

THE 5TH SATOYAMA PRACTITIONERS NETWORKING EVENT

Satoyama × inbound

- Hokkaido's potential -



Hokkaido's potential to be transmitted globally in 5th satoyama event

Maiko Muraoka
Contributing writer

Ahead of the fifth event to share insights and experiences about revitalizing rural economies through the sustainable use of resources, to be held in the Hokkaido town of Yoichi, Kosuke Motani, the chief senior economist at the Japan Research Institute Ltd. and an adviser to The Japan Times' Sustainable Japan Network, spoke to The Japan Times about the significance of this annual event and what he expects from this year's meeting.

Motani has been a keynote speaker and moderator of panel sessions since the first event was held in the Hiroshima Prefecture town of Jinseki in 2018. "Among many of the events under similar themes, this event stands out as one of the few that gather truly diversified speakers and participants," he said. He particularly values the fact that speakers consist of men and women of vari-

ous generations and backgrounds who actually engage in hands-on activities to rejuvenate local communities, not just old men who dominate senior executive positions for regional promotion.

"Another notable characteristic of the event is that it has been organized by The Japan Times, and the outcome of the event is transmitted globally," he said, pointing out that being able to reach out directly to the world is hugely significant for Japan's rural communities.

Motani said the world's interest in Japan's rural communities is growing. "There is an increasing demand for travel to uncrowded areas among the foreign tourists who have come to Japan after the pandemic. I feel this trend will continue," he said. He also commented that an increasing number of Japanese have chosen to live in rural areas while working remotely.

New businesses are popping up in the

countryside, and proving to be successful. "Up until several years ago, the typical way of launching a new business in a rural community was to copy a business model that had been successful in Tokyo, which didn't

always work," he said. Recently, entrepreneurs in rural areas are starting businesses at scales and with methods that are different from those in urban areas, he added.

He said that the overpopulation of Tokyo is at an insane level even compared to other big cities around the world and that it is wrong to think businesses can only succeed through mass sales in metropolises.



Photo by Yuka Aoki
Kosuke Motani Senior researcher at the Japan Research Institute

He added that there is abundant potential in rural areas, and more and more people who pursue quality over quantity are finding value in a slower-paced lifestyle surrounded by nature.

Motani regrets that Hokkaido, the venue of this year's event, is often labeled as a hinterland with depopulating communities. "The inhabitable areas of Hokkaido are actually more densely populated than those in many European countries," he said, and so it should not be impossible for various industries and businesses to grow. "In fact, rice, wheat, livestock and dairy farming, fisheries, grape cultivation and winemaking are all doing well there. Thanks to its vast lands and high precipitation, Hokkaido is one of the several prefectures in Japan that are self-sufficient in food," he said.

Hokkaido has the potential to be more

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than self-sufficient — the land is broad enough to produce feed for livestock farming across the country and the manure from its livestock can be used to increase agricultural production in a sustainable way, contributing to the improvement of the nation's overall food self-sufficiency.

"There is also the potential to further enhance the value of what Hokkaido produces by improving the levels of processing and cooking. To promote such efforts, it is important to leverage the external demand from people visiting Hokkaido," Motani said. He concluded his comments by expressing his hope that the focus of this year's event, gastronomy tourism, would stir insightful discussions.

The Japan Times Sustainable Japan Network は余市町と共催し、第5回 Satoyama 実践者交流会を開催。今回は『里山×インパウンド～北海道のポテンシャル～』をテーマに藻谷浩介氏の基調講演やドメーナ・タカヒコの曾我貴彦氏、余市町の齊藤啓輔町長、ニセコ町の片山健也町長などによるパネルディスカッション、また各地で地域全体の活性化に寄与する実践者、高校生のみなさんに里山や里海の視点からその活動や



The 2022 satoyama event in Mutsu, Aomori Prefecture



Last year's satoyama event in Tottori, Tottori Prefecture

成果を共有いただく。2018年に広島県神石町で第1回が開催されて以来、基調講演やパネルセッションのモデレーターを務める藻谷氏は、「多様なスピーカーや参加者が集まる数少ないイベント」で「その成果が世界に発信されることも大きな特徴」と話す。日本の地方社会に対する世界の関心が高まっており、地方で新しいビジネスが次々と生まれ、成功を収めていることにも触れ、地方には

豊かな可能性があり、量より質を追求する人々が増えており、自然に囲まれたスローなライフスタイルに価値を見出す人が増えていると付け加えた。今回の開催地、北海道については「米、小麦、畜産、酪農、漁業、ブドウ栽培、ワイン醸造などが盛ん。広大な土地と降水量の多さのおかげで、日本で食料自給率が高い県の一つ」であり、加えて、広大な土地では家畜の糞尿を利用して持続可能な方法で農業生産を

増やすことができ、日本全体の食料自給率の向上に貢献することができる、と、その秘めた可能性にも触れた。今回の実践者交流会のテーマであるガストロノミーリズムについて、「加工や調理のレベルを向上させることで、北海道の生産物の価値をさらに高める可能性もあります。そうした取り組みを進めるためには、北海道を訪れる人々の外需を活用することが重要」と藻谷氏。示唆に富んだ議論が展開されることに期待を寄せる。

Hokkaido is rich in nature, food and wine

Naomichi Suzuki
GOVERNOR OF HOKKAIDO

In Hokkaido, nature untouched by humans is preserved. An example is the Shiretoko World Natural Heritage Site, which has many rare and endemic species. In June, the Hidakanmyaku-Erimo-Tokachi National Park was officially designated, bringing the number of national parks in Hokkaido to seven. Biodiversity is maintained in these parks. The prefecture has many regions that are important in terms of their landscape and geological features, including Mount Usu and Mount Aopoi, which are designated as UNESCO Global Geoparks. Adding to Hokkaido's attractions are magnificent views that change with the seasons, including autumn leaves and snowy landscapes.

Hokkaido's natural environment enables a variety of sports. In winter, many foreigners visit to ski its famed powder snow. In summer, trekking, cycling and rafting are great options. Last September, the Adventure

北海道では手付かずの自然が守られてきました。6月には日高山脈襟裳十勝国立公園が誕生し、道内の国立公園7か所で生物の多様性が保たれています。季節ごとの絶景も魅力で多様なアクティビティも楽しめます。昨年9月には「アドベンチャートラベル・ワールドサミット」がアジアで初開催されました。

Travel World Summit was held in Hokkaido, a first in Asia, and tourism insiders from around the world praised the island.

Another attractive feature is the rich variety of its foods. Wide-ranging agricultural and dairy products, including rice, vegetables and cheeses, are produced on its fertile land. In addition, fresh seafood is the residents' pride and joy. Hokkaido also has attractive sake brands brewed using high-quality water from its vast mountain forests and locally grown rice.

Wine production is a thriving industry. The Hokkaido government trains wine brewers through a "wine academy" program. The number of wineries in Hokkaido has nearly tripled over the last decade. The town of Yoichi, host of the upcoming social event for satoyama practitioners, is one of the top wine-producing regions in Hokkaido.

Furthermore, wines made from Hokkaido-grown grapes, including Yamasachi, an original grape variety of Hokkaido registered in the list of vine varieties of the International Organisation of Vine and Wine, have won prestigious prizes in international competi-

豊かな食も北海道観光の魅力の一つ。お米や野菜、和牛、農畜産物、魚介類も自慢です。広大な山林が育む良質な水と北海道の酒米を使い、魅力的な日本酒も作られています。さらに、ワイン生産も盛んです。北海道庁ではワインアカデミーで醸造家を育成し、この10年でワイナリーが約3倍に増加しており、今回



tions and are attracting increased attention overseas.

Hokkaido has unique cultures that have been passed on from ancient times. Jomon prehistoric sites registered on the World Heritage list give us glimpses into the spiritual culture of people in the 10,000-year-long Jomon Period. In addition, one can have a

glimpse into the culture of the indigenous Ainu people at facilities in various locations, including the Upopoy National Ainu Museum and Park in Shiraoi.

I hope many people will visit Hokkaido, which has a variety of attractive features, including nature, food and culture, to have the kinds of experiences that one can only have here. I am looking forward to your visiting Hokkaido.

Finally, I would like to say a word of thanks to residents of various regions for supporting Hokkaido's tourism.

Hokkaido tourism gets great support from the efforts of residents who have preserved and refined the attractions of their regions. I would like to express my heartfelt appreciation to them.

The Hokkaido government aims to work with you all to make Hokkaido a destination chosen by tourists from around the world. For this, I ask for your continued help.



縄文時代の人々の精神文化を今に伝えています。また、先住民族であるアイヌの人々の固有の文化が、白老町にある民族共生象徴空間「ウポポイ」など、道内各地のスポットで体感できます。

ぜひ多くの皆様に北海道でしか体験できない時間を過ごさにお越しいただきたいと思ひます。

Fifth social event for satoyama practitioners

Keisuke Saito
MAYOR OF YOICHI, HOKKAIDO

Hello, everyone. I am Keisuke Saito, the mayor of Yoichi.

It is a great honor for our town to host the fifth social event for satoyama practitioners.

When I participated in the third event in 2022, I joined a discussion on food-themed regional branding with other panelists including Soichiro Miyashita, who was the mayor of Mutsu and is now the governor of Aomori Prefecture. The experience gave me many ideas on how we might take advantage of regional resources. In Yoichi, we have been working to identify untapped resources and promote them.

Yoichi has long been known for a nearby herring fishing ground. Blessed with a relatively mild climate, it has also developed as a fruit-growing region since the Meiji Era (1868-1912), making it a standout among Hokkaido's regions. In particular, Yoichi farmers were the first in Japan's private sector to succeed in

余市町長の齊藤啓輔です。第5回 Satoyama 実践者交流会の開催を非常に光栄に存じます。余市町はニシン漁で栄えた街としての歴史を有するだけでなく、比較的温暖な気候から北海道では珍しい果樹産地としても発展してきました。特にりんごは日本で初めて民間栽培に成功して以来、現在でも全道一の



cultivating apples. Today, the town boasts the largest apple production in Hokkaido. Nikka Whisky Yoichi Distillery came to be widely known in Japan after the TV serial "Massan" aired on NHK. The company actually began as Dai Nippon Kaju, manufacturing processed apple products.

Today, wine is a rising industry in Yoichi.

生産量を誇ります。そんな余市町で現在盛り上がりを見せているのがワイン産業です。1980年代から醸造用ぶどうの栽培が本格化し、2010年代からはワインの製造まで手掛けるワイナリーが急増しており、世界的なレストランでも取り扱われるようになってきました。今回は余市という土地や文化、その可能性に魅せられ、

Cultivation of wine grapes began in earnest in the 1980s, and the town now boasts many European varieties of wine grape that were once thought to be difficult to grow in Japan. The number of wineries in Yoichi began to increase rapidly in the 2010s, and some of their wines are served at world-renowned restaurants.

A wine's charm increases as one experiences the climate, soil and culture of the land that nurtured it. In the upcoming event, active satoyama practitioners fascinated by Yoichi's land, culture and potential will participate, along with high school students representing our town. I am looking forward to having exchanges with experts, including Mayor Kenya Katayama of Niseko, the most advanced municipality in terms of inbound tourism in Hokkaido, and witnessing the chemistry they may touch off.

I understand that the past social events for satoyama practitioners have been successful in many ways. I have great expectations for this year's event in Yoichi to stimulate active discussion on the theme of "Satoyama ×

この地で里山実践者として活躍されている方々、そんな余市町で学び生活している高校生たちが本町の代表として登壇いたします。北海道のインパウンド最先進地であるニセコ町の片山町長をはじめとする有識者の皆様との交流と、そこから生まれる化学反応を私自身楽しみにしています。活発な議論が展開され、独創



inbound: Hokkaido's potential" and inspire creative ideas. I also hope that the event will contribute to the development of Yoichi, Niseko and other municipalities of the Shiribeshi region, as well as Hokkaido as a whole.

It is my wish that the event in Yoichi will create an opportunity to bring together diverse people and inspire various ideas for taking advantage of local resources to revitalize the entire region.

I am looking forward to seeing you all in Yoichi!



的なアイデアの創出や余市・ニセコをはじめとする後志管内、そして北海道全体の更なる発展に寄与するものになることを大いに期待しております。余市町で多くの出会いが生まれ、地域の資源を活かした地域全体の活性化に向けた多様なアイデアが生まれる場になればうれしく思います。

The 5th Satoyama Practitioners Networking Event

Organized by the Sustainable Japan Network and the town of Yoichi

Theme: **Satoyama × inbound: Hokkaido's potential**

Dates: Sept. 28 (Sat.) and 29 (Sun.) Venue: Yoichi Chuo Community Center

Schedule for fifth satoyama networking event

The Japan Times Sustainable Japan Network and the town of Yoichi will co-host the 5th Satoyama Practitioners Networking Event. The theme of this year's event is "Satoyama × inbound: Hokkaido's potential." It will include a keynote speech by Kosuke Motani of the Japan Research Institute and panel discussions involving Takahiko Soga of Domaine Takahiko, Yoichi town Mayor Keisuke Saito, Niseko town Mayor Kenya Katayama and more.

Day 1 SATOYAMA PRACTICAL EXCHANGE PROGRAM

13:30 Opening remarks

KEYNOTE SPEECH

Theme: Satoyama × inbound: Hokkaido's potential

PANEL DISCUSSION 1

Theme: Ask key people about the secrets to success and the challenges facing Hokkaido

PANEL DISCUSSION 2

Theme: The potential of Hokkaido gastronomy tourism

COMMUNITY PRESENTATION 1

The true meaning of hospitality in Yoichi

COMMUNITY PRESENTATION 2 (high school students)

Hokkaido Yoichi Benishi High School

- International understanding group: English version of the guide poster (simplified map)
- Production business group: Revitalizing the town of Yoichi through the development of local products

Day 2 STUDY TOUR

8:30 Meet at Yoichi Station

SITE TO VISIT:

1. Domaine Takahiko
(Yasuki Nitori, president of Nitori Orchard Co.)
2. Nitori Tourist Orchard
(Yasuki Nitori, president of Nitori Orchard Co.)
3. Lunch: wine and pork
4. Yoichi Fisheries Museum
5. Nikka Yoichi Distillery

To register, please visit this URL.

* In Japanese only



Keynote speech,
Panel discussion 2 moderator

Kosuke Motani

Senior researcher at the Japan Research Institute, the Japan Times Satoyama Consortium adviser



Panel discussion 1 moderator

Yuto Yoshida

Former Mayor of Yokosuka City
Glocal Government Relationz Co., Ltd.
president



Panel discussion 1 panelist

Keisuke Saito

Yoichi mayor



Panel discussion 1 panelist

Kenya Katayama

Niseko mayor



Panel discussion 1 panelist

Makiko Kamori

Director of Business Development,
Kamori Kanko Co.Ltd.



Panel discussion 2 panelist

Takahiko Soga

Domaine Takahiko



Panel discussion 2 panelist

Ayumi Itou

President and producer,
Creative Office Q Co.



Panel discussion 2 panelist

Nozomi Onishi

Executive vice president,
Tsuruga Holdings Co.



Community presentation 1

Hiroto Murai

Owner-chef, Yoichi Sagra

The many charms of the Hokkaido town of Yoichi



Yoichi Tourist Association

Located on the east coast of Hokkaido's Shakotan Peninsula about an hour's drive from Sapporo and half an hour from Otaru, the town of Yoichi is known especially for a famous Nikka Whisky distillery. Historically, herring fishing played a key role in its growth, and today it is known for shrimp, squid and *karei* flounder fishing. It is also known as having the northernmost habitat for sweetfish (*ayu*) in Japan. Apple and pear orchards flourish in Yoichi's relatively mild climate, and it notably is one of Japan's top areas for growing wine grapes.

Yoichi has over 50 vineyards, and many wineries have opened over the years, producing great wines that make the town an attractive destination for wine aficionados in Japan and overseas.

北海道・余市町の魅力

札幌から約1時間、小樽から約30分の距離に位置する余市町は、積丹半島東端にあり、ニッカウキスキー蒸溜所が有名です。歴史的にはニシン漁で栄えた町で、えび、いか、かれい漁や北限の鮎の生息地としても知られています。余市町は比較的温暖な気候を持ち、りんご、梨、ぶどうの生産が盛んで、特にワイン用ぶどう

The waters off Yoichi are one of the top fishing grounds in Hokkaido as well, and so the town offers a uniquely wide range of fresh local seafood, fruits and vegetables from its fertile fields.

The town government is working to promote gastronomy tourism, aiming for visitors to enjoy dishes featuring regional ingredients and sip locally produced wines, simultaneously deepening their understanding of the area's culture and terroir and their appreciation of its many charms. Tourism also offers opportunities for visitors and residents to meet and socialize.

The blessings of nature and the passion of its residents combine to make Yoichi a place with great allure. Yoichi offers opportunities to enjoy magnificent landscapes, a wide variety of great foods and high-quality wines. Why not come and visit our town?

の産地として日本有数です。

町内には50軒以上のヴィンヤードがあり、多くのワイナリーが新しくオープンしています。これにより、余市町は国内外のワイン愛好家にとって魅力的な目的地となっています。これらのワイナリーでは高品質なワインが生産され、その風味豊かな味わいが多くの人々に支持されています。



Vineyard landscape and Cape Shiripa Yoichi Tourist Association



Ebisu Iwa and Daikoku Iwa Yoichi Tourist Association



Nikka Whisky Yoichi Distillery Yoichi Tourist Association

眼前に広がる日本海は豊富な海産物に恵まれ、北海道屈指の漁場となっています。新鮮な魚介類や、豊かな畑で育つ果実や野菜は、余市町ならではのフルコースの味わいを提供します。

また、余市町はガストロノミー・ツーリズムの推進にも力を入れています。地元の食材を活かした料理や地元産のワインを楽しむことで、訪れる人々に地域の文

化や風土を感じてもらおうことを目指しています。食を通じた観光は、地域の魅力を深く知る機会を提供し、観光客と地元の人々との交流を促進します。

余市町は、自然の恵みと人々の情熱が織りなす魅力的な場所です。美しい風景、豊富な食材、そして高品質なワインが楽しめるこの町を訪れてみてはいかがでしょうか。



Hokkaido Wineries Map

Available at Imadeya stores. Please note that some items may not be in stock at the store.



Shiribeshi Area

Yoichi

- ① Yoichi Winery
- ② Domaine Takahiko 🛒
- ③ Rita Farm & Winery
- ④ OcciGabi Winery
- ⑤ Nobori Jozo
- ⑥ Hirakawa Winery 🛒
- ⑦ Domaine Atsushi Suzuki
- ⑧ Domaine Mont 🛒
- ⑨ Winery Yume no Mori
- ⑩ Camel Farm Winery 🛒
- ⑪ Mongaku Valley Winery 🛒
- ⑫ Domaine Yui 🛒
- ⑬ Lan Seqqua
- ⑭ Yamada-Do 🛒
- ⑮ Misono Vineyard
- ⑯ Lowbrow Craft
- ⑰ Yoka Winery 🛒
- ⑱ Marumegane
- ⑲ Domaine Mizuki Nakai

Niki

- ⑳ Berry Berry Farm & Winery Niki, Domaine Ichi
- ㉑ Niki Hills Winery
- ㉒ Vina de oro bodega
- ㉓ Domaine Bless 🛒
- ㉔ Domaine Harboise

Rankoshi

- ㉕ Matsubara Vineyard

Niseko

- ㉖ Niseko Winery

Otaru

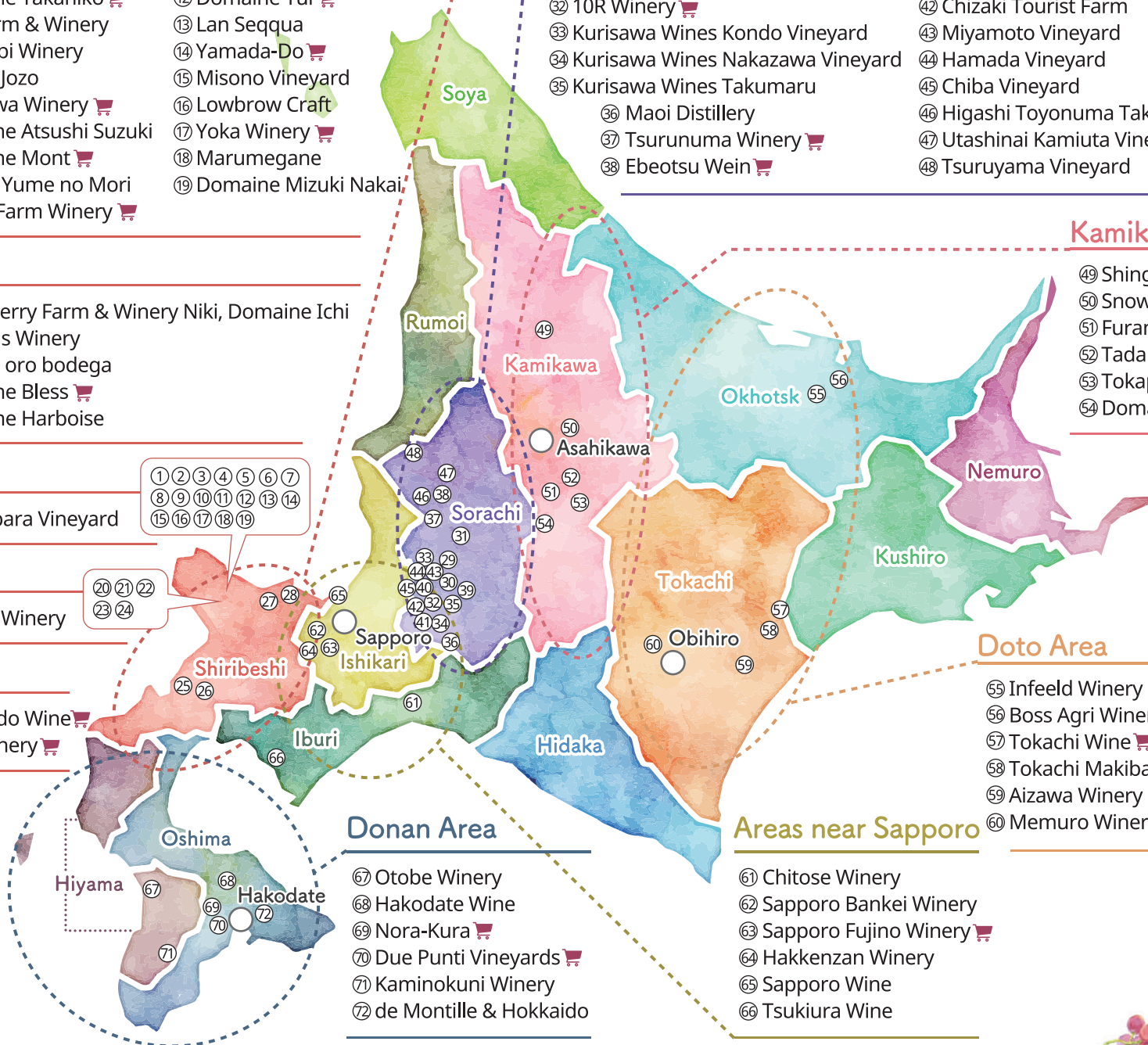
- ㉗ Hokkaido Wine 🛒
- ㉘ Osa Winery 🛒

Sorachi Area

- ㉙ Yamazaki Winery 🛒
- ㉚ Hosui Winery 🛒
- ㉛ Takizawa Winery 🛒
- ㉜ 10R Winery 🛒
- ㉝ Kurisawa Wines Kondo Vineyard
- ㉞ Kurisawa Wines Nakazawa Vineyard
- ㉟ Kurisawa Wines Takumaru
- ㊱ Maoi Distillery
- ㊲ Tsurunuma Winery 🛒
- ㊳ Ebeotsu Wein 🛒
- ㊴ Vineyard Moo
- ㊵ Irenka Vineyard 🛒
- ㊶ Fujiyoshi Farm
- ㊷ Chizaki Tourist Farm
- ㊸ Miyamoto Vineyard
- ㊹ Hamada Vineyard
- ㊺ Chiba Vineyard
- ㊻ Higashi Toyonuma Takahashi Farm
- ㊼ Utashinai Kamiuta Vineyard
- ㊽ Tsuruyama Vineyard

Kamikawa Area

- ㊾ Shinga Winery
- ㊿ Snow River Wines
- 51 Furano Wines
- 52 Tada Winery
- 53 Tokapuchi
- 54 Domaine Raison 🛒



When visiting the winery and vineyard: Please do not enter the facilities without permission. Many wineries and farms do not allow visitors. You are kindly requested to check the website for more information or call before visiting.

Hokkaido is a treasure trove of nature, food and culture

Kenji Koganezawa
CHAIRMAN, HOKKAIDO
TOURISM ORGANIZATION

People from Asian countries and regions, including South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong, represent 90% of the foreign visitors to Hokkaido. They come for its vast nature, hot springs and foods, especially seafood. In winter, many people visit the world-renowned snow resorts of Niseko, Rusutsu and Furano to enjoy skiing and snowboarding.

Hokkaido is a major Japanese wine-producing region, with the number of its wineries tripling to 66 over the past 10 years, and is attracting attention from within Japan as well as abroad.

Wines that take advantage of the climatic characteristics of each region are made in various places in Hokkaido, including the towns of Yoichi and Niki. Visitors can enjoy them paired with locally caught game meat and fresh seafood, as well as fresh vegetables from local farms.

北海道を訪れる外国人の9割が韓国・台湾・香港などのアジア圏の方々です。北海道の広大な自然や温泉、海産物などの食を目的にお越しいただいております。特に冬の季節には、世界的なスノーリゾート地であるニセコ、ルスツ、富良野にはスキーやスノーボードを楽しむために多くの方が訪れて



In 2023, Hokkaido hosted the Adventure Travel World Summit, becoming the first Asian venue for the event. It drew 773 participants from 64 countries and regions. It provided a great opportunity for participants to get to know Hokkaido, allowing them to deeply experience its local stories through outdoor activities and historical and cultural

います。また、北海道は日本ワインの一大生産地であり、ワイナリーもこの10年で3倍に増え、国内外から注目されております。余市・仁木町をはじめとした道内各地において、その土地の気候的特徴を生かしたワインが作られて



Tourists can enjoy all sorts of outdoor activities in Hokkaido.

experiences, including the traditions and culture of the Ainu.

We will continue working to promote the attractions of Hokkaido, a treasure trove of nature and food, to the world. We will also work to enhance our ability to welcome foreign tourists to ensure satisfying experiences for them. We await your visit to Hokkaido.

おり、地元で獲れるジビエや新鮮な海産物や農産物とのマリージュを楽しむことができます。2023年に開催されたアドベンチャートラベル・ワールドサミットでは、64の国と地域から773人が参加をされ、参加者はアウトドアアクティビティやアイヌの伝統文化をはじめとした歴史・文化体験

などを通じて地域のストーリーに深く触れ、北海道を知っていただく良い機会となりました。今後も自然と食の宝庫である北海道の魅力の世界へ発信していき、お越しいただいた外国人観光客の皆さまがご満足いただけるよう受入れ体制を整えてまいります。ぜひ北海道へお越しください。



Hokkaido's terroir crafts Japan's next great wines

EMI MAEDA
Contributing writer

Hokkaido is emerging as a significant player in Japan's wine industry, holding the third-largest share in the production of wine from domestic grapes, following Yamanashi and Nagano prefectures. Its distinctive climate, unique terroir (environmental factors like soil, sunlight and climate) and passionate vintners are captivating wine enthusiasts worldwide.

Recognized for its distinctive cool climate, the region plays a crucial role in Japan's wine production landscape. Hokkaido is the only region in Japan classified in the widely used Winkler Index as Region I, whose growing seasons are the coolest of the index's five zones, aligning it with renowned cool-climate wine regions such as Champagne in France as well as parts of Germany and Austria.

Unlike Honshu, Hokkaido's climate is characterized by low rainfall and a high percentage of sunny days, which is ideal for grape cultivation and contributes to the unique qualities of Hokkaido wines. Ryota Koyama, director of Imadeya Corp., a company headquartered in Chiba that operates stores with curated alcoholic beverages at locations including Ginza Six in Tokyo, noted: "Grapes harvested in Hokkaido are simply exquisite.



Ryota Koyama, director of Imadeya Corp.

One of the key factors contributing to this quality is the low incidence of mold, which is typically a major cause of grape diseases."

Hokkaido grapes undergo a distinctive growth process that sets them apart from other regions. As grapes ripen in typical wine-growing areas, their sugar content increases while their acidity drops rapidly. Hokkaido, however, benefits from unique climatic conditions that allow for a more balanced development. Here, the grapes' acidity declines slowly even as sugar levels rise. This favorable characteristic enables vintners to delay harvest until both sugar and acidity reach optimal levels. Consequently, Hokkaido wines showcase a rich depth of flavor, striking an appealing balance between luscious sweetness and refreshing acidity.

Hokkaido's favorable cool environment also allows for the cultivation of grapes with minimal or reduced pesticide use, contributing to its growing reputation for the production of more natural wines. The cool climate, characterized by low humidity, helps reduce the incidence of pests and diseases, making it easier for vintners to adopt organic practices. This climate is likely a contributing factor to the increasing number of producers in Hokkaido who are focusing on a more natural wine production cycle, as they can grow high-quality grapes while minimizing



Imadeya exports Japanese wines.



Imadeya's main store and headquarters in Chiba. COURTESY OF IMADEYA

chemical interventions.

Currently, Hokkaido is home to 66 wineries, with the town of Yoichi standing out as one of its most renowned wine-producing areas. This area, along with the Hakodate and Mikasa areas, is known for its unique small wineries that produce distinctive wines highly popular among Japanese enthusiasts. The wine-growing regions in Hokkaido are expanding, including areas like Furano and Asahikawa, contributing to the diversity that is one of the major attractions of Hokkaido wine.

Hokkaido is actively embracing wine tourism and promoting the industry. This initiative involves people visiting local vineyards, experiencing the winemaking process and engaging with producers while immersing themselves in local climate, culture and history. This form of tourism has become a vital component of the local economy in many renowned wine-producing regions around the world.

Yoichi, in particular, is at the forefront of promoting wine tourism through events like winery open days, when wineries that are normally closed welcome the public. These

events provide both wine enthusiasts and general tourists with a chance to experience the local wine culture firsthand. Hokkaido's wine tourism offers a unique blend of the region's rich natural beauty, food culture and winemaking traditions, and it is expected to continue developing in the future.

Given Hokkaido's distinctive climate and terroir, its passionate vintners and the allure of its diverse regions, international recognition for Hokkaido's wine industry seems imminent. Discovering the charms of Hokkaido wine, witnessing its evolution and savoring the nuances in its flavors will engage a new generation of wine enthusiasts. This exploration promises to be a novel pleasure for wine connoisseurs worldwide. This burgeoning wine region is undoubtedly opening an exciting new chapter in the story of Japanese wines.



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Chimikepp Hotel

Selected for *Destination Restaurants 2021*

Michelin-starred modern French cuisine deep in the mountains of Hokkaido

ROBBIE SWINNERTON
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Surrounded by thick forest, Chimikepp Hotel lies deep in the mountains of eastern Hokkaido overlooking the unspoiled waters of Lake Chimikeppu.

Some visitors make their way there for the winter snowscapes, the summer outdoor activities or just to breathe good clean air; others because they know they will dine remarkably well.

While the accommodations look typical of many a back-country inn, the hotel dining room serves cuisine that sets it apart. For

this, all plaudits are due to chef Masaki Watanabe.

A native of Shizuoka, he only arrived in Hokkaido by happenstance. He had trained and worked in France and then landed jobs in California, first at the three-Michelin-starred French Laundry and then at Benu in San Francisco (now also with three stars, but at the time a hot newcomer). While waiting to renew his U.S. visa in 2012, he came up to Chimikepp to help out and was bowled over by the setting.

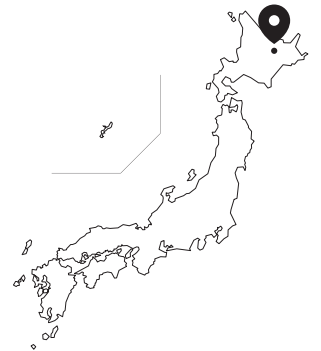
Before long he had taken over the hotel kitchen and revamped the menu. Out went the tired if ubiquitous Continental cuisine. In

came seasonal local produce.

He sources fish, scallops, urchins and shrimp from the nearby Sea of Okhotsk. He buys beef and pork from local small-scale farmers. And he only has to step outside the hotel to find cep mushrooms growing wild in summer.

And then there are fowl and other game meats. Watanabe prepares a great pate en croute stuffed with bear, pork and chicken meat.

He also forages for edible plants in the surrounding forest. All these end up on his menu. No surprise to know he now has a Michelin star of his own.



CHIMIKEPP HOTEL

Address
Chimikepp Hotel
204 Numasawa, Tsubetsu-cho,
Abashirigun, Hokkaido 092-0358, Japan
<https://www.chimikepphotel.com/>

Published in *The Japan Times* on Nov. 8, 2021



北海道東部の山間部、手つかずの自然が残るチミケップ湖を見渡す深い森の中にチミケップホテルはある。ここには極上の食の体験を求めてやってくる人もいます。

シェフの渡辺賢紀氏はフランスで修業し、カリフォルニア州ナババレーのミシュラン三つ星レストラン「フレ

ンチランドリー (French Laundry)」やサンフランシスコの「ベニュー (Benu)」で経験を積んだ。静岡県出身の渡辺氏は2012年、米国ビザの更新手続きを待つ間にチミケップホテルを手伝い、その環境のすばらしさに魅了され、北海道の旬の食材を生かす料理を考

えた。オホーツク海で水揚げされる魚やホタテ貝、うに、小エビを仕入れ、地元の小規模農家から牛肉や豚肉を調達する。夏にはホテル周辺で野生のボルチーニ茸を収穫する。

ジビエも料理に使う。熊、豚、鶏の肉を混ぜたもの

をパイ生地で包んで焼き上げるパテ・アン・クルートは絶品だ。ホテルを囲む森に自生する山菜もメニューに載る。チミケップホテルは2017年にミシュラン一つ星を獲得した。渡辺氏がふるまう料理は、ここを訪れる人の期待を裏切らない。

Yoichi Sagra

Selected for *Destination Restaurants 2022*

Italian restaurant in Hokkaido wine capital Yoichi

TAEKO TERAO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Yoichi, home to the restaurant Yoichi Sagra, is a small town of 18,000 in northwestern Hokkaido, past Otaru from Sapporo. The drive from New Chitose Airport takes an hour and a half, or two hours with snow on the ground. The town's name has roots in the language of Hokkaido's Indigenous Ainu people, and according to various theories may mean either "place with a hot spring," after the springs in the upper reaches of the Yoichi River, or "place with snakes."

From the middle of the Edo Period through the 1950s, the port town had a thriving herring fishery, but today the boats bring in mainly shrimp, squid and flounder. The town is known for its apples, cherries, pears and other fruits, and for being one of Japan's few centers of production for Western-style alcohol; its first whisky distillery was established in the

1930s and its first winery in the 1970s. Today Yoichi boasts the highest wine production in all of Hokkaido.

Yoichi Sagra is an Italian-style inn with three guest rooms, costing ¥38,500 (\$290) for one night and two meals. Chef-owner Hiroto Murai shapes his cuisine around wines from Yoichi and other parts of Hokkaido. The prix fixe dinner (¥15,000) includes about 10 innovative courses, many of which make use of the region's traditional food-preserving techniques.

"Although this area is blessed with abundant nature and foodstuffs, the climate is harsh. In winter, when the sea is rough, there are times when fishing boats can only go out twice a month, so we focus on vegetables and preserved foods as well," Murai said.

For instance, the appetizer one December day was *saba* (mackerel) *ruibe*, a dish of fish frozen to preserve it and distribute the fat more evenly, which improves flavor. It paired

perfectly with a local cider. Cannelloni stuffed with *hatahata* (Japanese sandfish) and wrapped in a dough made with *mukago*, the propagules of wild root vegetables, was served with salty, umami-rich *shirogai* mollusks fermented in salt and paired with wine made from aromatic Kerner white wine grapes.

Guests can dine at the restaurant without staying at the inn, but an overnight stay with a breakfast is highly recommended. "In the future we'll be offering a monthly multnight package deal that includes special activities, targeted at repeat guests. Through events such as river kayaking to pick *gyōja ninniku* (Alpine leeks) or watching salmon swim upriver, I hope to share more widely what makes this place wonderful," Murai said.

He also plans to begin making take-home sweets using surplus fruit that local farmers currently struggle to sell. It seems there is still much he can contribute as a chef rooted in this community.



余市 SAGRA

Address
Yoichi Sagra
987-2 Nobori-cho, Yoichi-cho, Yoichi-gun,
Hokkaido
<https://sagra.jp>

Published in *The Japan Times* on Feb. 6, 2023



ワイン用ぶどう畑の隣に店を構えるイタリアン・オーベルジュ〈余市 SAGRA〉。オーナーシェフ、村井啓人がつくるのは余市産を中心とする北海道産ワインに寄り添う料理だ。10品前後のインヴェーティブなディナーコースには古くから伝わる食材保存の知恵が盛り込まれる。

「自然豊かで食材にも恵まれた土地ですが、気候も厳しい。海が荒れやすい冬は1ヶ月に2度しか漁が出ないときもあるので野菜や保存食にも力を入れています」12月のある日の前菜はルイベという調理法で仕上げたサバに、小サバの塩辛やウドの実の酢漬けを合わせ

たもの。地元産シードルとの相性が抜群だ。ムカゴを練り込んだ生地はハタハタを包んだカネロニには白貝の塩辛などで塩味や旨味を添えて、華やかな香りのケルナー種のワインを合わせる。豆腐や納豆、海苔まですべて手作りの朝食もいただ

きたい。デザートにも力が入っている。アクティビティ付きの連泊プランや、地元農家が処分に悩ませる果物の余剰生産物を用いたおみやげのお菓子作りなど、地域に根づく料理人、村井氏にはたくさんの構想があるようだ。

Elezo Esprit

Selected for *Destination Restaurants 2024*

Meat-based culinary community carries on Tokachi's pioneer spirit

TAEKO TERAO
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

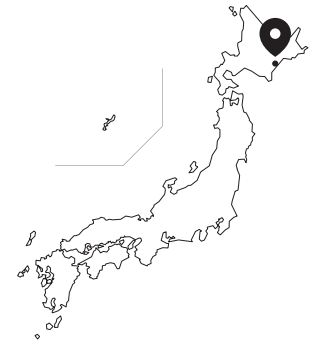
From among the 10 Destination Restaurants 2024 honorees, Elezo Esprit was chosen as the Destination Restaurant of the Year 2024. Located in Toyokorocho in Hokkaido's Nakagawa district, the area lies at the mouth of the Tokachi River, and the small hill on which the restaurant is situated faces the Pacific Ocean.

Elezo Esprit's owner-chef, Shota Sasaki, gained experience in French cuisine at a Hoshino Resort restaurant in Karuizawa and Bistro de la Cite in Tokyo. In 2004, he returned to Obihiro, where he helped out at

his family's cafe-restaurant. In 2005, he established the business Elezo for meat processing and distribution in Obihiro, his hometown. At first he focused entirely on processing wild game obtained from hunters and selling the meat, establishing strict rules for the handling of game animals, including specific hunting methods and the time needed to transport animals after hunting. For this, the meat produced by Elezo gained popularity.

In 2009 Sasaki moved his activity base to Otsu in Toyokorocho. There he built a comprehensive meat-processing laboratory on a 14-hectare site. Through unique methods, Sasaki is creating a new meat-based culinary

culture. In 2022, Sasaki opened Elezo Esprit, an inn-style hotel made up of three accommodation buildings. The main dining room has six counter seats. The restaurant, which offers a course menu for ¥28,000 (\$185), is open to hotel guests and nonguests alike, but overnight guests currently make up 90% of its customers. Meats made on the premises, including assorted charcuterie, roasted pastured pork and venison fillets, are presented in simple and refined ways. Meat dishes of equivalent quality can be enjoyed at an Elezo Group restaurant located in Toranomon, Tokyo. But the cuisine experienced here is truly the taste of life itself. "We mustn't waste a single drop of blood," Sasaki said.



Address
Elezo Esprit
127 Otsu, Toyokorocho, Nakagawa-gun,
Hokkaido
<https://esprit.elezo.com>

Published in *The Japan Times* on Aug. 5, 2024



「Destination Restaurants 2024」に選出された10店から「The Destination Restaurant of the Year 2024」に選ばれた『ELEZO ESPRIT』。オーナーシェフ、佐々木章太は軽井沢『星のリゾート』、東京『ビストロ・ド・ラ・シテ』でフレンチの料理人として研鑽を積み、2004年、

帯広市に戻り、カフェレストランを営む実家を手伝っていた。店の常連の猟師が獲った鹿一体をさばき、調理して食した際の感動から、食肉文化に本質的に関わることを決意。2005年、故郷の帯広市で食肉処理流通を手がける「ELEZO」を創業する。最初は猟師の

ハンティングによる野禽獣（ジビエ）のみを扱い、東京のレストランに卸していた。2009年には人口200人弱の過疎地域でもある豊頃町大津に拠点を移転。山を含む14haの敷地に食肉総合ラボラトリーを建設した。そして、2022年、3棟の宿泊棟を備えたオーバーブルジュ『エ

レゾ・エスプリ』をオープン。ディナーは佐々木が「命のスープ」と呼ぶ蝦夷鹿のコンソメから始まり、シャルキュトリ盛り合わせや放牧豚や鹿ヒレ肉のローストなど、同じ敷地内で「作った」肉がシンプルかつ洗練された形となって供される。

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