



THE SWEETEST THINGS

KAKI PERSIMMONS

A land rich in delicious fruits and vegetables, Tottori never runs out of sweet deals. From its deep red watermelons to its large and juicy *nashi* pears, the prefecture is a proud producer and exporter of a great variety of natural treats. A leading local favorite that often gets overshadowed by other popular products is the *kaki* — Japanese persimmon. What many don't know about this delicious fruit is that it's extremely rich in dietary fiber, vitamin A and vitamin C (more than lemons) and tastes heavenly.

The Tottori kaki can be identified by their large sizes and refined sweetness that exceeds this of most peaches and even melons. The leading brands grown in the prefecture are *Kitaro*, a registered Tottori original product since 2010, *Hanagoshō*, said to be the country's sweetest, and *Saijyo*, adopted from Hiroshima Prefecture but developed locally. It is known for the absence of any astringent taste and is often consumed when dried. Tottori's kaki season is at its peak from early October through early December, during which time the prefecture exports most of its annual shipment of nearly 3,000 tons of the fruit.

A leading producer of kaki in Tottori's Yazu Town is the Okazaki Farm, which has run as a family business across four generations for over 100 years. Its current owner, Akito Okazaki, took over the business from his grandfather, who continued growing kaki until the age of 101. Striving to protect the business and promote the prefecture's sweet kaki deal, Okazaki operates the farm solo, caring for its over a thousand trees, one kaki at a time.





WATERMELON

Grown in the mineral-rich black soil at the foot of Mount Daisen are Tottori's famous watermelons known for their extra sweetness, juiciness and large sizes. Typically harvested in June, Tottori's watermelons are massively shipped throughout the country, earning the prefecture the reputation of one of Japan's top producers of the expensive fruit. The three main Tottori watermelon signature brands are the Daiei Watermelon, characterized by its high sugar content, size and crunchiness, the thin-skinned, soft and extra sweet Kurayoshi Gokumi Watermelon and the black-skinned Gaburiko Watermelon, a watermelon as sweet as candy that has almost no seeds.



NASHI PEARS

A great Tottori pride is its locally grown, perfectly round-shaped *nashi* pears, the Japanese fruit closest to perfection. Though commonly translated as "pear" in English, nashi has an excessive juiciness and mild sweetness, which greatly differs in taste from the solid texture associated with most overseas-grown pears. The fifth-largest producer of nashi and an exporter of some 15,000 tons of the fruit annually, Tottori has been growing nashi for over a century. There are many varieties of the fruit, though a local would most likely recommend the main five, Nijisseiki nashi, Akibae, Natsuhime, Oushuu and Shinkansen (name not to be confused with bullet trains). Nashi orchards are a common sight in the

prefecture and the fruit is so revered that it even has its own dedicated museum, the Tottori Nijisseiki Pear Museum, or "Nashikkokan" as it is locally known, in Kurayoshi City. The museum is the only facility of its kind in Japan and it is much larger than one could expect from a museum dedicated to one single fruit. The museum's main hall boasts a giant nashi tree with branches stretching out some 20 meters, but this is only the first surprise — interactive exhibits and informative displays, in addition to delicious nashi treats, are just some of the many experiences visitors can enjoy. Nashi are grown from summer through autumn, making it the perfect treat to satisfy one's thirstiness on a hot, humid day.



TOTTORI “MINGEI” FOLK CRAFTS

The term *mingei*, most commonly translated into English as “folk craft” or “folk art,” is composed of two of the most simple Japanese characters — those for “art” and “people.” It was this simplicity that art critic Soetsu Yanagi wanted to emphasize when he coined the term in 1926. Yanagi wanted to express the aesthetics of crafts made by anonymous artisans, or in other words, demonstrate that some of the world’s most beautiful art is made in the hands of people who don’t necessarily have noteworthy titles on paper. Yanagi founded the *mingei* movement in Japan in the late 1920s and 1930s, paving the way for generations of artisans.

One man who was greatly inspired by Yanagi’s movement was Shoya Yoshida (1898-1972), a Tottori native medical doctor who actively produced folk crafts in the prefecture and worked tirelessly in his promotion of Tottori Prefecture’s folk crafts. Today, he is known as the “father of Tottori’s *mingei* movement” and it is thanks to him that many of Tottori’s kilns have crossed the sand borders to become domestically and internationally known. Many of these Tottori classics are now on display at the Tottori Folk Crafts Museum, which Yoshida opened in 1949 near Tottori Station with the mission to display the “beauty of folk crafts” and to guide artisans in the creation of their own unique *mingei* crafts. Through his work, Yoshida continued to inspire artisans to produce “shinsaku *mingei*,” new folk crafts that use traditional techniques but are innovative, contemporary and, most of all, practical.

Such “new folk crafts” continue to be produced and sold today — and one of the key players in the industry is Inshu Nakai Kiln in the town of Kawahara in Tottori City.





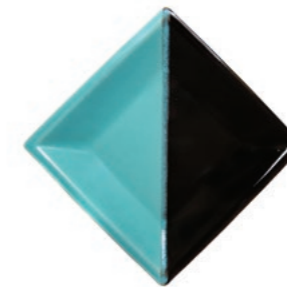
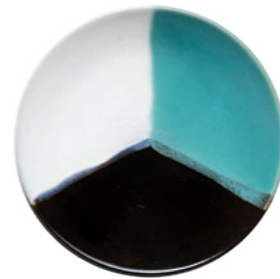
THE GREEN, BLACK AND WHITE GLAZE: INSHU NAKAI KILN

Inshu Nakai Kiln's trademark product's distinct, clean and eye-catching design is easily recognizable, although "some people would think it's northern European, not Japanese," as Akira Sakamoto, the third-generation owner of the kiln, likes to joke. Since its opening in 1945 in Tottori, Nakai Kiln has continued making modern, stylistic ceramics with a vivid tricolor — green, black and white — glaze as their trademark, under the supervision of Shoya Yoshida, and later on Sori Yanagi (1915-2011), an industrial designer and modernist who merged simplicity and practicality with elements of traditional Japanese crafts. In the spirit of creative *mingei* crafts, the kiln has devoted its work to creating wholesome pottery that can be used in everyday life, but also please the eye whenever displayed.

Nakai Kiln's products are made of natural materials, such as charcoal-burned straw and sandy soil found in Tottori Prefecture, in a *somewake* (separated glaze) style using the brand's all three signature colors or a

combination of two of them. In particular, Nakai's two-colored plate with traditional green and black glaze is one of the kiln's — and Tottori's — most famous craftworks.

A winner of numerous folk craft awards, Nakai Kiln's beautiful and practical products, the range of which covers everything that can fit in a regular kitchen or restaurant (including giant vases), have drawn attention from popular nationwide stores, including the popular brand BEAMS, resulting in a growing market of younger buyers. Sakamoto, who is currently training his son to take over the family business, says that the key to success is simple: doing something that no one else is doing.





**SELF-MADE, SELF-OWNED:
TALMARY**

When a nomad family decides to settle down permanently, it says a lot about the place they choose. For Itaru and Mariko Watanabe from Talmary ("Tal" for Itaru and "Mary" for Mariko), the last destination on their ever-changing map was Chizu in southeastern Tottori, known as "the most beautiful village" in Japan. Surrounded by mountains and with more than 93 percent of the village's total area being lush forest, the greenery stretches as far as the eye can see. With a little over 6,300 people and some of the purest streams in western Japan, this small Japanese village hides one of the largest pure natural resources found all across Japan.

But that is not the only reason why the Watanabes moved to Chizu. Itaru is a baker who has long relied on natural yeasts to make his delicious, simple bread. He is also a beer brewer, a passion he acquired after realizing that if he started brewing beer in the same way he baked bread, it would not only be delicious but would also conveniently provide him with a stock of yeast for baking.

The couple started Talmary in 2008 in Chiba near Tokyo, their hometown. Tired of the city's busy life, the two always dreamed of moving to the countryside to pursue a better quality of life. But when the post-earthquake and tsunami nuclear disaster struck the country in 2011, they decided to move to southern Japan in search for safer food business grounds. This took them to Okayama Prefecture first and then finally to Chizu, where they decided to settle permanently in 2015. Chizu had the purest waters, the cleanest air and the perfect location for sustaining their business using mostly local ingredients. The place they chose as a base for their restaurant and brewery was a former nursery, close to Tottori's border with Okayama. The site was sitting on a well, which provides pure water for Talmary's beer, bread and coffee. It is also surrounded by vast greenery spaces where Talmary grows its own hops and where the Watanabes hope to grow barley in the future. Their mission is to go fully self-made and self-sufficient and they are already on the right path: Talmary is currently one of the very few breweries in Japan that ferments all of its beer with wild yeast.

Aside from their fascinating business culture, for locals and visitors, Talmary is a place to celebrate healthy, natural food and a place to enjoy the extraordinary found in the very ordinary we have. To maintain this vibe, the Watanabes have preserved the nursery's former look, keeping toys, objects, and blackboards used by the kids in the past. The restaurant offers homemade freshly baked bread, pizza, scones, hamburgers and sandwiches, and various meals cooked with local vegetables and meats. It's the perfect location for a slow but fulfilling life — something that the Watanabes had been pursuing all their lives.



A RITE OF PASSAGE: OOE VALLEY STAY

There is a beautiful place in the town of Yazu, a short drive from Chizu Town, that can help every traveler turn back time to their early years of school life. The large yard, the spacious gym, the symbol adorning the building and the guest rooms, all carry the memories of their past: just until three years ago this building used to be the Oe Elementary School, the local primary that closed its doors for good in 2017. Today its classrooms have been transformed into the Ooe Valley Stay, a contemporary inn in the local Oenosato Resort, surrounded by magnificent nature, mountains and near a clear stream.

Despite its modern look and interior design, Ooe Valley Stay is a resort inn that provides the luxury of a simple stay. To shut away the noise of the exterior and help guests spend a quiet time away from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, the hotel rooms are not equipped with TVs. Instead, guests are invited to listen to the mountain's sounds, look at the starry sky or take a moment to unveil and relax with a good book in hands while looking at the splendid scenery from the hotel. For those seeking entertainment, the hotel's gym — which occupies the former school gym and looks very much like it did back in the days — is the place to go to (literally) play like a child. Here you will find trampolines and bouldering walls, or you can play basketball, ping pong, badminton or any other games that come to the mind of the inner child within you.

Ooe Valley Stay is equipped with various room types fit for both budget and luxury travelers and solo, couples and families. Guests will be served a traditional breakfast that includes locally grown rich-flavored "Tenbiran" raw eggs (a specialty of Oenosato Resort) on steamed white rice and other simple dishes cooked with local ingredients. A good collection of sake and beer from Tottori is also in store for those wishing to end a day at the school with a glass of something more suitable for adults. On the next day, before heading back to reality, ride one of Ooe Valley Stay's rental bikes and tour the area at your own pace. Just a short bike ride from Ooe Valley Stay you'll find Oenosato Natural Farm, a farm, restaurant and a natural amusement park that serves one of Japan's fluffiest and most delicious pancakes (as well as puddings and various other mouth-watering sweets) in addition to offering a variety of activities and events for children and adults alike.





SOAK AND HEAL

Tottori's ten hot spring districts, all equipped with multiple luxury accommodation facilities, boast radon hot springs that are believed to be effective in speeding up the metabolism, boosting the immune system and aid the body's natural healing powers. Paired with stunning views and clean air, these hidden from the ordinary world springs invite for the ultimate relaxation.



KAIKE HOT SPRINGS

An unparalleled destination that combines a sand beach resort and hot springs, Kaike Onsen in Yonago City is one of Tottori's most multifaceted landmarks and the largest hot spring resort in the San'in area. The resort comprises some 20 hotels and Japanese-style ryokan (inn) lined along the Sea of Japan coast, providing a refined location to enjoy a full package of healing hot springs, a day at the beach, delicious local cuisine and a stunning view of Mount Daisen in the background. Kaike Onsen has been selected as one of Japan's "100 selected views of Japanese

sunsets and sunrises," a prestigious landscape award presented to cities with exceptionally scenic urban views. Kaike Onsen's hot springs are welled up from the Sea of Japan and are high in sodium and calcium chloride, a combination that thoroughly warms up the body. Thanks to its salty waters with a groundwater temperature of 63 to 83 degrees, the resort is a popular venue for people practicing thalassotherapy, a natural remedy for various health and beauty conditions.



MISASA HOT SPRINGS

A nostalgic visual departure from Kaike Hot Springs' contemporary look is Misasa Onsen in the town of Misasa, a hot spring resort with a retro vibe known as "the healing spring" of Tottori. The Misasa springs boast extremely high radon levels, making this area a popular health resort for people seeking help in improving their metabolism, muscle soothing, stress-relieving and an overall immune system boost. Most of Misasa Onsen's traditional Japanese inns are lined along the banks of the Mitoku River, creating a look of a historic town in an almost time-slip experience. The Kajika Bridge downstream and the popular among couples Koitani Bridge (also known as "La Vallée de l'amour") upstream add to the area's visual perfection and form a lovely place for a stroll. The peaceful environment, combined with its healing waters, invite travelers for a rehabilitative retreat, with many ending up staying for weeks, sometimes even months at a time. But as the local saying goes, one should stay for at least "three mornings" (the literal translation of "Misasa") — for it is believed that those who stay to enjoy three mornings in the hot springs will find all of their ailments cured.

