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FEATURED ESSAY

CIRCLE K RECIPES

Karen Tei Yamashita

Gohan

Wash rice until the water runs clear. For each cup of rice, add a cup of water. Place in rice cooker, and push the button.

Arroz

Rinse rice and drain. Sauté chopped garlic, onion and salt in oil. Add rice. Add water. For each cup of rice, add about two cups of water. Bring to a boil. Lower heat and cover until tender. (If you live in Japan, dump the sautéed rice into the rice cooker, add water, and push the button.)

One day at a restaurant that specializes in tofu, I heard the people at the next table ordering “*raisu*.” “*Raisu, hitotsu*.” I thought I had misunderstood, but eventually I could also read the side order in *katakana* on menus in other restaurants. That you can order rice at a Japanese restaurant seems obvious, but that it’s called “rice” is one of those things in Japan that has a reason you can only guess. My guess is that the word *kome* means rice, the grain, and the word *gohan* means rice, but also refers to food generally. No word for just an extra bowl of rice. So *raisu*. But, it used to be that if you were eating food (*gohan*), you were eating rice (*gohan*).

My grandfather came from the small village of Naegi, now incorporated into the larger city of Nakatsugawa in Gifu Prefecture. His family apparently owned enough land to parcel a portion out to tenants who paid in rice. In those days, rice was legal tender. A large storehouse used to stand where the family turned that rice into *sake*. My father once speculated that the fall of this family may have come about from drinking that legal tender. Recently the family who since owns and farms the land in Naegi sent us a large sack of rice produced on that very land. *Naegi no okome*. I washed and cooked several cups of it very carefully in the rice cooker, and

we all ate it very carefully, trying at first to taste each grain. It was an odd little ritual like eating your ancestors. Or eating legal tender.

I was born in the Year of the Rabbit. On evenings with a full moon, I look up to decipher the outline of a rabbit pounding rice into the giant *omochi* that is, they say, the moon. When I was a child, my grandmother stuck a few grains of rice to the lobes of my ears. I always thought my ears were too big, but my grandmother said big lobes were good luck; if you can stick rice to your lobes, you'll be rich. *Kanemochi*. The sticky rice knows. Legal tender here.

In Japan, rice must be the sticky sort and also polished white. One eats the purity of it. It doesn't matter if its nutrition is negligible. You can rarely find in stores any other sort of rice or grain for that matter. No brown rice. No barley. No cracked wheat. No corn meal. No long grain. A Brazilian woman explained the difference between the short and long grains, "Japanese rice: *Juntos venceremos!* /Together we will succeed! Brazilian rice: *Sozinho, consigo!* /I can do it myself!" But, heaven forbid that the Japanese should eat the long grain rice of Thailand.

Everyone can tell you how Thai rice was introduced into the Japanese market only to be given a bad rep and thrown away by the tons. They complained, "It had a funny smell. Someone found a piece of insect in it. It wasn't sticky." It was cheap. It was just a food staple from a poor country. In that sense, it wasn't rice. It wasn't legal tender. Who's eating it now? Probably the Brazilians.

It's the rainy season in Japan. Water fills rice paddies across the countryside. Houses, mini-marts and factories encroach upon the planted land, replacing the fields gradually, but nothing yet replaces the reign of rice. Rare in some parts of the country to see plantings of vegetables or fruits. And rarer still: corn, beans, other grains, or cover crops. From the looks of the supermarket offerings, variety and quantity are sacrificed for an almost cloned perfection in the produce. For example, every eggplant looks like every other eggplant in size and shape. The same goes for cucumbers, tomatoes, onions, potatoes, apples, oranges, melons, etc. Someone produced the incredible statistic that Japan throws away imperfect vegetables and fruits in quantities that equal the weight of the total production of rice each year. You pay for this statistic: One tomato=\$1.00.

One apple=\$1.00. One head of lettuce=\$2.00. 1/4 head of nappa cabbage=\$1.50. Ten kilos/Twenty pounds of rice=\$40.00.

Although food (*gohan*) is rice (*gohan*), obviously rice is not really food. Certainly it is also *sake*, *nuka*, roof thatching, paper, glue, starch, matting, and even in the past, footgear and raincoats. But beyond these byproducts, its production, its purity, its mythic qualities, its value, define every other thing called food. Everything is measured against it. Legal tender. The stubbornness of rice. The persistence of rice. The gold standard was abolished years ago, but not this rice standard.

Miso-shiru

Bring a pot of water with dashi to boil. Add a scoop of miso paste, and chopped vegetables, seaweed, mushrooms or tofu.

Feijao

Separate the beans from any pebbles or insects. Wash and soak the beans. Cook in pressure cooker until tender. In a separate pan, sauté onions, garlic, and salt in oil or fat. Smash a cup of the cooked beans into this mixture to make a thickening paste, then stir everything back into the cooked beans. Add more salt and pepper to taste.

Rice-and-beans. *Arroz-e-feijao*. Inseparable. For Brazilians, the only food that sustains. When the early Japanese immigrants to Brazil arrived on coffee plantations in the 1920s, they received a ration of rice, beans, salt, coffee and sugar. Sugar has always been plentiful in Brazil, and in those days the Japanese knew only to add it to the beans. After several weeks of the sweet stuff, the salty fare might have been a pleasant surprise. In any case, rice and beans became an accepted staple, the food that makes the people, the daily blessing, a *comida sagrada*. If *gohan* (and probably miso soup) is food to Japanese, *arroz-e-feijao* is *gohan* to Brazilians.

Thanks to this cultivation of the Brazilian palette, the first commercial ventures among Brazilians in Japan have been related to the making and sale of Brazilian food. What is it that the food of your homeland, of your mother's kitchen, will provide you? Why do we crave it so badly? Why do our tongues pull us home? Was mom's cooking really that good? When Japanese immigrants got to Brazil, they spent much of their years laboring to make vegetables, tofu, miso, and shoyu. Now, the *dekasegi* in Japan

finance a lucrative network of imports from Brazil, New Zealand, Australia, and the Philippines to eat the stuff that pleases the literal mother tongue: *mandioca*, *Sonho de Valsa*, *Guarana*, *pão de queijo*, *linguiça*, *goiabada*, *fubá* and *suco de maracujá*.

In the center of every enclave of Brazilian life in Japan, you find food. Sometimes it is a restaurant; sometimes a cantina and grocery store, or a karaoke bar. Sometimes it is a truck stocked with Brazilian goods making designated stops to the lodgings of factory workers in remote towns. Often it is the *obento/marmita* lady, the woman who delivers boxed lunches and dinners to factory workers.

The *obento* lady brings a boxed lunch with the always-dependable *arroz-e-feijao*, a piece of meat, and a side of vegetables. She says the young Brazilian men say that the Japanese lunches don't "sustain." Rice and pickles don't make it. They need food that sticks to your ribs. Some don't care for fish. In the first months that they arrive, they all lose weight quickly. The *obento* lady also brings news, gossip, and motherly advice. Often she's walking social services; she'll give you information about health insurance, your visa, and your driver's license. She's been here awhile, started her own business, and knows the ropes. Her cell phone rings constantly as she delivers her food. "Carlos, listen, you perforated your lungs once already. Forget the overtime for a while. Give it a rest. Do you hear me?" "Luis? I heard you moved to Toyota. Of course there's a friend of mine over there who makes *obento*. Do you want her telephone number?"

Arroz-e-feijao, the daily blessing, the tie that binds, not just food but also a social construct.

Yaki-Niku

Arrange thin slices of file mignon on a plate with a variety of cut vegetables, tofu and mushroom. Cook at the table on a hot plate with a little oil. Serve with rice, beer and sake.

Bife Milanesa

Pound slices of beef flat. Dip them in egg and breadcrumbs and fry. Serve with rice and beans.

About seven years ago, a small butcher shop in the town of Yoro in Gifu put out a flyer offering imported meat from Australia at extraordinarily

cheap prices. The flyer attracted several Brazilians who came to buy the meat and who also returned on the following Sunday, despite the fact that the offer was for one week only. The Brazilians peered past the counter and asked about some pieces of meat on the block. This was meat cut away from the fine rib eye or perhaps from the mignon that Japanese customers expected to buy, but the Brazilians offered to take this unwanted meat. Every weekend, the Brazilians returned for more meat, for the side cuts and the tougher meats. Finally, the owner found herself too busy to handle these Brazilians and invited them into the shop to cut away the pieces they wanted: *picanha*, *colchão duro*, *colchão mole*, *ponta de agulha*.

In time, Brazilians came by the busloads, set up barbecue pits on the empty lot on the side of the shop, roasted meat, played music, sang and danced. The owners covered the empty lot when it became cold, and the *churrasco* and the music continued. They gave up trying to sell fancy cuts of fine Hida and Kobe beef at 1,200 yen (\$12.00) per 100 grams, and transformed the business to provide imported Australian meat cheaply for a more voracious clientele, for Brazilians whose families can be counted on to each buy as much as ten kilos of meat—beef, chicken, pork, bacon, ham and sausages—per week. Brazilian grocery items were added to the shop. The empty lot turned into a *churrascaria* restaurant complete with live music and karaoke. It only remained to sponsor a soccer team to turn completely Brazilian. Now there are four other such shops in four other cities in Japan, and they also do a mail order business, shipping meat directly to the homes of individuals in places as far as Okinawa and Hokkaido. For this purpose, 100 tons of meat is shipped from Australia every month.

As for the owners, the husband is Japanese; the wife is Korean. It's one of those Creole situations: Korean Japanese buying Australian meat and selling it in Japan to Brazilians and Peruvians.

Gyoza

Fill gyoza wrappers with a mixture of ground pork and chopped vegetables. Arrange them on a pan, frying them all on one side in a small amount of oil. When browned, spill about a 1/4-cup of water into the pan, lower heat, cover and cook until tender.

Pastel

Fill pastel wrappers with cheese, hearts of palm, tomatoes, or ground beef. Fry until crisp and golden.

I learned from my grandmother that after rice, everything else is *okazu*. At her house, lunch was always a bowl of rice and every jar of *tsukemono*, pickled fish, salted squid, she could bring out of the refrigerator. I imagine *okazu* to be an old term, not used much in Japan today. The Hawaiians still use it; in Hilo, I tried a sushi they call *okazu-maki*. The Brazilians have a similar term: *mistura*. Everything after rice and beans is *mistura*. *Gyoza* is *okazu*. *Pastel* is *mistura*.

I don't know if anyone has ever done a study of the origins of the *pastel* in Brazil. I assume the Chinese brought fried wonton to Brazil and adopted it to Brazilian tastes. But it was the Japanese immigrants who also became attached to its production, frying it behind stands at the *feiras* or open market places. In Brazil, fried wonton became much larger in size. Instead of a pork filling, there is cheese, hearts of palm, tomatoes, or ground beef. The dough is thicker; the secret in the recipe they say is *pinga*, that most potent of cane brandies. Now *pastel* is back in Asia, but it is back as *pastel*. It is not Chinese or Korean or even Japanese; it is Brazilian. And the secret in the dough is *pinga*. Still, the other day, I ate a fried wonton filled with cheese and *omochi*.

We visited the very traditional village of Shirakawa where all the houses are 200 years old and have thatched roofs. Also special to this area is the mountain cooking which includes fern sprouts, bamboo shoots and mushrooms gathered from the mountain side. Curiously we visited a factory that packages these mountain veggies because we had heard that a Brazilian family works in this factory. As it turns out, all the materials—fern sprouts, mushrooms, shoots—for this local specialty are imported from China and Russia, and have been from the last twelve years. To use the local produce would be far too expensive. So there you have it: unknown to thousands of tourists who pass this way, the packages of mountain vegetables bought as *omiyage* come from China and Russia and are made and packaged by Brazilians.

An Okinawan nutritionist in Yokohama opened a Brazilian restaurant because she noticed that the young Brazilians coming to work in Japan were

all losing weight, all seemed to have difficulty eating Japanese food. She wondered about this and went to Brazil to learn to cook Brazilian dishes. A Brazilian cook came to Japan to study Japanese cuisine; now she is the chef at a Brazilian restaurant in Nagoya whose fine food attracts a clientele both Japanese and Brazilian. A *nikkei* whose family traveled from Okinawa to Bolivia to Brazil to Yokohama recently opened her kitchen in Kawasaki offering both Okinawan and Brazilian dishes. Everybody is making *okazu*. Everybody is making *mistura*.

Chawanmushi

Beat eggs and a clear dashi soup together. Place pieces of chicken, ginkgo nuts, bamboo shoots, mushroom and fish cake in ceramic cups. Pour egg-soup mixture on top. Steam over boiling water until set. Serve hot in cups

Pudim

Beat eggs, sweetened condensed milk and cream in blender. Pour into a pan lined with sugar caramelized with cinnamon and cloves. Steam over boiling water until set. When cool, turn the pudim over on a plate to serve.

Lately I have been using the *chawanmushi* cups to make Brazilian *pudim*. The last time I made *pastel*, I tried it with cheese and *omochi*. Using *omochi* in this way reminded me that some California company makes pizza *omochi*, garlic-cheese *omochi* and raisin-cinnamon *omochi*. Another company specializes in jalapeno and smoked tofu. The other day we received a fancy box of chocolate covered *sembei*. In Japan, McDonald's has a teriyaki-chicken burger, the pizzas all have corn on them, and curry-rice comes with *tsukemono*. I heard some Brazilian women have used the rice cooker to bake cakes. Nothing is sacred. Your tradition is someone else's originality. It's a big taste adventure. And then again, "*raisu, hitotsu.*" *Gochisosamadeshita*.

CIRCLE K RULES

Japanese Rules

1. Remove your shoes when entering houses and buildings.
2. Always bring *omiyage* when you visit as a guest.
3. Don't leave your chopsticks stuck in your rice bowl like two posts.
4. Avoid the number four.
5. Dress according to your age and the season.
6. For the same work: Pay men 1,200 yen per hour; pay women 900 yen per hour.
7. Use the toilet slippers, but don't forget to leave them with the toilet.
8. *Enryo* until your host insists.
9. Wash outside the bath before soaking, and don't bring the towel in with you.
10. Drive on the left side of the road; if it's too narrow, drive in the middle.
11. When wearing a kimono, wrap yourself left over right.
12. Follow the table for incremental salary increases and title changes according to a man's age.
13. His opinion is her opinion is my opinion is your opinion. I agree.

The Rule Board

(A large sign in Japanese and Portuguese at Homi-Danchi, condominium complex housing some 8,000 people—2,000 of whom are Brazilian—in Homi-gaoka, Toyota City)

Let's respect the rules of the residential condominium!

Please do not park without requesting permission.

Let's stop driving motorcycles at high speeds.

Please don't use the plaza late at night before the sun rises.

Let's stop throwing cans and bottles in the streets and around the buildings.

Please don't write on the walls or objects.

During parties or reunions in apartments, please take care with the noise.

**Lets stop barbecuing on the verandah.*

Lets take care with pollution.

**Please regulate the volume on your television and stereo system.*

**Conversing in loud voices bothers your neighbors.*

Please put trash out in accordance with the determined models and in the appropriate location.

Do not throw objects or trash out of apartment windows.

**In particular, the throwing of cigarettes is common; please do not throw them.*

The residential condominium is a place where many people live communally. Let's collaborate to have a pleasurable daily life, thinking also of our neighbors.

*Municipal Corporation for Habitual Conservation
Chubu Branch/Nagoya Office*

In addition to the Rules Board, flyers are also distributed throughout Homi-Danchi explaining the following regulations in Portuguese:

Precautionary Notice for Daily Living

- 1) In these public housing units live various people, each with a different rhythm of life. Furthermore, the culture and customs of Japan are different from that of other countries. Thus, we ask that each person respect the regulations of communal life, to avoid any problems with your neighbors.
- 2) Do not turn on radios and televisions at high volume, principally in the early morning and late hours at night. Also during this time, take care not to make noise in the corridors or even in your apartment.
- 3) It is prohibited to raise cats, dogs or any other animal in the apartment because this may cause inconveniences for your neighbors.
- 4) In each home, the trash must be separated by category. This trash should be left in specific locations and on specific days of the week. It is prohibited to throw trash out on the previous night or at other inappropriate times. Stray dogs and other animals can spread the trash during the night, causing inconvenience to the residents and neighbors.

- 5) The activities of the Association are realized through the financial resources received monthly from residents to the Residential Condominium Association. These monthly revenues are used for the operational costs of the Association, such as the realization of events, printing of bulletins, acquisition of equipment, celebratory notices and condolences, etc.

Condominium dues serve to cover the costs of indispensable services for the daily activities of the condominium, such as the cost of electricity to illuminate stairs, corridors, passages, halls and rooms for reunions, maintenance and repairs of installations, cleaning the land, piping and drainage, and water for collective use, etc.

Any late payments will cause delays in the operation of the Association and this will cause in the last analysis, inconveniences to the proper residents. Do not forget to pay your monthly Residential Condominium Association dues before the due date in the same manner as your rent.

- 6) Notifications of the Association of Condominium Residents and the City are circulated through clipboards. As soon as you have read these notices, pass them to the next resident.
- 7) From time to time, the Association of Condominium Residents has a clean up, cutting of grass and weeds, etc., in the form of a group event. The residents realize this work and the cooperation of everyone are requested. On the other hand, there are also festivals and other events of fraternization. Try to participate to promote friendship with other residents.

The Brazilians have had difficulty following all these rules. No loud music. No late night conversations in the plaza. No *churrasco*. No speeding around on motorcycles. An extremely detailed categorizing of trash (burnables, cans, bottles, breakables, large items) with specific methods for disposal, specific days and times, and specific locations for specific removal. Brazilians forget to pass the clipboard or don't read the contents. Finally, the group clean-up days are monthly on Sunday mornings from 8:30 AM. While their Japanese neighbors are outside trimming hedges, sweeping paths and cutting grass, the Brazilians turn over in their

beds, preferring to pay the fine rather than to wake on a Sunday at such an ungodly hour.

In the meantime, the Japanese residents are at their wit's end. The Brazilians are unruly. Their presence has made a muck of a quiet routine. Not living in these housing units, it's difficult to imagine this complaint. A tour of Homi-Danchi and its environs gives you a sense of an oppressive quiet—the sound of sleeping people who work the night shift, the sound of a silent majority who want very badly to be accepted, the sound of people trying very hard to be quiet. Even the children seem to play quietly. This is as quiet as Brazilians can possibly be. This is probably as *ruly* as it gets.

Brazilian Rules

- 1) There are no rules.
- 2) All rules may be broken or avoided.
- 3) Dar um jeitinho. (There is always a way.)
- 4) Always bring your babies and small children to parties.
- 5) Men on the verandah with beers; women in the kitchen.
- 6) When leaving a party, give yourself an hour to kiss or hug each person good-by.
- 7) Females: Two kisses in greeting; three kisses to marry; four to avoid living with your mother-in-law.
- 8) Males: Left hand on his shoulder. Right hand patting his belly.
- 9) Nothing is sacred; tell a joke.
- 10) Taking advantage of a situation is not necessarily stealing.
- 11) Since nothing works, doing nothing may be the best approach

Brazilians are a very physical people. They touch each other a lot. They kiss and hug. They kiss and hug when meeting, and kiss and hug when taking leave. It takes some mastering to get that close to someone's face with just the right brush of the cheek. Even though it all seems so natural and friendly, there are rules about all this touching. One Japanese man got carried away and grabbed a woman's breasts. She hauled out with a metal pipe and nearly beat him to a pulp. Later he explained his impulsive excess; those breasts were just too beautiful to believe.

Still, Brazilians have an expectation about the "abra□o." They send embraces in their messages. They send "*beijos*." Their expectation is that

this show of affection is a demonstration of warmth and openness. Without this, the world is a cold place; thus, others who may find this kissing disconcerting are a cold people. *Frio*. Americans and Japanese hardly show affection in public; to kiss a mere acquaintance seems a little over-done. A handshake is just fine. Or how about a little bow. It's probably not about cold or hot; it's more like what's comfortable for a body to do. Brazilians kiss. Japanese get naked together in hot baths.

One of the well-known *nisei/sansei* traumas has been that their parents don't show physical affection for each other or their children. A lack of such affection among Nikkei in Brazilian or even American society is cause for an identity crisis: "I thought my parents didn't love me." Since one side of my family is the distant sort and the other, touchie-feelie, I've had to learn that affection is made of many things. Still, growing up and seeing that Japanese never even shook hands, I had some idea that they also never touched each other. Working with a Japanese director on one of my plays and seeing her put my Japanese characters in physical contact with each other finally abolished this assumption. Announcement: Japanese do in fact touch each other.

Abracos e beijos. It's a fine art among the Latins. It's easy to think that the rule is not hugging and kissing, that rules separate us. But it's also possible to think that hugging and kissing are rules in themselves, that otherwise we shall be separate. And then again, I embrace you from a great distance. It's a long embrace without rules.

American Rules

- 1) Speak English.
- 2) He who has makes the rules.
- 3) Smoking is prohibited in public places and on airplanes.
- 4) Just do it.
- 5) When in doubt, consult your attorney.
- 6) Drink Coke. Enjoy the real thing.
- 7) We are the world.
- 8) We are the happiest place on Earth.
- 9) We accept American Express, MasterCard or Visa.

I remember years ago seeing a pamphlet for Japanese travelers explaining with cartoons a series of possible scenarios in foreign places and the appropriate behaviors. There was everything from shaking hands to sitting (not stepping up) on the toilet seats. The stepping up on the toilet seats had to do with the nature of the Japanese toilet, which is on the floor. You have to crouch over it. The Brazilians have fondly dubbed it the “*motoquinha*” meaning that you “ride” it much like a motorcycle. Now public places often have stalls marked “Western Toilet,” and hotels and homes boast of the most sophisticated toilets in the world.

A company named Toto sells a toilet with a heated seat, bidet and air-drying system. Truly amazing. Somehow the nozzle for the bidet can squirt you in the vagina or the anus. Yes, there are clearly two pictures signs to choose from. My friend’s father demonstrated his home model and asked me if we didn’t have such toilets in America. When I said probably not, he jokingly said, in that case, he probably couldn’t travel there. Furthermore, since he got his new toilet, he never uses toilet paper anymore. In any case, I began to feel that I needed a pamphlet with cartoons explaining a series of possible scenarios and appropriate behaviors. If I pressed the button for bidet, how could I raise the temperature of the water? More importantly how could I make the squirting water stop?

Then there’s this odd feature in women’s toilets in some public places: *the sound of flushing*. On first inspection and unable to read the Japanese explanation, I kept trying to flush the toilet by passing my hand over a sensor. Curiously, all I got was the recorded sound of flushing. No water. Just the sound. Finally I dragged an interpreter into a bathroom for an explanation. Ah! Apparently Japanese women have found the sound of peeing offensive; to mask this sound, they flush and pee at the same time. It’s an enormous waste of water; so, Toto invented *the sound of flushing*.

Finally, Japanese bathrooms, even the most luxurious (marble counters, *ikebana*, perfumed soap, and all), never have paper towels. You’re supposed to bring your own towel, and I always forget. As a result, the bathrooms are quite litter-free. Who knows? With Toto, one day they may be paper-free.

A Brazilian friend, Ana Maria Bahiana, has written a book, *America: A to Z*, sold in airports, detailing all the habits and situations of American life that Brazilians find exasperating, funny, unexplainable or odd. Under “B”

is bidet. There are no bidets in the USA, she notes. Ana Maria misses her bidet, but I can't remember that anyone really used it in Brazil; it was usually filled with dirty laundry in most houses. Women use them to wash their panties. Nevertheless, all houses seem to have them. The construction outlets sell the toilet with a matching bidet. It's a pair, you see.

Public places in Brazil of course don't have bidets. Some don't have toilet paper or paper towels either. In this case, there might be a woman who offers you these essentials for a small fee. This woman supposedly also cleans the bathroom, scrubbing the toilets and mopping the floors. The fee you pay is probably her dinner. But every now and then, you may not have any change for the toilet lady; you've got to run out of the lady's room and hope she doesn't come chasing after you.

American women did away with pay toilets a long time ago. This was a major act of feminism at the time. In fact, an Asian American woman rose to political fame on this platform: pee for free. Still there's ground to cover here. Queuing up in endless lines for the women's room in theaters always reminds you that a man was probably the theater's architect.

The thing about American public toilets is the great amount of paper in them: gigantic toilet paper rolls so you will never be without, and paper towels that finally fill and spill over the trash receptacles. Most importantly, American toilets usually have paper seats. You can hear the women in the other stalls ripping them out of the containers and slapping down on the seats. You never know what could be yucking up the seat of a toilet. Some women must use the hover method where you sit without touching. Heck, some people must just sit on the seat anyway. Who knows, maybe someone is stepping up and crouching.

What all this toiletry has to say about rules is probably not erudite. The Romans invented plumbing. If you've ever tried to fix the plumbing, you feel as if nothing has changed since the Romans. At Versailles, we're told that no toilets existed; you simply disappeared for a moment behind the velvet curtains along the walls. At the Iso Gardens in Kagoshima, a guide dressed in a kimono shows you the toilet where the Lord Shimazu sat, his bowel movements falling into a bed of fragrant cedar leaves. You look in the toilet and sure enough: branches of cedar leaves. Some rules are rituals, some habits.

Circle K Rules

- 1) Immigrate into your own country.
- 2) Learn to cook your favorite meals.
- 3) Ask the next question.

***Just Do It in 24 Hours 1997 Nike Brazil World
Tour: Osaka World Cup Exhibition Game:
Brazil vs. Japan August 13, 1997 *7 PM***

The preceding announcement may or may not excite the imagination depending on your attachment to soccer, to Brazil or to the World Cup. Despite our scheduled departure from Japan on August 15, an invitation to see this game could not (I repeat) could not in the minds of my Brazilian husband and our son be passed up. Dunga, Ronaldo, Roberto Carlos, the coach Zagalo, Brazil's finest. They would all be there. And they would test the mettle of the new Japanese team and its aspirations to join the fury over the most contested of games across the entire world.

August 13, 1997 at 1 AM

I am awake writing as usual as everyone else sleeps. I am doing this on the floor because we no longer have any furniture in preparation to leave this rented house.

My friend and translator, Kenichi Eguchi, will be working as an interpreter for Nike at the exhibition game in Osaka. He has faxed information about where to pick up free tickets and the best way to get around Osaka to the stadium. His instructions are based on taking the Shinkansen from Nagoya to Osaka, but Ronaldo has called Brazilian friends to catch a ride. In any case, I set this information aside for Ronaldo and Jon. I putter around the last of our preparations for packing. I might under other circumstances prepare a snack for them, but we no longer have a refrigerator, not to mentioned kitchen supplies. We are living out of the Circle K *kombini* in the mean time.

4 AM

Despite the hour but charged over the promise of this daybreak, Ronaldo and Jon rush out to the corner Circle K to meet our Brazilian friends. They load up with a Circle K regimen of Morinaga aloe-vera juice, assorted *musubis* and breads for the road.

Jorge and Masaye Takahashi pull up in a Delica van with three young men, all members of the Viva Brasil soccer team at Homi Danchi. Jorge is the team captain; Masaye is the team mom. The team members are between 17 and 25; they are exemplar of the youth and energy that drive the subparts factories in and around Toyota. On weekends, these men spend their frustrations and retrieve their youth in traveling soccer competitions. Today, a Wednesday, they've skipped out of their jobs in order to see live for the first time the Brazilian champions, the team that sustains their dreams and self-perceptions in a distant home. To lose a day of work is no small thing, but the choice is a particularly Brazilian one, steeped in a confusion of identity, rebellion and *saudades*.

It's a three-hour ride over the *kosoku* (highway) to Osaka. It's also three hours of storytelling. There is jokes and prankster tales revealing a childhood full of a humor unimaginable in Japan or even the US. My son revels in the stories—escapades to steal a free pizza, how to avoid detection of radar when speeding, stolen car radios recycled. The stories aren't focused on dishonesty; they are told to reveal the trickster, cunning, a good joke, the stodgy made foolish, the system turned on its side. This is a world of hilarity encapsulated in a Delica van. Outside the severe landscape, paid for by tolls at about ten cents a kilometer, rolls out along the *kosoku*.

7:30 AM

At this hour, clearly the first arrivals by car, the Delica van gets the closest parking space to the stadium, some kind of miracle one guesses. Its seven occupants tumble out and survey the situation. Along the sides of the stadium, people in sleeping bags have overnight staked their claims to places in a long winding line of fans, hopeful of getting the choice seats in general admission. Two of the young Brazilians take off to scout the stadium, slipping through the gates, wandering through the empty stands, making use of the bathrooms, taking photographs like accomplished spies.

8:45 AM

Ronaldo meets Kenichi at the appointed time and place and receives four coveted tickets to the game. The story is that this game sold out months ago in the first hour of sales. The value of these tickets is compounded by the moment. Scalpers with wads of cash buy and sell, offering a \$40 ticket for as much as \$150. The Delica crew needs three more tickets, but \$ 150 is too high.

10 AM

Ronaldo and Jon make a run for McMuffins at McDonald's. The crew scarfs down three Big Macs apiece. Some children have a ball and are playing soccer. The Brazilians are soon playing with the kids.

Masaye has spread out a mat to sit; some nod off to nap.

12 Noon

The concession booths begin to open, stalls selling food and soccer paraphernalia. Other Brazilians gather in bunches, their carousing and jocular repartee evident. They sport the soccer shirts of their home teams, dozens of local affiliations. A Japanese man with missing teeth appears with a bag full of J League soccer shirts, which he proudly displays one by one, his collection, his local affiliations. A meeting of minds is quickly understood; soon he is trying to learn Brazilian songs and yelling Brazilian slogans.

Meanwhile a group of Japanese women has already joined the festivities, gamely trying to learn the *Danca da Garrafa*. It's a lewd dance, its raunchy movements swaying and pumping over a strategically placed Coke bottle. The Brazilian men demonstrate a few steps. The Japanese women follow along in good humor. Things are getting heated up.

1 PM

About this time, large booster groups are being ushered into a second inner courtyard beyond the gates. These special fans are in lines, getting their special booster tickets. One of the Delica crew slips into this line, pretends to be part of the group, and scores a ticket. These tickets are encased lovingly in plastic covers with special shoelaces that allow you to wear the ticket like a necklace. Moreover, special stamps are glued to the

covers indicating the booster status of the bearer. One ticket down; two to go.

Now the rest of the booster group invades the scene with large flags, and three of the crew find themselves swept through the gates into the stadium. They pull away from the crowd and gain access to the inside of the stadium itself. Sneaking in and out of bathrooms, wending their way to the top of the stadium, hiding in the stands, they communicate all the while between themselves and their friends outside the stadium with cellular phones. "We are in the bathroom on the north side." "We are now at the top of stands above the reserved section." "There's a security guard at the south door. *Cuidado!*" It's "Mission Impossible."

2 PM

By this time, the security guards have caught the three crewmembers and kicked them out, but not without causing some commotion between the guards themselves, some who are reprimanded by superiors for allowing this situation to have occurred. However, the young man with the special booster ticket and stamps is allowed to stay.

Cellular phone calls reach out to Brazilians on the road approaching Osaka. Someone has scored some tickets for this group; they are on their way. But they get into an accident. No one is hurt, but the car looks totaled. The group abandons the car, rents another car, and arrives at the stadium. No one is going to miss this game.

3 PM

Masaye overhears three Japanese girls talking about friends who haven't arrived. They have two extra tickets. The Delica crew quickly takes in the three Japanese girls. Suddenly they are part of a Brazilian thing. The joviality of the young men, their easy banter and friendly joshing surround the girls like a tropical beach. For one day, they are in Brazil. There is nothing in the world, short of being in Brazil that can match this. The girls agree to sell their extra tickets at price. That's it. The two final tickets. Seven Brazilians. Seven tickets.

5 PM

Things are intensifying at the front. A samba group is drumming it up. Brazilians can't be without their rhythms. The noisy ruckus and hilarity are infectious. The sensation of it swells with expectation.

The crewmember with the special booster ticket with the stamps gets in early with the designated fan club. He moves in quickly and stakes out fifteen choice seats at the very front of general admission. There are places for all his old and new friends, including the three Japanese girls. Folks back in those lines packing up their sleeping bags never had a chance.

Nike is passing out the Nike fans, the Nike stickers and the Nike face tattoos. No doubt there are Nike hats, Nike shirts, Nike buttons. This is a Nike World Event. The crew gets in line to get the freebies. They get some, pass them out, get in line again, and get some more.

Ronaldo and Jon move to their reserved seats, but the hoopla is definitely back in general admissions with the Brazilian samba band and the Delica crew and their trickster ways.

6 PM

There is a capoeira and samba show before the game starts as well as a taiko show.

The game happens. It's 1 to 0, Brazil-Japan, after the half. During the first half, a Brazilian is seen running into the field to shake hands with the players on the team. It's all on national TV. The man is ushered off the field and kicked out.

At half time, Ronaldo and Jon rejoin the partying crew in general admissions. The three Japanese girls are trying to learn the Danca da Garrafa.

Second half; 3 to 0, Brazil. Neither Ronaldo nor Jon will later remember who made the goals. The steam of Brazilian revelry that filled the very air gradually seeps away. The rhythms tire. The carnival reveals its *tristeza*. That Brazil wins the game is a given. It wasn't the game after all.

10 PM

Leaving the stadium, the Brazilian who was seen running on to the field is met by his friends. He shrugs off having missed the second half of the

game. He had run onto the field to be on television. He was certain that his family in Brazil must have seen him on international TV. For the moment, he is exuberant with his success. At midnight, he will turn back into a *dekasegi*.

The three Japanese girls who have attached themselves to the Delica crew hang on to their last moments with Brazil. One girl bursts into tears as they take leave.

The crew piles into the Delica, pulls out of Osaka, continuing and taunting banter filling the van. “Hey Jon, you made that girl cry. What did you have to do that for?” Then everything settles into the light snoring of sleeping men. Three hours back again to Nagoya.

1 AM

Back at the Circle K. I’m up writing as usual. The guys fill our now empty rented place with their still high energy and wild sense of excess, an excess that has little to do with the game they have struggled for the past 24 hours so valiantly with others to see. My questions: How was the game? What was the score? Who made a goal? All irrelevant.

Seven Brazilians went 24 hours and 250 kilometers with only the hope of seeing a soccer game sold out months in advance. What could they lose but a chance to test their ingenuity, their infallible charm, their cunning, and their facility with play? This was the game at hand. At midnight—the Delica churning its engine across the highway, they would have stirred in their old roles; peons they would call themselves, *dekasegi*. No matter. At one o’clock, a wild sense of excess, the trickster’s success, momentary but marvelous havoc, filled our house one last time in Seto, Japan.