



FAMOUS LOCAL FOOD

Bountiful catches from the Sea of Japan make Obama a seafood lover's paradise. Though it is best known for mackerel, you can enjoy a wide variety of other fresh fish, crab, and shellfish, as well as local vegetables and mouthwatering sweets.

Sabazushi

鯖寿司

Pressed mackerel sushi, or *sabazushi*, is popular all along the Saba Kaidō road, so you should definitely try it at the source! Lightly salted mackerel is filleted and pickled in sushi vinegar before the tougher skin is peeled away and the bones are removed. A wooden mold is then used to press the fish onto the sushi rice, with a thin piece of kelp on top or between them for garnish.



Kodai no Sasazuke

小鯛ささ漬

Mackerel isn't the only famous fish in Obama! The appetizing *kodai no sasazuke* is made from small sea bream filleted into slices and treated to a time-tested balance of salt and vinegar pickling to preserve the taste. When you crack open the distinctive cask you can eat the bamboo leaf-topped fish as is, or use it in sushi or soup!



Yopparai Saba

よっぱらいサバ

Fancy your fish served a bit tipsy? Try *yopparai saba*, literally meaning "drunk mackerel"! This special farm-raised brand of mackerel is fed *sake* lees with its food, resulting in a fish with more *umami* flavor, much weaker fishy odor, and a less oily texture. The best part is the added touch of *sake* to the taste and smell of the *yopparai saba*, whether served grilled or cut into the freshest of *sashimi*.



Kuzu Manjū

葛饅頭

How about some sweets to balance out the seafood? Obama is well-known for its *kuzu manjū*, a delicious treat associated with summer. *Manjū* usually consist of sweet red bean paste centers surrounded by a steamed yeast bun, but in this case exteriors are made from kudzu (Japanese arrowroot) starch, resulting in a clear, gelatin-like casing. The smooth flavor and watery texture make for a refreshing snack to enjoy between April and October.



TRADITIONAL CRAFTS

Since ancient times, artisans in Obama have been able to perfect their crafts by skillfully incorporating techniques brought through foreign trade into their own. Particularly famous for lacquerware and chopsticks, Obama also prides itself on agate carving, *washi* papermaking, and traditional clay tile production.



Wakasa Lacquerware 若狭塗

The local lacquerware tradition is said to have begun on the cusp of the 16th and 17th centuries when craftsman Sanjūro Matsuura produced a design depicting the seabed of Wakasa Bay. This *Wakasa nuri* style flourished under the ruling Sakai clan, and highly skilled artisans continue the practice to this day. Cloth pasting and several layers of colored lacquer are followed by seashells, mother-of-pearl, eggshells, rice husks, and pine needles to create a pattern, further covered by more coats of lacquer. Polishing with progressively finer whetstones to bring the pattern to the surface is a process unique to Wakasa lacquerware.

Obama proudly produces at least 80% of Japan's lacquered chopsticks! *Wakasa nuri* chopsticks showcase a variety of techniques like the classic *raden*, where mother-of-pearl designs are coated with lacquer to be later revealed by polishing, *tsuishu* bringing out the multicolored layers of lacquer, and *kanshitsu* with dry lacquer powder sprinkled underneath for a slightly rough surface. Artisans make chopsticks with rougher ends to prevent food from slipping, an improved grip for a steady hold, and varied lengths for people of all ages. The Wakasa Chopsticks Industry Cooperative holds the Guinness World Record for the largest chopsticks: 8.4 meters long!

Wakasa Agate Carving 若狭めのう

Legend says that when Obama's Wakasahiko and Wakasahime Shrines were built back in the 8th century, a sea-faring people who worshiped two jewels of the tide settled in the area and made agate carving their trade. More official records mention Obama native Kihei Takayama, an optician's apprentice in Naniwa (Osaka), who brought a technique of making round agate beads back home in the early 18th century. It was later discovered that heat enhances the stone's color, and by the 19th century a wide range of techniques were developed to produce intricate works that have received recognition both within Japan and abroad. Drawing inspiration from each stone's natural pattern, artisans painstakingly cut and polish every piece, transforming rough stones into lovely animal figurines, Buddhist statues, incense holders, and stunning accessories.



Some of Obama's traditional crafts can be experienced at **Wakasa Kōbō** on the second floor of the Miketsukuni Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum. Here you can polish your own chopsticks, try your hand at making traditional *washi* paper, or make an agate keychain or pendant with guidance from the masters of each craft.



Wakasa Kōbō | 若狭工房

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 9:00 – 17:00 (December – February)
 Closed: Wednesday, December 28th – January 5th
<http://wakasa-koubou.com/>