

# Asahi Shokuhin: Think Local, Share Global

Asahi Shokuhin is bringing Japanese food culture to international markets and introducing people to local specialties. *By Daniel de Bomford and Cian O'Neill*



"Our strategy is about how quickly we can connect products with retailers."

Takahisa Takeuchi, President,  
ASAHI SHOKUHI Co., Ltd.

Every facet of culture is an insight into the history and the people from whom it belongs. Food is an inescapable part of culture and one that can be shared with people from the outside. It is a form of communication. Since UNESCO has designated *washoku*—Japanese cuisine—as an intangible cultural heritage, it has enjoyed an explosion of popularity around the globe. With the Japanese government looking to expand exports to 5 trillion-yen, food will play a vital role in reaching those goals.

Asahi Shokuhin Co., Ltd. is a major player in bringing Japanese cuisine to new markets, giving more people the opportunity to experience Japanese culture. President Takahisa Takeuchi says the key to Asahi Shokuhin's business is to secure product supplies and exits. "It's key for us to grasp

the hearts and minds of these end users, promote the products and show the variety of the Japanese gastronomical scene," he says.

Asahi Shokuhin's international strategy is cognizant of local trends and demands. From the manufacturer's side, it leverages data to assist the manufacturer in finding the best retailers. Takeuchi points out that many wholesalers use data, digitization and technology to enhance marketing, but Asahi Shokuhin takes it further. "What sets us apart and is one of our strengths is helping manufacturers sell what they really want to sell, not what they have to sell because they have no choice," he says.



Made with Real Shrimp

Asahi Shokuhin supports local infrastructure and brings local Japanese specialties to the world through donations and grants to local producers and university research. By developing products based on local specialties with local ingredients, Takeuchi says it enables them to support local regions, strengthen local business and enable local food culture to spread throughout the world.



3 Traditional Japanese Flavors

Asahi Shokuhin is looking to continue its international expansion in the face of Japanese demographic decline. "We're definitely looking to expand our partnerships because our global business strategy is to leverage our strength of connecting people, and partnerships are indispensable for that,"

Takeuchi says. He considers the U.S. to be a mature market for Japanese cuisine, and Asahi Shokuhin continues to pursue partnerships in the region. It is also looking closer to home in Asia. Its overseas development division is proactively looking to expand the network and connect with retailers, be it in China or elsewhere. Takeuchi describes how their peers prioritize logistics and infrastructure, but Asahi Shokuhin takes a different approach due to the time and cost. Rather, its strategy is to connect products to retailers. With that approach, Asahi Shokuhin is set to continue bringing Japanese culture and *washoku* into homes around the world.

Front and center of Asahi Shokuhin's global strategy is Foodem Co., Ltd., Washoku Series, which has a focus on premium high-quality Japanese food. Takeuchi says the goal of the series is to sell authentic Japanese cuisine overseas. One product at the heart of this series is Shrimp Cheek, a nutritious snack made from shrimp. The rich umami flavor can be

presented as a snack, complement alcohol and as a topping or decoration. The product is distinctly Japanese, inspired by the Japanese tradition of using shrimp heads for their umami flavor in dishes like miso soup and offers flavors such as shichimi, wasabi and yuzu pepper.



An important facet of the *Washoku* series is minimizing waste, aligning with the Japanese concept of *mottainai*. This goes hand in hand with Asahi Shokuhin's sustainability goals, and the shrimp cheek was created with these goals in mind. It also aligns with SDGs with affordability, supporting job growth in the fishing industry and is produced responsibly and sustainably. New global Japanese flavors are under development and will be launched at Foodex 2025 at South Hall 1, booth S1-P12.



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