

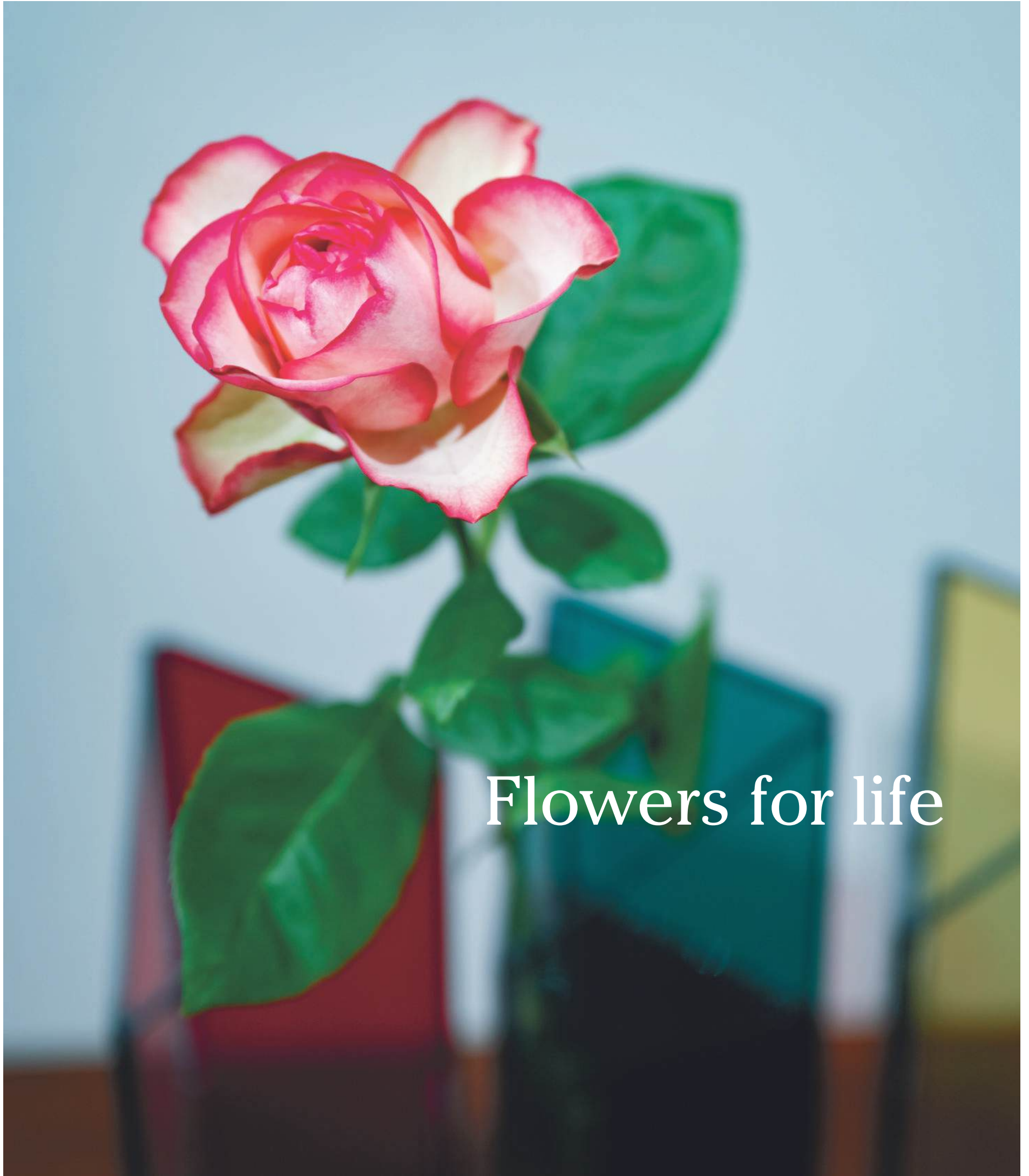
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SUSTAINABLE JAPAN MAGAZINE

Saturday, March 29, 2025



Flowers for life

FROM THE EDITOR

By YOSHIKUNI SHIRAI / EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Fukuyama, known as the “City of Roses,” is an important regional hub of some 400,000 people in the eastern part of Hiroshima Prefecture. On Aug. 8, 1945, just days before the end of the war, about 80% of the city was destroyed in U.S. air raids. The city got the nickname after citizens planted about 1,000 rose bushes there in the mid-

1950s, when the scars of war were still visible and some residents thought that flowers could enrich the city and restore peace of mind to its citizens.

The area where the planting took place is now known as Rose Park, valued by residents as a haven for relaxation. Small flower beds have also been added throughout the city, and ros-

es are now playing a role in revitalizing the town. As a case in point, Fukuyama will host the World Rose Convention in May, bringing together researchers, growers and aficionados from around the world.

This special issue is about flowers and greenery, and their power to comfort us and enrich our daily lives.

福山市は「ばらのまち」として知られる。広島県東部の街です。この街が「ばらのまち」と呼ばれるようになったきっかけは、市民の手により約1,000本の薔薇の苗木が植えられたことに始まります。1945年8月、福山市は終戦の1週間前にアメリカ軍の空襲を受け市街地の約8割が焼失しました。戦争の傷跡が癒えない1950年代半ば、住民の中から「花を植えて荒廃した街に潤いを与え、心に和らぎを取り戻そう」という声が起こり、薔薇の苗木

を植えたそうです。そこは今、「ばら公園」となり、市民の憩いの場となっています。また、市内の至る所に花壇が作られ、薔薇を通じた街づくりが行われています。

その福山市で今年5月、「世界バラ会議」が開催され、世界中から薔薇の研究者、生産者、愛好家が集まります。花や緑は、時に人に寄り添い、心を癒し、私たちの日々の生活に彩りや豊かさを与えてくれます。今回はそんな花や緑についての特集です。



NICOLAI BERGMANN

Born in Copenhagen in 1976, Bergmann started his business in Japan as a florist in 1998, invented “flower box” arrangements in 2000 and founded Nicolai Bergmann Flowers & Design in 2001. In 2017, he was appointed goodwill ambassador for the 150th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Denmark. In the same year, he became Fukuyama’s City of Roses PR ambassador. His publications include “Good Perseverance: The Words I Found in Japan to Help Me Achieve My Dreams.” On March 27, he will open a new store in Tokyo’s Takanawa Gateway City. <https://www.nicolaiberghmann.com/>



Opened in Hakone in April 2024, the Nicolai Bergmann Hakone Gardens feature virgin forest where visitors can stroll and enjoy picnics. There is also a cafe. <https://hakonegardens.jp/>

COURTESY: NICOLAI BERGMANN FLOWERS & DESIGN

Feature FLOWERS & GREENERY

WORLD ROSE CONVENTION

Flower artist Nicolai Bergmann on blooms’ healing power

By RIKO SAITO



Bergmann at his flagship store in Minami Aoyama, Tokyo. The flower shop has a cafe and is always buzzing with people.

PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA

● Summary

フラワーアーティストが語る花が持つ癒しの力。

第二次世界大戦により市街地の8割が焼失した広島県福山市。“荒廃した街に潤いを与え人々の心に潤いを取り戻す”ことを目的に、市民の手で薔薇の苗木約1000本を植えたのが「ばらのまち福山」の始まりだ。現在ではばら公園を中心に市内に100万本あまりの薔薇が植えられている。2025年5月にはその福山市で『第20回世界バ

ラ会議福山大会』が開催される。この会議は、世界40の国・地域のバラ会が加盟する世界バラ連合が3年ごとに開催する薔薇の世界大会。今回の大会のアンバサダーを務めるのが、デンマーク出身のフラワーアーティスト、ニコライ・バーグマンだ。彼は2016年に《ばらのまち福山PR大使》に就任して以来、福山市と深い関わりを持

ち続けてきた。フラワーアーティストとして、自分の仕事と名前を通じて「ばらのまち福山」を盛り上げていくことができるのはとても嬉しいことだと語る。彼の名前を一躍有名にした「フラワーボックス」も今年で25周年を迎え、様々なコラボレーションも進行中だ。ニコライ・バーグマンへの注目度は益々、高まっている。



日本語全文はこちら



Left: A special-edition wooden “flower box” inspired by origami was created in collaboration with a Danish design company to mark the product’s 25th anniversary. Right: Flower boxes created in collaboration with the Japanese fashion brand Facetasm. Brand designer Hiromichi Ochiai’s personality shines through in these 25th-anniversary boxes, which features roses, carnations and hydrangeas.

COURTESY: NICOLAI BERGMANN FLOWERS & DESIGN

The Hiroshima Prefecture city of Fukuyama suffered the destruction of 80% of its urban area during the air raids of World War II. As part of the recovery effort, citizens banded together to plant some 1,000 rose bushes in Minami Park in the Gomoncho district. Their hope was to “enrich the devastated city and restore the spirit of the people.” Eight decades later, the park is now Rose Park, while Fukuyama is known as the “City of Roses” and boasts more than 1 million rose plants, mainly in the park but also throughout the city.

In May, Fukuyama will play host to the 20th World Rose Convention. The event is held every three years by the World Federation of Rose Societies, bringing together societies from 40 countries and regions. The convention draws 600 to 700 researchers, growers, aficionados, artists and others from around the world. It serves as a forum for exchanging information and discussing solutions to various rose-related issues, including the advancement and dissemination of knowledge and the promotion of research.

Nicolai Bergmann, a floral artist from Denmark, is the official ambassador for the event. He has had a deep relationship with Fukuyama since 2017, when he was named the City of Roses PR ambassador. On Feb. 7, 100 days before the convention’s kickoff, a commemorative event featuring a rose installation and live performances was held at Sun Station Terrace Fukuyama, a commercial facility next to Fukuyama Station. The event was a lively prelude to the convention.

“As a flower artist, I am delighted to be able to promote Fukuyama, the City of Roses, through my work and name. In 2018, Fukuyama produced a new variety of rose named the Nicolai Bergmann Fukuyama Rose, which is now blooming in front of Fukuyama Station. It is such an honor to have a rose named after me,” he said in fluent Japanese, delighted to share his enthusiasm for the upcoming convention.

Bergmann first visited Japan in 1996 after completing his vocational training as a florist in Denmark. He was so fascinated by the country that he returned in 1998 to launch his career here. He made his name with his “flower boxes,” arrangements of flowers carefully laid out inside boxes, which he first developed in 2000. At the time, a fashion brand asked him to distribute fresh flowers at a party, but it was impractical to stack cut flowers at the venue. After some trial and error, he came up with the revolutionary idea of a black gift box that you could open to find an arrangement of flowers.



The Nicolai Bergmann Fukuyama Rose, named after the flower artist. This variety was established in 2018.

COURTESY: NICOLAI BERGMANN FLOWERS & DESIGN

The idea quickly became a worldwide hit, and as it now marks its 25th anniversary, it has become a standard floral gift around the world.

“It is wonderful that our standard-bearer product has remained popular for 25 years. But we don’t just continue to make the same thing because it is popular — we always try to innovate and create new things,” he said. “For the 25th anniversary, we announced a collaboration with the Japanese fashion brand Facetasm. We will also be presenting a collaboration with a Danish design company, using a wooden box made in the image of origami. I wanted to express the fusion of Japanese and Western styles in the box. We also plan to release collaborative boxes with long-standing characters from popular culture. And please look out for our exhibitions commemorating the 25th anniversary of the flower box that will be held around Japan and in Denmark.”

In April 2022, the Nicolai Bergmann Hakone Gardens opened in the Gora

area of Hakone. The vast gardens, completed after more than eight years of planning, are not just a flower garden, but a place where people can connect with nature and experience the seasons with their entire bodies. Walkways, stairways, a glass pavilion and a cafe were built into virgin forest. The garden, with the preservation of nature at its core, features a unique ecosystem of local plants, flowers, animals and birds. It also boasts one-of-a-kind objects made by Bergmann using local stones, branches and leaves.

Bergmann says that having flowers in our daily lives has a positive effect on the spirit because they give people a sense of the seasons and a feeling of being in harmony with nature.

He advises that people can start by incorporating just a single flower into their lives.

“The goal should be to enjoy the flowers themselves, not how they are arranged. A simple start is fine. Even watering flowers every day and watching them transform serves as a kind of meditation. Just by having flowers, a positive change occurs in your psyche that you may not even be aware of. Living with flowers enriches lives,” he said.

For Bergmann, flowers are an important tool for expressing his creativity as an artist. With their power to heal people and invigorate the spirit, he can’t imagine life without flowers. Always aiming to surpass his previous efforts for creativity and scale, each year he embarks on new collaborations while continuing to promote the splendor and the power of flowers. With his uncanny green thumb, acute sensibility and unmatched drive, his growing world of flowers will continue to warrant close attention.

To mark 100 days before the World Rose Convention commences in Fukuyama, a special event was held at a commercial facility near Fukuyama Station in February. Bergmann made a rose installation and did a live performance.



COURTESY: FUKUYAMA CITY



COURTESY: NICOLAI BERGMANN FLOWERS & DESIGN

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Full articles are available at the Japanese-language site:
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COVER PHOTO

Large and with a thick stem, this Kenyan rose is full of vitality. Such flowers are the specialty of Afrika Rose, a florist in Tokyo’s Minato Ward founded by Megumi Hagiuda. PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA

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Surrounded by a verdant garden, Kudan House in Tokyo's Kudan district is a private dwelling built in 1927 that has been given new life after a renovation. The Spanish-style reinforced concrete home was designed by three noted architects.

COURTESY: KUDAN HOUSE

Feature FLOWERS & GREENERY

INHERITANCE

Preserving century-old Kudan House

By MIAKI NAGAI

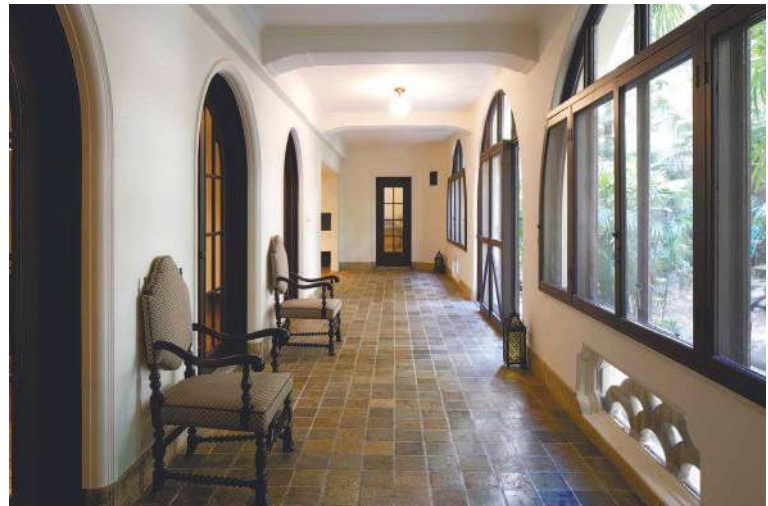
TOHO LEO

Toho Leo was founded in 1965 as a company engaged in the production, sales, and installation of heat-insulating building materials (obsidian perlite). The company applied its technology to soil improvement materials and rooftop greening materials, and established a greening-related division in 1981.

Left: A hall located just inside the entrance was modeled on a Spanish-style exterior patio. Right: A porch connects the interior with the garden, offering a space to observe the changing seasons and forget for a minute you are in the middle of a city.



PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA



COURTESY: KUDAN HOUSE

● Summary

100年前の邸宅を次世代に残す取り組み。

皇居・北の丸公園のほど近く、東京都千代田区九段に、築98年を迎える邸宅が、庭木に囲まれてひっそりと佇んでいる。「kudan house」と呼ばれるこの建物は1927年に建てられたものだ。地価の高い都心部では相続税が高額になることや、高層化による収益を見込んで、戸建住宅は普通、売却され集合住宅などに建て替えられるものだ

が奇跡的に残り、2018年に国の有形文化財に登録された。邸宅が会員制のビジネスインベーション拠点として再生したのも2018年だ。2016年に東邦レオ代表取締役社長に就任した吉川稔がこの邸宅と出会ったことで、「次世代に残したい」という所有者の想いが叶えられた。保存再生にあたっては、東邦レオ、東急電鉄、竹中工務店の3社が

共同で所有者から建物を借り受けて改修工事を実施し、運営は東邦レオグループの〈NI-WA〉が担っている。この邸宅で新たに加わったのが日本庭園だ。若手の庭師に作庭の機会を提供したいという社員の希望により作られた。歴史的建造物の保存活用という社会的な課題に対してこの場合は1つの解答を示したものと見える。



日本語全文はこちら

In Tokyo's Kudan district, near the Imperial Palace's Kitanomaru Park, stands a 98-year-old residence nestled within a leafy garden. Now known as Kudan House, it was built in 1927 as the private residence of Mankichi Yamaguchi, the fifth-generation leader of a successful business family from the Niigata Prefecture city of Nagaoka.

With three stories above ground and one below, the building was designed by Tacchu Naito, Shichiro Kigo and Kenji Imai, three architects known for their contributions to the development of modern architecture in Japan, and it features a reinforced concrete structure and the Spanish-style design that was popular at the time.

The building not only survived the fires of the Tokyo air raids of 1945, but its appearance remains almost unchanged from the time it was built. Grand old residences like this tend to be sold and redeveloped as apartment complexes because central Tokyo's high land values lead to steep inheritance taxes and because significant rental income can be generated from high-rise apartments, but this one survived and was registered as a Tangible Cultural Property in 2018.

Also in 2018, the residence was reborn as a members-only business innovation center. Two years earlier, the owner's long-held desire for the building to be preserved had become possible when the owner was approached by Toho Leo President Minoru Yoshikawa. Joining forces with what is now Tokyu Corp. and Takanaka Corp., Toho Leo agreed to lease the building and renovate it. NI-WA, a Toho Leo group company, took charge of its management.

Founded in 1965, Toho Leo's core business is developing green infrastructure, and although it enjoys a significant market share, it is not well known to the general public. Yoshikawa decided that by creating a "flagship store," in the same way that a luxury brand might, they could enhance the company's brand awareness. As Yoshikawa sees it, a flagship store is not a place to generate sales or cost-effectiveness, but rather "to communicate the company's worldview."

It was when he was searching for a suitable property that he first came across this residence. He wanted the flagship store to communicate the concepts of "sustainability" and "ecology," which are higher-level concepts than "green," and to place "Japanese aesthetics" at its center. "We realized we could express our creativity and direction in the way that we revived and utilized this existing historic building and garden," he said.

The residence's garden is large, with four trees that are nearly 200 years old. They had been transplanted there at the time of the house's construction, when they were already around 100 years old. The owner wanted to keep the trees, but local authorities had advised that they be cut down because they were getting weak and presented a hazard. All the redevelop-



PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA

MINORU YOSHIKAWA

President and representative director of Toho Leo Corp. and president and representative director of NI-WA Co. Ltd. Born in Osaka in 1965. After graduating from the Faculty of Agriculture at Kobe University, he worked at Sumitomo Trust and Banking Co. He later served in other positions including executive vice president of Listea Holdings Inc., which operates boutique stores. In 2012, he became an external adviser to a Toho Leo Group subsidiary as a result of his participation in an economy ministry "Cool Japan" public-private expert panel. He has held his current position since 2016.

ment proposals received from developers also recommended cutting down the trees while retaining the building.

Toho Leo has an employee who is a certified arborist, and when he diagnosed the four trees, he found that although they were indeed very weak, they could be revived. Yoshikawa then told the owner that he would leave the trees in good condition, but the owner, who had been told by many others that it was impossible to keep the trees, was suspicious of this proposal and at first did not believe him at all.

As promised, Yoshikawa retained the four old trees and renovated the residence. And strangely enough, the moment

he did so the trees recovered without any further care. "The house was uninhabited before we got involved. You often hear that when a house lies unoccupied it quickly deteriorates. Well, I think the same goes for trees. When they know they are cared for, they feel it and become healthy again," he said.

The building has been renovated, with the major focus being on utilities. Design work was limited to restoring rooms that had been remodeled over the years, even if the cost was high. The current use of the building as a business innovation center is also premised on the need to take care of it. For example, visitors take off their

shoes at the entrance, Japanese-style. This is to avoid damaging the elaborate marquetry wooden floors, which were not designed to be walked on with shoes. In addition, Toho Leo employees take care of the daily cleaning of the building and the garden. Perhaps because that level of care is obvious, even visitors are careful when opening and closing the doors.

One of the few new additions to the residence is a Japanese garden, created at the request of an employee who wanted to give young gardeners an opportunity to contribute. Yoshikawa remembers the words of the gardener who worked on this project: "A Japanese garden is a mirror of its master." In other words, the dignity of the gardener is expressed in the condition of the garden. "If I am diligent, the garden will improve, and if the garden is not good, I realize that there is something wrong with my conduct," he said. "Humans are part of nature and exist in a world that is one with trees and plants. The deterioration of the global environment means that human behavior is worsening, and plants are warning us about this, so we should acknowledge this reality and change what needs to be changed."

Kudan House does not have a sign out front, and the names and logos of Toho Leo and the other two companies do not appear on its website. "It is not classy for companies to show their faces," Yoshikawa said. The ownership of the land and building remains the same as before, and NI-WA operates it under a 20-year fixed-term lease from the owner. Prioritizing the careful use of the building and its harmony with its neighborhood, the occupancy rate is kept below 20% at maximum, while the rent is set quite high. The business plan is aimed at recovering the investment cost over the long term.

The company aims to grow while providing an example of a solution to the social issue of preserving and utilizing historical buildings. Kudan House is a quintessential example of "creating shared value," a business concept that focuses on generating both economic and societal benefits, rather than just profit. At the moment, the building's main users are foreign companies, but Yoshikawa hopes its value will soon be recognized by domestic companies as well.



A former reception room features original furniture dating back to when the house was first built.

COURTESY: KUDAN HOUSE


<http://tyrant.jp>

TAKAO Armchair

design by KUNIHICO MATSUBA/Architect

Width: 538.5 mm / Depth: 495 mm / Height: 690 mm / Seat height: 425 mm
 Materials: Wood (keyaki/Japanese zelkova), Steel

info@tyrant.jp



An artist's rendering of the planned main garden at Green x Expo 2027. The event will be held in the suburbs of Yokohama on a 242-hectare plot that was returned to the Japanese government in 2015 after being requisitioned by the U.S. military after World War II. Approximately 100 hectares will be used for the exposition.

© JAPAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE INTERNATIONAL HORTICULTURAL EXPO 2027, YOKOHAMA

**Green x Expo 2027
(International Horticultural Expo 2027,
Yokohama, Japan)**

The International Horticultural Expo, the highest class of expo, will be held in Yokohama, Kanagawa Prefecture, from March 19 to Sept. 26, 2027. The theme is "Scenery of the Future for Happiness," and 10 million paying visitors are expected. The venue is the former Kamiseya Communications Facility in Yokohama, which was formerly used by the U.S. Army as a communications base from the end of World War II until 2015, when it was returned to the Japanese government.

Feature **FLOWERS & GREENERY**

EXPO

Looking ahead to Yokohama's Green x Expo 2027

By MIAKI NAGAI



Green x Expo 2027 (the International Horticultural Expo 2027, Yokohama, Japan) will be held from March 19 to Sept. 26, 2027 — 37 years after Japan last hosted a top-tier horticultural exposition, the International Garden and Greenery Exposition, in Osaka in 1990.

With the overarching theme of "Scenery of the Future for Happiness," the expo will go beyond the conventional horticultural expo format to communicate and take action on solving global issues. The objective is to demonstrate the potential for a sustainable and happy society where flowers and greenery help us achieve harmony with nature. Held just three years out from 2030, the target year for most of the United Nations' sustainable development goals, the event will contribute to the achievement of the SDGs by presenting a Japanese model for society beyond 2030 and communicating sustainable initiatives for the realization of a green society.

Since its opening as an international port in 1859, Yokohama has been a gateway for trade in horticultural products, including the export of lilies and other plants from Japan and the import of Western flowers like roses and tulips. The expo will be held at the former Kamiseya Communication Facility located in the suburbs of Yokohama. This land once housed warehouse facilities for the former Imperial Japanese Navy, and after World War II it was requisitioned by

the U.S. military and turned into a naval communications base. It was returned to the Japanese government in 2015.

Before the war, Kanagawa Prefecture, just south of Tokyo, was home to several military bases, along with military educational institutions and factories. After the war, the U.S. and other Allied forces seized those facilities and used them for stationing troops. Kanagawa was second only to Okinawa in terms of the number and scale of bases it hosted. Eighty years have passed since the end of the war, and the return of U.S. bases has progressed considerably, but as of 2022 Kanagawa still housed 12 U.S. military bases, comprising an area of approximately 17 square kilometers, according to its government.

The former Kamiseya Communications Facility, which was returned in 2015, is vast, covering 242 hectares — 100 hectares of which will host the expo. Because the area was off-limits for such a long time, it is now considered a rich natural environment, including farmland and gently rolling grasslands, valuable natural assets like the headwaters of the Aizawa and Izumi rivers flowing to the north and south, and a picturesque valley. During the event, the expo site will be decorated with a wide variety of flowers and greenery. Industry professionals will exhibit gardens, flower beds, ikebana and Western-style flower arrangements, and new varieties of plants plus rare species. In the main garden, visitors

will be able to enjoy the seasonal changes in blooming flowers, and in the gardens of overseas exhibitors, they will experience a variety of floriculture, horticulture and landscaping techniques from around the world, as well as distinctive exhibits from different regions.

The official status of the exposition ensures it will be well attended. Green x Expo 2027 is of the the highest level of international horticultural exposition, the A1 class, and will be held with the endorsement of both the International Association of Horticulturalists (AIPH, headquartered in the United Kingdom) and the Bureau International d'Exposition (BIE, headquartered in France). International horticultural expositions are held with the aim of promoting horticulture and landscaping, the value of flowers and greenery to our lives, and also regional and economic development and opportunities to resolve social issues. Four categories of exposition are recognized: world horticultural expositions (A1 class), international horticultural expositions (B), international horticultural shows (C) and international horticultural trade expositions (D). World horticultural expositions must be accredited by the BIE, which was established under the Convention on International Exhibitions, and can be called "international expositions."

The International Association of Horticulturalists (AIPH) was founded in 1948, after World War II, by horticultural pro-

ducers from various European countries with the aim of promoting their interests and advancing horticultural techniques on an international level. Its headquarters is in Oxfordshire, England, and as of 2022, it is composed of 77 horticultural and landscape gardening organizations and others from around the world. The first A1-class international horticultural exposition was held in Rotterdam, the Netherlands, in 1960. Since then, expos have been held regularly, mainly in Europe. The 1990 International Garden and Greenery in Osaka was the first to be held in Asia. In recent years, other expos have been held in China, Thailand, Turkey and, most recently, in Doha, Qatar, in 2023, making them a truly global phenomenon.

Speaking of expos, Expo 2025 is due to kick off in Osaka in April. A forest has been created in the center of the giant wooden Grand Ring that demarcates the venue. Named the "Forest of Tranquility," it symbolizes the kind of symbiosis with nature that society should strive for in the future. Pavilions are lined up around the forest, which covers an area of about 2.3 hectares and boasts some 1,500 trees. We human beings are sustained by nature and form part of the natural cycle of life. It is exhilarating to imagine what kind of "scenery of the future" will emerge at Green x Expo 2027, where planetary-scale issues like global warming, loss of biodiversity, natural disasters and food crises will all be firmly on the agenda.

● **Summary**

横浜で開催される『GREEN x EXPO 2027』。

2027年3月19日～9月26日に「GREEN x EXPO 2027 (2027年国際園芸博覧会)」が神奈川県横浜市で開催される。1990年に大阪で開催された「国際花と緑の博覧会(花の万博)」以来、日本では37年ぶり2回目となる最上位クラスの国際的な園芸博覧会だ。このEXPOは「幸せを創る明日の風景」をテーマに掲げ、従来の園芸博に留ま

らず地球規模の課題解決に向けた行動と発信を行う国際博覧会。花や緑との関わりを通じ、自然と共生した持続可能で幸福感が深まる社会を提案することが目的だ。SDGsの目標年：2030年直前に開催されるEXPOとしてSDGs達成に貢献し、その先の社会も見据えた日本モデルの提示や、グリーン社会の実現に向けた取組の発信

も予定している。会場となるのは横浜市郊外に位置する「旧・上瀬谷通信施設」。この場所は戦後、在日米軍に接収され、2015年に日本政府へ返還された土地だ。約242ヘクタールと広大で、そのうち約100ヘクタールが博覧会区域となる。長期にわたり土地利用が制限されてきたことから、農地など豊かな自然環境が広がっている。

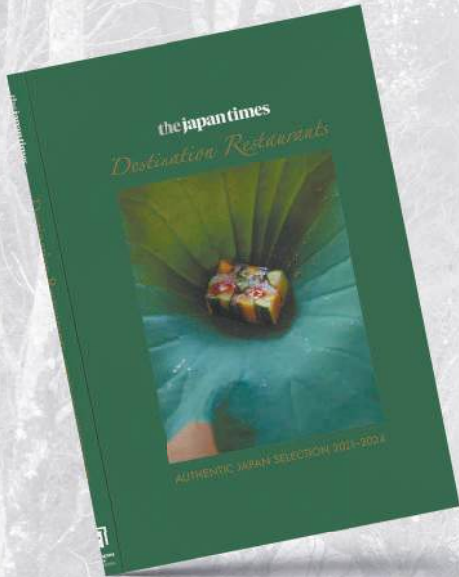


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thejapantimes

Destination Restaurants

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION 2021-2024



A list of the best restaurants in Japan, selected by Japanese experts with international diners in mind.

In 2021, The Japan Times created the Destination Restaurants list around the idea of Japanese experts uncovering top local restaurants for people around the world — hidden gems that not only offer unique culinary experiences but also contribute to community revitalization, sustainable food and the promotion of natural resources. We aim to differentiate ourselves from other selections by bringing countryside talent proper recognition.

This book, marking the fourth anniversary of the Destination Restaurants project, is a compilation of the finest restaurants we have selected so far.

Suggested price: ¥4,200 (without tax)
Circulation: limited to 2,000 copies

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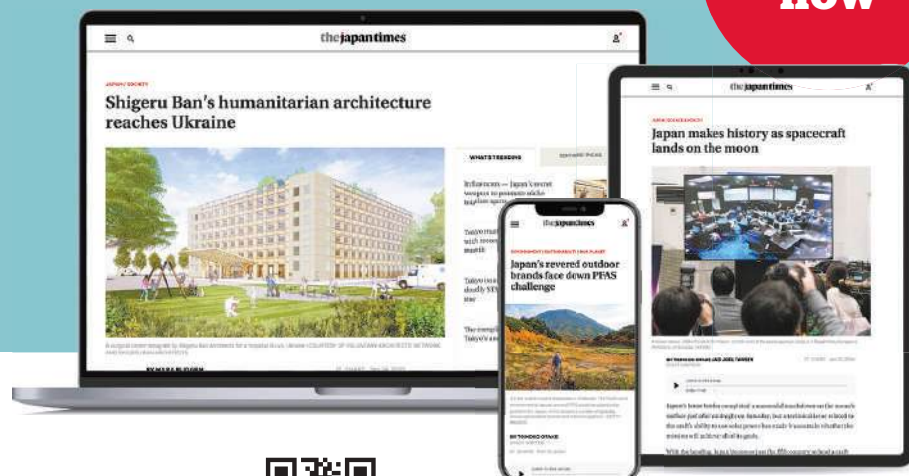
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Top: The farm near Kenya's Lake Naivasha where Afrika Rose sources its flowers. Bottom: An employee of the farm with her family. Hagiuda used to visit the farm and its employees about once a year.

COURTESY: MEGUMI HAGIUDA

MEGUMI HAGIUDA

Founder of Afrika Rose and president of the Slow Flower Association. Born in Tokyo in 1981, Hagiuda moved to the U.S. at the age of 18 and graduated from California State University. In 2011, she left her job and went to Kenya to volunteer with an NGO for six months. During that visit she encountered local roses. After returning to Japan, she launched an online store in 2012 and started selling roses from Kenya. In 2015, she opened Afrika Rose, a store specializing in African roses. In 2023 she launched the Slow Flower Association. <https://afrikarose.com/>



The Afrika Rose store in Tokyo's Roppongi Hills. Roses can be purchased at the store and online.

PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA

Feature FLOWERS & GREENERY

FAIR TRADE

Afrika Rose founder cares for jobs, organic flowers

By TERUKO IKE

Flowers have so many positive effects on our lives — cheering us up, consoling us, even facilitating our relationships. But how often do we stop to wonder who grows them, and where, and how they got to us?

Many of the flowers imported by developed countries like Japan come from African countries like Kenya or equatorial South American countries like Colombia or Ecuador. Some may have been grown by exploited, low-paid workers, or grown with health-damaging pesticides, or be linked to environmental problems like soil or water pollution. Such impacts are rarely quantified, making it difficult to ascertain the true cost of our flowers.

Megumi Hagiuda, the founder of the fair-trade florist Afrika Rose and the current president of the Slow Flower Association, decided at the age of 29 to quit the pharmaceutical company job she had held since university and headed off to Kenya to volunteer for six months with an NGO that supported school construction. Earlier, when she had been studying at an American university, she participated in a mock United Nations and learned about the poverty, environmental degradation and other problems that afflict Africa. She decided then that she would one day work for an international organization.

Determined to make that goal a reality, she landed in Africa in 2011 — and during her time there, she had a fateful en-

counter with beautiful Kenyan roses that had large flowers and thick stems and were full of vitality. She started a rose-importing business soon after returning to Japan, careful to try to apply the principles of fair trade and also contribute to job creation in Kenya.

“Even where there were schools in Kenya, I saw children who couldn’t attend because they had to work, and I saw adults who had become dependent on aid from developed countries. It occurred to me that by going into business importing high-quality roses from Kenya, I could help solve the problem of poverty. I knew that ‘aid’ would create dependency, but if we imported flowers in line with fair-trade principles, we could create employment and not dependency,” she explained.

Kenya’s two largest exports are tea and flowering plants. According to data compiled by JETRO based on a survey by the Kenya National Bureau of Statistics, together they accounted for two-fifths of the nation’s exports in the 2023 financial year, at 20.8% and 20.7% respectively.

Against this backdrop, Hagiuda’s first goal was to import 2,500 flowers. She approached a number of farms, but none of the large-scale plantations would see her. The flower farm that did listen was near Lake Naivasha, run by a Kenyan of Indian descent. It employed many single mothers and used no child labor. The working conditions were also good, with

free lunches provided in the cafeteria and a 24-hour clinic on the farm. In recent years, many workers had moved to the farm from coffee and tea plantations.

In 2012, Hagiuda founded the company that now operates the Afrika Rose stores. As the business progressed steadily, she became more conscious of environmental concerns as well as job creation, and so in 2020 she introduced a “carbon offset fee” that asks for a voluntary donation of ¥5 per rose purchased in order to help offset the carbon dioxide emitted by its transportation, estimated at 1.4 kilograms. Meanwhile, the CO2 absorbed by a single tree over its lifetime is 1 ton. So the company sends a monthly donation to a tree-planting organization in Kenya, funding 20 trees.

At the end of September 2023, Hagiuda retired as company director and from her role managing Afrika Rose. She continues to be involved with the store but has also stepped up her environmental efforts through the Slow Flower Association, which she launched in March 2023.

The concept of “slow flowers,” which originated in the U.S., is akin to the “slow food” movement from Italy. The idea is that seasonal flowers are grown using organic methods for local consumption, thereby benefiting producers, consumers and the environment. Hagiuda says that while farms producing truly organic flowers remain rare, she is starting her efforts by looking at ways to revive mi-

croorganisms in the soil and creating flower gardens that utilize their power.

“While people have learned to care about organic food, there are not many who are interested in organically grown flowers. And yet the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides may lead to loss of microbial diversity and possibly to health hazards. I look forward to continuing activities that prompt people to consider the question, ‘Are you keeping the Earth in mind when you buy your flowers?’” she said.



Full of vitality, Kenyan roses are sold at Afrika Rose stores.

PHOTO: TAKAO OHTA

● Summary

〈アフリカローズ〉創業者の花を巡る挑戦。

美しい花がどこでつくられてものなのか、どういった人が育て、どのようにして自分の元までやってきたのかを意識したことはあるだろうか？ 先進国が輸入する花の多くは、ケニアやコロンビアやエクアドルといった国で生産されたものが多い。なかには低賃金による労働搾取のうえで栽培されたものや、農業散布により労働者の

健康被害を生んだり、生産地に土壌汚染・水質汚染などの環境問題を引き起こしているものがあるかもしれない。「AFRIKA ROSE」創業者で、現在は一般社団法人「スローフラワー協会」代表理事を務める萩生田愛は、大手製薬会社を辞めて単身ケニアに渡り、ボランティアに半年間従事した。その際、生命力あふれる美しいケニア産

の薔薇に出会い、帰国後、雇用創出とフェアトレードを組み込んだバラ輸入事業をスタートさせた。「スローフラワー協会」では花を通して、地球環境や生産者の生活環境をより良いものにしていくための活動を行っている。「地球を意識して花を買っていますか？」という問いかけを行っていく活動をしていきたい」と語る。



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PICK-UP
ARTICLE

Fukuyama, the City of Roses — and so much more

By TOSHICHIKA IZUMI

Fukuyama, host of the World Rose Convention from May 18 to 24, is a major port city on the balmy Seto Inland Sea, with its 460,000 people second only to Hiroshima itself in the prefecture. Around 80% of the city was destroyed by fire in an air raid in August 1945, at the end of World War II. In the mid-1950s, citizens planted about 1,000 rose bushes as part of a reconstruction bid, and Fukuyama blossomed into the “City of Roses.” The site where the roses were planted is now known as Rose Park, the focal point for the Fukuyama Rose Festival held there and at other parks every year in a two-day mid-May celebration that attracts some 500,000 locals and tourists. This year’s festival will take place over the weekend



Fukuyama Transporting Rose Arena, the venue for the Rose Expo, is very close to Rose Park, which will host various rose-related events like talks and displays of flower arrangements.

of May 17 and 18.

To coincide with the convention, a global gathering of rose enthusiasts and experts, the City of Roses will welcome the general public to the Rose Expo over three days from May 17 through 19. Themed as “a journey through the world of roses,” the expo’s main venue will be the Fukuyama Transporting Rose Arena. In addition to a variety of rose-themed displays ranging from Western-style flower arrangement to Japanese ikebana, visitors can enjoy talks and lectures with celebrities, as well as a rose market and much more.

Fukuyama offers much more besides roses. Along with Fukuyama Castle, which marked its 400th anniversary in 2022, and Myooin Temple, which boasts two National Treasures among its buildings, another must-see is the small, traditional port town of Tomonoura, a national heritage-designated scenic spot. Tomonoura is known among anime fans as the place that inspired visiting filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki with ideas for “Ponyo” (Studio Ghibli, 2008). This spring could be a good time to visit Fukuyama for the Rose Expo, and take in some nearby tourist attractions as well.



Top: Tomonoura at sunset. An obsolete *jōyātō* stone lighthouse still towers over the small port. Bottom: Fukuyama Castle, next to Fukuyama Station, built on a railway line that once ran through the old castle grounds.

COURTESY: FUKUYAMA CITY

● Summary

ばらのまち、広島県の「福山」に迫る。

広島県福山市では、「世界バラ会議福山大会」に合わせ、5月17日から19日までの3日間、「ROSE EXPO」が開催される。これは一般の人でも参加できるイベントで、「ばらで世界を旅する」をテーマに、福山通運ローズアリーナをメイン会場に行われる。フラワーアレンジメントから生け花まで様々な薔薇のインスタレーションのほか、著名人によるトークイベントや薔薇の販売会などが開催される。

福山市内には、築城400年を迎えた「福山城」や、2つの国宝をもつ寺院「明王院」、景勝地「瀬の浦」もあり、見逃さない。日本語全文はこちらから



Explore a World of Roses at Rose Expo FUKUYAMA 2025



Rose Expo
FUKUYAMA 2025
A Journey Through the Roses

2025. 5/17 sat - 19 mon

Fukuyama Transporting Co., Ltd. Rose Arena 3 Days Event

Visit Fukuyama, Hiroshima—a city adorned with a million blooming roses—for the spectacular Rose Expo FUKUYAMA 2025, held from Saturday, May 17, to Monday, May 19.

Under the theme “A Journey Through the World of Roses,” the event features unique Japanese-style arrangements, including bonsai roses, and gardens inspired by the homelands of ambassadors and their spouses. Admire vibrant roses lovingly nurtured by local residents and children, celebrating community connections through roses. Enjoy more than fresh flowers—explore rose-inspired art, unique products, fashions, and gourmet treats shaped by the beauty and scent of roses. You’ll also have the chance to purchase rare new varieties of world-famous rose brands. Celebrate the endless charm of roses at this extraordinary event. Join us this May in Fukuyama, the City of Roses!

Become Lord of Fukuyama for a Day with an Exclusive Castle Stay



Spend the night at Fukuyama Castle and immerse yourself in history and culture like never before. As the Lord of Fukuyama, you’ll enjoy exclusive access to the castle, including the top floor of the five-story keep as your private lounge. Rest in comfort with beds on tatami mats in the historic Tsukimi Yagura turret. Savor a gourmet feast of locally sourced Japanese cuisine fit for royalty, and wake up to a delightful breakfast overlooking the castle and gardens. Explore Fukuyama Castle Park, a treasure trove of historical buildings, cultural assets, and traditional performing arts. Customize your stay with experiences such as Noh Theatre or visits to the picturesque townscapes of Tomonoura and Kannabe Honjin. Fukuyama Castle Stay offers an unparalleled journey through history, delivered with the finest hospitality. Reserve your timeless adventure today!



PICK-UP
ARTICLE



From left: Kazuhiro Inoue of Restaurant Uozen, Hiroto Murai of Yoichi Sagra, Toru Kawashima of Ipponsugi Kawashima, Toshiya Ikehata of L'Atelier de Noto, Keiko Kuwakino of Satoyama Jujo and Masakazu Taira of Don Bravo. In front is Kanji Kobayashi of Villa Aida. PHOTOS: TAKAO OHTA

Seven chefs take part in an event for Noto's recovery

By RIKO SAITO

Destination Restaurants, presented by The Japan Times, tells the world about Japan's outstanding regional restaurants. An event for the recovery of the Noto Peninsula was held on Feb. 13 at Crazy Pizza in Toranomon Hills Station Tower with the participation of seven chefs honored by Destination Restaurants: Toshiya Ikehata of L'Atelier de Noto and Toru Kawashima of Ipponsugi Kawashima, both in Ishikawa Prefecture; Kazuhiro Inoue of Restaurant Uozen and Keiko Kuwakino of Satoyama Jujo, both in Niigata Prefecture; Kanji Kobayashi of Villa Aida in Wakayama Prefecture; Hiroto Murai of Yoichi Sagra in Hokkaido; and Masakazu Taira of Don Bravo in Tokyo. Using ingredients from their home regions, the chefs prepared and served attendees highly creative appetizers and pizzas.

The event was made up of three seating periods starting at noon, 3 p.m. and 6 p.m. Each gathering was a great success, with

every seat filled. All the guests looked delighted as they savored the original, one-time-only pizza creations of these celebrated chefs.

Kawashima said: "Even though it has been over a year since the earthquake, Noto's recovery is not progressing. But there are actually a lot of people who think things are all right now, and I'm afraid [Noto] will fade in people's memories. If skilled chefs getting together and creating an event like this helps raise awareness of the current and future situation of Noto, which is working so hard [to recover], I'll be happy."

Ikehata, whose restaurant collapsed in the earthquake and whose outlook for rebuilding remains unclear, said: "I can't let the encouragement I've received from so many people go to waste. Having colleagues all over the country who support me has enabled me to look forward. Chefs are unhappy when they're not cooking, so an event like this makes me really happy."

Taira, the event's presenter and the owner-chef of Crazy Pizza, remarked that the plan had come together very quickly when the chefs met at the previous Destination Restaurants award ceremony in May 2024. He said he was infinitely grateful to fellow chefs throughout Japan who, with heartfelt wishes, sent products in support of the event although they were unable to attend in person.

Kawashima (left) and Ikehata prepare pizza.



From left: L'Atelier de Noto's pizza was made with sardines landed at the port of Noto and topped with Noto herbs such as *shungiku* chrysanthemum leaves and rapeseed leaves. Ipponsugi Kawashima's pizza was generously topped with Noto beef cooked sukiyaki-style. Yoichi Sagra's pizza was topped with fresh cod milt (*shirako*) and baked, then garnished with savory rock seaweed. Uozen's pizza featured plenty of tuna, caught by the chef himself. Villa Aida's pizza was topped with thin slices of black radish harvested in the restaurant's garden. Satoyama Jujo's creation was stuffed pizza crust with *yukimuro* (snow cellar) carrots grilled over a wood fire, ricotta cheese and house-made spices. Don Bravo's pizza Margherita was topped with fresh mozzarella cheese made before the guests' eyes.



● Summary

7名のシェフによる、能登半島復興イベント。

地方の素晴らしいレストランを毎年リストアップするジャパンタイムズ主催「Destination Restaurants」。受賞シェフたちによる能登半島復興イベントが、2025年2月、虎ノ門ヒルズ・ステーションタワーの「クレイジー・ピザ」で開催された。参加したのは、石川県「ラトリエ・ドゥ・ノト」池端隼也、

石川県「一本杉川嶋」川嶋亨、新潟県「UOZEN」井上和洋、新潟県「里山十帖」桑木野恵子、和歌山県「ヴィラ・アイダ」小林寛司、北海道「余市SAGRA」村井啓人、東京都「ドンブラボー」平雅一の7名のシェフたち。それぞれが、地元の食材を使い趣向を凝らした前菜とピザを料理し振る舞った。

被災地石川県で店の再建に取り組む池端・川嶋両シェフは、全国にシェフ仲間がいて支えてくれることが励みになると語る。震災から1年以上経っても能登の復興はなかなか進まないが、能登の現状や今後を知り風化させないためにも、非常に意義のあるイベントであった。



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Destination Restaurants 2024

AUTHENTIC JAPAN SELECTION

Ventinove: Italian wood-fired cuisine in Gunma

By TAEKO TERA0

Kawaba, home of the Italian restaurant-inn Ventinove, is a village of about 3,000 people in Gunma Prefecture's Tone district. The small number of residents may evoke the image of a depopulated village in decline, but with its location at the foot of Mount Hotaka, one of Japan's "100 famous mountains," Kawaba is actually a vibrant tourist destination. From Tokyo, visitors can take the Joetsu Shinkansen to Jomo-Kogen Station, followed by a 30-minute taxi ride. The area abounds in sightseeing attractions, including the roadside station Kawaba Denen Plaza, which receives as many as 2 million visitors per year, in addition to skiing and golf facilities and five hot springs.

Ventinove's chef-owner, Yusuke Takeuchi, was born in Tokyo but lived in Kawaba from the age of 10. His father, Shigemitsu, an independent early childhood education specialist, relocated to the area in order to provide educational programs in a natural setting.

Takeuchi said: "Every summer, my dad takes city kids camping for two weeks in an area deep in the mountains without electricity, running water or gas. I went along with the group every year until I was 18. Each day we'd make a wood fire and use it to cook rice and heat bath water. At home, too, we used firewood for cooking and baths."

In 2006, while training as a chef, Takeuchi went to Italy, where he spent three years honing his skills. In the final year he worked at Cecchini, a 250-year-old business in the Chianti region of Tuscany that has been called the world's most famous butcher shop.

"In the morning, I'd cut up the meat. From noon, at the attached restaurant, I'd grill the specialty, *bistecca* (Tuscan-style steak)," said Takeuchi.

After returning to Japan, he worked for a year at Osteria Enoteca da Sasino in Aomori Prefecture, and in 2011 he opened Trattoria 29 in the Nishiogikubo area of Tokyo. Though the restaurant flourished, an eviction notice from the landlord came in 2019, followed by the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. Takeuchi returned to his family home to take stock, and it was then that he became aware of the wealth of ingredients produced in Kawaba. He decided to create a restaurant there, and in 2022 he opened Ventinove.

"There are wild mountain vegetables, of course, and also an abundance of mushrooms," said Takeuchi. "You can even forage for black truffles. I also go along on hunts, and as soon as I return, I butcher the hunted game in the meat-production facility at our family home."

These mountain gifts and all the other ingredients used in the course menu (except seasonings) are sourced in Gunma Prefecture. Menu prices start at ¥15,500 (\$100), and a night's stay in Ventinove's only guest room, with two meals, starts at ¥36,000 (prices include tax). All the cooking, including the Akagi beef *bistecca* — crisp on the outside and moist and tender on the inside — is done with wood fire, either on a grill or in an oven. Takeuchi's wife, Mai, is in charge of service.

This small restaurant will undoubtedly play a big role as a new destination in Kawaba, a town that has survived and prospered through tourism.



A dish of wheat risotto and grilled mushrooms makes the most of the rich flavors and distinctive textures of wild *maitake*, *mukitake* and *yamabushitake* mushrooms. Garnished with a tart sauce made from wild grapes, and cosmos that grow in the restaurant's garden, the risotto is comparable in impact to Ventinove's meat-based main dishes. PHOTOS: TAKAO OHTA



Gunma Prefecture (Italian)

Ventinove

2593-1 Yachi, Kawaba-mura, Tone-gun, Gunma Prefecture
<https://www.29ventinove.com>



YUSUKE TAKEUCHI

Born in Tokyo in 1980. After studying at a culinary school, Takeuchi pursued a career as a chef specializing in Italian cuisine. For three years starting in 2006, he honed his skills further in Italy. He spent the last of those years in Tuscany's Chianti region gaining experience in meat butchering and meat-based cooking at Cecchini, a 250-year-old business encompassing a butcher shop and attached restaurants. Takeuchi returned to Japan in 2009 and completed his training the following year at Osteria Enoteca da Sasino in Aomori Prefecture. In 2011 he launched Trattoria 29 in the Nishiogikubo area of Tokyo. In 2020 he relocated to the village of Kawaba in Gunma Prefecture, where he opened the restaurant-inn Ventinove in October 2022.

Summary

群馬県の小さな村にある薪焼イタリアン。

イタリアン・オーベルジュ『ヴェンティノーヴェ』がある群馬県利根郡川場村はスキー場やゴルフ場、5箇所ある温泉に加え、年間約200万人が訪れる道の駅もあり、観光資源に恵まれている。『ヴェンティノーヴェ』オーナーシェフ、竹内悠介は東京都生まれだが、10歳から川場村育ち。調理やお風呂に薪を使う生活

をしていた。料理人としては世界一有名な精肉店と呼ばれるトスカナ州『チェッキーニ』でも腕を磨き、2011年、東京都西荻窪に『トラットリア29』を開店。繁盛したが2019年に立ち退きを宣告され、2020年のコロナ禍を機に川場村に戻り、2022年に『ヴェンティノーヴェ』をオープンした。

今では山菜やきのこを採り、解体場で獲物を捌く。¥15,500〜のコースは、調味料以外は群馬県産。赤城牛のビステッカをはじめ、すべての調理に薪グリル、薪オープンと薪の熱源で火を入れる。観光で生き残る川場村の新たな目的地として、この店が果たす役割は大きいはずだ。



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