



History of Hitoshi Tsuzuki

- A Man in Search of Authentic Bread
One Hundred Years Ago in Kyoto -

Le Meilleur Pain

LE PLUS HYGIÉNIQUEMENT FAIT

Boulangerie **SHINSHINDO**

FONDÉE EN 1913

TÉRAMACHI TAKÉYAMACHI HIGASHI KIOTO

Birth of Shinshindo

Hitoshi Tsuzuki, who founded Shinshindo in Kyoto, was a man who embraced high ideals and was a man in search of authentic bread. Living in the Meiji, Taisho and Showa periods, Hitoshi held great esteem for Western culture from early on, and was the first Japanese baker to visit France when he was 42 years old. He realized that the hard-baked French bread that he ate in France was real French bread, and after returning to Japan, he devoted his life to bread making in the hope of having the “authentic” taste take root in Kyoto.

He set his mind on offering healthy and tasty bread to all people. His persistence in baking bread day after day in pursuit of his ideal became the foundation for today’s Shinshindo, and his extraordinary passion still lives on.



Takeya-machi Tera-machi Store around 1932

Succeeding to Bakery Blessed with Good Friends and a Wife



Founder of Shinshindo:
Hitoshi Tsuzuki

A baby boy was born in Ehime prefecture in 1883. He lived in comfort during his childhood as the third son of a wealthy village headman, but sudden misfortunes came in succession – the early death of his father and the downward spiral of his family business. Before long, the boy left his hometown and was accepted in an apprenticeship in Okayama, far removed from his home. It was at the age of 13 when Hitoshi Tsuzuki began to awaken to life’s turning points. The boy Hitoshi at his master’s house was diligent in his studies taking time out of his work, and began to focus interest on literature, English and Christianity, partly due from his experience with his father who read foreign books to him, saying, “English will be necessary in the new age to come.” At that time, he was impressed by the book titled “How I Became a Christian” written by a Christian educator Kanzo Uchimura, and went to Tokyo, with his mind made up, to learn the teachings of the Bible under Uchimura.

In 1902, Hitoshi, fulfilled his deepest desire, by becoming a pupil of Uchimura, and became acquainted with Hisajiro Shikata, who was also a pupil of Uchimura, at Shinjuku Nakamura-ya, which Hitoshi worked for. This encounter greatly changed Hitoshi’s life later on. Spending much time together reading books and writing poetry, the two young men bonded and nurtured a strong friendship. And, through Hisajiro, Hitoshi met Hisajiro’s sister Hana who would become Hitoshi’s future wife. It was just about that time when bread began to attract people’s attention as nutrient-rich food. Hisajiro went back to Kyoto and began to operate a bakery, however, he fell sick shortly after the establishment of his shop. Making a decision to retire from the business, Hisajiro entrusted his bakery to his sister and her husband. The name of the bakery was “Shinshindo.” It is said that Hisajiro named it after experiencing a revelation that “Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:13-14) Thus, Hitoshi and Hana took over the business of Shinshindo.

To France, the Place He Longed for

In 1913, the first bakery was built at Yoshida, Sakyo-ku. However, the bakery completely burned down due to a fire that occurred in the following year. His relocation to Horikawa Takeya-machi brought him a God-given opportunity. In 1915, a great ceremonial occasion was held with the enthronement of Emperor Taisho at the Niijo Imperial Villa (“Niijo Rikyu”), and Shinshindo, favored by a good location facing the main street leading to the venue, was crowded with many customers who wanted to buy bread. He did such a booming business that he could not keep up with demand, even though he baked bread all day and all night. Taking this opportunity, his shop continued to thrive after the ceremony.

Also supported by the booming economy due to special procurements during World War I, his business went into overdrive. After strengthening the business foundation by moving to Takeya-machi Tera-machi (present Tera-machi Factory) in 1920, Hitoshi made his decision to go to France to absorb Western culture and the techniques of bread making. After learning the French language at Kyoto University, he became the first Japanese baker to visit France. It is easy to imagine that all what Hitoshi saw and heard after a two-month ocean voyage left him

in astonishment and a lasting impression. Among other things, bread gave his greatest shock to his senses. After visiting many local bakeries and buying many technical books, Hitoshi left the following words in his letter to Hana.

“I was thinking that I would become anxious for Japanese food, but such an appetite never occurred. I would much prefer bread-eating. (Snip) Here in Paris I cannot find such soft and unpalatable bread as we see in Kyoto, even if I want to eat it. Hard-baked crusty bread is the best. The goodness and beauty of French bread is more than I imagined.” Hitoshi deepened his knowledge about the latest bread-making equipment, such as ovens and mixers that are necessary for making bread, to prepare for improvements in his shop facilities after returning home.



He went to France by himself at the age of 42.

In Pursuit of Authentic French Bread in Kyoto

After studying abroad for nearly two years and returning home, he devoted himself to the study of leaven (yeast) to re-create the bread that he had ate in France. However, he felt like he was pulling teeth to re-create the authentic taste in Japan where ingredients and climate were totally different from France. Yoshio Yamada, who was the chief baker of Shinshindo at that time, describes what it was like at that time. “Master used to bake French bread on a trial basis after translating original French books into Japanese. So, a lot of failed bread attempts piled up high, but Master continued experimenting until he was fully satisfied. I still remember that he sometimes flung bread to the ground in disappointment.”

After much toil and blood, what finally came to function was crisp hard-baked French bread. In an age when not a few people left bread crust on their plate, such hard-baked French bread was not appreciated by people right away, even though it might have tasted like authentic French bread. There was even a time when Hitoshi personally explained the delicateness of bread to his customers. Then, he

conceived of using his own poetry as an advertisement so that more people would come to understand what French bread was all about.

Since then, he continued to publish his verses and brief notices as an advertisement in a paper based on his own belief that “an advertisement should not be blaring false statements or means of allurements, but must be the gospel of truth. Sometimes, a heaven-sent cool breeze would be sent in a corner of a newspaper with a proprietor’s report on his life, thoughts, religious faith, frank feelings and meditations in a single evening.” These advertisements received unexpectedly enthusiastic responses, and many Kyoto citizens ate Hitoshi’s French bread and became fascinated with its taste.

“Beauteous French Bread”

French bread made from real leaven	No one can taste this bread
Pretty plain French bread	Without thoughts of art
Crust is harder than ordinary bread	While chewing the bread
A little coarse in texture is good	What is that passing over your tongue?
Cream-colored in the middle	Feeling the subtle quiver of life
Deep in flavor and full in taste	You realize it is authentic French bread

The reason why Shinshindo's bread continued to be beloved by people even throughout turbulent times such as wars, world depression and famine is because the founder Hitoshi Tsuzuki's lofty ideal and unceasing passion remained. Raising an objection to the prevailing trends of that time where bakeries drove up prices by making slowly-cooked heavy bread, Hitoshi stuck to his beliefs with well-baked bread and the right price. We believe that Kanzo Uchimura's teaching "You should know that trust you gained through sincerity is your largest fortune" was engraved into his chest. Hitoshi continued to devote himself to his studies in pursuit of better bread and go about his daily business operations with Hana. Then, in 1934, Hitoshi's life came to an end at 52 years of age due to tuberculosis, from which he was struck on his return on board from France. His life of devotion started from the teachings of the Bible and adoration for Western culture and ended with his mission to deliver an impression he had received in Paris later in his life to as many people in Kyoto as possible.



Bread at that time. A photo of coupe.

Greetings

“As I am a baker, today too, / I will work for society making good bread.”
These two-line words written in his verse “Real Life” tell the unshakable spirit of Hitoshi who rendered his service to society by baking bread with utmost care. His spirit has stayed alive in the one-hundred-year history of Shinshindo. We will continue to follow the thoughts of the founder, Hitoshi Tsuzuki, who offered healthy and tasty bread to all his customers.

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