

Okawa LOVERS



Festivals & Events

(Subject to change due to various circumstances.)

- February** Furogu Grand Festival (Hadakan-gyo)
Okawa Kinoka Marathon
- March** Koga Masao Memorial “Okawa Music Festival”
- April** Spring Okawa Woodworking Festival
Wakatsu Shoshosai Festival
Kobo-Enokizu Hanzakai Festival
- May** Grenadier Anchovy Fishing Season Opens(open until July 20)
- June** Chikugo River Shokaikyo Stamp Rally (Etsu Festival)
- July** Koga Masao Memorial Day Ceremony
- August** Okawa Citizens’ Summer Festival
- October** Okawa Woodworking Festival
- November** Okawa City Comprehensive Art Exhibition
Okawa Citizens’ Cultural Festival (Mid-November to Early December)
Koga Masao Birthday Festival



Furogu Grand Festival (Hadakan-gyo)

It is counted as one of the three major festivals of the Chikugo region, and the sheer intensity of the Hadakan-gyo ritual, held on the night of February 10, is especially thrilling. This is the representative festival of Okawa City.



Koga Masao Memorial “Okawa Music Festival”

Held on the first Sunday of March as part of efforts to honor Koga melodies, this event features performances by contestants who have passed the preliminary rounds, along with special guest appearances.



Grenadier Anchovy Fishing Season Opens

From May 1 to July 20 each year, grenadier anchovy fishing is permitted in the Chikugo River. During this season, visitors can enjoy the fresh taste of grenadier anchovy in a variety of dishes, including sashimi and salt-grilled preparations.



List of Accommodations

- Smile Hotel Fukuoka Okawa ☎0944-89-1311
- Okawa Riverside Hotel ☎0944-86-2200
- Ryotei & Inn Mikawaya ☎0944-87-3155
- Business Inn Seifuso ☎0944-86-5513
- Hotel AZ Fukuoka Okawa ☎0944-89-3311



For Inquiries:

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*The data published in this pamphlet is current as of the end of March 2025. Since information may change after publication, we recommend confirming details by phone or other means before your visit. Please note that we cannot be held responsible for any damages resulting from the use of the information contained herein.
*The prices listed in this pamphlet include consumption tax, in principle, and are based on information confirmed at the time of research.
*Holidays, in principle, exclude the year-end/New Year period, Obon holidays, and Golden Week.
*Unless otherwise noted, operating hours are, in principle, from opening to closing. Please note that admission is usually allowed up to 30 minutes to 1 hour before closing.
*Travel times are approximate and may vary due to weather conditions or seasonal factors. Please check with each transportation provider before your trip.
[Unauthorized reproduction prohibited.]



Okawa City, Fukuoka Prefecture



Mokka Kun

Mokumi Chan



Okawa LOVERS share their favorite local highlights.

Okawa LOVERS

FUKUOKA OKAWA





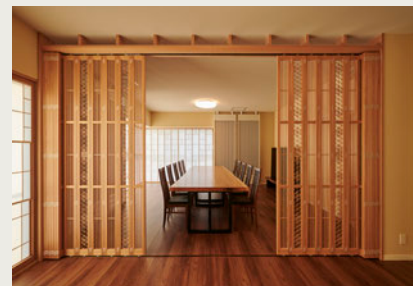
Okawa Furniture

The origins trace back to 1536 with furniture making called sashimono, which utilizes the skills of ship carpenters. This traditional craft involves joining wood without using nails, and while preserving these techniques, Okawa has incorporated new methods and designs to become Japan's leading furniture production region.



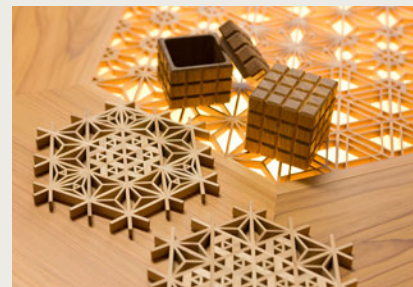
Okawa Traditional Joinery

Tategu refers to architectural fittings such as doors, sliding fusuma, paper shoji, windows, and storm shutters—all elements used to divide spaces. In Okawa, master craftsmen, using techniques cultivated through a rich tradition, create finely crafted wooden joinery that enhances daily living. Carefully finished using natural materials, these fittings bring the warmth and beauty of wood into any space.



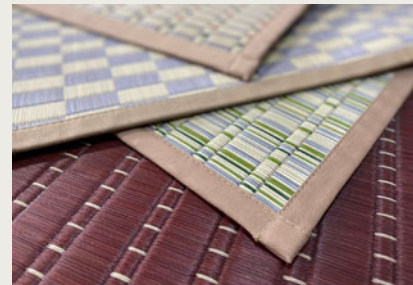
Okawa Kumiko

Kumiko is a beautiful decorative craft created through the expert techniques of joinery artisans and has developed alongside furniture making as a traditional industry of Okawa. Finely split pieces of wood are assembled one by one to form intricate geometric patterns. The Kumiko designs are imbued with various wishes and intentions, such as warding off evil or making heartfelt vows.



Kakegawa

These products are made by weaving in dyed igusa (rush grass) and are designated as a traditional specialty craft by the Governor of Fukuoka Prefecture. They are crafted using a unique locally passed down weaving technique known as Kakegawa-ori. Visitors will be able to appreciate the work put in by skilled artisans to weave the intricate patterns and designs.



Cat Furniture

Fickle and free-spirited by nature—yet when it comes to their perfect spot, cats are surprisingly demanding. This premium cat furniture is designed to satisfy even the most particular feline. Far from being an afterthought, every piece is crafted with carefully selected wood, and finished with meticulous attention to detail by skilled artisans in Okawa, who pour their expertise and craftsmanship into each item.



Prologue

What's Okawa Like?

Okawa is, of course, well known as a city of skilled craftsmen thriving in furniture making and woodworking.

But it's more than that; there are fascinating places to explore and delicious foods to enjoy.

Why not meet the people who love Okawa and have carried on its traditions?

Take a stroll through the city, and you're sure to become one of the many "Okawa Lovers"!

Index

P02- The Woodworking of Okawa

P04- Tourist Attractions

P07- Okawa's Local Cuisine

P09- Cafés, Sweets & Desserts

P11- Local Specialties & Renowned Products

P13- Okawa Souvenirs/Map

P15 Event Information & Inquiries





EVENT.1

Okawa Woodworking Festival

A major event that brings energy to Okawa, the city of furniture—a unique and iconic celebration found only here.

Held each year in April and October at the main venue, the Okawa Industry Meeting Hall, and surrounding sub-venues, this is a major furniture festival celebrating the city's craftsmanship. The Okawa Furniture Show & Sale brings together around 200 furniture manufacturers, showcasing approximately 10,000 items—including furniture, joinery, interior goods, and home accessories—all in one place. The festival is packed with events like woodworking workshops, children's furniture design presentations, and student-led product development projects. There's also a parade featuring celebrities with ties to Okawa, as well as a bustling local market offering delicious regional specialties and renowned products—making it a popular event that draws large crowds every time.



Enjoy the sights,
tastes, and experiences
as you discover the
charm of Okawa
and our furniture.

Craft one-of-a-kind wooden creations—
fun for both kids and adults alike!

Discover a range of engaging woodworking experiences, from Okawa kumiko to chairs, piggy banks, coasters, and beyond. Each activity includes a convenient, easy-to-use kit, with helpful staff on hand to provide clear guidance every step of the way—ensuring a fun and accessible experience even for children. As you work with the natural warmth of wood, you'll gain a deeper appreciation for the meticulous skill and artistry behind traditional craftsmanship.



EVENT.2 Woodworking Experience @Okawa Terrazza



Okawa Terrazza
Address: 2525-2 Oaza mukaijima, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-87-0923
Hours: 10:00 am–5:00 pm
Days closed: Mondays (or the following day if Monday is a national holiday)
Fee: From ¥1,000



Chikugo River Lift (Shokaikyo) Bridge (formerly the Chikugo River Railway Bridge)



The bright red iron bridge spanning the Chikugo River is a beloved symbol of Okawa.

Built in 1935 alongside the construction of the Japanese National Railways Saga Line, this is the oldest surviving vertical lift bridge in Japan. It has been designated as a National Important Cultural Property and recognized as a Mechanical Engineering Heritage site. Designed as a movable bridge to avoid obstructing ships traveling along the Chikugo River, it features a rare structure in Japan that lifts the entire central span to allow vessels to pass. Today, it no longer serves as a railway bridge and is open to the public as a pedestrian walkway. *Passage by motorcycles or other vehicles, as well as entry with pets, is not allowed.

Address: Near Oaza Mukaijima, Okawa City Tel: 0944-87-9919 [Chikugo River Lift Bridge Tourism Foundation (Public Interest Incorporated Foundation)]
Operating Hours: 9:00 am–4:30 pm Illumination: From sunset until around 10:00 pm
Walkway Open Hours: March–November: 9:00 am–9:00 pm
December–February: 9:00 am–5:00 pm
Days closed: Mondays (or the following day if Monday is a national holiday)

The stone embankment that appears at low tide has been recognized as a Selected Civil Engineering Heritage Site.

At the mouth of the Chikugo River, heavy sediment buildup had long obstructed the passage of ships. To address this issue, the Meiji government invited Dutch engineer Johannes de Rijke, who in 1890, oversaw the construction of a roughly 6km-long stone levee down the center of the river. By locally increasing the water flow speed, the levee helps flush sediment out toward the shallow river mouth—a function it continues to perform to this day.



de Rijke Training Levee





Koga Masao Memorial Hall & Family Home



Discover the legacy and musical world of master composer Masao Koga

Masao Koga, a celebrated composer was born in 1904 in Taguchi Village (now part of Okawa City). The pride of Okawa City, Koga was known for iconic songs like Kage wo Shitaite, composing around 5,000 popular tunes beginning in the early Showa era. The memorial museum was established to carry on the legacy of these poignant Koga melodies, which continue to touch people’s hearts. On display are his beloved guitar, handwritten scores, and a chronological timeline that traces his life and career. Visitors can enjoy his many masterpieces in the listening room. The museum also hosts regular events: Utagoe Hiroba (Community Chorus) on the second Saturday of each month, and the Fureai Concert on the fourth Sunday.



Address:844 Oaza Sanmaru, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-86-4133
Hours:9:30 am–5:00 pm (last entry: 4:30 pm)
Days closed:Closed on Mondays
(or the following day if Monday is a national holiday)
Fee:General admission: ¥400, High school and university students: ¥300, Elementary and junior high school students: ¥200 *Group discounts available for parties of 20 or more.



1) A restored version of Masao Koga’s childhood home stands adjacent to the museum. He spent his early years in Okawa until the age of seven.
2) You might even be treated to a live performance by the museum director, Mr. Eiki Yamada!



1) The simple white exterior walls create a remarkable contrast with the emerald green walls inside.
2) Museum Director: Takahiro Iyonaga



Okawa Municipal Seiriki Art Museum

Experience a world of modern architecture and art with 100 years of history!

Built in 1908 as the office of Seiriki Sake Brewery, this historic building was transformed into the Okawa Municipal Seiriki Art Museum in 2001. The museum interior offers a refined blend of Western and Japanese styles, with attention to detail evident in its furnishings and intricate decorative touches. In addition to the permanent collection showcasing valuable works, the museum also hosts a variety of special exhibitions. Because Seiriki Sake Brewery had close ties with prominent young artists—including Aoki Shigeru, one of Japan’s leading Western-style painters—the museum also holds an annual special exhibition titled “A Vision for the Future”, featuring the works of emerging artists under the theme of connecting and nurturing.

Address:77-16 Oaza Kanegae, Okawa City Tel:0944-86-6700
Hours:9:00 am–5:00 pm Days closed:Closed on Mondays
(or the following day if Monday is a national holiday)
Fee:Free admission (charge applies during special exhibitions)



Furogu

A shrine with a history of over 1,800 years, affectionately known as “Ofuro-san.”

This historic shrine, said to have been founded around 1,800 years ago, is associated with Empress Jingu. Its majestic inner shrine and the stone Shohei Pagoda have been designated as an Important Cultural Property of Japan. Affectionately known to locals as “Ofuro-san,” the shrine has long been revered as a place to pray for good fortune and victory in life. The Furogu Grand Festival, held annually from February 9 to 11, is considered one of the three major festivals in the Chikugo region. In April 2025, a new shrine garden designed by world-renowned landscape artist Kazuyuki Ishihara was completed beside the inner shrine. Centered around three sacred pillars, this tranquil new space offers a place of peace and reflection.

Address:726-1 Oaza Sakemi, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-87-2154
<https://www.ofurosan.or.jp>



1) The sacred camphor tree known as Shirasagi-no-kusu is estimated to be around 2,000 years old. Illuminated from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm; enveloped in a mystical cloud of mist (unkai) six times daily, creating a dreamy scene (See details on the official website). 2) Norihisa Azumi, a deputy shrine priest (negi)



Kobo and Enokizu: Townscape of the Clan Boundary

The birthplace of “Japan’s Woodworking Capital, Okawa”A townscape preserving the spirit of the Edo period

The term “Townscape of the Clan Boundary” refers to how, during the Edo period, the Ego waterway that runs through the town marked the boundary between two feudal clans: Kobo on the west side belonged to the Yanagawa Clan, while Enokizu on the east was part of the Kurume Clan. As a key hub for maritime trade, the area attracted shipbuilders and woodworking craftsmen, laying the foundation for Okawa’s renowned woodworking tradition. Strolling through this charming district—lined with traditional townhouses, temples, and shrines dating from the Edo period to the early Showa era—offers a glimpse into the bustling life of the past. The area can be leisurely explored on foot in about 20 minutes, but joining a guided tour will deepen the experience with fascinating stories that are sure to leave you saying, “Wow, I never knew that!” (For details on guided tours, please visit the official website.)

Address:471-1 Oaza Enokizu, Okawa City
(Clan Boundary Town Square/Rest Area)
Contact:Kobo-Enokizu Clan Boundary Town Preservation Society(Closed on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays)
Tel: 0944-87-0931(9:00 am–5:00 pm)
<https://hanzakai.com>

Ms. Hiroko Miyake, a member of the Kobo-Enokizu Clan Boundary Town Preservation Society, who also works as a guide.



1) Nakamura Family Residence: During the Edo period, a notice board of the Kurume Clan was displayed right beside it.
2/3) Former Yoshihara Family Residence: Designated as a National Important Cultural Property.

Okawa's Local Cuisine

Okawa's very own tare-zuke karaage started here!

This is the birthplace of tare-zuke karaage—Okawa City's beloved soul food, where crispy fried chicken is dipped into a flavorful broth-based sauce before eating. The chicken is simply seasoned with salt and pepper, then carefully deep-fried in oil that's refreshed daily. When the piping-hot karaage is dipped into a special soy-based sauce made with kombu dashi, the flavor is taken to a whole new level! The dip also helps drain excess oil, making the dish surprisingly light—you'll find yourself going back for more. Try dipping the side of shredded cabbage into the sauce and enjoying it together with the chicken for an extra-delicious bite.

Karaage Taisho

Address: 1-3 Oaza Sakemi, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-88-1828 Hours: 11:00 am–8:00 pm
Days closed: Mondays/Tuesdays



1) A wide variety including boneless (thigh), bone-in (breast), chicken wings, gristle, and liver 2) Akiko Hirano, the second-generation owner and daughter of the founder 3) Tare-zuke karaage (from ¥650 per serving)



1) The Sushi Gozen (¥2,420) is a great-value course offering a variety of dishes, available for both lunch and dinner.
2) The tasteful interior was crafted by skilled woodworkers from Okawa.

A unique taste of the Ariake Sea Etsu dishes in early summer!

With a history spanning over 50 years, this long-established sushi restaurant is known for its fresh seafood from the Genkai-nada Sea, as well as unique local catches from the Ariake Sea, such as kuchizoko (sole). One of its highlights is dishes made with Etsu—a rare fish that can only be found in the lower Chikugo River from May to July 20 each year. "It's full of tiny bones, so preparing it takes a lot of work," says second-generation owner Kiyonori Nakajima, "but no matter how you cook it, it's delicious!" One signature dish is the Etsu Oshizushi (pressed sushi with vinegared whole Etsu), a specialty originally created by the founder.

Sendo Zushi

Address: 1698-5 Oaza mukaijima, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-86-3665
Hours: 11:30 am–2:30 pm / 5:00 pm–10:00 pm
Days closed: Mondays



1) Ramen and Mini Fried Rice Set - ¥1,150 Ramen ala carte - ¥750
2) Tatami seating available; great for families with children



Ramen with a mellow flavor adored for over half a century.

Founded in 1971, this long-standing ramen shop serves a mellow, odor-free tonkotsu (pork bone) broth made with slightly sweet soy sauce from the local Okawa area. The noodles are homemade, and the chashu pork is tender and flavorful. The second-generation owner proudly carries on over half a century of tradition, proclaiming, "Our goal is to make ramen you can enjoy every day and still come back for more!" The most popular choice is the ramen set with a side of mini fried rice—but don't be fooled by the word "mini." This hearty dish has long satisfied the appetites of Okawa's hardworking craftsmen and packs a surprisingly generous portion.



Furu Ramen

Address: 253-1 Oaza Kitakoga, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-87-2393
Hours: 11:00 am–3:00 pm (last order)
Days closed: Thursdays, 3rd Wednesday of the month

Piping hot, fluffy, and richly flavored—Seiro-mushi steamed eel

This specialty restaurant has been serving eel dishes for over 40 years. A regional favorite in the Chikugo area, Seiro-mushi features grilled eel glazed with a secret sauce and topped with shredded egg over rice, all steamed together in a bamboo steamer. The result is melt-in-your-mouth eel and perfectly seasoned rice, with every grain infused with flavor. Another popular choice is the Shioyaki (salt-grilled eel). Enjoy a luxurious meal in a refined, traditional Japanese setting.

Hamamatsuya

Address: 9-1 Oaza Tsu, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-88-3818 Hours: 11:00 am–8:30 pm (last order)
Days closed: Tuesdays *subject to change



1) Private rooms available with views of a traditional Japanese garden
2) The Premium Seiro-mushi comes with soup and small side dishes (also available for takeout)



Hotel-quality tantanmen and dim sum that are absolutely delicious

Originally opened in 2013 as a Chinese-style izakaya, this eatery transitioned into a noodle specialty shop during the COVID-19 pandemic. Owner-chef Shinya Ryu, who honed his skills in Chinese cuisine at Hotel Nikko Fukuoka, brings a refined touch to every dish on the menu. The standout favorite is the tantanmen—a sesame-rich yet light and flavorful noodle soup made by adding ingredients like tahini (sesame paste) to a clear broth. On weekday afternoons, customers can enhance their meal with set options that include spring rolls and other sides for an additional fee.



1) Run by the Ryu husband-and-wife team
2) The Tantanmen (¥950) comes topped with bean sprouts and seasonal vegetables. Also available: Black tantanmen (¥1,000) and Dry tantanmen (¥950)



Tantanmen and Panda-tei

Address: 1463-4 Oaza mukaijima, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-86-3080
Hours: 11:00 am–2:00 pm (last order) / 5:30 pm–8:30 pm (last order)
Days closed: Monday nights, Tuesdays



Local cuisine of Okawa, nurtured by the Chikugo River and Ariake Sea

This traditional Japanese inn and restaurant was founded in 1876. From May to July 20, the highlight is Etsu—a species of anchovy-like fish. Freshness is ensured by sourcing directly from local fishermen, and generations of culinary expertise bring out the delicate taste of this rare catch. From July to November, the menu features wild Chikugo River catfish, known locally as kawa-anko. Unlike typical freshwater fish, it has no muddy flavor and offers a light yet deeply satisfying taste. During the same season, you can also enjoy a full-course Wild Eel Kaiseki meal, priced at ¥11,000 or ¥14,300, made with naturally caught eel. This is an ideal base for savoring local cuisine while exploring Okawa City and nearby attractions.

Ryotei & Inn Mikawaya

Address: 2222 Oaza mukaijima, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-87-3155 Hours: Restaurant: 11:00 am–9:00 pm (reservation required) INN Check-in: 3:00 pm–10:00 pm / Check-out: 10:00 am Days closed: Unscheduled



1) Etsu Kaiseki (from ¥5,500)
2) Kawa-anko Sashimi (¥2,200)
3) Guest rooms in the main building were renovated in October 2024



Cafés, Sweets & Desserts



Adachi Coffee—A café where you can savor exquisite coffee



COROICO Tea Lounge

Address:1F Villa Verde 325-28 Oaza Enokizu, Okawa City
Tel:090-2963-5615
Hours:11:00 am–5:00 pm(Last order: 4:30 pm)
Days closed:Wednesdays *Irregular holidays

1) Mr. Adachi (center) and his enthusiastic staff
2) Basque Cheesecake and Blended Coffee Set – ¥1,088

Driven by the motto “Ichigo Ippai”—a once-in-a-lifetime cup—owner Kazuhiro Adachi has traveled the world in search of truly delicious coffee. Born in Okawa, he founded Adachi Coffee. Located within the Mediterranean-style shopping complex Villa Verde, the Okawa branch features an adjoining café, COROICO Tea Lounge, which was renovated in April 2021. In this bright, stylish space, you can relax and enjoy specialty coffee* along with light meals and sweets.

*Only about 9–10% of coffee beans worldwide meet this high-quality standard



Enjoy the authentic flavor and wheat aroma of traditional French bread

1) A wide variety of hard-type breads available, such as apple pie, danish, and Yokubari France (our special French bread).
2) The shop owner, Mr. Yasushi Koga, has trained in France.



Bread made with domestically grown wheat from Hokkaido and Fukuoka are centered around simple varieties such as baguettes, croissants, and boules. The popular pain de mie (mountain-shaped loaf), available only by advance reservation, is so well-loved that some regulars visit once or twice a week to buy it by the bagful. Located in an area that once thrived as a post town, the shop—originally a traditional townhouse—has received the “29th Public Competition Fukuoka Prefecture Architectural Award for Artistic Urban Design.”

A Certain Bakery Corner in Paris Paris-Montsouris

Address:121-1 Oaza Kobo, Okawa City
Tel:0944-87-6919
Hours:9:00 am–7:00 pm
Days closed:Mondays/Tuesdays



1) Cream puff ¥330, shortcake ¥480 2) Baked sweets from ¥140 3) Grilled steamed bun filled with cream cheese, walnuts, honey, and white bean paste: Kurumu Cheese ¥280

Onoshima’s specialty: grilled steamed buns and sweets

Housed in an 80-year-old traditional home, this nostalgic kanmidokoro (Japanese-style sweets café) offers a charming retro Showa-era atmosphere. The location once served as a ferry port on Onoshima, where people crossed the Chikugo River by boat. Their signature yakimanju (grilled sweet buns) are made with carefully crafted dough and filling, and one of the highlights is enjoying them while sitting on the riverbank with a view of the Chikugo River. The café also offers beautifully made shortcakes and sweets by a patissier, using locally sourced fruit. Everything is handmade, so quantities are limited—reservations are highly recommended.



Kanmidokoro Ni

Address:2774-1 Oaza Onoshima, Okawa City
Tel:080-5792-0002
Hours:11:00 am–5:00 pm
Days closed:Thursdays, Sundays
*Irregular holidays



1) Special Short cake ¥590
2) “The strawberries come directly from a local farmer I know,” says Kumai. The affordable prices are possible thanks to community connections.



The neighborhood cake shop that’s always stayed the same

“We had been running a traditional Japanese sweets shop since the Meiji era, but I turned it into a Western-style confectionery,” says third-generation owner Koki Kumai. For over half a century since then, they’ve continued making mild flavored cakes and baked goods in the same consistent style. Many fans span three generations, drawn to treats like the Special Shortcake topped with a large Amao strawberry, the nostalgic Mont Blanc, and cakes made with buttercream.



Bon Gateaux

Address:505-3 Oaza Sakemi, Okawa City
Tel:0944-86-3442
Hours:0:30 pm–7:00 pm
Days closed:Unscheduled



A café attached to a cozy interior shop surrounded by lush greenery



A café attached to Crash Gate Fukuoka Okawa Main Store, an interior shop operated by Seki Kagu. Opened in September 2024 with the theme “LOVE & JOY,” the café offers a bright space filled with a variety of lush houseplants. All the food and sweets are carefully prepared using carefully selected ingredients, delivering high satisfaction. The most popular item is the Plate Lunch, featuring the café’s proud homemade additive-free sausages.

OASIS CAFE

Address:170-4 Oaza Hataho, Okawa City
Tel:0944-88-3939
Hours:10:00 am–6:00 pm
(Last order: 5:00 pm)
Days closed:None



1) “Be sure to try the hand-drip coffee too!”
2) Dogs are welcome at the terrace seating.
3) The Plate Lunch with plenty of vegetables is ¥1,300. The freshly baked daily croissants are also delicious.

An adored local favorite that continues to be loved by the people of Okawa



The specialty of Kanoeya is the Shokaikyo Manju, stamped with an image of the Chikugo River Lift Bridge. These traditional, simple manju buns feature a smooth red bean filling and a simple, mild sweetness that makes you want to eat two or three in a row. Along with their ever-popular Kushi Dango, these treats have been loved by the town for their consistent flavor and affordable price since the shop’s founding 76 years ago. This is a beloved taste of Okawa that people hope will continue for years to come.

Kanoeya

Address:2476-3 Oaza mukaijima, Okawa City
Tel:0944-86-2592
Hours:10:00 am–5:00 pm
Days closed:Unscheduled

1) Kushi Dango ¥160
2) Shokaikyo Manju ¥150
3) In autumn and winter, seasonal favorites such as Uguisu Mochi, Mame Daifuku, and Kuri Daifuku are added to the showcase alongside regular items.





Amao— Strawberry liqueur

Japan's first Amao strawberry liqueur. Enjoy it on the rocks, mixed with soda, or diluted with milk to make a strawberry milk drink. (300 ml/¥930)



Wakanami Junmai Sake

Wakanami's flagship product. A refreshing acidity reminiscent of green apples, balanced with a gentle sweetness (720 ml/¥1,540)



Wakanami Junmai Ginjo Sake

Elegant sweetness with a clean, crisp finish. Uses Yamada-nishiki rice from Itoshima and Yume Ikkon rice from Mizuma. (720 ml/¥1,930)

PICK
UP!

Rushing waves of umami, with a refreshing and lingering finish The young team behind Wakanami's vibrant sake

In the manufacturing town of Okawa, the sake brewery Wakanami Sake Brewery is making splash in the world of Japanese sake. At the 2024 Fukuoka Prefecture Sake Awards* held in September, their Wakanami brand won prizes in four out of five categories—a testament to its status as one of Fukuoka's leading sake producers both in name and in quality. Their sake is crafted on the banks of the majestic Chikugo River. Today's "Team Wakanami" consists of President Kaichiro Imamura, his sister and production head Yuka Imamura, ninth-generation toji (master brewer) Takahiro Shoji, and four other brewers, making a team of seven. "The current toji was a classmate of mine when I was attending the National Research Institute of Brewing in Hiroshima," says Yuka. "When we brought him on board, we established a clear concept for our sake-making." That concept is: "A forward wave of flavor, a receding wave of finish." "Having a shared concept helped clarify the direction for the entire brewery. The president is the captain, the toji is the helmsman, and the brewers are the crew—we're all on the same ship sailing toward a common goal. That's the image we work with." The calm and refreshing flavor characteristic of the Wakanami brand is only possible because the entire team works toward the same flavor profile. "To sail in unison, we repeatedly conduct tasting sessions," Yuka explains. "We quantify taste elements like sweetness and acidity on a 10-point scale so we can align our palates." This tasting skill is another major strength of Team Wakanami. Both Yuka and Shoji are certified Sake Expert Assessor—the only officially recognized sake-tasting license in Japan. Currently, no one else in the prefecture holds this title, underscoring the difficulty of the certification. Having not just one, but two people with such elite qualifications is an undeniable asset. With team strength as its driving force, Wakanami Sake Brewery continues its rapid rise. It may not be long before their sake becomes a household staple in Fukuoka—and across the nation.

*An appraisal competition for commercially available sake, held with the aim of improving the quality of sake and authentic shochu produced within the prefecture, as well as promoting research and the advancement of brewing techniques and skills.



- 1) The blending tank that keeps watch over the brewery
- 2) The tank used for making moromi (fermenting mash)
- 3) The brewers who craft Wakanami sake
- 4) Part of the brewery featuring a large wooden beam, where tasting sessions are held day and night
- 5) Yuka Imamura, head of production, at the brewery's attached liquor shop



Founded in 1922

WAKANAMI sake brewery

Address: 752 Oaza Kanegae, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-88-1225 (Advanced reservations required for brewery guided tours)
Hours: 9:00 am–5:00 pm Days closed: Saturdays, Sundays & holidays

Vinegar-making with a 300-year history Experience the power of nature and the rich flavor of vinegar through the five senses

PICK
UP!

The Takahashi family settled in Enokizu, Okawa City in 1624, during the early Edo period. Blessed with abundant water and rice, the second generation of the family began brewing sake, and the fourth generation later shifted to vinegar making. For over 300 years since then, the family's vinegar has been crafted using a traditional method passed down from parent to child. "We never change the core of our process, but it's also important to create products that fit the times," says Seitaro Takahashi, the 15th-generation head of the family. In front of the vinegar brewery stands a 260-year-old townhouse. On its first floor is a vinegar shop offering a variety of products: from traditional nigori-zu (unfiltered vinegar), to sushi vinegar, pickling vinegar, and fruit-based drinking vinegars—all made using time-honored techniques. "Many people think of vinegar as being good for the health but associate a sharp, nose-stinging smell with it, but when it's made with care and time, the result is mellow and smooth," says Takahashi. "Nigori-zu is bottled straight from the fermentation crock with minimal filtration. It retains the flavor of our original black vinegar, complete with naturally occurring acetic acid bacteria from our brewery. I hope people will give it a try." To share more about vinegar and how to use it, the second floor of the shop houses Ristorante SHOUBUN. Its monthly Vinegar Lunch course begins with an aperitif vinegar and features a variety of dishes made with different types of vinegar. Vinegar isn't used just for acidity—it also adds richness and depth to the flavors. The shop also regularly hosts fermentation workshops, such as making fermented drinks, and offers guided tours of the vinegar brewery—even solo visitors are welcome (see website for details). "We want people to fully experience, through all five senses, the natural power of fermentation and vinegar making!"



Umasu Vinegar

Simply seep vegetables in it overnight, and they simply become delicious pickles—a product meant for your convenience. (300 ml/¥486)



Kasumikuro-su Vinegar

A traditional, smooth flavored nigori-zu (200 ml/¥1,728)



Suin Strawberry

Strawberry vinegar-based drink. Dilute 4 to 5 times. (200 ml/¥1,188)



- 1) Fermentation is carried out using wooden barrels and straw mats
- 2) A vinegar shop where you can sample different vinegars
- 3) Vinegar Lunch ¥2,750. The same flavor as the popular chirashi sushi can also be taken home as vinegar shop rice balls (frozen) for ¥324.
- 4) Seitaro Takahashi, the 15th generation owner.

Founded in 1711

Vinegar Brewery SHOUBUNSU •

Vinegar Shop

Address: 548-1 Oaza Enokizu, Okawa City
Tel: 0944-88-1535 Hours: 9:30 am–5:00 pm Days closed: None

Ristorante SHOUBUN

Hours: 11:30 am–3:00 pm (Last order: 2:00 pm) Two seatings (advance reservations required) Days closed: Sundays, Mondays
*Renovations scheduled for fall of 2025 <https://shoubun.jp>

Be sure to visit the vinegar brewery, filled with rich and fragrant aromas, while strolling through the Kobo and Enokizu: Townscape of the Clan Boundary (see p.6).
*The annual Vinegar Brewery open house is held on the third Saturday and Sunday of April.

