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会見

INTERVIEW

## Tea Time with Ms Emiko Okamoto - Japanese Tea Advisor

*Could you briefly describe your professional background?*

After my studies in Kyoto, I came to Zürich in 1993 to work for an iconic Swiss jewellery and watch company. Four years later, I moved to Geneva, host to the world's major watchmakers brands.

Having worked for almost 15 years in "haute horlogerie", I married and become a mother, and at this time I wanted to start something different professionally. As I had been passionate about green tea and pastries for a long time, a dream formed to open a little tea house.

I learned traditional French pastry in Osaka with a Japanese Chef. I then obtained the license to operate a Tea room in Switzerland. In 2012, I joined the "Nihoncha Instructor Association" and have since then become a certified Japanese Tea Advisor. In 2012, I started organizing Japanese tea tastings, paired with homemade pastries, mainly in Geneva. It was a good way to hear about local clients' experience with Japanese tea and how it reflected on their wellbeing and health. At the same time, I started to receive orders for matcha pastries from restaurants.

People often asked me where to find good teas, and this led me to



Ms Emiko Okamoto preparing tea in the tea house "Mille Pins"

progressively importing and distributing fine Japanese tea.

In 2016, I was nominated a Japan Tea Ambassador.

In 2017, our tea house "Aux Mille Pins" opened in Geneva.

*Could you tell us more about this title of Ambassador?*

In 2016, the Japan Export Tea Council, under the authority of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and The Nihoncha Instructor Association started appointing qualifying members who lived overseas as Japanese Tea Ambassadors, for the purpose of supporting exports of Japanese green tea. I was nominated for Switzerland and Liechtenstein. At the moment, there are 27 of us around the world, representing the ex-

cellence and uniqueness of Japanese tea in different ways. Our mission is to increase the number of appreciators and consumers of Japanese tea.

Tea Ambassadors achieve this by educating the largest possible audience about the history, innovations, variety and health benefits of Japanese tea.

In Switzerland, tea presentations take place during official and cultural events, supported by the Embassy of Japan and the Consulate of Japan, often in collaboration with local institutions.

For example, events were conducted during the "Week of Taste" (la Semaine du Goût/die Genusswoche), at the Olympic Museum in Lausanne and at the Japanese Cultural Center in Bern.

## 会見

INTERVIEW

# Tea Time with Ms Emiko Okamoto - Japanese Tea Advisor

*What are your activities in Geneva and Switzerland?*

I travel to Japan once or twice a year to seek, select and meet small producers. These selections are available for ordering on our website.

Mobile tea house events are organized for institutions, private parties and corporate gatherings. Please note these are not formal Japanese tea ceremonies. The events feature the presentation of the variety of Japanese teas, including their health benefits according to science, the simple way of preparing tea using the teapot (kyusu) and whisking the matcha or using it as a cooking ingredient for daily usage, along with tastings.

The tea house "Aux Mille Pins" is a little, hidden place. A "kakurega" where everyone is welcome to taste teas in an authentic Japanese atmosphere, centered around the chagama and tea house furniture designed by the HEAD art school. Tasting sessions are available for small groups. Customers can find directly selected tea and tea goods.

*Have you faced some challenges to start your business here? Especially regarding imports or cultural differences?*

The variety and true taste of Japanese tea is actually not well known in Europe.

Successful and innovative Japanese contributions to teas such as sencha and matcha suffer from a lack protected designation of origin.

This can induce confusion for customers that are looking for Japanese specialties.

Many people have prejudice about

tea - e.g. "Green tea is bitter" - as a result of drinking cheap, flavored, low-grade green teas.

To develop the market, "taste education" is needed for consumers and food professionals regarding the different varieties of green teas, influence of natural conditions and harvest time.

A real challenge is to reach and provide service evenly to consumers in the four language regions of Switzerland. But this gives me an opportunity to practice Swiss German!

Finally, there is also work to do with producers; I still have to help them with the paperwork.

*Talking about the Swiss market, have you noticed any particular trend regarding tea and Japanese food?*

In Switzerland, most of the customers I have encountered are still heavily influenced by their traditional, culturally-ingrained food habits, i.e. long tradition of coffee drinking, use of herbal and black teas, habit of heavily sugar-sweetened beverages and desserts. However, the current trend for

healthier, lower-calorie, vegetable- and nutrient-rich meals and "superfoods" favors a further increased appreciation for Japanese Tea and Japanese food, which traditionally provides an excellent nutritional balance. For instance, I have witnessed several clients who now appreciate tea every day, having converted from their daily coffee to green tea.

Today, a product like matcha tea is becoming more and more popular, following trends that we can observe in the US and UK.

During matcha workshops for kids, I am often pleasantly surprised to see how they enjoy using the bamboo whisk, and they appreciate the taste of matcha.

Generally speaking, in Switzerland, Japanese food is very popular today and this reflects favourably on the attractiveness of Japanese tea.

*What are your projects for the future?*

Above all, I am happy to continue my activities by keeping my good health and mood with refreshing Japanese tea!



The presentation of tea at The Olympic Museum Lausanne

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## JETRO Seminars: Partnership Switzerland-Japan: keys to success

More than 40 people took part in both of our jointly-organized events in Neuchâtel and Lausanne. The one in Neuchâtel was co-organized by the JETRO, the Office for Economic Promotion of the State and Republic of Neuchâtel, the CNCI and S-GE. The one in Lausanne was co-organized by JETRO, the DEV, the CVCi and S-GE.

Those two seminars aimed to inform participants about business opportunities and the business culture in Japan. For sure, Japan represents a very interesting market: highly sophisticated, large and quality oriented, Swiss companies have a good chance of succeeding there. However, as it was explained by the speakers during those two seminars, the Japanese market is also very specific and it is important to understand its way of doing business and the expectation of potential Japanese partners and customers.

To exemplify those differences, two Swiss companies - Sika and Fischer Connectors - presented their own experience with this



Charles Ochsner, Attorney at Law in Tokyo

very interesting market.

With several years of experience in the Japanese market, Sika successfully became one of the leading companies in the construction field and more particularly in the "roofing" sector. Sika also successfully entered the Japanese car market by supplying plastic pieces to Toyota's best-seller, Prius.

In Lausanne, Fischer Connectors explained how they changed their strategy regarding the Japanese market and why they just opened an office to answer the local demand more effectively.

On the other hand, Japanese companies Sunstar and Tanaka Kikinzoku Kogyo (TANAKA) ex-

plained why they decided to start a business in Switzerland. TANAKA did this through the acquisition of Metalor. By doing so, the company completed its portfolio in the precious metal industry. Sunstar is probably a unique case of a Japanese company which relocated its headquarters to Switzerland. This audacious decision was made in order to more efficiently expand the activities of the company outside of the Japanese market. Today, beside the Japanese market which remains the most important for Sunstar, the company makes more than half its sales outside of Japan.



Daniel Spycher, Sales Director, Fischer Connectors

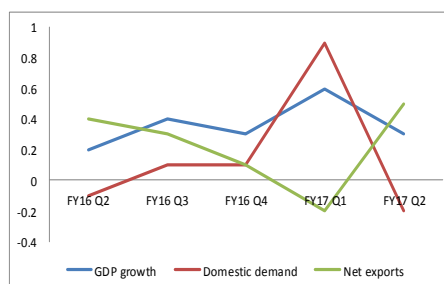
活動

ACTIVITY

## Japan Economy in Q2 of Fiscal Year 2017 (July-Sept.)

According to the Cabinet Office, the GDP increased (0.3%) for the seventh consecutive quarter. During Q1, the domestic demand explained most of the growth (0.9%), compensating for the low level of exports (-0.2%), the situation reversed in Q2. Domestic

demand slowed down (-0.2%) and exports did well, with a 1.5% increase. Seasonally adjusted, the balance between exports and imports reached a 0.5% level. Annualized, GDP growth should be at 1.4% based on Q2 figures.



Source: Cabinet Office / Nov. 15, 2017

動向

SITUATION



## 革新

INNOVATION

## The Driving Force of Japan: Small and Medium Enterprises

Like in Switzerland, small and medium enterprises represent a driving force in Japan. They account for 90% of the total number of companies in Japan, forming the foundation of the Japanese economy. However, as in Switzerland, they suffer from a lack of visibility outside of the country and even if many of them are successfully able to export their products and knowledge outside of Japan, many others still struggle to be known. If you want to learn more about this hidden potential, Japanese International Broadcasting Inc. (jibtv) presents a documentary in collaboration with JETRO about those small and medium enterprises.

The documentary is programmed on NHK World / jibtv on Nov. 23 and 24 or will be made available in streaming after Nov. 27.

[https://www.jibtv.com/programs/driving\\_force\\_of\\_japan/](https://www.jibtv.com/programs/driving_force_of_japan/)



Source: jibtv

## Agenda

## 日程

AGENDA

- ✓ Impulse Event: Japan  
Event co-organized by JETRO, S-GE and the Swiss Japanese Chamber of Commerce (SJCC)  
Zurich February 27, 2018

*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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