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INTERVIEW

Japanese Cooking Workshop at EHL highlighting Toyo Rice Products

Interview with Nao Adachi Mathiesen, Sales Representative for Europe at Toyo Rice, and Kohji Imai, Sushi chef at EHL

This month, we had the chance to attend a Japanese cooking workshop held at [École hôtelière de Lausanne \(EHL\)](#) where [Toyo Rice's](#) Kinmemai rice was used. Toyo Rice is a traditional, yet innovative Japanese company that specializes in rice production and technology. We interviewed Ms. Nao Adachi Mathiesen, Sales Representative for Europe at Toyo Rice, and Mr. Kohji Imai, Sushi chef at EHL.



Chef Imai used Kinmemai rice by Toyo Rice for his Japanese cooking session — Nao Adachi Mathiesen

Ms. Adachi Mathiesen, can you tell us a bit more about the history of Toyo Rice and what its main mission is?

Toyo Rice was originally established as a rice milling machine company. Therefore, it has invented many special techniques to mill rice better and this is our specialty. Our mission is making people healthier and happier with our rice and technology and supporting rice farmers in Japan.

What makes Kinmemai stand out from its competitors on the market? What is its competitive advantage in the marketplace?

Kinmemai is our white rice milled with our special technique, and has more nutrition, like fiber and vitamin B1 remaining com-

pared to conventional white rice. Kinmemai's nutrition is very close to brown rice. Not only nutrition, but thanks to our special milling technique, Kinmemai also has a richer taste but lower levels of sugar and calories. In addition, all our rice, including Kinmemai, is "rinse-free", which means you do not need to wash it before cooking. This is a huge advantage, especially for hectic people and restaurants where large amounts of rice have to be cooked every day. Not only do they save time, but they can also minimize water pollution.

In which countries outside of Japan are your products already available?

In Europe, our products are available in Switzerland (Geneva and Lausanne), in the UK, Spain, France, Denmark and Sweden. In

Asia our products can be found in Hong Kong, Macau, Singapore, and Taiwan. In the Middle East, Toyo Rice products can be purchased in the UAE, in Oceania in Australia and in North America in both the US and Canada.

How does Toyo Rice market its products to different regions and what are some of the challenges involved in doing so?

Toyo Rice targets consumers, restaurants and distributors who pursue rice with higher quality and healthier food. It is sometimes very challenging for us to acquaint people who focus only on low priced rice, not focusing on the quality, especially in countries and areas where people do not have a rice eating culture. However, Sushi is very popular these days in many countries and (continue on page 2)

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INTERVIEW

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more and more people eat rice on a daily basis. So, we keep trying to share our special quality rice and knowledge about it for people's health and better food experience.

How does Toyo Rice see the Swiss market for its products?

Our Kinnemai wax-off brown rice and rice flour pancake mix are available in Geneva and Lausanne now. We can see that the customers in those areas prefer higher quality, and love "good" food. We are happy to keep trying to contribute to their everyday health and diet.

Please explain how your Kinnemai brown rice is different from conventional brown rice.

Our brown rice is named "wax-off brown rice" in English. Normal brown rice is required to be in water for a long time before cooking and cooking itself takes longer than normal white rice, but still has a harder texture. The reason why normal brown rice needs a longer time to absorb water and cook is because the grain is covered with a wax layer. This prevents brown rice from absorbing water and becoming soft. Toyo Rice invented a technique to get rid of this wax layer, retaining all nutrients. By removing the wax layer, the brown rice can absorb more water and become soft and fluffy, almost like white rice. You can make Sushi and Onigiri with wax-off brown rice without mixing in white rice.

Our wax-off brown rice is the best-selling item in the brown rice category in Japan and some doctors and diabetes experts recommend wax-off brown rice to their patients.

Mr. Imai, can you tell us about the cooking workshops at EHL? When did Japanese cooking workshops start and what is the main profile of people attending them?

The EHL cooking workshops are aimed at both passionate amateurs and professionals of gastronomy. Led by our chefs and experts, people can enjoy a friendly, educational, and gourmet experience. My master's class started in March 2023. Classes were supposed to be held twice in six months but due to the large number of applications, we ended up doing them three times. Participants range from professionals to semi-professionals to hobby cooks.

Why did you decide to use Kinnemai rice in this session?

It has always been my dream to use Japanese rice. Thanks to Mr. Takahashi of JETRO Geneva, I got introduced to Ms. Adachi Mathiesen, and their efforts and passion inspired me to apply for the use of Japanese rice, which in turn inspired my boss as well. Returning to the subject, the reasons for using Kinnemai rice were that I thought it was a good fit for today's health-conscious society, sustainability, business timing, and mobility. Plus, Toyo Rice's philosophy suits me. The

rice must taste good, but it is the people who make the rice. Coffee and brand bags for example do not show the face of the producer. It is important that there is a line from the producer to the supplier and to the customer. We have accentuated a system where everyone can profit and enjoy.

As a chef, what do you think is the uniqueness/attractiveness of Kinnemai? Could you explain the difference between Kinnemai and Italian sushi rice?

Please keep in mind that I have not eaten all kinds of Italian sushi rice and I do not like to compare and criticize them. However, Kinnemai has something that European white rice is missing for the Japanese consumers, in particular flavor, gravity, and texture. To use an analogy, there is now Wagyu beef all over the world, but it has a level of taste, quality, aroma, and color that is far different from that of Japanese beef. Long story short, using Kinnemai rice makes my Sushi even tastier and more environmentally friendly because it's rinse-free and healthier. I believe that these elements are also present in Italian rice, and in fact there is a lot of good Italian rice, but when it comes to Italian sushi rice, I don't think there are any suppliers, even if there are producers who focus on such aspects in the current business scene.

Thank you both for the interview!

Results of Switzerland's 2023 Federal Elections



The National Council hall in Bern — Fabrice Coffrini /AFP

Switzerland held federal elections on 22 October 2023 to elect all 246 members of the National Council (200 members) and Council of States (46 members). Almost 6'000 candidates stood for election to the National Council, which is a new national record.

The overall voter turnout was 46.6%, slightly higher than in 2019 (45.1%). Several polls and surveys conducted before the election had predicted major wins for the right-wing Swiss People's Party (SVP/UDC) and significant

losses for the Green Party. The final results show a slight shift to the right, with the SVP/UDC increasing its share of the vote to 27.9% (2019: 25.6%). The Green Party lost almost four percentage points, falling to 9.8% (2019: 13.2%). Contrary to 2019, voters in Switzerland seemed less preoccupied with the environment and climate change, strong agenda points of the Green Party, and more with immigration, asylum, and security policy, which are traditionally the core themes of the SVP/UDC. Concerns about rising health costs have also benefitted the Social Democrats (SP/PS), which managed to

increase its share by 1.5 percentage points of the vote to 18.3% (2019: 16.8%).

In the 46-seat Council of States, the Center Party and the Radical Liberals have so far won the most seats, but because in some cantons none of the candidates won an absolute majority (more than 50% of votes), a second round in November will be necessary. In the second round, the candidate(s) with the most votes win, regardless of the absolute majority rule.

The newly elected parliamentarians will choose the seven members of the Federal Council for the 2024-2028 term on 13 December 2023.

Sources: [swissinfo](https://www.srf.ch/news/swissinfo); [SRF](https://www.srf.ch/news)

分析

ANALYSIS

New Consulate and Swissnex Office in Osaka + Signing of an MoC

The new Consulate of Switzerland in Osaka has officially opened its doors on 30 September. It is the first consulate primarily focused on science in Japan and is part of the global Swissnex network dedicated to foster ties in the fields of science, research and innovation.

The opening ceremony brought together many high-level guests, including Andreas Baum, Ambassador of Switzerland to Japan, Hideyuki Yokoyama, Mayor of Osaka, Nobuhiko Yamaguchi, Vice Governor of the Osaka Prefectural Government, Tetsuya Tanaka, Deputy General-Director of the Ministry of Economy, Trade

and Industry (METI) and Martina Hirayama, the State Secretary for Education, Research, and Innovation, who was accompanied by a high-level academic delegation. One of the aims of the new consulate will be to support more projects between universities, research institutes and start-ups in the two countries in order to meet the challenges of tomorrow. Nine Swiss start-ups showcased their innovations and achievements in sustainability. Demonstrations included solar fuels, carbon capture from the air, ambient PET recycling, autonomous-legged robots as well as drones. The new Consulate's presence in the Kansai region is also

closely tied to the upcoming World Expo 2025 in Osaka.

On 1 October, on the fringes of the 20th Science and Technology for Society (STS) Forum in Kyoto, Ms. Hirayama and Mr Masahito Moriyama, Japan's Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) which aims to strengthen the ties between Switzerland and Japan in all areas of research, in particular quantum science and technology, artificial intelligence (AI), robotics, materials science and space research.

Sources: [admin.ch](https://www.admin.ch) ; [Federal Department of Foreign Affairs \(FDFA\)](https://www.federa.ch)

動向

SITUATION

Major News from the Japanese Automotive Sector

革新

INNOVATION

Japanese automakers are making significant strides in the development of electric vehicles (EVs) and their batteries. Two major Japanese automakers, Toyota and Honda, have recently announced partnerships to develop and mass-produce all-solid-state batteries for EVs.

Toyota and Idemitsu Kosan

Toyota Motor and Idemitsu Kosan have joined forces to develop and mass-produce all-solid-state batteries for electric vehicles (EVs), the companies declared on 12 October. The partnership follows an announcement in June by Toyota that it would introduce high-performance batteries to improve the driving range and reduce costs of future EVs. In a joint statement both companies said that they would aim to commercialize the next-generation batteries in 2027-

28, followed by full-scale mass production. Solid-state batteries can hold more energy than current liquid electrolyte batteries, and automakers and analysts expect them to speed the transition to EVs. However, Solid-state batteries are expensive and are likely to remain so for several years. Idemitsu, which is Japan's second-biggest oil refiner, continues to expand into EV battery supply chains. Earlier this year, it increased its stake in Australian lithium developer Delta Lithium to 15%. On the other hand, Toyota aims for annual global sales of 1.5 million units in 2026 and 3.5 million units in 2030 as stipulated in their EV business strategy.

Honda and Mitsubishi Corp.

Honda and trading house Mitsubishi Corp. have signed a

pact to explore new businesses using EV batteries. As part of their memorandum of understanding, the companies are looking to set up a business in monitoring usage of Honda's mini-EV model battery and transferring the auto battery to stationary energy storage. Additionally, they seek a more extensive collaboration in "smart charging", a process that automatically adjusts the timing of EV charge for efficiency as well as in the "Vehicle to Grid" system, a technology that supplies electricity stored in EVs to the grid. This deal could lead to lower electricity bills for customers and a more efficient use of battery materials. Honda plans to begin sales of the EV model in Japan in 2024.

Sources: [The Japan Times](#); [The Japan Times](#)

Agenda

活動

AGENDA

✓ IGEHO 2023

JETRO will have a booth at this year's IGEHO to introduce all the possibilities that offers the platform *Japan Street* to buyers interested in finding new and high-quality Japanese products.

Date: 18-22 November 2023

Venue: Messe Basel

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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