

## The key to enhancing the essential 'sashi' in Japanese wagyu



### Toru Okuda

Owner chef at Ginza Kojyu, Ginza Okuda and OKUDA, Paris

Charcoal-grilled dishes, shabushabu, sukiyaki and more. Globally popular Japanese cuisine embodies traditional wisdom and techniques that boost the flavor of Japanese wagyu.

### Tips for conveying the appeal of Japanese wagyu

1. Japanese wagyu is naturally rich in flavor. Develop a cooking method that enriches the essential 'sashi' fat.
2. Charcoal grill or blanch the meat over low heat at around 60 to 80°C.
3. Make the taste even more appealing to a wider audience by adding sweet and sour seasoning.

"Charcoal-grilled Japanese wagyu sirloin" is garnished with fried wild onion, butterbur stalks, broad beans and nut tree buds. Seasonal wild plants provide a variety of flavors and textures.

●Cut: Sirloin ●Grade: A5





Now, the center of the Japanese wagyu is medium-rare and juicy. Cut into bite-sized pieces with 3 grilled sides each to enjoy the sublime texture of the wagyu.



"Japanese wagyu sukiyaki with bamboo shoots and fern". The warishita sauce is made with water, sake, kombu, wagyu scraps, soy sauce, sugar and rich Tamari soy sauce. The wagyu fat melts into the sweet and salty sauce for a blissful combination.  
●Cut: Chuck roll ●Grade: A5



For charcoal grilling, use a high flame to sear the outside, then gradually heat with a medium flame, and finally draw out the sweetness under a low flame. The meat is suffused with the fragrance of the Japanese wagyu itself. Rest for 10 minutes and finish under a medium flame for 2 minutes. The roasted aroma is entrancing.

Japanese cuisine is part and parcel of the Japanese culture. Mr. Okuda, in his relentless quest for perfection, sets high standards on ingredients, including the water in his 'dashi' soup which he orders them every day from his hometown of Shizuoka. And he has a trained eye for vegetables, fish and beef.

### The heart of wagyu is its aroma and flavor

— *Mr. Okuda values the ingredients and prepares the menu efficiently with minimum effort and a minimalist philosophy. So what is your opinion on Japanese wagyu's essential quality?*

"Japanese wagyu is intricately marbled with high quality 'sashi' that contains unsaturated fat full of umami (flavor) and aroma. That's the uniqueness of Japanese wagyu. The basic approach here is to make the sashi flavor stand out."

— *You recommended charcoal-grilled Japanese wagyu sirloin when we asked you to name a dish featuring Japanese wagyu. What's the benefit of charcoal grilling?*

"Aroma. Charcoal grilling wagyu with rich sashi causes fat to drip on the charcoal. This adds an extra, unique aroma to the beef.

You can't get a charcoal-grilled aroma with other methods. Charcoal grills that combine infrared heat may only grill the meat partially, evaporate the water and shrink the meat. You can't expect good results unless you use quality Bincho charcoal. Charcoal from overseas differs in odor and heat."

— *I see. Only salt and black pepper are used for seasoning, but it creates a pleasant aroma and flavor that spreads in your mouth. It's as tasty as if sauce were inside the meat.*

"Most beef overseas is lean, so you need to add spice to fully enjoy the taste. Japanese wagyu, on the other hand, is full of sweet, unsaturated fats, so additional seasoning is not really necessary.

The same can be said about the aroma. The rich taste from Japanese wagyu's aroma coats the meat during charcoal grilling. With other meat, it may only create a vague aftertaste. It has just the right amount of fat and is now ready to serve. Just like "Chilled Japanese wagyu chuck roll shabushabu" (see discussion on previous page), prepare it with grated wasabi, daikon, soy sauce and ponzu."

— *Charcoal grilling is originally a method for cooking fish in Japan. Traditional recipes handed down through generations can also be conveniently applied to Japanese wagyu.*

"You'll see that basic cooking methods for fish and beef have a lot in common. Both consist of skin, meat and fat, but marbled beef has lean meat around the fat. I keep this in mind whether I am charcoal grilling or making shabushabu or sukiyaki."



Always be bold and beautiful when plating. "Charcoal grilling is a great way to show off Japan's wonderful ingredients." (Chef Okuda)

### The future of world-class Japanese wagyu

— *You mentioned sukiyaki earlier. In what way is charcoal grilling effective for this traditional Japanese wagyu recipe?*

"The charcoal grilling method keeps the aroma of Japanese wagyu in the beef so its essential taste can be enjoyed. In shabushabu, there's a fine balance between the fat and meat in low temperature water, topped with a spicy flavor. For sukiyaki, you simmer the wagyu in salty-sweet warishita sauce over low heat to melt the fat, and add fresh vegetables and tofu. It's a perfect combination of Japanese wagyu fat and warishita. All of the recipes require high quality fat."

— *"Japanese wagyu sukiyaki with bamboo shoots and fern" has an unclouded, smooth wagyu quality. Mr. Okuda travels between Tokyo and Paris every month to oversee his restaurant in Paris. Are there any preferences among foreigners in Japanese wagyu menus?*

"Charcoal grilled dishes and sukiyaki are popular. It seems the thick and distinct flavor suits their taste. But the taste is actually slightly strong for us in Japan. In restaurants specializing in traditional Japanese dishes, sukiyaki is served in a smaller pot as part of a set menu ranging from sashimi and cooked vegetables to soup, etc."

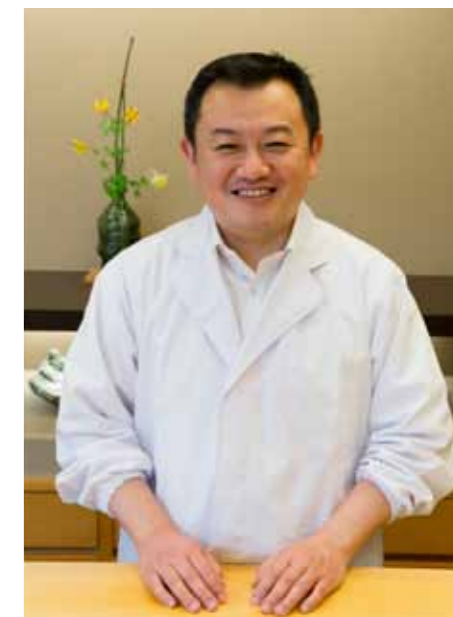
— *Would you recommend wagyu for Japanese cuisine in France?*

"Beef is consumed a lot in France, too, but it's different than Japanese wagyu, which is raised in Japan. Unlike red meat in Japan, French meat has a wilder flavor. I strive to present authentic Japanese cuisine in Paris, so I use unique Japanese wagyu because of its delicate taste."

— *How do you plan to popularize Japanese wagyu in France and other areas?*

"Introducing the meat takes some time. It's important to explain what type of dishes bring out the flavor of Japanese wagyu, where Japanese wagyu can be ordered, and so on, to let people become familiar with the cuisine.

Japanese wagyu will more than likely become a worldwide trend. So in addition to spreading the meat, chefs and restaurants should team up to communicate the allure of Japanese wagyu."



It's been 3 years since OKUDA opened in Paris. They've since opened a sushi shop and fish shop with live fish and have hired a Japanese cook for their technical school to nurture Japanese chefs for the future.



### GINZA KOJYU

Counters, tatami rooms, and private rooms provide a sense of true relaxation in this traditional Japanese restaurant. Customers from Japan and overseas come to enjoy the exquisite tastes of the changing seasons.  
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