

---88 Years in the Heart of Shibuya---

Enjoying Beautiful Japanese Quality at a Time-Honored Fruit Parlor Shibuya Nishimura Souhonten / Shibuya Nishimura Fruits & Parlor



Japan has lots of delicious fruit throughout the four seasons of the year. “Fruit parlors” are places where you can enjoy this fruit in beautifully arranged desserts that will take your breath away. Actually, “fruit parlor” is a Japanglish term combining the two words, with “parlor” meaning a room for conversation and relaxation. Such fruit parlors, kind of coffee shops serving desserts combining fruit with ice cream, fresh cream, and other delights, appeared in Tokyo more than a century ago.



First floor of the present Shibuya Nishimura Fruit Store (left) and the shop at the time of postwar recovery (right)

Shibuya Nishimura Fruits & Parlor is located just a stone’s throw from the Shibuya Scramble Crossing by the iconic Hachiko statue of a faithful dog, an area always buzzing with foreign tourists and young people. Nishimura Fruit Shop, a high-end fruit store



founded in 1910, opened an outlet at the present location in 1935, and the fruit parlor on the second floor opened in the following year. For nearly nine decades since then, Nishimura has been continuing to serve delicious and beautiful fruit desserts right in the heart of Shibuya.

← Executive Vice-President Mototaka Nishimura (at the front of the fruit store)

According to Mr. Mototaka Nishimura, executive vice-president of Shibuya Nishimura Souhonten, Nishimura established an outlet in Shibuya shortly after Tokyu Toyoko Department Store had opened in front of the railway station. At that time the legendary Hachiko was appearing at Shibuya Station every day. Apparently Mr. Nishimura's grandmother used to give food to the dog.

At that time it was still uncertain whether Shibuya would develop as it has into a bustling shopping and entertainment district. But believing in its potential, the founder of Nishimura, Shojiro Nishimura, went ahead and opened the fruit parlor in the center of the area. He really did have foresight. After that, although Shibuya was reduced to ashes by the air raids of World War II, the district recovered, and the Shibuya Nishimura Main Store was rebuilt. One of the store's traditional recipes is its pancakes, which remain popular even today and still use an original mixed flour dating back to the Showa period (1926–89).

↓ Original pancakes



They are carefully cooked one by one on a custom-made copperplate with good thermal conductivity. Seasonal pancakes are also served with the toppings of fruit and home-made fruit sauce changed depending on the time of year.

Located in the Shibuya area, which continued to develop as a young people's playground, the Shibuya Nishimura Fruits & Parlor store became popular as a date spot and also as a casual place for meetings between prospective arranged marriage partners. And in recent years its top-quality fruit and fruit desserts have delighted foreign tourists flocking to Shibuya to see the scramble crossing and Hachiko statue.

Mr. Nishimura says he feels strongly that domestic fruit has steadily carved a niche in the culinary culture representative of Japan. Domestic fruit is cultivated with a stress on not simply sweetness but also fragrance, juiciness, and fleshiness. It has a safe and reliable high-quality level and looks beautiful as well. This rare value and attraction are probably unparalleled overseas.

Why does domestic fruit have such high quality? Mr. Nishimura explains that in Japan fruit has been treated not only as something to eat but also as a luxury item. Because it is a luxury, since long ago fruit in Japan has been valued as a gift and as a dessert called *mizugashi* (literally, juicy confectionery). For this reason, even better quality has been pursued, and fruit has evolved with the creation of various new varieties.

↓ Specially selected Marihime and Hatsukoi no Kaori parfait using white strawberries



Strawberries are one of the most popular domestic fruits, and repeated variety improvement has given rise to new types one after the other. These include varieties like Hatsukoi no Kaori (Fragrance of First Love), which turn white when fully ripe.



Amaou is a representative variety of domestic strawberry. It is cultivated through painstaking methods, including fine temperature control.

↓ Gift of musk melon and Shine Muscat grapes



Musk melons are treated as the kings of domestic fruit. Every single musk melon has the date on which it will be ready to eat written on it. Shine Muscat grapes are seedless and can be eaten as they are, without having to peel the skin. They are a sweet and tasty variety. Originally they were best in September and October, but the evolution of storage technology and equipment has meant that now they can be tastily eaten right up until the beginning of the next year. Placing these fruits in decorated boxes or baskets and neatly wrapping them to present as gifts is a very Japanese custom.

Benishuho cherries →

Early summer is the season for cherries. Their careful arrangement in rows in a decorated box is something you see only in Japan.

In recent years there have been problematic cases of domestic fruit seedlings finding their way overseas, but Mr. Nishimura insisted that even the same seedlings cannot be raised to yield top-quality and delicious fruit without sound methods of cultivation. Traditionally, in Japan there is a culture favoring the expenditure of much time and energy on making things and engagement in intricate work. This approach has led to Japan's high level of product quality, and this spirit lives on in the cultivation of fruit as well. In addition, distributors and retailers also make relentless efforts to carefully handle the fruit that producers have grown so painstakingly, such as by placing them one by one on cushions, so that they are delivered to consumers without damaging their high quality.



Anyway, if you want to taste this top-quality and delicious domestic fruit in the best possible way, head for a fruit parlor. Mr. Nishimura told me about their popular menu and its attractions. In the case of fruit desserts, what is important first and foremost is the combination of the fruit. As with drink and meals, he said, the key point is the “marriage” between different fruit. For example, if a rich-tasting fruit is matched with fruit with a strong acidic flavor, the taste is softened. And if fruit is combined with, for instance, good-quality fresh cream or original gelato with adjusted sweetness for parfaits, you get a wonderful taste.



Another key point is the cutting. For each type of fruit, there is a beautiful way of cutting, and taste and fragrance change depending on the cutting method. Since the fragrance of newly cut fruit is best, Mr. Nishimura recommended us to savor the freshness as well. Furthermore, the readiness of the fruit for eating is also important. For some fruit, freshness is the paramount factor. But for other produce, such as melons, pears, mangoes, papayas, and bananas, as well as some persimmons, peaches, and so on, cooking staff force-ripen the fruit after procurement, and then professionals cut and serve it after determining when it is best ready for eating.



← Beautifully cut macedoine

This original dessert is an arrangement of macedoine, an Italian-style fruit punch. Fresh seasonal fruit is dipped into a fruity syrup tasting like white wine and using vanilla beans produced in Madagascar. Served with a topping of fluffy and foamy whipped cream.

Pudding a la mode →

The fruit, type of gelato, and fruit sauce change with the season. The puddings are made especially for the fruit parlor in the company's own confectionery factory. The orthodox puddings, which give a sense of egg flavor, go well with the fruit.



← Apple mango and strawberry parfait

Deluxe mangoes grown in Miyazaki Prefecture are popular, but in recent years it has become possible to cultivate them in the northern island of Hokkaido too thanks to an ecological method of cultivation that uses geothermal heat and cool air from snow stored in winter.

Centered on seasonal fruit, Nishimura changes its menu seven times a year. In addition, since there is also fruit that

can only be eaten during short periods of time, “Only now!” offerings frequently appear. The crowning joy of a fruit parlor is that every time you visit, the fruit menu is going to be different.

Beni-Madonna citrus and strawberry parfait →

Beni-Madonna are a high-class domestic citrus that can only be offered for about one month. A limited-edition phantomlike parfait?



Domestic fruit is continuing to evolve through variety improvement. Production and storage technologies are making tremendous advances, which mean not only even better quality but also that the fruit can be enjoyed for longer periods. Nevertheless, Mr. Nishimura insisted, essentially the good thing about Japanese fruit is that the season for a certain fruit is limited and seasonal produce appears in cycles throughout the year. If you could eat the same fruit for too long, he said, it would not be so enjoyable.

Message from Mr. Nishimura, who is helping to keep alive the traditions of the venerable old fruit store:

“Each fruit has its own most delicious time of the year, so in Japan, which has four seasons, I want you by all means not to miss the season and to savor fruit in its prime condition.”



Cooperation

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