

GLUTEN-FREE MOVES IN THE HOTEL INDUSTRY



With the rapid growth in foreign visitors to Japan, hotels and restaurants are getting increasingly elaborate requests for food, for reasons of religion or various food allergies. With the 2020 Tokyo Olympics drawing near, it is becoming increasingly urgent to meet related needs in areas such as ingredient procurement methods, menu development, and kitchen arrangements. Let's take a look at the current situation.

Hotel Intercontinental Tokyo Bay

Get Healthier With a "Healthful, Beautiful, and Fresh" Special Buffet



Last summer, the Chef's Live Kitchen, which is the face of the hotel, staged a buffet fair with the cooperation of the US Grains Council that featured sorghum, a gluten-free ingredient.

Chef Isamu Tsukuda, the head chef of the Chef's Live Kitchen, was working on developing new menu items using US-grown sorghum. A chef through and through, he has worked at the hotel for 20 years, since it opened. His abundant experience began with French cuisine and broadened as he extended into Asian and Californian styles. Using his rich knowledge and skill, he has developed lunch and dinner menu items that make the most of the characteristics of talked-about gluten-free ingredients. The Fair was lively and busy with many diners looking for gluten-free food, particularly female guests with an eye for beauty.

Chef Tsukuda says "I have been working on gluten-free recipe development for 13 years, partly in response to a request from the US Grains Council, and I put some of the recipes on the restaurant menu, but there was not much reaction at the time. About five years ago, I started to notice that there seemed to be more customers with wheat allergy. In recent years, the numbers of people with all kinds of food allergies, not just to wheat, have been growing, and I addressed

each allergy individually, a little at a time. I got a particularly strong sense of this after March 2012, when the Chef's Live Kitchen opened. The chefs prepare food in front of diners, in a completely open kitchen that has no "backstage" areas, so maybe that made it easier for customers to make requests".

For the Special Buffet last summer, Chef Tsukuda developed some menus from ingredients that completely eliminated gluten. The hotel is also thorough about matters such as isolating and separating cooking equipment. Their installation of a gluten-free-only oven for baking bread is one example of that. The hotel has also nearly completed its development of the equipment and ingredients needed to accommodate allergy problems and special requirements such as halal. Chef Tsukuda says "Even if gluten free is a transient thing as part of a health and fitness boom, I think allergy-based requests will go on increasing in future. I want to add gluten-free items to each seasonal fair in future".



The Peninsula Tokyo

"Naturally Peninsula" Strictly Adheres to its Own Principles and Guidelines



The Peninsula, where 80% of occupants are foreigners, accommodates requests from individual diners based on vegetarianism, food allergies, religious restrictions, and other reasons. The menu has a gluten mark to label items that use gluten. The hotel's four restaurants - The Lobby, Peter, Hei Fung Terrace, and The Peninsula Boutique & Café - offer Naturally Peninsula menus.

The menus are supervised by the Peninsula's nutritionist. They follow nine Naturally Peninsula principles, which includes no use of animal oils, sustainable production methods from known source regions, gluten free, no artificial flavorings or other additives, and only natural salt and sugar.

Let's take a look at Chef Haeiwa's breakfast menu as an example. Mr. Masayuki Haeiwa moved to France in 1994 and worked at Michelin two-star restaurants such as the Le Clos de la Violette restaurant in Aix-en-Provence, before taking the post of banquet chef when The Peninsula Tokyo opened in 2007. He became Chef de Cuisine of The Lobby in July 2014.

The Naturally Peninsula breakfast at The Lobby gives a choice of juice and main course. In the photo, the juice is carrot and the main dish is a Spanish omelette. The other dish is the mixed vegetable plate from the a la carte menu.

Chef Haeiwa says "I want diners to enjoy their meal

with all five senses. Many foreign diners prefer volume, balance, and strong stimulation. Japanese diners, on the other hand, want to look, enjoy the scent and flavor, and the ingredients, and then look forward to what comes next". The Peninsula's greatest concern is for its ingredients. The chef's skill lies in looking at the ingredients and understanding them, thinking how to cook them, and bringing out their best flavors. The chef's moment-by-moment judgments based on close attention to ingredients, such as "steaming would be better than grilling", can make diners enjoy the experience more. That is where the true dynamism of cuisine lies.

Chef Haeiwa says "serving simple ingredients actually costs more. Even if the appearance is the same, you have to look more deeply for good, fresh ingredients. Vegetables are a moving target. For example, Japanese-grown asparagus sources move north from Kyushu Saga prefecture with the seasons. Then they move further north, through Nagano and Tochigi prefectures, through the Tohoku region, and on up to Hokkaido. Using Japan's seasonal ingredients means the ingredients vary every time. There are some constants, but we provide produce in season. As the seasons turn, the balance, combinations, and tastes differ, and I always think how to make the most of the different textures. In addition to the nine Peninsula principles, I see the pursuit and protection of delicious flavor as difficult, yet important task".

