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當我還是個孩子的時候，干貝的名稱常常讓我感到困惑——不知道應該是「江瑤柱」、「江如柱」還是「乾瑤柱」。但不論如何，江瑤柱屬蚌類，自古以來便是珍品。單從其名字中從「玉」字旁的「瑤」字，便可見古人視之為美玉一般的食材。

As a child I was perplexed by the many versions of the Chinese name of dried scallop. Albeit the confusion, this precious mollusk had been valued by people for centuries.

宋代詩人兼美食家蘇東坡曾經寫過一篇《江瑤柱傳》，生動地介紹了它的生長環境、生物特性和遷移過程。對於這江南美味，他是這樣描述的：

Su Dongpo, an eminent poet as well as gourmet in the Song Dynasty, penned an interesting personification about dried scallop, portraying its habitat, characteristics and migration.

生姓江，名瑤柱，字子美，其先南海人。十四代祖媚川，避合浦之亂，徙家閩越。閩越素多士人，聞媚川之來，甚喜，朝夕相與探討，又從而錫錄之。……凡歲時節序，冠婚慶賀，合親友，燕朋友，必延為上客，一不至，則慊然皆云無江生不樂。……

Gong Yiu-chu descended from the South Sea. Mei-chuen, his 14th generation ancestor, moved the whole family to Minyue, a colony of literati. Mei-chuen was warmly welcomed by the literati, often invited to discussions of literature and virtues... During festivals, weddings, celebrations, gatherings or banquets with friends and family, Yiu-chu was always an honourable guest. If he failed to come, it would be a great pity for the other attendees...

這足以讓我們明白，江瑤柱至少在千年以上一直是中國上流社會的美味，經常出現在婚宴等喜慶場合。今天，在廣東人心目中，除了鮑參翅肚四者能夠在海味乾物中名列前茅，我們日常生活接觸最多的可算是江瑤柱了。

From this, we know that dried scallops had been a delicacy among the Chinese bon ton for thousands of years, an essential dish in banquets. Abalone, sea cucumber, shark fin and fish maw are the 4 most adored and well-known hoi-mei (dried seafood) today in Cantonese communities, followed by dried scallops.

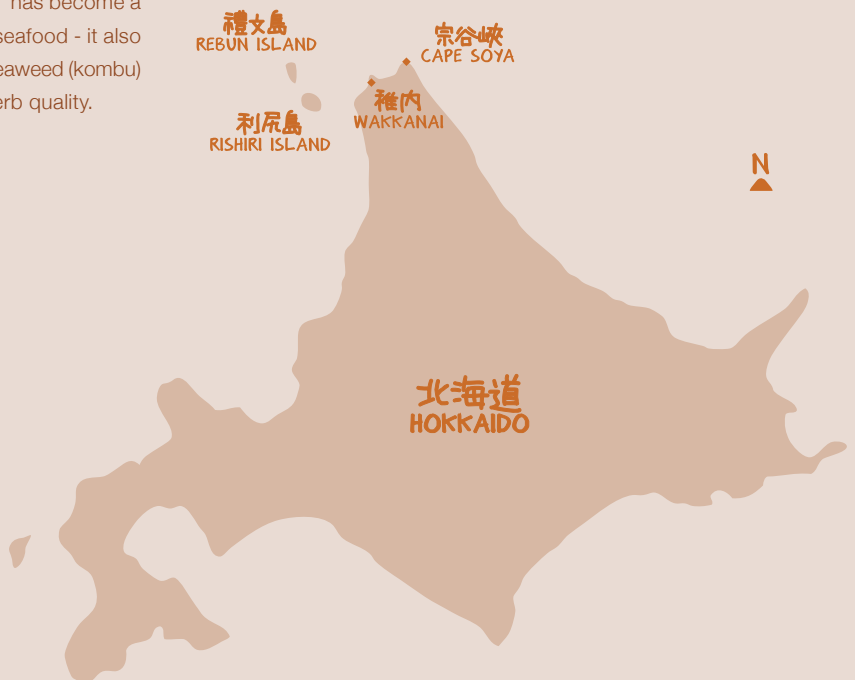
吃江瑤柱的途徑多不勝數：放在飯內再加上生老抽，可成為簡單而美味的「有味飯」；它也是廣東粥的粥底、老火湯的台柱，還有佛跳牆、節瓜炆瑤柱、桂花乾炒，以至廣為人知的XO醬，都有江瑤柱的身影。驟耳聽來，江瑤柱和廣東飲食有著不可分割的關係，但畢竟也是高檔貨色，在訂價上要考慮多方因素。就在今年，因為受到日本三月的東北地震和海嘯影響，不但日本鮑魚嚴重缺貨，連帶日本江瑤柱也漲價四成以上。上環的海味店主跟我說，要是昨年賣三百二十元的，現在要五百二十元了，漲價程度可想而知。

Dried scallops are versatile: cook them with rice and soy sauce for a simple delicacy, or as the essence of Cantonese congee and double-boiled soup. Other famous dishes include "Buddha Jumps Over the Wall" and "Stuffed Hairy Gourd". It is also the major ingredient for making XO sauce. Almost ubiquitous in Cantonese cuisine, this high-end foodstuff has to be priced with a global vision. Due to the earthquake and tsunamis hitting northeast Japan earlier this year, the market suffered from severe stockout of Japanese abalones, and an inflation of over 40% for Japanese dried scallops. Those costing \$320 last year are worth \$520 now, an owner of a hoi-mei shop in Sheung Wan said.

北海道 From 宗谷 Soya of Hokkaido

對大部分香港人來說，宗谷似乎是一個比較陌生的名字，但要是你有留意平日經常食用的江瑤柱的話，不難發現上等的日本乾貝經常會冠以「宗谷」二字。今天，很多國家都會養殖江瑤柱並將之出口香港，但來自日本宗谷的江瑤柱依然被認為是最好的。宗谷坐落於日本北海道的極北海岸線上，約在北緯四十五度左右，面向庫葉島。宗谷一帶的島嶼和海岸也是日本最北部的國立公園所在地。一般來說，在稚內、利尻島、禮文島和宗谷峽一帶出產、用作加工製成江瑤柱的帆立貝，都通稱為「宗谷乾貝」。所以宗谷不僅僅是一個日本的地名，還是一個代表優質海產的品牌。加上當地還出產極優質的刺參、昆布和海膽，更為宗谷的海產蓋上「品質保證」的標籤。

Soya - a place unfamiliar to most Hong Kong people, is often associated with the choicest dried scallops from Japan. Many countries are now raising scallops and exporting them to Hong Kong, but imports from Soya are regarded the best among all. Soya, approximately 45°N, lies on the ultimate north of the Japanese coastline in Hokkaido, facing the Sakhalin Island. The northernmost National Park of Japan covers the isles and coastal areas here at Soya. In general, dried scallops made of scallops from Wakkanai, Rishiri Island, Rebun Island and Cape Soya are called "Soya dried scallops". More than a place in Japan, "Soya" has become a brand name for quality seafood - it also yields sea cucumbers, seaweed (kombu) and sea urchins of superb quality.



利尻島的中心是著名的「利尻富士」，雖然在規模上難以和日本本州的富士山相比，但此山的氣勢和形態都能使人眼前一亮。踏上這個人口少於六千人，以漁業、旅遊業和本地建築業為主的利尻島，第一眼看上去便能夠深深感受到的，卻是她火山爆發後遺下的痕跡。利尻島上四周散滿了深灰色的岩石，和那從山頂貫徹到山腳的深隙。筆者曾經到利尻島考察當地的漁業和加工業，她在初春四月剛好渡過嚴冬的景象，到今天仍令我印象深刻。四月尾的利尻島雖然仍刮著嚴厲的北風，但在濕軟的雪上，不難窺探到大地迎接初春時露出的微笑。相對我這個外來訪客，當地漁民就顯得有點急不及待，臉上寫滿了期望南風快來的表情。雖然如此，這時的漁民已經剛剛完成了春天的工作，收到今年第一次的漁獲。一方面，他們正在編排夏天的工作，另一方面他們也算是稍作偷閒，享受嚴寒過後利尻島大地回春的一刻。

Rishiri Fuji - the "Mount Fuji" of Rishiri Island - stands proudly in the centre of the island. Although not equally magnificent, its landscape still makes it a local icon. With a population of less than 6,000, the Rishiri people rely mainly on fisheries, tourism and local construction industries. But your first perception on the Rishiri soil must be the "post-eruption" scene - you find scattered dark-grey volcanic rocks and tremendous deep trench from the peak to the foothill. I had been to Rishiri Island for a research on its fisheries and farming. It was the end of April in very early spring, and its beauty after the bleak winter was fascinating. The north wind was still chilly, but on the soft snow of Rishiri Island there were traces of life beaconing a new growing season. As a foreigner, I looked much relaxed than the local fishermen which were thirsting for the south wind. I thought they could try loosening up a bit, as they had just earned their first harvest of the year following the spring duties. As they were scheduling their summer timetable on one hand, they could actually sit back and enjoy this seasonal moment.



帆立貝和貝柱

The making of "the jade from sea"

帆立貝的「帆」字是比喻其狀如風帆的貝殼，而「立」字是指其張開時的姿態，有如漁船揚帆出海般堅強。它強壯的肌肉組織，就是香港人愛吃的江瑤柱了。優質的帆立貝產於冷水地帶，一般長大到四歲的帆立貝，都適宜作日本本地的刺身和壽司，或加工製成乾貝柱輸出國外。和刺參一樣，儘管帆立貝的價格不斷上升且外銷銷情理想，當地的漁業協同組合仍然不斷進行科學研究，務求對現階段的自然放流養殖法作更深入了解。協同組合的職員向我解釋說，自然放流養殖法的特點是在人工環境內繁殖帆立貝幼苗，再將其流放到海上的自然環境內成長，並在每年因應生態環境的變化而遷移繁殖點，以確保帆立貝得到優良的成長條件。因此在漁業協同組合的支援下，漁獲的數量和品質便得以保障。

Japanese describe scallops as sailing yachts shells - a perfect metaphor of fishing boats raising their sails with a strong will. What Hong Kong people love to eat is their strong muscular tissue. The best dried scallops are raised in cold water regions. Scallops of 4 years old are good enough to satisfy the local sashimi and sushi needs, or being dehydrated into



dried scallops for worldwide consumption. Like sea cucumbers, dried scallops have rocketing prices and good foreign sales, but scientific researches on the current "release and breed" method of the scallops never stop. These are done by the local "Fisheries Cooperative" organizations for a better understanding of the breeding programme. As explained by its staff, juvenile scallops are bred under artificial environment, then released to the sea at selected locations to let them grow in the optimum environment in the wild. With support from the Fisheries Cooperatives, the amount and quality of harvest are guaranteed.





在沿海的漁業生產上扮演重要角色的可算是「協同組合」了。漁業協同組合是一個完全由當地漁民支持的組織，工作範圍由技術開發、為漁民爭取合理售價，到借貸、發出捕魚許可證、監管漁獲的數量等等。組織的收入主要來自出售漁獲的佣金和一些小規模的銷售網絡，但他們的工作卻頗有成效，主要反映在當地漁民生活水準的改善和海岸資源的持續發展。

正如同行的日本專家指出，日本的漁農業能有今天的成果，很大程度上是依賴協同組合所發揮的連繫和相互溝通的作用。這次給我們引路的協同組合職員，本身就是北海道大學的水產科畢業生，雖然受僱於這個以漁民為主的組織，但他卻以嚴謹的科研態度為地方漁業研究出優良的水產品，希望在漁民的生活水平和環境保育兩方面達到雙贏。除了乾貝外，大概在二十年前左右，當地漁民開始捕捉更多海參，到今天已成為當地漁業的一個重要項目。從當地一位老太太的口中得知，早於第二次世界大戰之前，利尻島的漁民已經有把刺參外銷到中國，不過這在當時只是副業，數量也遠遜於今天。

Fisheries Cooperatives are, without doubt, playing an important role on the near-shore fishery productions. Fully supported by local fishermen, the cooperatives are responsible for technological development, striving for reasonable fish pricing, loans, issuing fishing permits, monitoring the catch volume and so on. They earn mainly the commissions from selling the harvest or proceeds from some small-scale sales network, but their efforts are surprisingly effective as reflected by the rising living standards of fishermen and the sustainable development of coastal resources. My companion, an local Japanese specialist, recognized the contributions of the Fisheries Cooperatives on bridging connections and communications, which give rise to the fisheries and agriculture of Japan today. The Cooperative staff who led the way for us was actually a graduate from the Faculty of Fisheries, Hokkaido University. As an employee of this "fishermen society", he carries out scientific researches with utmost professionalism, bringing on quality marine products for the local fishing industry. He is aspired to seek for balance between the fishermen's lives and environmental conservation. Besides scallops, local fishermen have caught more sea cucumbers since 20 years ago. It has now become an important source of fishery income. According to an old lady on the island, the Rishiri fishermen had been selling sea cucumbers to China before the Second World War though the catch volume was far less than that of today.

以香港人熟悉的「豬婆參」為例，熱帶海參體型比較大，表面比較圓滑，大都是煮成軟綿綿後入饌。相反刺參又稱「關東參」，體積比較細小，有刺狀外皮，以爽脆的口感聞名，「紅燒刺參」就是最常見的宴客菜。今天，海參的普及程度可能已是鮑參翅肚之首，皆因其他三項已到了可遇不可求的地步。根據上環店主提供的資料，在過去四年間，刺參的零售價已足足升了兩倍，由四千元漲到一萬二千元。海產的價錢雖然一年比一年高昂，但利尻島的漁民仍然安守本份，尊重規定的漁獲上限，使海洋資源得以保護，達到持續發展的原則，這份精神正是值得我們學習的。🌟



"Sow Sea Cucumber", a common consumable in Hong Kong, belongs to the bigger tropical sea cucumber. It has a rounder, smoother surface, and usually cooked to a very soft state. Thorny Sea Cucumbers, or "Japanese (Kanto) Sea Cucumber", are smaller in size with thorny skin and famous for its crispy texture, and often presented as "Braised Sea Cucumber" on banquet tables. Today, sea cucumbers may be the dominator in the world of dried seafood - because abalones, shark fins and fish maws have become very rare. According to a hoi-mei shop owner in Sheung Wan, the retail price for thorny sea cucumbers has tripled from \$4,000 to \$12,000. A way of making quick money it seems, but fishermen on Rishiri Island have no plans to take advantage. They still fish day in, day out, but strictly observing the catch limit for preservation of marine resources and respecting the principle of sustainable development. Have the story inspired you in protecting our ocean? 🌟