



## Sweetie Pie

Do you remember I wrote about my local bakery in one of the earlier stories? Let's drop in on them again this afternoon!

I usually arrive at the bakery just before their lunchtime rush, so it is very common for me to see the shop assistants coming out of the back room carrying trays of freshly-baked goods to place in the showcases. I always eagerly peek to see what is on each tray, always hoping for some kind of interesting treat to appear!

I like to buy things that are 'fresh from the oven' whenever I can, because I'm only about a one minute bike ride from the bakery, so they will still be piping hot when I sit down to eat. Eating a lunch of such fresh items is one of life's small pleasures ... no, not so small!

This time I spied a kind of bun that I didn't recognize, and eagerly asked the girl what it was. "It's *genmai anpan*!" she cheerfully told me, but she must have seen my face fall, because she then asked what was wrong.

The problem for me - of course - was the mixing of bread and sweet bean paste. I tried to think of a way to express to her just how I felt about this kind of baked creation, and decided to use an analogy. "Just imagine - you're at home for dinner tonight, and you hear the beep beep from your rice cooker that tells you the rice is ready. As you open the pot a cloud of steam arises, enveloping you in the scent of fresh and tasty rice. But then, when you scoop some out into your bowl, what do you find hidden under the surface? Blobs of sweet bean paste ... How would you react?"

She laughed at my words ... but then agreed with my point; the tasty rice needs to be served by itself. Of course it may then be eaten in combination with other foods, but well-cooked, good quality rice needs no such accompaniment. If she wanted to shock one of her foreign friends one day, she couldn't find a better way than to serve them one of these 'anpan' creations she was showing me.

In general, this bakery uses far too much sugar, as do most bakeries in Japan. Now of course, western bakeries use sugar too; just think of all the famous sweets and cakes that are part of European culture. But a 'patisserie' and a 'boulangerie' are two different concepts, and while the products of one may be drenched in sugar, the products of the other use it very sparingly, if at all.

Flour, water, and a touch of salt. That's all that I want to detect in my bread! I know the baker has to use yeast, and he may even include a tiny touch of sugar to provide 'food' for that yeast to grow, but that's none of my business. When I crack open a bun fresh from the oven, all I want to see is a cloud of steam rising!

Mind you, the very next thing I may do - before I take a bite - is go to the cupboard, take out a pot of raspberry jam, and slather a spoonfull over the bread. What a perfect combination!

Try that with your steaming bowl of rice!

**David Bull**  
**Seseragi Studio**  
**Nagabuchi 8-4-5 Ome City**  
**Tokyo Japan 198-0052**  
**<http://astoryaweek.com>**