Carmine restaurant.  
Photographs courtesy of Mr. Carmine Cozzolino

Because of this sort of prejudice towards the Italian cuisine that prevailed in most Japanese owned restaurants, Carmine opened his own business in a Tokyo area known as Kagurazaka in 1987. Though small (in fact a hole in the wall), that is how he likes to talk about it. There were only twenty-five miniature tables around which students, “salary-men,” dating couples and occasionally show-business people crowded. According to Carmine, the popularity of the place was due to low prices, a friendly atmosphere and, of course, the Italian food itself. Even if different from Japanese food, it proved to share the rule of simplicity: few natural ingredients and not too many rules of etiquette. Earnings were so high each year that finally he had to move to more spacious accommodations on the opposite side of the street.

The business spirit of Carmine has always been to open a restaurant with an image of himself as the first customer of the place. In 1987 he opened his



restaurant according to the needs of a single, thirty-year-old man, wishing to dine with his friends or take his fiancée to a foreign restaurant without having to go through all his savings. In the 1990s being a forty-year-old man with a family and children, he was thinking of a place to dine without having to worry about noisy youngsters, broken glasses, or high prices. With this “forty-year-old married man with children” idea in mind, he opened Pizzeria La Volpaia (The Fox’s Lair) in 1995. Again it became a boom. Little foxes were drawn on the walls, and the room(s) contained long tables with benches to sit on. Importantly, it was easy to clean the concrete flooring. Moreover, it was a self-service environment. Unable to install a wood-burning oven in a wooden structure, he brought an electric oven from Italy. Though his initial idea was to make the restaurant a fun place for kids, it became, once again, a place to take someone on a date. Thanks to the self-service system, the restaurant required fewer personnel, and so the profit margin rose to 40%. The restaurant closed in 2005 because the old wooden house had to be torn down to build a typical Japanese mansion, but Pizza Carmine is still to be found in and around Tokyo.

### *1990s - present*

As observed during the years following the war, the pizza scene was dominated by pioneers of Italian cuisine. In the 70s and 80s there followed a boom in Italian cuisine on one hand, and the birth of pizza chains on the other, mostly standardized pizza. Beginning with the 1990s, we can see the rise of pizzerias as well as a rise in popularity of Napoli style pizza.



Plastic Pizza samples displayed outside an Italian Chain Restaurant, Tokyo.  
Photo by Rossella Ceccarini

Pizzerias are sometimes run by Italians and marketed in a traditional, family-oriented Italian environment, but very often they are owned by Japanese food corporations. For instance, the big Nisshin Seifun Group owns the pizzeria chain “Partenope,”<sup>2</sup> taking the name after a mermaid that, according to the legend, died in the gulf of Napoli. Similarly, Still Food Corporation holds a number of “Pizzeria 1830” establishments.<sup>3</sup> This name refers to the year in which “Pizzeria Port’Alba” (founded in Napoli in 1738) became the first modern pizzeria with tables and chairs (Levine 2005). In the past, the pizzeria was a small workshop where peddlers bought the pizza to be sold on the street. Eventually, take-away pizza was sold directly to customers, and by the end of the 18th century, some benches found their way into the pizzeria, enabling customers to sit and eat (Benincasa 1992; Capatti 2001).

Along with pizzerias held by Japanese food corporations, there are also family-owned pizzerias run by Japanese pizzaiolos, who are sometimes assisted in the business by their wives. Two examples are “Pizzeria Dream Factory” (opened in 1994) and “Pizzeria Il Pentito” (opened in 1998). Both are owned and run by Japanese men who left their old jobs to become pizzaiolos. One was a laundry shop owner and the other a fashion buyer.

Beginning with the 1990s the pizzaiolo sometimes became a figure of celebrity status in the restaurant scene, the most popular being Salvatore Cuomo.<sup>4</sup> He was born in Italy and moved to Japan with his family in the late 1980s and for a while traveled back and forth between Italy and Japan. His father ran a restaurant in Kichijoji, an area slightly west of Tokyo that continues to be very popular among foreigners and the younger generation. When his father fell ill, Salvatore had to work alone in the restaurant business with the help of his younger brothers. Being continually exposed to his father’s work, and since Italian cuisine was blooming all over Tokyo, it was not difficult for Salvatore to find work as a pizzaiolo and chef. He started teaching Italian cuisine at a popular Italian language school and after working at several locations he began to appear in popular magazines. In 1995, Salvatore conducted what was called “the tomato battle” on the Iron Chef TV Show along with his younger brother. With this, his name grew until he was “scouted” to manage Salvatore Cuomo Brothers and Pizza Salvatore Cuomo, which today is known as “Y’s Table corporation.” This corporation also holds a number of Asian and French cuisine restaurants. PIZZA SALVATORE CUOMO is advertised as follows:

PIZZA SALVATORE CUOMO, produced by Chef Salvatore Cuomo, is an Italian-style pizzeria. Thin-crafted but chewy Neapolitan pizza

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2. <http://www.nisshin.com/english/english32.html>

3. <http://www.stillfoods.com/1830/index.html>

4. Information drawn from an informal interview with Mr. Raffaele Cuomo in February 2008 and from printed and on-line press articles (See references).



is baked quickly in the wood-fired oven built by a Neapolitan Craftsman. Now delivery service enables this real taste to be enjoyed at households and offices. Gather your family and friends and enjoy the party in Italian style with PIZZA SALVATORE CUOMO's Neapolitan pizza.<sup>5</sup>

Today the trade mark, Salvatore Cuomo, and his restaurants are not only known in Kanto, Tokai and Kinki regions of Japan but are also making their way into Shanghai. Moreover, there are plans to open locations in Seoul.

The pizza of Napoli is also promoted by the Japanese branch of the Italian Associazione Verace Pizza Napoletana. The association was founded in Italy in 1984 to promote and safeguard the traditional pizza of Napoli as a response to the rise of fast-food pizza chains and industrially-made pizzas often marketed as “Pizza from Napoli.” Pizzerias making their pizza in accordance to the Napoli system can become members of the association and display the trademark of “Verace Pizza Napoletana (VPN).” The goals of the association are also supported at the local level by the Municipality of Napoli and at national level by the Italian Ministry of Food and Agriculture. The association has members all over the world. As for Japan, the first pizzerias to display the trademark VPN in Tokyo were the “Ristorante Pizzeria Marechiaro”<sup>6</sup> in 1996, followed by “La Piccola Tavola” in 1998.<sup>7</sup> Today the association has members in the northern city of Sapporo and has its own independent branch in Tokyo, established in 2006. It should be noted that in Italy the various pizza associations do not always agree on the pizza recipe and regulations promoted by the VPN. However, this does not diminish the importance of the association's role in spreading traditional,

hand-crafted pizza throughout Japan. The association frequently promotes seminars conducted by master pizzaiolos coming directly from Italy, and in 2007 the association published the book *The veracious pizza of Napoli, craft book* (真のナポリピッツァ技術教本). The book features a short history of pizza, the Napoli style pizzerias of Tokyo, the pizzaiolos who studied in Italy to learn how to make pizza, and includes several recipes with colorful photographs.



Pizzeria Tonino in Tokyo receives the VPN trademark May 2009. Photograph courtesy of Mr. Toshi Shino.

5. [salvatore.jp/restaurant/index.html](http://salvatore.jp/restaurant/index.html)

6. Information from <http://www.bellavita.co.jp/company.html>

7. Information from <http://www.pizzanapoletana.org/showassoc.php?id=94>

## The Pizzaiolo

So why did pizza become so popular in Japan and other parts of the world? Probably it is because of the simple idea that a dish of bread with tasty toppings, simple in shape and size, has potential roots everywhere. Perhaps it is the pizza's adaptability to a variety of ingredients (first reflecting the regions of Italy and now the world) that has enabled the development of local pizzas. The pizza's initial popularity doubtless has roots in American society's mass production and consumption market (La Cecla 1998; Capatti 2001; Helstosky 2008), but as noted by Sanchez, the role of the pizzaiolo should not be underestimated:

During the 1930s, the years of the American prohibition, it is to him [the pizzaiolo] that we owe the merit of having attracted the Americans. Americans ventured into the various Italian neighborhoods to buy alcohol, and while allowing themselves to be tempted by a dish of spaghetti, they observed from a distance an amazing worker making a circular shape, dough flying into the air. (Sanchez 2007, 170, author's translation)

The establishment of pizza as the everyday dish of the poor has its roots in Napoli (Capatti 2001), which is also true for the origin of the pizzaiolo (Benincasa 1992). The occupation has evolved to such an extent that in recent years (2005, 2006 and 2008) a bill (in draft form) has been presented to the Italian parliament intended to discipline the trade and to create a sort of European certification for pizzaiolos.<sup>8</sup> Meanwhile, to deal with growing requests for pizzaiolos in Italy and abroad, pizza schools have mushroomed all over Italy, supported by dozens of pizza associations. Nevertheless, the craft of making pizza is still, as a rule, learned through apprenticeships in a pizzeria.

As mentioned by my sources, in traditional pizzerias the roles (preparation duties) are fundamentally comprised of three persons working around a wood-oven in a hierarchical order: the pizzaiolo who makes the dough, rolls it out, and prepares the topping; the baker who is in charge of baking the pizza; and the table assistant who is in charge of such tasks as slicing the mozzarella and placing the ingredients in their respective containers. After a long apprenticeship, the table assistant is expected to become a baker and then pizzaiolo. Nowadays, the task divisions are becoming less common in the sense that assistants are also involved in making

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8. Italian Parliament.

Draft Bill 426, XVI legislature (2008). <http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Ddlpres&leg=16&id=302278>

Draft Bill 382, XV legislature (2006).

<http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Ddlpres&leg=15&id=209067>

Draft Bill 3380, XIV legislature (2005).

<http://www.senato.it/japp/bgt/showdoc/frame.jsp?tipodoc=Ddlpres&leg=14&id=135709>

pizza. Italian pizzaiolos acquire their skills from an early age, usually through the perpetuation of family tradition. In fact, all of my Italian informants started their pizzaiolo apprenticeships before the age of fifteen. The following excerpts illustrate how deeply embedded—from youth—the pizzeria system is:

I come from Ischia Ponte, the oldest village of Ischia Island. My house is surrounded by pizzerias. Just for play, at the age of 7, I started unconsciously learning the craft at Pizzeria Di Massa. Relatives, same family...but in that place there used to be a great maestro pizzaiolo, Tonino Troncone, and from age 7 until I turned thirteen I just played, always inside that place. Always... Neapolitans joke, the oven, and of course, the pizza that is so delicious...and is among kids' preferred food.... Anyway, I ended up at age thirteen being completely autonomous, quite able by myself to run a pizzeria and make every single part of the pizza: the dough, setting the working table...the oven, which is the most complicated part. (Interview with Italian pizzaiolo A, March 2008)

...I gradually entered this kind of occupation in 1977 during the school summer breaks. Instead of letting me go out with friends to play soccer or to ride the bike, or to go to the country side to steal oranges or fruits, my mother would send me to the shop so I could learn a job. (Italian pizzaiolo B, February 2008)

Having worked all over Italy and Europe, pizzaiolos often find work in Japan through word of mouth and other casual networks. For instance:

I did not know anyone who had working experience in Japan. I became familiar with this country thanks to a Japanese friend of mine living in Milan with his Italian wife and two children. He proposed that I work independently here in Japan for one of his friends in an area called Saitama. I was about to decide between Russia and China but I chose Japan because of its peacefulness. (Italian pizzaiolo B, February 2008)

In short, when an Italian pizzaiolo arrives in Japan he already has a job, some kind of accommodation, and visa sponsorship. But he doesn't have a strong knowledge of the local culture and does not speak Japanese. Nevertheless, he has the job skills and knowledge, or more specifically, what could be called in Bourdiean terms, cultural capital. In short, he has what it takes to ply his trade in Japan. Such knowledge and the skill can be illustrated through this story by one of my sources. He found a job in a restaurant that was already employing a Japanese pizzaiolo. While the Japanese pizzaiolo could make 50-60 pizzas in one day, the Italian pizzaiolo could make up to 140-150 pizzas by himself. Eventually, the Japanese pizzaiolo quit the job and looked for a different restaurant. But my informant made clear that he did not mean to oust the Japanese pizzaiolo from his work place:



An Italian Pizzaiolo baking pizza in Tokyo.  
Photo by Rossella Ceccarini

He quit on his own because I became the first pizzaiolo. But by now, I had already taught him several Napoli-style tools of the trade. Towards the end, we competed against each other, but he just couldn't keep up, falling behind by thirty pizzas within a two-hour period. Finally he gave up! (Italian pizzaiolo C, April 2008)

Dealing with Japanese flour, water and atmospheric conditions that are different from Italy also requires special knowledge and skill. Japanese humidity is so high during the summer that it is necessary to pay careful attention to the leavening process. Without this precaution the dough could, in a sense, “explode.” The oven must also be carefully cleaned and cared for. As pointed out by one pizzaiolo residing in Japan for about 10 years (and having nearly 30 years of business experience), a pizzaiolo's occupation is:

...a very particular job, it is a sense. When I make the dough or check the oven temperature...I do not use a thermometer or such similar device. I just use my hands. (Italian pizzaiolo A, March 2008)

To develop such a sense, the Japanese pizzaiolo goes to Italy and studies the craft. The pizzaiolos I have met with so far went to Italy starting from the 1990s, but the chances that some Japanese traveled to Italy for this purpose before the 1990s cannot be discounted. This is because Pizzaiolos are not formally trained in culinary



schools as is usually the case for chefs. Most of the “want to be” pizzaiolos go to Italy on tourist visas and search for on-the-spot training at a pizzeria. This informal condition of flux and lack of official data make exact training time, or starting points, difficult to account for.

Some of my Japanese informants had worked in restaurants as Italian cooks and then moved to Italy to improve themselves. Such was the case with Makoto Onishi, now a pizzaiolo and chef at Salvatore Cuomo. Below, he recalls his first encounter with Napoli style pizza in Tokyo:

When I ate [that pizza] I was struck by how delicious it was. So impressive! That cornicione [pizza frame] and that dough were delicious. Even as a cook trained in Italian cuisine, I could not understand how the pizza dough could be so soft and could have both a pleasant soft and springy [もち もち *mochi mochi*] texture in the mouth. Such a good taste.... I then realized that if that is the way a good pizza should taste, I would have much to learn.... That taste! How to get it would be my goal. That is when Italy became a part of my life-long project—to go to Italy to learn the real art of making pizza. (Interview with Makoto Onishi, June 2008)

After spending about two years learning how to make pizza, he also participated in—and won—a pizza competition, as we will see later. Onishi brought with him a basic grasp of the Italian language, which he studied by himself, but there was no job waiting for him. Upon his arrival in Napoli, he met an Italian doctor at the train station who helped him find a job as a pizzaiolo on the island of Ischia. He was not the only person with lucky encounters. Another informant who, having studied European Philosophy, travelled to Europe after his graduation in 1994. At that time he had no interest in pizza or the possibility of becoming a pizzaiolo. But one day as he was walking on the streets of Napoli he was approached by a young Italian man who was studying Japanese at a university. The man asked,

“Are you Japanese?” “Yes, I am Japanese, not Chinese.” Then he invited me to his house and made me dinner. He talked a lot because he was very interested in Japanese culture. Then we went together to that pizzeria... how is it called? The most famous pizzeria of Napoli, Pizzeria Da Michele. He said that I must have pizza in Napoli, and so we went to eat pizza. Pizzeria Michele surprised me. It was something new. I felt something new, even the atmosphere of the pizzeria. (Japanese pizzaiolo B, July 2008)

So impressed was he by this event that decided to learn how to make pizza and was introduced by his new Italian friend to the owner of a pizzeria. He recalls his new part-time job:

I asked to work. Even washing the dishes would be fine. So I worked only during the weekends, but this way I could also see the work of the pizzaiolo and what kind of job it was. It was fascinating: the atmosphere of the pizzeria, the laughing and the telling of jokes. The atmosphere of Italian restaurants in Japan were, how would you say, completely different. I don't know how it is now, but 14 years ago Italian restaurants [in Japan] were like conservative French restaurants. (Japanese pizzaiolo B, July 2008)

One way to find a job in Italy is to seek out the various pizzerias. But, given the growing links and network connections between the Italian and Japanese regarding the pizza trade (thanks to the first young Japanese going to Italy and vice versa), we can assume that Japanese who now go to Italy already have pizzeria employment connections. Also, language schools probably play a role in making connections. For instance, a young Japanese working in a Tokyo pizzeria, when asked, "How might you find a place to work in Italy?" he replied that he would be helped by the Italian owner of the Italian language school he is attending.

When the training in Italy is over, the Japanese pizzaiolo returns to Japan having acquired job skills and cultural knowledge. Not only has he learned how to make pizza, but he has also learned that there are different kinds of pizza and pizza tastes around Italy. Such is the case of a Japanese pizzaiolo who was asked by a restaurant manager to move from Napoli to a holiday town in Calabria and to work there alone during the summer. Here is his reaction to the experience:

There is a difference. For instance, in the region of Calabria basil is not used in the pizza Margherita. They only use oregano and tomato when they make pizza Margherita but include spicy condiments. Yes there are differences. Also they like it kind of crispy.... Well, Neapolitans also like it crispy but let's say, a little softer. (Japanese pizzaiolo B, July 2008)

Once back in Japan, the pizzaiolo will easily find a job in one of the local pizzerias and will likely be responsible for the training of new pizzaiolos. Some Japanese pizzaiolos who trained in Italy have won important pizza competitions. For example, the Italian and Japanese press paid considerable attention to Makoto Onishi who won the Pizzafest Competition in Napoli in 2003, and in 2006. Likewise, Hisanori Yamamoto won a trophy for the most creative and artistic pizza in 2007 and in 2008. However, Japanese do not go to Napoli only to learn how to make pizza. They also study the regional pizza markets of Italy where the number of pizzerias is relatively high, such as in Emilia Romagna. Takeshi Morita, for instance, worked and received his training near the city of Ravenna for about three years. In 2001, he won the

“Gusto della Pizza” (The taste of pizza) prize in a competition held at the Padua Pizza Show. There is also the acrobatic pizza team of Japan that consistently places among the best three (first in 2004) at the world competition held annually in the city of Salsomaggiore, in northern Italy. One might conclude that sometimes the trophies won by Japanese are seen by Italian pizzaiolos as the result of a certain marketing strategy; that is, through media exposure the pizza festival gains in popularity outside of Italy and accordingly, the Japanese companies acquire more recognition and credibility if their pizzaiolos have won a competition in Italy. This might, or might not, be the case, but the basic fact that young Japanese go to Italy by themselves to learn how to make pizza is unquestionable. They acquire the necessary knowledge to become pizzaiolos, thus helping to spread an interest in pizza and pizza cooks throughout Japan. The experience of working in Italy and having won pizza awards can easily lead to television appearances, including major shows, and appearances in popular magazines.



Hard to find in Tokyo. A Japanese female Pizzaiolo setting up the dough.  
Photo by Rossella Ceccarini

As we have seen, prior to the 1990s, the making of Italian pizzas in Japan was mostly done by Italian chefs, such as the pioneer, Antonio Cancemi in the 1950s. From the 1990s, there was a need for pizzaiolos, which led to a search for pizzaiolos in Japanese restaurants. This employment is now recognized as a specific occupation. That can be inferred, for instance, from the advertisement of Granada, a Corporation holding the various pizzerias “Isola” around Japan. Granada Corporation has a web page dedicated to the occupation of pizzaiolo

and to the search for new ones. The company stresses that the image of the pizzaiolo is different from “cook,” as is the case in Italy. Granada offers an attractive three year apprenticeship contract for aspiring pizzaiolos whose participants learn the basics of the job in the first six month and earn a salary between 180,000 - 200,000 yen per month. By the third year they become competent pizzaiolos, often responsible for a shop, and earn between 250,000 - 500,000 yen a month.<sup>9</sup> As we can see, the globalization of pizza has not only introduced a new food but also a new occupation into Japan. Today the word, ピッツァ職人 (*pizza shokunin*), is used to indicate a pizza artisan and the word, ピッツァイオーロ (*pizzaiolo*), has entered the Japanese *katakana* dictionary (Sanseido’s concise dictionary of *katakana* words 2005,865).

9. Information from <http://www.granada-jp.net/saiyo/pizza.html>

## Conclusion

While most studies on foreign food in Japan have been considered from the customer's perspective and how they react to the new food, this paper has focused on the food worker's perspective. The paper has shown that by looking at food from the worker's point of view we can see at least two significant issues:

a) That food is not as a mere commodity but an artifact of human ingenuity. It is a creative product shaped through the accumulation of knowledge, skills, and human experience. The paper further shows that food does not depend only on responses to consumer demands or influences by multinational corporations, but also on food creators.

b) Through this perspective we can also see a double-flow of transnational food workers. One is the flow of Italian pizzaiolos traveling to Japan to ply their trade and provide the cultural and human capital necessary to recreate Italian food in Japan (while coping with environmental differences and the use of non-traditional ingredients in craft pizza). The other is the flow of young Japanese traveling to Italy to learn how to make pizza and to build or reinforce their culinary knowledge. Upon returning to Japan they have acquired the necessary forms of capital (i.e., cultural, symbolic and institutionalized, as in the Bourdiean perspective) to enter Japan's world of Italian restaurants.

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