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Journey Through Kyoto's Culinary Landscape



Kyoto Prefecture 101



Sourced from the edges

Kyoto has flourished as a city since its founding in the late eighth century. As the imperial capital, it nurtured a refined aristocratic culture centered on the court—one in which cuisine held a place of particular importance. Crafted by master chefs using the finest ingredients, Kyoto's food is often regarded as the pinnacle of Japanese cuisine. But where do those ingredients come from? The answer lies beyond the city, in its periphery.

Fresh seafood from the ocean, mountain vegetables and game from the forests, and fish from the rivers. Rice and vegetables from the fields, and matcha from the tea gardens. Almost all these ingredients were caught, grown or cultivated in the far-away peripheral areas of Kyoto Prefecture and transported to the capital. Each region contributed not only its delicious produce, but also its own approaches to preparation and cooking. Over time, these traditions blended with fermentation and other preservation techniques developed to keep food from spoiling in transit. These gradually evolved into the sophisticated culinary art that defines Kyoto's food culture today. In other words, the city's riches have always been sustained by the gifts of nature.

A renewed appreciation for nature and its bounty in recent years has helped fuel a growing interest in gastronomic tourism. (It's also worth noting that the Japanese word *fūdo*, meaning "climate" or "natural environment," is pronounced much like the English word "food.") In Japan, cuisine is deeply rooted in the land that sustains it. One of the great pleasures of travel is experiencing food and drink in their place of origin. Venture beyond the city into the far reaches of this remarkable prefecture, and immerse yourself in Kyoto's *fūdo*.



pp.8-9
Asobi Beer
(craft beer)

Amanohashidate and Yosano Area

The northern reaches of the prefecture, overlooking the Sea of Japan, are known as "Kyoto by the Sea." Fishing ports dotting the coastline supply Kyoto with an abundance of fresh, flavorful seafood, while pristine beaches attract visitors for oceanic pursuits such as swimming and surfing. The area is also home to the Amanohashidate sandbar—one of Japan's Three Scenic Views—as well as the "floating" boathouses of Ine Town. Renowned for Tango *chirimen* silk and dotted with wineries and breweries, the region offers a rich blend of industry, culture, and coastal charm.



Miyama Area

Miyama's iconic thatched-roof village makes it a favorite destination with tourists from both Japan and abroad. The town has also become an appealing destination for those seeking a quieter, more nature-centered lifestyle including city dwellers looking to make a fresh start. With growing interest in game meat and organic food, the area has attracted visitors eager to experience hunting, farming, and rural life firsthand. This shift has brought a wave of new energy, with an increasing number of restaurants serving locally sourced game dishes, along with accommodations offering immersive country-life experiences.

pp.4-5
Tautasya
(game meat)



Kyoto City



pp.24-25
Daiyasu
(tsukemono)



Uji Area

The historic city of Uji flourished as a key waypoint between the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara. It is best known as the setting for the final chapters of *The Tale of Genji*—often regarded as the world's oldest novel—and offers plenty of opportunities to explore notable sites such as Byōdōin, Uji Shrine, Ujigami Shrine, and Kōshōji Temple. Uji is also world-renowned for its matcha and premium green tea, drawing visitors from around the globe in search of Japan's iconic brew. In recent years, a growing number of bakeries, soba shops, and even Italian and Vietnamese eateries have opened, giving the city a fresh, youthful energy—and making it an ideal place to snack your way from one stop to the next.

Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove Area

While Arashiyama may be Kyoto's most famous bamboo spot, its true heart lies in the Otokuni Bamboo Grove area. Renowned since ancient times for its high-quality bamboo, the region is especially prized in spring for its tender, flavorful bamboo shoots. Beyond its bamboo heritage, Otokuni also boasts a rich agricultural tradition, producing many of Kyoto's heirloom vegetables, along with several breweries and distilleries. The world-famous Yamazaki whisky takes its name from this very area, further highlighting the region's deep ties to craft and terroir.



pp.20-21
Uosu
(bamboo sushi)



pp.12-13
Incense Kitchen
(matcha incense)

Minamiyamashiro Village Area

The only municipality in Kyoto Prefecture officially designated as a village, Minamiyamashiro is perched in the mountains at the prefecture's southeastern edge, where Kyoto meets Shiga Prefecture, Nara Prefecture, and Mie Prefecture. While nearby Ujitawara and Wazuka are better known for Uji tea, Minamiyamashiro is in fact the prefecture's second-largest producer. The village is also famous for its flavorful log-grown shiitake mushrooms. Drawn by the slower, nature-rich lifestyle, a younger generation has begun settling here, bringing fresh energy in the form of new cafés and eateries.

pp.16-17
Roadside Station Ocha-no-Kyoto Minamiyamashiro-mura
(matcha sweets & regional specialties)

Miyama Area



Hear the Earth's song

A small community practicing self-sufficiency in rural Miyama

Tautasya

Tautasya

Address: 京都府南丹市美山町田歌上五波 1-1

For workshop bookings and inquiries, please visit Tautasya's official website. (in Japanese)

tautasya.jp

instagram @tautasya_miyama facebook @tautasya.miyama



Getting back to nature and laying the groundwork for Tautasya

Deep in the forests beyond the picturesque thatched-roof village of Miyama lies Tautasya, a small, self-sufficient community that feels a world apart from the usual tourist trail. Here, visitors are invited to slow down, reconnect with nature, and learn from people who are deeply committed to sharing a more grounded and fulfilling way of life.

Set across three hectares, the farm takes its name from the poetically-named Tauta district—"rice fields that sing"—with "sya" meaning a home or dwelling. Life here flows in close harmony with the land. Meat is sourced through hunting, while vegetables, rice, and wheat are grown in the surrounding fields. Fresh water comes from mountain springs, milk for homemade cheese from the farm's goats, and eggs from its chickens and ducks. Those same ducks wander the rice paddies, eating pests and weeds in the time-honored, pesticide-free practice of rice-duck farming.

Everything on the farm is thoughtfully interconnected. The buildings are crafted from timber sourced from the surrounding forests, which also provide firewood. Even wood scraps and animal

remains are returned to the earth as compost, ensuring that nothing goes to waste.

This peaceful corner of rural Japan is the creation of Tautasya's founder, Homaru Fujiwara, who left behind city life—and dreams of becoming a professional musician—for something quieter and more rooted. He made the move in 1995 at the age of 22, during a time of deep uncertainty in Japan. In the wake of the burst economic bubble, and following events like the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake and the Tokyo Subway sarin attack, many people found themselves questioning long-held assumptions about modern lifestyles and where true fulfillment might lie.

After graduating from university, Fujiwara was drawn to Miyama by a growing sense of unease with urban consumption. Looking back, he feels that pull may also have been shaped by more personal currents—personal childhood allergies, Japan's gradual loss of traditional rural landscapes, and a quiet resistance to the direction of modern society. What he longed for was simple: to build a home from felled timber, grow his own rice and vegetables, and catch fish with his own hands. That, he felt, would be enough.

A community takes shape, and Tautasya is born

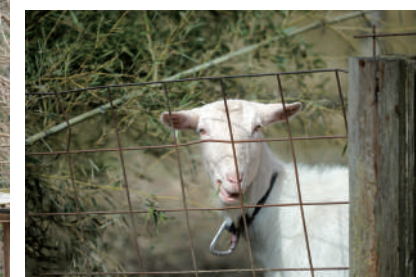
Fujiwara threw himself into learning the skills needed for life in the countryside. He took a job at a poultry farm and sought out local mentors, gradually picking up the knowledge of animal husbandry, rice cultivation, and traditional building techniques. On weekends, he worked as a rafting guide in Tokushima Prefecture, balancing hard work with a deepening connection to the natural world.

By this time, he had married his wife, Yū, whom he met in Miyama. Bringing together her love of cooking and herbs with the ingredients Fujiwara grew and gathered, the couple opened an intimate, single-table restaurant. There, they served just two parties a day, offering meals built around

homegrown vegetables and wild game he hunted himself.

Along the way, as they learned how to live in the forest, the couple reached a point where they could sustain themselves almost entirely from the land. In 2004, when Fujiwara was 32, they officially turned their modest venture into a business. Word began to spread, drawing media attention and, before long, young people from across Japan who were inspired by their way of life.

Today, the community has grown to include six full-time staff, along with trainees and part-time helpers. Fujiwara says he has come close to realizing his vision of self-sufficiency. Tautasya now feels less like a single farm and more like a small, self-contained village—almost a world of its own.



Get in tune with the land: subsistence experiences at Tautasya

The Fujiwaras and their team welcome visitors with a range of hands-on experiences and seasonal outdoor activities, from wild game preparation to kayaking in the warmer months and skiing in winter. There's also a small restaurant where you can enjoy the fruits of their labor, along with simple lodgings on the farm, allowing guests to settle in and experience the rhythms of mountain life more fully. Programs can be mixed and matched, making it an easy and deeply rewarding side trip from Kyoto City.

Deer hunting experience

Tautasya offers the truly rare opportunity to join a *makigari* hunting trip in the mountains with the farm's licensed hunters and their dogs. A traditional Japanese practice of encircling deer to drive them towards hunters lying in wait, *makigari* is less physically demanding than methods that involve tracking game over long distances and steep terrain. Although guests are limited to observing the proceedings due to gun restrictions, the hunt itself is nonetheless genuine—not one staged for tourists—and a profoundly raw and intense experience.

•Availability: Offered during hunting season (November 15 to March 15)



Deer and chicken butchering experiences

At Tautasya, you can learn how to skin, break down and butcher a deer or chicken for their meat. Inspired by the old hunters' saying, "To discard meat is to take life in vain; to eat it is to honor it," the programs aim to foster a sense of gratitude for the lives that sustain us through the experience of breaking down an animal carcass. With recent growing public interest in fostering an appreciation for the value of life, these experiences have become a popular choice for family groups.

•Deer butchering experiences are only available during hunting season (November 15 to March 15), but chicken butchering experiences are available year-round.



Activities

Experience Miyama's natural surroundings with a wide range of seasonal activities. Try kayaking and canyoning during the spring and summer months, rafting in summer, or cross-country skiing and snowshoe trekking in winter. Activities are led by experienced guides with extensive knowledge of the local mountains and rivers.



Restaurant

•Venison ring sausage plate includes salad and bread 2,200 yen (tax included)

A generous portion of additive-free sausage made with thick casing. Venison is earthy yet mild in flavor and surprisingly light on the stomach.

•Venison kebab plate includes salad and bread 2,200 yen (tax included)

Shish kebab-style venison, lavishly spiced and served with house-made pickles makes for a well-balanced, accessible game meat meal.

House-made bread

This rustic bread is made with black rice flour from rice grown in Tautasya's own fields and fermented with rice *koji*. Served with goat's cheese from animals raised on the property.

Game Meat BBQ

Enjoy a selection of BBQ meats: chicken, duck, venison, wild boar, and even bear and monkey, along with seasonal vegetables from the fields.

•Menu Availability: Offered during hunting season (April to November). Game hotpot also offered during winter (October to April).



For details and bookings, please visit Tautasya's website or email info@tautasya.jp.

At Tautasya, you're reminded of a philosopher's observation: that civilization leans on money and machines to ease discomfort, while culture is found in meeting it with one's own hands. The way of life the Fujiwaras have shaped—rooted in honest self-sufficiency long before words like "sustainable" or "SDGs" became fashionable—feels deeply genuine. It speaks to a quieter, more grounded way of living that has largely faded from modern life. A visit to Tautasya offers a chance to slow down, reconnect, and rediscover something essential about what it means to be human.



MAP



Miyama Area

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ed visitors eager to experience hunting, farming, and rural life firsthand. This shift has brought a wave of new energy, with an increasing number of restaurants serving locally sourced game dishes, along with accommodations offering immersive country-life experiences.

1 A window into days of old Kayabuki no Sato

Step into a traditional Japanese way of life in this hamlet of thatched-roof houses, many of which have stood for around 200 years. Designated by the Japanese government as an Important Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings, the village's distinctive charm draws visitors from across Japan and beyond. As you wander among its restaurants, gift shops, and museum, please be mindful that this is also a living community where residents go about their daily lives

- Address : 京都府南丹市美山町北
 - Instagram : @kayabukinosato
- kayabukinosato.jp



2 Experience the Japan of old in a country town stay Nipponia Miyama Tsurugaoka Mountain Village

This "scattered" hotel in Miyama—best known for Kayabuki no Sato—comprises a collection of beautifully restored, traditional thatched-roof houses spread throughout the area. Guests can experience rural life firsthand, with an entire house to themselves. A range of activities offers opportunities to connect with the local community during your stay. Depending on the season, you might observe the making of sacred *shimenawa* ropes for Fushimi Inari Shrine, try your hand at straw crafts, or take part in seasonal activities such as rice planting or thatch harvesting.

*For prices, bookings and inquiries, please visit the website below.

- Address : 京都府南丹市美山町鶴ヶ岡新釈遊堂前1番地
 - Facebook : @nipponia_tsurugaoka.miyama
 - Instagram : @nipponia_miyama
- miyama-tsurugaoka.jp



3 Soba, vegetables and game meat in a traditional Japanese home Mokuan Handmade Soba

Mokuan Soba Restaurant is run by an energetic owner who takes a hands-on approach to just about everything—from renovating the traditional house that now serves as the restaurant, to growing organic vegetables and rice in nearby fields, and even sourcing wild boar and deer for the menu. Of course, he also makes the soba fresh by hand each morning. Crafted from 100% buckwheat, the noodles are wonderfully aromatic, with a pleasantly firm, chewy texture.

- Address : 京都府南丹市美山町静原野々ヶ畑1-1
- Opening hours : 11:00 am – 3:00 pm
- Closed : Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and every day during the winter period (late December to February)
- X : @mokuan2suzuhara



4 Savor the rich natural bounty of Miyama Kajikasō Restaurant

Kajikasō, located within Miyama Town Nature and Culture Village, showcases the flavors of the region through dishes made with local ingredients such as venison and wild boar from the surrounding mountains, free-range chicken and river sweetfish. Whether you're in the mood for a full-course meal or something more casual—like ramen, curry rice, or a hearty rice bowl—you'll find plenty of options to suit your appetite. The village also features a pizzeria, a barbecue house, and accommodation facilities, making it easy to linger a little longer and enjoy the setting.

- Address : 京都府南丹市美山町中下向56
 - Opening hours : 11:30 am – 3:00 pm (last orders 2:00 pm), 5:00 pm – 8:00 pm (last orders 7:30 pm)
 - Closed : varies
 - Instagram : @miyama_kajika
 - Facebook : @miyama.kajika
- miyama-kajika.com/meals/

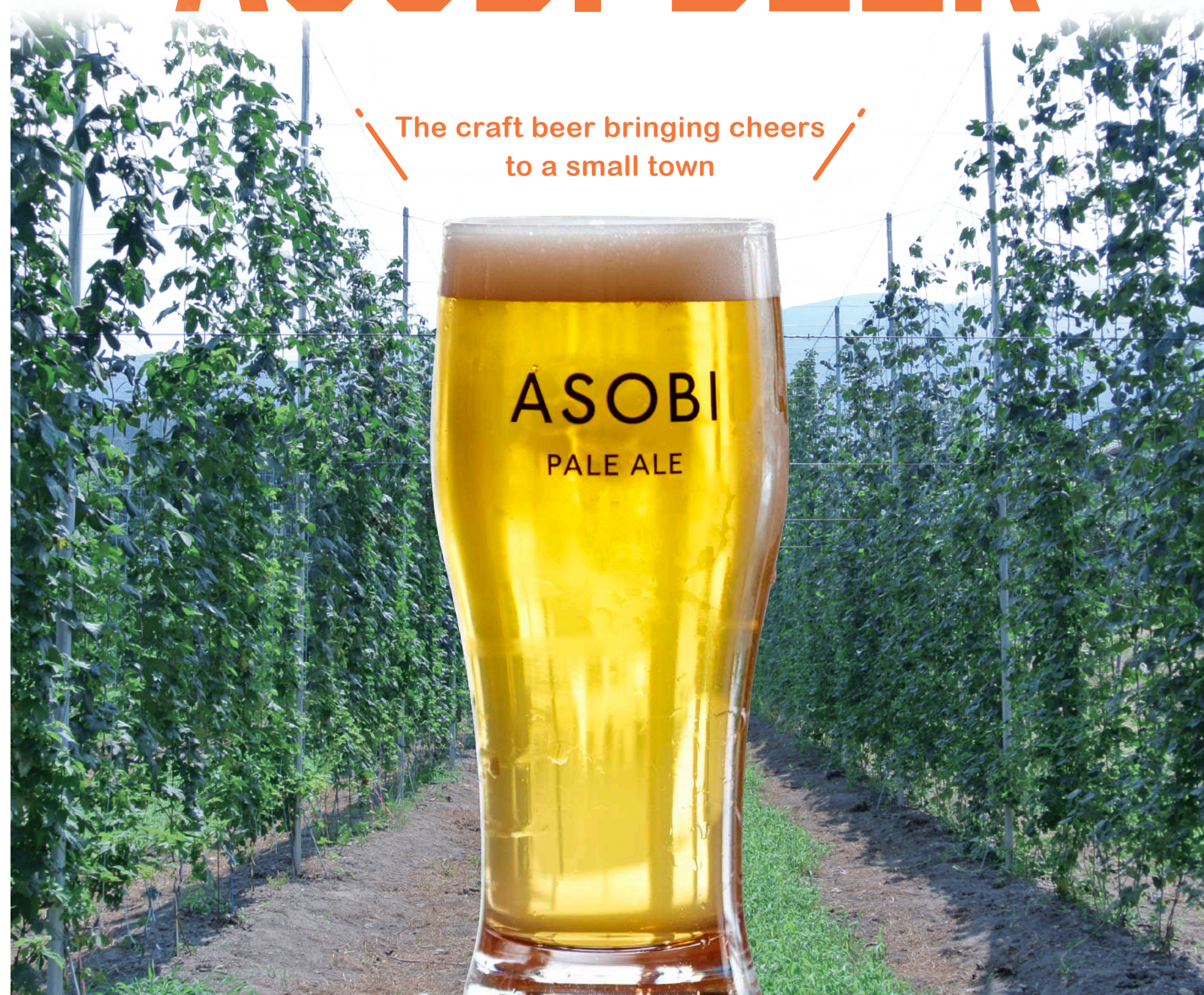


Amanohashidate and Yosano Area

Fun is part of the formula

ASOBI BEER

The craft beer bringing cheers to a small town



ASOBI
PALE ALE

Putting Yosano on the beer map

Tucked at the base of the Tango Peninsula on the northern edge of Kyoto Prefecture, Yosano is a quiet town just a short distance from the famous Amanohashidate sandbar and funaya houses of Ine town. The Tango region is known as the “pantry” that has long supplied Kyoto’s food culture. The region boasts abundant, fresh seafood from the Sea of Japan and a rich variety of agricultural produce. Yosano Town has now become known as one of Japan’s leading hop-growing regions, supplying fresh hops to breweries nationwide.

The greatest advantage of Yosano hops is that they are available year-round. So while Japan’s craft brewers have until now largely depended on imported hop pellets to brew their beer, Yosano’s product has made it possible to brew with raw hops at any time of year. But

despite having a supply of quality hops quite literally on tap, the town was missing its own brewery. That was until Local Flag was born.

It was an ironic situation for a town with such deep connections to the beer industry. It had no breweries, no taprooms, and sadly, little enthusiasm for the drink itself. The man behind Local Flag, Yuta Hamada, recognised the opportunity the hops presented and began selling beer made from Yosano hops in 2023. Their mission: to transform Yosano into a true beer town, bolster the profile of the local hops, and thereby contribute to the promotion of domestic hops. These were just the kind of goals that needed a community development company to bring to reality.



Thus, the Asobi Beer brand was born, and the beer-shaped hole in Yosano was filled by a new brewery and taproom called Tangoya Brewery & Public House. Asobi’s signature brew, the Pale Ale, took off nationwide as a beer produced year-round from fresh hops that can be transported at room temperature.



Ale for all

The concept behind Asobi’s brewing is “beer you’ll never tire of drinking.” Compared with typical mass-brewed lagers, craft beers tend to be defined by distinctive characters and bold flavors—bitter IPAs, fruity sour ales, and vibrant pale ales. But sometimes consumers can become overwhelmed in brewers’ current drive for ever-more impressive and unique flavors. Bucking this trend, Asobi Pale Ale was brewed as an accessible beer for everyday drinking. Its mild flavor profile means it pairs effortlessly with everything from meat dishes to seafood and cheese. It’s also a natural match for the many canned foods of the Tango region, such as the famous Amanohashidate Sardines in oil. Paired with some local snacks, it’s the perfect tittle for your train or coach ride back to the city.

The Pale Ale is the cornerstone of the brand’s diverse lineup of flavors and the best introduction to its range. Next, we recommend moving on to Hare Kogane Yosano Session IPA. Made with loads of locally-grown hops, it is characterized by the brisk aroma of hops.

Another one not to be missed is Asobi’s latest creation, Kyoto Odashi Goze “Kyo-no-shiosai”, which was released in January. This brew is laced with bonito broth from the famous Kyoto broth supplier Moringi and promises to be a memorable drop. Brewed in the German gose style, it blends salt with Japanese ingredients to create a unique harmony of sour and umami notes. It’s a beer that pairs especially well with Japanese food.

This Goze is just one of the innovative beers Asobi has produced

in collaboration with local concerns. Some of their other originals include the tart and fresh Konowa Blueberry Sour Ale, made with blueberries grown on a farm run by Kyoto precision instrument maker Horiba, and Tanagokoro Micro IPA that features tomatoes from a grower in Kyoto City. The folks at Asobi hope that teaming up with Kyoto City businesses will encourage more people to come and visit Yosano. And nothing makes them happier than visitors popping in to their pub to sample the brews.

Tapping into the community

The brand name “Asobi” means “play” in Japanese. It was inspired by the Aso Sea, a calm inland sea enclosed by the Amanohashidate sandbar, which was nicknamed the “Asobi Sea” by the famous 17th-century scholar Kaibara Ekken. The name reflects the company’s playful approach to brewing and the hope that Asobi beer will bring joy to as many people as possible.

There’s also a deep respect for their namesake sea in Asobi’s brewing methods. The Aso Sea of today is has lost much of the beauty of Ekken’s time. Environmental changes have resulted in an overabundance of oysters in the water and, consequently, massive amounts of shells accumulating on the shore. These deposits are not

only unsightly, but they emit a pungent stench and obstruct ocean currents, which in turn adversely affects the quality of the water. Asobi is doing its bit to thwart this vicious cycle by collecting these oyster shells, which it crushes to use as a water profile adjustment agent in the beer. In other words, they’re cleaning up and sourcing ingredients all at once, so the more beer that is drunk, the cleaner the beaches become. This feels very much like another example of the impact a community development specialist can have.

While giving back into the community, Asobi Beer is also looking for new ways for the community to support the brand. Due to climate change and fewer local hop farms, Yosano only produces around a quarter of the crop it did at its peak. Through the Kyoto Yosano Hop Shareholder Program, fans of the beer can buy shares to support the town’s growers. Entry starts at 33,000 yen per share, and overseas residents are welcome to join. Shareholder perks include special label beer (only shippable within Japan), the opportunity to participate in the harvest and other farm events, and a seat at the annual shareholders’ meeting. For a true beer lover, there’s no better reason to venture north to Yosano each year. It’s a unique way to forge special connections with the town and its people through hops and beer, and the experience is sure to make for a truly unforgettable vacation.



Currently, Local Flag and its local affiliates also operate a souvenir shop, a restaurant, and a hotel in the Tango area, and continue to expand offerings for visitors from out of town. Naturally, their endeavors are always focused around Asobi beer, because for them, nothing brings the the culinary riches of Kyoto’s kitchens to life like a beer brewed right here in the Tango region.

Summer is a great time to visit Yosano as there are opportunities to experience working in the hop fields and take part in the harvest—and cool off at the taproom afterward with an ice-cold glass of your favorite Asobi beer. If you’re heading to the more famous spots in the north like Amanohashidate and the Funaya houses of Ine, the town of Yosano is the perfect addition to your itinerary. Hop on over, take a stroll around the town and, of course, sample the Asobi beer.



ASOBI BEER

TANGOYA BREWERY & PUBLIC HOUSE

Opening hours: 11:00 am – 5:00 pm
Closed: Saturdays, Sundays, and national holidays
Address: 京都府与謝野郡与謝野町下山田 1342-1



www.asobi.beer



Instagram
@asobi.beer



Local Flag official website
<https://local-flag.co.jp/>



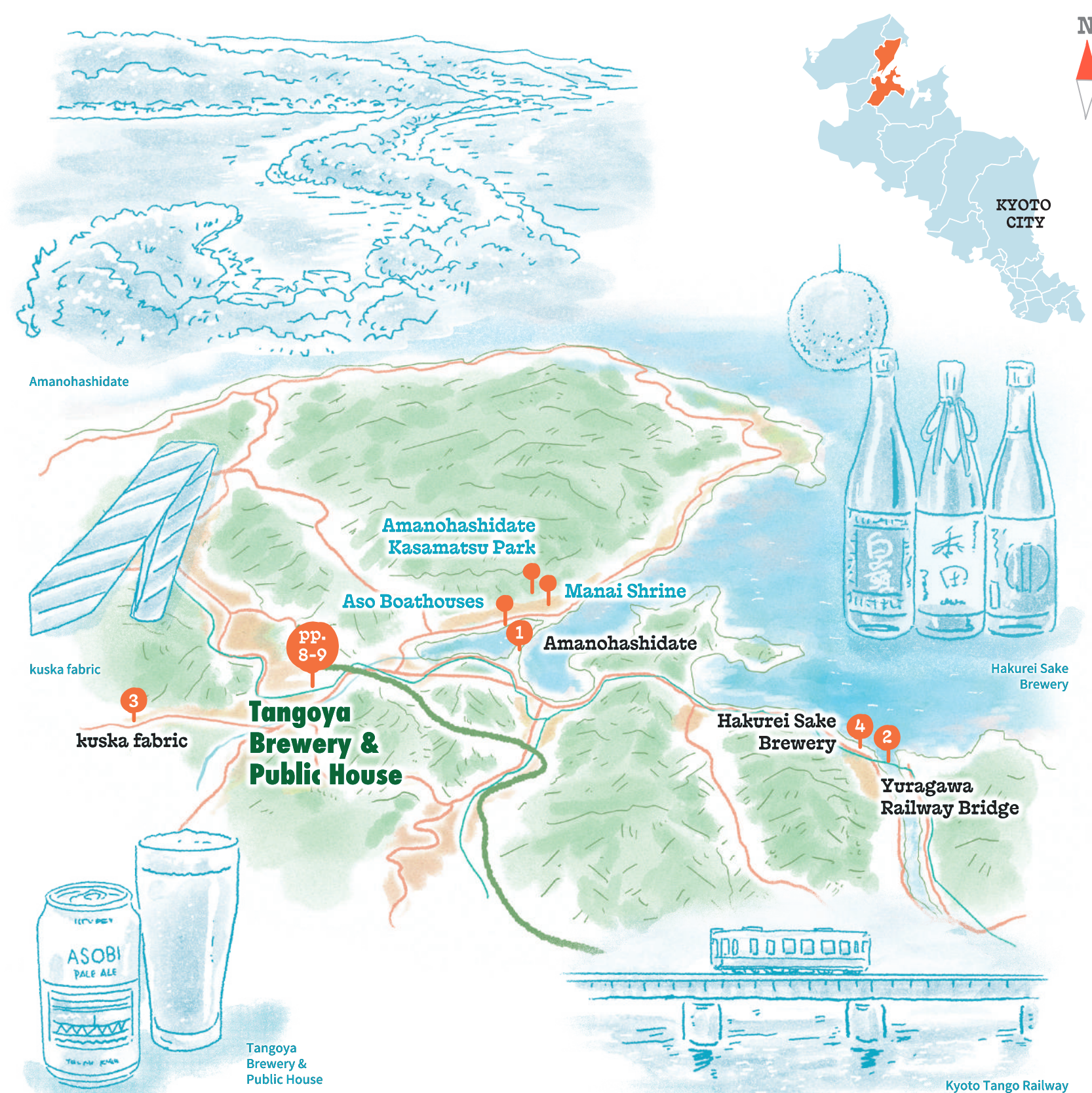
Register as a hop shareholder here:
local-flag.co.jp/service/hop



For inquiries, visit Asobi Beer’s official website.
local-flag.co.jp/#contact

MAP

Amanohashidate and Yosano Area



The northern reaches of the prefecture, overlooking the Sea of Japan, are known as “Kyoto by the Sea.” Fishing ports dotting the coastline supply Kyoto with an abundance of fresh, flavorful seafood, while pristine beaches attract visitors for oceanic pursuits such as swimming and surfing. The

area is also home to the Amanohashidate sandbar—one of Japan’s Three Scenic Views—as well as the “floating” boat-houses of Ine Town. Renowned for Tango *chirimen* silk and dotted with wineries and breweries, the region offers a rich blend of industry, culture, and coastal charm.



1 The bridge to heaven Amanohashidate

Amanohashidate is a natural sandbar, between 20 and 170 meters wide, stretching about 3.6 kilometers across Miyazu Bay. Formed over thousands of years from sand carried by ocean currents and covered with nearly 7,000 pine trees, it stands as one of Japan’s most celebrated natural landscapes.

Its name, meaning “Bridge to Heaven,” comes from a legend in which the deity Izanagi set a ladder to reach the heavens; when it fell into the sea as he slept, it became this long, slender strip of land. Amanohashidate is famously best viewed upside down through one’s legs—a tradition known as *matanozoki*—from Kasamatsu Park on the nearby hilltop

- Address : 京都府宮津市文珠
- instagram : @amanohashidate.tourism

amanohashidate.jp



2 A scenic journey through seaside towns and across a historical bridge Kyoto Tango Railway

The Kyoto Tango Railway offers a delightful journey through the rural and costal scenery of northern Kyoto. If you’re heading to Amanohashidate and Yosano by train from Kyoto Station, board at Fukuchiyama. A highlight of the ride is the spectacular view as the train crosses the historical Yura River Bridge between Tango-Yura and Tango-Kanzaki stations on the Miyama Line.

The railway operates three distinctive trains: the Tango Kuromatsu, an elegant “restaurant on rails” offering

meals in refined surroundings; the Tango Akamatsu, a cafe train with comfortable bench and counter seating; and the tourist train Tango Aomatsu, which can be ridden without a reservation or surcharge.

- instagram : @kyototangorailway
 - facebook : @willer.trains
 - X : @tangorailway
- trains.willer.co.jp



3 Premium handwoven neckties with a kimono-inspired twist kуска fabric

Kuska produces and sells neckties made from luxurious silk crepe, crafted by hand using the Tango *chirimen* tradition—a 300-year-old weaving technique unique to the region that uses tightly twisted weft threads. In recent years, the brand has expanded beyond ties, collaborating with global labels to create bags, shoes, and even the fabric for chairs. Visitors can also tour the workshop and take part in hands-on experiences (reservations required).

- Address : 京都府与谢野郡与谢野町岩屋 384-1
- instagram : @kuska1936
- facebook : @kuska.1936
- X : @kuska94

kuska.jp/en/



4 A Tango brewery making sake the traditional way for almost two centuries Hakurei Sake Brewery

Hakurei has been crafting sake in Yura using traditional methods since 1832. Its name, meaning “white mountains,” pays tribute to Mount Yuragatake, which rises above the surrounding landscape. The brewery’s Shutendōji label takes its name from Shutendōji, a legendary demon of local folklore. Locally grown rice and ultra-soft spring water from the mountains make for a devilishly smooth and mellow brew. Book in advance to tour the brewery

- Address : 京都府宮津市宇由良 949
- Opening hours : 9:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Closed : Wednesdays
- instagram : @hakureishuz
- X : @hakurei_kyoto

www.hakurei.co.jp

Uji Area

Matcha is in the air



Incense Kitchen Matcha incense workshops

a unique way to enjoy the world's favorite green tea

Uji's most famous export, reimagined as a fragrance

Matcha has become a global phenomenon, and the city of Uji is now something of a sacred place for tea aficionados who make the pilgrimage to the home of the iconic green brew. In Uji, a product known as “matcha incense”—made using matcha that would otherwise be discarded during the production process—is gaining attention both in Japan and abroad, not only for its uniqueness but also as an effort to reduce food waste.

The idea came from Kyōko Gotō, who began making and selling matcha incense called *Kotoha* in 2020. She also runs workshops where people can try making their own matcha incense. Although the workshops started quietly during the pandemic, they have since become a popular experience, especially with international visitors.

Unlike many types of incense that are lit and burned to release a scent, *Kotoha's* incense takes the form of small tablets which are warmed indirectly over a heat source. One traditional method is called *soradaki*,

and involves heating incense on ash that has been warmed by a small piece of burning charcoal buried inside it. Interestingly, *soradaki* incense burning makes numerous appearances in another cultural work closely associated with Uji, the classic novel *The Tale of Genji*. The court ladies in this classic work of literature scent their robes with incense to show their refinement to potential suitors. It's a charming and unexpected connection.

Having come up with the ingenious idea of using matcha in incense, Gotō launched the workshops to offer a fun, family-friendly activity with a distinct local touch. She explains that matcha incense tablets and incense-making experiences are both still quite rare.

Incense Kitchen's workshops are held at Eshin-in, a small, picturesque temple perched above the Uji River. The wing of the temple where the workshops are held has a literary connection: the writer Taruho Inagaki lived here in quiet seclusion during the mid-20th century.



With the river flowing below and centuries of history surrounding the temple grounds, it's an atmospheric setting to try your hand at this unusual craft. Here's what you can expect from the workshop.

Creating your own matcha moment

Each participant can make about six pieces of incense during the workshop. You'll start by preparing a dough. The ingredients are simple—matcha powder, *tabu* powder (a binding agent made from the ground bark of the Japanese bay tree), and water. First, mix the matcha and *tabu* powder thoroughly in a bowl and add a splash of water. Then, take a pestle and bring the mix together firmly, working it into a dough. Once the dough comes together, knead it with your hands until its texture is consistent and smooth.

Now comes the hardest part—choosing a mold to shape your incense tablet. There are 60 delightful motifs to choose from, including animals such as cats and rabbits, butterflies, ladybirds, and other insects, as well as traditional Japanese heraldic emblems. Some designs are inspired by Uji itself, including tea canisters and the iconic Byōdō-in Temple. The molds, which are all patented designs, were crafted especially for Incense Kitchen by an artisan specializing in molds for Japanese sweets.

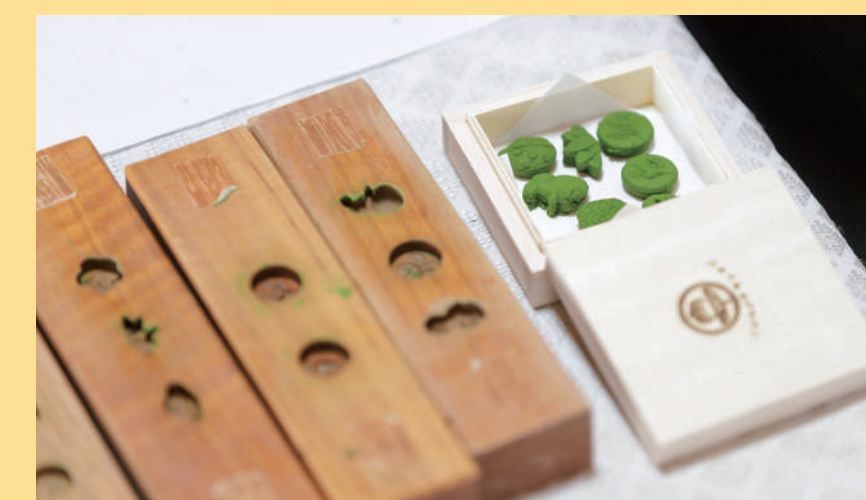


Once you've chosen your design, break off a small piece of dough and press it into the mold through the opening in the lid, keeping the lid in place for now. Use enough dough so that it bulges slightly above the lid when the mold is full. Press firmly with your fingers to push the dough into all the small crevices. When you're done, give it one more strong press, remove the lid, and gently pop the incense out to see if the pattern has formed clearly. If the design isn't quite right, you can simply put the dough back in, replace the lid, and try again. Gotō makes the whole experience easy and enjoyable, demonstrating each step and guiding participants through the process.

You can take your incense home on the same day, and it will keep for up to a year. There are several ways to enjoy it. For beginners, an electric incense heater is a good choice, as it maintains the ideal temperature to release the fragrance. Once you're more familiar with incense, you might try using an aroma pot, letting the soft candlelight and gentle scent of matcha infuse a touch a Japanese calm into your living space. Finally, for the most traditional experience, you can even try *soradaki*, warming the incense over ash heated by charcoal and enjoying fragrance much as courtiers did in the age of *The Tale of Genji*. Whether kept as a cherished souvenir or given as a thoughtful gift, your handmade incense is a uniquely personal memento of Japan.



① Incense warmer “Ajirogi”



Incense heaters can be purchased from Incense Kitchen's online shop.

- ① Incense warmer 18,150 yen
- ② Aroma pot 5,060 yen

Prices include tax.

Incense Kitchen

For workshop bookings and inquiries, please visit Incense Kitchen's official website.
incensekitchen.com/taiken-list

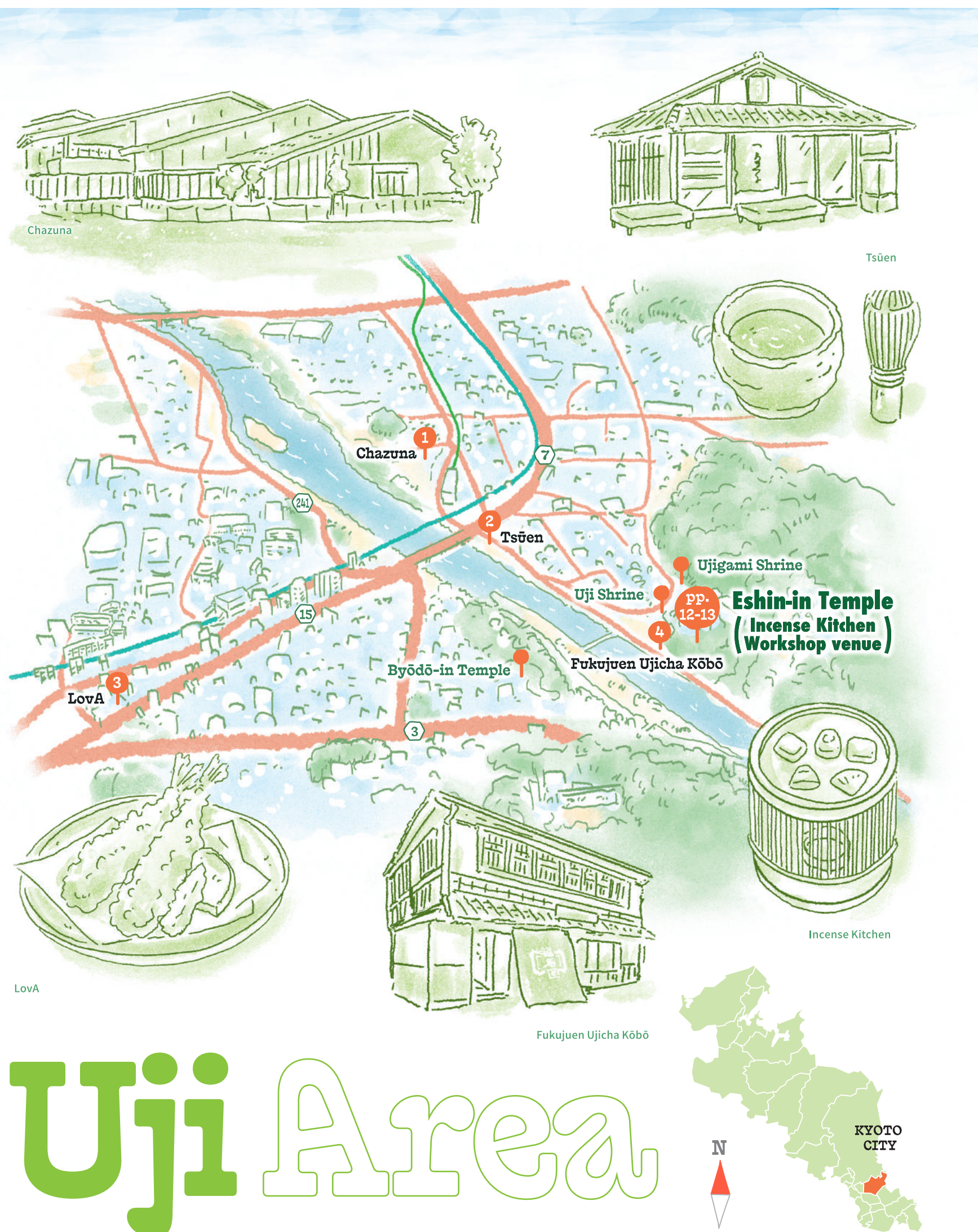
Online shop
itowokashiko.thebase.in

instagram:
[@incensekitchen](https://www.instagram.com/incensekitchen)

X:
[@IncenseKitchen](https://twitter.com/IncenseKitchen)



MAP



Uji Area

The historic city of Uji flourished as a key waypoint between the ancient capitals of Kyoto and Nara. It is best known as the setting for the final chapters of *The Tale of Genji*—often regarded as the world’s oldest novel—and offers plenty of opportunities to explore notable sites such as Byōdōin, Uji Shrine, Ujigami Shrine, and Kōshōji Temple. Uji is also world-renowned for its matcha and premium

green tea, drawing visitors from around the globe in search of Japan’s iconic brew. In recent years, a growing number of bakeries, soba shops, and even Italian and Vietnamese eateries have opened, giving the city a fresh, youthful energy—and making it an ideal place to snack your way from one stop to the next.



1 Chazuna

Chazuna is a lively hub for all things tea, combining hands-on experiences with opportunities to learn more about Japan’s tea culture. Explore the museum exhibits to discover the history of tea and its many varieties, or join one of the workshops (fees apply), which range from grinding tea leaves with a traditional stone mill to make your own matcha, to tea-picking (available April to mid-May) and even crafting your own tea canister. When it’s time for a break, stop by the on-site restaurant for a meal or indulge in matcha-based sweets. An outdoor event space and garden also host a variety of seasonal activities, adding to the venue’s relaxed, welcoming atmosphere.



- Address : 京都府宇治市菟道丸山 203-1
- Opening hours : 9:00 am – 5:00 pm every day
- Instagram : @uji_chazuna

uji-chazuna.kyoto



2 Tsūen

Founded in 1160, Tsūen has stood at the foot of Uji Bridge for over 850 years, making it the oldest tea house in Japan. The store sells a wide selection of teas—from matcha to premium *sencha*, *hōjicha* and *genmaicha*—alongside a range of sweets to complement them. The owner is happy to recommend the perfect tea based on your tastes, making it an ideal spot to pick up souvenirs from Uji. There’s also a café at the back, where you can relax with tea and desserts while enjoying river views.

- Address : 京都府宇治市宇治東内 1
- Opening hours : 9:30 am – 5:30 pm every day
- Instagram : @tsuen1160

www.tsuentea.com



3 LovA

LovA is a popular tempura spot on Ujibashi Street, just a four-minute walk from JR Uji Station. Housed in a beautifully renovated traditional home, it has a warm, welcoming atmosphere that feels more like dining at a friend’s house than a restaurant. Enjoy deliciously light and crispy tempura of shrimp, conger eel, Kyoto-style *nama-fu*, seasonal vegetables and more, all fried to perfection in rice oil. The grilled mackerel set meal and dishes made with seasonal ingredients are also highly recommended.

- Address : 京都府宇治市宇治巻番 8 3
- Opening hours : 11:15 am - 3:00 pm, 5:30 pm - 9:30 pm
- Closed : Tuesdays and occasionally on other days
- Instagram : @lovauji

lova2021.com



4 Fukujuen Ujicha Kōbō

Fukujuen Ujicha Kōbō, located on the right bank of the Uji River near Uji Shrine, is operated by Fukujuen, a renowned tea merchant with roots dating back to 1790. The facility offers a wide range of tea-related experiences, from hands-on matcha and *hōjicha* making to lessons in tea ceremony etiquette and even workshops where you can craft your own tea utensils. Tea-picking experiences are also available in spring and summer. Visitors can explore traditional tea-processing tools in the on-site

museum before relaxing in the café with specialties such as matcha soba or green tea ice cream.

- Address : 京都府宇治市宇治山田 10 番地
- Opening hours : 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Closed : varies
- Instagram : @ujikoubou_fukujuen

www.ujikoubou.com



Minamiyamashiro village Area

A small community in rural Kyoto is bringing producers and consumers together by doing things differently



A village where something is brewing

Roadside Station Ocha-no-Kyoto Minamiyamashiro-mura

Rebranding the village's tea

Tucked away in the mountains at the south-eastern edge of Kyoto Prefecture, the village of Minamiyamashiro remains largely off the radar for most visitors to Japan. Home to just around 2,500 residents, this quiet farming community lies about 60 kilometres from Kyoto City, close to the borders of Shiga, Nara, and Mie Prefectures. With its forested hills, tea fields, and unhurried pace of life, it offers a glimpse of rural Japan that feels worlds away from the bustling cities—and notably, it is the only municipality in Kyoto still officially designated as a village.

In recent years, however, this once-sleepy corner of Kyoto has begun to draw curious travellers from across Japan and beyond, thanks to the growing popularity of Roadside Station Ocha-no-Kyoto Minamiyamashiro-mura. Japan's roadside stations are a feature of the nation's highways and expressways. They provide a break from driving with not only free parking and clean restrooms, but also restaurants and shops showcasing regional specialties. At Minamiyamashiro's station, that often means locally grown tea, fresh produce, and a chance to experience the flavors and rhythms of the countryside during a pitstop.



When Roadside Station Ocha-no-Kyoto Minamiyamashiro-mura opened in 2017, it set out to redefine what a roadside station could be. More than just a convenient stop for passing drivers, it was conceived as a hub for community revival—an ambitious project driven by local man Kenji Morimoto. A lifelong resident of Minamiyamashiro and a former government employee, Morimoto had grown increasingly concerned about the village's ageing population and steady decline. While working at the local office, he developed a number of ideas to breathe new life into the community, but turning those plans into reality proved challenging. Determined to make a change, he left his job to devote himself to a company named Minamiyamashiro established by the village. Once the foundations were in place, farmers and other locals who shared Morimoto's passion and vision came on board organically. With a plan to take advantage of the village's significant green tea industry—about 20% of the famous Uji green tea produced each year comes from Minamiyamashiro—Morimoto launched the “Muracha” (literally “Village Tea”) brand, an initiative that not only celebrates local produce but has also helped the village's fortunes begin to grow once again.

Leave it to the locals—redefining the concept of the roadside station

Two guiding principles shaped the Muracha brand from the outset. The first was a commitment to keeping production local: all sweets and products would be made by people from the village itself. To make this possible, a dedicated production kitchen was built inside the station—a rare feature for a roadside station, where most goods are typically sourced from outside suppliers.

The second principle was an uncompromising focus on quality. While many matcha-flavoured sweets use lower-grade tea to keep prices down, Muracha products are made with premium leaves—the same quality used in traditional tea ceremonies. The result is a richer, more refined flavour that sets them apart. They may cost a little more than the average matcha treat, but visitors quickly discover they're worth it, and the products soon fly off the shelves. Even the bottled tea sold here is made from carefully selected spring-harvest leaves, a grade usually reserved for brewing fresh in a teapot—offering travellers a rare chance to taste high-quality Japanese tea on the go.

Morimoto also created a new distribution system for the fresh produce sold at the station. Fruit and vegetables are brought in by the farmers each morning, providing a straight path from producer to seller. In addition, the tea is marketed to highlight the unique characteristics of each individual producer. These initiatives are designed to benefit the farmers and in turn, Morimoto hopes, the wider community.

“I was born in Minamiyamashiro and have lived and worked here my whole life. I know just about everyone. Whether it's vegetables or sweets, I can tell you exactly who grew or made them, and the time and care they put into them. I want the people who buy our products to know these details. To me that kind of care and effort is what is most valuable in today's society, and that's why we sell our products at prices that are fair to the producers,” says Morimoto.

If the station's best-selling treats are any indication, the message is clearly resonating. Silky-smooth custard puddings disappear in their hundreds each day, while the popular soft-serve ice cream can sell as many as 1,400 servings during peak periods. For Morimoto, the pace rarely lets up—he takes just two days off a year. Even on New Year's Day, the country's most important family holiday, he can often be found manning the register or guiding a queue of eager customers. For him, it's a small sacrifice in return for securing a future for his beloved hometown.



Roadside Station Ocha-no-Kyoto Minamiyamashiro-mura

Address: 京都府相楽郡福見山城村北大河原殿田 102



michinoeki.kyoto.jp

• Opening hours: 9:00am – 6:00pm
• Closed: 3rd Wednesday of June, 2nd Wednesday of December



instagram: @kyoto.muramura



facebook: @michinoeki.minamiyamashiro



Online shop murakyotheSHOP.jp



X: @kyoto.muramura



Muracha's greatest hits

Matcha Soft-Serve

This is Muracha's most popular product, selling up to 1,400 serves a day. Made with Okumidori matcha from the prized first harvest of spring, it offers a rich, smooth depth of flavour that stands apart. Once you've tasted this premium soft-serve, other matcha ice creams rarely measure up.



Muracha Custard Pudding

• Matcha flavor

Muracha's matcha custard pudding is an indulgently rich favourite, with as many as 700 servings sold in a single day. Made with generous amounts of vibrant green spring harvest Okumidori, it is slowly steamed to perfection in the on-site kitchen, creating a smooth, deeply satisfying dessert with a refined tea flavour.

• Hōjicha flavor

This version of the custard pudding is lavishly made with hōjicha roasted in sand. The rich, aromatic flavor of hōjicha and the mellow sweetness of milk are a match made in heaven.



Other popular menu items include:

Village Curry, Chocolate Terrine, Shiitake mushrooms simmered in a savory broth, and of course, a range of matcha, sencha and other teas grown in Minamiyamashiro Village.

Muracha Cha-soba

A customer favorite at Tsuchinoubu restaurant, these rich tea soba noodles packed with locally-grown matcha are a must-try. Sprinkle with some matcha salt for an extra punch of flavor.



Village Tea revitalizes the village

Roadside Station Ocha-no-Kyoto Minamiyamashiro-mura is set to mark its 10th anniversary in 2027—a milestone that reflects a remarkable decade of change. In 2024, the facility was ranked number one in Japan's “Best Roadside Station” awards, a standout moment in the village's ongoing revival. Today, Minamiyamashiro is welcoming a growing stream of visitors from across Japan and overseas, many making the journey to the village specifically to experience the station. A Marriott hotel has also opened next door, while the station's signature products continue to attract increasing media attention.

For Kenji Morimoto, however, the most meaningful outcome of the Muracha brand is less tangible: a renewed sense of pride within the community. From tea farmers to vegetable growers and local residents, people have begun to see the value of what they produce—and of the village itself.

That shift is already shaping the future. Where it was once taken for granted that young people would leave after high school, some are now choosing to stay. Others who initially commuted to work here have gone on to settle in the village. Little by little, a new kind of community is taking root, nurtured by the success of the roadside station. Morimoto's long-held vision is beginning to take shape. “Our greatest tourism resource is our people,” he says with pride.

Looking ahead, plans are underway to offer farm tours and create opportunities for residents to connect more deeply with visitors from overseas. If current trends are any indication, the tea leaves are showing a bright future for Kyoto's one and only village.

MAP



Minamiyamashiro Village Area

The only municipality in Kyoto Prefecture officially designated as a village, Minamiyamashiro is perched in the mountains at the prefecture's southeastern edge, where Kyoto meets Shiga Prefecture, Nara Prefecture, and Mie Prefecture. While nearby Ujitawara and Wazuka are better known for Uji tea, Minamiyamashiro is in fact the

prefecture's second-largest producer. The village is also famous for its flavorful log-grown shiitake mushrooms. Drawn by the slower, nature-rich lifestyle, a younger generation has begun settling here, bringing fresh energy in the form of new cafés and eateries.



Freshly harvested vegetables from local farms

1 Minamiyamashiro Village Produce Market

Drop by this farmers' market on the Kizugawa River just near the village office and pick up some of the local tea, fresh vegetables, the famous shiitake mushrooms or specialty foods made with local produce. Light meals are available at the café space. Don't forget to try the signature *shiitamayaki*. It's a unique twist on *takoyaki* (octopus dumplings) made with simmered shiitake instead of octopus.

- Address : 京都府相楽郡南山城村北大河原久保 1-3
- Opening hours : 9:00 am - 3:00 pm on Saturdays, Sundays and national holidays, 9:00 am - 1:00 pm on weekdays
- Closed : New Year holiday period
- Instagram : @minamiyamashiro_tyokubai



Coffee and the great outdoors

3 Doors Coffee Roastery

Take a break in scenic mountain surroundings at this coffee stand in the town of Kasagi just near Minamiyamashiro Village. Sip one of the house-roasted specialty coffees from around the world, or if tea is more to your taste, try a *hōjicha* or *matcha latte* made with locally grown leaves. Pair your drink with house-smoked bacon and country-style bread or one of the other tempting menu offerings.

- Address : 京都府相楽郡笠置町笠置平田 26
- Opening hours : 11:00 am - 5:00 pm
- Closed : Tuesdays and Wednesdays (unless a national holiday)
- Instagram : @doors_coffee_roastery

doorscoffee.jp



2 Minamiyamashiro's photogenic tea fields Tayama Tsurugi Tea Plantation

The Tayama area is one of the most scenic parts of the picture-perfect village of Minamiyamashiro. It is known for its striking *tsurugi* ("sword") tea fields, where neatly ordered rows climb the mountainside as if reaching toward the sky. Officially recognized as part of the "Walk Through 800 Years of Japanese Tea History" heri-

tage designation, these fields are often featured in magazines and attract visitors from far and wide eager to take in the iconic landscape.

- Address: 京都府相楽郡南山城村大字田山小字ツルギ

ochanokyo.jp/spot/detail.php?sid=506



4 A café in a renovated schoolhouse Café Neko Pan

Set in the former wooden schoolhouse of Tayama Elementary, Café Neko Pan is full of nostalgic charm. Thoughtful touches—like a menu written on the blackboard and the original classroom desks and chairs—offer a gentle reminder of its past. The lunch set, centered around a freshly made bagel and seasonal dishes, is well worth trying, especially washed down with a smoothie made from locally grown blueberries. The café is open only on the first three weekends of each month, so it's best to plan your visit in advance.

- Address : 京都府相楽郡南山城村田山中シヨジ 旧田山小学校
- Opening hours : 11:00 am - 5:00 pm on the first three Saturdays and Sundays of the month
- Closed : Days other than the above (Cafe may be open during some holiday seasons)
- Facebook : @cafenekopan

cafenekopan.com



Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove Area

The bamboo underground —dig into the true taste of Kyoto



Whole bamboo shoot sushi
Enjoy the sweet juiciness of bamboo shoot in the dish for which Uosu is famous. It has a light, refreshing taste, yet is satisfyingly filling.



Natural bounty and human expertise

Nishiyama's bamboo shoots are widely regarded as the finest in Japan—but what is it about this region that produces such an exceptional product? The first factor is its abundant, high-quality water. Gentle, sustained rainfall during the rainy season is gradually absorbed into the ground, enriching the soil with a steady, nutrient-rich reserve. The area's clay-rich earth plays an important role here, retaining moisture remarkably well. Indeed, the purity of Nishiyama's underground water is so prized that the famous drink producer Suntory chose the area for both its Kyoto brewery and the renowned Yamazaki Distillery.

Climate is another crucial element. Bamboo thrives in Japan's sharply contrasting seasons, and the Nishiyama Mountain Range is particularly well suited, with its cold winters, humid rainy season, and hot summers. A consistent supply of water is essential for producing tender, juicy shoots free from bitterness or harsh earthiness. The steady rains of early summer—more so than sudden downpours—are especially important, replenishing the soil with enough moisture to sustain the plants through the intense heat of summer and the dry months that follow, until the shoots emerge in spring. These ideal conditions also yield the beautifully pale, ivory-colored flesh of the bamboo shoots that is so highly prized.

Equally important are the time-honored tools and techniques unique to the region. Because bamboo shoots begin to harden and discolor as soon as they are exposed to air, farmers must harvest them before they break through the surface. Over centuries, they have developed a remarkable sensitivity to the land, able to detect subtle cracks in the soil—or even a faint change underfoot—that signal a shoot just below. They use specialized tools found only in Kyoto: a long-bladed hoe known as a *hori* ("digger") to carefully extract the shoot, and a slender metal probe called a *sagashi* ("finder") to first locate it underground.

Finally, it is the careful stewardship of the fields themselves that completes the picture. After

the spring harvest, selected shoots are left to mature into "parent bamboo," which will produce future growth. In summer, these are trimmed and thinned to maintain proper spacing, allowing sunlight to reach the ground and air to circulate freely. Come autumn, farmers spread rice straw across the fields—affectionately known as "laying out the futon"—to protect the soil from the cold and prevent it from drying out. As many growers also cultivate rice, they reuse leftover straw, which gradually decomposes and nourishes the earth.

The result is a quietly elegant, sustainable cycle—water, climate, and human care working in harmony. It is this delicate balance between nature and tradition that has sustained Nishiyama's bamboo cultivation, and Kyoto's broader bamboo culture, for over three centuries.

Uosu's bamboo sushi

For a taste of Nishiyama's prized bamboo shoots, there's no better place than Uosu, a long-established Japanese restaurant just a 15-minute walk from Hankyu Nagaoka-Tenjin Station. With more than 80 years of history, the restaurant has built a reputation for showcasing the region's seasonal specialties. Owner Takeshi Yamashita recommends their signature whole bamboo sushi as the best way to appreciate the shoots' delicate, natural flavor.

This distinctive dish has its roots in local ingenuity. It was created around 50 years ago by Takeshi's father, Yasuhiro Yamashita, at the request of a local agricultural cooperative. At the time, an abundance of spring-harvest bamboo shoots was being processed into canned goods, but with surplus stock piling up, new ideas were needed. Yasuhiro, who had already been experimenting with ways to serve bamboo shoots year-round, found his answer in sushi—transforming a seasonal ingredient into a dish that could be enjoyed at any time of year.



Bamboo leaf yōkan

Another favorite is Uosu's *yōkan* (a thick, jelly-like bean paste confection) which is served topped with bamboo shoot soaked in syrup, rice flour dumplings and bean paste and sprinkled with bamboo leaf powder.

Uosu offers a range of other dishes such as fish sushi, teppanyaki, and course meals that include sushi and tempura.



Uosu

Opening hours: 11:00am - 7:30pm (last entry)
Closed: Mondays (unless Monday is a national holiday)
Address: 京都府長岡京市今里 2-17-8
www.uosu.jp (in Japanese)



Discover a classic Japanese flavor

At Uosu, bamboo shoot sushi takes the form of *sugata-zushi*, a style in which the main is used largely in its original form to encase the rice. Yamashita prefers smaller shoots for this dish. Each one is carefully hollowed into a conical shape using a specially crafted knife, then parboiled and soaked before being gently simmered in a broth of sake, *mirin*, and salt, with bonito added at the end for depth of flavor. Once prepared, the cavity is filled with a slab of vinegared rice known as a *shari*, which is infused with chopped *sansho* pepper leaves and *yuzu* citrus.

Rather than being finely sliced, the leaves and citrus are lightly pounded—a technique that produces a slightly coarser texture and releases a fresh, spring-like aroma. Notably, no soy sauce is used during cooking, allowing the bamboo's natural ivory hue to remain beautifully intact.

Unlike most familiar forms of sushi, this variety is also eaten without soy sauce. This lets the gentle sweetness of the bamboo shoot and the bite of the seasoned rice come through, offering a taste that is both refined and deeply rooted in tradition.

For those curious about sushi's many forms, the version most widely known around the world—raw fish served over rice—is

actually called *Edomae-zushi*. It is a relatively recent development that originated in the area around modern-day Tokyo. In Kyoto, however, sushi originally referred to fish preserved with vinegar to withstand the journey inland from the sea. *Sugata-zushi* evolved from this tradition, alongside other regional styles such as boxed, pressed, and rolled sushi, which remain popular across Kyoto, Osaka, and the wider Kansai region today. Like bamboo shoot sushi, many of these are enjoyed without soy sauce.

Sushi may now be a global cuisine, but discovering its regional expressions is one of the great pleasures of traveling in Japan. For a truly distinctive taste of Kyoto—rooted in its bamboo culture—Uosu offers an experience not to be missed.

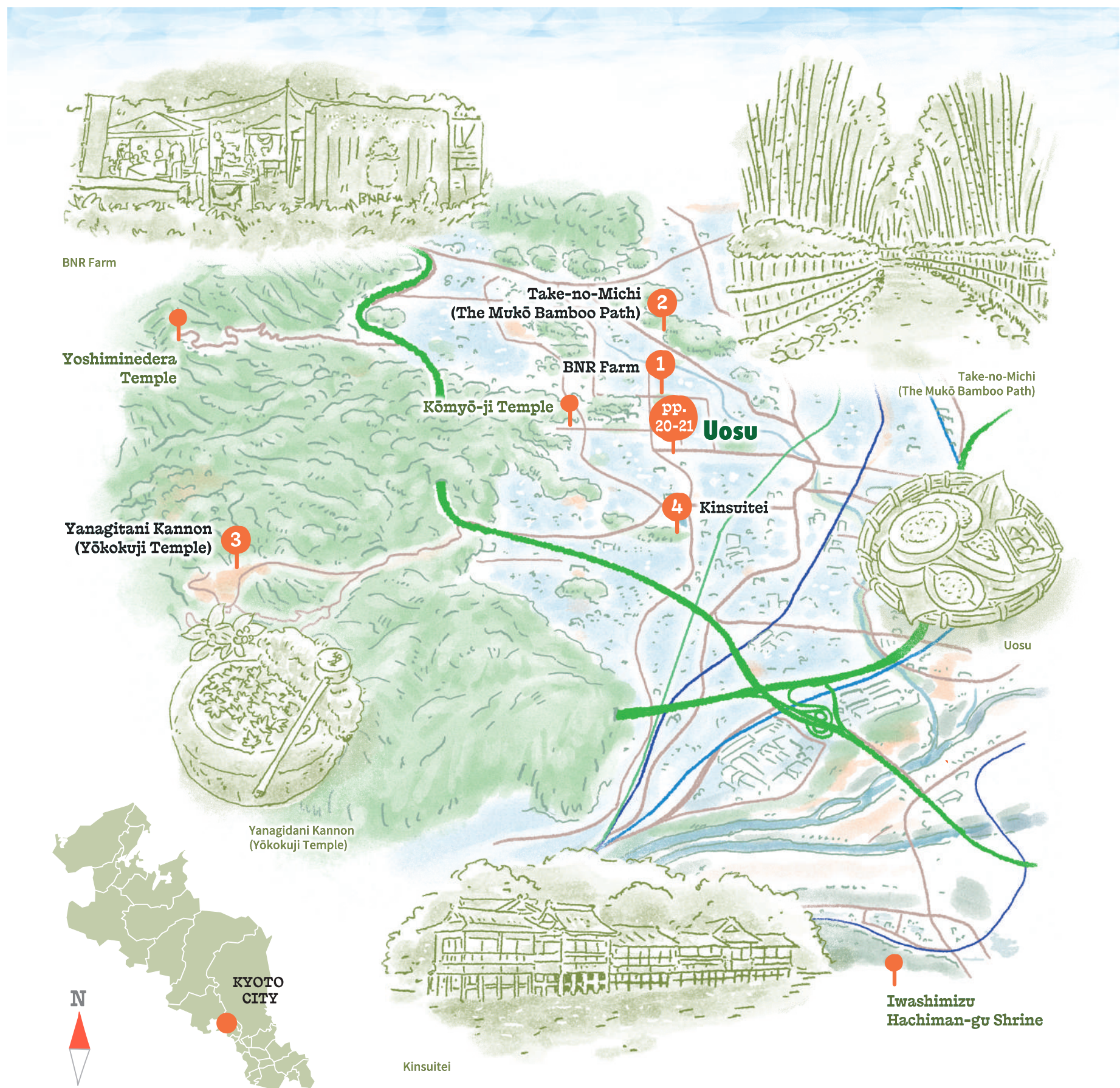


The Nishiyama mountains and the roots of Kyoto's bamboo culture

Arashiyama has become a favorite destination for international travelers, who flock to its famed sights, including the iconic bamboo groves. If you've visited the area, you'll likely remember the imposing mountains that frame this celebrated scenery. These peaks are part of the Nishiyama Mountain Range which runs along the western edge of the Kyoto Basin, stretching some 35 kilometers from the sacred Mount Atago, just north of Arashiyama, down to Oyamazaki on the border with Osaka Prefecture. Renowned as a source of bamboo for over a millennium, the Nishiyama mountains are widely regarded to be the birthplace of Kyoto's bamboo culture.

Naturally, where there's bamboo, there are bamboo shoots. Harvested just before they break through the soil, these young shoots are a beloved seasonal ingredient in Japanese cuisine. Subtly sweet with a satisfying crunch, they signal the arrival of spring on dining tables across the country.

MAP



Kyoto Otokuni Bamboo Grove Area

While Arashiyama may be Kyoto's most famous bamboo spot, its true heart lies in the Otokuni Bamboo Grove area. Renowned since ancient times for its high-quality bamboo, the region is especially prized in spring for its tender, flavorful bamboo shoots. Beyond its bamboo heritage, Otokuni also boasts a rich agricultural tradition, producing many of

Kyoto's heirloom vegetables, along with several breweries and distilleries. The world-famous Yamazaki whisky takes its name from this very area, further highlighting the region's deep ties to craft and terroir.



1 A nighttime veggie treasure hunt BNR Farm

Get your hands dirty with a night farming experience at BNR Farm. Start by picking vegetables straight from the fields, with around 15 varieties of local and seasonal produce available at any given time. Then, enjoy what you've gathered—grilled over a barbecue or baked into pizza in a wood-fired oven right there in the field.

- Address : 京都府京都市西京区大原野上里南ノ町 736
 - Instagram : @bnr1111_kyoto
- bnr-kyoto.com



2 The beauty and tranquility of an authentic bamboo grove Take-no-Michi (The Mukō Bamboo Path)

Take-no-Michi is a scenic path that winds for about 1.8 kilometers through bamboo groves in the hills of Mukō. Offering a quieter, more laid-back alternative to the crowds of Arashiyama, it's a place where changing seasons and local events make every visit feel different. In spring, you can try your hand at digging for fresh bamboo shoots, while autumn evenings feature illuminations that enhance the grove's tranquil atmosphere.

- Address : 京都府向日市寺戸町芝山、物集女町長野 他
- muko-kankou.jp/recommend/detail.html?id=585



3 The "flower temple" captivating social media Yanagidani Kannon (Yōkokuji Temple)

Founded in 803 by the monk Enchin—who also founded Kiyomizu-dera—Yōkokuji is known as the "Kiyomizu of the west." The temple has long drawn worshippers to its spring water, which is said to have healing properties for eye ailments. Visitors can view a magnificent statue of Kannon with eleven heads, a thousand hands, and a thousand eyes, which is opened to public viewing on the 17th of each month. The expansive precincts of the temple are famous for thousands of hydrangeas that bloom in early summer and stunning red foliage in autumn. In recent years, its artistic *hanachōzu*—a flow-



er-filled purification basin—has also captured widespread attention on social media.

- Address : 京都府長岡京市浄土谷堂ノ谷 2
- Opening hours : 9:00 am - 5:00 pm (last entries 4:30 pm) every day
- Instagram : @yanagidanikannon
- Facebook : @yanagidani

yanagidani.jp



4 Seasonal flavors and splendid views Kinsuitei

This *kaiseki* restaurant next to Nagaoka Tenmangu Shrine was founded in 1881. Take in the seasonal beauty of the garden as you dine on waterside seating that seems to float on Hachijōgaike Pond. In spring, don't miss the special *kaiseki* meal of dishes made with bamboo shoots dug fresh from the restaurant's own grove each morning

- Address : 京都府長岡京市天神 2 丁目 15-15
- Opening hours : 11:30 am - 9:00 pm (last orders 7:00 pm)
- Closed: Wednesdays (open daily from late March to early May)
- Instagram : @kinsuitei
- Facebook : @kinsuitei

kinsuitei.co.jp

Kyoto City



Tsukemono ≠ Japanese pickles

A fresh look at a timeless taste tradition

Put a Japanese staple on your table

Daiyasu
www.daiyasu.co.jp

Main Store
Opening hours: 9:00 am – 6:00 pm every day of the year
Address: 京都市左京区岡崎南御所町45

●instagram: @daiyasu_kyotsukemono
●facebook: @kyoto.daiyasu

Enmusubi Onigiri Café Gion
instagram: @daiyasu.gionmise



What are tsukemono?

In Japan, few meals feel complete without *tsukemono*—those bright, crunchy pickles that add a refreshing lift to bowls of rice and many other dishes. And yet, for all the current global appetite for sushi, ramen, and other Japanese cuisine, tsukemono remain somewhat unappreciated beyond Japan's shores. Part of the reason may lie in the way they're often translated simply as "Japanese pickles." While that's not entirely incorrect, it hardly captures their depth. Tsukemono may resemble Western pickles at a glance, but their flavors, textures, and—above all—their methods of preparation set them in a world of their own.

Their history runs deep. Tsukemono have been part of Japanese food culture for centuries, with records dating back as far as the 8th century. Kyoto, in particular, became a natural home for this tradition. Once the imperial capital and located inland, the city relied on preservation techniques to transport food—especially seafood—to the court. Over time, these methods evolved alongside Kyoto's rich culture of heirloom vegetables and its temple cuisine, both of which placed vegetables at center stage. The result was a vibrant and enduring pickling tradition. Even today, many of Kyoto's tsukemono businesses have been run by the same families for generations, some even for centuries.

As the lives of everyday people grew more prosperous, preparing tsukemono at home became a

familiar part of everyday cooking. While tastes and habits have shifted over time, tsukemono continue to hold a cherished place—bringing color, texture, and a sense of continuity to meals across Japan.

So how are tsukemono made, and what is the best way to enjoy them? Let's take a closer look at the time-honored techniques—and the fresh ideas—of one of Kyoto's renowned makers, who is helping these quietly remarkable pickles find a new audience.

The difference between tsukemono and pickles

In many Western traditions, pickles are made by simply soaking vegetables in a jar—often in a vinegar-based brine, especially for non-fermented varieties. Tsukemono, by contrast, tend to follow a more nuanced path. Most are fermented, and the process unfolds in careful stages. The vegetables are first lightly cured with salt, drawing out excess moisture and concentrating their flavor. They are then transferred to a secondary curing medium—often one enriched with *kombu* (kelp)—where they are left to ferment slowly and develop their distinctive taste and texture.

To witness this craft in action, let's turn to a classic example. At Daiyasu, a renowned tsukemono maker, this process is brought to life in their *senmaizuke*—delicate, paper-thin slices of heirloom Shōgoin turnip, and one of Kyoto's most iconic tsukemono.

Old-fashioned know-how and chemical reactions

Daiyasu's exacting approach to tsukemono

The process begins with the careful layering of thin slices of Shōgoin turnip in a large barrel. Each one holds around 1,000 slices—the yield of some 80 turnips. This is where the name *senmaizuke*, or



"thousand-leaf pickle," comes from. The slices are arranged in 31 delicate layers, and each is evenly salted before the next is added. A heavy stone is then placed on top, and the turnips are left to rest and gently mature over three days.

At this stage, precision is everything. The salt must be scattered evenly in a single, fluid motion; any inconsistency can affect the final flavor and texture of the tsukemono. While modern machines can assist with slicing, the salting itself still relies on the practiced touch of a skilled artisan. As the founder of Daiyasu, Yasujirō Ōsumi, once put it, "Pickles are made with the heart."

Over those three days, the salt draws out moisture from the turnips, and the layers gradually compress to about half their original volume. The next step is the main curing. The compacted stack is carefully removed, then returned to the barrel layer by layer, this time interleaved with strips of *kombu* and a delicately balanced seasoning of *kombu* stock, mirin, vinegar, and sugar. After a further two days of maturation, the *senmaizuke* is ready.



Behind this seemingly simple process lies a quiet interplay of natural forces. As the turnips mature, lactic acid bacteria begin to develop, driving a gentle fermentation. The weight keeps air out, creating the ideal environment for these beneficial microbes while helping to prevent spoilage. Many of Kyoto's best-loved varieties—such as *senmaizuke* and the brilliant purple *shibazuke* (made with eggplant, cucumber, and perilla leaf)—are carefully maintained at a salt concentration of around 3 percent, roughly the same as seawater. This balance encourages fermentation while keeping unwanted bacteria at bay.

What is remarkable is that these techniques took shape long before the science behind them was fully understood. Through experience and intuition, generations of makers learned to work with principles like osmotic pressure and microbial activity, weaving them into a food culture that has been part of everyday life in Kyoto for centuries.

Tsukemono for beginners

Tsukemono onigiri

Let's turn now to how Daiyasu is bringing the charm of tsukemono to a wider audience, reimagining how this traditional food can be enjoyed today. One of its newest ventures is the Enmusubi

Onigiri Café, which recently opened at the company's newly renovated Gion location in Kyoto. Here, tsukemono take center stage in a menu of freshly made *onigiri*—hand-shaped rice balls filled with the shop's signature pickles, from the heirloom turnip *suguki* and *shibazuke* to *ume-daikon*, a bright combination of plum and daikon radish. It also offers refreshments such as matcha lattes and soft-serve ice cream, all available to enjoy in or on the go. Since opening, the café has drawn a growing number of customers from overseas. If the word "tsukemono" doesn't yet resonate with international visitors, the familiar appeal of a portable, hand-held snack like onigiri clearly does.



Single-portion packs

Another thoughtful initiative focuses on everyday eating habits. While many of us know we should be eating more vegetables, it's not always easy to put that into practice. In Japan, the average daily intake hovers around 280 grams—well below the recommended 350 grams. Daiyasu's "Daily Umami Vegetables" project, launched last year, offers a gentle solution. Because tsukemono have a lower moisture content, just 35 grams can provide the nutritional equivalent of around 70 grams of raw vegetables. To make this even more accessible, the company offers "Chisana Daiyasu," a line of single-serve packs designed to make it easier to bring tsukemono into our daily diet—particularly for health-conscious women and younger people, who are more likely to fall short of the recommended vegetable intake.

Fresh ideas for cooking with tsukemono

Daiyasu is also exploring fresh, creative ways to bring tsukemono into modern cooking. Think grilled salmon paired with sliced onions and finely chopped shibazuke in place of capers, or pizzas topped with *suguki*, and even shibazuke folded into peperoncino pasta for a tangy twist. At Foodex Japan Tokyo—one of Asia's largest food and beverage exhibitions held each March—the company even teamed up with the South Australian government to serve spring rolls filled with kangaroo and shibazuke which proved popular with visitors.

If you've yet to try tsukemono, incorporating them into familiar dishes is an easy and rewarding place to start. Add them to salads, pair them with grilled meats, or use them as a bright, flavorful accent in your everyday cooking. Experiment and discover just how versatile tsukemono can be!

Whether you're new to these beloved Japanese staples or simply looking to deepen your appreciation, we hope this has sparked your curiosity. Vegan- and vegetarian-friendly, healthy, rich in umami, and the very embodiment of ancestral wisdom, tsukemono bring so much to the table. And when you do try them, remember to enjoy tsukemono the classic way—alongside a bowl of freshly steamed, fluffy white rice.





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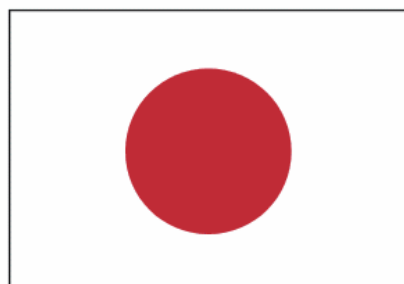
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