Breaking Bread Building Bridges Trancscript

**Janet Oh**

Hi, everyone, welcome. I'm Janet Oh, I'm the Senior Director of Innovation at CoGenerate, and I'm so glad to be hosting this conversation today about the power of food to connect generations. For my family of origin, a Korean immigrant family, food was everything. When I was in college, I remember my mom would ask me what I wanted to eat for breakfast three months in advance of my visit home. So in our family, food is what we obsess over. It's how we show our love, but most importantly to me, it's how we keep our culture alive from generation to generation. So I wanted to tell you a little bit about the layout of today's conversation. So I'm going to start the conversation with Sky Bergman and Kathrine Yungmee Kim. And then from there, Sky will talk to three of her participants from her documentary. After that, Kathrine is going to talk to an older and a younger pair she's worked with through the Koreatown Storytelling Program, and then finally, we'll wrap up with a Q and A so as the conversation is going, please feel free to drop your questions into the chat. Okay, so to get us started, I'd love to welcome Sky and Kathrine. They are two of our Innovation Fellows, and I adore them. Sky Bergman is the director of Mochitsuki, a film about the ancient tradition of preparing mochi to celebrate the Japanese New Year. Kathrin Yungmee Kim is the program director of the Koreatown Storytelling Program at Koreatown Youth and Community Center, the nation's oldest and largest Korean American nonprofit organization, organization. Welcome Sky and Kathrine.

**Sky Bergman**

Thank you so much for having us.

**Janet Oh**

So I'd love to start, if each of you could describe a little bit about how you're using food to connect generations and Kathrine, I'd love for you to begin.

**Katherine Yungmee Kim**

Hi. Thank you, Janet, so much. So at the Koreatown Storytelling Program, we are a intergenerational and multilingual oral history and community journalism program in Los Angeles' Koreatown, and each year we have a different cohort. And one of our cohorts in 2022 was investigating the food industry in Koreatown. And so that year, we decided to have food making workshops where we asked older adults in Koreatown like my colleague and friend Cathy to lead food making workshops for the younger participants and community members and and so Cathy has led several food making workshops, and she'll be able to speak about it after that.

**Janet Oh**

Thank you. Kathrine,

**Sky Bergman**

Well, I'm working on a film called Mochitsuki, which you mentioned, is a way that Japanese Americans celebrate the new year. For me, food has always been something so vital. As you said, Janet, it's just I grew up on my grandmother's kitchen, and that is where the wisdom and the stories were passed down from one generation to the next, and certainly, through this film, I see how that wisdom and knowledge is passed down as people gather to make the you know, annual mochi.

**Janet Oh**

Thank you, Sky. I'd love to go back to you, and if you could just tell us a little bit more about how you see that physical act of making mochi as a community ritual, and how does that treat what does that tradition reveal about the role of food in keeping those generational ties strong? Well, I

**Sky Bergman**

think one thing that we all have in common is if we think about our own lives, we can think about traditions that have been passed down from one generation around food. So, you know, many of us are immigrants to this country. And even though we are immigrants, the thing that remains when everything else falls away seems to be food. And I see that certainly with mochi Suki, because it is a communal event where everyone has to come together. You'll see in the little trailer that I'll show, they're pounding the rice together. They're forming the ball, the mochi balls together. So it is a very communal event, where you're around a table in a place where everybody is coming together, and in that space there's all different generations that are working together for one common thing, which is to make the mochi.

**Janet Oh**

Thanks, Guy and Kathrin for you and the Korea Town storytelling program, I feel like you often use food to tell stories, and I'm wondering if you can share a food story that has contributed to the healing or the bridging of differences in the community as diverse as Koreatown.

So for our food cohort, we had a Guatemalan we partnered with a Guatemalan restaurant in the community. So I think when a lot of people think of Koreatown, they think of it obviously being a Korean American community, but the majority is really Mexican and Central American, and so we want to be able to have our participants understand all of the cultures in our community. And we partnered with a Guatemalan restaurant and the food makers there made Guatemalan chilaquiles, which is not chilaquiles, which we learned, but it is a chayote squash, and it's battered in flour and egg. And so when we were making these Julia kilos, and pan frying them, the Korean American students said, Wait a minute. This is, this is the same as as one of our dishes, which is called hobak done, which is a zucchini flowered and battered in egg, and it's literally identical. And so just having that moment was really an epiphany for everybody that like our food ways are very similar, and that we're in this community now where we can share like dishes and stories around these dishes. Also, two weeks ago, we had our holiday party and we did tamales this year and last year we did mandu. So it's the same way where we're sort of introducing our community members and students to the different traditions around the holidays of food.

**Janet Oh**

Yeah, that resonates so much with me. My mom makes hobak Jen so I I can just picture the similarities of those dishes, and it's such a equalizer. Everyone needs to eat, and if you don't have anything to talk about, or it seems like you have nothing in common, there's always the food and what it reminds you of, and how it tastes and feels and everything. Okay. So now I'd love to get the participant voices involved and hear more from them. So Sky, I'm gonna hand it off to you and have you invite your guests on so we can hear more from them.

**Sky Bergman**

Absolutely. And I'm going to show a little trailer of the film just 20 seconds, but it'll give you an idea for those of you that haven't had mochi before. Mochi is rice that's pounded until it's kind of like a bread dough and then formed into mochi balls. But this will do. You an idea of what the process is like you

**Sky Bergman**

um, so a very, very quick, just to show you kind of what it's like to be part of a mochi Suki, and I want to invite my three guests to come on. I'm going to ask, I'm going to give you a little bio for each of them, and then ask a question of each of them. So I'm going to start with Kent. Kent is a half Yonsei and Shin Nisei from Southern California. He's a program manager at Kiro, overseeing and implementing programs supporting older adults and their caregivers. He had attended Cal State Fullerton and received a Bachelor of Arts in Asian American Studies and psychology, and his family has been doing mochi Suki for over a century. So I'm going to ask you, Kent, if you can start off by, what has the mochi Suki tradition meant to you personally, and how has it connected you with other generations in your family and community?

**Kent Marume**

Sure. Yeah. So thank you for having me. For me, Mochitsuki is, I think, one of my favorite opportunities of the year to gather everyone. It's really like a family reunion of sorts. We have my grandparents age. They're considered Nisei or second generation. My grandpa just turned 100 this year. He'll be out there sitting, of course, in a camping chair, watching us make mochi. But we have folks of that age all the way down to, like great grandchildren age. So we span from second generation to fifth generation. We all get to participate in the activity. So for me, it's a really great time to gather family. And you kind of saw a glimpse of that in the in the trailer there, but I think in the full movie, we'll get to see what really it looks like for family as far as community goes. You know, there's an organization down in Orange County called the Orange Coast optimist, and then there's Tanaka Farms. They, as a group or as a collective, have this annual event, and for me, it's been a great opportunity to connect and bring some of my skills to the table and be able to use that as a point of communication and as a way to really pass down some of these skills that I learned over the course of my life to those who have not done this or participated in this, and they have like, over 2000 people who attend this event. So it's really great opportunity. And then lastly, I think for me, it's just a really great glimpse into Japanese or Japanese American culture, of seeing how we're able to keep this, you know, cultural practice and this tradition alive, even after immigrating over 100 years ago. And you know, we see mochi in pop culture, right? There's mochi ice cream in stores. In fact, the Try Guys just had a video on this they published last week, and they tried making mochi without a recipe. But I think it's even more unique to see it with your own eyes, and it being practiced, you know, across the Pacific Ocean, still by families in the United States here. So it's one of my favorite activities to partake in, of course.

**Sky Bergman**

Yes. Thanks so much. Kent and Dr. Lily Anne Welty Tamai — She's amazing. She's an assistant professor at CSU Channel Islands. She previously served as a curator of history at the Japanese American National Museum and so many other things. But I want to get to the question, because we have limited time, can you talk a little bit about the historical context of Mochitsuki, and more personally, what it has meant to you?

**Dr. Lily Anne Welty Tamai**

Yeah, for sure. Thank you so much, and thank you for putting all the folks who are here and putting this on and all the work that goes into these these events. We are really grateful, and we're so happy to share our food stories with you. So I get to talk a little bit about the history, about mochi just and it's going to be a not history, 101, but like, but so mochi itself, the rice that it's made from, is not your regular kind of dinner rice. It's made from a short grain, glutinous or sweet or sticky rice. And so this process has been something that they've done in Japan for over 1000 years. It wasn't as widespread 1000 years ago, but because initially, during the Heian Period, 1000 years ago, it was really popular amongst the aristocracy. And so they knew what to do with it. They were able to serve it at during big celebrations. And then over over time, it generally went out and became more popular amongst the masses in Japan. And so by the Edo period, which is 1603, to 1868, this is a 200 and plus year, 200 plus years of peace. It was something this is all the Shogun, and I think a lot of folks know this, this era, this was a time where it really became widespread. It was something that was always made collectively, because you just can't do it by yourself. It's not something that you can do alone. So there is a there's not an individual. Will sort of mochi making. It's always with people. And of course, it was served with at celebrations, really New Year's weddings and and now, of course, it has become, fast forward to the present. It's become, always something that was brought over by Japanese American immigrants to the United States, because much is always associated with New Years and these celebrations, and also just a good just a snack, but for the most part, Japanese Americans who started to immigrate to the United States in the 18, 1860s what we see is they are bringing their traditions and then their food ways. And it evolved a little here, because they didn't always have everything they needed, but they certainly had enough people and a collective group to to to pound it, to make them make the balls, because that also takes a lot of time, and then to eat it and celebrate it, to get tell celebrate together. When mochi initially came from the West, it was called Japanese rice cake. And so it's not really like a cake in the sense that we know. I think many of you guys have already eaten mochi, so you don't need to, you don't need me to tell you what it tastes like. But it's not like a cake, right? It's like a really, really sticky dough. And you could, if you don't have the proper kinds of flour on your hands, it can get all over. So there's a there is a skill, and you can't just do it by yourself. Someone really has to show you how to do it. And that's really this translation from generation to generation. And even today, it's still weddings. And for me, New Year's isn't New Year's without mochi. We always had it. My mom was a sheen, is say, and she came to the United States in the 1970s and we, we always had it to eat on the side, to always, you know, have it in our ozone New York State soup. And it was just something my brothers and I always looked forward to and it, you know, we always had it. We I never actually got to participate in a mojit ski till I was older. And now our family, we have a mochi maker, so my sister in law makes it, and she just gives us that. So it's a little, you know, it's a less, a little less collective. So that's kind of makes me sad, but I think still, the the tie in of it being really a very communal celebratory dish is something that really means a lot to me, so big,

**Sky Bergman**

and your son still does the Mochitsuki at school, so

**Dr. Lily Anne Welty Tamai**

I'm one of the few moms who makes my kid go to language school. I think there's some people who have had childhood trauma at language school, so I apologize if this is triggering to you guys, but my son goes to a Saturday language school, and they are actually going to be doing much to keep this Saturday, right before the holiday. So we will have mochi for New Year's, which is pretty cool. So yeah, so we're still very much involved with doing it, and they definitely do the, you know, with the wooden mallets and the zoo and everything. So, yeah,

**Sky Bergman**

wonderful. Well, now I'd like to introduce Dr Paul Mori. Paul is a third generation Japanese American whose parents and grandparents suffered greatly during the incarceration during World War Two. He comes from a family of a rich cooking tradition, and Paul makes an amazing spread at New Year's. He has tried to recreate all of the recipes that his family did, and he talks about his grandmother making mochi and that when I when I interviewed for the film. So Paul, I'd like to ask you, how did participating in the film shape your perspective on the importance of preserving this tradition?

**Dr. Paul Mori**

Well, guys, thanks so much for inviting me today, but also to share when you were doing the documentary and doing the filming, it brought back such rich memories of growing up. I hadn't thought about my grandmother and grandparents when I was a small child, maybe young, elementary school age, where they used to do this and steam the rice with a fire. You know, they're stoking a fire with wood and and the smoke and the steam and old fashioned way of just pounding and doing that. It was all kind of improvised, and I hadn't thought about that for years, and but I did think about my grandmother and the rich tradition that she had doing this. You have to imagine all these Japanese immigrants who came, you know, 100 years ago, a lot of the ingredients weren't available. You know, certain things you could get. So as a result, they had to create the food themselves. They had to, they had to improvise their cooking. And my grandmother was just a great cook. She could she was famous for her apple pie, she was famous for her fried chicken and potato salad, but she also made the traditional foods. And doing the interview with you Sky reminded me. Part of the stories of my grandmother. She was the one that would be turning the rice. There's the way the process you might have seen. You didn't see that particular aspect of the process in that short clip, but there's somebody that has to go in there with their hands between hammer strikes and turn the rice and get it so it so it kind of distributes it in much way that, you know, in a bread maker, whatever you know, that kind of process that happens. And she was really skilled about it. And my aunts and uncles would talk about, oh, she was so great at doing this, and that kind of connection with those kinds of memories. And then, when my mother was still alive, she probably hadn't done it for years, but you could see those same kind of skill in her hands, that memory of that motor memory, was still there from, you know, decades before we got a motion based machine, but you still have to, you know, form everything. And my mother was so good at this, and to have that kind of rich memory is more than just a sensory experience that triggers memory, but it's one that gives you a sense of of connection. And I think often in in my life, at those moments where life's challenges are really, really difficult, whatever that case is, everybody's experienced this, but for being Japanese American, to think about parents and grandparents and what they had to endure through their lives with the incarceration Japanese of Japanese Americans during World War Two. It gives you a sense of courage. So that memory of their bravery, their courage, is kind of an inspiration to me, and that connection comes through mundane or maybe not so mundane, but from things that don't seem to be related. But doing this community event where you come together, it's much more than about the food itself. I mean, it's, it's great to have mochi once a year that's fresh and and it's there, and you know, you it's still warm, and you bite into the thing and, and you're, you're enjoying it. But it's more than a comfort food. It's symbolic of the gathering, like like Kent mentioned, that transcends generations in a lot of ways. It's it's a it's hard to explain, to have memories and the inspiration community, all those things are involved in experience that's

**Sky Bergman**

great. Thanks so much. Paul, and I just wanted to go back one second, and then I'll hand it over to kathr and Kent. I remember one of the things that you said when I interviewed you was about making mochi and your grandparents and World War Two. How it struck you that in that moment, that to want to do mochi and want to do that at a moment. Can you talk a little bit about that?

**Kent Marume**

Yeah. I mean, I just thinking about the 120,000 Japanese Americans who looked like us, who were told that being Japanese was not a good thing. In fact, we're going to imprison you for it. But then being in this camp with others, and just trying to latch on to anything that was tradition, culture, and just in that December, right in camp, maybe not the first year, but that second year, just finding the tools and fashioning them so that you can make this Japanese rice cake or mochi. I think that, in itself, is resilience. The government's telling you being Japanese is bad, but you're saying, my relatives, my ancestors are saying we're going to do our best to try and maintain this, and my relatives still do it to this day, and I think that is the ultimate sign of resilience in my head. Great.

**Sky Bergman**

Thanks so much. Thank you to all three of you. I really appreciate it. We'll be back on for the Q and A from everyone, but at this point, I want to turn it over to Kathrine.

Thank you, Sky and Paul and Kent and Lily. While we were muted, Kathy and I had a whole conversation about Korean thought, which is like, you know, again, like commonalities and and building bridges, I learned a lot about Kathy making a version of mochi, which is called in Germany, yeah. And when Paul was talking about the wood burning,

**Cathy Yi**

The mochi doesn't have it inside anything, but mochi has a flower with pudding. You put the bean paste, red bean paste

**Katherine Yungmee Kim**

Mochi doesn't have as much, and so she was also telling me she had memories of the of the wood burning as well. I'd like to open up with a TikTok reel that we. Have from our holiday party from last year to show you how we use food making in our celebrations. And so Duncan's going to cue that up.

[Video]

**Katherine Yungmee Kim**

Hi. So at this point, I'd love to introduce Christine Paek. She is a KSP participant, and I'm going to ask her to introduce herself.

**Christine Paek**

Hi. My name is Christine Paek, and I'm a junior at large bond charter school at Lafayette Park, and I have been a KSP Student Participant for, I think, two years now, and I've been a part of many KSP foodmaking workshops that include The kimchi Miyeok guk and the Mandu making workshops.

**Cathy Yi**

[Korean]

**Cathy Yi**

[Korean]

**Christine Paek**

[Korean[

That was themselves, reintroducing themselves to each other. Christine was saying he met her at the workshop. Christine, I wanted so the Miyeok guk workshop is one that Kathy led, and so I wanted you to talk about the Miyeok guk workshop, and what was your role, and why is this dish significant to you?

**Christine Paek**

Yeah, so I remember it was either Dylan or Katherine asking for some suggestions Korean food, I think. And it was regarding the food making workshop. And I thought of Miyeok guk, because my role in the workshop was to research and relay the importance of miyeok guk to Koreans. And it's significant when it comes to birthdays and women in Korea, because it's a food eaten by new mothers and women who have given birth for several months postpartum. And Miyeok guk is also rich in iodine, iron and calcium, and it's perfect to eat even if you aren't pregnant or have given or had a given birth.

So you're we also are having our next food making workshop on January 7. So if people are in LA, they can sign up. Kathy will be leading it. And Christine also suggested this one. And so it's Sundubu Jjigae, which is a tofu stew. So why did you why did you pick this one? Why did you suggest this dish?

**Christine Paek**

So again, Katherine and Dylan also asked for another suggestion, and I requested Sundubu because it's one of my comfort foods that my grandma makes for me all the time, and I resort to it whenever I feel down, because my grandma just comes over in my house and she makes for me all the time. Because growing up, I lived with my grandma, but now she doesn't live with me anymore. She lives in Hollywood because she would babysit for my mom when she was working. Now I'm like, more independent, and I don't have to, but whenever she makes it for me, it's so delicious I want everyone to try it, which is why I requested it

**Katherine Yungmee Kim**

Yeah, Cathy said it's also healthy.

**Christine Paek**

Yes, it's very healthy.

**Katherine Yungmee Kim**

So what do you feel like? It's like learning from an older adult who's not in your family?

**Christine Paek**

Yeah, so I haven't made the I like, haven't really had the opportunity to make the dish at home by myself, which is why I thought learning how to make Miyeok guk, especially because it was one of the dishes that I requested from a Korean elder was extremely, truly, like a special experience, because it felt like very direct, like my grandmother's touch, and I feel like the new generation doesn't really make. Traditional food in the traditional ways they used to make it, because there's a bunch of new things, like instant noodles, instant ramen, like instant vehicle. But I really want to learn. I really wanted to learn how to make these traditional foods. I can make it for my family in the future. I can make it for my friends in the future, and I can share these recipes to all of my friends and people that I love.

Okay, so we're going to show you the Miyeok guk workshop. So this is going to be Cathy, our food maker. So Cathy made three dishes for us at three different opportunities before she made Japchae, which is a Korean Glass Noodle and then kimchi-jeon. Can you explain kimchi-jeon?

**Cathy Yi**

[Korean]

**Christine Paek**

She's asking, if you guys know this Korean pancake called kimchi pancake? Kimchi, this, like, marinated cabbage and spicy sauce. And it's really crunchy. It's so good with, like, meat. And you basically just put it in like this pancake batter, and it makes, like, this really good Korean pancake. And it's like, savory. It can also be sweet. It's just so good with literally everything.

**Janet Oh**

Okay, so check out the next video that Cathy made her Miyeok guk.

**Janet Oh**

[Video]

You guys get a good a good look at our classroom. So moving on to my friend Cathy. Her Korean name is Yong-Cha and can you introduce yourself and where do you live and tell us a bit about your family?

**Cathy Yi**

Okay. Hi. My name is Young Cha i live in Korea Town in LA, and I have two children, one boy and one girl, my son Living in LA, my daughter living in New York.

And so do you do you cook with your children?

**Cathy Yi**

Oh, yes, I like to, because, you know, they born in in New York City, both of them, but they don't know people. But I keep cooking for them in Korean, purposely, you know, I don't want to feed just the hamburgers and American food, because they gotta know someday about the Korea, you know. So they are part of a Korean too hard. So I want to they sometimes they were the, oh, I cannot eat hot food. I cannot it doesn't matter. They gotta learn. You know, these days I think this is most second generation young people. They don't know the Korean food. They only try to buy the instant food, because first they had in first second they don't want to cook because too much work. You know, that's why I want to to show them how to cook the Korean food. And the day you I wanted them to know the taste too. So I wanted to know the all the Americans too. You know, Korean food is very healthy and good, good, I think.

So, what is it like for you when you come in? Can you describe what we do? So the first thing we do, like we showed in the video, I we have to go over the recipe. Yeah,

**Cathy Yi**

which one I'm gonna do? Let's see, Miyeok guk. Oh. Do you know what, what the Miyeok guk, right? Because, yeah, see soup, and it's a, that's a Korean traditional soup. So because if women has a baby birth, you give a Miyeok guk three to four times a day. Make them baby mother to eat. So they're supposed to be blood is very clear and clean. And also the baby milk.

It produces milk for new mothers.

**Cathy Yi**

That's why, one day, when after baby born, the parents, they cook milk a big, whole pot, but, but two, three days you have, you don't have to, but after, because baby, when you get hungry, hungry, then whatever you give just to eat. Eat three times, four times a day.

So this is kind of, I think you're seeing our program in action, and seeing how some of these stories and traditions get conveyed. You know, I didn't really know any of this history before. I knew that Miyeok guk was really good for you, and it was served at every meal, but this whole tradition of serving it, I didn't know until I had a child, and so I really wanted to share those stories and have it come directly from somebody in the community who has been doing this for many years. Um, I think I'm going to pass it on to Janet. Um, Janet is going to come back on. I think she's going to lead a Q and A Janet. Have you had Miyeok guk?

**Janet Oh**

Yes. I love Miyeok guk, and I actually didn't know Christine, when you said you explained that you have it on your birthday to honor your mother. Like my mom always gives me Miyeok guk on my birthday, but I didn't know I was eating it to honor her.

I didn't know that either, Janet. I learned that too this time. So like, you just like somebody had mentioned, Oh, get get him milk for his birthday. And I didn't know that that was a tradition either. So I'm glad we're passing it. We're typical second generation kids kind of,

**Janet Oh**

well, I'd love to open this conversation up for questions or other things. I feel like in the chat, people have been sharing a lot of their food traditions in their family, but if you have questions for the panelists, or if the panelists have questions for each other. I'd love to just kind of open up the conversation. I did see that someone asked like, so what was the breakfast that I wanted? I told my mom I wanted three months in advance. I have no idea what I said, but I always just laughed at the thought that, like my mother was planning, I'm sure, as parents who have children in college, their return, is this really special thing. I was a busy college student, so I didn't care. I probably just wanted to sleep. But now, as a mother, I think I understand like all of that love and planning and that obsession that goes into how you can show your love through food. Let's see. I know that Duncan is helping us with some of the questions. Oh, this, this question, I think, is actually very interesting from Shanti. How involved are men in caring forward traditions? Because I realized a lot of people spoke of their grandmothers, so curious, if anyone wants to take a stab at that question,

**Dr. Paul Mori**

I suppose you know, back in the day, you know, the women did all the cooking, but you know, I'm, before my mother passed, I was, I've made sure that I learned all the family recipes and how to do this. So between my mother and my aunt Dorothy, there was no one to really carry on the tradition of the of Japanese New Year's foods. And so, you know, as the need comes, as it's important to you. Doesn't matter your gender at this point.

**Janet Oh**

Christine, I'm curious, from your perspective, like deep with your peers, do you see both, like all genders, taking part in this food making, or does it lean a particular way?

**Christine Paek**

Yeah, so this isn't necessarily like my peers, but my parents. They actually don't live together, but when I go over to my dad's house, he actually makes yoga for me and I get. Really surprised, because I don't think, I did not think he would know how to make it, but he made like a perfect soup of vehicle for me. And it wasn't my birthday. He just made it for me for breakfast. And I was like, Oh my God. And this piece is really good. And at my school, we have a bunch of Korean festivals. We have a club here called a three it's called the Asian American Association, and we have, like, parents come in and bring Korean food, and a lot of Korean dads and Chinese parents, Chinese dads, Japanese dads, they all come in and provide food for us. Some they cater. Some they make. So I feel like there is a bunch of progressiveness that has happened in the past and in the present, where men are involved in caring for these traditions.

**Janet Oh**

Thank you. Christine,

**Sky Bergman**

I think. And with sorry, I think with Mochitsuki, it's been a communal event that involves both men and women that pass on this tradition. So I think maybe because there is so much physical work that needs to go into it, the men are just as involved as the women in making it. I do think for many years and generations, it was just the men that pounded but I think that's also changing, that women are getting in there. And I think it was more the women that shaped the mochi balls. But that's, I think, that that's more gender fluid at this point and also changing at least. That's what I see at Tanaka Farms, or saw last year, where there were 2500 people making mochi at one one day. And it was a, really a great combination of men and women at that event. Yeah,

I think another thing that happened as well. I had mentioned earlier that my grandmother, my mother's mother, was so inventive with her cooking of all kinds of food. She learned how to make tamales from the farm workers that Mexican farm workers that work as laborers on my grandparents farm, for example, and that having to invent and how to creatively use ingredients that you weren't familiar with was part of her generation, and it kind of filtered down. So when Thanksgiving, even, you know, a couple weeks ago, the whole Mori family gets together, and it's always a treat for everyone, because everybody cooks, you know, my brother and my cousin, my male cousins, my female cousins. Everyone is in that tradition because of that influence of our grandparents, where they had to make the food because they couldn't buy it. It wasn't available. And what you find in Japan today is a lot of people don't how to, how to make the New Year's food at all, because they just purchase it. But the way my parents generation, my grandparents generation, and largely for mine, you can't buy it, you have to make it still. So there is that, that pressure, I mean that that influence of saying, Hey, if you want to eat this food, you gotta make it yourself, and learning how to do it was kind of important. And again, this is gender neutral. A lot of ways

**Janet Oh**

I see a question that's kind of coming up in different forms, which is basically like, how do you get started bringing community together? Because I think, like when I was, when I lived in San Francisco, across the street, there was a family, a Japanese family, and I'd see them every year doing the mochi Suki. And I was, like, desperate to join them. I was just I'd walk outside and hope they would invite me over. And so I think this question comes from a yearning for people who want to participate, but maybe don't have that container already built. If any of you have some advice on how to get that started in the community, kind of way to connect generations over food,

I can start. So we are in Koreatown right now, and this is Cathy's apartment. We're in her place of residence. And this building is called St James Manor, and it's an older adult residence in the community. There are 82 people right that live here, and most of them are older Korean Americans. And so we, we initially met over COVID, when we were doing hot meal deliveries here during when the elders were in lockdown. But then we kind of became friends. And I said to Kathy, you know, do you want to, do you want to come teach, like, the kids, how to make something? I mean, it was really as simple as that. And I think that one thing that we've been talking about trying to do, or having, like, pop ups or just, you know, finding a space in a city where they'll lend you the space for. The evening, and then asking an older adult in the community and like not a professional, even just somebody who is making a traditional dish, or knows how to make a traditional dish, and just host an event and have people come, I think it's actually quite easy once you find the food maker, and Kathy was happy to join. I mean, Kathy actually we met because I invited her friend to come to teach Japchae, which is a Glass Noodle dish. And I noticed Cathy was going around to each table, kind of stirring the food and tasting it. And I thought she didn't sign up from the beginning. But then I invited you to lead your own workshop, and so I think you'll find a lot of willing people that way.

**Janet Oh**

That's great. And I also heard from Christine like that you asked young people, what do you want to learn? So it seems like you were also kind of inviting that cross generational curiosity and going with their interests as well. Christine, do you want to add anything there?

**Christine Paek**

Oh, yeah. And it was also not just like me asking other people. I was also, like, introduced to it by Koreatown soil traveling program. I was really, like, interested in making a bunch of foods beforehand. But I feel like career town storytelling program really, like, invited me into opening up with my culture and learning like vehicle, for example, it was one of the foods that I enjoyed eating, but more so I didn't really want to, like learn how to make it, but after the workshop where we learned how to make it, I realized, like, wow, this food is, like, really simple to make, and it's also a really big part of my culture, and it has really big, like, a deep meaning behind it. I want to learn how to make more food.

**Janet Oh**

That's awesome. So it was, like, kind of a there was a hook. Like, maybe you

**Christine Paek**

didn't, yeah, it was like an eye opening experience. I was like, Oh my God. Like, it's I like this. I enjoyed this.

**Janet Oh**

Yeah, once you were introduced and had the opportunity to participate, it deepened a curiosity in you. Yeah, I love that. I wonder, for the mochi making, like, I've actually in the Bay Area the Asian Art Museum. This is pre COVID, so I don't know if they still do it, but they did a Mochitsuki like ceremony, where they had an artist doing like painting, and then they invited people to come and pound, and then kids could make and taste. And I'm curious if, for mochi, if, if all of you know of opportunities like that that are kind of open to the community to participate.

**Sky Bergman**

Yeah, there's Jane is doing something in the next couple of weeks. Actually, that's a Japanese American National History Museum. So looking on those, you know, websites for the events that are coming up, I think is a great way if you want to get involved that I know that that's open because I'm on their email list. And there was also somebody in the Evelyn and the questions asked, Is mochi boiled, baked, fried, after it's prepared? Also, what flavorings are used? Lily, do you want to answer that? Because she was trying to make it in every which way so that I would I don't actually particularly like mochi, after making a film about mochi, and everyone that I tell that I'm in the film says, No, you just haven't had it the way I make it. And Lily was the most persistent. So do you talk about how you make it? Yeah,

**Dr. Lily Anne Welty Tamai**

I was really surprised that sky didn't like the texture. And I'm like, How do you know like the texture, like you didn't have it the way that it just wasn't good. So, but she's tried it all. And it's, I guess it's a texture thing. My husband has texture things too, but, but, yeah, there's lots of ways you can have it, of course, like the most common, I mean, I'll just tell you how I've always had it, which was always savory. I've always had it in a way that was, you know, it was toasted and then, and then dipped in soy sauce, lightly dipped in soy sauce, and then wrapped in nori, and then eaten. So it's, it's crispy on the outside, Chewy, salty. It's just kind of got, like, a, you know, party in the mouth. But then I know that a lot of people also put it in, you know, they'll put it in udon, or they'll put it in ozoni, which is New Year's soup, and then, and, of course, like, there are Korean versions and other versions of it too, where the mochi pieces are smaller. But I know fugitsudo, which is one of the oldest Japanese American businesses in Little Tokyo, they make a lot of sweet mochi as as well with it's, it's in a dessert kind of way, where traditionally with like beet sweet asuki bean paste in the middle. And then that is also another, you know, celebratory way to to consume it. Also, there's lots of ways, you know, you can change the texture of the nut textures. Can you change the flavor of the mochi, which make it green tea, or, you know, with fruit. And there's even, you know. There's peanut butter and chocolate mochi that fugit has done too. So it's really all it can it's, you know, it can become what you want it to be. And there's even, you know, ice cream, right? So lots and lots of different ways to do it, although I prefer the savory, but that's just me. But that's just because that's how I've always

**Janet Oh**

had it. Oh, I wanted to take a stab at this question, which I think is a really big question, so it's kind of going in a new direction, but very much related to food and culture. The question is, how do you feel about the importance of preserving authentic Korean and Japanese food, especially thinking about how sometimes adapted or reinvented by chefs and restaurants, I feel like this is a really big question, and curious. How you all think of this?

**Dr. Lily Anne Welty Tamai**

Can I chime in on this one? I just I'll just say briefly, I think that a lot of us who are really in a ethnic community that is often not the mainstream, where our food is always looked at as kind of different or weird, maybe sometimes right. People were ashamed of bringing ethnic food in their school lunches. I know people have said, Please don't bring, don't put any Asian food in my lunch box. And I think because of those kinds of experiences as young children, as we get older, and now we're seeing the popularity of a lot of these foods become more mainstream, right? You see things of Ube, or you see Frozen, you know, all kinds of things at Trader Joe's, there is kind of something like, wait a minute, how is that authentic? When I was told that my food wasn't authentic, and so people sort of feel a little bit, you know, have a lot of strong feelings about how their food might be being appropriated or taken away. But I also think that in the same time where we are working on preserving a cultural tradition, I also think maybe we kind of have to let it go and say, You know what? Let other folks try it like, let them be inventive. You know, as long as they're being respectful, I think that, you know, why not? Right? Italian Americans, Italian American food that is made in American in the United States. If we were to bring that to Italy, they would. They're like, that's not Italian food, right? Everybody's got their own authentic perspective, and we sort of police our food. And I think maybe it's okay to sort of let that go and say, you know, let it evolve. It's going to evolve. In the United States, language is evolving. Our identities are evolving. Our food is going to evolve too. So I don't know. I always feel like, let's be as long as we're respectful, let's, let's see what's, what's going to happen on the plates. I'm not going to eat the weird stuff that folks are going to mix. But it might be, you know, it might be pretty good. So who knows?

**Janet Oh**

Anybody else feel strongly and want to answer?

Well, Cathy, was you were talking about after BTS, what happened to Korean food?

**Cathy Yi**

Yeah, after BTS, a lot of students like the Korean food and they won't go to Korea to learn Korean culture. You know now more, but sometimes when I go to the Koreans restaurant weekends, especially weekend 60 to 65% is all foreign people. You know, they like a hot they you is, some people say first time they try the Korean kimchi gig. Do you know kimchi spicy? Second time? Third time they try is a day. Just love it, you know, the Korean food is pretty much even spice is pretty much healthy food, you know.

And so I was asking her if she had any problem with it being co opted or kind of like fusion, yeah. And you said you don't have a problem with it. No

**Cathy Yi**

problem. No problem. Yeah, and now more people like a Korean food,

**Cathy Yi**

You know, as culture evolves, as Lily was talking about, things do change. And what I'm seeing with younger people, you know, that there's a want or a desire to connect with culture to roots, and the language skills are long gone, you know, by the third or fourth generation, sometimes sooner than that. So the only kind of glue that keeps the community together in terms of its tradition, oftentimes, is food. It doesn't require that that first language skill from from the immigrants at all, and any kind of means of promoting that, of making connections for the. Younger generations is a very good thing. The other thing is to remember and my parents. I remember my parents growing up in Santa Barbara here, and they were just amazed that look, look, because those white people, they're eating sushi, right? It was, it was, it was something that was not part of greater culture, and for them to see some some other people sharing that brought them great pride and brought a great joy to them. It was initially, maybe it was shock, but after a while, you know it, it gave a sense of of community and a sense of of of owning it and so on. So I have no problem with it as well.

**Janet Oh**

Well. Thank you. Thanks for everyone for your insights. I mean, I feel like where this conversation is ending is around this question of, How does food continue to adapt for new generations? And it kind of has to it's the way that culture is kept alive. It's the way that like, I'm thinking of my mother, who used to wash the kimchi for me when I was a little kid, so it was not so spicy. And she'll kind of do that for my kids, or kind of change it based on their food preferences. And I love in this conversation that we were talking about, like, you can't do it alone, like with the mochi, making you actually need people to help. And I often think that is that need is what drives community. So I think about all of the food preparation that's happening over the holidays, and maybe each of us could figure out ways where we could help, whether it's asking for help or helping others in the creation of it. And I think often, like younger generations are eager to be given a job to, you know, try to, like, make the mandu or whatever it is, there's some trial and error there. So just wanted to thank everyone for this really delicious conversation that has made me very hungry. We'll follow up with different links that were shared, more information about Moji suit, the documentary for people who want to watch it, and I think Duncan has like a quick poll for us right now. This is just a question we'd like to ask at the end of our webinars. So just a big, big thank you to everyone, every all of our panelists, thank you for sharing your cultures and your traditions and your food loves with us, and I hope everyone has a wonderful holiday. Thanks so much. And

**Sky Bergman**

Janet, I just want to give a really quick shout out. Thank you so much to my panelists who are also in the film. I saw that my editor, Jamie Heinz, is on this zoom as well, and it takes a village to make a film. And I just want to thank him for all that he's done. And thank Paul Kent and Lily and all the other people in the film for sharing their stories and making the documentary possible.

**Katherine Yungmee Kim**

Oh, Kathy wants to say something

**Cathy Yi**

I just wanted to say, thank you for having me this program. Yeah. Thank you so much. And

thank you, Christine for coming on in during school.

**Christine Paek**

No problem.

**Janet Oh**

Thanks, everyone, take care.