

VOICES From THE NEW YORKERS

Sonoko Sakai to Have Cookbook Tour in NYC
by Susan McCormac

Japanese American food writer and culinary instructor Sonoko Sakai will be in New York the first week of December to promote her new book, "Japanese Home Cooking: Simple Meals, Authentic Flavors." The book weaves together recipes for traditional Japanese dishes with personal anecdotes from the California-based writer, who was born in New York and raised in Japan, Mexico and California. Sakai also advises readers how to stock their pantries with the ingredients and equipment essential to making any Japanese meal.



On Tuesday, December 3 at 7:00 p.m., Marlow & Sons in Brooklyn will host the author for a book-inspired menu and signing event. The following day, Sakai will have a book signing at Asia Society from 4-5:00 p.m. Finally, on Thursday, December 5, Sakai returns to Brooklyn for a 7:00 p.m. panel discussion and book signing at Archestratus Books & Food.

Go to one—or all three!—of Sonoko Sakai's events and learn more about the Japanese kitchen. If you can't attend, you can purchase "Japanese Home Cooking" on Amazon.com. She will also be a featured guest on an upcoming episode of The Big Root Podcast, so stay tuned!

(Susan is the founder of JapanCultureNYC, an English-language website for all things Japanese in New York, and the co-host of The Big Root Podcast.)

THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints

GOVERNMENT OF JAPAN TO HONOR

Gary Shunichi Moriwaki and Shuji Yagi (Shuho Bon Yagi) Both from New York



Gary Shunichi Moriwaki



Shuji Yagi (Shuho Bon Yagi)

On November 3, 2019 the Government of Japan announced the recipients of its Autumn 2019 Decorations which include two distinguished United States citizens under the jurisdiction of the Consulate General of Japan in New York. Gary Shunichi Moriwaki, former President of the Japanese American Association of New York (JAA) was decorated with The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette for his outstanding contribution to the enhancement of the welfare of the Japanese and Japanese American community and to deepening and promoting goodwill and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States. Shuji Yagi (Shuho Bon Yagi), President of T.I.C. AKEAN, Inc. was decorated with The Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Rays for his outstanding contributions to promoting Japanese cuisine in the United States.

Since joining JAA in 1988, Mr. Moriwaki has made use of his expertise as a lawyer to contribute to the social welfare, education and culture of Japanese and Japanese American residents in the State of New York. He has been active in the association's activities as a director, Vice President, President and Honorary President for over 25 years.

In 1994, he set up free legal counseling services for areas that were difficult for Japanese and Japanese Americans to understand, mainly on immigration law and estate-planning. He also assisted in the support of procedures for cases in which Japanese or Japanese Americans with no relatives died suddenly or when the surviving family members remain in Japan.

After the March 2011 Great East Japan Earthquake, as Chairman of JAA he established, fundraised and donated to the affected areas, and JAA has continued to support reconstruction of these areas by collaborating with other organizations. In 2014, he and former professional baseball manager Bobby Valentine created a baseball team of 15-year-olds from the east coast of the United States to be sent to Japan to play friendship games with youth baseball teams in Miyagi, Iwate and Fukushima.



When Hurricane Sandy hit N.Y. in October 2012, he worked with a volunteer group to establish a relief fund for victims and called on JAA members to donate clothing and volunteer in activities to clean damaged houses. This contributed to the promotion of friendly relations with New Yorkers by actively providing various kinds of support not only to Japanese Americans but also to all affected.

Achievements through the U.S.-Japan Council

In addition to JAA activities, he served the U.S.-Japan Council, an organization that promotes opportunities for exchanges between Japan and the United States, for six years as a director and Vice Chair. During his term as a Director in 2018, he traveled frequently between Japan and the United States in support of the organization's TOMODACHI Initiative, which aims to foster the next generation of leaders in Japan and the United States through networking and community fostering activities and events.

In the 2005 Special Olympics World Winter Games held in Nagano Prefecture, he served on its advisory board and helped raise funds and awareness for the Games. This also contributed to the deepening of the bonds of friendship between athletes from Japan and various countries participating in the Special Olympics.

Yagi, a Pioneer in Japanese Restaurant Management in N.Y.

After starting a vegetable wholesale business to supply Japanese restaurants in N.Y. in 1976, Mr. Yagi always found a way to get ahead and has opened various Japanese restaurants specializing in sushi, sake, soba and shabu-shabu. He has opened 16 stores as of 2018. He has also led the new Japanese food market in N.Y. and has contributed significantly to its expansion.

The fact that he has shared his Japanese cooking and food culture expertise with Japanese and non-Japanese alike is recognized as a further deepening of relations between Japan and the United States. In recognition of these achievements, in 2017 he was awarded the 11th Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Award for Overseas Promotion of Japanese Food.

Achievements through Japanese food and social contribution

He has been a board member of The Gohan Society, a non-profit that promotes Japanese food culture in N.Y. through an exchange program of chefs between Japan and the United States since its founding in 2006.

Since the establishment in 2008 of the N.Y. branch of JRO, a nonprofit to promote Japanese restaurants abroad, he is now the branch's caretaker on the vacant branch head's behalf. There, he plays a central role in coordinating a Japanese restaurant association to solve the common problems of Japanese restaurants.

He serves as a director of JAA, and when the Great East Japan Earthquake occurred, he led fundraising activities in the Japanese restaurant community and donated through the United Nations and JAA.

Also, in cooperation with Japanese American Social Services, Inc. (JASSI), every November since 1998, one of his restaurants holds a free shabu-shabu lunch for the elderly to show respect for those in the Japanese American community, which is met with appreciation.

Since 1990, Japanese festival "Japan Town" has been held in the East Village where his company is located, inviting people to "enjoy Japan without airfare." He has also deepened friendships with local N.Y. residents by donating to the Christmas charity hosted by the district police station for over 20 years. As a role model for young entrepreneurs, he is known as "an ambassador for Japanese cuisine in the East Village."

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