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**Japan Economic Foundation**

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Editor's postscript

# My Gourmet Experience

Photos: Tsuchiai Junior High School, Saitama City (upper right)  
 Nishihara Primary School, Kashiwa City (lower left)  
 Lunch samples are of Notre Dame Elementary School, Kyoto City



When I was an elementary school student, I remember the day at school lunch when something in a palm-size aluminum foil container was placed on the top right side of my food tray. Its surface was slightly browned here and there. "What is this?" I asked a classmate sitting next to me. "It's 'guratan'" was the reply. I had never heard the name, or seen such food before. It was my very first time to try gratin or 'gu-ratan.' What on earth is 'guratan'? I wondered to myself. I usually saved my favorite food till last, but on that day, the very first food I reached out to was this 'guratan.' It tasted good. I had never tasted such food before. When I got home I asked my mother if she would make us 'guratan.' My mother replied, "There's no way I could make that." I grew up in a family of seven that spanned three generations, and with our family-run business, there was always bustle in my home from morning till night. My mother could not afford to spend a lot of time preparing meals. While I do not recall looking forward to school lunch, I do remember the delight I felt when food was served that I could not eat elsewhere. Now that I think back on it, school lunches gave me the opportunity to savor what was for me a gourmet experience. Nowadays, given progress in the restaurant industry, it is possible to taste the rarest meals from all over the world. Of course, a price has to be paid for such meals. Meanwhile, school lunch is inexpensive, and proper care is taken over nutrition and hygiene. What busy mother would not be thankful for school lunches? I am sure that any parent, or rather, any adult, would be grateful for schools taking care of providing lunch for children. However, the number of households that do not pay for school meals is on the rise. This fact was made known in the results of a nationwide survey first released in January 2007 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology. It is still a social problem that continues to draw attention. We should keep in mind that school lunch is not just a meal to feed children, but also to provide the perfect opportunity to learn that balanced meals are the source of our physical energy. Parents must not take away this valuable learning opportunity from their children.

M. Watanabe