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Crafting Connections Through Pastries: The Journey of Atelier Okashi

Interview with Misako Akiyama, Chef Pâtissier, founder of Atelier Okashi

Atelier Okashi, founded by Misako Akiyama, is a patisserie specializing in Japanese-inspired confectionery that combines traditional techniques with selected local ingredients. With a focus on products such as matcha-based pastries and seasonal creations, it reflects a blend of Japanese craftsmanship and European influence.

The atelier is known for its delicate balance of flavors and textures, introducing Swiss customers to a refined interpretation of Japanese pastry culture. By carefully adapting recipes while preserving key ingredients and techniques, Atelier Okashi creates products that are both authentic and accessible.

Building on her culinary training in Tokyo and experiences in France and Switzerland, Akiyama has steadily grown Atelier Okashi while maintaining a strong commitment to quality and authenticity. For this issue of our newsletter, we were able to meet Misako Akiyama at Atelier Okashi in Rüslikon.

Could you tell us the story behind *Atelier Okashi* and what inspired you to bring Japanese confectionery traditions to Switzerland?

I moved to Switzerland in 2017 after spending some time in France, where I had gone to learn both the language and more about French culinary culture. I graduated from *Le Cordon Bleu* in Tokyo and worked as an assistant to an executive chef, but I had never really planned to start my own business abroad. When I arrived in Switzerland, I did not know much about the country and could not speak English very well, so I felt I needed to create something for myself.

A key moment was meeting the owner of MAME Café in Zurich. I became a regular customer, and when she learned about my background, I started making small batches of matcha and yuzu pastries at home for her café. Customers responded very positively, and through her, I discovered a shared kitchen in Zurich where I could produce more. From there, everything grew step by step. It was not a big dream at the beginning, it felt more like a natural development, or even destiny.



Misako Akiyama, the owner and founder of *Atelier Okashi* © Romain Mader

How do you balance authenticity with local tastes when introducing Japanese flavors to a Swiss audience?

I try to keep a balance between authenticity and adaptation. For me, it is important to use local ingredients as much as possible to ensure freshness, but at the same time, key ingredients like matcha are sourced directly from Japan. I still have contact with a tea farmer there, which is very important to me.

At the same time, I adjust my recipes slightly to suit Swiss tastes. Japanese pastries are usually less sweet and smaller, so I sometimes increase the sweetness or size. For example, my matcha roll is less bitter than in Japan, and I add white chocolate to create a better balance. I also use rice flour, which makes many products gluten-free, something that Swiss customers really appreciate. In this way, I can keep the essence of Japanese confectionery while making it accessible locally. I believe that for my brand, this is a good combination.

What are some of the key differences in food culture or customer expectations you've noticed between Japan and Switzerland?

There are many differences. In Japan, the diet is traditionally based on rice, while in Switzerland it is more focused on bread and potatoes. Texture is also important: Japanese pastries are typically very light and airy, while Swiss customers often prefer something a bit more structured or crispy. This also affects ingredients. For example, the rice

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Yuzu Roll Cake prepared at *Atelier Okashi* © Romain Mader



Staff members making cookies at *Atelier Okashi* © JETRO Geneva

flour available here does not always give the same results, so I import it from Japan in small quantities. Service culture is also quite different. In Japan, service is more formal and structured, while in Switzerland it is more relaxed and personal, with more direct communication.

What challenges did you face when establishing your business in Switzerland, and how did you overcome them?

At the beginning, I underestimated how complex it would be to set up a business in Switzerland. The administrative processes and legal requirements were challenging, especially because of the language barrier with German. I was very fortunate to have the support of my husband, who helped me navigate the registration process and understand the system. Instead of trying to do everything at once, I let the business grow step by step, which made it more manageable.

How do you source your ingredients?

Most of my ingredients come from local suppliers around the Zurich area, and I try to work closely with farmers whenever possible. At the same time, certain key ingredients, such as matcha and specific types of rice flour, are imported from Japan to maintain quality and authenticity.

For packaging, I also sometimes order from Japan, as the sizes and styles are often better suited to Japanese confectionery. Today, I supply my products to around ten locations across Switzerland, including establishments in Zurich, Zug, Basel, and Interlaken.

In your view, what role can small businesses like *Atelier Okashi* play in strengthening cultural exchange between Japan and Switzerland?

I think small businesses can play an important role by making culture accessible through everyday experiences like food. My main business format is B2B and for me, it is very important to stay authentic while also communicating directly with customers and listening to their feedback. My products are inspired by Japanese traditions with a touch of French influence, and they attract a wide range of customers, from Swiss locals to international residents and people who have visited Japan. Through these interactions, I feel that I can share a part of Japanese culture in a very direct and personal way.

Looking ahead, what are your ambitions for *Atelier Okashi*, and do you see opportunities for expansion or collaboration?

In the future, I would like to expand *Atelier Okashi* further across Switzerland and participate in more markets and food events. I am also very interested in collaborations, as they allow me to connect with new people and ideas.

One of my long-term goals is to open my own café or shop, not only for customers but also to create a stable and inspiring environment for my team, which currently consists of about ten members. Social media, especially Instagram, plays a very important role in our growth, and I hope to continue building on that to reach a wider audience.

Thank you for the interview!

To order pastries as well as Matcha and tea from *Atelier Okashi*, visit their web shop [here](#).

The Canton of Lucerne Takes the Lead in Switzerland's Corporate Tax Landscape

Lucerne has emerged as Switzerland's most tax-efficient canton for corporations, overtaking Zug, long regarded as the country's benchmark for low corporate taxation. This development is based on a recent analysis by PwC, which compares effective corporate tax rates across Swiss cantons.

動向

SITUATION

According to the study, Lucerne's effective corporate tax rate has declined to 11.66% in 2026 (2025: 11.91%), marking a more pronounced reduction than in Zug, where the rate now stands at 11.71% (2025: 11.85%). At the other end of the spectrum, companies operating in Bern and Zurich face significantly higher tax burdens, with effective rates approaching 20%. Despite the introduction of the OECD's global minimum corporate tax framework in 2024, overall tax levels in Switzerland have remained largely stable.

Several cantons have continued to adjust their tax policies incrementally. For 2026, 8 cantons, including Lucerne, Zug, Uri, Basel-Country, Fribourg, Aargau and Zurich, have implemented tax reductions, while 4 (Basel-City, Solothurn, Jura and Schaffhausen) have introduced slight increases. Central Switzerland continues to stand out as one of the country's most attractive regions from a tax perspective, consistently offering some of the lowest corporate tax rates nationwide.

In an international comparison, Swiss corporate taxation also remains highly competitive. Within the EU, only Hungary reports lower corporate tax rates than Lucerne, namely 9%. Overall, corporate tax levels in 2026 remain broadly aligned with those of 2025, with selective reductions in several cantons. It is important to note that a company's actual tax burden in Switzerland can vary considerably depending on its specific location at the municipal level, as well as its eligibility for targeted tax instruments. These may include mechanisms such as the patent box, enhanced R&D deductions, tax holidays, step-up provisions, or additional cantonal incentives such as subsidies or tax credits.

Sources: [PwC](#), [PwC](#); [Le Temps](#)

Swiss Biotech Sector Attracts More Capital in 2025

The Swiss biotech industry attracted more capital in 2025, according to the Swiss Biotech Report 2026. Total financing rose to CHF 2.6 billion, driven in particular by stronger investment in private biotech companies. Funding for privately held firms reached CHF 1.15 billion, which the report describes as a record level and 38% more than in the previous year.

動向

TREND

The report says this private funding represented 45% of total capital inflows, compared with around 30% in previous years. It also notes that 334 biotech companies were active in R&D in Switzerland in 2025. The report further states that the sector's total revenues reached CHF 7.5 billion, also a record. According to the report, growth was supported by more companies reaching the commercial stage and continued demand for specialized CDMO services. Employment in Swiss biotech R&D companies also increased, with more than 21'000 full-time equivalents recorded in 2025.

The report was presented at the Welcome Reception on 3 May 2026, held as part of Swiss Biotech Day 2026 in Basel (4–5 May 2026), where the latest industry figures and developments were discussed. The event also highlighted the importance of Swiss-Japanese cooperation in the biotech sector. The Swiss Business Hub Japan, in cooperation with JETRO Geneva, led the organization of a Japanese booth in the Global Village, and 17 Japanese companies participated. This created an opportunity for Japanese biotech companies to present themselves to an international audience and exchange with the Swiss biotech community.

At the closing reception in the Global Village on the second day of Biotech Day, the Swiss Biotech Association announced that Japan had been selected as the Partner Country for 2026, for which JETRO expressed its gratitude.

Click [here](#) to read the full report.

Sources: [Swiss Biotech Association](#), [JETRO](#), [JETRO](#); [Agefi](#)

The Canton of Aargau Advances Planning to Enable a Hitachi Energy Campus

革新

INNOVATION

The Canton of Aargau has initiated a cantonal plan amendment to create the planning conditions for a potential [Hitachi Energy](#) campus in the Tägerhardächer area, a site among those shortlisted by the company. The proposal asks that the Tägerhardächer site be designated in the cantonal structure plan as an economic development focus (ESP) of cantonal significance and that roughly 10.7 hectares of settlement area be made available to accommodate the project.

The revision would convert agricultural land into a workplace zone and entails a reduction of some fruit-bearing agricultural areas and of the existing settlement-separation belt in that locality. The municipality of Wettingen submitted the proposed structure-plan change, and the regional planning association 'Baden Regio' has indicated support for the measure. Cantonal authorities have described the amendment as a plan-led preparatory step intended to provide the spatial and regulatory framework needed for an informed corporate location decision. However, it does not represent a commitment by the canton to the project itself. The canton says it concluded after reviewing consultation input that an overriding public interest in the proposed settlement exists and that there are no overriding spatial conflicts preventing the adjustment. The final decision whether to locate a campus at the site remains with *Hitachi Energy*.

The canton's announcement notes that, if realized, the project could help secure existing jobs and create additional positions in the region - figures cited in reporting indicate the potential to secure around 1'000 existing jobs and to add up to 2'000 new jobs in Aargau - while further municipal and planning approvals would be required before construction could proceed. The structure-plan amendment was subject to public consultation and has been submitted to the Grand Council for decision. Should the Grand Council approve the change, subsequent municipal and land-use procedures would determine whether the campus can proceed under local rules.

Sources: [Canton Aargau](#), [swisstrade](#)

Agenda

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AGENDA

✓ Stay tuned!

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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