

PRESS RELEASE

Japanese Embassy celebrates Harvest of Autumn with traditional Japanese cuisine and sake

Prague, September 29, 2016 - Japan traditionally worships culinary culture of the autumn season, culminating now during the rice harvest. "Harvest of Autumn" is thus an ideal time to celebrate traditions and tastes of Japanese cuisine. In this context, H.E. Mr. Yamakawa, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary to the Czech Republic, invited representatives of significant restaurants and food industry to his residence for a presentation of sake and Japanese cuisine.

In recent years Japanese cuisine (in Japanese called "Washoku") has become increasingly popular in many countries. One of its many benefits is an excellent nutritional balance, it is also very tasty and looks beautiful. It has been evaluated that the reason why the Japanese are one of the longest-living nations in the world, is their rich and healthy food. In 2013, traditional Japanese cuisine was registered as intangible heritage of UNESCO. Currently, there are more than ten thousand Japanese restaurants only in Europe, and their number is increasing.

At the turn of September and October, rice harvest is taking place throughout Japan, and it is an ideal opportunity for sake tasting, in Japanese called Nihonshu. Sake is a traditional Japanese alcoholic beverage that has been playing central role in Japanese life and culture for 2,000 years. It is made by multiple fermentation of rice. Sake is brewed in a highly labour-intensive process, in which vaporized rice, koji (freshly mouldy rice), water and yeast are added to create so-called "Shub". Rice fermentation lasts about two weeks and is followed by pressing and pasteurization. The final step is maturation which usually takes about six months and occurs mainly in the ceramic or stainless steel containers. The resulting beverage is finally diluted with water to an approximate content of 15 to 16 % of alcohol. At the residence of the Ambassador, this beverage was presented by Mr. Hiroshi Sano, an expert at the Head of the European branch of the Japanese company Nihon Sakari, which is engaged in the production and cultivation of sake.

Japanese cuisine, especially dishes that match sake, were introduced by Mrs. Darja Kawasumiová, the owner of the Japanese restaurant Miyabi (in Prague since 1995). She presented cooking techniques of selected Japanese dishes.

One of the most famous dishes of Japanese cuisine is sushi. It consists of cooked vinegared rice combined with other ingredients such as raw sea fish and other seafood, seaweed and vegetables. There are many different types of sushi. The best known types are: nigirizushi (an oblong mound of sushi rice, topped with a precisely cut piece of raw fish, vegetables or egg omelette), makizushi (rolls of rice filled mostly with fish and vegetables from the outside wrapped in marine nori) and many others.

The highlight of the culinary program at the Japanese Ambassador's residence was a presentation of the preparation of delicious "Wagyu" Japanese beef. "Wagyu" refers to specific breeds and its cross breeds of beef cattle originated from Japan. These breeds have been selectively bred for a hundred years by Japanese beef cattle producers and breeding agencies. Japanese cattle producers are very proud of "Wagyu" as their prized cattle. Now, "Wagyu" is incomparable in its quality and taste to any

other beef in the world. Only beef from a “genuine Japanese Wagyu” that comes from pedigree of the cattle born and raised in Japan can bear special mark. One of the most famous “Wagyu” brand among foreign people is “Kobe beef”, which is globally considered the most delicious and highest quality beef. Dishes from Wagyu are popular gourmet experience. The secret of its intense taste lies in smooth velvety texture, juicy flavour, delicate, but rich taste. These unique characters are created by the large proportion of amino acids and unsaturated fat. In addition, “marbling” affects its taste. The marbling fat in the beef is never too greasy. Indeed, it will almost melt as you put the piece in your mouth. The “marbling” on beef has been especially valued as a symbol of high quality, which is the key to grade beef.

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