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The Conception of Rice among Japanese Expatriates in Kentucky

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ABSTRACT Recent scholarship has recognized the relationship between food and ethnic identity and rice has been associated with Japanese identity in Japan. In this paper, we looked at how rice is conceived among Japanese expatriates in Kentucky. Japanese expatriates experience three stages of finding out the best rice in Kentucky. The stages are: (1) try substitutes and feel dissatisfied, (2) find a better variety, and finally (3) feel satisfied with rice made in California. Although they appreciate the availability of Japanese rice variety in Kentucky, the symbolic meaning of rice has been somewhat disrupted among Japanese expatriates. In Japan, close spatial/social distance between consumers and producers on rice was a source of imagination for paddy field as Japanese landscape and for farmer's hard work. Yet, in Kentucky, they have difficulty to provoke such images.