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Compare and contrast Amatsu with the Great British Bake Off...

by Jane Langston

Let's face it. I am no baker. My scones are like brick, my Victoria sponges are biscuits and my biscuits could be used as roof tiles. However, I do make a mean roast dinner and an awesome peach and raspberry crumble, so I will not go hungry. Like half of Britain, I like to watch the Great British Bake Off, and watch in awe of these amateur bakers who can whip up intricate creations made of cake and chocolate. Surely it is sculpture, not cookery! However, last night I was struck by the similarities and differences between Mary Berry's television show and Amatsu, this amazingly powerful therapy that I both practice and teach. I sat and pondered whether to set my students the essay title "Compare and Contrast Amatsu with the Great British Bake Off". My students will no doubt be relieved that I decided to answer this question myself.

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The bakers in Great British Bake Off seem to be surrounded with a plethora of technical equipment, the majority of which seems to get used in every episode just to make one cake. They have whisks, liquidisers, and food processors of varying types, cutters, knives, chopping boards, scales, and every shape and size of baking tin you can imagine. Then they have their ingredients; a selection of different flours, butter, cream, and who knew there were so many different types of sugar? The seemingly simple task of baking a cake is clearly not as simple as it seems. The bakers may have to create the same type of cake, a Black Forest Gateaux for example, but from similar ingredients, and an oven, twelve different cakes appeared in vastly differing designs, styles and components, and actually with vastly differing degrees of success.

In Amatsu Therapy, we have practitioners from vastly different backgrounds, with skills ranging from biomedical science to psychology, paramedics and cleaners, personal trainers and primary school teachers. Like the Bake Off contestants, they have to learn how they can apply their existing skills. In Bake Off, they need raw ingredients. In Amatsu Therapy, those raw ingredients are the knowledge of anatomy and physiology. The Amatsu Training School now asks that all students take a basic course in Anatomy and Physiology before commencing Amatsu training, and for previously qualified practitioners, continual professional development is encouraged and supported, giving opportunities to revisit their training to enhance their anatomical knowledge. Students are taught the key structures which make up the human body, and learn the functions for each part. Just as the Bake Off contestants fundamentally understand the difference between self-raising and plain flour, Amatsu students learn the attachments of each muscle, and understand its actions. By practising and revising this information, clearer diagnosis of dysfunctions and problems can occur, giving clarity to the assessment and treatment.

The equipment needed by our amateur bakers is, as I mentioned earlier, vast. It is such a huge selection as it gives them the

chance to use the right tool for the right task. Our Amatsu practitioners have been taught a huge amount of assessment techniques; observation, range, textural changes, orthopaedic tests, muscle tests and of course, the most important, listening to the client's history. As the Amatsu practitioner goes through their training, they learn different techniques, varying in degrees of difficulty, a bit like a new baker may use a balloon whisk to make a cake, but a professional pâtissier uses a hugely technical, and probably expensive, electric food mixer. Early baking equipment makes great cakes, but there are many ways to whisk a batter! Amatsu practitioners may have their favourite techniques, and equally may have assessment tools that they positively avoid, just as a baker may absolutely hate using the balloon whisk, so chooses a different kitchen tool for the same task.

The cakes produced in Great British Bake Off are sublime. Works of art in sugar and flour. They are constructed by artistic people who use every corner of their imagination to grab the attention and taste buds of Paul Hollywood and Mary Berry. Our Amatsu practitioners are not dissimilar to this, although our judges are more discerning – the general public! Just as the bakers follow a recipe to create their cake, the recipe we use to create our Amatsu treatment protocol is dependent on training, expertise and favourite techniques. We, like the bakers, follow prescribed protocols, which if incorrectly performed, do not get the desired results. Creative flair is used by both bakers and Amatsu practitioners, yet we do have to follow the rules which are there for very good reason. Attempting to make a chocolate mousse cake at the wrong temperature will not make for a

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successful cake! Amatsu practitioners have prioritisation techniques at their disposal to help to work out the most appropriate treatment for that particular client. And each client is different. They have a different set of symptoms, that have different causes, and their bodies are literally different shapes. One size does not fit all in Amatsu. Prioritisation techniques such as circuit locking, anchoring, prone leg length tests, polarity, and therapy localization can all be used to style the treatment to be the most effective it can possibly be, with minimum treatment intervention – the Amatsu equivalent of not over-whipping the cream!

Final touches on the cakes give individuality and make each cake unique, irrespective of the fact that the basic cake followed the same recipe. The decorations and final finish are chosen by individuals to suit individuals so plenty of opportunity for diversity. The final finish also reflects the expertise



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However, watching Great British Bake Off, it is clear that if bakers are given the same training, the same ingredients, the same recipe and the same equipment, somehow the results come out differently – my Victoria sponges bear testimony to this. Is baking somehow “in the blood” or instinctive? Or is it that some bakers simply bake more often than others, and are prepared to learn

from their mistakes? I will never manage a perfect Victoria sponge if I refuse to practice! So case studies and reflective practice are a vital part of the Amatsu practitioners’ training, and the reflective practice should continue into professional practice. Meeting or chatting with fellow practitioners and discussing problems in technique is essential. We learn from each other.

And as for those bakers (and think of our grandmothers here) who can whip up a sponge mix in no minutes flat with minimum effort... It’s all in the movement. Getting the right arm and wrist action is imperative to a good sponge. It is effectively whole body action which makes for a good sponge mix. Amatsu works by the practitioners using their own natural body movement, or to give it its correct title, taijutsu, to match the clients’ twists, turns and injury patterns. By holding key areas of the body, called Kyushu, the practitioner is able to apply their taijutsu, recreating the pulls in the soft tissue of the body, and offering it the opportunity of fully correcting. If the body could correct

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itself without the helping hand, it would have done so already, so the practitioner simply is the enabler, a helping hand, a Good Samaritan, and facilitator. The Amatsu practitioner doesn’t judge or force, but coerces and coaxes the body back to its functional shape. Amatsu practitioners give the body its space to be itself, and of course, since we humans are creatures of habit, and we are bodies that change according to our mind and our environment, we need to receive Amatsu treatments regularly to give the body a chance to develop the habit of healthy posture.

The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Are you ready to try Amatsu therapy? As a client? Or as a student?



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