

E-e-o-w! Raw fish and seaweed! Gross!

That was my general feeling about sushi 10 years ago. It wasn't until a good friend practically shoved a piece of raw tuna in my mouth (assuring me it had come from the finest fish monger in the city) that I had a total change of heart. One of the most emotionally satisfying meals I have eaten in the last year has come from the finest Japanese Restaurants in Columbus. I can't hardly wait to go back!

So what does that have to do with book reviews? This review is not so much about a book, but about an area of sewing books most seamstress and quilters say "E-e-o-w! I can't read this! Get this away from me!" Yes, upon the first rapid flip through, most would put the book down as though it were filled with live eels. Give these publications a longer glance!

There are numerous Japanese sewing books begin imported into the United States. Most of the topics range from purses, small bags, sashiko, quilts, creative sewing and other small projects. There are also two Japanese quilting magazines available.

Twelve books are sitting in my lap as I write this! Every book is filled with some of the most wonderful project I have seen in a long time. The shape and style of the purses is sophisticated and unique. I have rarely seen the same styles in American patterns. The small projects and quilts range from "Oh my Gawd! That is absolutely adorable!" to breathtaking classic twist.

In "Small Quilt", the 3-D Dog shaped pin cushion and cat face tape measure holder are made in natural colored plaids. The three sided pencil case and small basket with puffed channeled side wall and wooded handle would make most people question if "You REALLY make that?".

One of the things you will notice after look through several books, is the popularity of neutral color schemes, plaids and the unusual pairings of fabric color and texture. It has that feed sack/crazy quilt look...but unlike the American style, it looks oddly fresh and contemporary.

The biggest hold back to these publications is that *most* are NOT translated into English. That should not hold you back, since each book, while containing full directions, also includes excellent illustrations or step by step photography. Since all measurements are in metric, simply flip over your measuring tape and use the non-inch side! Even a novice can use many of these books. I would not recommend these publication to individuals who require extremely detailed written instructions or have difficulty with interpreting illustrations. It is best suited for those who welcome new ideas and are willing in some cases to "winging it". If you are more interested in garment construction, there is only a small amount of information on this topic.

The biggest disappointment would be the fact that the Japanese character are largely unreadable to most Americans and some of the articles beg to be read. I would just love to know what the captions under the pictures say and even what the content of the article is about!

I think a will grab a copy of Quilts Japanese and head over to Akai Hana. Many after an order of Caterpillar Roll with eel and some Miso soup, I can get the waitress to tell me what is says on page 35, under the picture of the stuffed monkey reading a book.

Final Note: Beth's Creative Stitchery has an large collection of Japanese type books in stock. Prices range from \$21 to \$40. Staff member Ming Jang would be happy to aid you in any needed translations.