

和食ワールドチャレンジ2015 決勝戦出場者

Away from Home, A Discovery of Cuisine Reflecting the Four Seasons Determined to go to the heart of washoku



Aaron Pate (39, USA)

Aaron Pate was born in Hawaii, where many people of Japanese descent live. From his childhood, he had many opportunities to come into contact with washoku. He says he has always felt that washoku is a delicious and eye-pleasing cuisine.

Pate entered the world of washoku at the age of 20. He began his training as a sushi chef at restaurant run by a Japanese American. He worked enthusiastically at the same place for 13 years, but a desire to work at a restaurant in Japan to master washoku grew stronger within him. His turning point came at the age of 34, when he got the chance to work for two years at the creative washoku restaurant “Gonpachi Nishi Azabu” in the middle of Tokyo.

In Hawaii, it is perpetually summer. There are no other seasons. Thus, when Pate came to Japan, he was surprised the most at how the cuisine reflected the four seasons. When he returned to the US after his training, he wanted to work in an area where he could obtain ingredients that reflect the four seasons just like in Japan. That turned out to be Seattle, where he currently works as a sushi chef at Shiro’s Sushi.

At Shiro’s Sushi, where Pate is the only non-Japanese sushi chef, they serve “Edomae sushi,” not creative sushi. Yasuko Nakajima, who works there, says, “In America, rolled sushi and other creative sushi dishes are popular. Many young people and others equate the term ‘sushi’ with rolled sushi. Seattle is on the Puget Sound, a treasure-trove of seafood, and at Shiro’s, we take care to offer sushi that makes use of the fresh seafood we get from the sea near the shore, just like Edomae. This is because we want our customers to know the true deliciousness of sushi.”

When Pate makes washoku, he takes care to think about overall harmony of the dish while bringing out the flavor of the ingredients. His contest entry is Tonyu-Shabushabu. His main reason for choosing this dish is the fact that although shabushabu is a standard popular food in Japan, it is still not so well known in the US. He also added his own twist by using seasonal Seattle seafood for his shabushabu instead of beef. For the broth, he uses soymilk (tonyu). Since yuba is created from the thin film that gathers on the surface when boiled, he decided to put it on raw sea urchin, and add a touch of black truffle flavored salt to offer a new way of eating shabushabu. For dipping the fish and vegetables used for the shabushabu, he prepared a ponzu sauce with white truffle oil and grated daikon radish.

Pate dreams of owning his own restaurant in the future, and wants to further refine his skills as a Japanese cuisine chef, as well as work as an instructor. “Even an American should be able to get to the heart of washoku,” he says with determination.

