

Japan's Taste for Wellness

Food and drink have always been among Japan's greatest cultural treasures and international exports. The rich flavors of sushi, sake and miso have helped propel the industry's sales and global renown. In the modern food and drink sector, however, success is now measured in health as much as wealth, with snacks, dinners and beverages all prized for their contribution to consumers' well-being. More and more businesses in the sector are focusing on the additional benefits of their products, and even working to boost these qualities with nutrient-enriched "functional foods" and organic ingredients. At snack firm Iwamoto Confectionery Co., Ltd., such plans include developing allergen-free snacks and treats that benefit people. "Expanding our product portfolio to suit the aging society of Japan will definitely be a goal for the future, providing nutrients in products that can help people with dementia or muscle weakness," said President Seiji Mori. Tetsuya Murata, president and CEO of Kanro Inc., agreed: "We are looking for inherent benefits of the ingredients we already use, such as the positive effects of carbohydrates on the brain and research on oligo-saccharides for potential benefits for

immune systems." Tomohiro Nakada, the president of Salad Cosmo Co., Ltd., revealed the health properties of his firm's produce have been driving sales. "Let's consider Japanese food culture from the perspective of vegetable producers. Bean sprouts were once available only throughout Asia. These days, thanks to health-food trends, it is rapidly gaining popularity," said Nakada. Meanwhile, Shinichirou Momiki, the president of Momiki Co., Ltd. is proud of the well-being qualities of his firm's products. "During the pandemic, we experienced an increase in sales of our black garlic. From the voices of our customers, many have seen improvements in their energy levels and daily function, as well as comments from others that they are looking 'full of life'," said Momiki. No matter which approach food and drink producers take to increase the well-being qualities of products, the tenets of Japanese business remain the same—quality above all else. "In Japan, our concept and way of thinking is rather different from other countries and their companies. In Japan, we always aim to achieve 100% quality, and this is what our customers want. It is the company's responsibility to respond to those demands," said

Masahiro Iwakura, representative director and president of KRACIE Co., Ltd. "I think the Japanese food industry has maintained the high quality of its products and gained long-term confidence from consumers thanks to its reliability, and it continues to gain significance overseas," said Nobutaro Asai, president of MARUYA HATCHO MISO Co., Ltd. "The reputation of high-quality Japanese food and beverages acts as a strong catalyst for growth for our company," said Hajime Murano, president & CEO of Orion Breweries, Ltd. Kaichiro Yamamoto, president of Yamamotoyama Co., Ltd., also prioritizes quality. "I believe that being fresh and innovative is the best way going forward," said Yamamoto. Takahisa Kuno, president of The Nishin OilliO Group, Ltd., agreed. "One of the characteristics of Japanese food is the attention to detail in terms of taste and appearance," said Kuno. When it comes to health properties, Atsuto Ono Hanjiro VIII, president and CEO of Someno's Tofu Co., Ltd. believes modern consumers are well-educated in this space. "In terms of the health benefits of soybeans, it's worth noting that many of our Japanese customers are already well-versed in this area, often possessing more knowledge than we do," said Ono. Working to improve the health and well-being of customers is a key objective for food producers such as MARUSAN-AI Co., Ltd, according to its president. "We have a corporate mission commitment of safeguarding the physical and mental health of people now and in the future. This really is the core of our company's philosophy," said Nobuyoshi Sakai. Ryuta Fujii, the president of pharmaceutical and traditional medicine manufacturer Ryukakusan Co., Ltd. insists that health will always be of utmost importance. "The big question for us is not whether a product will be profitable, but rather, will our customers enjoy better health because of it. We believe that if we create a product that is beneficial to society, then the profits will follow," said Fujii.

Japan's food and drink sector is embracing the health benefits of its products. (Image: SALADCOSMO)



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