

HIYAMA Brand Story



Introduction: Questions at the Table

HIYAMA meat is always delicious.

Why is that?

Why is the flavor so delicate, the texture so tender, and the rich umami and aroma so concentrated?

Why does Japanese Wagyu differ in taste from any other beef in the world?

The answer lies beyond Wagyu alone.

It is rooted in Japan's ancient beliefs, in a history through which beef transformed from a forbidden food into a cultural treasure, and in the dignity and spirit that HIYAMA has preserved since its founding.

All of these layers, accumulated over time, have shaped what we now know as the deliciousness of HIYAMA.

Chapter 1

The Origins of Beef Culture in Japan

Before Beef

For centuries, the Japanese diet centered on fish, grains, and vegetables.

Deeply rooted Buddhist and Shinto beliefs led people to avoid meat for a long period.

This custom changed after the Meiji government adopted Western culture and officially permitted the consumption of meat.



— The Arrival of Cattle (1st–2nd Century)

Cattle are believed to have arrived in Japan between the 1st and 2nd centuries via the Korean Peninsula. They were not initially for food; they pulled plows, carried loads, and hauled timber, serving in agriculture and transport.

Over a long history of breeding within Japan's unique climate, the distinctive characteristic of Wagyu marbling (*sashi*) was cultivated.

— The Long Prohibition on Meat (7th Century onwards)

For a long time, Japan was not a country of meat-eating culture. Shinto and Buddhist teachings valued purity and compassion, and everyday meals centered on rice, fish, tofu, and vegetables.

In 675 AD, Emperor Tenmu prohibited the consumption of cattle, horses, dogs, monkeys, and chickens. Wild meats such as deer and boar were exceptions and were eaten depending on region, but cattle were regarded as “sacred workers” and were not used as food.

This state continued for over a thousand years.

— The Quiet Continuation of Meat Eating (7th–19th Century)

Although officially forbidden, the custom of eating meat did not disappear completely.

People quietly found ways to eat meat, and some also consumed cattle and horse meat.

Wild game was described with elegant euphemisms: boar was called “mountain whale,” and deer was called “autumn leaves,” and eaten under those names.

During the Edo period (1603–1868), Japan restricted foreign trade to Dejima in Nagasaki, where only the Dutch were permitted to reside and trade.

Local cooks created a beef stew called *ushinabe* to suit Dutch food culture, and some Japanese interpreters and physicians also got to taste it.

When Japan opened to the world in the mid-19th century, this dish spread to the cities and came to be enjoyed as *gyūnabe*.



— Opening to the World and the Dawn of Beef Culture (Mid-19th Century)

In 1854, at the end of the Edo period, Japan ended two hundred years of national seclusion and opened its doors to the West. New cultures flowed into the cities, and in 1872, early in the Meiji era, Emperor Meiji's public consumption of beef signaled the end of the old prohibitions. Eating beef was no longer taboo. It became a symbol of modernization and progress.

The Chinese-derived reading “gyū,” sounded modern and refined, linking beef with the impression of Westernization. As enjoying beef when dining out became associated with international dining culture, the sound “gyū” gradually came into use in the names of many dishes.

Many beef dishes took names containing “gyū” and among them *gyūnabe* was a new beef hotpot seasoned with miso and soy sauce to suit Japanese tastes.

For many people it was fresh and exciting, and it spread rapidly once it began to be served in Tokyo restaurants. Over time, *gyūnabe* became one of the most popular beef dishes across Japan, eventually leading to today's sukiyaki.

— Crossbreeding and New Breeds (1868–1944)

From 1868, the first year of Meiji, restaurants serving gyūnabe spread rapidly, marking the beginning of an era in which beef was widely consumed. This created a need to increase the cattle production, and in pursuit of better-tasting meat, Japan attempted crossbreeding with European cattle. However, the resulting cattle were unsuitable for farm work and also had coarse meat quality, and the initiative ended by 1910.

Even so, improved Wagyu emerged through these attempts, and in 1944, four Wagyu breeds were officially established. Among them, Kuroge Washu (Japanese Black) stood out for its fine marbling and aroma, and was highly valued as a characteristic not found in Western cattle.

— The Birth of Wagyu Culture (20th Century)

Prewar and wartime Japan was an era of food shortages.

With meat controls also imposed, opportunities to eat beef were extremely limited, often confined to the meat of older work cattle.

After the war ended in 1945, the food environment changed drastically.

In school lunches, children began consuming milk, butter, and meat, refrigerators spread into households, and food choices expanded rapidly. During Japan's period of high economic growth in the 1960s, fat intake increased to nearly double the prewar level.

At last, an era arrived in which Wagyu marbling came to be truly appreciated.

Unlike the heavier fats of Western cattle, the fat of Kuroge Washu (Japanese Black) contains abundant oleic acid and melts at lower temperatures, drawing out aroma and umami. It creates a flavor as if a natural sauce is born from within the meat itself. Marbling, once avoided, came to be recognized as the very essence of Wagyu's appeal.

Chapter 2

The Founding Spirit of HIYAMA

The Founder's Challenge

Teiichi Murakami, a young entrepreneur born and raised in Hiroshima, possessed true foresight. Instead of continuing the family business, he began a livestock enterprise in Hiroshima and named it “HIYAMA.”

He then moved his business to Ningyocho in Tokyo, the center of Japan, and survived through turbulent times.



— A Challenge That Began in Hiroshima — 1912

HIYAMA's story begins in 1912 in Fukuyama City, Hiroshima Prefecture.

At the time, meat was still a rare presence in daily life. Yet Teiichi Murakami, who had been adopted into the inn Hiyoritei, saw new potential there. He left the inn business behind and took a gamble: opening a butcher shop.

For the shop name, he combined “Hi” from Hiyoritei with “Yama” from Fukuyama, Hiroshima, where he established his first shop. The name “HIYAMA” connected his origins with the land, laying the foundation for the future.

— Expansion to Tokyo — 1928

As he came to operate five to six shops across Hiroshima and Okayama, Murakami set his sights on the center of Japan.

Tokyo, rebuilding from the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, was regaining its energy.

In the streets of Nihonbashi Ningyocho, merchants' voices echoed, the wheels of rickshaws rolled by, and actors hurried toward the theaters. Lanterns glowed above smoking street stalls, and the scent of soy sauce and charcoal fire drifted through the air.

In 1928, HIYAMA opened its first Tokyo shop in this district. It was a decision to seize opportunity and, at the same time, a major step into the heart of Japanese food culture.

— Innovation in Dining — 1935

In 1935, HIYAMA expanded into the restaurant business.

The newly opened “Sukiyaki Kappo HIYAMA” aimed to create something unlike anything before.

Incorporating elements of kappo, a style of refined Japanese cuisine, the experience began with appetizers served in the spirit of kaiseki, a traditional multi-course meal. It then flowed into sukiyaki, where the beef was sliced, simmered, and carefully presented in a considered sequence.

This honored the traditions of Japanese cuisine while creating a new kind of experience.

Guests could enjoy not only the deliciousness of Wagyu, but sukiyaki as a course that harmonized Japanese flavors. By combining expertise honed through its wholesale business with a pursuit of gastronomy, HIYAMA developed a distinctive style of dining and elevated its presence in Ningyocho to a new stage.



— Resilience in Wartime — 1938–1945

The years that followed became a period of major trials for HIYAMA.

In 1938, HIYAMA was formally established as “HIYAMA Shokai Co., Ltd.”

Soon after, war broke out, and strict controls on meat were imposed for five years. During that time, operations were almost entirely halted, and many businesses disappeared. Even so, supported by reserves and preparedness, HIYAMA endured this period and continued to sustain its business. After the war, HIYAMA quickly resumed its course, reopening retail and restaurant operations in 1947. Thereafter, it opened locations one after another in Tokyo’s leading department stores, expanding its presence.

— The Founding Spirit Alive Today

What shaped HIYAMA’s first several decades was not scale, but foresight.

Opening a butcher shop in Hiroshima in 1912, moving into Ningyocho in 1928 before it became known as a sukiyaki quarter, and opening a kappo restaurant in 1935 that fused wholesale specialization with refined cuisine—all of it was grounded in the ability to read what lay ahead.

HIYAMA’s strength has always been in capturing timing. At the moment a new current begins to spread, HIYAMA steps forward to meet it. That ability to see the trend, and the boldness to act, is the spirit of HIYAMA, carried forward from its founding to the present day.

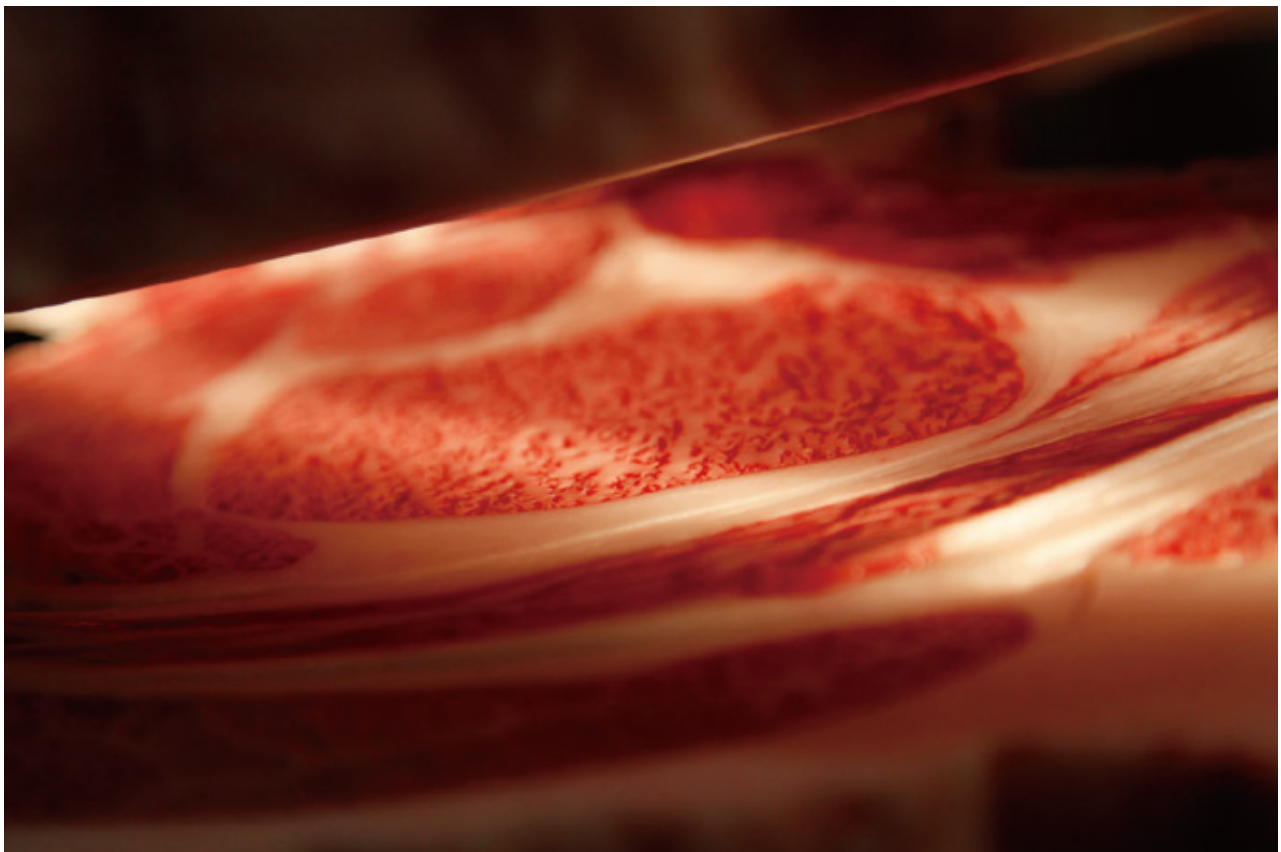
Chapter 3

Wagyu as an Artform

The Essence of Taste

The true appeal of genuinely delicious Wagyu cannot be fully measured by grades or numbers. When flavor, aroma, and refined fat come into harmony, a deliciousness that stays in memory emerges.

HIYAMA has held this standard as an unwavering belief and has continued to approach Wagyu with that conviction.



— The Sole Grading System

Wagyu's reputation was built upon Japan's grading system.

Beef is classified by yield grade (A–C) and meat quality (1–5), and meat quality is evaluated by: “marbling (degree of *sashi*),” “color and luster,” “texture and firmness,” and “fat color, luster, and quality.” Marbling, in particular, is heavily emphasized, and A5 is positioned as the highest rank, marked by fine marbling, vivid color, and sheen.

Through this framework, buyers and sellers share a common standard, and Wagyu established its market position as a premium product with reliable value.

— Why Marbling Became a Brand

From the 1970s through the 1980s, alongside Japan's economic growth, marbling became a symbol of luxury. Because the top rank A5 was an easy-to-use indicator, it was emphasized by the industry and the media as proof of refinement, and widely perceived as representing quality and luxury. As a result, the evaluation “A5” became a clear sign that people came to understand as directly linked to taste itself.

In reality, determining true deliciousness requires more discerning judgment.



— What Truly Delicious Wagyu Is

The essence of Wagyu selected by HIYAMA is found in a supreme harmony that satisfies all five senses.

What first draws the eye is the fine-grained meat quality, woven by delicate muscle fibers like a work of art. The moment it reaches the mouth, its texture reveals its true character, smooth and grain-free on the tongue and gently passing down the throat.

Especially notable is the extraordinary quality of the fat, which melts in the mouth. Fat rich in unsaturated fatty acids such as oleic acid has a low melting point, allowing it to dissolve softly at body temperature and transform into an elegant sweetness. Derived from sweet-tasting amino acids, this sweetness is pure and free of off-notes. Though subtle, it leaves a deep richness.

Bringing all of these elements together is what may be called Wagyu's signature, "Wagyu aroma." The sweet, exuberant fragrance that rises with heat lingers after the meal as a rounded finish in the mouth, completing a taste that stays in memory.

This experience is supported by the unique structure of Wagyu fat itself.

In Western cuisine, flavors are built through the addition of fats during cooking, such as butter and duck fat in French cuisine or olive oil in Mediterranean cooking.

In contrast, Wagyu fat is interwoven into the meat itself, and when heat is applied, it gently releases from within as juices, bringing aroma, texture, and flavor into harmony.

This structure is the unique value that Wagyu offers to the world of gastronomy.



— HIYAMA's New Definition of Taste

For HIYAMA, excellence cannot be fully measured in numbers.

Even when grading draws attention, what remains in memory is deliciousness.

This belief is what has shaped HIYAMA's standards for selecting, handling, and delivering Wagyu.

We understand “deliciousness” through three pillars:

- Flavor: The balance of lean and fat, and how the umami held within the meat is expressed.
- Aroma: The fragrance that rises as the fat melts.
- Fat quality: A clean melt, a light finish, ease of digestion, and lasting umami.

At the heart of HIYAMA lies an unending pursuit of deliciousness, with brand and grading serving to support that promise. HIYAMA's path has been to establish a standard of taste that customers can always rely on. This has built trust in HIYAMA, because it is HIYAMA beef.

Chapter 4

Crafting the Future: The HIYAMA Standard

Craft Becomes Trust

HIYAMA's rule is extremely simple: handle only the finest Wagyu with integrity. Each accumulation becomes craft, and together they build unwavering trust. Through craft and trust, HIYAMA will continue delivering delicious Wagyu to customers.



— From Market to Table

HIYAMA is responsible for every process, from auction to the customer's table.

The starting point is the auction at the Tokyo Meat Market. At this market, which boasts the largest volume of transactions in Japan, HIYAMA holds a primary wholesaler license possessed by only a limited number of companies. At the auction, the discerning eye cultivated for over a century since our founding is fully brought to life. We purchase only after assessing marbling, color and sheen, grain, and overall balance of the carcass. Each decision becomes Wagyu that meets HIYAMA's standards. By purchasing directly as an intermediary wholesaler, we can secure and provide stable quality and quantity.

From here, the Wagyu story connects to the table. At HIYAMA's butcher shops, carefully selected Wagyu becomes sukiyaki, shabu-shabu, yakiniku, and steak at home. At Suki-yaki Kappo HIYAMA in Tokyo, Niseko, Hong Kong, Taipei, and Shenzhen, we express Wagyu as cuisine, creating experiences where taste, hospitality, and culture intersect.

At the center of this is sukiyaki, HIYAMA's signature dish. The warishita (suki-yaki sauce base) that shapes its flavor has been a closely guarded recipe, passed down across generations since the opening of Suki-yaki Kappo HIYAMA. Prepared at the main store in Tokyo, the warishita is delivered to restaurants around the world.

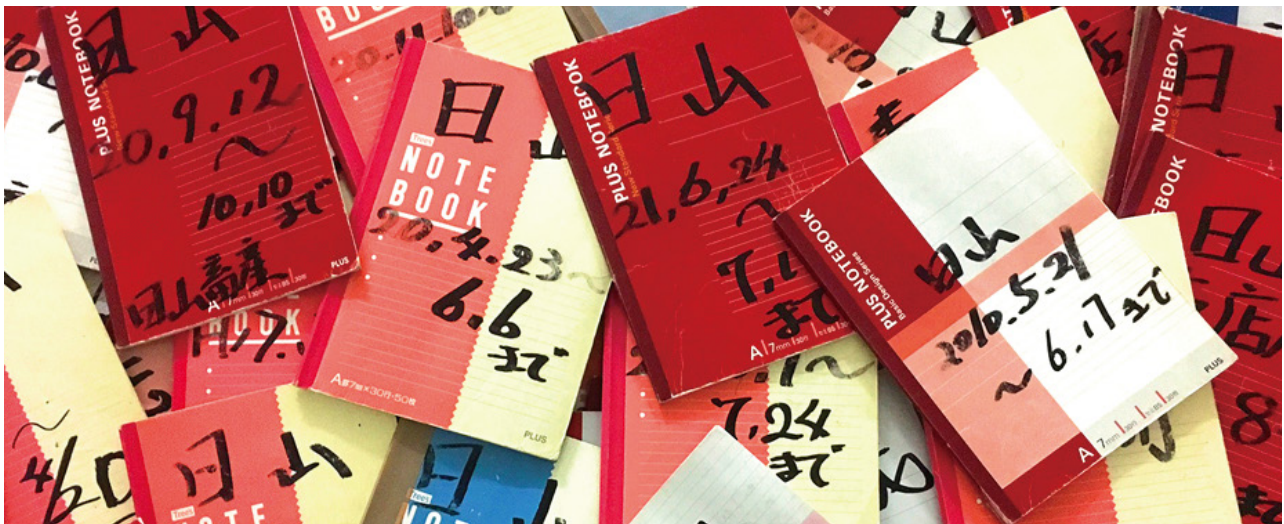


— The HIYAMA Note

The trust HIYAMA has built comes from the high regard for our ability to select exceptional Wagyu. At auction, the buyer assesses marbling, color, tactile feel, and overall balance. After purchase, every carcass is tasted in-house, and aroma, fat quality, and flavor are recorded in the HIYAMA Note. These records are linked to each animal's ID (individual identification number) and accumulated as individual histories.

Descriptions such as “a sweet aroma like baked confections,” “mellow fat,” and “a nutty, deep flavor” fill the pages as tasting notes evaluating flavor.

Through this format of taste, HIYAMA has developed an approach that evaluates each Wagyu through tasting, without being bound solely by regional brands or grading, and brings out the inherent character of Wagyu.



— Commitment to Quality

HIYAMA has an uncompromising commitment to Wagyu.

We prioritize fat that melts cleanly, enhances aroma, and balances umami with tenderness.

Differences in quality arise from subtle variations in how the cattle are raised, the conditions in which they are kept, and the feed they are given. Differences in feed create significant differences in aroma, texture, and the impression of the fat. That is why we source with care. We always confirm the taste ourselves, ensuring every cut meets HIYAMA quality.

— Connecting Producers and the Table

We can see the carcass at auction, but consumers cannot directly know how that Wagyu was raised. Likewise, producers often have few opportunities to learn how the cattle they raised are experienced in terms of taste. We serve as a bridge, connecting producers and consumers by carrying their voices to one another. As feedback circulates in a positive cycle, Wagyu culture continues to evolve. HIYAMA will continue to be at the center of this exchange.

— Toward the Next Generation of Wagyu

HIYAMA is also working on the future of Wagyu.

Through new food styles, sustainability, and ongoing efforts both domestically and internationally, we continue to put the following statement into practice:

“Believing in the potential of Wagyu, and renewing the stories of food in Japan.”

The HIYAMA Standard is a promise to connect tradition and innovation, evolve with taste, and continue pioneering.

Chapter 5

From Tokyo to the World: HIYAMA Shaping the Future of Wagyu

The Legacy Continues

For more than a hundred years, HIYAMA's journey has continued without pause.

From Japan to cities around the world, we have delivered our approach to Wagyu as an experience, just as it is.

As a steward shaping the future of Wagyu culture, HIYAMA will carry this story into the next generation.



— The Spirit of HIYAMA Spreading Worldwide

For more than a century, HIYAMA has embraced changes in Japanese food culture and given them form. From a time when Wagyu was still a rarity to the present, when it has become a main dish on menus around the world, our journey has been guided by a constant commitment to stand at the forefront of change.

Today, the stage of HIYAMA's story extends across the world. Just as our founder, Teiichi Murakami, opened a butcher shop in Hiroshima and later moved to Tokyo, HIYAMA continues to carry that pioneering spirit beyond borders.

Building on the craftsmanship we have refined, the trust we have earned, and the consistent quality we uphold, HIYAMA continues to move forward in Japan and across the world.

Our expansion into new frontiers such as Niseko, Hong Kong, Taipei, and Shenzhen is not simply a matter of increasing the number of locations. It represents a form of innovation that carries forward tradition while embracing the climate, customs, and food culture of each place. In harmony with each city, a new chapter is unfolding, conveying the spirit of Japanese cuisine through Wagyu.

— A New Chapter in a New City

When HITAMA expands to a new place, what we value is not simply bringing the same things. Grounded in the know-how cultivated in Ningyocho, Tokyo, we begin by carefully understanding people's dining habits, preferences, and the scenes at their tables.

For example, in many parts of Asia, time spent around the table with family and friends is an integral part of everyday life. When HIYAMA's Wagyu and sukiyaki become part of these moments,

Japan's sense of seasonality, its culture of dashi, and its spirit of hospitality begin to take on life in a new context. HIYAMA's role is not to impose Japan's way of doing things, but to create a place where the culture of each city and the appeal of Wagyu resonate with one another.

— The HIYAMA Experience

Dining at HIYAMA is meant to be an experience that remains in memory.

It conveys the essence of Wagyu and delivers the spirit of Japanese hospitality.

It serves truly exceptional Wagyu with heartfelt care, leaving a lasting impression.

This commitment is carried forward unchanged from the Tokyo main store to every location, in Japan and around the world.

This spirit of hospitality is expressed through the five senses.

- The beauty of marbling, the delicate patterns running through the meat.
- The sound of sukiyaki gently simmering, together with the sweet aroma of warishita.
- The elegant Wagyu aroma released by melted fat, like a hidden sauce.
- The delicate, unforgettable flavors that deepen with each bite.
- And the hospitality present in every gesture.

When these moments come together, the experience transcends a simple meal.

A dialogue emerges among those gathered, touching the spirit of Japanese cuisine.

HIYAMA cherishes this as a place where Wagyu and culture meet.



— HIYAMA as a Global Legacy

HIYAMA has built trust as a primary wholesaler. By standing at auction in the Tokyo Meat Market, assessing each carcass, and purchasing according to our own standards, we are able to deliver consistent quality, reliable supply, and exceptional Wagyu.

It is on this foundation that we can speak with confidence to chefs, restaurants, and customers in Japan and around the world: this is Wagyu selected by HIYAMA.

At the same time, global food trends are significantly changing. New ways of enjoying Wagyu, more health-conscious ways of eating, growing environmental awareness, and increasing interest in sustainable production are all shaping the future. We acknowledge these shifts as part of our role.

HIYAMA's standards are not fixed. They evolve with the values of the times, new ways of dining, and the needs of those who support them. As a steward of Wagyu culture, HIYAMA will continue to move forward with the times.

— A Promise for the Future

“Always delicious. Truly delicious. That is HIYAMA beef.”

This is the promise we will continue to uphold for our customers into the future.

The story that began in Ningyocho, Tokyo will continue to be passed on to new cities and new generations. At its foundation is one question that remains unchanged across time:

“What joy and story can this meat bring to the table?”

HIYAMA will continue to revisit this question as we move into the next hundred years.