



# HACHIOJI HIGASHI POST

Special Edition

March 2024

## Attracting hearts with traditional “Amezaiku”

“Amezaiku” means candy sculpture, and it is a part of Japanese traditional culture that started about 300 years ago. Before that, candy was known as a luxury in Japan, but as times changed and peaceful lifestyles continued, the popularity of candy gradually increased, and the prototype of candy craftsmanship was eventually created.

According to Takahiro Mizuki, an amezaiku artisan, being able to make people in front of him happy is what is worthwhile about his job. How has Mizuki fascinated people?

Mizuki was not born in a family of candy makers but became an amezaiku artisan. He learned about making candy for the first time at a street performance event and became interested in it. After that, he watched the craftsmanship many times and learned the skills. In other words, his practice of amezaiku began with imitation. He made a website, and through it, he started to visit people who were interested in his work. His great skill has attracted people all over the world like the USA, Italy, Korea and so on.



The process of making the shape with Japanese scissors

DAICHI SASAKI PHOTO

### How to make amezaiku

1. First, knead the candy well and add color with food coloring. After kneading well, roll it up and put it on the end of a stick to make a perfectly round shape.
2. Second, using only Japanese scissors to cut, bend and pinch it into the shape of an animal such as a rabbit, a crane, or a Pegasus. The candy hardens easily, so it is important to make it rapidly.
3. Finally, air-dry it and it's done.

In our interview, he wore traditional clothes which immersed us in Japanese culture, and in front of him, he put a special wooden box made of precious wood and took out Japanese scissors and candy. With them in his hands, he performed actions such as cutting, bending, and crushing to create a wonderful model of amezaiku. His philosophy is “nostalgic candy.” We approached the interview with Mizuki, a great amezaiku artisan who embodied exactly that, with excitement in our hearts.

We asked Mizuki, “What are the most difficult animals to make?”

He answered, “One of the most difficult animals to make is a dragon, because it has many complex parts and it's fragile. It's also difficult to make chickens, peacocks and eagles.”

According to Mizuki, candies which are shaped like dragons and dolphins are popular among children. There are also candies



Takahiro Mizuki, an amezaiku artisan, is making the last adjustment

Takahiro Mizuki's website: [www.amezaiku.com](http://www.amezaiku.com) DAICHI SASAKI PHOTO

of popular characters, such as Pikachu, Kirby, and Winnie-the-Pooh. They attract not only children but also adults.

In addition to working as an amezaiku artisan in Japan, Mizuki visits other countries to perform amezaiku creations. When he shows amezaiku to foreign people, they find it interesting because they are new to them. On the other hand, Japanese think of them to be nostalgic. That is the main difference between foreigners and Japanese when it comes to their feelings about amezaiku.

He said that enjoying making amezaiku was more necessary than being good with one's hands. “The most interesting point of this job is that I can make the person in front of me

happy through my candy. It is really important for me to entertain people whom I meet,” Mizuki said. Why don't you try amezaiku which satisfies your eyes, your tongue, and your heart?

Yuto Matsunaga, Daichi Sasaki, Ryotaro Yamamoto, Sakura Suzuki and Yukimi Mizuki



Various kinds of traditional amezaiku DAICHI SASAKI PHOTO

### HACHIOJI HIGASHI POST

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## ART

# Hayao Miyazaki's sincere hope for a museum

Studio Ghibli is one of Japan's leading animation studios.

In 2001, the "Ghibli Museum, Mitaka" was built in Inokashira Park, Mitaka, Tokyo.

Its main designer is Hayao Miyazaki. He is an animation director who has made many famous Ghibli films. His masterpieces are "Spirited Away" and "Howl's Moving Castle," to name a few.

After creating several Ghibli movies, he thought, "I want to create a museum where visitors feel warm when they enter."

The museum has an atrium and lots of windows to let in the sunlight, so you'll be able to relax. Some of the stained-glass windows in the museum are decorated with various Ghibli characters.

Why don't you look for your favorite character?

The museum is also designed with the concept of "Let's get lost together."

Visitors can enjoy the museum in their own way because the museum has no route.

## Efforts to make the museum comfortable

"I want visitors to enjoy the museum as the main character," said Shouhei Tanaka, who has worked at the museum for a long time.



**In front of Totoro at the reception. It's not a real reception desk, so be careful when you come! The staff member Shouhei Tanaka (left), Junichi Nishioka (right)** KAZUMI KOBAYASHI, A PUBLIC RELATIONS OFFICER

There is always communication between the staff through an earpiece.

"We always communicate. For example, we communicate with each other to help if some of the staff see a person in a wheelchair."

In daily work, communication and teamwork are a must.

Recently, the number of foreign visitors to the museum has increased because people can watch many Ghibli films overseas on Netflix.

In order not to make them feel uncomfortable, each staff member has learned many things: cultural differences such as food, religion, manners and so on.

Tanaka said, "Even now, I feel the emotion of my first visit to the museum every morning."

I think it's one of the charms of the museum that it can still impress me even though 10 years have passed."

"Ghibli Museum, Mitaka" is made up of both the visitors'

## Important Notes

Tickets to the museum are available only by advance reservation. Details of the museum can be found on its website.

Photography is not allowed inside the museum but you can take pictures outside.

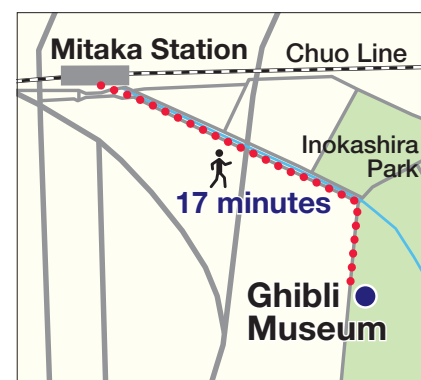
## Working Hours

10:00-18:00 (last entry 16:00)

## How to get there

By walking: It takes about 15 minutes to walk from JR Mitaka Station South Exit along Tamagawa-Josui.

By bus: Take a local bus from Mitaka station to Ghibli Museum, Mitaka.



feelings about Ghibli and the staff's efforts and teamwork, with feelings they want to share with many visitors.

The museum has been loved by many people for 22 years.

## Explore, eat and enjoy

### A shop full of treasures

There are snacks, miscellaneous goods, stuffed characters, and so on in the gift shop "Mamma Aiuto." "Mamma Aiuto" are pirates who appear in Porco Rosso, one of the Ghibli films. It means "Help, mama!" in English. It also shows the situation of people being confused by choosing souvenirs from the pirates' wide selection of treasures.

### Dishes for a special day

The cafe that has been famous since the museum was built is called the "Straw Hat Cafe."

Each item on the menu is designed by Hayao Miyazaki to feel

like home cooking, but also as dishes for a special day. You can have "Breaded Pork Cutlet Sandwich for the Hungry Stomach" and "Strawberry Short Cake with Berries of all Sizes," for example. Organic vegetables and free-range pork are used for the sandwich.

According to Nishioka Junichi, a supervisor at Studio Ghibli, Miyazaki planned these dishes with one wish: "I want everyone to open their mouths wide and bite into them without worrying about spilling the sauce." Nishioka also said that the chefs make dishes with the feeling that they want guests to become the main characters of the movie by eating



**This is the exterior of the cafe called "Mugiwaboshi," which means "straw hat"** GIBLI MUSEUM, MITAKA

the dishes.

These menus have entertained many people since the museum opened.

Hina Yageta, Asumi Furuyama, Ayaka Tozawa, Ayana Nishida, Hiromu Chiba and Rina Kaneshima



TRAVEL

Kibundo, filled with the history and the owner's passion

Kibundo (紀文堂) is a shop selling “Ningyo-Yaki,” doll-shaped pancakes filled with red bean paste and “kawarassenbei,” tile-shaped rice crackers from 1890. We interviewed Yusuke Tezuka, the owner of the shop, about the fastidiousness of the shop and ningyo-yaki.

What's the origin of the store's name?

The shop started in Tokyo's Higashi-Nihonbashi. Kinokuniya Bunzaemon's house was located there; he was a successful businessman. The founder of Kibundo wanted to be like him, so the name Kibundo took “紀” (Ki) and “文” (Bun) from Kinokuniya Bunzaemon's name (紀伊國屋文左衛門).

How was ningyo-yaki born?

Ningyo-yaki was originally “kawarassenbei,” like cookies. You can make them by baking a mix of eggs, flour and sugar in molds. Then one day, one ningyo-yaki shop thought it would be better if they put something inside it. The start was someone putting “anko,” sweet bean paste, in it.

Why is ningyo-yaki popular and famous in Asakusa?

Asakusa started as a “monzen-machi,” a town devel-



Ningyo-yaki INSTAGRAM OF KIBUNDO

oped near the gate of Sensoji temple. Now, it is a sightseeing spot. In the monzen-machi, there were souvenir shops and inns. Ningyo-yaki shops were among the shops there. Then, ningyo-yaki shops became popular and gradually increased.

What makes your products unique compared to other stores?

The owner of Kibundo shared his thoughts about what makes his shop special. “I've never thought I want to make better products than other shops because from the beginning, the shape and the taste of ningyo-yaki are differ-



Kibundo's exterior and interior design MADOKA USAMI PHOTO

ent from other shops. When you cook, you don't think you'd like to make sub-par meals. That applies to ningyo-yaki. A desire to serve good food is important.”

What are the special features of the shop's exterior and interior to attract customers?

We are not particular about the exterior and interior design. However, when the customers see the store's design, they feel it is nice, unfamiliar, and so on. We emphasize such an atmosphere because Asakusa was a monzen-machi.

What's the aim of Kibundo?

Our goal is for our store to become well-known throughout Japan and that tourists want to introduce it to others by saying, “It is a great store.” I'm glad to hear that

the students on a school trip came to my shop because their mothers recommended to visit here. That means my shop is known to mothers. We also hope that it is in my store that people want to buy ningyo-yaki as souvenirs.

Is there anything you are working on for foreign visitors?

I'm not particularly doing anything about it, but I think it is important to have a desire to convey our thoughts to other people through our products.

Please leave a message for foreign tourists.

I want you to become interested in Japan more!

.....  
Manari Moriki, Mahiru Honda,  
Madoka Usami, Yuta Komiya,  
Yuto Onoda and Yuto Otsu

Asakusa, the town which has so many different attractions

Asakusa, Tokyo, is so appealing and popular for not only Japanese but also foreign people. Now we will introduce its charms from foreign tourists' perspectives. We interviewed three groups of foreigners to learn their thoughts of Asakusa.

A woman from England

What's the purpose of your visit?

I came here just to look around. I was exploring around here.

What is the best place in Asakusa and what do you want to recommend to other foreigners?

I want to recommend Senso-ji temple. I like its dynamic looks. What is the best food you have tried? What food do you want



Two women from Portugal (right), and the interviewers (left)

YUTO OTSU PHOTO

to recommend?

I just had curry for lunch. It was good.

Was there anything surprising and amazing?

There are lots of people, lots to see here, so it's quite busy.

Asakusa is very different from the energy of the two downtown Tokyo areas like Shibuya and Shinjuku.

Also, there are different types of people.

Two women from Portugal

What's the purpose of your visit?

We visited here for tourism.

What is the best place in Asakusa and what do you want to recommend to other foreigners?

We liked Nakamise market. It's very busy.

What is the best food you have tried?

Takoyaki, a ball-shaped pan-

cake with a bit of octopus, and sushi made us love Asakusa. They were good.

A man from England

What's the purpose of your visit?

We are now enjoying tourism here!

What did you enjoy in Asakusa?

We ate sweet mochi balls and soy sauce ramen and visited Senso-ji.

Was there anything surprising?

I do not know how to use chopsticks, so it was difficult to eat ramen.

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Manari Moriki, Mahiru Honda,  
Madoka Usami, Yuta Komiya,  
Yuto Onoda and Yuto Otsu



## SPORTS / FOOD

# Sports across the ocean

In contrast to Japan's enthusiasm for baseball, there are countries that thrive on other sports.

The sports that have taken root in each country differ from country to country.

In this article, we would like to focus on these differences and delve deeper into the appeal of sports.

We interviewed foreigners from different countries at airports and baseball stadiums.

## Content of the interviews

The questions asked were about famous sports in each country and the state of sports in that country.

Regarding the most famous sports in each country, South Africans mentioned rugby, Filipinos volleyball, Turks handball, and Americans basketball.

Regarding the state of sports, health benefits were universal.

## Reflections

Why are there differences? Let us take South African rugby as an example. South Africa won the Rugby World Cup last year.

Why is rugby so popular in South Africa? Is it deeply rooted in the country's history? In fact, it is. When Nelson Mandela became the first black president of South Africa, he asked non-whites to love the South African team. As a result, black and white people became united through rugby, and rugby went from being a symbol of apartheid to a symbol of racial reconciliation.

Thus, we can see that the sports that are rooted in a country are different depending on the history of the country. The character of a country also has an impact. The United States is a good example.

Many Americans are friendly and open-minded, and high-scoring sports like basketball are popular.

Baseball is becoming extremely popular now with the World Baseball Classic Championship, but why has it become so popular in Japan? One of the reasons baseball has been so popular since it was imported from the U.S. in the Meiji era (1868-1912) is because of the similarities be-



Tokyo Dome, Japanese baseball stadium RYOTARO TAKIKAWA PHOTO

tween the characteristics of baseball and the Japanese people.

Baseball requires discipline, hard work, and teamwork. These are all skills that the Japanese possess. The media has also had a strong influence. With the advent of television, many baseball games were broadcasted live. It is believed that the popularity of baseball did not stagnate because

even children who used to watch baseball with their parents began to like baseball.

Why don't you try to watch sports by paying attention to the reasons why famous sports became popular in your country?

.....  
Ryotaro Takikawa, Sota  
Noguchi and Yoshimasa  
Shinojima

# A strange vegetable grown underground in the Tama Region

Have you heard of a Tokyo vegetable that's grown in complete darkness? This is "Tokyo Udo," Japanese spikenard. It is a traditional vegetable in the Tama region, the western part of Tokyo. Tokyo udo is a vegetable that grows in an underground room. Due to growing without sunlight, it has white skin. It seeks sunlight, so this vegetable grows to be about 80cm long.

## Difference from ordinary udo

There are two main differences between Tokyo udo and regular udo. Firstly, while regular udo is 30cm in length, Tokyo udo is a whopping 80cm. The second difference is that regular udo is grown above ground, while Tokyo udo is cultivated underground. As a result, regular udo has green tips, whereas Tokyo udo is entirely white. Tokyo udo lacks the bitter green part, making it all edible.



Hikoyoshi Susaki, Tokyo udo farmer RIN HIGUCHI PHOTO

## The secret of growing udo

The cultivation method of udo is special. The biggest feature is to grow it underground. It grows in a small hole, two meters in width and three meters in length. It doesn't need sunlight, therefore the hole is dark and humid. To grow udo, it is necessary to have udo plants. Udo is grown from cultivated plants. When spring

comes, udo plants become white and long. The season for harvest is around March.

## Making people smile forever

We decided to research vegetables in the Tama region for two reasons. First, we want to share and promote our local traditions. Traditional vegetables in the

Tama region are familiar to us, but not to other people. Second, they also contain people's feelings and thoughts. For example, one farmer said, "I want to harvest and share Tokyo udo and see people smile." Tokyo udo is grown with the hope to make everyone smile.

## How to eat udo deliciously

Tokyo udo is a rare vegetable. You can eat everything, including the tips, stems, and skin without throwing it away. Tokyo udo has a unique taste and a nice texture. The tips are said to be delicious, so we recommend udo tempura. You can enjoy different dishes with just one udo shoot. Why not try eating Tokyo udo and experience its quality and uniqueness?

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Tasuku Kato, Haru Inoue,  
Kazune Sugimoto, Mia  
Yoshida, Mioyabi Arahata and  
Rin Higuchi