Announcing the meals

Overview

Exactly <u>five minutes</u> before the meal starts, one of the tenzo's announces the meal by ringing the big bell in the hallway leading to the zendo, immediately followed by ringing the *umpan*, the small gong from the kitchen. The tenzo keeps on ringing the umpan until the Roshi gives the sign to stop.



The umpan

Note that the times for breakfast, dinner and lunch differ form season to season, so look carefully at the sesshin schedule for the right time.

Ringing the big bell

Exactly five minutes before the meal starts, one of the tenzo's announces the meal by ringing the big bell in the hallway. The pattern for ringing is 'big-big-big-small-big':



Right after the last stroke, you can hear the *jisha* (zendo-leader) ringing the *inkin*, announcing the end of the zazen period.

The right rhythm

Take about 3 or 4 seconds in between each of the strokes. Don't worry if the fourth 'small' strike is too loud or too soft. It's quite difficult to hit it the right way.

Ringing the Umpan

Immediately after ringing the big bell, the tenzo starts ringing the *umpan*, the small gong from the kitchen. This means you have to carry the umpan with you to the hallway. (Alternatively, you can also ask one of the other tenzo's to ring the umpan for you. It doesn't really matter who rings it, as long it is done in the right way!)

The pattern for ringing the umpan is as follows:

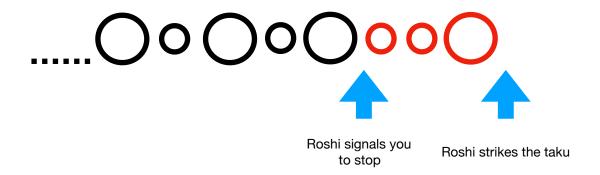


So it **starts** with <u>big-small-small</u> (in red), and the **continues** with <u>big-small-big-small-big-etc</u>. all the while the sangha is entering the dining hall and until the moment the Roshi signals you to stop.

As soon as everybody is standing at his of her place at the table, the tenzo's and the table servers also take their places. The person with the umpan is the only one that **remains standing and continues ringing it**.

Next, the jisha rings the inkin. This is the sign for everybody to sit down (and also to put the ladles and spoons into the pans.) **At this moment the person doing the umpan keeps on ringing it**, still standing in front of the tables and looking at the Roshi.

When everybody is seated, the Roshi gives a signal to the person with the umpan by crossing the *taku* ('claves' – his wooden rhythm sticks) in front of him. This is the sign for person with the umpan to stop. This is done with the pattern 'small–small–big' (below in red):



Right after the last strike, the Roshi hits the taku and starts the Heart Sutra. The person with the umpan puts it away and takes his seat. Finally the meal can start!

Two common mistakes

There are two common mistakes which should be avoided:

- WRONG: The umpan already stops when the jisha rings the inkin. This is too early. The umpan should stop only when the Roshi gives you his signal.
- WRONG: To stop, the umpan waits for the Roshi to hit the taku. This is the wrong way around. The Roshi waits for you to do the closing pattern (small-small-big, the red pattern) and then strikes the taku.

The right rhythm

The art of striking the umpan is to do it <u>evenly</u> and <u>not too hastily</u>. Take about 2 seconds in between each of the strokes, counting 'twenty-one...twenty-two'.

Count the time between the strokes, not the silences. Many people are inclined to count the duration of silences between the strokes, but that is not the right way. This makes the rhythm very uneven, because the silence after a 'small' stroke is much shorter than the silence after a 'big' stroke.