

Quinn on Nutrition: Down-to-earth advice from a visit to Nebraska

23 April 2021, by Barbara Quinn, Monterey Herald



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Gotta love the great state of Nebraska. On a recent visit to the historic Haymarket district in Lincoln, we stopped for lunch at an upscale Japanese restaurant. I casually gazed out the window at a giant screen across the street. Up flashed advice on how to social distance. I laughed when I read "Keep one cornstalk apart."

Nebraskans are pretty down to earth. That's because much of the residents are involved in agriculture. According to the United States Department of Agriculture, 92% of the state's land area is comprised of farms and ranches. Nebraska is a top producer of beans, popcorn and beef.

Nebraska is also about the only place you'll find a "runza." It's a yeast bread pocket stuffed with ground beef, cabbage, onions and seasonings—the Cornhusker state's version of a German cabbage roll. Yum.

So why were we eating Japanese food on our visit? Our host was an engineer at the large Kawasaki factory in Lincoln. Although he is a native Nebraskan, he has become a big fan of

Japanese food and culture. So we had sushi for lunch and yakiniku (Japanese barbecue) at another restaurant that evening. And so began the adventure.

Sushi or sashimi? Sushi is comprised of fish and other ingredients (raw or cooked) wrapped in rice and seaweed. Sashimi is thinly sliced raw fish or meat.

Is it safe? According to the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), "it's always best to cook seafood thoroughly to minimize the risk of foodborne illness. However, if you choose to eat raw fish anyway, one rule of thumb is to eat fish that has been previously frozen. Some species of fish can contain parasites, and freezing will kill any parasites that may be present." I ordered cooked sushi.

The miso soup—made with protein-rich soybeans and tofu along with vitamin-rich seaweed—was light and delicious. And then came the yakiniku—platters of raw items for us to grill at our table: sliced [sweet potatoes](#), broccoli, sea scallops, chicken, and several different beef cuts, including ... tongue.

"Try it!" our host urged, as he dipped a thin piece of his grilled delicacy into a dish of sauce.

I did. And let's just say it was better than the image I had in my mind.

If eating is meant to be an experience, this was certainly an enjoyable one in our nation's heartland.

Here's another fun fact: Nebraska is home to Arbor Day, which is kind of funny because there aren't a lot of trees here. And that's the point. In the late 1800s, a [newspaper editor](#) named J. Sterling Morton proposed that the state adopt a holiday to plant trees. On the first Arbor Day in 1872, more than 1 million trees were planted in this state.

We ended our visit with a toast to our host. "Kanpai (cheers!)" And made sure we were one cornstalk apart as we departed. Gotta love Nebraska.

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