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INTERVIEW

Europe's First Machida Shoten Ramen Restaurant Opens in Zurich

Interview with Alex Müller, General Manager at Machida Shoten Zurich

On 13 August 2025, [Machida Shoten](#) opened its first European restaurant in Zurich, aiming to serve authentic Japanese ramen to the Swiss public. For this issue of our newsletter, we had the opportunity to talk to **Alex Müller**, General Manager at Machida Shoten's Zurich branch.

What inspired the decision to bring *Machida Shoten* to Switzerland, and why was Zurich chosen as the first European location?

The decision really came about by chance. I met Mr. Jun Hirano from *Machida Shoten* quite unexpectedly in a coffee shop in Japan through a mutual friend. It wasn't planned as a business meeting, but we ended up talking and naturally the conversation turned toward *Machida Shoten's* ambitions to expand beyond Asia and the US. Europe hadn't been explored yet, and when the idea was raised, it felt like a natural fit for me. Being half Swiss and half Japanese and having a deep interest in F&B and multicultural experiences, I immediately saw an opportunity to bridge the two worlds. Switzerland, and Zurich in particular, is known for its vibrant food scene and is centrally located in Europe, making it a great place for this kind of authentic culinary exchange. So, it was a simple coincidence that turned into a shared vision. Our values aligned perfectly, bringing



Alex Müller © JETRO Geneva

authentic, heartfelt Japanese ramen to a new audience while connecting with the multicultural spirit I've lived with all my life.

How have your connections to both Switzerland and Japan shaped the project's vision and execution?

I think they have been very important. Having spent significant time in both countries, and maintaining friendships and business relationships across them, I naturally became a bridge between the two cultures. More importantly, our Swiss team's strong background in the F&B industry aligned perfectly with what our Japanese partners were looking for. We spent over two years building trust, starting with initial conversations with Jun Hirano, followed by several visits from the vice president to Switzerland. Throughout this time, we worked hard

to present a clear goal: expanding this project from Japan into Europe. So, it's not just about being based in Switzerland, but about having the right team and dedication to truly bring this vision to life.

What factors made Switzerland an attractive first step into Europe for *Machida Shoten*?

Switzerland was a very strategic choice for *Machida Shoten's* first step into Europe for several reasons. Geographically, it's right in the heart of Europe, which makes it a natural hub for reaching multiple markets. Culturally and linguistically, Switzerland is very diverse, which helps when adapting to different European customers. Additionally, the country offers favorable tax conditions that many global companies also take

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INTERVIEW

advantage of by having their European HQ here. All these factors combined made Switzerland the ideal location for us.

For readers unfamiliar with it, how do you explain the essence of 'lekei ramen' and why this is *Machida Shoten's* signature style?

'lekei Ramen', originally from Yokohama, combines tonkotsu and shoyu broth with soy seasoning and medium-thick noodles, topped with chashu pork, spinach, and nori. The founders of *Machida Shoten* perfected this style by blending traditional elements with a broad appeal. The key was striking the right balance.

How will you ensure culinary authenticity and consistency while adapting to local tastes and ingredient sourcing in Switzerland?

Drawing from the experience of over 850 shops across Japan, we have developed a well-established system to replicate the exact same taste wherever we open. One of the biggest challenges was adapting to the difference in water quality: Japan has soft water, while Switzerland has hard water. To address this, we partnered with a specialized contract factory in Europe under strict confidentiality agreements.

Are there any Switzerland-exclusive menu items and how were they developed without compromising the core brand? We have introduced some options tailored to local preferences. For example, we developed a vegan ramen, which is not something we serve in Japan. Creating this ramen was an exciting challenge because it required



The official ribbon cutting ceremony © JETRO Geneva

rethinking traditional recipes without compromising the authentic ramen experience. We also offer gluten-free noodles, made by a renowned Japanese company and produced in Thailand.

What benchmarks will determine when and where to open the next Swiss or European locations?

Our goal is to open 50 shops across Europe within the next five years, but we're taking a very strategic approach. First and foremost, we want to establish a strong and successful presence in Switzerland, starting with multiple locations around Zurich. Having just one shop isn't enough; we need at least two or three in close proximity to ensure operational resilience, such as sharing staff, ingredients, and support when needed. Building this solid foundation here will allow us to refine our team and processes before expanding to other key markets.

How do you see *Machida Shoten* contributing to the broader Swiss-Japanese culinary and business exchange?

I see our role as a bridge between Japanese and Swiss cultures through food. We strive to offer an authentic taste of Japan

here in Switzerland, providing not just a meal but a lively and enjoyable experience. While some may find our flavors bold or our atmosphere lively, many of our guests appreciate the true Japanese ramen experience we bring. Our goal is to continue sharing Japanese culinary culture in a fun, welcoming environment.

What milestones are envisioned for the next 12-24 months?

Our key milestones focus on strengthening our presence within Switzerland. We plan to establish two to three additional shops in Zurich and expand to three or four locations across the country. Once we have solidified our position nationally, we aim to accelerate our growth and begin expanding quickly into markets outside Switzerland. This phased approach will ensure a strong foundation before we scale internationally.

Thank you for the interview!

Switzerland is Hit With 39% US Tariffs

The US has imposed tariffs of 39% on Swiss products, a move that has sent shockwaves through both Swiss industry and government. The tariffs, which came into effect on 7 August 2025, follow last-minute talks between President Karin Keller-Sutter, Economics Minister Guy Parmelin, and US officials in Washington. Despite Switzerland's efforts to make a fresh proposal, the US government, under President Donald Trump, decided to move forward with the measures.

Nearly 70 other countries, including members of the EU, are subject to these new import duties, although the rates and the impact do vary considerably. Nearly 60% of Swiss exports to the US are now subject to additional tariffs.

In comparison to other US trading partners with similar economic structures, such as the EU, Japan, and the UK, which face tariffs of 15%, 15%, and 10% respectively, the tariffs imposed on Switzerland are particularly steep. President Trump justified the tariffs

as a response to persistent trade deficits, arguing they pose a national security risk to the US. The Federal Council acknowledged the reality of the new tariffs and has vowed to continue pursuing further negotiations with the US authorities to reduce or remove these measures as soon as possible.

While keeping close contact with affected industry sectors, the Swiss government is also preparing to engage in discussions about relief measures for Swiss businesses and assessing whether broader economic policy actions are required.

The Federal Council has stated that trade tensions do not serve Switzerland's interests, and therefore, tariff countermeasures are not being considered. Simultaneously, it aims to continue prioritizing the diversification of trade relations with all international partners.

Sources: [Borderlex](#); [admin.ch](#); [swissinfo](#)

動向

SITUATION

The EFTA-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement Enters into Force on 1 October 2025

The EFTA-India Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA) will officially enter into force on 1 October 2025. This landmark agreement between the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries and India represents a significant boost to bilateral trade and economic relations.

For Swiss businesses, the TEPA offers enhanced market access through the elimination or reduction of tariffs on most goods covered under the agreement. The tariff dismantling will be immediate on the EFTA side, while India will implement tariff reductions gradually to allow for adjustment. From the date the agreement enters into force, India will no longer receive tariff preferences under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP)

from the EFTA countries, as it will instead benefit from preferential tariffs established by this new comprehensive agreement.

The agreement establishes clear rules of origin, which detail how products qualify for preferential treatment. These include specific product and value-added criteria, territorial scope limited to EFTA countries and India, and a 10% tolerance on third-country materials used in production. The rules allow for cumulation between EFTA states and India but exclude materials from other free trade partners. The agreement also permits shipments of goods between regions, including those via third countries, without losing their origin, provided the goods are not further

processed and remain under customs supervision during transit. Additionally, authorized exporters in Switzerland can issue electronic origin declarations, which simplifies and expedites customs clearance procedures.

Overall, the TEPA is expected to strengthen trade relations, foster investment, and create new opportunities for Swiss companies in India's dynamic market. The agreement marks a new chapter in EFTA-India economic relations and unlocks potential benefits for Swiss businesses prepared to engage more deeply with the Indian market.

Sources: [admin.ch](#); [swisstrade](#)

動向

TREND

Researchers from EPFL and Kyoto University Discover New Liquid for Hydrogen Storage

革新

INNOVATION

Researchers from EPFL in Lausanne and Kyoto University have unveiled a new liquid for hydrogen storage that promises to simplify hydrogen transportation and enhance energy storage solutions. This innovative liquid, developed by mixing ammonia borane and tetrabutylammonium borohydride in precise ratios, forms a stable and reusable hydrogen-rich fluid known as a deep eutectic solvent (DES).

Unlike traditional methods that require high pressures or cryogenic temperatures, the discovered liquid remains stable down to -50°C and releases pure hydrogen at moderate temperatures around 60°C . With a hydrogen storage capacity of about 6.9% by weight, the liquid carrier exceeds the U.S. Department of Energy's storage targets for 2025. Its unique molecular structure prevents crystallization, maintaining a liquid state that is easier and safer to handle, store, and transport.

Moreover, the hydrogen release process leaves the carrier largely intact, allowing it to be reused multiple times. This helps reduce costs and environmental

impact compared to existing hydrogen storage technologies.

The development constitutes significant progress toward overcoming the long-standing challenges in hydrogen storage and transport, which are critical barriers to adopting hydrogen as a clean energy vector. According to the researchers, this new method could enable decentralized energy storage and more flexible hydrogen supply chains, accelerating the transition to renewable energy systems.

The collaborative research was published in June 2025 and highlights the potential of hydride-based deep eutectic solvents as efficient, safe, and practical hydrogen carriers for future clean energy applications. This advancement comes at a crucial time when hydrogen is increasingly viewed as a key component in global efforts to reduce carbon emissions and achieve climate goals.

Sources: [swisstrade](#); [EPFL website](#)

Agenda

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AGENDA

- ✓ EXPO 2025 in Osaka
- Dates: 13 April – 13 October 2025
- Theme: *Designing Future Society for Our Lives*
- Find more information [here](#)

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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