

Inside this issue

“One of the biggest advantages of our dressings is their versatility” 1
+ 2
+ 3

Switzerland lifts import curbs on foods from Fukushima 3

Call for Logo Designs: Japan—Switzerland 160th Anniversary 4

会見

INTERVIEW

“One of the biggest advantages of our dressings is their versatility”

Interview with Mr Roman Donz , CEO and founder of akari taste GmbH

In this edition, we would like to present you a Swiss company, whose vision it is to bring “Swiss-made Japanese taste” to your plate, specifically in form of dressings and dips. Mr. Roman Donz , CEO and founder of [akari taste GmbH](#) kindly answered our questions.

Can you tell us about the history, mission and philosophy of akari taste GmbH?

I was in New Zealand to study English, where I became close to many Japanese students. I fell in love with Japanese cuisine when I was traveling with a Japanese friend of mine for about 1.5 months. Seeing how he cooked and treated food was an interesting experience for me. In my family, my brother and mother are both great cooks, and my dad would also cook great meals on weekends. I was always told to make the dressing for the salad, which became my task. One day, a friend asked me if I had ever tried the KABUKI dressing, which came from a restaurant with the same name in Bern. The owner, Mr. Shinji Tanaka, had a vision to have his dressing available all over the market, so he started a small factory in Zurich to produce it. However, after some time, he had to close the place. One day, he came up to me and said: “Roman, you have always loved this sauce. What do you think, could you take over the whole thing?”, and I said yes. We set everything up in one month, and we already had some selling points in Globus, Jelmoli, and other smaller delicatessen stores. That is how akari taste was born in 2008. We were fortunate to work with [Betty Bossi](#), a big Swiss brand for all things related to cooking at home. We could produce a lot of and develop a lot of dressings for them and with them. That is how we got into more salad dressings and not only the original KABUKI dressing. We are still the same company, but we have grown a quite a bit and are now 12 people.

Is there anything else about Japan or Japanese cuisine that inspired you to create your company’s products?
Soy sauce is one of the biggest parts of our sauces. In



Mr Roman Donz  founded akari taste GmbH in 2008

Switzerland, we have a similar product called Maggi, which is as popular and common here as cheese and chocolate. It is always found in our kitchen together with Aromat, but both contain glutamate, which we do not use at all in our products. That is why I was really into soy sauce, which is a great preservative and has a great taste. We also use rice vinegar and sweet sake (Mirin), which are the three main ingredients in our dressings. I also love how food in Japan is prepared. Even if you get one of the Bento boxes, they look so cute and nice. Design is also very important to me, and I keep a big eye on our design work. For me, one of the biggest things in Japan is its design and style, which is very simple and clear.

Do you import any ingredients from Japan?

We import a lot of products from Japan because the quality of Japanese products is

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会見

INTERVIEW

(continued from page 1)

exceptional, for example sesame seeds and all sesame-based products. We have also started a partnership with a small soy sauce producer based in Tokyo. Although it is more expensive, the quality is so much better, and it is gluten-free, which is a big advantage for us. We are fortunate to have a great relationship with our suppliers in Japan. We import directly from Tokyo, and we are always in contact with the company that provides us with the products we need, such as Mirin, soy sauce, and fresh wasabi powder. During the COVID-19 pandemic, we did not get our ingredients from any supplier, so we had to do everything by ourselves, which was very interesting but intense.

Which big Swiss retailers do you work with?

We work mainly with Coop and Globus. Globus is a smaller brand in Switzerland, but it is a high-level brand, so being listed with them was a great way to attract other customers. At the beginning, we did not have any certification, but now we have FSSC 22000, which is a worldwide-known certification. We are proud to work with other customers like Manor, Jelmoli, and some other delicatessen stores as well.

Among all your products, which one is the best-known and which one is the most popular?

Our best-known and most popular

products are definitely the sesame-based KABUKI dressings because they have a traditional Japanese taste. They are also the best-sellers.

What are the typical ways consumers enjoy your products?

At akari taste, we make dressings that can be used as marinades, dips, and dressings for both cold and hot meals. Our dressings keep fresh even when opened for seven months, and they can be used not just for salads but for nearly everything, particularly meals with rice and vegetables. We always talk about our dressings when we go to exhibitions and encourage people to try them out.

One customer even uses our black sesame dressing for baking her chocolate cake. We also provide many recipes when we organize cooking events. One of the biggest advantages of our dressings is their versatility. Our dressings have a good name in the market for their good taste, particularly our Japanese-style dressings, which only our company is doing in Switzerland. We are trying to get into more stores and have an eye on export around Europe.

How does akari taste GmbH differentiate itself



A manufacturing scene at akari taste GmbH

from competitors in the market?

We always say that we offer “Swiss-made Japanese taste”. Our production process sets us apart from others in the industry because we approach it as if we were making the products at home. First, we gather all the ingredients and prepare them. Then, we mix everything together by hand at the beginning of the process and store it in the fridge. We do not use the method of pasteurization and avoid all preservatives or conservatives. Our first goal is to have high-quality dressings that taste great. We produce sauces for other companies, such as Sushi Mania, who do Poké bowls and Sushi. We are trying to get into more stores and have an eye on export around Europe. We are flexible with our customers and work with them to prepare the right product. We produce already for a small amount of only 50 kilograms, which many customers appreciate.

How does your company approach sustainability and environmental responsibility?

We source all our fresh vegetables and other ingredients from a farmer located right next to us. Our logistic partner is also next door. We value our relationship with our partners and try to regroup as

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(continued from page 2)

much as possible. For instance, we only send out web shop orders twice a week instead of daily to avoid having someone come to our office every day to take one or two parcels instead of 10. We also use recycled PET bottles for our KABUKI dressing bottles. Instead of carton boxes for delivery, we use a multi-system of cases that can be used repeatedly.

What are the biggest challenges that akari taste GmbH faces in the industry?

One of the biggest challenges we face is energy supply. We are cur-

rently operating at the lowest level possible, and we need to increase our production capacity. We are looking for a new site that will allow us to be more flexible with our power supply, but it is taking time to find the right locality.

How do you see the trend of Japanese food in Switzerland? Do you feel it is expanding in the market?

Japanese food has a great reputation in Switzerland, and everyone loves it, especially the people who have already visited Japan. Japanese cuisine is popular here in Switzerland, and there are many similarities between Japanese people and

Swiss people. Switzerland is often compared to Japan for its high-quality products and attention to detail and both cultures have a strong focus on quality and craftsmanship. Even though food trends change, I believe that Japanese cuisine is here to stay, just like Chinese or Italian cuisine. A few years ago, Korean restaurants and Tibetan Momos started to become popular here as well. However, we still have many Japanese restaurants here, particularly Sushi bars, but also Ramen restaurants.

会見

INTERVIEW

Switzerland lifts import curbs on foods from Fukushima

On 15 August 2023, Switzerland has officially lifted all import restrictions on Japanese food after the Fukushima Daiichi reactor accident in 2011. The Federal Food Safety and Veterinary Office (FSVO) announced that the conditions are no longer necessary due to the current radiation exposure.

Following a similar move by the European Union earlier this month, Switzerland will no longer require radiation tests on some agricultural and fishery products from 10 Japanese prefectures, including Fukushima.

Already since 3 August 2023, there have no longer been any special protective measures for food of animal origin. With immediate effect, the measures will no longer

apply to foods of plant origin either. Removing these trade barriers is an important development for Japan, since the effects were particularly

noticeable for the Japanese economy.

Sources: [The Japan Times](#), [swissinfo](#)

動向

ANALYSIS



Seafood at a fishing port in Soma, in Fukushima prefecture—KYODO

Call for Logo Designs: Japan—Switzerland 160th Anniversary

文化

CULTURE

2024 marks the 160th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Japan and Switzerland. To celebrate this milestone, the Embassy of Japan in Switzerland and the Embassy of Switzerland in Japan are launching a logo design contest. The selected logo will be used in the PR material for the various commemorative events and exchange programs to be held in both countries in 2024. The deadline to submit designs is Saturday, 30 September 2023. Please click [here](#) for more details.

Sources: [Embassy of Switzerland in Japan](#); [Embassy of Japan in Switzerland](#)



Agenda

活動

AGENDA

- ✓ The Key Success Factors of Doing Business in Japan
Event organized by S-GE
Registration available following this [link](#)
31 August 2023 - 5pm - 8pm
Switzerland Global Enterprise, Stampfenbachstrasse 85, 8006 Zurich

JETRO is a government-related organization that works to promote mutual trade and investment between Japan and the rest of the world. Originally established in 1958 to promote Japanese exports abroad, JETRO's core focus in the 21st century has shifted toward promoting foreign direct investment into Japan and helping small to medium size Japanese firms maximize their global export potential.

The JETRO Switzerland Newsletter can also be viewed and/or downloaded online: <http://www.jetro.go.jp/switzerland/newsletter>

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