

Language:



Why is the sushi and sashimi in Tokyo so deliciously fresh? [PR]

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Put a bite of fresh-caught sashimi in your mouth and the springy texture will delight your mouth as the natural sweetness of the fish spreads across your palate. Shove a piece of expertly-rolled sushi in your mouth and the complex flavors of fish, rice, and spicy wasabi—all accented by the soy sauce—will delight your heart as much as your tongue. You won't be able to help the smile that spreads across your face.

Many of the overseas travelers who visit Japan find that their favorite part of the trip is eating Japan's signature food—sashimi and sushi—prepared with fresh-caught seafood. But it takes an army of people working behind the scenes to deliver raw fish safely and properly, and the Tokyo Market Sanitation Inspection Center plays a key role in that process. Read on to find out more about what they do.

Temperature, sanitation, toxins... meet the people who make sure your fish is safe to eat

Each day, the Tokyo Central Wholesale Market brings in food not just from Japan, but from the rest of the world as well.



Toyosu Market of the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Wholesale Market

Among the Tokyo Metropolitan Central Wholesale Market locations, the Toyosu Market is a familiar tourist attraction popular with overseas visitors for its tours, display areas, and rows of eateries where you can eat seafood rice bowls, sushi, and other dishes made with fresh seafood. The functions of the Tsukiji Market, which boasted the highest volume of fish transactions in Japan for 83 years until it closed in 2018 (the eateries outside the Tsukiji Market that carry fresh seafood are still in operation have now been taken on by the Toyosu Market, and it is the staff at the Tokyo Market Sanitation Inspection Center that supervise food safety there.



Inside the Toyosu Market

Their job starts at four in the morning, well before the sun comes up.

The first thing they check, wrapped in their hygienic white uniforms, is the most popular of all sushi fish—tuna.



Tuna gather not just off the coast of Japan, but also in the Mediterranean Sea, the Atlantic Ocean, the Indian Ocean, and more. They are traded at the market using a unique process called a seri, which is a lot like an auction.

We spoke with Mr. Takagi, who works at the Tokyo Market Sanitation Inspection Center. “Our job is to make sure that the proper temperature is maintained in the place where the seri occurs and inspect it to make sure that there are no unsanitary environmental conditions.”

Mr. Takagi: In most cases, tuna and other seafood must be kept at 10°C or below, no matter what the season. Large fish like tuna are auctioned off without being stored in polystyrene boxes or other packaging, so we also have to make sure that they are properly placed on aluminum pallets and not on the floor—and otherwise ensure that the environment is sanitary and free of dirt and debris.



They use a special device to measure temperature and make sure that the tuna is being kept at 10°C or below, and they can also visually tell that the fish is fresh. As the guys at the market are belting out their calls back and forth, they're trading tuna that's been checked by the staff at the Tokyo Market Sanitation Inspection Center.



The next place the inspectors visit is the seafood auction floor. Here, fish of all varieties brought in from around Japan are bought and sold—and the staff must check other important things in addition to temperature and sanitation.



Mr. Takagi: One thing we have to pay particular attention to when we're inspecting seafood is whether poisonous fish have been mixed in with the products. Many fishermen simply box up whatever they catch in their nets, and we get a few cases a year where something poisonous gets mixed in. There are even some that are so dangerous that they can be life-threatening if you put them in your mouth. Our inspections are there to make sure that things like that don't get shipped out.



Massive amounts of fish pass through the seri at the fish market each day, and the inspectors only discover poisonous fish a few times a year. But no matter how slim the chances of finding them are, it is their job to make sure they never let one slip by; people's lives are at stake. They are staring at the fish with their serious gazes for the purpose of keeping consumers safe.

Food safety management systems that are the envy of the world

Even when the seri ends around seven each morning, an inspector's job still isn't through.

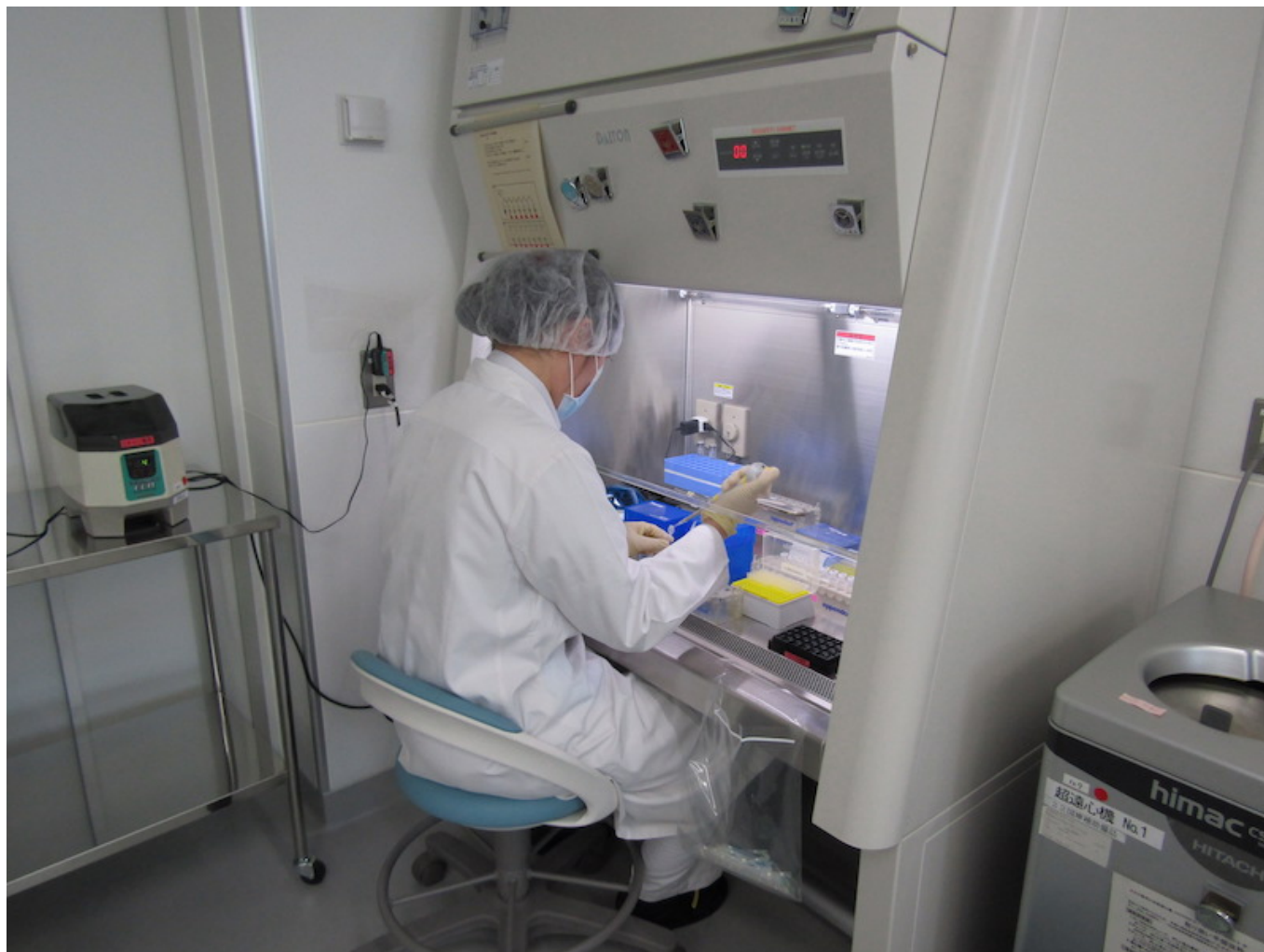
The next thing they do is check on the vendors who purchase fish at the auction. The companies who buy fish at the market during the seri and sell it to retailers and restaurants are called intermediate wholesalers, and more than 500 of them line the market.



Mr. Takagi: The first thing we do in the mornings is check the fish that will be sold during the auction. But because there is a massive amount of it all lined up at once, there are many items that we just can't get to. So we do a more detailed inspection once the seri is over and the fish have been moved to the intermediate wholesalers.



They also inspect the seafood to make sure that it does not have any microbes on it that trigger food poisoning—namely norovirus, salmonella, and E. coli. This is an important task that takes place after the seri is over. By double- or even triple-checking the items, they ensure that whatever fish makes it to the consumer's table is safe to eat.



We wondered whether the inspectors who go around with their analytical instruments precisely determining the status of the fish are an unwelcome presence for the people at the market, who feel they're being scrutinized. We felt a bit rude asking the question, but Mr. Takagi answered us with a wry smile.

Mr. Takagi: I have to admit there's some truth to that [laughs]. But everyone involved in the market is a seafood professional, so they are well aware of the importance of maintaining sanitation and the proper temperature. When you point those things out to them, they respond by making the necessary improvements.



Mr. Takagi: The thing that is fundamentally the most important to food safety—from the moment it comes out of the water to the time it passes through the market and ends up at retailers—is maintaining proper sanitation and temperature through every stage of the process. If the proper temperature is not maintained even for an hour, microbes that are harmful to human health will multiply rapidly, breaking the chain of food safety.



Strict control systems that do not allow for even a one-hour gap are what keep Japan's fish safe. That's why many businesses involved in the market come to Tokyo (not only from Japan but from around the world as well) to study its world-class seafood safety management technologies.

This year, market-related operators came from the Philippines, Laos, and other parts of Southeast Asia to learn about the sophisticated techniques used here. Especially because eating raw fish is part of the culture here, Japanese markets manage safety according to strict control systems that people all over the world are turning to not only because it keeps the seafood delicious, but because they keep it so safe as well.

Addressing allergies is an important part of safely enjoying Japanese food

Now you know more about how the inspections from the Market Sanitation Inspection Center and other practices keep food safe. But there's more to it. Mr. Takagi also told us that a high

level of awareness among the businesses involved in the market is an indispensable part of maintaining safety as well.

Mr. Takagi: Really, the only people handling the fish are those involved in the market, the wholesalers, and the retailers—all of them businesses. And it's because they are all so committed to delivering safe seafood that consumers are able to confidently relax and enjoy whatever fish they are served.

We also hold lectures to make people more aware of food safety, but most businesses that carry seafood are just as exacting about safety and reliability as they are about taste. I want people to realize that it's really the high level of awareness of these vendors that's behind everything when they marvel at how good the fish is in Japan.



So behind all of the delicious Japanese food that makes use of raw fish—sushi, sashimi, seafood rice bowls—stands the Market Sanitation Inspection Center, committed to delivering food that is not only delicious, but also safe and reliable thanks to proper controls on seafood distribution.

The Tokyo Bureau of Social Welfare and Public Health also distributes an Allergy Communication Sheet to restaurants. The sheet helps them respond to people with food allergies, and contains information in Japanese, English, simplified Chinese, traditional Chinese, and Korean. It allows people who have trouble communicating in Japanese to enjoy Japanese food without worrying about having an allergic reaction.

English / 中文(简体) / 中文(繁體) / 한국어

アレルギーコミュニケーションシート

食物アレルギーをお持ちの方は、このシートをご利用ください。

If you have any allergies, please use this check sheet.




























食物过敏者请使用本表单。 如果您有食物過敏，請使用此清單。

음식물 알레르기가 있으신 분은 이 시트를 이용해 주십시오.

● 食べられないものにしるしをつけてください。

Please tick the ingredients you are allergic to.

请在不能食用的食品上划勾。 請勾選您不能吃的食材。 먹을 수 없는 것에 체크해 주십시오.

 <input type="checkbox"/> 卵 egg (hen) 鸡蛋 雞蛋 달걀	 <input type="checkbox"/> 乳 milk (cow) 牛奶 牛奶 우유	 <input type="checkbox"/> 小麦 wheat 小麦 小麦 밀가루	 <input type="checkbox"/> そば buckwheat 荞麦 蕎麥 메밀	 <input type="checkbox"/> 落花生 peanut 落花生 花生 땅콩	 <input type="checkbox"/> エビ shrimp/prawn 虾 蝦子 새우	 <input type="checkbox"/> カニ crabmeat 螃蟹 螃蟹 게					
 <input type="checkbox"/> オレンジ orange 柑橘 柳橙 오렌지	 <input type="checkbox"/> キウイフルーツ kiwifruit 猕猴桃 奇異果 키위	 <input type="checkbox"/> バナナ banana 香蕉 香蕉 바나나	 <input type="checkbox"/> もも peach 桃 水蜜桃 복숭아사과	 <input type="checkbox"/> リンゴ apple 苹果 蘋果 사과	 <input type="checkbox"/> やまいも mountain yam 山芋 山藥 마	肉類 meats 肉类 肉類 육류  <input type="checkbox"/> 牛肉 beef 牛肉 牛肉 소고기		 <input type="checkbox"/> 豚肉 pork 猪肉 豬肉 돼지고기	 <input type="checkbox"/> 鶏肉 chicken 鸡肉 雞肉 닭고기		
 <input type="checkbox"/> カシューナッツ cashew 腰果 腰果 캐슈넛	 <input type="checkbox"/> くるみ walnut 核桃 核桃 호두	 <input type="checkbox"/> ごま sesame 芝麻 胡麻 깨	 <input type="checkbox"/> 大豆 soy 大豆 大豆 대두	 <input type="checkbox"/> まつたけ pine mushroom 松茸 松茸 송이버섯	 <input type="checkbox"/> ゼラチン gelatin 胶原 明膠 젤라틴	魚介類 seafood 海鲜类 魚類 어패류  <input type="checkbox"/> さけ salmon 鲑鱼 鮭魚 연어		 <input type="checkbox"/> さば mackerel 鲭鱼 鯖魚 고등어	 <input type="checkbox"/> いくら salmon roe 鲑鱼卵 鮭魚卵 연어알	 <input type="checkbox"/> あわび abalone 鲍鱼 鮑魚 전복	 <input type="checkbox"/> いか squid/cuttlefish 鱼鱿 烏賊類 오징어

・接客者 ・テーブル番号 ・注文品(時刻) (:)

お客様に確認する際は、次の文章を指差して使用しましょう。

- このメニューには、選択された食材を使用していません。**
This meal does not include any of the ingredients you have chosen.
本餐中没有使用您所选择的食材。 此道菜不使用您選擇的食材。 이 메뉴는 선택하신 식재료를 사용하지 않았습니다.
- このメニューには、選択された食材を使用しています。**
This meal includes ingredients you have chosen.
本餐中使用有您所选择的食材。 此道菜使用著您選擇的食材。 이 메뉴에는 선택하신 식재료를 사용하여 만들었습니다.
- このメニューには、選択された食材が混入することがあります。**
This meal may include ingredients you have chosen, through cross contamination.
本餐中混入有您所选择的食材。 此道菜有可能掺入您選擇的食材。 이 메뉴에는 선택된 식재료가 혼입되어 있을 수 있습니다.
- このメニューは、選択された食材を除去して提供することができます。**
We can prepare this meal by omitting ingredients you have chosen.
本餐可以为您去除掉您所选择的食材。 此道菜可以不使用您選擇的食材。
이 메뉴는 선택하신 식재료를 빼고 제공할 수 있습니다.
- 残念ながら当店では、選択された食材を除いた食事の提供はできません。**
We are unable to prepare this meal without including ingredients you have chosen.
非常抱歉本店不能提供去除掉您所选择食材的餐品。 很抱歉，本店的料理無法不使用您選擇的食材。
죄송합니다만, 당 점포에서는 선택하신 식재료를 뺀 식사를 제공할 수 없습니다.

英語/中国語(简体字)/中国語(繁体字)/韓国語

Tokyo is an enormous city whose 14 million residents and numerous overseas visitors enjoy eating there every day—and their safety depends on teams of people working in day after day in many different ways.