

ESG promotional content
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sustainable japan

Co-founder Philippe Gueulet tells of local ties, sustainable growth

Group of friends brews naturally tasty Kaigan beer

Name: Philippe Gueulet
Title: Co-founder and co-owner of Kaigan Brewery and Coaster Craft Beer & Kitchen, brewmaster of Kaigan Brewery
Hometown: Marseille, France
Years in Japan: 22

Leaders & Readers

MIKA OSAKI
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

A group of friends and a whole lot of beer, the beginning of many stories. This is the genesis of Kaigan Brewery. What started as an interest in home brewing and a passion shared among lifelong friends has grown into a beloved craft beer brand and two bustling taprooms. Tokyo craft beer lovers are familiar with the flavorful beers of Kaigan Brewery, located on the coast of Minamiboso, Chiba Prefecture. Most likely, those premium-quality beers were enjoyed at a Coaster Craft Beer & Kitchen, the brewery's well-loved taprooms in Tokyo's Shimokitazawa and Aobadai areas.

While many people know how delicious Kaigan beers are, few know how instrumental sustainability practices are to the brewery and how intertwined they have become within the local farming community. In a sit-down with Coaster co-founder and Kaigan brewmaster Philippe Gueulet, we got to hear the origin story of the brewery and the taprooms and how sustainability initiatives have had a direct impact on the growth of the business and flavors of the beers.

Gueulet and six friends founded Coaster

in June 2018. His interests have always extended beyond the business world, "I always wanted to have my own brewery, so I started this adventure with my friends. One of them was chef Thomas Kim, who always wanted to have his own restaurant." The accomplished and classically trained chef developed the menu that has become an iconic staple to the food scene of Shimokitazawa. In February of 2019, the guys opened the first Coaster Craft Beer & Kitchen together, and a lifelong dream shared between old friends became a tangible space.

The intention was always to brew their own beer for Coaster. COVID unfortunately struck right as Coaster opened, so for better or worse Gueulet had a lot of time to focus on developing the brewery. The crew acquired an empty old house close to the Chiba coast and renovated it from the ground up. He mentioned how lucky he is to work closely with Mehdi Djerrah, a talented self-taught brewer who started as a cook at Coaster in Shimokitazawa. "He's the best brewer in Tokyo," Gueulet said as he recalled the countless hours they have spent brewing beer together. There was a lot of DIY involved, as well as a lot of breaks to enjoy barbecues and surfing on the pristine surrounding beaches. In January of 2022, they got their commercial brewing license, and Kaigan Brewery was operational.

Due to the fairly remote countryside location of the brewery, the Kaigan crew stand out as a group of foreigners running a business. When they first arrived, they were total strangers to a tight-knit rural community. Luckily, they are very friendly strangers who made a genuine effort to connect with the locals. "The first connection we actually man-

aged to make with the local community was through the spent grain. The brewery creates a certain amount of waste; part of it is organic waste from the used malt. We found a local cattle farmer who accepted this waste and uses it as cow feed." This began a network of mutually beneficial exchanges. Local rice farmers began donating used casks, which they would otherwise discard but now are repurposed by Kaigan to filter beer. These types of exchanges have naturally cultivated sustainability into the foundation of the brewery's practices.

Gueulet recalled developing genuine friendships when they began looking for fruits and fresh produce to incorporate into their beers. After speaking with some blueberry growers, he realized that a lot of the visually imperfect berries taste perfectly fine but can't be sold in markets and are thrown away. The farmers gave the Kaigan crew 80 kilograms of "ugly" blueberries, and the brewers used them to create the insanely refreshing and lightly tart Blueberry Gose (a type of warm-fermented beer). In return, they gave the blueberry farmers some of their organic waste, which can be used as a soil fermentation additive — and some of the blueberry beer, of course.

As word got out, the brewery began to receive visually imperfect but still delicious yuzu citrus fruits, plums, wakame seaweed and even shiitake mushrooms that later became a popular shiitake porter. All of this produce that once would have been destined to become waste is now given new life as delicious seasonal beers. The availability of seasonal ingredients is why the Kaigan beer lineup at the Coaster shops is always rotating. They do have a series of permanent beers



COSUFI

that pop in and out of the menu rotation, all named after different yōkai spirits. If Gueulet could recommend one permanent Kaigan beer to try, it would be Shojo, a West Coast-style IPA named for a mythical primate yōkai. A lot of people associate craft beer with haziness, but the strong and pleasantly bitter West Coast style harkens back to the origins of craft beer.

When asked about the current challenges of running Kaigan Brewery, Gueulet mentioned that their beers currently can only be sold in large reusable kegs. Because they do not pasteurize or use any chemical stabilizers, their beers must be kept at less than 10 degrees Celsius. Gueulet believes that additives greatly compromise the taste of beer

and reduce its overall quality. However, avoiding them means that only bars and restaurants with a tap system and refrigerators large enough to store 15 kegs can currently serve Kaigan beers, despite high demand.

The solution to this challenge will be to begin canning their beers within the next month so that more craft beer fans can enjoy them and they can be provided by a larger number of bars and restaurants. Kaigan Beers will soon be more accessible than ever.

Many stories begin with a group of friends and beer. Few of them lead to the realization of lifelong dreams and the creation of countless happy memories. For many people, the Coaster taprooms extend beyond places to eat and drink. They are a community, where

Truffles, yogurt, beer, energy drink

Gueulet was born in Marseille, France, and has spent half of his life in Japan. He arrived here at the age of 22 with a small French company that sold truffles to help develop the Japanese market. After a year and a half, the company asked him to return to France. He decided to stay in Japan, as he had already spent a significant amount of time studying the language and felt settled here.

He spent the next 10 years at Danone in various positions, including commercial director, and moved on to Johnson & Johnson in 2017, the same year he and six friends founded the Coaster company. He is the brewmaster of Kaigan Brewery and co-owner of the Coaster Craft Beer & Kitchen taprooms. Currently, he is working at Red Bull as the on-premise sales director.

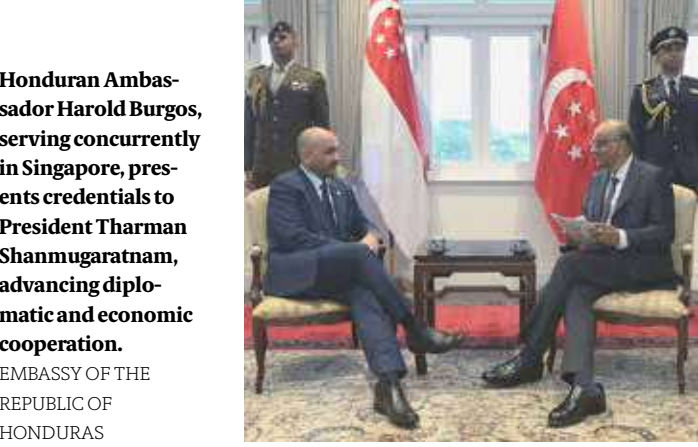
everyone can come as they are and be welcomed with a warm smile and a cold beer. The highly anticipated opening of the second Coaster location in Aobadai last October has allowed this culture of genuine friendship to grow with a new flavor in a new neighborhood. Gueulet mentions consistently how much gratitude he has for the friends, partners and operations team members who have been a part of the journey and make Coaster and Kaigan so special.

Looking to the next chapter, Gueulet anticipates opening more Coaster locations and making Kaigan beers more accessible so they can be enjoyed by a wider audience. At the brewery, their next big project will be to eliminate the small amount of fuel they use in the brewing process and switch to an electric source, which will make them nearly 100% sustainable. Focusing on the quality of the beer and remaining true to the joyful spirit that characterizes the journey thus far is how they plan to continue growing. In closing, Gueulet said, "We love what we do, and we hope you love it too."

Times Gallery



Emperor Naruhito bids farewell to Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who paid a state visit to Japan from March 24 to 27. RICARDO STUCKERT



Honduran Ambassador Harold Burgos, serving concurrently in Singapore, presents credentials to President Tharman Shanmugaratnam, advancing diplomatic and economic cooperation. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF HONDURAS



Ambassador Ermal Muca and Honorary Consul Kyoko Spector host economic security minister Minoru Kiuchi and Japan-Albania Parliamentary Friendship Association members. EMBASSY OF ALBANIA



Eid al-Fitr was celebrated by 6,500 Indonesian Muslims at the Indonesia Mosque Tokyo in Meguro on March 31. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF INDONESIA



Fukuyama Mayor Naoki Eda (left) and Italian Ambassador Gianluigi Benedetti participate in a commemorative rose-planting at the Italian Embassy. FUKUYAMA CITY



The ambassador of the Republic of Kosovo, Sabri Kicmari, participates in the official opening of Osaka's Expo 2025. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOSOVO



The speaker of the House of Representatives of Jamaica meets with Japanese House of Representatives Speaker Fukushima Nukaga on her official visit to Japan. EMBASSY OF JAMAICA



Charge d'Affaires a.i. Shafraz Rasheed meets Hoko Co. Ltd. CEO Ichiro Ozawa, reflecting on Hoko's role as the first exporter of chilled raw tuna from the Maldives. EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALDIVES

Event weighs private equity's role in environmental and social issues

ESG/SDGs

HIROKO NAKATA
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Facing increasingly complex environmental, social and business issues, society needs multifaceted approaches to solutions. To discuss how to address these issues, private equity firms, lawyers and next-generation sustainability experts gathered in Tokyo on March 14 at a conference under the theme of "next-generation nexus and investment."

Habib Abdur-Rahman, the global head of sustainability at Investcorp, an alternative investment firm and the lead sponsor of the event, emphasized in his keynote speech the significance of addressing climate change and the role of investors in a commercially viable green transformation.

"I think it's increasingly evident that in a low-carbon future, companies who fail to invest or don't invest far enough may find themselves uncompetitive as governments and customers increasingly demand more sustainable practices," Abdur-Rahman said. He also emphasized that the next generation of leadership is essential to driving the green transition.

Heizo Takenaka, a professor emeritus at Keio University, highlighted in his keynote speech the importance of private equity investment in Japan, stressing the need for a system to deploy its high-level technologies and human capital for growth. "I believe private equity funds can play a meaningful role to change Japan, change society and change the global environment," Takenaka said.

Since its debut in Japan around the turn of the century, private equity investment has grown to about ¥6 trillion (\$40 billion)



Investcorp speakers and Prometheus Foundation staff INVESTCORP JAPAN LLC

annually. The growth has been driven by companies' need to streamline operations by selling to private equity funds or strategically delisting their shares, according to Ryosuke Iinuma, chairman of the Japan Private Equity Association.

A panel discussion by young environmental experts focused on the increasing threats from climate change and water insecurity across the country, and on the low level of young people's involvement in policymaking processes. "The government and ministries invite us to share our opinions, but these are not reflected in their policies," said Sakura Takahashi from the group Climate Youth Japan.

In the second panel discussion, three experts on private equity investment discussed how they integrate ESG (environmental, social and governance) principles into corporate management to improve the profitability of the companies they invest in.

Private equity funds seek to enhance corporate value by reforming the businesses they acquire to achieve higher returns. "We cannot go on doing business without working on various ESG-related activities, and in that sense our daily activities are a nexus," said Shunsuke Tanahashi, a partner at Investcorp Japan LLC and mediator for the discussion. In the context of sustainability, "nexus" refers to linking multiple factors in addressing issues.

Yusuke Niibayashi, who is in charge of renewables and sustainability at Advantage Partners Inc., detailed the hydrogen fund that the private equity investment firm launched last year in collaboration with the Hydrogen Value Chain Promotion Council, aiming to promote hydrogen as an alternative energy source, particularly for hard-to-abate sectors.

Makoto Iwami, the director of Nippon Sangyo Suishin Kiko, explained the private equity firm's goal of enhancing corporate value through investments, particularly in mid-capitalization companies, and its commitment to ESG principles, mentioning its efforts on employee growth and gender diversity. Unlike the traditional image of private equity funds as prioritizing short-term profits, NSSK's corporate mission includes ethical and responsible behavior, he said.

Yuka Katsuki shared Polaris Capital



Speech by Shunsuke Tanahashi, Partner at Investcorp INVESTCORP JAPAN LLC

Group Co.'s approach to ESG, including her role as chief sustainability officer and its focus on information disclosure. Polaris mainly invests in medical and welfare sectors, technologies and retailing, emphasizing the importance of ESG in driving corporate value.

The panelists discussed the challenges and opportunities of implementing ESG initiatives, with a focus on balancing economic value and sustainability. They also addressed the importance of engaging with younger generations and incorporating their perspectives into ESG strategies.

"Taking ESG-oriented actions does not mean a trade-off for a return, but the actions themselves help create economic value," NSSK's Iwami said, dismissing opinions often heard from people at firms it invests in that focusing on sustainability may not be cost-effective or be unrealistic due to a lack of human resources. To gain such people's understanding, it is essential to gather evidence on what kinds of sustainable activities improve corporate value, he added.

Katsuki from Polaris noted that big companies are usually proactive but young ones often say they lack the human resources and small ones are not sure where to begin. In those cases, Polaris advises how to go about it, she said.

In the last panel discussion, involving law experts, Green Rights Law lawyer Kaoru Koide explained about a civil lawsuit by 16 young people requesting the country's 10 major electric utilities to reduce carbon emissions based on scientific standards, as their emissions account for about 30% of the nation's overall energy-related emissions.