

JAPAN'S FOOD REVOLUTION: TRADITION REDEFINED

JAPAN'S FOOD EXCELLENCE INSPIRES THE WORLD WITH BOLD FLAVORS, SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES AND MODERN TWISTS ON TIMELESS TRADITIONS. *By Bernard Thompson, Daniel De Bomford and Megah Bintang*

Japanese cuisine seamlessly blends tradition and innovation, captivating diners worldwide. Authentic flavors, seasonal ingredients and long-practiced techniques elevate staples like ramen and sushi into cultural icons. Beyond the plate, companies are revolutionizing agriculture, creating allergy-friendly foods and reinventing tea culture. As tastes evolve, Japan's culinary excellence continues to inspire.

Japanese food companies like Kanetetsu Delica Foods are shaping the future of global cuisine. Company president Yutaka Murakami speaks to how the Japanese food manufacturer, specializing in innovative *surimi* (fish paste) products and allergy-friendly alternatives, is committed to progress and empathy-driven innovation. "We strive to deliver safe, sustainable food solutions that improve lives and make a lasting impact on society." Kanetetsu Delica Foods' vision comes to life through "Almost" food alternatives, blending taste, sustainability and inclusivity to meet diverse dietary needs.

Maruhachi Muramatsu, a *dashi* (traditional Japanese soup stock) specialist company, masterfully blends time-honored tradition

to meet modern needs. Having refined their techniques for over 150 years, company President Zempachi Muramatsu explains how their products are crucial to addressing global health concerns. "With its unique ability to enhance natural tastes, *dashi* serves as a powerful ingredient for creating healthier, delicious dishes," he says. Championing health and sustainability, Maruhachi Muramatsu preserves Japan's culinary heritage, catering to a health-conscious world.

Ujien—a renowned tea manufacturer—is also of like mind. President Sakurako Shigemura speaks to Ujien's mindset. "Our uniqueness does not lie in the products themselves but rather in the mindset and spirit," she says. "We cannot just have a strong product; we need to adapt to the times and trends." By expertly balancing tradition and innovation, Ujien is bringing authentic Japanese tea culture to global audiences.

Such advancements go beyond dining tables—they shape the foundations of our food systems. Food and agricultural companies like Nitten advance functional foods, eco-friendly animal feed and cutting-edge farming tools. Shu

Ishikuri, president of Nitten, explains, "For over 100 years, we have developed and disseminated beet cultivation techniques together with farmers in Hokkaido." Without such partnerships, sustainable agriculture would stagnate. Companies like Nitten drive progress, ensuring resilient farming, healthier food and a green future.

Japanese food culture thrives on the harmony of tradition and ingenuity, shaping the future of global cuisine. These advancements go beyond taste—they redefine how food nourishes both people and the planet. As global demand grows, Japan's focus on quality, sustainability and culinary excellence continues to inspire.



1. Kanetetsu Delica Kanikama 2. Ujien Japanese sweets 3. Nitten Hokkaido Dosanko Oligo

MODERN TEA BREWING, TRADITIONAL TASTE

UJIEŒ PRESERVES TRADITION AND BRINGS IT INTO THE MODERN DAY, ALLOWING EVERYONE TO ENJOY AUTHENTIC JAPANESE TEA.

By Daniel de Bomford, Sean McBride and Sasha Lauture



Masaru Shigemura

Chairman & CEO, Ujien Co., Ltd.

京都山城創業1869年



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"I

think the four seasons in Japan are the biggest attraction of the country," Sakurako Shigemura, president of Ujien Co., Ltd., says as she talks tea and its cultural significance. For more than 155 years, the tea manufacturer has successfully balanced preserving traditional flavors while experimenting with modern tastes. Like the seasons, Shigemura describes how flavors can reflect the variety in life and Ujien has long created tea flavors to inspire and delight changing tastes.

Ujien's gotas tea is the prime example of its pursuit of a perfect combination of tradition and modernity. Developed by Masaru Shigemura, Ujien's chairman and CEO, it is brewed with Japanese water for an authentic flavor profile, balancing the traditional tea drinking experience with the accessibility that comes with a bottle. Featured regularly at global summits and events, Ujien's considered approach to accessibility won it the Grand Prize for Packaging at the World Green Tea Contest. Its distinguished flavor had gotas featured in tea pairings offered by Xavier Thuizat, the 2022 Best Sommelier of France, at Hôtel de Crillon in Paris.

Whether one is a foreigner wishing for an authentic green tea experience or a Japanese person looking for that comforting familiarity, Ujien has created an experience faithful to the dynamic culture of Japan. Shigemura says that "Japanese tea represents Japanese culture," and Ujien succeeds in delivering an authentic experience with gotas, alongside its many blends.



ALMOST SEAFOOD IS NO IMITATION

Kanetetsu

Nourishing Life

KANETETSU DELICA FOODS IS INNOVATING ON ITS “ALMOST” RANGE OF FOODS TO TACKLE NUTRITIONAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES IN JAPAN.

By Daniel de Bomford, Sean McBride and Sasha Lauture



Yutaka Murakami

President & CEO,
Kanetetsu Delica Foods, Inc.
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Many family memories are made around the family table with a shared meal. Japan, in particular, has foods tied to particular events and holidays throughout the year, and for many, it is a time-honored tradition to share with family. Yutaka Murakami, president of Kanetetsu Delica Foods, Inc. shares stories in which their alternative “almost” foods, such as “almost crab” and “almost salmon roe” bring families together by allowing those with allergies or special dietary requirements to participate in these traditions. Murakami says that Kanetetsu Delica Foods fills both stomachs and enriches hearts, reflecting their philosophy of “nourishing life.” He explains, “We prioritize creating products that deliver not just deliciousness, but also surprise, excitement, joyful moments with family, and solutions to challenges.” With its 100th anniversary in 2026, Kanetetsu Delica Foods has been a staple at Japanese tables, offering alternatives to seafood to support people’s diets, allergy free living and healthy growth.

One of Kanetetsu’s core philosophies, Neriversal Design, is dedicated to solving food challenges and creating positive change. “We value human-centered manufacturing and prioritize the happiness of those who enjoy our Neri (fish surimi) products,” Murakami says. With its Almost Crab, Kanetetsu recreated the taste, texture and appearance of real crab using surimi, offering an affordable and delicious alternative as crab becomes less accessible. Building on this success, it expanded the concept to develop substitutes for scallops, eel, salmon roe, shrimp and

more as part of the “Almost” series. The “Almost” series also addresses broader food challenges, such as creating affordable alternatives for premium ingredients, providing safer options for allergenic or high-risk foods, and offering sustainable substitutes to protect natural resources. Beyond seafood, Kanetetsu leverages advanced manufacturing to develop plant-based and gluten-free options that meet diverse customer needs. “Through ‘Almost’ technology and a deep sense of empathy, we strive to

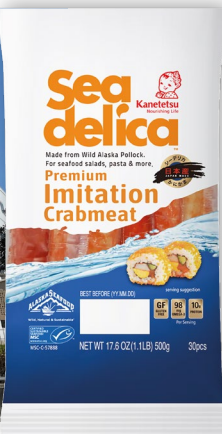


Almost Crab

deliver safe, sustainable food solutions that improve lives and make a lasting impact on society,” he says.

The success of the Kanetetsu Delica Foods products can be distilled to the “Kanetetsu Essence,” defined by innovation, hospitality (empathy) and originality. It strives to challenge the status quo and push boundaries to make progress. Hospitality and empathy are imperative qualities for meeting the needs of others. “I believe that empathy is key to great hospitality, and hospitality helps people grow their empathy,” says Murakami. Originality reflects the uniqueness of the brand and delivers products that stand out in the market.

With almost a century of experience under its belt, Kanetetsu Delica Foods is committed to continuing to create products that bring joy to those that enjoy them. Its drive to solve problems for people and the environment alike pushes them to continue to innovate. As Murakami puts it, “Our production is rooted in this people-centric philosophy, ensuring that our work resonates with and supports those we serve.”



Dashi for All: Changing the World One Dish at a Time

Maruhachi Muramatsu are broadening the appeal of dashi and taking it international.

By Daniel de Bomford, Cian O'Neill and Paul Mannion

As ingredients make the base of a beautiful meal, authentic dishes are an ingredient in the base of culture. Rich experiences through cuisine speak to our common understanding of culture, both familiar and foreign. Like cuisine as part of the basis of culture, *dashi* is the basis for many of Japan's most popular culinary dishes.

Maruhachi Muramatsu, Inc. has specialized in *dashi* for over 150 years, primarily engaging with food manufacturers and kitchens and culinary artists to produce the staples of Japanese cuisine. As Japanese food exports continue to grow, the Japanese Government has set an ambitious 5 trillion-yen target, which fifth-generation president Zempachi Muramatsu sees as achievable. "With an abundance of high-quality, health-promoting seafood and superfoods like matcha, as well as functional and health-focused foods, achieving the 5 trillion-yen market goal feels entirely within reach," he says.

The health benefits and versatility of *dashi* are its greatest strength, with health-conscious diets on the rise both domestically and globally, *dashi* can be used to reduce the salt and sugar content of dishes. However, Mr. Muramatsu says that *dashi* isn't limited to Japanese cuisine, it can be added to Western dishes as well. He explains, "With its unique ability to enhance natural tastes, *dashi* serves as a powerful ingredient for creating healthier, yet equally delicious meals." *Dashi* isn't limited to savory foods either, and Mr. Muramatsu says the company is actively exploring new ingredients to create new flavors. He describes how *Kombu dashi* complements the flavor of sweet red bean paste (*anko*) and adds "incredible depth" to a risotto.

This variety of flavor is possible through high quality and diverse, natural seafood-based ingredients, which when combined create a complex and enjoyable experience. Mr. Muramatsu explains, "We have honed techniques to maximize the potential of these ingredients while continuously developing innovative applications to meet our customers' needs." By combining their natural ingredients and the umami flavor of *dashi*, Maruhachi Muramatsu delivers tasty, cost-effective products.

Maruhachi Muramatsu supplies these products to restaurants both domesti-

cally and abroad. Mr. Muramatsu says that they offer solutions to kitchens that require authentic *dashi*, regardless of size. Its Handy Broth, for example, can make precise amounts of authentic *dashi* in just 10 seconds, reducing food waste and saving labor. Saving labor in particular is an important differentiator in Japan, where the domestic workforce continues to shrink. With the domestic market continuing to shrink, it has found success looking abroad.



With Japanese restaurants flourishing in foreign countries and Japanese food increasing in popularity around the world, Maruhachi Muramatsu is well positioned to capitalize. Mr. Muramatsu says that many foreign chefs are already well acquainted with *dashi*, and he is eager to see that recognition diffuse into the public. Because of its B2B business, this recognition has been advantageous for Maruhachi Muramatsu, "We sell seafood-based *dashi* and plant-based ramen soups to these restaurants, and our sales have been steadily increas-



ing." But beyond Japanese restaurants, the versatility of *dashi* has proven to be the key to finding new markets. "To encourage the

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"This is an exciting opportunity to introduce the wonders of *dashi* to the world."

Zempachi Muramatsu V,
President,
Maruhachi Muramatsu, Inc.

use of traditional Japanese seasonings like miso overseas, it's crucial to adapt recipes to align with each country's unique food culture," Mr. Muramatsu explains. With plant-based diets on the rise and religious diets common in international markets, kombu and shiitake-based *dashi* are also finding vital channels for increased growth. He surmises, "As global palates become more diverse and menus expand, I am confident this will lead to further market growth and exciting opportunities."

These opportunities exist beyond the humble *dashi* with Maruhachi Muramatsu's R&D division making strides in functional foods and pharmaceutical sectors. Mr. Muramatsu says that they are committed to tackling global health challenges, such as osteoporosis, dementia and swallowing disorders by contributing to research, publishing findings and participating in academic conferences. "This year, we will conduct clinical trials focused on the elderly, striving to contribute to society with products that promote longer, healthier lives," he says.

As the basis for cuisine, both traditional and modern, Mr. Muramatsu hopes that their *dashi* goes beyond and contributes to the betterment of the world. With rising sea temperatures affecting ingredients and processing generating waste, he hopes that Maruhachi Muramatsu can contribute meaningfully to its SDGs and a sustainable future.



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