

## Highlighted Resources

Since Japanese food is becoming increasingly popular in Chicago and the Midwest, I decided to read a Manga series known as 'Oishinbo' for April's book review. We have both the Japanese and English editions of this series. As there are several books in the series, I chose two that I think capture the significance of Japanese cuisine entering the Midwest market: *Oishinbo: 和(wa) Japanese Cuisine* & *Oishinbo: Ramen & Gyoza*. It is one of the best-selling manga's in the world and has appeared in weekly



manga magazines for years. The word Oishinbo (美味しんぼ) is a combination of two food related terms in Japanese: *Oishii*, meaning delicious and *Kushinbo*, which describes someone who loves to eat.

Each book in the series follows Yamaoka Shirō, a journalist tasked with finding the *Ultimate Menu*. Yamaoka learned all of his cooking tricks and knowledge from his father, the renowned chef Kaibara Yūzan. Kaibara is the founder of *The Gourmet Club*, a highly selective group of people in the Japanese food industry who gather to eat meals never before seen. He is also Yamaoka's biggest rival.

In the first book '和: Japanese Cuisine', Yamaoka takes readers on a journey through the basics of Japanese food. From how to make the perfect rice, to a good miso soup, he leaves no dish unturned. The attention to detail in Japanese food is what makes it so special for the person eating it. Through a series of competitions in each chapter, the secrets to good food are revealed. And each time Yamaoka thinks he has it figured out, his father appears to remind him why he is the true food master.

In the second book, 'Ramen & Gyoza', Yamaoka is on the search to find the best ramen noodles and gyoza dumplings. Yamaoka finds that the key to ramen is in the noodles. They cannot be too soft once cooked, handmade is best, and they have to be eaten quickly. The key to gyoza is to make sure there is just the right amount of filling and that the skin is the right texture. Some people boil their gyoza and some pan-fry them. Either way, Yamaoka is once again battling his father to create the ultimate menu of ramen and gyoza.

Be sure to come and check out Oishinbo, as well as many other books on Japanese cuisine, including cookbooks in our JIC library!

