In the spring of 1979, a group of macrobiotic supporters approached Michio and Aveline Kushi with the idea of forming a new company to produce miso in the United States using traditional methods and only the finest organic ingredients. The Kushis entrusted Aiyazhu Kazama, founder of Mitsuo Trading Company, a major supplier of Japanese natural food, to find someone to train our miso to be made in the rapidly fading art of traditional miso manufacture. In a skillful spirit of international cooperation, Mr. Kazama searched for someone who still made miso the old-fashioned way, yet was open-minded enough to invite strangers into his home. After many false starts, Mr. Kazama finally located, in the mountains north of Tokyo, Mr. Takamichi Onozaki, one of the remaining handful of country miso makers of the old school.

Mr. Onozaki generously opened his home to gaigen (foreign) seekers after knowledge from half a world away and agreed to house and train an American couple, John and Jan Bellence, for an entire year. When Mr. Kazama finally visited and held both an hour and a half-miso making session, his students all agreed that he had accumulated from a lifetime of miso making in his small rural miso factory.

Upon the Bellences’ return to America, we rapidly constructed our factory building near Rutherfordton, NC, about fifty miles east of Asheville, and arranged to ship our new equipment from Japan. By late 1980 we had begun to make our first experimental batches of rice miso. Although our miso was sold only in bulk for its first two seasons, our familiar one-pound and eight-ounce tubs with the Miso Master logo soon arrived on the scene and sales slowly but steadily grew. Starting with eight barrels, we steadily added more vats until we now have a total of 47 barrels, holding upwards of four tons of two-year miso. All of our vats have been crafted out of recycled wood by the Arrow Tank Company of Rocke-

ter, NY, the only remaining traditional hand-crafted barrel maker in the US, in order to house our expanding fantastic activities, we built a second factory building as big as the first in 1993.

In the fall of 1981, Mr. Onozaki came to Rutherfordton for an inspection trip to see exactly how well his students had learned their lessons. He had never left Japan before in his life. He stayed and worked in the factory alongside our own crew for weeks, patiently reviewing our practices and refining our procedures until he pronounced himself fully satisfied.

Over the next few years, the Bellences developed, in succession, Brown Rice (Genma) Miso, Mellow White (Shiro) Miso, and Mellow Barley (Orih) Miso, all of which had never before been produced outside of Japan. Next they produced two completely original kinds of miso never before produced anywhere, Chickpea (Soy-Free) Miso, and Sweet White (Shiro) Miso, to round out AMC’s product offerings.

There was no organic certification of processing in 1979, nor many years thereafter; but AMC used only Certified Organic Rice, Organic Barley, Organic Soybeans, and Organic Chick Peas from the very first day of operation and became certified as an organic proces-

or as soon as this procedure became available in the late 1980’s.

From them until today, Quality Assurance Internation, an independent third-party certification organization, certifies all AMC manufacturing, processing and warehouse facilities as organic.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture has put in place a set of national standards that food labeled “organic” must meet. The USDA Organic seal tells you that a product is composed of at least 95 percent organic ingredients, and you can be sure that it was produced using the highest organic production and handling standards in the world. This seal is displayed on all AMC organic products.

From the beginning, the American Miso Company has produced only organic miso and we have never wavered from that commitment in the inter-

vening years.

As a result of the high quality of our miso, we were chosen as the exclusive source of miso for introduction of this superfood into the American market.

Scientific research is now supporting what ancient traditions have endorsed regarding the benefits of miso. As miso moves from the exotic to mainstream, we explore delicious new ways to intro-

duce miso into the American diet.