

Japanese wagyu expands the possibilities of *ristorante* cuisine

Stefano Dal Moro

Executive chef at ANTICA OSTERIA DEL PONTE, Tokyo

Japanese wagyu, with its evenly marbled sashi (fat), is different than beef produced in Italy. Its quality and aroma open up new possibilities for Italian cooking.

"Japanese kuroge wagyu grilled, spicy chocolate and Pedro Ximenez sauce and Grana Padano cream". The black pepper in the sauce is from Madagascar and the Grana Padano was matured for 24 months. The sophisticated aroma brings out the savor of Japanese wagyu.
●Cut: D Rump ●Grade: A3

Tips for conveying the appeal of Japanese wagyu

1. Bring out the unique aroma and sweetness of sashi in Japanese wagyu. A new flavor, found in no other beef, can be expressed in grilled and boiled dishes.
2. Keep the sauce light. Using spices and herbs is also effective.
3. Highlight the tenderness of Japanese wagyu, such as in millefeuille-style dishes.



Grilling the Japanese wagyu on a grill pan coats the meat with fragrant smoke from the sashi. The meat is then wrapped in aluminum foil.



Stefano Dal Moro. Born in 1966, in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, Italy. Became famous as the fair-haired boy of Italian cuisine giant Ettore Alzetta. He served as Executive Chef at ANGELO PARACUCCHI in Paris before coming to Japan. Since 2002, he has been in charge of ANTICA OSTERIA DEL PONTE, Tokyo.



The portrayal of Italian cuisine with Japanese ingredients. This has been Stefano Dal Moro's unchanging mission since moving to Japan more than 20 years ago. Whenever he finds the opportunity, he returns to his home country Italy to check "what's new in Italian cuisine." While in Japan, he spends much of his time speaking intimately with food producers. He presents dishes that faithfully carry on the tradition of ANTICA OSTERIA DEL PONTE, Milan, a renowned restaurant representative of Italy. But he adds flourishes of imagination rooted in vast knowledge and experience. Signature items on Dal Moro's menu include dishes featuring Japanese wagyu. In this report, we cover some of them.

Highlight Japanese wagyu's aroma. Choose the right grade and cut.

—Today, you prepared two dishes for us. Your main dish, "Japanese kuroge wagyu grilled, spicy chocolate and Pedro Ximenez sauce and Grana Padano cream" is a work of art. You topped tenderly grilled Japanese wagyu with spicy fragrant chocolate sauce and a cream containing Grana Padano cheese. All components are rich in flavor and superbly match each other. Japanese wagyu is characterized by its sashi, but the dish tasted very light to me.

"Matching beef with chocolate, orange and spices is a golden combination perfected by Ezio Santin, Owner chef of ANTICA OSTERIA DEL PONTE, Milan.

The Japanese wagyu in this dish is grade A3 class, which has a standard balance of lean meat and sashi. The cut is D rump, at the dimple of the cattle's hip joint. In my opinion, grade A3 Japanese wagyu suits Italian cuisine better than grade A5, which contains more sashi. Having more sashi increases the flavor of the meat, but it becomes more difficult to achieve a nice balance with the sauce, and the texture as well as the aftertaste become heavier."

—The fragrance is splendid, too. The more I chewed the meat, the more I felt an aroma was flowing from it.

"Grilling has a lot to do with it. In this dish, the surface of the Japanese wagyu is first browned on a grill pan. Next, the meat is left in the oven for 10 to 15 minutes at a low temperature of around 60°C until the juices spread throughout the meat. The grill pan has a wavy surface and the fat dropping into the grooves becomes smoke that clings to the meat. The smell, which reminds me of coconut, is something unique to Japanese wagyu and a characteristic I like to highlight."

—The chocolate sauce, effectively using spices with an oriental nuance, helps to round out the coconut-like aroma. The savor of the Japanese wagyu lingers on, and the luxurious fragrance gently spreads.

"The texture of the sauce is also key. Japanese wagyu may contain much fat, but it has a rather mild taste. So the basic rule is to keep the sauce light. When using European meat, such as lean meat that has matured awhile, the taste is heavy and you need to adjust the sauce into something heavier."

—In your second dish, "Fresh pasta "Tuffoli" stuffed with ricotta, spinach and Grana Padano cheese", the ragù sauce containing Japanese wagyu left a strong impression. I felt there were multiple layers of taste and texture.



The Japanese wagyu in the grilled dish was selected and inspected at the breeding farm by chef Dal Moro himself, who was attracted by its special qualities. The grade of the meat is A3, which has a good balance of lean and sashi, and the cut is D rump. The chocolate and spices used for the sauce are shown in back.



The chocolate sauce is made from various spices, orange and Pedro Ximenez, a sweet sherry made from sun-dried grapes. The sauce is rich yet spicy, with a dignified freshness.



"Fresh pasta 'Tuffoli' stuffed with ricotta, spinach and Grana Padano cheese, with ragù Napoletano using Japanese wagyu". Tuffoli is a large pasta with a crunchy texture. The dish is served with Napoli style ragù containing simmered Japanese wagyu, veal, pork, calf bones and vegetables.
●Cut: Mixed ●Grade: A3

"This ragù is called 'Napoletano' and is prepared by a traditional Italian cooking method called Carnemista, in which various meats are stewed together. I sliced Grade A3 Japanese wagyu into strings and mixed them with veal and pork. This cooking method adds rhythm to the texture and depth to the flavor."

— *The veal and pork remained solid, but the Japanese wagyu seems to have dissolved into the stew and united with the sauce.*

"Yes. Chefs must remember that Japanese wagyu, with its rich sashi, dissolves easily when simmered. In other words, its shape may disappear but its deliciousness and flavor remain. It works as a binding agent between the liquid and solid ingredients. Ragù is an original Italian taste, and Japanese wagyu gives it a new expression."

Japanese wagyu opens the door to new possibilities in Italian cuisine

— *The common thread to your two dishes appears to be your perspective on using the special characteristic of sashi in Japanese wagyu.*

"The greatest allure of Japanese wagyu is, by all means, its sashi. If the chef cannot understand sashi, he cannot handle Japanese wagyu. Since Japanese wagyu has fine marbled fat spread throughout it, it takes longer for heat to penetrate the core of the meat than with lean European beef. You need to control the heat and cooking time differently with Japanese wagyu than when using lean meat.

Naturally, the specific recipe differs depending on the dish and chef's style. For example, I sometimes cook Japanese wagyu in the oven at low temperatures (110°C) for a few minutes, take it out to rest, cook it again, take it out to rest again, and repeat this over and over."

— *From the opposite point of view, are there dishes in Italian cooking that sashi does not suit?*

"Hardly any. Japanese wagyu is good for tartare and carpaccio. It can be used for almost any dish, from appetizers to the main dish, as long as you have a good grasp of Japanese wagyu's characteristics."

— *What "Italian cuisine seasonings" do you think match Japanese wagyu?*

"First of all, agrodolce (sweet and sour sauce) matches Japanese wagyu well. The most



"Japanese kuroge wagyu grilled, spicy chocolate and Pedro Ximenez sauce and Grana Padano cream". After the meat is grilled on the grill pan, it is wrapped in aluminum foil and cooked in the oven at a low temperature of 60°C for about 10 to 15 minutes. This allows heat to reach the core, turning the color of the Japanese wagyu rose pink. Japanese wagyu's major characteristics, the rich umami flavor (from inosinic acid and glutamine acid) and juice containing aromatic components (oleic acid, etc.) are all locked inside the meat, creating a tender and juicy texture.

typical agrodolce is aceto balsamico sauce. Its rich tartness highlights the sweetness in sashi. Spices and herbs can also be used effectively, as in "Japanese kuroge wagyu grilled, spicy chocolate and Pedro Ximenez sauce and Grana Padano cream". Black pepper and sansho (Japanese pepper) also go well with Japanese wagyu. Unlike the sourness of agrodolce, these spices bring out the sweetness of the meat with their scent and impact. Above all, because the fat in Japanese wagyu has a sophisticated scent and flavor, you need to use good quality spices with a rich taste.

Personally, however, what I'd like Italian guests who have never experienced Japanese wagyu to try first is bistecca (steak) simply seasoned with salt and herbs. It's better for the grade to be A3, not A5, for the cut to be top-round or D rump, not chuck roll, and for the meat to have less sashi. It will absolutely suit the taste buds of Italians, and I am sure everyone will be amazed by it."

— *Can you tell us more about other cooking possibilities for bringing out Japanese wagyu's special qualities?*

"One example is 'manzo bollito (consomme boiled beef)'. Warm the truffle-flavored consomme to around 60°C and place a large chunk of meat in it. By cooking leisurely, the fat from the meat begins to dissolve into the consomme soup. Remove the meat, slice it and pour consomme onto it now and then as you eat. A moderate amount of fat has left the meat, and instead, the consomme soup is rich in fine quality fat. This is a kill-two-birds-with-one-stone dish.

Another example is 'Japanese wagyu chuck roll millefeuille'. Prepare thinly sliced Japanese wagyu chuck roll containing rich sashi and brown only one side of each slice. Place rucola and parmigiano-reggiano paste between multiple layers of meat. The bitterness of rucola leaves blends with the flavor of the fat, which is nicely counterbalanced. In Italy, you see veal millefeuille, but I have never seen millefeuille using adult cattle. When Japanese wagyu is used in millefeuille, it creates a texture that nearly melts."

— *By applying Japanese wagyu as a new ingredient to Italian cuisine, there are many possibilities for new recipes to be born and the variety of dishes to increase. Do you agree?*

"Yes. In Italian cuisine, beef means veal. The meat of adult cattle of minor breeds such as Chianina are used for bistecca (steak), tartare and carpaccio, mainly in northern Italy. Japanese wagyu has characteristics that are different than veal and adult cattle in Italy, and I think there are huge possibilities for Japanese wagyu to expand the joy in eating."

— *Regarding food, your country, Italy, is said to be conservative because there are already bountiful delicious tastes. In such an environment, how do you foresee Italians receiving Japanese wagyu and how do you think Japanese wagyu will spread in the country?*

"Recently, in Milan mainly, I have noticed there are more restaurants and food shops dealing with Japanese wagyu. I myself think Japanese wagyu is an ingredient that very much suits ristorante cuisine. Japanese wagyu contains ample fat, is rich in aroma and flavor, and guests will feel full after eating less meat. In course meals, after the appetizer, pasta and various dishes are eaten, you can serve 50 grams of flavorful Japanese wagyu and finish the course with a dessert. The entire course is beautifully well balanced and will satisfy the appetite of your guests and make them content. Japanese wagyu is an extraordinary ingredient that will enhance the joy of the ristorante dining experience."

"Japanese kuroge wagyu grilled, spicy chocolate and Pedro Ximenez sauce and Grana Padano cream", the main dish featuring Japanese wagyu, is rich, served with class, and perfectly pairs with wine. From left: Sassicaia (1996), Gaja (1976) and Chateau Mouton Rothschild (1996).



ANTICA OSTERIA DEL PONTE, Tokyo

This is the only branch of ANTICA OSTERIA DEL PONTE, Milan, the second Italian restaurant to win three stars in 1990 from the world's most authoritative restaurant guidebook in France. It is located on the top floor of Marunouchi Building, facing Tokyo Station, the gateway to the city.
●36 F, Marunouchi Building, 2-4-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo
Tel: +81-3-5220-4686



The proportion of meat in the ragù is 6 parts Japanese wagyu to 3 parts veal and 1 part pork. While stewing, only the Japanese wagyu gradually breaks down and the sashi from the meat blends with the juice from the vegetables. It's the unique qualities of Japanese wagyu that make this ragù so special.