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MARUKAN USA

Continuing a Japanese tradition
of genuine rice vinegar in
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Marukan USA

Continuing a Japanese tradition of genuine rice vinegar in Paramount, California

Produced by James Logan and Written by Molly Shaw

MARUKAN VINEGAR has been slow brewing the world's finest rice vinegar since 1649 and subsidiary Marukan USA, based in Paramount, California, has brought the Japanese specialty to consumers in the United States. Home cooks to top restaurant chefs alike have enjoyed the taste of mild, organic Marukan rice vinegar—a perfect addition to dressing, dips, sauces, soups and marinades or directly on vegetables.

The secret to Marukan's success is time says Jon Tanklage, president and chief operating officer of Marukan USA. "What we like to call the 'Marukan difference,' is using the same all-natural process for centuries and that starts with making our own sake the old-fashioned way," he explains.

Centuries of tradition

This tradition dates back to the mid-1600s in western Japan when the company was established by Yasutsugu Hanzaemon Okada. His eldest son, Kanzaburo Yasushisa, moved the business to Fushimicho in Nagoya. Kanzaburo was adopted from the Okada family into the Sasada family and started production of refined vinegar.

“Marukan is still owned by the same family and Denzaemon Sasada is the owner and chairman,” shares Tanklage. “The Sasadas have long-running ties to the family that owns Kikkoman Soy Sauce. Kikkoman was one of the first companies to make a market for Japanese food items in the U.S.”



Kikkoman first launched U.S. distribution in the '50s. “This was long before most grocery stores had Asian/ethnic food sections and at first there was some difficulty entering the market because grocers didn't understand the item,” explains Tanklage. “Kikkoman realized it needed to start a U.S. distribution network to enter the market and Japan Food Company [JFC] was formed.”

With family ties to the Sasadas, Kikkoman started selling Marukan rice vinegar through JFC, making the company one of the first on U.S. store shelves about 41 years ago. “Our parent company is celebrating 366 years in 2015, but Marukan USA has been running for a little over 40,” adds Tanklage.

The Marukan difference

While Kikkoman certainly helped Marukan get a start in the U.S., the label has become a consumer favorite for superior taste and quality – the product of a time-tested process.

“We're using the same natural process used to produce rice vinegar for centuries by making our own sake,” says Tanklage. “Other companies buy commercial rice alcohol or make it out of rice syrup, not using real rice, but a highly processed byproduct.”

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Griffin-Spalding County, Georgia welcomes Marukan!

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