Japanese Homestay Report

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I had a great time staying together with the Japanese couple staying in Singapore. Not only I tried a lot of delicious Japanese traditional food, but also learnt about their culture. It has been one of the most enriching experiences I have had last year.

The Homestay project has deepened both the visitors(us) and the hosts' knowledge about each other's home country's culture and tradition. On 12th Dec, we met in Chinatown MRT, and I brought them along to a Chinese authentic northern restaurant to let them have a taste of China. After lunch, we had an exciting and cheerful trip nearby. Even though the sun was very scorching, it could not stop us from exploring the wanders in Chinatown (see fig 1).

We had the famous coconut drink, we wandered around in a kitchenware shop selling cheap cooking wares, even including the giant traditional sashimi ship (see fig 2) and tepan etc.

The couple brought me to Orchard to get some materials for dinner. They told me we were going to have some home made sushi (which is my most favourite!!) that night. We went to a Japanese supermarket---Isetan, to buy tofu and umei for next morning' breakfast, nadou(纳豆), ebi tempura, and desserts for dinner and supper. I really got to know more about Japanese preference and taste afterwards.

Here comes the exciting and interesting part when I helped the hostess to cook dinner. I
always wondered how did the Japanese cooked the fried egg cake, and after learning from the hostess, I found it so easy! Even though more practice is needed to have the perfect shaped fried egg cake!(fig.3&fig.4). Except for busy helping out to cook dinner, I also did not neglect all the interesting kitchen wares and cooking wares.(Fig.5 &fig.6 &fig7). I find the Japanese people live a enjoyable and joyous life even in another country, maybe so as to seek for a sense of home and familiarity. Finally the long-awaited sushi dinner came! The hostess taught me how to make sushi the simple and convenient way. Just put the rice and the stuffing such as ebi tempura, crab stick, fried egg cake, cucumber or/and sashimi on a big piece of Japanese seaweed and wrap up!(see fig.8&9) It is unlike those nicely cooked sushi in Japanese restaurant, but the the taste is even better because it is authentic Japanese!

Fig.3( The fried egg cake made by the hostess)

Fig.4
( I was trying to make a fried egg cake by myself)

Fig.5
( The cute container is used to store garlic and ginger)
Fig. 6
(The Japanese's way of displaying the utensils during meals)

Fig. 7
(The display of cooking wares and meal utensils.)

Fig. 8
(Sushi stuffings, clockwise: seaweed, crab stick, crispy fried chicken, fried egg cake, cucumber, ebi tempura)

Fig. 9 (Sashimi, used for sushi stuffing, or direct eat)
We watched television after a heavy and delicious dinner. All the programmes were Japanese which I rarely understood. However the couple were so helpful and patient that they would explain everything I was unknown of. Every time I misunderstood their meaning, the husband would take out a Japanese-English Electrical Dictionary to help explain the Japanese in English. I improved on Japanese while at the same time they learned more English. I got to know how the native Japanese celebrate Christmas even though they have no religion belief. It has just become a big fest for friends to go shopping and lovers to spend a sweet time in Japan!

After having a traditional Japanese bath, we had some Japanese deserts. (See fig.10) They are very sweet and tasty, and mochi is my favourite!

I had a nice sleep and woke up quite late the next morning, when the hostess already finished washing clothes. Then we started to prepare for the breakfast or to say lunch due to my lateness of waking up. And our breakfast was unigiri—another sushi alike traditional Japanese food and miso soup! The hostess's way of cutting tofu for the miso soup amazed as well as scared me initially. (See fig.11) However after trying it by myself, I found it very easy and safe to cut tofu like that.

After cooking the miso soup (see fig.12) and rice, we started to make unigiri, which is Japanese rice ball. (See fig 13&14)
Fig. 12 (Home-made miso soup)

Fig. 13 (Umei for unigiri's stuffing)

Fig. 14 (Smashed fish for unigiri's stuffing)
After having another delicious meal at the couple's house, it was time for me to say goodbye to them as well as to send my thanks to them to take so good care of me. They sent me a Japanese towel as a gift, which has sakura printed on it. They sent me until the bus stop and waited for my bus to come before they headed back home, as a kind of Japanese tradition of sending a guest, they told me. Even though I was unwilling to say goodbye to them, this experience of homestay really left me a fresh and sweet memory.