

MLI Gazette

What's Cooking?

A LOVER OF COOKING

I love cooking! I think it is a wonderful way to express ourselves.

It doesn't need to be boring.

You can make it a joyful moment in your life and make it better. You might be surprised at what you are capable of.

It is like making a piece of art.

I didn't really learn how to cook from my mom because she didn't have enough patience and time to teach me, but when I was a kid, I was curious about cooking, so I spent some time watching her until I finally asked her to explain to me how to make a cake myself. She guided me. She gave me her recipe and this is how I made my first cake.

Growing up, I became more and more inspired and interested in making food, especially the new recipes from different countries. I became so passionate about cooking that I was able to do it for hours.

So, I created a WhatsApp group on my phone to share some recipes and make my own versions of them based on the inspiration I had at that moment.

I don't want to be a chef because I don't like the pressure that you have in a restaurant kitchen; however, I just love cooking. I love living my fullest passion and sharing it with people around me.

—Deborah

The Quiet Power of Dashi

In many countries, people build flavor with oil, butter, or strong seasonings. However, in Japan, the base of flavor is often something more simple. It is a soup stock called dashi. It seems like almost everything starts with it. Instead of making food heavier, dashi gently brings out the natural taste of each ingredient.

Dashi has been a part of Japanese cooking for a very long time.



PHOTO BY YOSUKE OTA ON UNSPLASH

It has a history of more than one thousand years. Records show that people were already using dried fish to make broth in the Nara period around the eighth century. Later, during the Edo period from 1603 to 1868, katsuobushi fish flakes became widely used. At that time, dashi became an essential part of everyday cooking. Even today, this simple method continues to shape Japanese food culture.

There are different kinds of dashi, and each one has its own personality. The most common one is made from kombu and katsuobushi. Kombu is a type of dried seaweed that is rich in natural umami and gives a mild and slightly sweet flavor. Katsuobushi is dried, fermented, and smoked fish, usually bonito, that is shaved into thin flakes.

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Photo by American Heritage Chocolate on Unsplash

DASHI (CONTINUED FROM
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It adds a deep and smoky taste to the broth. There are also other types. For example, niboshi dashi is made from small dried sardines and has a stronger and slightly bitter taste. Shiitake dashi is made from dried mushrooms and is often used in vegetarian dishes. Even though the ingredients are simple, small differences in preparation can change the flavor a lot.

Dashi is used in many everyday Japanese dishes. Miso soup depends on dashi for its flavor even though it looks simple. Udon and soba noodles are served in a warm broth made from dashi with soy sauce and mirin (a sweet rice wine used in Japanese cooking). Tamagoyaki also uses dashi to create a soft texture and a slightly sweet and savory taste. Simmered dishes such as nimono use dashi to allow the flavor to soak into vegetables and meat. These dishes are not heavy, but they still feel very satisfying.

Dashi is also connected to umami, which is known as the fifth basic taste. This idea was discovered in 1908 by Kikunae Ikeda. People all over the world can taste umami, but not everyone is used to noticing it. In some cuisines, richness comes from butter or cream. In Japan, it comes from something much lighter, but still deeply comforting.

For me, dashi is also very personal. My mom used to make miso soup from scratch using dashi, and it was always so good. Every now and then, I suddenly miss that taste. It reminds me of my childhood and the time I spent eating with my family. It is amazing how one flavor can bring back so many memories.

Even now, whenever I smell dashi, I feel a little sense of comfort, like I am back home for a moment.

-Shiori



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A CHANGE OF LIFE: A NEW BEGINNING IN AN IMMIGRANT'S LIFE

Sometimes, the most difficult decision in our lives is to make changes to transform our lives because it has an impact on different aspects, from our thoughts and habits to our life vision, but it is never too late to start.

Looking for a new beginning and combining this with a process of emigration to a country without knowing the culture and without knowing the language is not easy, but not impossible either if you know and you are clear about what you want for your life and how you see your future in 5 or 10 years.

Sometimes the people that emigrate from your countries have different situations and different statuses in the social, educational, legal, economic, financial and family areas, but everyone is looking for new opportunities, new lives, and dreams in their minds that they want to achieve in different aspects of life, not only for themselves but for their families as well.

Therefore, I want to share with you my perspective from my experience. My name is Danny Maca; I am an immigrant from Colombia. I arrived in the United States of America about four years ago. I didn't know any English, but I began to study English two weeks after I arrived in the U.S. in a public school. I studied there for three years. After that, I came to Mentor Language Institute. I have been studying English at MLI since August 2025. In my country, I studied for a bachelor's degree and master's degree and worked in a bank in Colombia for 15 years.



PHOTO BY [FLAVIA CARPIO](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)

In my experience, from the third week I started to create a life plan-to which I added all my dreams that I wanted to achieve in this country and then organized the steps that I should take-my principal inspiration was to validate the studies that I completed in Colombia. Without thinking, the first thing that I put in my suitcase from Colombia to the U.S. was my university books and notebooks that I used during my studies in Colombia; hence, I realized that my better option was to study for an MBA in a top university. As a result, I needed to start studying English and obtain a high level in order to find a job that would allow me to manage my time and that would generate enough money for my expenses and to help my family in Colombia and finally maintain good mental health.

In conclusion, new beginnings won't be easy, but they are not impossible. No matter your age, social condition, country or anything else taboo that you believe, you only need to change your life and then it is necessary to create a life plan and take actions with discipline, effort, and constancy-and you will always be clear about your steps for the future. Remember that education is the most important thing that helps humans to transform their lives and their environment.

-Danny

THE US MEDICAL SYSTEM IN MY EYES



Photo by [camilo jimenez](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I am a visitor from China. When I decided to visit the US, I prepared a lot of things. The most important are drugs, especially antibiotics. Because I learned that it's very difficult and expensive in the US to see a doctor.

In the US, you must have medical insurance, and then you will have a family doctor. If you don't feel well, you should contact your personal doctor. You can't go to the hospital yourself. If you need an operation, you need to make a consultation. And maybe you will wait for a really long time. Also, in the US, pharmaceutical drugs are separate from medical care. You need to buy drugs (prescribed by a doctor) outside of the hospital and the clinic.

In the US, if you have an emergency, you need to call an ambulance. You may spend \$1,000. That's ridiculous!

I came to the US for a long visit and will stay 2 months. I feel a little worried about complicated situations. If I need some medical therapy, I need to make a full preparation and learn about the medical rules and knowledge in the US.

You know that China's medical system is very different from the US's. I will list 3 points.

First, most hospitals in China are owned and governed by the government. If you don't feel well, you can choose any hospital you want. Maybe you can see the doctor the same day.

In China, if you need drugs, you can get them in the same hospital. If you only use the drugs on the national drug list, it is almost free. If you have an emergency and call an ambulance, you may only spend \$25.

But maybe in the US the doctors might be experts at innovation. And the hospital is quieter than a Chinese hospital. The doctors may have more time to evaluate your health situation. In China, a doctor may only speak to you for about 2 minutes and then move on to the next one. You may not feel very respected.

In conclusion, every coin has two sides. If the US and China can learn from each other about their medical systems, I think it will be perfect to make the effort and efficiency a good balance.

-Jane

EARTHQUAKES

IN JAPAN



AOMORI, JAPAN - PHOTO BY [RYUNOSUKE TOMIZAWA](#) ON [UNSPASH](#)

Recently, Japan has experienced strong earthquakes in Nagano and Aomori.

However, experts say that this isn't always true and we shouldn't panic, but we should be careful.

People should prepare water, food and other important things that they need.

This has made many people worried and some people think that bigger earthquakes may happen soon.

Earthquakes often happen in Japan, so this isn't so strange.

Schools and offices teach people what to do when earthquakes happen. For example, people learn to hide under a desk and protect their heads and also practice running away from a building safely.



HAKUBA, NAGANO, JAPAN
PHOTO BY [YOEL WINKLER](#) ON [UNSPASH](#)



MATSUMOTO, NAGANO, JAPAN
PHOTO BY [JET DELA CRUZ](#) ON [UNSPASH](#)

There are earthquakes that don't always lead to bigger ones, but it's important for many people to prepare for them and keep safe.

These things help people when an earthquake happens.

Our families should talk about what to do when an earthquake happens.

We should also decide how to contact each other and where we will meet.

—Jian

WHY DO WE DREAM?

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE BRAIN AND EMOTIONS

There are two types of sleep.

Rapid eye movement (REM) sleep and non-REM sleep. During REM sleep, our brain is active and we often dream at that time.

Dreaming is important to organize our emotions and things that happened during the day.

We have many things that happen during the day and these will be mixed in our dreams; that's why sometimes our dreams put us in a unique situation.

By dreaming we organize and pick up important things to remember.



PHOTO BY [SASHA FREEMIND ON UNSPLASH](#)

The dreams which put us in a bad situation, a scary place or something like that, help us to deal with stress and anxiety. Lack of REM sleep causes irritation and reduces concentration. REM sleep is to rest our body and non-REM sleep is for our heart.

Dreams are not meaningless. They are essential for a healthy mind.

-Rin

MESENCHYMAL STEM CELLS AND REGENERATIVE MEDICINE

The mesenchymal stem cells (MSCs) are a type of adult stem cell. A stem cell is a specific type of cell that can develop into different kinds of cells and can also make copies of itself. It is called self renewal. Stem cells and particularly the MSCs represent a promising breakthrough in Future medicine.

MSCs can be found in bone marrow, in fat tissue, umbilical cord and placenta. I worked on MSCs from bone marrow but more from umbilical cords. These cells can differentiate into different cells : bone cells (osteoblasts), cartilage cells (chondrocytes) or fat cells (adipocytes). MSCs also have some flexibility and can be guided in the lab to become specialized cells similar to liver or pancreatic cells. This ability is studied to help treat diseases like cirrhosis or type 1 diabetes, where the body cannot easily repair damaged tissue. In experiments, MSCs can perform some functions of these cells, such as producing liver proteins or insulin. MSCs can support the immune system.



PHOTO BY [EMILY SEVENOAKS ON UNSPLASH](#)

ANIMAL WORLD

Today we will dive deeper into animal behavior. I firstly want to talk about swans, which spend their whole lives looking for a perfect mate. And when they finally find their perfect mate, they stick together for the rest of their lives, and when their mate dies they don't try to find another mate. Because of their grief the swans stop eating they inevitably end up dying from sadness.

STEM CELLS (continued)

The particularity of these cells from umbilical cords is that they have specific surface markers. They express CD73, CD90 and CD105 and they don't express CD34 Or HLA-DR. In fact, this lack of markers makes the MSCs less visible to the immune system; this gives them low immunogenicity and a lower risk of rejection after transplantation. They are more immature than MSCs from other sources like bone marrow and can grow faster. Their weak expression of immune markers is an advantage because it can be used more easily in donor-to-patient transplants, even without perfect matching, But the risk of rejection is not zero and it depends on the clinical situation.

Immunofluorescence of Mesenchymal Stem Cells (DAPI (blue for nucleus), ALEXA FLUOR 488 (green for markers) and ALEXA FLUOR 568 (red for cytoskeleton actin))

Stem cells are used in aesthetic medicine, especially mesenchymal stem cells. They help improve skin quality and support tissue repair.

They do not directly rebuild the skin. Instead, they release growth factors that stimulate skin cells and also reduce inflammation.

FACT: Some research has shown that during pregnancy, some fetal cells can pass into the mother's blood and move into her tissues. These cells can sometimes look similar to MSCs. Studies have found these cells in different maternal organs, like the heart or liver. Some research suggests they may move to injured areas and help with tissue repair.

–Mayssa

ANIMAL WORLD (continued)

Another animal that is also very interesting is the anaconda, a giant snake that lives in the Amazon in Brazil. This snake uses its size to constrict its prey's bones and then the snake swallows the animal. You would be mistaken if you think this animal only eats small animals; actually, this snake can eat anything, even if the prey is bigger than the snake.



PHOTO BY BOFU SHAW ON UNSPLASH

In the Amazon you can also find a small fish that is almost invisible in the water. If you decide to urinate in the river, the fish will swim up through the urine and go inside of you, drinking your blood. It's also known as the vampire fish. The only way to remove the vampire fish is with surgery, so I would be careful if I were you!

Now moving to Australia, you can find the dingo, a dog that lives in the desert. He is extremely aggressive to humans. Many animal centers have tried to domesticate this animal but they always end up attacking the person responsible for taking care of them. This shows how nature can be beautiful and dangerous, and how animals are smart and capable of showing empathy towards other animals. They are definitely smarter than we initially thought. Maybe now we can be more conscious before killing or taking the animals away from their families. With that, we can even understand more about these animals' behavior. I really love learning about animals. I have learned a lot through my research and I definitely see everything with fresh eyes.

–Nicole

A FEW WORDS ABOUT SURFING

Surfing is more than just a sport – it is a lifestyle shaped by the ocean. People who choose surfing are often drawn to nature, freedom and a sense of flow. Surfing, unlike many other sports, depends on constantly changing conditions, which makes every session unique.

The philosophy of surfing is harmony. Surfers do not control waves but “read” them, observe and adapt. This creates a very unique mix of adrenaline, balance and patience. Why patience? Surfers spend most of the time sitting on their surfboards, watching the waves and waiting for the set (waves come as a set of 6–8 waves) and for the right wave. Some people would say it is boring, but surfers enjoy this part of the process, as it is a kind of meditation or therapy.

Compared to other types of sports, surfing is not structured. There are no fixed fields, predictable results or particular timing. And the progress is not linear.

Beginners start learning on beach breaks with a sandy bottom. When they are able to stand on a surf board and turn, they move to reef breaks, which create constant, powerful and well-formed waves. Equipment also evolves with experience. An interesting fact is that before you can truly experience surfing, you have to go through a kind of “survival school.” In the beginning you fight with white water, struggle to control a heavy board, and try to catch imperfect but safe waves. It can be frustrating and it is easy to give up. But then you catch your first, second and third wave and become so excited.



PHOTO BY [KNUT ROBINSON](#) ON [UNSPLASH](#)

What helps you to go through this stage is a very supportive and unique surf culture. It includes its own style, language, and unwritten rules in the water. Beyond the ocean, surf culture influences music, fashion, and travel. Surfing values are simplicity, connection with nature, and living in the moment. In the end, it is not only about riding waves, but also about learning to accept uncertainty and enjoying the process.

California, as a capital or heart of surfing, is the best place to try it and maybe fall in love with it.

–Evgeniya

*The MLI Gazette is written monthly by our Advanced and High-Intermediate ESL students.
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