

Please briefly introduce yourself.

I was born in Germany. The culture of food & hospitality is in my blood. My father was a wine producer and my mother worked in the hotel industry. I have been working in 5-star luxury hotels and fine dining restaurants in Asia, Europe, and Middle East, doing rebranding, opening and putting new concepts in place. Before coming to Japan 9 months ago, I was working for the Okura Prestige in Bangkok. I joined Hilton Tokyo after working for the Conrad Hotel in Manila.

What is your job as an executive chef?

I have over 160 chefs here in the kitchen. My job is to have an eye on all of our restaurants, to bring the team from different cultures together, to support my chefs in any way they need me. To create menu, to cook, to train them, and of course to take care of the financial aspects behind it all. There is a lot more I need to do as an executive chef.

What I find fascinating about my chefs in the kitchen in Japan is that every single one is specialized in a field taking it to perfection – even if it takes years. What I love about my job in the past and now is that I can experience different foods and learn how they are created. This expands my own knowledge and helps create new unique dishes.



Thomas Jakobi

Executive Chef, Hilton Tokyo

How are you preparing for the Tokyo Olympics?

Tokyo Olympics is a huge upcoming event. Preparations are on the way for room bookings, etc. As we serve international guests, we are already preparing ourselves for the Olympics. Special food requests like vegan, gluten free, halal, are not unusual nowadays and they are requested daily. Vegetarian dishes are mandatory on each of our menus, as well as gluten free dishes which are available at our Breakfast Buffet. As we change the menus every two months, we improve and incorporate more and more of these kinds of food.

Of course in the back of my mind I am already thinking about special menus and dishes that we could offer during the season to make our guest feel the vibes of the Olympics, no matter where they are from, local or visiting.

What do you think about Japanese food?

I love Japanese food and ingredients – how it goes with the season, its perfection and details for making sushi, creative kaiseki, menus, and the skillfulness of chefs at the teppan, etc. In the past, I learned a bit about the Japanese cuisine and incorporated it into my dishes. Here in Japan, I can broaden my horizon, learning more on how different the ingredients can be. Food is art & culture and here I find they really put it to the point. Art and culture are reflected in each single dish.

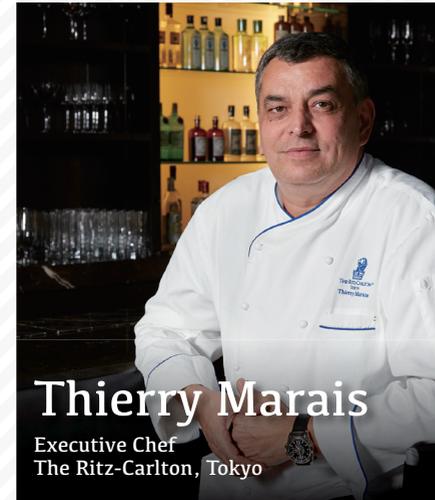
What is Omotenashi to you?

The Vision of The Hilton is to fill the earth with light and warmth of hospitality. We are a business serving people, and our Team Members extend their passion for hospitality beyond our hotel walls every day.

When I was studying the word omotenashi and its meaning, I was surprised to see a specific word to explain the Japanese hospitality. It comes from the heart, and it starts from how you greet the customer and continues with the small details to anticipate and fulfilling people's needs in advance. Making them feel welcome, feeling right at home.

Please tell us about your future goals.

To continue experiencing different cultures and their food. To expand my horizon and my cooking. If it would be up to me, I would love to continue staying in Asia. I am still full of energy and curiosity to continue staying close to the kitchen.



Thierry Marais

Executive Chef
The Ritz-Carlton, Tokyo

Please briefly introduce yourself.

I'm a French national. I have always wanted to cook since I was 14. I was fortunate to work at a 3-starred Michelin restaurant, but I've always had the desire to travel around the world. I have always been fascinated to discover different food cultures as they tell me about the history and the roots of the country. This is what excites me throughout my career. I have been working for The Ritz-Carlton Hotels for the past 14 years and I've been with The Ritz-Carlton, Tokyo since 2014.

What is your job as an executive chef?

A few of my main responsibilities are selecting each chef de cuisine and employees in my culinary team, looking at the concept of each restaurant, making sure that we are true to every concept and relevant to the market and so forth. In the kitchen, the chefs are mainly focusing on the food. My responsibility is to provide a broader vision that focuses more on the future rather than something that is just happening the next day when it comes to their restaurant- how they see their restaurant in 2 years or how do they think it will evolve etc. Another important aspect of my job is to feel responsible for the future when it comes to sustainable produces, not only choosing the best produces available on the market but also knowing where they come from and how they protect the environment for the generation to come.

I don't feel like I "need" to go to work every day, I feel more like going to an environment where I have new exciting things happening all the time - new guests, new experiences,

and new ideas. My passion is being able to bring fond memories to our guests. We have so many opportunities to do that when it comes to food and that's why I'm where I am today.

Please explain about "sense of place".

Our guests' stay in our hotel is to be an escape from the normal days and expect an international experience, but at the end of the day we should never forget that we are in Tokyo, not in New York or Paris. For example, La Boutique is a western themed shop serving chocolates and pastries created by a French chef, but guests can feel the Japanese senses from the urushi walls and edo-kiriko lights. We also bring in Japanese hospitality to our property but stay international. We want our guests to experience something special that they can only feel in Japan - the way they have been welcome to our hotel, the way they are brought to the room, and every interaction with our ladies and gentleman with the Japanese hospitality in mind. In addition, our hotel scenography such as the lighting ceremony every evening in our lobby, the tea experience in our Hinokizaka restaurant and so on contribute to this aspect.

What do you think about Japanese food?

When I think of Japanese cuisine, I think of tradition, seasonal produces, culture, technique, umami, perfection in the execution, craftsmanship, the connection with the guest in every interaction, and deep respect to guests. I'm still in the learning process of Japanese food, and I'm impressed by everything I see and eat. My biggest discovery was sushi although I have had sushi many times outside of Japan but it is impossible to compare it with the real thing here in Tokyo.

What is Omotenashi to you?

Omotenashi means home to me. I feel like Japanese hospitality treats every guest that comes to their restaurant or hotel like a family. I hope that all guests who come here feel like they are invited to a house. I don't have a Japanese culture in me, but there's so much I can see. I believe that the Japanese culture, movement, gesture, and the way you greet is very powerful to me as foreigner.

How are you preparing for the Tokyo Olympics?

Today, about 60% of our customers are coming from abroad, therefore we will not see significant changes in offering what we provide to our guests for this very special event. As we discuss it earlier, it is important for these guests who come to Japan for the first time, to instill the sense of place so they want to come back and explore further what Japan have to offer. Since this will be my first time to work in the host city of the Olympics game, I'm just very excited that I would be able to be part of this great event.