

MONO-logue

“Mono” means “thing,” “object,” or “product” in Japanese, but it also implies that the thing has quality. In this corner, we introduce “mono” that characterize Japan’s spirit of constantly improving quality.

Photo courtesy of
Blue Ribbon Sushi



Ten-Qoo (pronounced Ten-Kuh) Maguro is the name of sustainable bluefin tuna cultivated in the fishery farm in Amakusa in Kumamoto prefecture, using artificially hatched bluefin tuna by the Fishery Laboratory in Kinki University. It is now available in the U.S.



Iron Chef Masaharu Morimoto showed his masterful knife technique and cut sustainable bluefin tuna provided by True World Foods at the food event last October.

Vol. 10 - MONO of the month

Sustainable Bluefin Tuna via Artificial Hatching

Food sustainability is a concern that has become more widespread than ever before. It has always been a point of interest among foodies who can, and often, do pay the price for this peace of mind, but as of late others have jumped on the bandwagon of this trendy concept. In regard to fish, nowhere is this more of an issue than in Japan, the country that consumes 70% of the world’s tuna. Ensuring its stable supply is of utmost concern to the Japanese, and since this is impossible with wild tuna, turning to other options became necessary. This is where something called “kanzen yoshoku,” or artificial hatching, comes into play.

As opposed to wild tuna fishing or typical tuna farming*, artificial hatching involves human intervention in regard to incubation. The ongoing cycle from birth to reproduction of offspring is all carried out by artificial rearing. For example, eggs are taken from an adult tuna and after artificial hatching, they are raised. Eggs are then taken from the resulting larger fish, and success is achieved when they are able to be artificially hatched. It takes three generations for a tuna to officially receive the label of “artificially hatched,” as its parents cannot have been wild.

However, this process is not as simple as it sounds, especially in regard to tuna. There are many factors involved, such as precisely controlling the water’s temperature. The major problem is that the fish die easily, as in the first 10 days there is only a 10% survival rate (it takes three years for a tuna to become 100 pounds). It is only recently that Japan has had success with this technique, and this came after 30 years of research at

Kinki University.

There were many bumps along the way, but researchers there have now mastered artificial hatching for not only tuna, but bream and yellowtail as well. Despite this, many challenges still remain so it is too early to say that we are in the era of artificial hatching. For example, prices for fish raised via this method remain prohibitively high.

Yuji Haraguchi from the Marketing Department of True World Foods, a wholesale distributor of seafood and specialty grocery items, echoes this sentiment. His company delivers artificially hatched tuna to top tier New York restaurants like Morimoto, Blue Ribbon Sushi and Ushiwakamaru but this is a new phenomenon. Haraguchi says, “As of now, sustainable bluefin is limited to big, famous places as it is viewed as a luxury item. Once regulations regarding wild tuna become tighter, people will have to pay more attention to artificially hatched tuna.” Considering that it took decades for this technique to become a reality, it is exciting to think about its potential in the coming years.

*With typical tuna farming, young fish caught in the ocean are grown in fish preserves.

Information:

True World Foods
24 Link Dr., Rockleigh, NJ 07647 USA
TEL: 201-750-0024
www.trueworldfoods.com

Ten-Qoo Maguro
www.ten-qoo.com

Fishery Laboratory in Kinki University
www.fiku.jp