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### My Grandmother's Kitchen

When I was in an elementary school, my family used to go back to my grandparents' house every summer vacation. My grandparents live in Okinawa, the tropical island that is located in the most southern area in Japan. At that time, it was difficult to get imported foods in Yokohama, my home town; however, because American armies had been stationed in Okinawa for over twenty years, American foods, like Spam, Milky Way, M&M's, and Coca-Cola were common everywhere in Okinawa. I liked to visit my grandparents because I could get on an airplane, and when I arrived at the airport, I could see the beautiful ocean and feel bright sunlight and a tropical atmosphere. These were things that I could not experience if I had spent my summer vacations in my home town. My grandmother's kitchen was as well; it was a pleasant place for me.

When we visited our grandparents' house, we always went into the backdoor that connected to the kitchen. First of all, through the backdoor, on the left side there was a big light green refrigerator. Next to the refrigerator, a clean stainless double bowl kitchen sink was set. The window behind the sink was always open, and a warm and humid breeze blew into the kitchen. Then there was a stove. In the afternoon, I could hear the rhythmic sound of chopping vegetables and the bubbling sound of the water of a pot. For a while, I could smell sautéed vegetables and a broth of dried bonito. Sometimes, a smell turned to a stewed chunk of pork, a simmered jam of ripe papayas, or deep fried doughnuts. A wooden solid cupboard was put next to the stove. Inside of the cupboard, there were many various dishes: rice bowls, tea cups, teapots, plates, glasses and bowls for miso soup. The sliding door of the cupboard was transparent glass, so I could see the

dishes even though the door was closed. A dining table was set in the center of the room, which was covered with a flower-printed smooth plastic tablecloth, and a rice cooker was put on the table. Every mealtime, the smell of boiled rice filled the air. An old-fashioned TV that was put on the right side of the backdoor was on all the time.

Being in the kitchen was an enjoyable time. I was excited whenever I opened and looked into the refrigerator because anytime there were a cooled dozen cans of Coca-Cola, several bags of Milky Way and Hershey's in it. Also, I loved pork luncheon meat, and above all Spam; in fact, just a smell of a toasted one made me happy. I liked to look at my grandmother cooking. To rinse vegetables such as bitter melons, bell peppers, and cucumbers, she filled one sink with full water and put them in it. Because of the full water, the vegetables were floating on the sink. For some reason, I liked the view, and even now I can still remember the sight clearly. Perhaps, the idea of filling water directly in the sink was brand-new for me. After dinner surrounding the table, my mother, aunt, and grandmother usually had a chat. They talked about relatives, neighbors, and local news with their dialect that was quite different from Japanese, so I felt as if I was a foreigner. On the other hand, I enjoyed hearing the sound of a dialect. Besides, I discovered another aspect of my mother when she talked with her mother.

My grandmother's kitchen was a treasure island for me. I could experience a variety of things in the kitchen: eating rare snacks, seeing an interesting way to use the sink, and hearing the unique language. Several years ago, my grandparents' house was completely remodeled, so now the previous kitchen has disappeared. Thus, the kitchen and the days which I spent in the kitchen were more precious to me.