

Week 1 in Japan: Saturday, June 11 - Saturday, June 18

We all arrived at Narita Airport from different parts of the world on Saturday, June 11. When we arrived, we were nicely greeted by Kenichi Kondo from the homestay agency and Ikuko Matsui from Wayo. Since Dr. Garcia's flight was delayed, Kondo led us to meet our homestay families by the rapid Japanese train while Ikuko waited for Dr. Garcia. Although we were very exhausted from our long journeys, we were anxious and looking forward to meeting our host families. After taking the train, Kondo introduced us to our host families at Yagiri station, where we were warmly welcomed by them. We then went our separate ways home to have our first Japanese dinner and night in Japan.

After we had a well nourished Saturday night, we spent Sunday with our host families. They treated us as part of their families and showed us around. We enjoyed getting to know more about them and grow closer to them.

On Monday, we met Ikuko, Reiko, Suzuki, some registered dietitians, and the Japanese students who came to Brescia as exchange students this past March (Hisano, Saori, Shiori, and Yukari). We discussed our schedule for the week and then attended a welcome lunch, where we met the President of Wayo Women's University. We were warmly welcomed by all the staff and faculty, and the President made a kind toast to us. We also met the many Wayo students who wish to come to Brescia on exchange next year and practiced speaking English with them. After lunch, we attended Jenny Morgan's Intensive English class where we learned some basic Japanese food knowledge through the students' presentations and in return shared Canadian food information with them. After that, Reiko took us on a tour of the university and showed us Wayo's museum, where we saw many traditional handicrafts of containers, clothes, bells, and Japanese symbols made by Wayo students.

On Tuesday, we visited a public health centre in Tokyo with Suzuki, Manami, and Hisano. In Japan, public health is backed by the national government and has a preventative focus by promoting dietary knowledge and education, with the belief that a healthy diet leads to good health. This policy is known as Healthy Japan 21 and is effective in the prevention of chronic illnesses such as cardiovascular disease and obesity, leading the Japanese to live much longer and healthier lives. We were guided on a tour through the public health centre and learned about its operations. We were all very impressed with how streamlined it is, as all the services and health

professionals are located in one place, whereas in Canada you would have to make several appointments and referrals to different practitioners. We learned about the nutrition and dietary education done by the registered dietitian, like the use of food models, cooking classes, and the strong influence she has over restaurant menus to make a real difference in the community. We also learned that each mother and child have a Maternal and Child Health Handbook, which follows the child from birth to three years old and contains all of his or her health records in one centralized place and allows for each health practitioner to easily follow up. Afterwards, we enjoyed the rest of the day in Tokyo. We went on a bus tour and visited the Senso-ji temple in Asakusa and admired the beautiful view from the top of the Tokyo Skytree.

On Wednesday, we attended a nutrition education practice class in the morning with Prof. Yumiko Fujisawa. We learned more about food and nutrition education and promotion, which is referred to as “Shokuiku” in Japan. It is evident that the Japanese government really cares about the health of its citizens. We were able to make a nutritional education origami and were also asked to create a poster about Canada’s Food Guide and healthy eating in Canada to display at the Nutrition Education Event the next day. After lunch, we travelled to Tokyo with Prof. Hajime Nakajima and Manami to attend a soba making class. It was difficult kneading the dough and cutting the noodles, but we all had a lot of fun! We were all able to try our soba noodles afterwards and bring the rest home for our host families.

We went to Prof. Yukie Yanagisawa’s food preparation class on Thursday and made a Japanese family meal with first-year nutrition students. It is very helpful to learn family nutritional food practice because meals are usually served in small portions that include one dish of meat, one dish of vegetables, one bowl of rice, and a dessert. Through Prof. Yanagisawa’s presentation, we learned how to prepare the serving sizes of fresh fish, vegetable salad, and rice ball dessert. In the Japanese food guide, the balance of food is more important than the balance of nutritional components. We enjoyed the meal that we prepared with the Japanese students and then attended the Nutrition Education Event to showcase our poster. In the afternoon, we went to the National Center for Global Health and Medicine in Tokyo with Prof. Ikuko Matsui and Hiromi to learn about Japanese dietary and clinical nutrition practice. There are six registered dietitians in the hospital, one for the Nutrition Support Team and the rest for outpatients. The dietitians mostly work with diabetes patients and see about 25-30 patients per day. We also learned about how

the hospital prepares food for its patients and that there are about 650 patients fed every day, with about half of them needing a special diet.

All of us woke up very early on Friday morning as a tour was planned for us to learn about one of the largest fish market in the world – the Tsukiji market. We met Prof. Toshikasu Suzuki and Manami at Konodai station and on the train, and Prof. Suzuki did a briefing on next week's schedule. Before we headed towards the market, we arrived at the tour center and were greeted by our guides. Since we did not get the chance to experience the Tsukiji auction because it occurs at 4:00 am every morning, the tour guides showed us a video about it. After watching the video, we were separated into two different groups with one of the guides. The tour guides shared their knowledge of the Tsukiji market with us during the tour and we learnt about the Japanese names of the fish and vegetables, the price and preparation of the food and the history of Tsukiji. Tsukiji market was the busiest and most unique market that we had ever visited. It is such a pity that the 80-year-old Tsukiji inner fish market is going to move to Toyosu this November 2016 in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Summer Olympics. We were very glad that we had a chance to visit the historic market before it is moved to a new location. After visiting the Tsukiji market, we went to the National Theatre to watch "kabuki". Kabuki is a traditional Japanese theatrical art include acting and dance performance. All of us really enjoyed the show and it was a very interesting experience for us to discover more about the Japanese traditional culture.

We spent our Saturday in Tokyo Disney Sea with Hisano and Saori. It was a nice and sunny day. We were very lucky that we could visit Disney Sea during its 15th anniversary. The theme park was packed but we were still able to go on a few rides and watch the parade. We also tried some delicious ice cream in Disney Sea which cooled us down from the hot weather. We had a lot of fun with our new Japanese friends!

To conclude, we have gained a lot of knowledge about Japanese traditional culture, and clinical and dietetic practice this week, and have started to adapt to life in Japan. We are very excited for the following two weeks of the exchange!