

# DISCOVER JAPANESE CONFECTIONERY, CUISINE AND CULTURE

JAPANESE COMPANIES ARE LOOKING OUTWARD AND INTRODUCING THE WORLD TO JAPANESE CONFECTIONERY, LOCAL DELICACIES AND FUNCTIONAL MEALS ROOTED IN BOTH TRADITION AND INNOVATION. *By Daniel de Bomford and Bernard Thompson*



**J**apanese food is remarkably diverse. Beyond the glitz of famous fatty tuna sushi and wagyu lies a vast array of cuisines, from sweets to seafood, with ingredients that are defined by Japan's varied environs. Japanese food pioneers are looking outward to share with the world scrumptious cultural staples and modern meals that mend both body and soul.

As a wholesaler and product developer, MIYATA is perpetuating *washoku* and introducing it to entirely new people abroad. "Our mission is to promote Japanese confectionery culture by creating unique and exceptional products with our makers, and to share the beauty of Japanese confectionery with customers around the world," President Janzen Tai says.

Odagaki Shoten has supplied *tamabaguro*, black soybeans, to traditional Japanese cuisine for nearly 150 years, and President Noboru Odagaki says they are gaining fame in foreign countries, such as Italy. "They're incredibly versatile—not just for *osechi*. They can be used in Western sweets, in pancakes, even ground into protein powder," he says.

Tsushima Suisan wants to introduce authentic *washoku* to the world, specifically *anago*, or conga eel, one of Tsushima's signature dishes. "By adapting to and harmonizing with local food cultures,

*washoku* is gaining deeper and broader acceptance around the world," says President Yoshiyuki Konda.

Despite being a staple, Japanese rice is often overlooked as a significant aspect of the country's culinary heritage. Ogata Village Akitakomachi Rice Producers provides the opportunity to experience this unique culture authentically

through its rice-based products. Chairman and CEO Toru Wakui states, "We're helping to keep rice relevant for modern consumers both in Japan and abroad."

Alongside agriculture, *washoku* is evolving with the times, and companies are pioneering a new era of functional foods. Sanmaruko Foods President Kodai Fujii looks to address society's health challenges with Dr. Dish frozen meals, a functional food that prioritizes wellbeing. "We want to be a company that society truly needs—one that helps people live healthier, happier lives."

**"In Japanese cuisine, each menu item has its own distinct identity and technique."**

**Kodai Fujii**

president,  
Sanmaruko Foods Co. Ltd.

## AUTHENTIC JAPANESE RICE PRODUCTS NOW IN U.S.



THE LOCAL RICE CHAMPIONS ARE BOLDLY EXPANDING INTO THE UNITED STATES AND BRINGING AN AUTHENTIC JAPANESE FLAVOR EXPERIENCE. *By Daniel de Bomford and Paul Mannion*

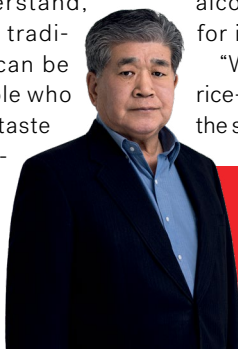
**J**apan's Ogata Village is famous for its rice production. For decades, locals have banded together to cultivate some of the highest-quality rice in the country. Ogata Village Akitakomachi Rice Producers was specifically formed to support this collective effort. Chairman and CEO Toru Wakui states that the company has successfully established sales channels in external markets. It is currently focusing on expanding into the United States with a strategy centered on its packed rice, gluten-free ramen and *amazake*.

While gluten-free ramen is easy for international consumers to understand, packed rice and *amazake*—a traditional fermented rice drink—can be more challenging. "Many people who visit Japan fall in love with the taste and texture of authentic Japanese rice and want to recreate that experience at home," Wakui says. The challenge is that without a rice cooker, especially a Japanese one, or Japanese water, which is

considered "softer," emulating Japanese rice can be difficult. Packed rice delivers the Japanese rice experience abroad, without the need for special preparation—just a microwave. "We also emphasize how versatile our packed rice is. It's ideal for making *onigiri* or even sushi at home," he says.

Although *amazake* literally means sweet sake, it is not alcoholic. Instead, it is a fermented, *koji*-based drink that is typically consumed during the summer. To avoid any unintended association, the company has branded its *amazake* as The Rice Malt, which is sugar- and alcohol-free, with added lactic acid bacteria for intestinal health.

"We want to highlight the unique charm of our rice—not just its utility as a gluten-free base but the story, flavor and integrity behind it," Wakui says.



**"What sets us apart is the care and quality."**

**Toru Wakui**

chairman and CEO,  
Ogata Village Akitakomachi Rice Producers Co. Ltd.



“We’re committed to offering food that’s not only delicious but also genuinely good for people..”

Kodai Fujii  
president,  
Sanmaruko Foods Pty. Ltd.  
www.sanmaruko.co.jp

# DR. DISH: THIS IS FOOD INNOVATION

SANMARUKO FOODS IS TRANSFORMING JAPAN’S APPROACH TO HEALTH AND NUTRITION WITH INNOVATIVE, SCIENCE-DRIVEN MEALS DESIGNED TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING THROUGH SMARTER, MORE MINDFUL EATING. *By Daniel de Bomford and Cian O’Neill*

The first bite of a meal is often the most difficult to savor. As flavors flood the tastebuds and fragrant aromas caress the senses, taking one’s time can feel impossible. With the focus on creating tasty foods, it’s easy to see why studies show that people are chewing food for fewer seconds than ever before. An overreliance on intense flavors, additives and salts is shortening chewing times and can lead to poor health outcomes. Sanmaruko Foods President Kodai Fujii considers this a significant challenge, both for enjoyment and, most importantly, for health. The Hokkaido-based food manufacturer Sanmaruko Foods was founded in 1979 and specializes in



the production of frozen foods. Its groundbreaking medical and functional Dr. Dish line, which supports health management, is emblematic of the company’s philosophy of supporting customers’ happiness through high-quality products.

In the wake of increasing diabetes diagnoses in Japan, Fujii describes the current food market as filled with “food tragedies,” driven by low prices and convenience at the cost of nutritional quality. He goes on to say that food-related health education is a “missing piece” of society, and poor eating habits can lead to poor body image and emotional struggles. “At our company, we’re striving for the opposite: to enrich lives through the products we offer—empowering people to feel better, live healthier and regain confidence,” he says. This is particularly close to Fujii’s heart, after he himself lost over 50 kilograms. “It was a long journey, but through it, I gained a deep understanding of both health and taste. That experience fundamentally changed how I think about food,” he says. The company has decided to move away from conventional formulas that focus solely on taste and cost. “We’re committed to offering food that’s not only delicious but also genuinely good for people—something we can stand behind with pride,” he says.

Sanmaruko Foods is addressing this societal challenge through its Dr. Dish frozen meal delivery service, backed by evidence-based health foods that are also delicious. The meals are primarily designed to support individuals with diabetes. A key indicator is reducing the level of HbA1c, or glycated hemoglobin, which reflects a person’s average blood sugar

levels over two to three months. Dr. Dish meals are precisely balanced to meet the dietary guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Japan’s Ministry of Health



and limit salt intake to less than two grams per meal. While similar products exist, most are not as strictly nutritionally controlled, and Sanmaruko Foods noticed that consumers often give up using them. Through its research, the company identified three key issues: the meals frequently lacked flavor (due to low salt content) and tended to be watery, menus were limited and there was often no clear evidence that the meals improved health. In response, Sanmaruko Foods expanded its menu and conducted clinical trials to gather data that showed the meals effectively reduced HbA1c levels. It also focused on enhancing texture, which specifically targeted the sensory experience.

Through its research, Sanmaruko Foods has developed a new approach, utilizing its “four-dimensional sensory design.” The X axis represents the materials, like the meat or the vegetables, and the Y axis represents flavor, such as that of spices and herbs. The Z axis captures umami, richness and depth. “Most product development ends at the two-dimensional level, but we include a fourth: time,” Fujii explains. The fourth dimension relates to the timeline of eating, specifically how long food is chewed. The company’s research indicates that the minimum ideal is 17 seconds, with 30 seconds being optimal to prevent spikes in glucose. Time influences not only digestion and nutrition, but also how flavors unfold in the mouth.

The company discovered that overly intense flavors can prompt people to swallow more quickly, potentially leading to overeating. By carefully adjusting the way the ingredients are cut and heated, the food’s texture and seasoning are engineered to promote slower chewing and broader contact with the tongue. It also focuses on building long-lasting flavors that intensify with each bite, making the food feel rich and satisfying, even with the reduced salt content. The meals are designed to allow the eating experience to unfold in the mouth, encouraging slower chewing and a more satisfying sensory experience. “This multidimensional thinking—grounded in both sensory experience and science—is what sets us apart and guides the way we create and evaluate our food,” Fujii says.

Sanmaruko is planning to open a clinic in Ginza that offers food-based therapy, treating patients through the consumption of specially formulated foods, essentially Dr. Dish as medicine. The clinic doesn’t serve only those with health conditions but also those who are looking to improve their wellness proactively. Clients can receive health assessments and personalized recommendations for the ingredients and nutrition their bodies need. The company operates a restaurant in Sapporo called FW, where people can enjoy Sanmaruko Food’s four-dimensional approach firsthand. The restaurant serves a delicious, carefully crafted menu with an extremely low salt content. The meal provides customers with the opportunity to detox and experience the difference in their body the next day.

Fujii says the company is committed to tackling society’s challenges through food innovation, relying on precise, measurable data and clinical evidence. “More than anything, we want to be a company that society truly needs—one that helps people live healthier, happier lives,” he says. However, it cannot tackle these challenges on its own. The company is open to collaborating with partners who share Sanmaruko Food’s dream of empowering people to feel better, live healthier and regain confidence. It is seeking food manufacturers and contributing to broader solutions. As Fujii states, “Our vision is for the human species to prosper—and we believe that’s a goal we can all get behind.”



北海道から もっと美味しく健康に







# MIYATA BRINGS THE ART OF JAPANESE Confectionery to the World

For nearly a century, Japan confectionery makers have perfected the balance of artistry and flavor. Now, MIYATA, a seasoned player in the industry, is helping to bring these traditions to global markets, one tailored sweet at a time. *By Daniel de Bomford, Arthur Menkes and Cian O'Neill*



The MIYATA Library showcases the company's extensive range of traditional and modern Japanese confectionery

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apanese confectionery reflects the nation's deep cultural roots. With over 90 years of expertise, MIYATA is not only a Japanese confectionery wholesaler, but also a planning expert on developing confectionery.

"Our mission is to promote Japanese confectionery culture by creating unique and exceptional products with our makers and to share the beauty of Japanese confectionery with customers around the world," President Janzen Tai says.

## The Power of Product Development

Beyond distribution, MIYATA thrives as a product development powerhouse, offering private brand (PB) development and original equipment manufacturers (OEM) services and developing MIYATA's own brands. The company leverages a large base of market data and experience to shape the development of flavors that perform best in specific geographic markets. "In the confectionery industry, understanding and tailoring products closely aligned with consumers' lives is important," Tai states.

## Going Global, Hand in Hand

The company has extensive experience in the Japanese and global markets and understands local preferences worldwide. MIYATA

has endeavored to partner with its manufacturers and customers to enter international markets, enabling MIYATA to offer data-driven strategies and hands-on support. "We understand the needs of our makers and leverage our intelligence and data on international consumer preferences to support our partners," Tai explains.



MIYATA branded products developed with manufacturers

This guidance can cover everything from consumer preferences in taste or ingredients to local packaging design or emphasizing products' key selling points. The company has already received numerous enquiries from overseas markets and exports to Asia, Oceania and the Middle East. Tai says that Europe, Canada and the United States are among its target markets. "We don't just expand—we build lasting partnerships," Tai emphasizes. "We grow by growing with our partners."

**"Our mission is to share the excellence of Japanese confectionery with the world."**

**Janzen Tai**

president, MIYATA Co. Ltd.  
managing director, Four Seas Group

[www.miyata-net.co.jp/en](http://www.miyata-net.co.jp/en)

## ABOUT FOUR SEAS GROUP

MIYATA's parent company, Four Seas Group, is a Hong Kong-based food conglomerate with over 50 years of expertise in trading, retail, F&B and manufacturing. It's the sole agent of iconic Japanese confectionery brands like Meiji, Glico, Lotte, Calbee and Yoku Moku, etc., in Hong Kong, as well as F&B brands like Torikizoku and the Michelin-starred omakase restaurant Sushiyoshi, etc., also in Hong Kong. [www.fourseasgroup.com.hk/us/](http://www.fourseasgroup.com.hk/us/)

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TSUSHIMA SUISAN  
JAPAN QUALITY

# Japan Quality

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The essence of Japanese cuisine lies in the freshness of its ingredients and the craftsmanship of its chefs.

To preserve that freshness and deliver it to dining tables across the globe, Japan has elevated the technology of freezing into an art form and a culture of its own. This is Japan quality, where carefully selected premium fish are processed using *ikejime*, vacuum packed and flash frozen.

Every step is designed to maximize the natural flavors of the ingredients.

It is a perfect fusion of carefully chosen ingredients and masterful technique. Supervised by Hisano, chef at a Michelin 2-starred restaurant, we proudly present: Densuke Simmered Conger Eel Sushi Roll

Each slice embodies the very essence of Japanese culinary tradition. Simply heat it up in a microwave and enjoy authentic Japanese cuisine that tastes as if it were freshly made — right in the comfort of your home, anywhere in the world.

\*Overseas tasting events are being held with support from the Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO).



Supervised by Michelin 2★  
“Hisano” Chef

## Tsushima Suisan Headquarters—HACCP-Certified Facility to Global Standards



Tsushimasuisan Co., Ltd.

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