



## The Key Ingredient

By Jerry Figgiani

**T**here are many different facets that one needs to become good at the martial arts. I am not just talking about the physical attributes. Like ingredients of a cake blended together, respect, confidence, perseverance, self-control, humility and spirit is what it takes to be a complete martial artist. The way a baker cannot bake a cake with just flour, the martial artist needs those ingredients to have longevity in their training. Don't get me wrong, it is so important for one to try to achieve their best physical condition, but marital arts is made up mind, body and spirit.

There are three quotes that have helped me make a difference in my approach to teaching martial arts. Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu founder, Shoshin Nagamine stated "Spirit first, technique second." This is a clear understanding that putting spirit into how you approach the martial arts will help you polish your technique. Kensei Taba Sensei always said "Make karate your own." This is so true. Just like no two people can have the same signature, the same could be said that no two karate masters can look the same. It is important for people to feel comfortable with the techniques they are learning. The last, Takeshi Tamaki Sensei said "The important thing is to just keep training." When I asked Tamaki Sensei why he is only a 9th Dan when most of juniors are 10th Dan, he just laughed and said "I just keep training."

These short statements by these highly respected masters give hope to everyone involved in the martial arts, regardless of their strengths or weaknesses. It gives hope to the women who have been physically abused by their husband or boyfriend. It gives hope to the students who are afraid to walk the halls in their schools. It gives hope to a young man in a wheel chair to get back on his feet, after doctors said he would never walk again. If these benefits of the martial arts are so important, why are so many martial artists critical of others? Kara-

te is different for many people. It may mean something totally different to the person reading this article than it is to me.

Recently, I viewed a Facebook post regarding a young woman doing a kata in a tournament. Every move was pure performance. It was all about the show. She kiai'd on every movement she made. There was no real fighting application in her technique. Would I perform a kata like this or teach it that way? No. This is the sporting aspect of the martial arts. What I did see, was how many people criticized her and ripped her apart because of this performance. Is it her fault or was it because she was taught that way?

The western world puts a whole different spin on what karate is. From the way the kata is performed to different colored gi's that are worn. What may feel right for one person may not be that way for another. Personally, for me, I find Matsubayashi Shorin Ryu is the one style that fits me best and that is what is important. Too many martial artists forget one key ingredient that most preach in the dojo. Karate begins and ends with respect. 🐉



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