

MESSAGE FROM CONSUL-GENERAL SASAYAMA TAKUYA

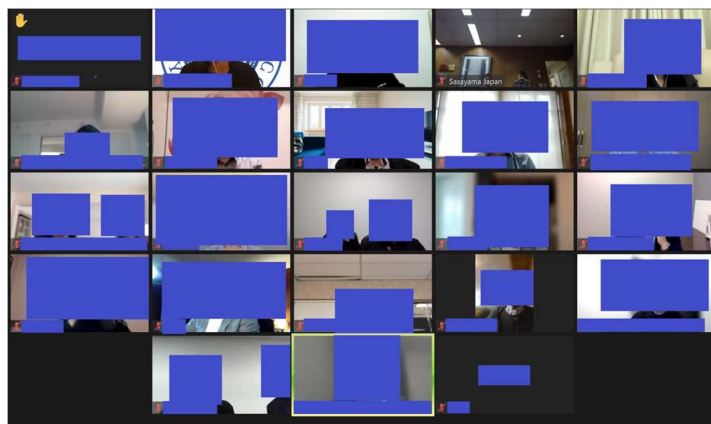
January 2022

Happy New Year!

As 2022, the year of the tiger, begins, I would like to take this opportunity to ask for your continued support of our work.

At the start of the year, the Government of Ontario announced new public health measures to combat COVID-19, in particular the Omicron variant. The Consulate-General of Japan also continues its policy of requiring phone reservations ahead of in-person visits. Those of you considering visiting or returning to Japan should also be aware that restrictive measures remain in place. We ask for your kind understanding with respect to any inconvenience this may cause. Schools in Ontario, which for a time were online only, resumed in-person learning subsequently, and the provincial government also announced on January 20 that other restrictions will later be lifted in stages. This month also saw the biggest snowstorm in decades. For a time, vehicles stuck in snow were noticeable everywhere. This year has been hit with various challenges from the start, but I eagerly await the day when we are able to sprint like tigers after things settle down.

On January 12, the Consulate-General of Japan co-hosted a networking session with JETRO Toronto to connect local Japanese importers with Canadian consumers with the aim to increase Japan's exports of agricultural and food products. A total of about 30 attendants gathered online, including representatives of five locally active Japanese companies and 15 members of ACCE (Association of Chinese Canadian Entrepreneurs).



Growing together through trade
JANUARY 12, 2022 | 11AM

Takaya Sasayama
 Consul-General of Japan in Toronto

Takashi Saito
 Executive Director JETRO Toronto

Irwin Li
 Former President ACCE

The purpose of this business meeting is to broker a fruitful exchange of trade in the agricultural and food sectors, between Japan and Canada.

If you would like to attend and take part, please contact Mystique Company Ms. Masuda at am@mystiquecompany.com

Please register by January 10, 5PM

If you would like to attend, please ensure to state:

- 1) Your full name and company details (address, phone number & email)
- 2) If you would like to participate online or in-person at the Consulate-General of Japan (77 King St. W, Suite #3300, M5K 1A1, Sakura Room)**

** please be advised that in-person attendance may be capped in accordance with Ontario COVID-19 measures

The Government of Japan is implementing various policies with the goal of increasing exports of agricultural and food products to 5 trillion yen (approx. \$55 billion CAD) by 2030. This networking session was a part of this initiative. Interest in Japanese food is particularly high, and we were able to gain the support of the ACCE, which has many restaurants and supermarket owners among its members. There was a lively exchange of views on matters of interest to both sides, as well as on products that should be noted for the future.

There are a great number of Japanese restaurants operating in Toronto and Ontario, and sushi is now even visible at kiosks located in supermarkets. While great effort is already being put forth by many people, the Government of Japan would like to ensure Torontonians are using authentic Japanese ingredients so that they can understand the true appeal of Japanese cuisine – or washoku, which has been designated an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO. It has also been noticeable lately that Japan’s safe and high-quality agricultural and food products are being used in types of cooking other than washoku, such as French and Chinese. The Greater Toronto Area is also one of the largest urban centres in North America where a vastly multicultural population is expected to continue growing. There is much room for development. This networking session was held against such a background.

Here in Toronto, there are people already active in promoting washoku as well as Japanese agricultural and food products. The Government of Japan appointed Chef KIMURA Shigeo as Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador in 2016. Last year, he was awarded the Foreign Minister’s Commendation in October, as well as one of the 15th Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Minister’s Awards for Overseas Promotion of Japanese Food in December. Chef Kimura moved to Canada 49 years ago. In addition to operating Ginko Japanese Restaurant, he was among the first who laid the foundation

for the immense popularity Japanese food enjoys today. Also, in January this year, Chef KASHIWABARA Seiichi was appointed a Japanese Cuisine Goodwill Ambassador for fiscal year 2021. Like Chef Kimura, Chef Kashiwabara is a Director of the Japanese Restaurant Association of Canada. Under the Zen Japanese Restaurant Group, he operates one restaurant serving sushi and other Japanese dishes and another specializing in Sanuki udon noodles. He is also passionate about mentoring future generations of chefs aspiring to master washoku. Meanwhile, Mr. Michael Tremblay, a Canadian, works hard at Ki Modern Japanese + Bar to promote understanding and appreciation of sake as a Sake Samurai (an official expertise designation by the Japan Sake Brewers Association Junior Council). As well, at the Japanese Canadian Cultural Centre (JCCC), the hub of Japanese culture in Toronto, there is the Kaiseki Yu-zen Hashimoto Restaurant, a hub for promoting Japanese culinary culture in the city.

There are too many Japanese restaurants in Toronto to introduce them all here. Santouka, headquartered in Hokkaido since 1988, opened a restaurant in the heart of Toronto in 2012 and was the forerunner leading the subsequent immense popularity of ramen in the city. Japanese ramen noodles are now becoming a part of Toronto's food culture. For example, there is a ramen restaurant called Oji Seichi, run by Japanese Canadians offering authentic Japanese flavours. It was even reported on in a local newspaper. With respect to sweets, Hattendo, headquartered in Mihara of Hiroshima Prefecture, is currently devoting energy into expanding in Toronto. When I was working at the Embassy of Japan in South Korea, I had the experience of taking (then) Foreign Minister KISHIDA Fumio, who was visiting Seoul, to a Hattendo in the basement of a local department store. One of the biggest news in Toronto recently is that Chef SAITO Masaki, who was awarded two Michelin stars in New York, has opened a restaurant here. I had the opportunity to meet with him online, and he passionately told me he wanted to provide authentic Edomae sushi to customers overseas and that what is most important in the kitchen is not technique but spirit and love. He is sure to be a presence that will impact and revolutionize the food landscape in Toronto.



Hattendo sweets kiosk



Oji Seichi



Chef SAITO Masaki

Increasing export of agricultural and food products from Japan entails connecting Japanese producers with overseas fans of Japanese cuisine and lovers of Japanese food and produce, both of whom already exist in large numbers. My understanding is that there are already many so-called “cold chains” in Japan which connect producers with consumers with IT, delivering food to consumers quickly and safely. It is important to envision extending these kinds of connections and chains overseas, keeping in mind the consumers who exist beyond the names of airports and harbours. There are not many Canadian companies that only think of conducting their businesses in Canada. Most build their businesses with the understanding of the large market next door that is the United States, as well as the European countries that are close both historically and culturally with Canada. The same kind of thinking is needed to further develop Japanese agriculture. The importance of DX (digital transformation) is being recognized by both the public and private sectors. I believe this kind of perspective is crucial to further promoting export of Japanese agricultural and food products.