



A PACIFICWIDE FRIENDSHIP

Portland's longstanding connection to Japan

By Susan G. Hauser

» To get a sense of the special tie between the people of Japan and the people of Portland, visit Portland Japanese Garden in Washington Park.

The 12-acre site, which includes eight separate garden styles, opened in 1967 as a symbol of peace between the two countries and has become one of the city's gems. The green space, acclaimed as one of the finest and most authentic Japanese gardens in North America, features distinct gardens, including the Strolling Pond Garden, which has two ponds, a waterfall and a century-old pagoda lantern, which was a gift from Portland's first sister city, Sapporo, Japan.

In 2017, the park expanded to include the Cultural Village, a collection of beautiful buildings arranged around a courtyard plaza. The new development was designed by famed Tokyo architect Kengo Kuma, who also designed the space for renowned Portland Japanese restaurant Shizuku, and is currently designing a stadium for the 2020 Summer Olympic Games in Tokyo.

The garden offers exhibitions, classes and lectures on a variety of subjects. Noritaka Tatehana, a renowned Japanese fashion designer and artist, will give a lecture at the garden, October 5, titled *Art of Japan's future*. The garden will also feature the exhibit "Noritaka Tatehana: Refashioning Beauty," October 5–December 1, which features examples of his work, including heel-less shoes worn by stars such as Lady Gaga.

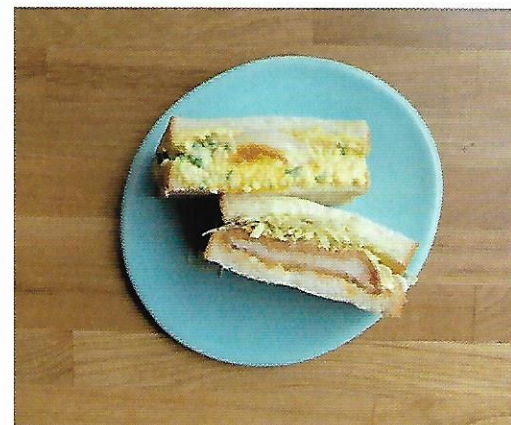
The Japanese garden is just one example of the close relationship between Portland and Japan. The connection dates back to at least the late 1800s, when Portland became a hub for West Coast Japanese immigration. At the time, a Japantown developed near the city's downtown core. The bustling area included restaurants, hotels and small shops. Today, the area has become the site of Portland's Chinatown. However, there are still many reminders, including the Japanese American

Historical Plaza and the Oregon Nikkei Legacy Center, which preserves and shares the history and culture of Portland's Japantown.

The Consular Office of Japan in Portland opened in 1900 and is the sixth oldest in the United States. Some local Japanese businesses still in operation date back almost that long. One example is Ota Tofu, which has been making handcrafted soybean tofu cakes in Portland since 1911 and is reportedly America's oldest tofu-making business.

Japanese visitors to Portland may find the city somewhat familiar, thanks to the many Japanese restaurants and businesses that have opened locations here, including outdoor





» **Clockwise from top of facing page:** Japanese influences in the Portland area include the beautiful Portland Japanese Garden; Nodoguro restaurant; Tomoe Horibuchi's Behind the Museum Cafe; the sandwiches at Giraffe Goods; Lauren Purvis' matcha teas; and sake from Uwajimaya, an Asian grocery and gift market.

lifestyle store Snow Peak, which has had a Portland location since 2013.

Next year, a new two-story, 14,000-square-foot Snow Peak location will open in Portland, complete with a Japanese restaurant and bar. Other Japanese businesses include Muji, a housewares and clothing store with locations around the world, which opened a branch in Portland last year.

Japanese food chains also have arrived, including the ramen restaurants Marukin Ramen and Afuri, both of which chose Portland for their first locations outside of Japan.

Japanese American businesses include Seattle-based Uwajimaya, an Asian grocery and gift market, which opened a location in the Portland suburb of Beaverton in 1998. The store includes a branch of the Japanese bookstore chain Kinokuniya. The chain is scheduled this fall to open its second Portland-area store in what was formerly downtown Portland's Guild Theatre. The store will include the Book of Tea Cafe, operated by Tomoe Horibuchi. The cafe will offer matcha lattes and sweets. Horibuchi's other location, the Behind the Museum Cafe, near the Portland Art Museum,

offers sweets, sandwiches and appetizers with seasonal vegetables.

American entrepreneurs have also opened Japanese-influenced businesses in the Portland area, including SakeOne, which was founded in 1992 in Forest Grove, about 30 miles west of Portland. The company is one of the only American-owned sake breweries in operation in the United States.

Portland-based American chefs are also successfully making their own version of Japanese food, including Gabriel Rosen, who runs the ramen restaurant Noraneko. He has also launched a new venture, Giraffe Goods, a Japanese-style delicatessen, offering groceries, bento box meals, sandwiches and snacks. His goal is to popularize Japanese-style convenience-store food, which is known for its excellent quality.

Chef Ryan Roadhouse and his wife, Elena, moved to Portland in 2014, opening the Japanese restaurant, Nodoguro, which was named 2015 Restaurant of the Year by *Portland Monthly* magazine. This fall, Roadhouse is opening the more casual Tonari, next door to Nodoguro.

The cafe will serve healthy Japanese breakfasts and lunches. In the evenings, the space

will become a Japanese-style vinyl salon called Peter Cat. The salon will play music, including records on a turntable, while offering cocktails, sandwiches and small-plate meals.

It's not Japanese food that appealed to Lauren Purvis, but the country's style of tea. The self-described tea nerd discovered her favorite tea, matcha—a powder created from stone-milled tencha tea leaves—during her first trip to Japan in 2013. Her initial sip of the vibrant and frothy green tea changed the course of her life. "I knew there would be good tea in Japan," Purvis says from her Portland

office of Mizuba Tea Co. "I just didn't know how good."

Soon after her first exposure to matcha, Purvis became a distributor for small-family matcha producers in the Uji region of Japan. She partners with 400 wholesale customers, about half of them coffee



shops that now serve traditional matcha and matcha lattes.

Whether it's in the form of tea, ramen or a calming garden, Japan's influence on the Portland lifestyle continues to grow. ✈

Susan G. Hauser enjoys Japanese cuisine from Portland, Oregon.