



A statue of Momotaro, created by Okayama-born sculptor Kimpo Okamoto, stands at Okayama Airport and JR Okayama Station.

OKAYAMA TODAY: WHERE THE ANCIENT LEGEND OF MOMOTARO (PEACH BOY) LIVES ON

Okayama Prefecture is home to shrines and historic sites connected to the Ura Legend—the tale of demon-slaying that inspired Momotaro (Peach Boy), one of Japan’s most beloved folktales. From this land, rich in history, new generations are emerging with the strength to shape the future through their own unique values.



According to the Legend of Ura, Prince Kibitsuhiko of Japan’s ancient imperial line is celebrated as the hero who defended the land from Ura, a demon feared for his wrongdoings. This story became the foundation for the Momotaro tale found in the Otagizoshi folktales of the Muromachi and early Edo periods. Today, Okayama is honored as the “Birthplace of the Momotaro Legend,” recognized as part of Japan Heritage.



Image provided by Koeido

1



One day, an old woman found a giant peach floating down the river. When the old woman and her husband opened it, out came a lively boy. They named him Momotaro, meaning “Peach Boy.”

2



Momotaro set off to defeat the ogres. Along the way, a dog, a monkey, and a pheasant joined him after receiving kibidango (millet dumplings).

3



Together, they boarded a boat and crossed the sea toward Onigashima, the island where the ogres lived.

4



After a fierce battle, Momotaro defeated the ogres and made them promise never to trouble people again.

5



He brought back the treasures the ogres had stolen and returned them to their rightful owners.

6



Peace returned to the village, and Momotaro lived happily with the old man, the old woman, and his loyal companions, enjoying kibidango together.

THE SACRED HOME OF JAPAN'S BELOVED FOLKTALE, WHERE THE MOMOTARO LEGEND LIVES ON

Kibitsujinja Shrine is renowned as the stage for the “Ura Extermination,” said to be the origin of the Momotaro (Peach Boy) legend. According to the tale, Prince Kibitsu-hiko defeated Ura, a demon who invaded from western Japan, and the story was later passed down as the folktale of Momotaro. The dog, monkey, and pheasant in the tale are believed to derive from the names of retainers who aided him in battle. The shrine’s buildings were re-constructed in 1425 during the Muromachi period. Its main hall and worship hall, built in the unique Kibitsu-zukuri architectural style found nowhere else in Japan, are designated National Treasures. A 400-meter-long covered corridor extending from the main hall to the Motomiya Shrine creates a breathtaking sight and is designated an Important Cultural Property of Okayama Prefecture. Within the grounds stands the Okamaden hall, said to be the place where Ura’s head was buried. Here, the traditional Narukama Ritual (Boiling Cauldron Ritual) is still performed, in which the sound of a boiling cauldron is interpreted as an omen of good or bad fortune. Visitors can experience the living world of legend in this historic and romantic shrine, where the spirit of Momotaro’s tale continues to thrive.



1 An ema (wooden votive tablet) illustrated in anime style, depicting the main characters from the “Ura Extermination,” the origin of the Momotaro legend. 2 A protective amulet featuring the demon Ura. Believed to ward off evil, it includes a metal bell that produces a beautiful sound. 3 A peach-shaped amulet inspired by the Momotaro legend. Since ancient times, peaches have been considered fruit that ward off misfortune and invite good fortune. 4 A goshuincho (stamp book for shrine seals) adorned with Momotaro and his companions—the dog, monkey, and pheasant—an endearing design unique to shrines tied to the legend.

Uraja: Okayama’s Largest Summer Festival



First held in 1994, the Uraja Festival now draws around 500,000 spectators each year, making it one of the largest summer festivals in Okayama Prefecture. Inspired by the local Ura Legend, dancers with demon-like makeup perform lively routines at venues throughout Okayama City. On the final day, the festival culminates in a massive group dance where spectators are also invited to join in.

Okayama’s New Theory on Ancient Japan



Okayama City is home to the Tsukuriyama Kofun, a key-hole-shaped burial mound built in the early 5th century. At 350 meters in length, it is nearly identical in scale to the Kamishizu Misanzai Kofun in Osaka Prefecture, which measures 360 meters and is the largest of its era. No other tombs exceeding 300 meters exist from this period, leading to a new theory: that the Kibi rulers of Okayama and the Yamato rulers of Osaka jointly governed the ancient Wa Kingdom—ancient Japan. This challenges the long-held view that Yamato alone dominated early Japan.

OKAYAMA'S BELOVED CONFECTION "KIBIDANGO": OVER 160 YEARS OF PASSION

Founded in 1856 (the third year of the Ansei era), Koeido is a long-established wagashi (traditional Japanese confectionery) maker that has dedicated more than 169 years to crafting sweets in Okayama. For generations, wagashi have been cherished across regions and age groups as the perfect accompaniment to gatherings,

leaving people with warm memories tied to family moments and a sense of nostalgia. The company's signature confection, Mukashi Kibidango, is crafted with exceptional care. It is made from rare, specially cultivated glutinous rice grown by contracted farmers in the Takamatsu district of Okayama City. Following traditional methods, the rice is soaked overnight, carefully stone-milled, and then finished by hand with the utmost dedication—resulting in a truly exquisite treat.

Kibidango

Koeido's kibidango is Halal-certified, making it a treat that people around the world can enjoy with peace of mind.



The Chunagon Main Store stands on the site where Koeido was founded and was reopened after renovations in December 2019.



At Koeido Cafe Hinemosu, where the wooden interior creates a warm and welcoming atmosphere, you can enjoy freshly baked Chofu cakes and seasonal wagashi. Take a moment to relax and enjoy a peaceful time.



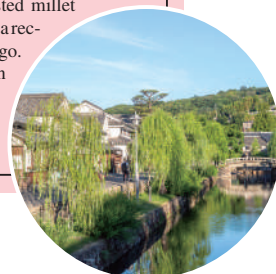
Its simple yet profound flavor conveys a timeless pride in the local heritage. Inspired by the legend of Momotaro, the Momotaro no Kibidango series offers seven varieties in total. In 1993, with the wish to bring these treats to children across Japan, the packaging was redesigned with illustrations by picture book artist Taro Gomi. Since then, it has remained a long-selling favorite, beloved by both children and adults. When visiting Okayama, be sure to experience the authentic taste for yourself.



Located at the entrance to the Kurashiki Bikan Historical Quarter, famed for its whitewashed walls, Koeido's Kurashiki Yukei Store welcomes visitors with a warm interior created from a renovated traditional townhouse.

From Okayama to the World

When Koeido was founded in 1856, kibidango was an everyday food eaten in regions where millet was grown. The founder refined it into a confection worthy of the tea ceremony. Instead of millet, he used glutinous rice, and to this he added refined white sugar and starch syrup—luxuries at the time—to create a soft gyuhi (sweet rice cake). Roasted millet flour was then used for flavoring, establishing a recipe nearly identical to that of today's kibidango. Later, the local feudal lord granted permission to use the clan crest featuring a nail-pulling design, and the confection gained high acclaim as Okayama's signature sweet.



TIMELESS TREAT BROUGHT BY THE SWEET SCIENCE



At L'Plaza, the food innovation lab, specialists with extensive experience collaborate with partners to solve challenges in product development.



Kibidango, one of the most popular local sweets from Okayama, is characterized by its soft and chewy texture thanks to starch. However, starch tends to harden over time, which affects the perfection of its taste and softness. The solution to this challenge lies in a key ingredient, trehalose, a type of sugar found in natural sources such as mushrooms and soybeans. Nagase Viita was the first in the world to successfully mass-produce trehalose from starch using enzymatic technology. Celebrating its 30th anniversary in 2025, this remarkable trehalose retains just-made softness and texture. These benefits help extend shelf life and keep its freshness and deliciousness over time. The potential of trehalose goes far beyond food; Nagase Viita is now expanding its applications into diverse fields, including personal care, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. From its home in Okayama, the company works with partners worldwide, turning deep expertise into new value to help shape a more sustainable future through passion and innovation. For its dedication to environmentally conscious manufacturing, human rights, and procurement, Nagase Viita has received the Platinum rating from EcoVadis, an international sustainability assessment organization, for two consecutive years.



Finding Clues from Nature for the People and the Planet

Founded in 1883 as a starch syrup manufacturer, Nagase Viita has been dedicated to enriching lives through the manufacture of ingredients, driven by innovations in biotechnology inspired by nature. It provides unique ingredients to various fields and further expands them into diverse areas such as food, personal care, pharmaceuticals, and agriculture. Spanning its integrated approach from R&D to manufacturing and sales, the company continues to enhance environmental sustainability and future global well-being.



At Nagase Viita, an R&D-oriented company, glycoscience researchers identify powerful enzymes from microorganisms—nature's gifts found in the soil that bring unique ingredients for tomorrow.

The illustration, a world in harmony, reflects its Purpose: "Respect life, and embrace the well-being of people and the planet."





CO-CREATING A “MICROORGANISM INDUSTRY” WITH BREWING EXPERTISE

Microorganisms—most notably koji mold—are indispensable for brewing soy sauce, miso, sake, and shochu. Fujiwara Techno-Art Co., Ltd. is Japan’s leading manufacturer of brewing equipment, having pioneered the world’s first fully automated, unmanned koji-making system. With technology rooted in more than a thousand years of tradition, the company now commands roughly 80 percent of the domestic koji production equipment market and exports to 27 countries worldwide. But Fujiwara Techno-Art does more than supply machinery. It also provides total engineering solutions that include factory design



and construction, creating efficient and user-friendly production environments tailored to the people who work

in them. The company’s reach extends beyond brewing as well, producing equipment for natto, amazake, and enzyme-based products, as well as facilities for processed foods such as alpha rice (used in emergency rations) and flour milling. In recent years, Fujiwara Techno-Art has defined “microorganism industry” as advanced manufacturing that harnesses the power of microorganisms nurtured in the brewing tradition. Through co-creation with a wide range of partners, the company is engaged in ambitious projects—from upcycling food by-products into new koji applications, to enhancing the value of underused resources, to making brewing processes smarter and more sustainable, including decarbonization efforts.

“A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE UNLOCKED BY MICROORGANISMS”



An example of using untapped resources: bread made with spent coffee grounds, rich in aroma and polyphenols.



and construction, creating efficient and user-friendly production environments tailored to the people who work



Rotary Type Automatic Koji Making Equipment (inside) From heaping to discharging, this rotary automatic system enables fully automated, unmanned operation. By maintaining optimal temperature and humidity, it ensures the production of high-quality koji.

Bringing Japan’s Fermentation Technology to the World

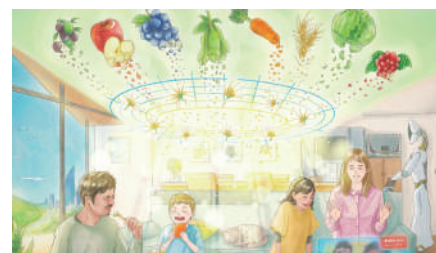
Founded in 1933, Fujiwara Techno-Art manufactures equipment and plants for producing koji—the essential starter culture for soy sauce and miso. Over nearly a century, the company has accumulated deep expertise in brewing production technologies, developing elemental processes such as raw material treatment and solid-state fermentation. Today, it plays a vital role in supporting the globalization of Japanese food culture.



“With microorganisms at our core, we are venturing beyond brewing into food, feed, energy, and biomaterials. Through co-creation with diverse partners, we are opening new markets and industries.”



Left: President Keiko Fujiwara / Right: Vice President Kana Fujiwara



Intellectual Property Portfolio Expanding Japan’s unique solid-state fermentation technologies—such as koji-making—into a wide range of industries, with the aim of building a sustainable, fulfilling, and circular society.

HAYASHIBARA MUSEUM OF ART

A TREASURY OF EAST ASIAN ANTIQUITIES

Opened in 1964, the Hayashibara Museum of Art houses approximately 9,000 works. The core of its collection consists of swords, ceramics, and other fine art objects gathered by Ichiro Hayashibara, an Okayama industrialist and the third president of Hayashibara Co., Ltd. (today Nagase Viita Co., Ltd.). It also includes daimyo treasures inherited from the Ikeda clan, the former lords of the Okayama domain—such as furnishings, Noh costumes,

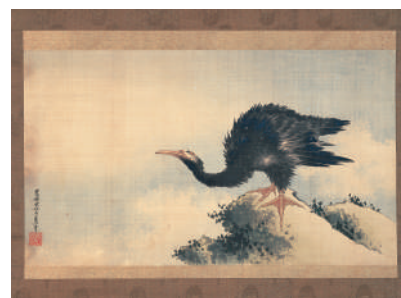
calligraphy, and paintings. Some of these holdings are designated National Treasures or Important Cultural Properties. The museum presents four to five themed exhibitions each year, along with one or two special exhibitions. It is located in Kita Ward, Okayama City, on the west side of Okayama Castle's inner moat—on the very site once occupied by the Ninomaru annex of the castle, which served as a state guesthouse.



A wide range of goods inspired by the collection—such as traditional wrapping cloths (furoshiki), decorative masking tape, and plastic document folders (clear files)—are also available for purchase.



Okegawa rokumai do armor with white-woven-fabric covered body. Edo period. This suit of armor, with white detailing, was once worn by Ikeda Tsunamasa, the second lord of the Okayama domain.



Cormorant on the head of a rock. By Katsushika Hokusai. Edo period. A close-up depiction of a cormorant standing with dignity atop a seaside crag.



National Treasures — Short sword without signature handed down by Daimyo Kuki family. Attributed to Masamune. Kamakura period / Koshirae. Edo period.

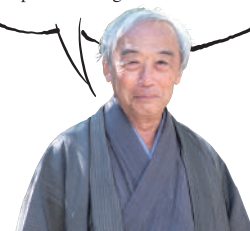
**COMBINED TICKET FOR
HAYASHIBARA MUSEUM OF
ART, OKAYAMA CASTLE
AND OKAYAMA
KORAKUEN GARDEN**



A special discount ticket (1,120 yen) is available that includes admission to Okayama Castle and Okayama Korakuen Garden—both within a 10-minute walk from the Hayashibara Museum of Art.

The building itself was designed by Kunio Maekawa, a leading figure in modernist architecture and a disciple of the world-renowned French architect Le Corbusier. Maekawa is also known for designing the Tokyo Metropolitan Art Museum and the Kumamoto Prefectural Museum of Art, and the Hayashibara Museum of Art was his very first art museum project. Its exterior, constructed with bricks irregular in both shape and color, gives the building a striking, distinctive presence. Particularly memorable is the view of the main building framed through the nagayamon (a traditional gate once used for samurai residences), which was relocated to the site in the late Meiji era.

The museum stands just west of the Okayama Castle keep, offering visitors the chance to view not only a superb collection of renowned Japanese swords but also a wide range of Japanese and East Asian antiquities. Surrounded by greenery, it provides a serene setting in which to enjoy a contemplative dialogue with art.



Director Prof. Dr. Takashi Taniichi

