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Tsukiji Wonderland

By Unknown

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Besides all the fish
Tsukiji is an information
gathering source.

A walk through the market
lets you know that the season changed.

Japanese food
is very seasonal
and the changing of the seasons is
first seen here.

It's not that
Tsukiji's the best in the world.

There's nothing in its league.

It's the only one.

Nothing in the world compares to it.

I bet you!

The Japanese have tremendous respect
for seafood.

Tsukiji is based on an appreciation
of fresh seafood.

- Where are they migrating to?

- Sado.

Already?

I won't recommend these to you.

I stopped selling the milt today.

It's available but
the quality's not good.

- You have sardines?

- Yes, they're getting better.

But they're still spongy on the back.

Our intermediate wholesalers know fish.

No other place has so many experts.

I'm convinced about that.

The intermediate wholesalers
are knowledgeable.

They know how to grade fish.

They auction and resell the seafood
to the retailers

in a prompt and effective manner.

There are professional fishermen,
the professionals who deliver
and those who evaluate the fish.

And the chefs are at the end
of the line.
Wholesalers choose the fish
best suited to the needs
of each retailer or restaurant.
So we get to eat good fish.
The wholesalers' choices
are based on knowledge
they've accumulated.
They take pride in their work.
Your last fish was great.
I'd do anything to get one for you,
if I saw another one like that.
The wholesalers are very proud
to be a part of
the market's long tradition.
It's not just about how much
they make out of a deal.
The priority for most of them
is to provide quality fish.
They aren't focusing on making
big profits.
That isn't a source of pride
for them.
I usually show up at I AM. A little
earlier before the long weekend.
I usually show up at I AM. A little
earlier before the long weekend.
Good morning.
You have 700 boxes?
Great. How's the quality?
We get orders a night before.
Now, I am sorting the customers'
orders for fish.
20 grilled eel to L.A.
I have an order from Los Angeles.

It's 8:

I don't call them too early but
they call me up any time of the day.
What can I do?
Some wholesalers come earlier,
like 10 PM-.
It's early but everything depends

on how much I get done now.
What we do is simple.
It's the same every day.
Daisuke Yamazaki
Intermediate Wholesaler
I process fish as soon as I arrive.
So I want the customers to come and
get it while it's still fresh.
I always come at 2:30 AM.
We process our orders the night before.
I check the orders and
figure out how to deal with them.
There's 300 jack mackerels
but the order's for 250-.
- Pack 250 of them and put the rest aside.
- I'll remove them.
Looking good.
Every fish has a different value.
The wholesalers evaluate
and sort the fish.
We auction the fish and sort it
according to the clients' needs.
That's our responsibility.
Intermediate wholesalers liaise
for the clients.
Toichiro lida
Intermediate Wholesaler
Fishermen risk their lives
to catch good fish.
But not everyone appreciates
that quality.
So we have to find suitable customers
who understand the fishes' value.
This is not a local market.
So all sorts of fish come
here from all over Japan.
We are here to pick the right
fish for my clients-.
We have a collective approach
to our service.
We have a collective approach
to our service.
When you walk down the aisles
you see wholesalers standing

at their tables.
And the intermediate wholesalers
walk around asking about fish prices.
After a short interaction
the wholesaler puts a sold tag
on the fish.
That's good!
Don't you have a box of 30?
Oops...
It's not about being able to tell
good fish from bad.
It's about fulfilling
the customers' needs.
The quality and prices
of fish change daily.
That's where a good wholesaler
makes the right choices.
The best seafood in the world
comes to Tsukiji-.
Mamoru Sakai
Intermediate Wholesaler
Which allows us to provide fish
steadily to our customers.
Which allows us to provide fish
steadily to our customers.
Each lot is individually numbered.
We wholesalers can spot
a good fish.
It's different every year.
Tsushima fish is good now
but next year it could change.
It changes every day.
I only know conger eels.
I wouldn't last a day
Auction table A"
I check the flavor first.
The color, size, dryness...
I use all my senses to evaluate it.
I use all my senses to evaluate it.
The market deals with
20,000 boxes a day.
Sea urchins come from across Japan
and the world.
Up north from Russia

and Hokkaido.
Peru and Argentina.
A lot from Chile.
From both coasts of America.
Sea urchins"
Naturally we're totally focused
at auctions.
You can't just stand and watch
if you want good products to sell.
You evaluate the products closely.
And you seize the opportunity!
I love this work.
I'm 100% committed to Tsukiji.
It's fun.
The first time I bid I was 22.
I still get nervous just
before the auction.
When I'm depending on a bid
and there's only one
my knees shake.
There's none coming tomorrow.
Really?
I'll buy it.
They have quite a few cases today.
The price will go down.
We're rivals.
So we deceive each other.
I'll say something
negative about fish I want.
I pretend fish aren't selling
when they are.
The others do the same
so it all works out.
It's good.
I'll take it.
We all play games.
We trick each other
because we're desperate.
Everyone has memo
pads with jottings in them.
It's shorthand notes. I know
which ones are good.
If you want something, you can't be
stingy about 2,000 yen.

It's competitive.
It's like a sumo ring.
All sellers say their product is the best.
Toshiaki Ishizuka
Intermediate Wholesaler
So you put them in the ring to test it-
That's the market-.
I'm nothing but grateful.
Good fish earns more money
which is an incentive.
So fishermen try their luck with us.
Hiroyuki Hirai
Intermediate Wholesaler
I'm grateful for their faith in us.
That's what Tsukiji is about.
I love prawns so I only want to sell
them to people I like-.
I love prawns so I only want to sell
them to people I like-.
Katsumi Morita
Intermediate Wholesaler
They're bigger today and wild.
It's not really a work to me.
I guess I'm a fool.
Forget profit.
- It's not about money?
- No.
Akihiro Oyama
Intermediate Wholesaler
In good and bad times we interact
with one another.
We communicate in person, not
over computers or telephones.
Which is good.
Theodore C. Bestor Social Cultural
Anthropologist Harvard University Professor
We got some lots from Hachinohe.
Go ahead and take a look.
Wow, so firm.
And cheap!
- It's a good deal!
- I hear you!
They are good.
40 cases for you, thanks.

They're from Aomori.
They're good.
This one goes to Los Angeles!
Nakaoroshi = intermediate wholesalers
I bid on these lots today.
Look how meaty they are.
One of a kind.
I'll sell them.
All the good fish
comes to Tsukiji-.
For me Tsukiji is a battlefield.
It's a battle between dealers
and shoppers.
I have to keep fighting
for good fish-.
If you do well, the wholesalers treat
you as an equal.
Don't order from the harvesters.
See it yourself and then decide.
Don't order from the harvesters.
See it yourself and then decide.
Ren Redzepi
noma
- Great.
- From Oita.
That's small.
But it's lively.
Tsukiji is great. We'd have
no business without it.
I started accompanying him to
Tsukiji early on.
I thought all the stalls
looked the same.
The market's so huge
you can get lost easily.
But he wouldn't wait for
his apprentices.
I thought if I got lost
I'd never find my way out.
I had to run after him,
carrying his bags.
The aisles are like a maze so it's
hard to keep up.
In western Japan, chefs are

like department stores in a way.
They diversify.
Their style is to employ various
techniques to serve variety of dishes-.
Variety is their style.
Whereas Tokyo chefs specialize,
like a sushi bar only serves sushi.
A tempura chef improves his tempura
over decades.
Tokyo chefs regard themselves
more as a craftsman than a cook.
That artisan culture has its roots
in Tsukiji.
To excel at their craft
they expect to work with
the best ingredients-.
See how it's not slimy?
It'll stay that way when it's cooked.
I'm meticulous with my craft-
I have to be.
I first visited Tsukiji when I was 30.
It's been 40 years.
I enter from here.
We've known the conger eel vendor
the longest.
From before the war.
The wholesaler is 3rd generation.
And I'm the second.
Can I see?
You chose the same sized eels for me.
Thank you.
He picks the best eel out of 30 or 40.
Sometimes he chooses the best
out of 50 for me.
Only they can do that.
Every eel has a different face.
Like people, there are faces you like.
I pick fatter small faces
Face size isn't everything.
This one's noticeably thicker and
its small face is a marker.
I don't weigh them.
I can just tell.
Kizushi"

They take time to choose eels for me
and I complain if
I'm not satisfied!
I have about 8 wholesalers
I buy from.
I want a smaller one.
Each stall has a specialty.
Live fish, shellfish and so on.
I visit certain stalls
because I like the vendor.
You can't go to a supermarket.
I seek out the experts who work
at Tsukiji.
Always.
Tsukiji's amazing.
You know Kaiko Bridge?
You cross it and anything can happen.
A wholesaler once told me
It's ruthless here-
If you're tricked, it's your fault-
In the old days there were more
know-it-all customers.
They went around choosing fish.
They claimed to know a good fish
when they saw one.
Bull.
You need wholesalers to choose
fish for you at auctions.
It's not easy.
We're lucky today. There were so many
abalones to choose from.
I like to choose myself-.
And I need the wholesalers to
help me do that.
When I deal with chefs
who demand the best
I need to work hard
or else they go elsewhere.
With the added push from a client
we all improve.
I'm tense every day. I feel sick if
bad weather affects the catch.
If I have an order of 50 gizzard shads
to fill but there's no fish

I go home sick and
come back the next day in a panic.
It's all worth it though.
If I pull it off
they'll come back for more.
They deal in fish but it's
also about interaction.
You go back for that.
This is wonderful!
I bet.
- That fish was great.
- The best so far this year.
I buy fish every day.
So a good wholesaler
affects my life tremendously.
I want this every time!
The wholesalers I deal with
call me at midnight!
Just when I'm closing up
they call
and say they've secured
good fish for me.
They've already started at midnight.
I come before 11 PM and
check the orders for the next day.
Takashi Shiobara
Intermediate Wholesaler
Takashi Shiobara
Intermediate Wholesaler
Mackerel is tricky so
I check each one of them well.
To assess the quality.
Is it fatty?
How fatty?
Slim ones can be fatty.
And thick ones can be unfatty.
The best way to know is by touch-.
Clients have preferences.
The colors of the meat they like
or the firmness.
Say you want a good mackerel
with tender meat.
If you're lucky you'd get a few
out of a box of 20.

What does a good wholesaler do?
He sorts the fish first thing in the morning and hides the good fish.
Half beaks are from Ibaraki.
I have some mackerels.
Some good line-caught mackerels arrived from Katsuura sea.
They're perfect for sushi.
Maybe even too tender.
I may think some fish are really good.
But it's up to the customers to decide what is good for them.
If you resent that, you should just quit.
Give it a try!
Feel them. The skin is tender.
My customers determine my fate.
If they do good business, they'll order more. It's a cycle.
We go up and down together.
We're inseparable.
I owe my business to my customers.
It's not my good fish that draws them, it's them who bring me fish.

- Got mackerels?
- Sure.
- How many?
- As many as you want.

It might snow tomorrow.
Intermediate wholesalers make a lot of effort in bad weather.
Takashi Saito
Sushi Saito
I have yellowtails ready for you.
They tell you straight when there's no fish.
But they go to enormous lengths to get fish for me-.
They care.
They've saved me many times.

- Flounders.
- You saved some?
They look good, huh?
- From Kamogawa.

- The color difference won't matter.
They charge us for it but I'm happy
they take care of us.
They know their regular
customers' needs.
So we keep coming back.
If they get me fish I don't need,
I still buy it.
We rely on them and consequently
they act on our behalf.
Our relationships are more important
than our craft or the fish.
They nurture our craft.
It's part of the tradition
of Japanese cuisine.
Trust is what keeps Tsukiji going.
Sam)"
This is great.
It responds to the salt.
It still has energy-.
The cells are still alive.
Salt removes the excess water
and brings out the sweetness.
Like any restaurant owner I don't
compromise on quality.
Small compromises lead to bigger
ones down the line-.
We serve flounder as
the first piece.
To let customer savor the
quality of our rice.
I like fish with volume.
The seller cut
its spinal cord.
So we can decide when to serve it.
Severing the spinal cord prevents
the fish from getting stiff.
It delays rigor mortis.
So the fish stays fresher for longer.
Koji Nakanishi
Intermediate Wholesaler
If you don't do it, the fish
flaps around before it gets stiff.
It's bad if it bleeds inside.

They cut the spinal cord.
It runs right by the spine.
They crush it to
immobilize the fish.
So it won't move around, bleed
and get ruined.
So it won't move around, bleed
and get ruined.
No cooking technique can save
a ruined fish.
In the old days quick transport
and freshness added value to fish.
In the old days quick transport
and freshness added value to fish.
Now it's all about keeping the fish
pristine when harvesting and
using the spinal cord treatment.
The fish we eat is more processed
than before.
More people are involved in keeping
the fish delicious.
In old days, when people
preserved fish
it was being aged at the same time.
But it was not intentional.
People in the know today
consciously age the fish.
"Sushi Sh0"
This yellowtail was aged at
Tsukiji for a couple of days.
We'll age it further.
It's perfectly good as it is but
we'll age it for one more week.
It'll be like this in a week.
See?
Fresh yellowtail isn't as tasty.
So you age it for sashimi.
And you age it longer for sushi.
You make it more acidic.
The surface is brown.
It looks nice inside.
I'll work on this cut.
I'll parboil and marinate it
before aging it further.

I match the fish's acidity with the
intensity of the vinegar in my sushi rice.
The food we serve must
leave the customer content.
A chef's pleasure shouldn't be in
showing off his crafts.
The pleasure should be in
the customer's enjoyment.
That's our purpose.
The baton's passed from the fishermen
to the intermediate wholesalers, to us.
When the yellowtail's fatty,
it's the season to grill it.
So when is it good for sushi?
It shouldn't be too fatty
and it should be acidic and
have a reddish tint.
Japan's distinctive seasons
give us seasonal specialities.
There's the seasonal fish and the first
catch of the season.
People care about what fish
is seasonal.
My mentor once told me
to think about a fish's seasonality.
There are 10 days in a year when
fish tastes its best.
Sometimes the fish's season passes
before you know it.
But good vendors know the season
and advise the customers.
Look at these shellfish.
They're in season now.
Dead shellfish are worthless.
Their quality depends on how long
they're kept alive.
Harumi sushi"
See the white dots?
These cockle clams have eggs.
They're at their best
when they are bearing eggs.
Some clams aren't at their best
then but
when they are bearing eggs

They're tender and plump.
Zezankyo"
It's about seasons.
March is icefish season
so we get inquiries about them.
Look at them, they're so tiny.
But they're adults.
Their ripe and rich taste
will surprise you.
Immature fish don't have such
a rich flavor.
Frying in batter both heats
a fish directly and steams it.
Frying gets rid of excess moisture
and highlights the flavor.
That's frying.
In a bad weather some fish like
sweetfish can be tricky to procure.
So I'd consult intermediate
wholesalers.
They're mostly good.
I have some of the better ones for you.
Thank you!
It's for you.
Sweetfish season starts in June
and are caught in rivers.
So I get the wild fish for him.
You let the charcoal settle a bit
in order for the fish to
get nicely seared-.
These fish only live one short year.
They look lean but they're vital.
It's like eating the four seasons
that they lived.
We have a 20-year relationship.
It's him I go to see
not the fish he sells.
Because I can rely on him.
Pike congers"
Pike congers are common
in the west.
Now there are good ones
available at Tsukiji.
They're in season now,

from summer to autumn-.
I filleted and sliced it super-finely
and boiled it.
I mix sieved plums
with dashi stock and soy sauce
and place it on top.
Then I add minced shiso
leaves, myoga and wasab/I
In summer time,
we enjoy fresh and light flavors.
It's boiled hamo.
Eat it while it's hot.
Namiyoke shrine"
Typhoon number 18 is approaching.
Secure your containers.
A very large typhoon
is forecast to approach.
It's a wonderland for me.
They have things that local
supermarkets don't have.
Tsukiji's essential for my work.
Remember the white squid?
That was good!
But you boiled it!
It was nice and sweet...
No matter what you do
it's good.
I know why you did it but...
I shouldn't have?
At first, some guys looked scary...
But they were helpful when I asked
questions.
I get a hands-on education
at Tsukiji.
Saury...
I just can't resist it
when autumn comes.
Sauries are at their best
in late August, early September.
Saury, mackerel, bonito
barracuda and butterfish.
They're all autumn fish.
They're local and
they taste great in autumn.

Osamu Shimazu
Intermediate Wholesaler
ESqUISSE"
Scallops arrive at ESqUISSE alive.
We put them in kelp stock
We put them in kelp stock
which they absorb when their
shells close.
We sous- vide them at 53 degrees
for at least 45 minutes.
In France most chefs
buy ingredients through middlemen.
But I want to choose them myself.
Are they bigger this time?
They're the same size.
200 grams.
Most intermediate wholesalers
have been to my restaurant.
In order to understand our work.
To understand
what we do with fish.
He's the man I trust the most.
We have a solid relationship.
When I tell him what
dish I have in mind
he'll advise me on what
ingredients to use.
No middlemen are as knowledgeable.
The Japanese say
salt and plum"
The Japanese say
salt and plum"
to describe saltiness
and tartness.
A magic balance of great food.
So I use orange for tartness.
Green peppercorn and anchovy
for saltiness.
Tsukiji motivates me.
It's natural produce so
it's unpredictable.
It's fun going there.
I talk to the intermediate wholesalers-.
I get to observe other cooks

and see what they buy-.
All of that motivates me.
A mysterious bond with the sea.
Every Japanese has it.
We have more variety of fish
available in winter.
We have more variety of fish
available in winter.
Like anglerfish and grouper.
Red tilefish and butterfish.
Their flesh gets firmer and fattier
in the cold.
Fish are fattier in winter.
And they're easier to handle.
There's no saving a bad fatty fish.
UMiyQShiu
I buy from a intermediate wholesaler
I trust.
Tsukiji is trustworthy especially
in terms of food safety.
Detoxification center"
I get information about new poisonous
pufferfish from them.
I ask the owner of the shop
to choose the best fish to buy.
I only buy pufferfish from a licensed
vendor at Tsukiji because I trust him.
In the old days chefs bought from
Tsukiji, then it was the harvesters.
Now we've gone back to buying
pufferfish from Tsukiji.
The drastic climatic change is
beyond our understanding.
So we need the intermediate
wholesalers' insight.
So we need the intermediate
wholesalers' insight.
When fish spawn
they begin storing fat
a few months ahead of time.
That's why they become fatty.
- Are there good mackerels?
- I handpicked some for you.
Thank you.

They handle so many fish
they know everything.
If the fish is bad
they tell you.
They know and suggest when
is the best for each fish.
Ginza Kojyu"
The abdomen's glistening with fat.
It'd be good for sashimi
or sushi.
Rosy seabass has a gelatinous
part under the skin.
It's unique to rosy seabass
and makes it delicious.
Winter fish are fatty
and delicious.
But in summer we don't crave
the same fatty fish.
Fish are different and we enjoy
different fish for each season.
Japan's seasonal foods are
a pleasure.
We come here at 1 AM
to lay out the fish.
At 11 PM we unload and clean
the tunas for the auction.
Oma's tuna"
Frozen tunas and bluefins are
in different halls.
Bigeyes also go to
a different hall.
We lay out the good ones first.
The best tuna's up front.
But sometimes it isn't so.
Fish we want to push
go in a prominent spot.
To grab attention and to
get a better price-.
The harvesters leave their products
with us.
We see to it
that they get a good price.
Tohto Suisan Co., Ltd."
Can I talk to your boss?

The fish has a blemish.
Wholesalers buy tunas
from distributors
so they want more money.
The intermediate wholesalers behave
more like shoppers.
They want to buy good tuna for less.
Tuna Department"
What they both want is to
expand the seafood consumption.
And they all want to provide
good fish to the consumers.
It's pink!
The quality of fish.
The quality of fish.
Shipping conditions and the weather's
effect on tomorrow's catch.
Whether I should buy today.
If fish is available for the
next few days I won't buy it.
That's what we discuss.
They're so informative.
Without information
I'd do no business.
Wholesalers need intermediate
wholesalers and vice versa.
We have a symbiotic relationship
I guess.
I arrive at the auction hall
then I walk around to see the fish.
I evaluate at the same time.
I check the flesh.
I check the cross-section of the tail
for density, texture and stickiness.
The overall shape, the abdomen's
thickness and so on-.
I try to imagine it inside.
Pale red is the ideal color.
I try to envision its value.
The thinner the skin,
the fattier.
If the fish is this fresh
it'll taste like this in a week.
I have the whole story in my head.

It's almost delusional.
Toichiro lida
Intermediate Wholesaler
Guys who work at Tsukiji...
They live in a fish fantasy.
An auction is alive and hard
to gauge.
In an auction the most unexpected
thing could happen.
In 3 minutes.
I'm nervous when I go out there
and ring the bell.
I surprise myself
with the bell.
That gets me in the right mood.
One bid could get you a tuna
as expensive as a luxury car.
We bid with our fingers-
We call it spearing.
If we don't win,
our spear was blunt.
It's from Shiogama Port in Miyagi.
It weighs about 100 kilos.
Caught on longline.
OK, I'll push it from this side.
You need a few men. The left side of the
abdomen is usually first.
Now the back.
You turn it over and clean it.
Then the right side of the abdomen,
then the back.
Now it's quartered.
Hundreds of years ago
nobody ate abdomen cuts.
Now fatty cuts like otoro
are in demand.
The abdomen's fattier-
The red meat's at the back.
Otoro, the fattiest cut's
from the abdomen.
There are only 2 cuts
with fatty meat.
That's why it's expensive.
This one looks good.

But this looks better.
This tastes better.
It's all seasonal.
Tunas aren't so fatty in summer.
In spring they're great
with a subtler taste.
Tuna from different seas vary in taste.
The size is also going
to affect the taste.
Oma, caught on longline"
How they're caught
also changes the taste.
Some fish live in deep waters.
They taste better because
of the food they eat.
Stress also affects the
taste of the fish.
Fish look good if they don't struggle
on the hook but they aren't vital.
I like tuna from local waters.
Taste is everything.
Bad looking tuna can taste good
and vice versa.
It's tastier if the color
changes quickly.
I don't sell tuna that doesn't meet
my standards.
That's the risk I have to take
at this job-.
Look at this fish!
OK, this is it, guys.
So fatty!
From off the coast of Oma.
From shallow waters.
I check the color, the quality of
the meat and fat.
And its tenderness.
I rate that over appearance.
And the fat's delicacy.
What do you look for in tuna?
Fatty tuna melts easily.
With a low melting point
the fat melts at a touch.
I'm blissful when I cut a tuna like that

and imagine the great sushi it'll make.
If it's dark here, it's dark
everywhere.
If it's white, the fat layer's thicker.
Farmed tuna gets like that.
Farmed fish is white like this.
Wild fish isn't so fatty.
The meat feels so juicy!
The back side is richer in flavor and
aroma while the abdomen is fattier.
You can tell everything
by the red meat.
If it tastes good
so does the rest.
I'm trying to get myself roused up
but I'm down-.
Not many good tunas today.
This is the last one.
OK?
Upper abdomen cuts?
What? I5 upper abdomen orders?
We don't have I5.
No tuna today.
They're in the sea.
Bring me good tuna!
I'll come back.
Why don't you go
catch some tuna?
The thing is,
I trade tuna and that defines me.
I tell myself that
and I tell my employees that too.
The best place to enjoy
the four seasons.
I trade tuna but
I can't call myself a businessman.
Domestically caught tuna
isn't good business.
You wouldn't trade them
if money's your priority.
For me and my customers
it's a quest.
Trading tuna means so much more than just
trading superior fish.

My quest for the ideal tuna
isn't a personal obsession.
It's because my customers want to
buy it from me-.
That's why I bid when
I'm at the auction hall.
Good tuna!
Come and look!
Some gossip about the tuna's prices.
That fish was overpriced."
I say those things too.
But when I make a bid, I owe it
to my customer to win-.
It's not about the price.
That's not what it's about.
Those fish are priceless.
Maybe it's hard to understand.
The length we'd go to get
just the right fish for the customer.
It's not to do with the price.
Nor the grade.
You have to bid for the fish
the customer wants. That's all.
It's been tough.
There's less tuna this year.
Tuna give me stress so I play golf.
- Does it work?
- Yes.
I was advised to forget tuna
for a while.
Don't forget tuna.
That's your thing.
That's your thing, right?
3 cuts for you today.
Look at the fat!
This is supreme.
I'll take that and age it.
This one's good but...
I'll take the Wakayama tuna.
The anticipation!
There's something special
about tuna.
They're hard to catch.
Fishermen risk their lives

to catch them.
We're obliged to honor
their heroism with our sushi.
The collar, semi-fatty, fatty
and red meat.
Tuna is the king.
Tunas in Japanese waters are tasty
because of what they eat.
If tuna eat bad fish,
they will taste bad too.
A fertile sea
makes great fatty tunas.
Japan's seas are the best.
We manufacture ice for the market.
To keep the fish fresh.
The ice is delivered at 3 AM
every morning.
Akimitsu Tsunoi
Ice Manufacturer
We take shifts to make it
24 hours a day.
We break up or saw the ice to sell.
We also sell blocks of ice.
It's crucial to keep
the fish fresh.
By memorizing the customers
we save time on interaction.
They bring their own box so we
don't need to weigh it-.
We open at 2 AM.
So from 2 AM to 4, maybe 5
is the busiest.
The customers line up.
I have the numbers on
Tsukiji's visitors 10 years ago-.
It includes all the wholesalers.
People transporting products.
People working in
the refrigeration facilities.
Other merchants.
All together 14,000 people worked
in Tsukiji.
Plus the 28,000 shoppers who
came from outside.

There were 42,000 people in Tsukiji every day.

There were 19,000 vehicles at the market per day.

Including motorcycles.

The design concept

of the market was

to have the quarter circular shaped buildings

along the tracks and the

loading platforms.

So the products could be shipped in by train and out by trucks

in a seamless operation.

But with highways and the

larger freight capacity of trucks

rail transport became obsolete.

Theodore C. Bestor Social Cultural

Anthropologist Harvard University Professor

Ginrin Club"

The library was planned in 1961

and opened in 1962.

Ginrin Library was built to

house books about the fish industry-.

Ky oko FukucN

Ginrinbunko Librarian

Public relations for the market

are planned here too.

And many academics and

researchers visit us here.

How long are you here?

I'll be in Japan for 2 weeks.

I have 10 more days.

Hello.

How have you been?

Good, thanks.

It's been a long time.

You look good.

He's like a family member, a nephew.

It was about 400 years ago, in the time

of the 1st Tokugawa shogun.

He brought fishermen from Osaka

to Edo to catch fish for him.

They named their new settlement

after their village in Osaka.
Merchants traded fish in the Nihonbashi
area with the shogun's permission-.
Nihonbashi was the center of
the flourishing culture.
That 8 acres was the best area
in the city.
They blocked off the traffic and
had a market in the streets.
The new market in Great Tokyo
Produce for 5 million Tokyo citizens
will be provided by the new market.
Tsukiji would introduce
a new system of commerce.
They said, "After 300 years of
being in this business"
we'll have a revolution
and change commerce."
So they did. Now distributors
would just distribute.
Same with wholesalers.
It was centralized.
All transactions were systematically
revolutionized.
That's what Tsukiji symbolized.
People here use the word nakama.
Nakama means mates.
It's not used much outside Tsukiji now.
It makes us feel self conscious.
Some Tsukiji guys have worked
here for 60 years.
They've been mates all their lives.
Now they're in their 70s.
They're real Tsukiji mates.
They've made the word nakama
their own by redefining it.
A nakama purchase. 1.65 kg clams.
270,000 yen.
Watch me rip off our mates.
Teruhiko Ito
Intermediate Wholesaler
270,000 is too much!
A nakama purchase is when
you buy from other vendors.

When you're out of stock
you buy from them.
Do you have boiled scallops?
- I think we're out.
- Oh!
How are you doing?
Can I have these boiled scallops?
Any other size?
You want large ones?
Here.
I'll have a pack.
A customer wants boiled ones.
I have raw ones.
At Tsukiji our relationships
go over generations.
When a son is born
he becomes one of us.
We have peers and mentors.
It's like connecting many triangles
It's like connecting many triangles
New Year reception"
There's a joke about homes with
no kitchen knife nowadays.
It's true that not many people
can fillet fish.
Some people, like unmarried people
prefer to eat out.
Some people, like unmarried people
prefer to eat out.
They don't cook.
That's how lifestyles have changed.
One of the reasons
why we trade less fish.
Things are different to when
I first started.
Things are different to when
I first started.
Much less fish.
There used to be about 4,000
fishmongers in metro Tokyo-.
Now there's less than 600.
There's much less fish trade now
which is a concern.
My father started this shop

in 1939, before the war.
I've been going to Tsukiji for...
I'm 73 this year so
almost 55 years.
You have some fish to sell me?
Some kids think living fish
look like fillets.
Nobody eats fish now. They just
eat instant noodles or something.
What has become of food culture?
It's good as sashimi, sauteed
or marinated with seaweed.
Fishmongers can tell customers
the best way to eat fish-.
But nobody takes
advantage of that.
The mantle's best as sashimi.
Then fry the tentacles and fins.
Want a big one?
Fish is best in the morning, right?
You like fish?
- I like sashimi.
- Great.
If you like fish, your kid will too.
See, it's a beak, like a bird.
Thank you.
Eat fish!
Tsukiji is a sacred place
for anybody in the fishing trade.
Tsurizao Morita
Fishmonger, Izugin
Maybe it's the awesome energy.
The intermediate wholesalers are
dedicated pros who choose fish for us.
But it's us fishmongers who deal
with consumers.
Our job is to give their message
to the consumers.
You want scallops?
Pick one.
You know how to choose?
Choose one that looks yummy.
Then it will be.
Simple.

Thanks, come again!
We're dealing with something
people consume.
In a few days it becomes
part of your cells.
It's like a sacred ritual.
It's bigger than me
earning a livelihood.
Have this candy.
It's chocolate...
No, it's tuna.
Dried squid is
good for kids' teeth.
They might not like it at first
but they get used to it.
You see...
Healthy people eat well.
Eat well and appreciate the food.
A dental university
did research.
30% of kids failed to
identify all 4 major tastes.
The 4 tastes are sweet, sour,
salty and bitter.
Have children's taste buds changed?
Nobuko lwamura Japanese Culinary Historian
Over 30% of the children failed
to identify the 4 tastes
in the experiment.
The manufacturing peak's over.
Consumers have to be savvy.
In Japan, instant food was introduced
in 1960.
Saving time on food
freed you for other things.
That lifestyle has been
promoted since then.
The children of that time
have their own kids now.
They spend more time playing
than making meals.
That's the lifestyle
post-war Japan promoted.
School lunch ingredients provider"

80% of my clients are
from schools.
We mainly supply seafood
for public school lunches.
Those fish are 2 days old.
Take these ones from yesterday's catch.
These are too large for kids.
They know their fish.
It's a huge relief to
rely on their selection.
Yum !
They're huge!
A whole fish!
They like the taste not the bones.
Many kids have choked on
a fish bone.
They're not used to eating fish.
Hello.
Welcome to our school-.
Before lunch we teach the kids
where the bones are
and how to use chopsticks
to remove meat from the bones.
Imagine where the spine is.
Thank you for the meal.
It's delicious.
Not bad.
It's good.
The 4th graders overcame the challenge!
What an experience.
The 4th graders overcame the challenge!
What an experience.
Hiroo lkeda
Elementary School Principal
Hiroo lkeda
Elementary School Principal
Yum.
Delicious.
I've never eaten a fish without help.
It's for education.
So I'm glad to supply quality fish
at an affordable price.
So I'm glad to supply quality fish
at an affordable price.

It's great that kids can enjoy
delicious fish together.
There's only one way to
know what's good.
You have to eat a lot.
We have to maintain the quality
of fish we provide-.
I'd be happy if people are more
interested in fish, like prices and all.
I'd be happy if people are more
interested in fish, like prices and all.
We worry about kids growing up
on ramen and hamburgers.
Kids won't know what good fish is.
Kids won't know what good fish is.
A baby's first fish puree
should be good.
A baby's first fish puree
should be good.
He'll remember that taste
all his life.
So he'll want more of that taste.
Seasonal fish is great.
If it's delicious, kids will eat it.
School lunches are our chance to
impress kids with delicious fish-.
School lunches are our chance to
impress kids with delicious fish-.
We just want to give kids more chances
to eat good fish.
First we'll reconnect them with fish.
Japan's market distribution system
supports Japan's present
seafood culture.
We're more aware of that now.
Anyone in the trade
has to raise awareness.
We have to pass it on.
We have to pass on the taste
of good food to kids.
We have to pass on the taste
of good food to kids.
We also need to pass cooking on
to children.

Food history
is more fascinating
than any historic novel you can read.
Our origins are in our cuisine.
So it's the responsibility
of chefs
to keep the tradition alive.
We have to persevere.
It's the busiest time of the year.
The market's filled with people.
There's tension in the air. I feel
exhausted and exhilarated.
There's tension in the air. I feel
exhausted and exhilarated.
There are lines of people
including the general consumers.
You can hardly move.
That's Tsukiji at year-end.
In a deluxe box
made of Empress wood.
You cook dried herring roe
in bonito or kelp stock.
You should try
how crunchy they are.
It's a New Year delicacy
with a long tradition.
The elderly appreciate it
but their numbers are decreasing.
I want to promote it to young
people but it's expensive...
It's almost a luxury item.
Good morning, everyone.
It's the only auction in the year
for herring roe.
Your bid determines
retail prices nation-wide.
So please bid
with that in mind.
Let's begin the bidding.
You eat herring roe
for good luck.
Traditionally it's prepared in December
and eaten at New Year.
They say kelp brings joy and smiles.

Herring roe symbolizes fertility.
Everything's for good fortune.
Herring roe symbolizes fertility.
Everything's for good fortune.
They're the year-end regulars.
They always go to the same vendors
for New Year delicacies.
Come and get some!
Come and get some!
- Come and get some!
- Here I've come!
A former sumo wrestler.
Thank you.
Take care of yourself.
I have no stock left.
Everything's sold.
Someone even wanted these tables.
My son is a company employee
and won't take over here.
So I have to be the one
to end the tradition.
I let down my ancestors.
Our business lasted
for 130 years.
I'm a 3rd generation owner.
We go back longer than Tsukiji Market.
Now I'll just enjoy
retirement with my wife.
You'll get up early...
That's what I'm worried about.
I'll wake up at 3 AM.
Everyone stops working eventually,
no matter what you do.
You're sad when your parents die.
And when you quit working.
Also when your wife departs first.
When you lose her.
I've had 2 of life's 3 saddest events.
The last one...is my wife.
I'll enjoy a slow life
with her for long as I can.
Thank you.
I feel sad to see you go.
You can come back.

This is for all your hard work.
If I bought all these it'd cost me
tens of thousands of yen.
I'll add some crab and tuna.
That's all I need for New Year.
For a good new year!
You get paid in cash.
A year-end tradition.
Everyone, clap your hands!
I hope it'll be a good year.
We'll do our best for
good results.
It was a rough ride for tuna this year.
The prices have been just crazy!
I'll stay passionate about tuna
and stay loyal to my customers-.
This year was a hop before the jump.
We're ready for a jump.
We might fall...
We'll turn things around next year.
I'm too skinny
but I'll do my best.
I'll pass on traditions to the young
ones. That'll be my new year.
I'm already excited
about the first New Year auctions.
Gather round!
Keep in mind whatever we do and say
goes into the fish we sell.
We sell fish with love and care.
And it reaches the consumers.
We're preserving something important
as Japanese.
It's our responsibility
as Tsukiji wholesalers.
Well done, guys!

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Shochku 00., Ltd.