



日本食・食文化普及の人材育成支援事業



Japanese Cuisine and Dietary Culture Human Resource Development Program



- FY2025 Report -

【Program Objectives】

This program invites international chefs specializing in Japanese cuisine to Japan to deepen their knowledge and refine their culinary skills, primarily through hands-on-training at traditional Japanese restaurants. The program aims to empower participants to become ambassadors of Japanese food, culinary culture, and ingredients in their home countries, while also fostering potential partnership with Japanese cuisine-related companies expanding internationally. Participants are expected to increase their use or purchase of Japanese-produced ingredients at their restaurants by at least 30% within two years of completing the program.

【2025 Program Summary】

In FY2025, the program selected 11 trainees from 7 countries across Asia, Europe, and the Americas from a pool of 185 applicants representing 40 countries worldwide. Participants joined one of two courses in Japanese cuisine: a long-term course featuring approximately six months of on-site training, or a short-term course with approximately one month of on-site training.

The program began with one month of online study covering the fundamentals of Japanese cuisine, including knife skills and the concept *umami*. Trainees then traveled to Japan in late August to study the five core techniques of Japanese cooking -- cutting, simmering, grilling, steaming, and deep-frying -- at a Japanese culinary school. They continued their training at renowned Japanese restaurants in Kyoto and Tokyo. Through hands-on experience in professional Japanese kitchens, trainees acquired valuable knowledge and skills beyond what could be learned online.

After completing the program, and taking the certification exam based on the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries' "Certification of Japanese Culinary Skills Abroad" guidelines, 7 trainees earned Silver certification and 4 earned the Bronze. They are expected to be further promote Japanese cuisine in their home countries using the skills and expertise gained through the program.

■ Group training at Taiwa Gakuen Kyoto Culinary Arts College (KCAC) (August 22-30, 2025)



■ Hands-on training at the restaurants (September 1, 2025 - February 16, 2026)



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■ Presentation of training results & Completion ceremony (February 20, 2026)



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Here's what the participants had to say:

"Using all the skills and experience I gained, I hope to show people what Japanese cuisine truly is, what it can be, and perhaps one day open my own cooking school or offer cooking courses" (Havelka, Czech Republic),












"In the near future, I hope to open my own small restaurant and prepare *washoku* in a way that Turkish people will enjoy. I want people in Turkey to know that Japanese cuisine is more than just sushi and ramen" (Cetinel, Türkiye),

"Thank you for giving me the opportunity to participate in this program. It was an unforgettable experience and one of the best times of my life. I will definitely come back to earn my Silver certification, and after that, I will certainly aim for the Gold qualification" (Tobler, Switzerland),

"I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of the program and to be a member of a renowned restaurant team. This experience will stay with me forever, and no one can ever take it away from me" (Ciszek, Poland), and

"I want to apply everything I learned in this program to support young chefs who are passionate about Japanese cuisine, helping them understand the cultural significance of Japanese food while emphasizing respect for natural flavors, artistic presentation, and preserving the true essence of the cuisine" (Gade, India).

FY2025 Trainees (*Short-term trainees)

		Name	Age at the arrival in Japan	Nationality	Employer as of May 2025 ★ Japanese Food and Ingredient Supporter Stores Overseas	Training restaurant
1		David Alexander Balshem	21	USA	Clay at Wildflower Farms by Auberge Resorts	Arashiyama Kumahiko
2		Leonardo Sebastian Tobler	22	Switzerland	Drei Könige Luzern	Shichi Jyu Ni Kou
3		Claudio Farinelli	34	Italy	Umami - Trattoria Giapponese ★ (Co-owner chef)	Akasaka Kikunoi
4		David Havelka	30	Czech Republic	MANYA Sushi & Sake Izakaya	Minokichi Honten Takeshigerou
5		Michał Paweł Ciszek	28	Poland	Yōko Restaurant ★	Kikunoi Honten
6		Advait Sanjay Patil	27	India	Izumi Bandra ★	Tankuma Kita-mise
7		Zeynep Çetinel	32	Türkiye	Ken Sushi and More	Uosaburo
8		Petr Bartoš*	34	Czech Republic	Kruh Dining (Owner chef)	Isshisoden Nakamura & Uosaburo
9		Aleks Dąbrowski*	25	Poland	Nare Sushi Skórzewo ★	Kinobu
10		Akash Mahendra Gade*	26	India	Ginkgo Pune ★	Toriyone
11		Derya Can*	34	Türkiye	Nobu Istanbul	Minokichi Honten Takeshigerou

Cooperating School

Taiwa Gakuen Kyoto Culinary Art College (KCAC)	https://www.taiwa.ac.jp/global/en
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Cooperating Restaurants

	Name of restaurant	Representative	URL
1	Akasaka Kikunoi	Yoshihiro Murata	https://kikunoi.jp/en/
2	Shichi Jyu Ni Kou	Akio Saito	https://www.72kou.jp/marunouchi/english.html
3	Tankuma Kitamise	Masahiro Kurisu	https://www.tankumakita.jp/en/
4	Arashiyama Kumahiko	Motoi Kurisu	https://kumahiko.com/en/
5	Uosaburo	Shigeo Araki	https://www.uosaburo.com/english.html
6	Minokichi Honten Takeshigero	Yoji Satake	https://www.takeshigero.com/english/
7	Kikunoi Honten	Yoshihiro Murata	https://kikunoi.jp/en/
8	Kinobu	Takuji Takahashi	http://www.kinobu.co.jp/en/
9	Toriyone	Yoshinori Tanaka	https://www.toriyone.com/
10	Isshisoden Nakamura	Moyokazu Nakamura	http://www.kyoryori-nakamura.com/

Testimonials from 2025 Program Participants



Advait Sanjay Patil (India)

I had always wanted to learn about Japanese culture and kaiseki cuisine. By actually staying in Japan, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of the changing seasons and the importance of hospitality. I also learned the value of attention to detail and approaching everything with humility—in other words, the importance of discipline in Japanese cuisine.



Leonard Sebastian Tobler (Switzerland)

My experience in this program made me realize: 1) the importance of each individual ingredient and its natural flavor—even before the finished dish itself—and 2) the importance of teamwork and the value of working together with mutual respect. Witnessing firsthand a kitchen where chefs approach their craft with this spirit every day filled me with both amazement and great joy.



Claudio Farinelli (Italy)

Among the many things I learned during my time in Japan, what I found most important was approaching everything with respect—whether it be tradition, ingredients, customers, or everyone involved. My perspective on Japanese cuisine changed through the experience of cooking while reflecting on the fact that each ingredient has its own unique history and characteristics. Upon returning home, I hope to put the many experiences and insights I have gained into practice.



Michał Paweł Ciszek (Poland)

Through this training, I believe I have not only improved as a chef but also grown as a person. It was not just about learning cooking skills; I was able to gain a wide range of related knowledge as well. More importantly, I learned the mindset and philosophy behind cooking. I hope to apply not only the Japanese cuisine I have learned, but also the various practices and cultural context behind it, to my future career.



Zeynep Çetinel (Türkiye)

Just as every game has beginner, intermediate, and advanced levels, I consider myself, when it comes to Japanese cuisine, to be at a stage where I can only just make out the intermediate level on the horizon. I imagine there is still a long road ahead before I finally reach the advanced level. However, now that I have been able to assess where I stand, I intend to continue working hard with single-minded dedication, keep studying, and strive to improve.



Akash Mahendra Gade (India)

Being able to observe various cooking techniques up close allowed me to deepen my understanding of Japanese cuisine, further fuel my passion, and reaffirm the importance of the spirit of hospitality. I also learned that, rather than pursuing complexity, one of the core values of Japanese cuisine is to highlight the natural flavors of each ingredient and bring out the unique characteristics of each season.



Derya Can (Türkiye)

Through this training program, which gave me an incredibly valuable opportunity, I was able to learn about traditional kaiseki cuisine, and it reaffirmed the importance of respect for ingredients, teamwork, and a dedicated approach to one's work. I was also able to revisit and practice fundamental techniques, which helped strengthen my skills as a chef. In addition, I gained valuable experience working with ingredients I had never encountered before, such as eel and soft-shelled turtle.



Aleks Dąbrowski (Poland)

As this was my first time experiencing kaiseki cuisine, I had many questions. However, the kitchen staff always answered them cheerfully; even when they were busy, it felt as though they genuinely welcomed my curiosity. At the same time, I came to realize just how much I did not know and became keenly aware of the gaps in my knowledge. I also had the opportunity to meet other trainees who shared my passion for Japanese cuisine, which was incredibly inspiring and helped renew my own enthusiasm.



Petr Bartoš (Czech Republic)

This training experience made me realize the importance of learning not only the various techniques of Japanese cuisine, but also its culture and spirit. I believe this is something of great value that should be shared with the world, so I hope to bring the experiences I have gained back to my home country and help share them there.