



AKIRUNO NO TAKUMI
Artisans in Akiruno



What is AKIRUNO NO TAKUMI ?

"AKIRUNO NO TAKUMI(あきる野の匠)" is a certification system, established by Akiruno City in 2016 and 14 people are recognized for now.

The purpose of this system is to archive expanding demand of the artisans' attractive products by spreading the products and their great techniques and arts widely, regardless of in or out of Akiruno City; besides, to pass the artisans' techniques on to new generation; thus, the system will help increasing number of tourists and nurturing love for our hometown.

Requirements for the recognition are:

1. A person who inherited unique or special methods techniques that have been passed down through the generations.
2. A person who inherited techniques for crafts or productions, utilizing Akiruno's nature, history or culture to good make.
3. A person who has an exceptional good skill as an artisan.

This booklet introduces "AKIRUNO NO TAKUMI" and Akiruno City compiles and updates the data every year.

*About logo design :

The character 匠 (takumi) consists of a hatchet and a carpenter's square or a box in origin.

Mr. Toshihiko Takahashi designed the logo based on the combination of it.

The TAKUMI(artisans) who have been recognized until now.



Certification number 01
Tetsuo Shimizu
Artisan of Udon noodles



Certification number 05
Masaru Ishikawa
Artisan of Futon



Certification number 02
Hiroshi Kondo
Artisan of Soy souce



Certification number 06
Toshihiko Takahashi
Artisan of Design



Certification number 03
Kazuho Moriya
Artisan of Konjak



Certification number 07
Tadashi Kishi
Artisan of Dried noodles



Certification number 04
Hiroshi Mori
Artisan of Mudding



Certification number 08
Atsushi Kozukue
Artisan of Woodworking



Certification number 12
Hiroshi Emori
Artisan of Bamboo work



Certification number 09
Akimitsu Tomonaga
Artisan of Wood carving art



Certification number 13
Mitsunaga Nozaki
Artisan of Sake Brewing



Certification number 10
Wasuke Ishikawa
Artisan of Japanese confectionery



Certification number 14
Hachiroemon Nakamura
Artisan of Sake Brewing



Certification number 11
Takumi Takahashi
Artisan of Futon

Tetsuo Shimizu Artisan of Udon noodles

Make Udon noodles from homegrown wheat



Cultivation while wheat and buckwheat in his fields, having a view of Mt. Otake, Tetsuo Shimizu (Born:1953) makes Udon noodles from homegrown wheatsna and serves in his restaurant in Akiruno. He is the master of Udon noodle restaurant, Syogotei. Succeeded to his mother's technique of Udon making, he is making an effort to succeed to the Japanese food culture by serving Udon and holding Udon workshops.

His advertising menu "Hikizuridashi Udon" is a dish, putting boiled Udon into a bowl with dried bonito and soy sauce. You adjust the taste as you like by adding residual boiled water while you eating. This is a local dish passed down in the villages and what he has been familiar. The Udon he makes with local flour has a plain deep taste and matches well with simple cooking styles like "Hikizuridashi".

"It was not a special thing to cultivate wheat and make Udon by yourself in olden days. Today, no one does that. I wondered if it is a right thing." He asks us if it's OK to allow it losing the culture.

Answering to the question by himself, he opened Syogotei in 2005. He cultivate wheats with his brother-in-law Ken Shimizu who is a full-time farmer. He uses vegetables harvested in his own fields or local farms for garnish.

"12 years passed since I started my restaurant. My thought that I dont' want to lose famrs from Akiruno and that I have to take over the local food culture has not changed at all. I'll keep making Udon, not leaving it to the others." He held his head high. Tetsuo speaks fluent Itsukaichi dialect and loves Itsukaichi area deeply. He is also a master of mashroom hunting and has found his own routes of strolling in woods.



He holds workshops that you can experience Udon making from weighing to cutting.



Hiroshi Kondo Artisan of Soy sauce

Make soy sauce in traditional way, using domestic soybeans and wheat, fermenting and maturing for a year.



Promoting fermentation by stringing in the wooden pail.
Explaining how to make soy sauce with showing materials.



The rich flavor with umami and sharpness is the best characteristic of Kikkogo soy sauce. You can find how tasty it is by eating hot white rice with the just-opened soy sauce. Hiroshi's predecessor loved this way.

Koji (malt) made with domestic soybeans and wheat is brewed and slowly fermented and matured for one year.

By the action of microorganisms in the wooden pail which has been used for over 100 years, the beautiful amber-colored soy sauce with rich flavor and deep taste will be produced.

Kikkogo soy sauce is made in traditional way without preservatives or coloring and sold not only in the store next to the factory, but also cooperative stores that require safety and security of food and is used for school lunch too.

Hiroshi Kondo (Born:1973) is the 4th head of Kondo-jozo Co., Ltd., established in 1908. Soy sauce brewery is rare in Tokyo. When he marked the 20th anniversary at the company, he succeeded to the business on behalf of the passed-over predecessor and started leading the company. While feeling uneasy for the loss of reliance, he braced himself to take the responsibility for the well-established brewery. "I will take over what the predecessor did well" he says.

Owing to recent health fad and registration of Japanese food as a World Heritage, there seem to be a movement that people reconsider Japanese traditional food. However, on the other hand, the consumption amounts of soy sauce is decreasing year by year. Kondo-jozo puts great deal of effort into publicize its attractive point and holds lectures for children, factory tour and workshops related to soy sauce in order to the people to rediscover the best in it.

He also sells soy sauce processed foods such as noodle soups and dressings. Moreover, he produced new item "Oshima pepper-containing soy sauce" using cayenne pepper made in Oshima, which is a friendship town of Akiruno, soaked in his soy sauce. It goes very well with sashimi.

Kazuho Moriya Artisan of Konjak

Feature Konjak as the leading foods



In cooking boiled-food, Tedori-konjak is very tasty because it contains air a lot and absorbs seasoning well.



"Toromi-konjak" is tender and good for sashimi. "Sugihai-kojak" is hard, chewy and good for Kimpira*...there may be around 30 varieties of kojaks. Iketani & Co. Inc. really has wide variety of konjak. Kazuho Moriya (Born:1947), the president of the company says "We can cook one single konjak in various ways, but that is boring. I have been invented konjaks matches to meals, and then there are so many kinds of konjak now. "

In 1959, at the age of 22, he entered to the company that his predecessor started. At the time, konjaks were sold putting in a water tub on the ground just at the entrance of vegetable shops. "Other goods are on the shelves but konjaks are not!" He was shocked. From that time, he has been struggling with making konjak as a leading food. His wish that complete all dishes, main, side and dessert with only konjak motivates him to keep creating new konjaks.

All the konjak imo(potato), raw material of konjak, he uses is homegrown or domestic products.

"Handmade konjak" is his leading product made in a way: add coagulant such as shellfish calcium, knead and roll by hands. Other products of Iketani & Co. Inc. are also home-made with the "Beta-neri (kneading)" method which is a traditional process of kneading raw materials by a stirrer with blades. You have to adjust the rotation speed and running time of the stirring blades while imagining its finished color and hardness. If the kneading is not enough, it becomes too soft and if it's too much, it will be separated and will not coagulate. The operation changes depends on the material quality and the temperature of the water.

Kazuho used to count numbers "1, 2, 3..." next to his predecessor so he can learn physically how many times he has to knead. "I feel its difficulty even now

but also find interesting in it." He tells us the real pleasure of handmade.

*Kimpira: Japanese local food of chopped burdock root and other materials cooked in sugar and soy sauce.

Hiroshi Mori

Artisan of Mudding

Revived "Kurohachijo" – the visionary silk fabrics



Using mud containing a lot of iron for mordanting
Washing dyed yam in cold water of Akikawa river



"Kurohachijo" which is also called "Itsukaichi" is a silk fabric dyed with mud and used for a decorative collar of kimono. It was fairly common throughout Akigawa river basin from mid-Edo period to Taisho period.

Hiroshi Mori (Born: 1948) of Itokobo MORI revived the mud dyeing method which was once lost in the early Showa period, on his own. He produces shawls and bags with it so as to match with modern sense to promote the fabric.

"Kurohachijo" is also called it Dorozome (mud dyeing) because of its making process; boil down fruits of alnus firma to get dye, and mordant by iron contained in mud. By dyeing many times, the balck color gets rich, and it becomes "frosted black" that shines and has refined texture.

About 30 years ago, Hiroshi found a description about "Kurohachijo" in an Itsukaichi Town history book by chance, and he became interested in it since it was related to his family business of silk yarn production. Depending on some keywords in the town history book such as "fruit of Alnus firma" and "Itsukaichi mud", he started dyeing through trials and errors while listening to elderly people about dyeing.

Dyeing with fruits of Alnus firma, mordanting with Itsukaichi mud and washing in water of Akigawa river - he repeats this process more than 20 times. At first, he had difficulty handling it because the silk yarn dyed many times are liable to get entagled. The productiuvity had not been increased for many years and he could only make small goods like a coaster. Recently, the production is 4-5 rolls of cloth. Now he has got improved so that he can produce an obi*. He newly built a studio that has larger space for boiling out dyestuffs than before. He can do what he

had been doing outside before even in rain, so the work efficiency got improved.

"Kurohachijo was lost once because its benefit didn't match the works, but it is a pity to lose it just saying 'the flow of the times'. I hope I can change Kurohachijo to fit with the trends by beating my brains, so that I can pass it onto next generation."

*obi: a broad Japanese sash for a kimono.

Masaru Ishikawa Artisan of Futon

Repair futon to be fluffy and comfortable



Tearing cotton by hands to adjusting finely not to make the edge, where cottons tend to be, too thick.

A futon that had worn thin can be reborn as a fluffy comfortable one by the work of Masaru Ishikawa (Born: 1973). He is a third head of Ishikawa cotton shop (Established: 1921) that makes and repairs futons. He took the family business over in 2000 and learned techniques from his father and the second head Keiji Ishikawa (Born: 1943) and the other workers.

This cotton shop covers all the process from cotton recarding in the own place when this kind of cotton shop is rare today. Once he gets an order of repairing, he removes the futon cloth, puts cotton wadding into the machine which is called "scutching wheel", looses it and makes the cotton sheet shape to reuse. Futon is handled one by one, so some customers choose this shop to avoid theirs cottons mix up with other's cotton wadding.

He adds new cotton for depreciation of original cotton, arranges and piles the sheet-shaped cottons by hand and makes futons. 12 sheets are used for a quilt and about 20 sheets are used for a mattress. It is difficult to handle the cotton protruded on all side, for instance, if he put cotton as much as the height of the folded part, it will be heavy. The expert skill is required in order to make a futon comfortable with predetermined number of sheets according to the necessity of use.

For example, in the case of making a mattress, the middle part where cotton decreases easily because of the body pressure must be a bit ticker than the other part. In making a futon for a kotatsu (foot stove), he makes the part where the board goes on thinner and put more cotton into the edge. Then, a 2m kotatsu quilt will be fixed by 100-spot sewing to prevent the inner cotton from being displaced when it is pulled from both sides. The reception of requests and the

returning of the futon repaired should be done in person. Smiles of the customers who has received the futon repaired gives greater motivation to him.

With chemical fiber woven futons being widely used, he would like to convey good points of cotton futons that has excellent moisture absorbency and can be used repeatedly by repairing.



Toshihiko Takahashi Artisan of Design

Write as I inscribe one's heart



The artisan who has designed posters promoting Akigawa Keikoku tourism or signs of public facilities and shops with unified design of a calligraphy by a brush is Toshihiko Takahashi (Born: 1942). The unique design consisting of the strong sophisticated brush

characters and Sumie (a painting in black and white) enables people to know that is Mr. Takahashi's work at a glance. His work blends in with local scenery of Itsukaichi and it seems to create an atmosphere of the city.

It has been over 40 years since he moved his hub and design studio from Yoyogi, where is the middle of Tokyo, to the mountain village in Akiruno city. Once his poster for the other prefecture caught the attention of Itsukaichi Town, he got a request from the town and then he has drawn the promoting posters of Akigawa Keikoku Valley since 1984.

He continually has been winning a prize in national contest, received a gold prize in 1986, silver prize afterward. He started planning city events such as Akiruno Film Festival and Yoruichi (night festival) and designing of printed matter. The unique type of his letters that seems primitive on occasion is drawn with a conscious of stonemason in "Northern Wei", China (386-534).

Despite what he actually uses is paper and brushes, he creates each letters as if he inscribes letters into a stone by chisel to convey prayer, wishes and feelings through the letters. "The letters inscribed by stonemasons in Northern Wei are not well-formed, but it has a kind of magnetic charm." This is why he has learned this form of characters having an impact. "To do calligraphy and paint picture that makes people feel something, I think of the tradition and the culture of this area. I want to express Japanese things in fresh and modern style and provide it as an

information that leaves a deep impression. Thanks to where I'm living, such a wonderful location of mountains and a valley, I became able to create." Appreciating to the place that stimulate his incentive to creation, he keeps improving sensibility and writing with sensibility.

Tadashi Kishi

Artisan of Dried noodles

Make firm fried noodles



Using carefully selected wheat, water of Akigawa river and salt that contains a lot of bittern as materials, Sumiya produces tough chewy dried noodles. The man who adjusts water content ratio that effects on the hardness of the dough on the site, checks its dryness and takes command in the production is the 4th head the company, Tadashi Kishi (Born: 1961).

What Tadashi always cares for is the temperature and the humidity. The dough gets soggy easily on hot days and gets dry easily on low humidity days. Especially at the change of season that has a great temperature and humidity variation, he adjusts the amount of salt solution very carefully according to the climate of the day.

Sumiya started producing noodles 150 years ago. Their first product "Kan-soumen" was made while running a charcoal warehouse. Unlike other dried noodles such as Udon or Soba that can be produced through a year, "Kan-soumen" can be produced only in January and February when the humidity is low. It is the remains of the olden days that there were no heaters or fans and only way to dry the noodles was air drying, and the dried noodles produced in those two months become well dried and tasty.

"Kan-soumen" is a size thicker and more filling than ordinal soumen. After drying, he lets the noodles stand for a half year in a warehouse, then they will be in the store.

During the half year, the gelatinization proceeds, and the noodles get strong in elasticity and it hardly gets soggy while boiling.

He shows his attachment to the town of Itsukaichi where he was born and brought up by using local materials or naming the goods, such as the raw noodles "Itsukaichi Udon" that is registered a trademark and "Norabo Udon" which is made with

Akiruno's specialty Norabona.

For Yakisoba, they steam noodles in a steaming basket and make it chewy. Then, they sell the raw noodle in order not to lose original flavor of wheat. He does not spare any time and any efforts to make people enjoy his noodles. He wants to keep producing noodles sincerely that he took over from his predecessor.

Atsushi Kozukue Artisan of Woodworking

The expert at grinding edged tools handcrafts landing nets



Peeling barks off deftly with a penknife.



There was an array of wooden landing nets (a net to scoop fish) what are simple and made in a way as to make use of the natural grain but excellent in handleability. A forester, Atsushi Kozukue (Born: 1948) gets materials from the mountains. To make the landing nets, he shaves out a handle from a tree-trunk by a hatchet, peels bark off branches by a penknife, bends and joins by letting steam pass over it, loops and puts a net. His delicate work is expressed in the seam joined snugly or in the finishing condition of the beautiful handle.

Since he was in elementary school, he has been going fishing to a river and stream and caught sweet fish as if the fishing is a part of his life. At first, he used to use tools sold at a market, but he felt "It's boring to use tools I bought. I can find a lot of materials in the rear mountain", so it was natural for him to begin making a landing net.

He checks and studies commercial tools and makes a fishing bait box and Kayoizutsu (a portable cylindrical container of decoy sweet fish) on his own. Moreover, he teaches it to his friends when they ask. Making tools is a part of the fun of fishing for him.

His theory is, "no good tools, no fun" for any activities.

The reason that he makes fishing tools by himself is to improve the usability. A sharp knife is essential in woodworking. He learnt how to sharpen knife blades from a master of the regular carpenter, so he can set a blade proficiently according to the necessity of using. He has been a lover of knives from childhood, and there was a time that he thought to become a smith seriously. He used to carry around a folding knife "higonokami" in his pocket and use it to make toys such as a bow and arrow. He was an only student who peeled apple's skin well and got "A" in his class of the elementary school. Even now he feels uncomfortable

if he doesn't shave pencil with a penknife. The expert at landing nets handcrafting is also an expert at sharpening knives. He knows how to enjoy life and he is quite skilled in Kintsugi* and making western confectionery.

*Kintsugi: Japanese art of repairing broken pottery with lacquer dusted or mixed with powdered gold, silver, or platinum.

Akimitsu Tomonaga Artisan of Wood carving art

Going beyond the framework, create freely



Creates works by making full use of various knives.



Akimitsu Tomonaga (Born: 1944) was in charge of art and production of puppets in the serial puppet show "Purinpurin monogatari" broadcasted by NHK from 1979 to 1982. In "Tomo' s little museum at Fukasawa" that has his studio and his house in the same place, wood carved dolls of slender girls with long limbs are standing beside unique dolls of Purinpurin. ZiZi, who is wearing a pointed hat with white beard, welcomes visitors at the entrance. All of the artworks are created by Akimitsu, although they have totally different taste. He creates not only puppets and woodcarvings but also woodblock prints and bronzes, moreover, he built the studio and his house by himself. He is an artist who creates whatever he wants regardless of genre.

After graduation from an art school in Tokyo, he entered the company of stage design. When he was 23 years old, he resigned since he passed the audition of the puppet show company in Australia. He visited to Australia alone and acquired experience of making puppets. The manufacturing in the foreign country was very fresh for young Akimitsu. "In Japan, people spend money on techniques, but in the other country people pay money for ideas in. I was taught that creators should go beyond any frameworks." The overseas experience became the base of his independent unique style. Coming back to Japan at the age of 25, he started working as a professional artist. Once he held a personal exhibition in Tokyo, the visitors, who concerns of art, gave him next jobs or chances of one-man show so that he was able to get this far. He moved to Fukasawa, Akiruno, to get a calm spacious studio when he was 39 years old. The scenery that the town is surrounded by mountains

and a river flows was similar to the atmosphere of his hometown, Shimanto City, Kochi, and that is why he chose this place. "Nature inspires my use of colors and shapes" he says that the starting point of his creation is in the nature.

Wasuke Ishikawa Artisan of Japanese confectionery

I don't make anything with no story



Beautiful homemade bean paste.



Wasuke Ishikawa (Born:1937), the president of "Ochazoppe no Nakajima-ya" says "I never make anything with no story." He named his confectioneries after Western Tama area dialect, for example, Okoju, Shoppei-mochi, Chitton-mochi, etc. and makes Japanese confectionery using local ingredients actively. The shop name "Ochazoppe" is Western Tama dialect that means a refreshment served with tea. By sticking to the local dialect and materials, he hopes people to feel a taste of hometown when people enjoy sweets. When he was in high school, he began to help his family business of candy store and changed it into Japanese confectionary shop. He has pursued his way for 60 years. He learnt skills without being taught by anyone but has made hit products like Saka-manju and Kikkohaya-monaka.* In addition to the traditional seasonal confectionaries such as mayudama, bota-mochi and sakura-mochi, this man of ideas produces new sweets every time he gets a new product named that links to the promotion of the hometown. "There are too many products now" he is smiling wryly. Among his many confectionaries, he is proud of Saka-manju that is on sale for a limited time from March to November. It is a Japanese steamed cake with the wrapping the homemade coarsly mashed bean paste with the dough that is leavened with rice-koji (malted rice). The degree of fermentation changes depending on the climate of the day so that he has to make use of his experience for many years and instinct to make confectionaries with stable quality. Although many shops use ready-made bean paste nowadays, his shop's bean paste is homemade except white bean paste. He boils azuki beans produced in Hokkaido carefully in a copper pan, then makes beautiful jam with a glaze. The salty bean jam of Kikkohaya-monaka has a taste that makes people want to eat it again.

He himself loves sweets. "Lately some people say that sugar is not good for health, but I get energetic when I take sugar and azuki beans into my body" so he is laughing. Japanese confectionary gives him energy and he gives energy to people by his confectionary.

*monaka: a wafer cake filled with red bean jam.