

Advent of Railway Dining Car

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The first railway dining car in Japan made its appearance on 25 May 1899 on the 307 *Re* train from Kyoto to Mitajiri operated by San'yo Railway. Mitajiri Station was renamed Hofu Station in 1962 and is now an elevated station. The Kyoto-bound up train from Mitajiri was the 312 *Re*, and one round trip ran each day. At that time, San'yo Railway operations ran on the Government Railways' Tokaido main line from their own private lines as far as Kyoto Station. This through operation of a private line on a Government Railways' line was also a first. Today, it seems perfectly normal for companies to extend through services on each other's lines. San'yo Railway was also the first company to operate sleeping cars. At that time, half of one carriage was used as the dining car and the other half had passenger seats. This design was called a composite carriage. The half-carriage dining car and buffet remained in service in an altered form for some years. Western-style meals were served at a big centre table with five chairs along the right and left sides. First- and second-class passengers sat at the table to eat but third-class passengers could not use the dining car. San'yo Railway also operated a composite carriage consisting of a sleeping car and a dining car in

1900 between Mitajiri and Osaka. There were two coupled sleeping/dining cars and instead of the large table found in the first dining cars, there was a table for four, a table for two and two tables for one. The cars were able to serve 8 passengers and the so-called 'train boy' made his appearance in sleeper trains at that time. His job was to prepare the sleeping berths at night and to change the berths back to seats in the morning. The service was extended on 27 May 1901 from the previous terminus of Mitajiri to Bakan Station, which was renamed Shimonoseki in 1902 when the San'yo Railway dining car operated on four round trips each day.

Express Trains, Interior Lighting

San'yo Railway introduced Japan's first dining cars, followed up by sleeping cars and then express trains. Previously, the norm was for trains to stop at every station but time-saving express trains made their first appearance in the revised timetable of October 1894 and ran between Kobe and Hiroshima. Interior lighting appeared in November 1897. Today, we take lit carriages for granted but in those days a 'lantern man' would board the train at a designated station and lower a lantern into each carriage. The lanterns were collected next morning at another designated station. Subsequently, generators were used to power carriage lighting, a role that was played later by batteries.

Spread of Dining Cars

Following the appearance of dining cars on San'yo Railway in May 1899, many people enquired about their availability on Government Railways' services. In those days, an imported steam locomotive hauled five carriages on the line between Shimbashi and Kobe, but when a dining car was coupled, the locomotive had insufficient power to climb the grades at Hakone Pass (Shizuoka Prefecture) and



Dining car on Government Railways in 1905

(MTM)

Mt Osaka (Shiga Prefecture). The simplest solution would have been to substitute the dining car for one carriage but the number of seats could not be reduced because large numbers of passengers were using the Tokaido main line. The solution was to couple the dining car only on flat sections between Shimbashi and Kozu, between Numazu and Baba (today's Zeze Station) and finally between Kyoto and the terminus at Kobe Station. This service started with two daily round trips on 15 December 1901; the down train departed Shimbashi at 06:20 and arrived in Kobe at 22:47, while the up train left Kobe at 06:00 and arrived in Shimbashi at 20:30. The trains departing in the evening operated as night trains. As on San'yō Railway, the dining car was a composite carriage, half of which was second-class seats. However, the fact that it was uncoupled *en route* must have made dining passengers feel very uneasy. In the revised timetable of 20 January 1903, a dining car was coupled throughout the entire journey. I do not know whether a more powerful locomotive had arrived or whether an auxiliary locomotive was used, but the other two trains also cut the sections operating without a dining car. Subsequently, dining cars were connected to third-class trains as well as first and second class. Third-class express trains started operation in the revised timetable of April 1906. Unlike earlier dining cars serving Western-style meals, dining cars on the third-class express trains served Japanese food. This was the first time that Japanese-style dining cars appeared. Instead of a Western dining table, long tables were placed alongside the windows with a row of fixed stools, and passengers ate while facing the window. The time for eating a meal was limited to 20 minutes. Dining cars occupying a whole carriage instead of being part of a composite carriage appeared in 1906.

Female Dining Car Crew

Initially, dining cars were for high-class passengers but they gradually became more popularized. By March 1907, 24



Dining car crew uniform in 1938

(MTM)

trains were operating with dining cars: 14 between Shimbashi and Shimonoseki, four between Ueno and Aomori, and six on Kyushu. As dining cars increased, so did the number of passengers using them. It would seem that conscription was also a factor because transport of drafted conscripts meant more train journeys. Apparently people who did not usually have much chance to travel by train wanted to take this opportunity to eat in a dining car. Waitresses first appeared in 1930. The first dining car staff were solely men, as was in the West, but wartime conscription caused shortages of men and women replaced them. In 1930, Toyoken employed waitresses on non-scheduled express trains between Tokyo and Osaka with the special approval of the Railway Ministry. The reaction from passengers was favourable and the number of waitresses employed by the railway operators increased subsequently.

Abolition of Dining Car

The six companies who had been operating dining cars merged on 15 September 1938 to form Nippon Shokudo and the dining cars operating separately on the various lines were amalgamated. In January 1938, there were 72 dining cars, 62 on scheduled services and 12 on non-scheduled services. This was the prewar high point. Apparently, there were various suggestions for the new company name but Nippon Shokudo Co., Ltd. was finalized because, in addition to dining cars, the company intended to run diners and *bento* boxed lunch kiosks inside stations in the future. As the war spread, the dining cars started to suffer a shortage of both ingredients and coal for stoves. They were able to supplement ingredients with other substitutes but then



Nippon Shokudo old headquarters building

(Author)

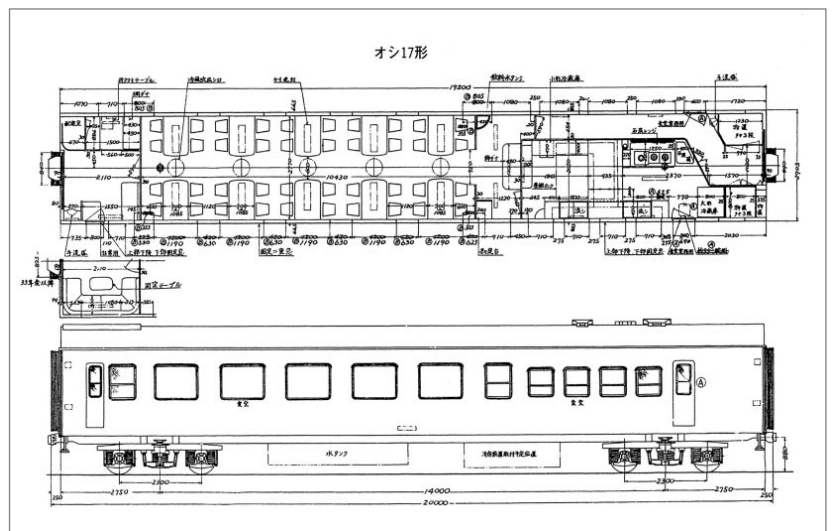
military demand meant that they had to hand over even their pots, pans, knives and forks. On 24 December 1940, dining cars and sleeping cars were removed from all trains throughout Japan. Carriages with seating, which could accommodate more passengers than dining and sleeping cars, were coupled instead. Dining cars, sleeping cars and first-class carriages were abolished in the timetable revision of 1 April 1944. The war rationing meant that food was supplied under government order. Railway bread (rolls made from wheat flour mixed with ingredients such as dried vegetables, mulberry leaves, fish meal, orange peel and persimmon leaves) and boxed lunches of rice mixed with other ingredients were sold at Tokyo, Ueno and other stations. Finally, the war ended on 15 August 1945.

Occupation Forces' Dining Cars

The 8-year Pacific War had ended with the Government Railways' stations and rolling stock in ruins. During this difficult time, an officer from the Allied forces came to Nippon Shokudo with four requests. The first was to run a dining car on the special tour train leaving Tokyo for Tohoku and Hokkaido on 2 October 1945. The other three requests were: to couple dining cars to trains used by soldiers and their families; to couple dining cars to military trains used to transport troops; and to prepare food for trains reserved for officers. It seems that directives from the Allied forces were given top priority in the early postwar period. In 1946, the 'Yankee Limited' ran between Ueno and Aomori, and was later extended as far as Sapporo. To the west, the 'Dixie Limited' operated between Tokyo, Hakata and Sasebo. At that time Japan, was suffering severe food shortages and apparently it was impossible to cater for dining cars. However, the Allied forces supplied the foodstuffs so the cooks working on the white-striped trains reserved for Allied troops never lacked for meat, seafood, and tinned food. Apparently, they cooked on oil stoves rather than coal. Flames apparently sometimes burst out of holes in the fuel pipes. I have heard that, since oil produces a strong heat, food such as steak cooked very well. People working on these trains received food that was not generally available in Japan when they finished their shift.

Revival of Dining Car—15 September 1949

After a 5-year gap, the dining car made its return on the *Heiwa*, the first postwar limited express, operating between



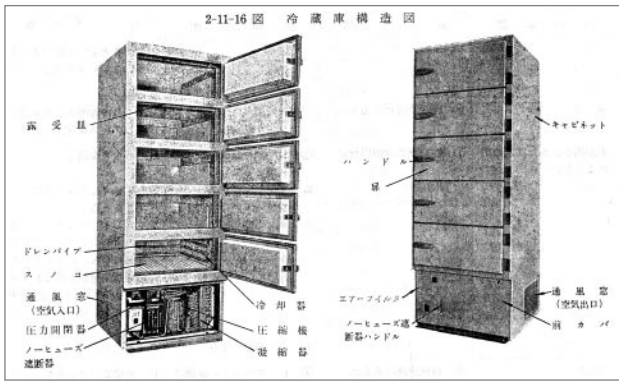
Oshi 17 dining car

(Author)



Announcement about restart of dining car services (Author)

Tokyo and Osaka. At that time, a dining car was also coupled to the Kagoshima-bound express later named *Kirishima*. The *Heiwa* used the *Sushi* 48 prewar dining car while the *Kirishima* dining car was remodelled from a standard *Oha* 35 carriage. Only passengers with *gaishokuken* ration coupons could use the dining car. The good old *Tsubame* and *Hato* limited expresses were revived in 1950 and in 1953 the *Kamome* limited express started operating on the down San'yo main line to Kyushu. These trains included a dining car, and the female attendants known as *Tsubame*, *Hato* or *Kamome* girls were very popular with passengers. The *Asakaze* overnight limited express linking Kyushu and Tokyo made its appearance in 1956. The dining car on the



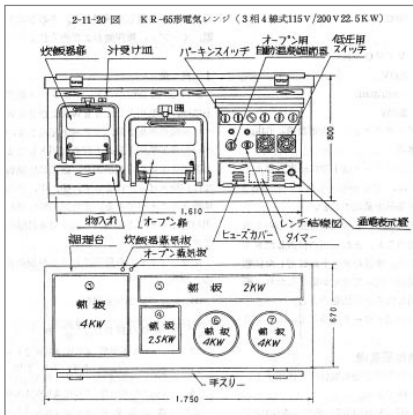
Refrigerator of *Nashi 20* dining car

(Author)



Seasons Menu in 1963

(Author)



Electric stove of *Nashi 20* dining car (Author)



Recruit pamphlet

(Author)

Asakaze was an *Oshi 17* with coal-fired stoves. It was used until May 1963 on the *Mizuho* limited express linking Tokyo and Kyushu, and then subsequently as a limited express dining car until 1972.

Age of Electric Stoves

With the timetable revision of 10 October 1958, the *Asakaze*, which had operated as an old-style passenger train, became a deluxe Series 20 fixed-composition train. It had a power car generating electricity for cooling, heating and lighting throughout the train as well as for the electric ovens, stoves, grills and hotplates in the dining car. It was an overnight sleeper express, and another limited express came on the scene 1 month after the revision. On 1 November, after a series of trials, the Series 151 *Kodama* limited business express (Series 20 at that time) covered the distance between Tokyo and Osaka in 6 hours and 50 minutes. The trainset included a *Mohashi 21* half-coach buffet car. In 1960, the *Tsubame* and *Hato* passenger trains were replaced by Series 151 electric limited expresses, including a *Sashi 151*

dining car and *Mohashi 150* (half-coach) buffet car; a first-class saloon car and telephone service were also available. More limited expresses came on the scene and in 1960 the *Hatsukari* diesel limited express started service between Ueno and Aomori. It included a *Kisashi 80* dining car and used diesel-generated electricity to power equipment such as refrigerators and electric stoves. 1961 marked the birth of the Series 82 diesel limited express, an improved version of the *Hatsukari*. The revised timetable launched the spread of smoke-free travel on major railway lines throughout Japan, making it possible to enjoy dining car services on Japan's major lines. There were no dining cars on diesel trains, local expresses or expresses, but many passenger expresses included a dining car. There was also the *Oshi 16* dining car (buffet type) that used electric stoves instead of coal stoves. Many electric expresses and local expresses operated as daytime expresses, and many half-coach buffet cars appeared. These buffet cars had a corner for *udon* and *soba* noodles, or for *sushi*, and were popularly known as 'soba trains' or 'sushi trains'.



Limited express *Hakucho* and author at Mukomachi yard in 1972 (Author)

Shinkansen Starts

Shinkansen services with dining cars started between Tokyo and Shin-Osaka in 1964, the year of the Tokyo Olympics, using two half-coach Type 35 buffets. They were located in Car 9 and Car 5 and were referred to as Car A and Car B within the company. In 1972, shinkansen services expanded westward as far as Okayama. At Okayama, the Series 485 daytime limited express, the Series 583 *Midori*, the Series 475 *Tsubame* and *Hato* expresses, the *Genkai*, and the *Tsukushi* and *Beppu* from Shin-Osaka, connected with the



ひかりAセット (ビーフシチュー・アラ・モードセット)

Hikari A Set (beef stew a la mode)

(Author)



ひかりBセット (ポークカツレツベルン風)

Hikari B Set (pork cutlet Bernese style)

(Author)



ひかりCセット (中華好菜)

Hikari C Set (Chinese vegetables)

(Author)



Yoshoku Set (Series 100)

(Author)



玄海御膳(0系)

Genkai-Gozen (Series 0)

(Author)



Genkai-Gozen (Series 100)

(Author)

shinkansen. Many limited expresses and expresses, such as the *Tsubame*, *Hato* and *Midori*, were in operation and most included a buffet or dining car. Tokyo night trains with a Series 20 dining car included the *Asakaze* and *Hayabusa*, and dining cars also operated on such night trains as the Series 538 sleeper limited express *Kinsei* from Nagoya, the *Kirishima* from Kyoto and the Series 20 *Akatsuki* from Shin-Osaka. Apparently dining cars were most common until shinkansen services to Hakata were started. There were many dining cars operating on limited expresses in the Hokuriku area, including the Aomori-bound *Hakucho* as well as the *Raicho* and the *Hokuetsu*. Recently, dining cars are also flourishing on Series 485 electric limited expresses on the Shin'etsu Line and the Series 489 electric limited expresses operating on the Tohoku and Joban lines.

10 March 1975

The shinkansen spread westward and services to Hakata Station finally started. This was when shinkansen dining cars appeared in Kyushu. The Type 36 dining car occupied the whole carriage and differed from dining cars on conventional trains because it had a separate corridor rather than a central aisle. As a result, dining car operations changed dramatically; the dining car was Car 8 and the buffet was in Car 9 where there was a telephone booth and a telephone attendant took messages or called passengers to the phone. In 1985, the Series 100 X trainset with a double-decker dining car came onto the scene. Before long, the heyday of the Tokaido and San'yo shinkansen dining car had arrived. Most trains ran a buffet or diner, but their numbers decreased gradually after the advent of the Series 300 *Nozomi*, because it increased speeds and shortened travel times so much that there was no longer sufficient time for a full meal. In 2000, the dining car conceded defeat to the Series 500 and 700 *Nozomi* and became extinct.

Personal Recollections Lighting coal stove—the first task

I joined the crew of a dining car in 1969 at age 19 because I loved express trains and was fascinated by the steam locomotives (SL) that hauled them. My first job was aboard the *Unzen* express connecting Nagasaki and Kyoto. I lived in Nishijin in Fukuoka and would board the SL-hauled commuter train, which ran once a day, and started work at 08:00. I would stop by the office to wish the staff good morning and then change into my cook's uniform before checking the sharpness of personal cooking knives and entering the kitchens. This was where we prepared food such as curry sauce and demi-glace sauce to load on the train. We also checked the ingredients to be loaded. My job was

to check the ingredients and to chop wood! The ingredients included condiments such as soy sauce and pepper, salad vegetables, boiled vegetables, pasta, beef, pork and chicken. There were many other things to check as well, such as disposable chopsticks and napkins, tablecloths, and linen, and the various crew members responsible checked them before we boarded. It was also part of my job to wash the vegetables and rice. In those days, there were two kinds of express train: EMU expresses, and locomotive-hauled expresses, which used coal stoves. The dining car prepared all food using coal-generated heat, so we had to prepare kindling for the coal stoves. Once that was done, we sorted the vegetables and prepared them so that it would be possible to cook them as soon as we had boarded the train. There was a roll-call after the crew had all finished the checks. When our train arrived we quickly changed with the previous crew. Passengers were also getting on or off the train and the platform was always bustling with people. Water was also stored under the carriage before the train set off again after a brief stop. The general rule was not to create black smoke in a station and I lit the coal so it would be fully ablaze before we arrived at a major station. This kindling was my first task.

Coal-stove kitchen

After 1 year working aboard the trains, I finally got a good grasp of it all. It was 3 hours to Nagasaki from Hakata, where I boarded. When we arrived at the terminus, the train was shunted onto the inspection track, where the rolling stock was checked. After the check was complete, the train was shunted into the cleaning track where the coal stoves were cleaned and the chimneys on the roof swept. Fresh ice for the dining car's refrigerator was loaded. After cleaning, the maintenance crew left and the dining car crew began preparations. I kindled the firewood I had chopped at Hakata using newspapers, magazines, etc., left in the train. Once it had caught, I added charcoal and then when the charcoal was ablaze, gradually added coal. While the stove was heating, I washed the vegetables and rice at the cleaning track. The person in charge of the tables got in more drinking water and checked the water. I started preparing food in earnest once the stove finally got hot. I also boiled kettles of water while the coal was building up heat. As soon as we had hot water, I boiled the rice. Before leaving Nagasaki, I cooked two pots of rice, enough for 30 people. After boiling the rice for about 20 minutes, I transferred the pot to a hotplate next to the stove and then started to heat four kinds of sauce. Once the soup, curry and demi-glace sauce were heated, I cooked the carrots, potatoes, runner beans and other vegetables to go with the meat. Vegetables, cheese, ham and bread for the sandwiches were sliced in the pantry.

The coffee sold onboard was made in the kitchen. Around the time that the coffee and sandwiches for the trolley were ready, the replacement SL came onto the cleaning track. That was the happiest moment for me. The SL crew often gave us some of their coal. When all the preparations were finished and the crew had finished their meal, the SL would haul us off to the Nagasaki platform.

Unzen Overnight Express

Many people came onto the platform at Nagasaki to see passengers off. Some had come by boat from places like Goto. As departure time approached, Nagasaki *geisha* would sometimes stand in front of the Green Car seeing passengers off. The platform and coaches were bustling, but in the dining car kitchen we were getting ready for business. The dining car had a crew of three: the chef in charge of cooking, the assistant cook 'Suke San' and the waitress 'Pan Chan'. Nine crew members were responsible for looking after the passengers: the Grade One cashier in charge of the cash register, the Grade Two staff in charge of the bills, the Grade Three staff in charge of linen, the staff in charge of drinks, looking after the customers and onboard sales. One passenger conductor, one operation conductor, four passenger attendants, one 'grease monkey', the engine driver and the fireman also worked the train. After the departure bell rang, the locomotive blew her whistle and we would line up facing the platform and exchange bows with the stationmaster and attendants. The train then departed Nagasaki Station bound for Urakami. When there was a festival like the summer Spirit Boat Procession or *Okunchi* we would see many people getting on and off the train in the town. Then it was time to 'open shop'. After the conductor finished announcing the stops and making other onboard announcements, the cashier made our business announcement, 'This is an announcement from Nippon Shokudo. Dinner is now available in the dining car. Our onboard sales also offer... .' This would bring customers flocking to the dining car. Set menus included a steak dinner, lunches A and B, as well as *a la carte* dishes such as spaghetti, curry and rice, and sandwiches. The Japanese dishes included *makunouchi* bento boxed lunches, and *unagi* braised eel on rice. When an order came in, the cook would take the ingredients from the refrigerator and prepare them on the chopping board. Of course fire was used in the cooking. A little more coal was thrown on to raise the heat. A ring to regulate the heat, known as a 'sha-no-me' was put on the stove and the oil heated. Thus we started business. There were lots of orders for beer and *sake* rice wine from the tables. We soon left Nagasaki behind and headed towards the mountain pass. We came out of the tunnel, passed through orange orchards and came to Omura Bay. The number of customers steadily increased. Dishes like

fried prawns and hamburgers were selling; it became a bit of a meeting place. Behind the dining car were the Green Car, Sleeper A and reserved seats. In front, were the four Sleeper B cars, and four carriages with unreserved seats. Apparently, a lot of the customers at the front of the train bought boxed lunches. The two onboard sales attendants went back and forth as far as Car 12 carrying baskets. They were carrying items like oranges, boiled eggs, juice and coffee. The corridor along the way had manually-operated doors which remained open unless someone closed them. That would be unthinkable today, wouldn't it? Of course the windows and staff door into the dining car were manually operated. The kitchen had no air conditioning and since we were right in front of the stove, there was nothing we could do about the summer heat. In winter, the kitchen stayed cold until the stove heated up. Hot water to wash the dishes also depended on the stove. Sometimes, we would ask the SL footplate to let us use their heating when we did not have enough hot water (in winter). Water was precious because we could not get a fresh supply while the train was running. We could only stock up when the locomotive was changed or at major stations. We would fill the upper and the lower water tanks to the brim, and there was a system to pump water up into the upper tank using an air pump. And thus we continued business.

Ordering underway

The dining car only carried a limited amount of raw materials and we couldn't get extra during the journey. We would run short if the train was delayed or if we had a large number of customers. The only station from where we could place an order was Tosu. From here, there wasn't enough time to ready the ingredients. Consequently, we would ask for help from stations en route. We would write down what we needed for the journey on up from Hakata, wrap the note around a carrot or potato or something, and throw it towards the platform attendant at a station as we passed through without stopping. If all went well, the staff at that station would contact our office to let them know. I think they must have found it an amusing sight at the station, reading notes like '2 kilos of cabbages' or 'curry for 20 people'. When we eventually arrived at Tosu Station we would confirm that the station had passed on the message. That was how the dining car was able to operate successfully. When we arrived at Hakata, we would get the items we had ordered, as well as the ingredients for the next morning's breakfast. After that, we would take on fresh supplies of water at Moji Station and Hiroshima Station, and then prepare breakfast.

Closing time

We stopped serving at 23:00; customers who had enjoyed

a drink would leave the dining car at around 23:30. Then we would clear the tables and start to prepare dinner for the crew, preparing a meal for the conductors and passenger attendants first. It would be around midnight when we made dinner for the dining car crew.

We would eat dinner together while asking the conductor about how many passengers would get off at which station in the morning. We could take a quick nap after dinner. It was gone 01:00 when we had finished tidying up. The female passenger attendants had done the washing and hung it out to dry in the kitchen. After the conductor and other staff had left, we prepared the beds for the dining car crew. We arranged groups of six chairs between the tables to make beds, where our legs would be under the tables. Two people shared a group of six chairs. There were no partitions and we all slept together companionably. We were able to get to sleep at around 01:30.

Preparing breakfast

It was past 03:30 when we arrived in Hiroshima. There was a supply of fresh water for the dining car and the engine driver handed over to his relief here. After leaving Hiroshima, there is a long grade between Seno and Hachihonmatsu known as 'the Hakone of the West'. We started preparing breakfasts during this stretch as the train's speed dropped. It was really tough on rainy days, especially when the coal stove wouldn't light. Just as it had started to smoulder, we would arrive at Seno Station where the EF59 locomotive was coupled to push us up the final stretch. The kitchen was in turmoil and it was always filled with smoke. I would open the window to let it out on the Seno Station platform where we were stopped and the engine driver for the Seno section and station staff always (and annoyingly) joked about me transforming myself into a puff of smoke again! After we left the station, the fire would catch and the stove heated up. Just before the train reached Hachihonmatsu Station the auxiliary locomotive was uncoupled whilst we were still moving and the lightened train was now heading downhill towards Saijo. In the kitchen, we boiled coffee, made sandwiches for the onboard sales, boiled rice, and made *miso* soup. The soup was in small milk urns as the narrow opening helped to prevent spills. I added more coal to increase the heat and added seaweed to the soup urns. After that I added *urume* (small dried fish). This was to make



Dining car crew of *Kirishima* limited express at Yasu yard in 1972

(Author)

the 'primary stock' for the clear soup and 'secondary stock' for the miso soup. I arranged the trays of Japanese dishes in the pantry around the time that the rice had finished cooking. The main dish was a salmon slice. I had grilled 60 portions in the oven. Next to it was *dashimaki* rolled omelette; to the right of the *kamaboko* fish cake I arranged pickled cabbage, cucumber and *narazuke* (vegetables pickled in sake lees). The finishing touch was to add vinegared turnip. We also served a Western-style breakfast. I cut the boneless ham and prepared the eggs. The Western-style breakfast was ham and eggs, orange or tomato juice, and a choice of coffee or tea. It came with toast. After we left Okayama, the dining car was packed until past Akashi. After 40 Japanese-style breakfasts had been sold, we prepared extra ones as we worked. We finished clearing the tables and washing up around the time we arrived in Kobe where we picked up the ice and coal we had ordered. The staff in charge of cooking and accounts prepared our order for Osaka; it was for ingredients for the return journey and for extra consumable items.

Clearing Up

After leaving Osaka, we would get a few customers for drinks such as tea or coffee, and we would close the dining car at Takatsuki. We would clean the frying pans, saucepans, carriers and silverware. I would burnish the frying pans with a pumice stone until their outsides were sparkling. There were 12 or 13 pots and pans, including a stir-frying pan, a deep-frying pan and a frying pan just for ham and eggs. The staff in charge of the tables cleaned the silverware.

They polished the egg-stained knives and forks with silver polish, washed them with detergent, then rinsed them in boiled water and dried them with a drying cloth. The kitchen staff prepared for the return journey. With the train still on the move, I sharpened the cooking knives I had used on the up journey. Once I had finished, I prepared ingredients and made something for the crew. The train arrived at Kyoto, our final destination. The female crew got off and went to the Kyoto Office to hand over our takings and take a rest. We would meet up again that night at the Yasu depot. The train was sent on from Kyoto to the depot and we had our meal on the way there. It passed alongside Lake Biwa for 40 minutes as we ate our meal before arriving at the Yasu depot where we took a bath, tidied up the dining car and rested. After the 16:30 train inspection had finished, we started preparing food again as the next work cycle started.

Working limited express

My first day working on the *Hayabusa* was 28 December 1969; I clocked in, prepared the ingredients, ran checks and then it was time for the roll-call. That day I had been sent from the Hakata Office to help out at the Moji Office. We were often required to provide extra help during the *Oshogatsu* year end or *Obon* summer holidays. At that time, the Hakata Office was in charge of express train dining cars but during the year-end period they replaced the dining car with an ordinary carriage. Crews were dispatched to help out at the Kagoshima, Yonago and Moji offices. At Yonago, they worked on the *Izumo* or *Matsukaze*, while in Kagoshima

they worked on trains like the *Nichirin* and *Ariake*. I asked to be seconded to the Moji Office because it was my dream to work on the *Sakura*, *Asakaze*, *Fuji*, *Hayabusa*, *Suisei* and *Asatsuki Blue Trains* (sleeper limited expresses). It was my first time to ride in a Series 20 dining car, and I remember how excited I was. After the roll-call I followed my senior colleague from the Moji platform and through the Kanmon Tunnel as we went to take over at Shimonoseki. Before long, the down-bound *Hayabusa* arrived, pulled by an EF65 (a DC electric locomotive). I had a camera in my workbag but, of course, this was neither the time nor place to take a picture. The dining car finally stopped right in front of us and we soon set off again. In the Kanmon Tunnel, we checked the ingredients with the crew who had come down from Tokyo and did the handover. There were some ingredients left but after the locomotive had passed through the neutral section (AC/DC) and pulled up at Moji Station platform, we swiftly loaded the ingredients for the round trip to Kagoshima. The corridor near the staff door was piled with provisions and the chef in charge told me to stow them away quickly. The locomotive had already switched from an EF30 (for use in the Kanmon Tunnel) to an ED72 (locomotive for use in Kyushu) and, before I had time to tidy up, we had set off and were passing alongside the Moji depot. I wanted to take a look but had no time to spare. When I looked up I caught a glimpse of a D51 (steam locomotive for freight trains). Even as we moved out, the last orders for breakfast came in. The train passed through Kokura Station without stopping. Our next stop would be Hakata Station. I finished stowing away the ingredients around the time we passed through Orio

Station and was able to return to the kitchen. Mountains of dirty breakfast dishes and utensils arrived. This was far, far busier than on an express, and I took a short breather after I'd done about half of it. The onboard announcement was saying that we were arriving at Hakata Station. People from the Hakata Office, my own workplace, came to help us. They asked if I was doing OK but I had no time to answer them. I had no chance to look at the locomotives in the Yoshizuka or Kashii depots either. The train set off from Hakata Station and we started to prepare lunch. From here to Kumamoto was a busy time. Even so, I caught a glimpse of the C55 steam locomotive at



Steam locomotive C61 *Hayabusa* and ED73 *Asakaze* (right), 1965

(Author)

Haruda. I knew the pace for an express train and would be able to take a look outside accordingly, but I couldn't do that on a limited express. I had friends in the limited express crew that I'd met at Mukomachi or Nagasaki, but working together was of course a different matter. At Tosu we split away from the Nagasaki-bound section. I did get a quick look at Tosu Depot while washing the dishes. I wasn't slacking. My hands kept moving. I felt a sense of relief at seeing the locomotives even though we were this busy. I had visited the Tosu Depot many times as a boy and had often seen the train I was riding on now—the *Hayabusa*—there but the depot looked different when seen from the train. After we had left Kurume, the next stop was Omuta. As the 600 Series EMU on the Nishitetsu Omuta Line approached us from the right, we stopped at Omuta Station. Many coal wagons were lined up in the station. We soon left and I gradually got the kitchen tidied up. At last I could hear something other than orders from the customers. 'Is everything OK?' It was my senior colleague speaking. By now the train was running through Tabaruzaka. The onboard announcements about connecting trains at Kumamoto began. In the kitchen, Suke San (the assistant cook) started getting ready to leave at Kumamoto, because there would only be a kitchen crew of three between Kumamoto and Nishi-Kagoshima. Suke San made his farewells and got off. He would be working his way back on the up-bound *Hayabusa*. The locomotive was changed from an electric ED72 to a diesel DD51. Electrification as far as Kumamoto was completed on 1 October 1965, but from here onwards we would see many steam locomotives such as the C60, C57 and the C61 which used to haul the *Hayabusa*. I could see the Kumamoto Depot on the corridor side of the kitchen. Next was Yatsushiro. Once we had got this far things had calmed down and the dining car only held people enjoying an afternoon tea. After we had passed Ijuin, I could see the Sakurajima volcano in front of us and we arrived at our terminus of Nishi-Kagoshima Station on schedule at 15:59. The train was hauled by a steam locomotive to the Kagoshima Depot where we handed over to the crew for the up-bound *Akatsuki*. After we had said our farewells and finished roll-call at the Kagoshima Office, I was off-duty until the next morning.

After breakfast at 09:30 at the office next day, there was roll-call and then I headed to the cleaning track at the depot, boarded the train and started getting ready for business. It was 29 December and the *Fuji* crew made an early departure. The No. 8 *Fuji*, departed at 09:15 and the No. 6 *Hayabusa* departed from Nishi-Kagoshima at 12:08, bidding farewell to Sakurajima. The train ran up the coast track, picking up speed on the flat stretch after Yatsushiro. When we arrived at Kumamoto, an electric locomotive took over for the remaining stretch. We arrived at Tosu Station at 17:01 and stopped for 14 minutes to be coupled with

the *Hayabusa* from Nagasaki. From here on, the dining car was packed. It stayed open as far as Hiroshima, closing at 23:00 when we were near Itozaki. After the customers had left, we made dinner for the conductor and crew, and could finally take a break after clearing up. The train was leaving Okayama. There was time for a nap but we started getting ready for business when we had passed Sekigahara and were approaching Nagoya. The dining car opened at 06:00 as we served up breakfast, and passed Lake Hamana, Mt Fuji and the Atami coastline heading for Tokyo where we arrived on schedule at 10:10. The passengers departed and the train became quiet. The power was turned off and we headed towards Shinagawa as a deadhead train. We arrived after about 10 minutes. The dining car crew left the train here and went through the underpass to the Shinagawa Office for the arrival roll-call. After that, we went to the kitchens for additional supplies for the down train and put in an order for ingredients such as meat and vegetables. In addition to the standard provisions, we loaded up on decorations and rice cakes to use in *zoni* soup since it would be New Year when we arrived in Kyushu. Once we had finished checking the ordered items we were off work until the following morning. The Shinagawa Office had sleeping accommodation, a canteen, a kiosk and a barber's shop in addition to its offices, and there were many crew members there from every area. It was bustling with people from the Nagoya, Osaka, Moji, Hiroshima and Yonago offices.

Next morning, I headed to the cleaning track to take over the work for the down-bound *Hayabusa*. It was 31 December 1969, New Year's Eve. I carried the ingredients we had ordered the day before through the underpass to the cleaning track. Things that could be washed outside would be dealt with here. Once the train had been washed and its interior cleaned, it was towed to the departure track. I could see the *Asakaze*, *Sakura* and *Fuji* alongside. The *Hayabusa* left just after 17:30 and headed towards Tokyo Station. The train was provisionally towed to the Kanda side where we waited until it was time to enter the station track. Before too long we were on the track leading to Tokyo Station where many passengers were waiting. The platform was crowded with people going back to their hometowns and well-wishers seeing them off. The next day was New Year. There were only 6 more hours left of 1969. I could hear the dialect of my Kyushu home. All the seats on the train were taken, and the dining car entrance and smoking room were packed. At 18:00, with a long whistle blast, the train set off from Tokyo Station. Once the platform and dining car crew had finished our salutations we opened shop. The dining car was soon full and orders came swiftly into the kitchen. Steak, set menu, makunouchi, eel, cheese, ham salad.... Orders flooded in for meals as well as snacks to go with drinks. We passed Yurakucho and then Shimbashi, and the train picked



Fuda-no-tsuji departure lines in the Shinagawa yard in Tokyo

(Author)

up speed after passing Shinagawa Station. The kitchen was frantically busy. We were serving mainly meals after our departure but the focus shifted gradually to drinks. The atmosphere in the dining car was relaxed, with passengers reminiscing about their hometowns. We passed through Atami en route to Shizuoka, our next stop. We arrived in Nagoya at 22:49 and departed at 22:54. Newspapers were unloaded onto the platform. When the departure bell rang, passengers from Nagoya boarded the train. There were many people on the platform to see them off. After leaving Nagoya, it wasn't long until closing time. Suddenly the train was running through snow. Once the dining car was closed and the crew's dinner had been made, the chefs prepared ingredients at the tables while the cashier tallied our takings. The other waiters and I tidied up the kitchen. One of the older workers had placed a radio next to the window from which we could hear snatches from the *Kohaku Uta Gassen* New Year's Eve song contest. The year was nearly over. The train was speeding through Sekigahara, where the snow lay more deeply. I opened the kitchen window and looked out at the locomotive hauling the long line of carriages towards Kyushu through the bright snow. Before long it was past midnight and the New Year had arrived. We wished the conductors and other people passing through the dining car 'Happy New Year'. The train was nearly at Maibara. From there we could nap until Itozaki. The next morning, I started

preparing the breakfasts whilst looking at the Itozaki Depot. It was the morning of New Year's Day 1970. In the kitchen, we were preparing New Year's zoni soup while roasting rice cakes in the oven. We had prepared *otoso* (spiced sake to celebrate the New Year) on the tables as we readied to greet the New Year's customers. The train passed through Saijo Station and we had just passed Hachihonmatsu when the conductor's announcement came over the speakers. The chime sounded and then 'We wish you all a Happy New Year. The time is now 05:40. Today is 1 January 1970. The train is running on schedule. We will soon arrive in Hiroshima. Our arrival time is 06:00. Please change here for the Geibi, Ujina and Kure lines.' The announcements continued as we pulled into Hiroshima. The dining car opened from Hiroshima, and our morning announcement was made. 'We wish you all a Happy New Year. The dining car is now open for breakfast. Both Western- and Japanese-style meals are available. The dining car is Car 5, in the middle of the train. Boxed lunches and green tea, sandwiches and coffee, newspapers and magazines are also available from our onboard sales staff who will make their way through the train. We hope that you will make use of our services.' The onboard sales staff set off after this announcement. The train passed Miyajima and sped along the coastline from Iwakuni. The morning sun rose over the Seto Inland Sea. We passed through Kojiro, Obatake, Yanaiminato and Tokuyama, and arrived at Ogori

Station. I could see a steam locomotive in the depot. We would start preparing for the handover when we left this station. By the time we had finished clearing up we were nearly at Shimonoseki, where the handover would take place. This time we were handing over to the new crew. We quickly completed the handover while passing through the Kanmon Tunnel and our work came to an end at Moji Station. With the completion of the arrival roll-call, report and handover of left-over ingredients, my 4-night 5-day shift had come to an end.

Dining car tricks

Various tricks of the trade are used in dining car kitchens. For example, the deep-frying pan curls inwards at the top so that the swaying of the train doesn't spill the oil. It won't spill over unless the train makes an emergency stop. Also, the rice saucepans and pots to make the stock for miso soup and clear soups are narrower at the top so that the stock doesn't spill. The crockery shelves have a rail at the front to stop the tableware from sliding out. If something unexpected happens and the train makes an emergency stop, it causes chaos.

When it's really bad, oil spills over and catches fire. A fire extinguisher is best in such cases, but the dining cars had sand onboard. We used to throw bags of sand to put out the flames when a lot of oil spilled and caught fire. There were a lot of clever contrivances on board the train, as well as know-how taught to us by our older colleagues. We used to place a large plate in the pasta saucepan until the water boiled to stop it spilling out.

The kitchens were small so you could do everything from getting out the ingredients to preparing them without having to move too much. The dining car was really built for efficiency.

Before work in dining car

Before and after my work in the dining car I would learn basic cooking techniques in the preparation area in our offices. There was a pantry for fresh vegetables and a place to sort different ingredients, and the refrigerators for each of the trains were lined up in a row. At the back of the room were refrigerators, freezers, and a cooling room, where cooked ingredients could be cooled, next to which were food cutters, slicers and mixers. Finally, there were many utensils, such as steamers and rotisseries, lined up in front of the stoves. The meat was prepared on a large work surface. Quartered cow carcasses were cut up for use in different dishes. Chickens were quartered and processed. The onboard crew's work was to prepare food that had already been processed to some extent. There was a limit to what could be done onboard a train. After I'd finished work in the dining car, I would often practise tossing food in a frying pan. I would add matchsticks to uncooked rice and

practise tossing them. When I'd got a bit ahead with tasks that could be done onboard, such as sharpening knives and cutting bread, before boarding the train for work I would often learn basic techniques such as how to make curry roux or white sauce, thicken mayonnaise, clean meat and mix hamburgers. I would cut up the carrots to be served warm along with the meat and then peel them with a small vegetable knife. Then I would boil them and caramelize them with butter and sugar. That would be one dish done. In the same way I would peel the potatoes for frying but they would be loaded on the train after simply being boiled. These basics could only be learned in our station premises. In addition to the preparation room on the second floor, there was a hall for parties and banquets on the third floor. There I could learn how to make Western-style full-course meals and hors d'oeuvres. I learned through practical experience at our station premises how to do the various tasks involved in dining car work.

Although it seems like only yesterday, in fact that was all quite a long time ago. Now my job is to preserve the trains for which I have such fond memories and to which I owe a debt of gratitude. The oil I use now is not for cooking but engine oil to polish locomotives. I have spent more than half my life on trains—I have spent more time on trains than at home. A co-worker I met during the express-train era married me in front of a locomotive on the 101st Railway Day. That locomotive is still carefully preserved today. Our children have grown up, and I retired after 35 years working the dining car. Now I work at the Kyushu Railway History Museum, maintaining the rolling stock preserved there and preserving mini railways and model trains. There is no going back to the past, but I remember my times working on dining cars each time I look at our beautiful rolling stock preserved for posterity. ■



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