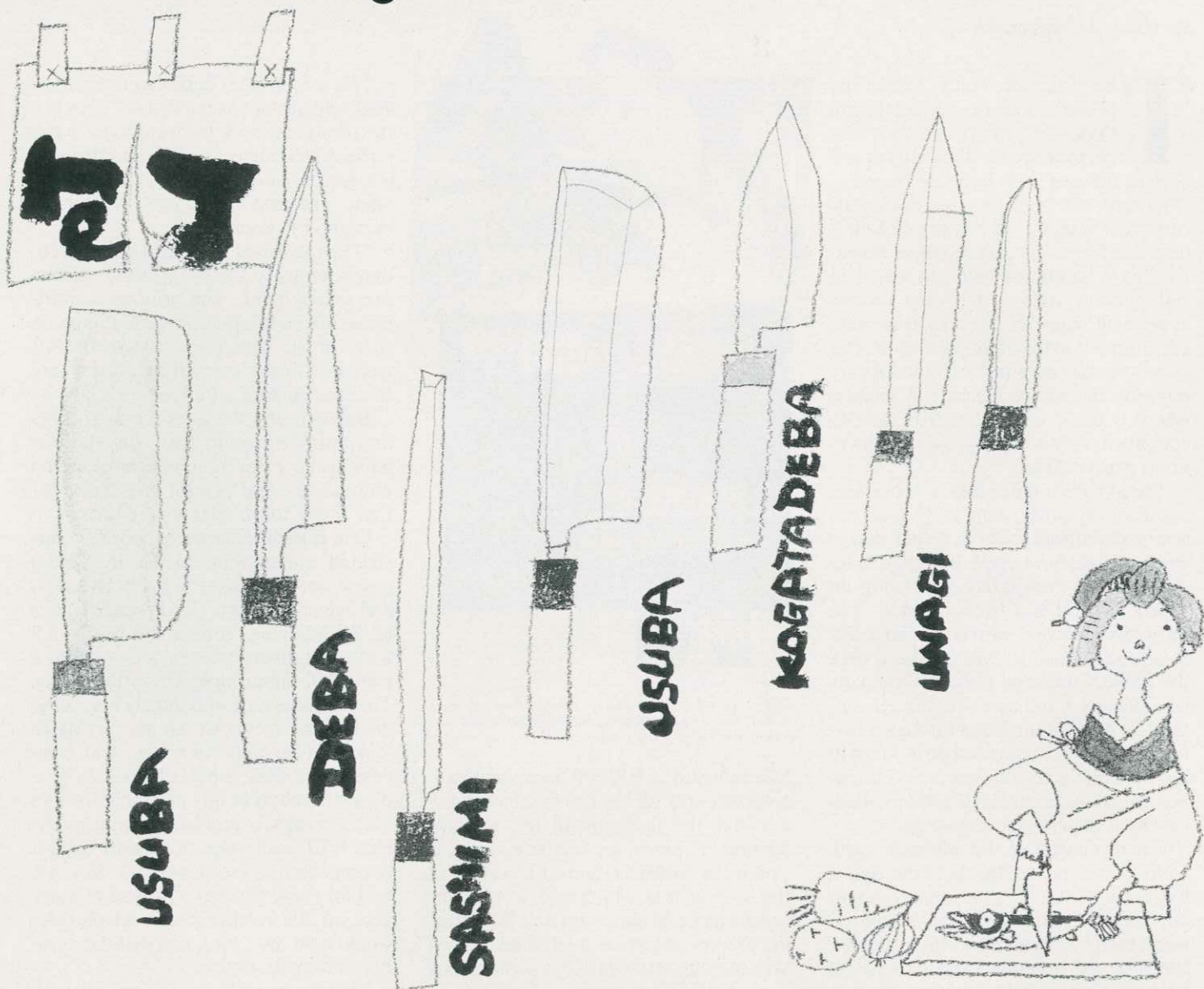


Craft of Cutting

Illustration and text by Hiroshi Oba



Probably the most important tool used in preparing Japanese cuisine is the *hocho*, or kitchen knife.

Of course, Western cooking also uses knives to ready the various ingredients for cooking, but the *hocho* assumes a much more pivotal role in Japan with its emphasis on the tasteful presentation of *sashimi* and other fresh seafoods. As a result, Japanese chefs, called *itamae*, are frequently appraised in terms of their skill with the knife.

Japanese cuisine's emphasis on freshness is probably best represented by the way fish is prepared. This is known as

"*sakana o orosu*" (cleaning and preparing the fish), and there is a variety of knives to make this job easier. These include the slender *sashimi-bocho* for slicing *sashimi*, the sturdy *ajikiri* for mackerel and the hefty *unagi-sabaki* for cutting open eel.

There is also a much-used kitchen knife for cutting and peeling such vegetables as carrots and white radish called the *usuba-bocho*, which, along with the *deba-bocho*, is one of the principal implements in the Japanese knife rack.

So if you would like to try your hand at Japanese cooking, be sure you have the full array of Japanese knives. ■



Hiroshi Oba is one of Japan's leading illustrators. Among his many books are *Oranda kara no Iro-enpitsu* (Colored-pencil sketches from the Netherlands) and *Tsubasa no Gashu* (An airplane collection).

The *Journal* regrets to announce that Hiroshi Oba passed away on August 18, 1988, at the age of 66.