

ROJI

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ROJI TABLEWARE

## Crockery and Tableware

The food is only half the story. Crafting seasonal dishes from the best produce available requires plates, bowls, dishes and cups of exceptional quality. It's not just about the presentation. Its about honouring the ingredients with grace and respect.

At Roji we have handpicked a selection of tableware from both Japan and England, handmade by master craftsmen and women.

As we move through the seasons the plates we use will change to best reflect the food being served. Below you will find information about a selection of our most prized pieces. We hope that as with the food, the tableware will fill you with a sense of warmth and pleasure.

# Takatori Kiln

The Takatori family produced some of the most sought-after ceramics of the late Muromachi / early Edo era. The great tea master Kobori Enshū (1579-1647) particularly valued their kirei-sabi or “refined patina”. The current head of the kiln, Takatori Shinobu, was adopted into the family when he married into the family which is a fairly common way of carrying on a family name when there are no male children. His son, Shuichiro, trained and worked as an architect in Tokyo until he was called back to re-join the family business. The duty of carrying on over 400 years of family history is hard to resist. More famous for tea bowls and other tea ceremony accessories, we are using their Soushu Sake Cups, with their distinctive shape and glaze. They are both delicate and striking, as well as being very rare.





Takatori Glaze Soushu Sake Cup

Traditional tea ceremony aesthetics value dark restrained colours. The greens and browns of the Takatori glaze reflect this tradition and lend an air of mystery and depth to these sake cups.



Takatori Warabai / Ameyu Soushu Sake Cup

The rich yellow of the ameyu drips down over the blues and grey of the warabai glaze. These are wood-fired which gives the texture and variation to the warabai in contrast to the brighter white plain warabai Soushu choko.



Takatori Warabai Soushu Sake Cup

Warabai means a rice straw ash glaze which ranges from a bright white through shades of grey, blue and yellow in colour. This variation comes from the straw itself, the glaze making process and the firing. To keep a clearer white colour these are gas-fired rather than wood-fired.

# Takatori Yuko

Unlike her brother Shuichiro, Yuko san would not be expected to take over the family business as she is female. For many Westerners, their immediate reaction is that this is clearly unfair, but Yuko san sees it slightly differently. She went to an Art and Design University where she absorbed influences from all over the world and was especially drawn to the Impressionists. Now she can experiment with different colours and glaze without being restricted by tradition.



Toho Village  
Fukuoka Prefecture



## Takatori Yuko Sakihana Choko

These stoneware sake sakihana sake cups are hand-made by Takatori Yuko. She fires in a gas kiln to keep the light, bright colours and she has mastered how to artfully layer the glazes. You can feel the layers and ripples of glaze under your fingers and the roughness of the unglazed foot is a pleasing contrast. These are the only ones which will be made. After making these ones, she feels that this shape should stay with the main Takatori family.

# Yanase Tobo

Yanase san grew up in a family known for washi making, but he has followed his heart and branched out on his own into ceramics. Even though they thought he was crazy, his parents let him set up a tiny propane-powered kiln wedged at the top of the small driveway at their family home. Modest and unassuming, Yanase san has nevertheless persisted, and he has an attractive naïve approach to shape and texture that can be seen in all his designs.



Small Sujitsuki Plate

These Sujitsuki plates have an interesting contrast between the smooth rich glaze and the organic mis-shapen form of the plates. The rough comb decoration and the brown glaze makes them look almost wooden from a distance.

# Tatsumi Kiln

Naganuma san uses two wood-fired kilns – a traditional anagama (“cave kiln”) and noborigama (“climbing kiln”). Both of these kilns use a lot of physical energy to prepare the wood and then to fire and feed the kiln. In the old days kilns would have apprentices to help with this physical labour, now it is just down to Naganuma san and his wife. Naganuma san digs and prepares his own clay and he also mixes and makes his own glazes. His dedication to all the different stages of making result in pieces full of character in his rougher, looser wabi-sabi style. We will use the Shirotatsumi Tile and Sushidai zara to serve your sushi courses as their beauty and simplicity will highlight the skill and purity of the nigiri.





Shirotatsumi Tile

Naganuma san's style suits simple shapes, where his clay and glaze can speak for themselves. The surface of these tiles undulates and cracks from the rough clay and the colours range from white through grey and green, even sometimes with a hint of blue from the oak-ash glaze.



Sushidai zara

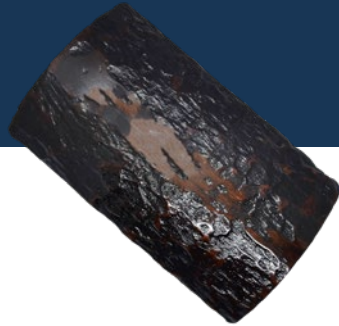
Designed as a sushi plate, these Sushidazara are shaped into imposing blocks of clay and glazed with a traditional Kohiki powder slip glaze. They are often pockmarked and cracked and depending on how diluted the glaze is, can have a smooth, rough or even pitted and scaly glaze. Naganuma san tries to recreate his idea of Nature itself, with all the imperfections and character of the earth and clay.



# Asada Workshop

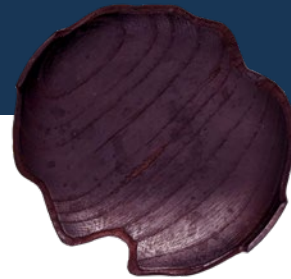
All the Asada family work in the family business, where they specialise in applying lacquer, and soon the grandchildren will have to make the decision whether to join the family business. As lacquer specialists, they are always looking for new finishes and new ideas. For example, they have gone back to tradition to resurrect mitsurou or beeswax lacquer, and they also had the idea of lacquering Zelkova bark so that it didn't go to waste. Although it looks quick and easy after a lifetime of practice, taking mere seconds to apply, the skill of applying lacquer is to make sure the coats are even and not too thick or too thin.





### Lacquered Bark Platter

Zelkova wood is used for many things, but it is particularly valued for making taiko drum frames. Taiko drums are made in one piece and require large mature trees. Rather than see all the bark from these trees go to waste at the sawmill, the Asada family used it to make a tray. After that experiment was successful, they now make a variety of sizes and shapes.



### Mitsurou Meimeisara, Medium

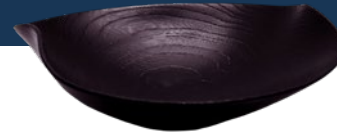
Hand-turned from "sen" wood at the Asada workshop in Ishikawa prefecture, this piece is intentionally left rough and seemingly unfinished, and then gently charred just enough to turn it black. Then there is a final layer of natural beeswax lacquer. This is now a rare method of lacquering as urushi lacquer gives a smoother, harder-wearing surface. But the beeswax gives a beautiful texture and lustre to these coasters.

# Kihachi Workshop

Suya san is the sixth generation to run Kihachi Kôbô since its founding in 1882, and Kihachi Kôbô specialises in the design and marketing of Yamanaka lacquer. However, Suyu san is modest, shy and self-effacing, Suyu san prefers to deflect attention on to the craftsmen that he depends on and the picture is of master wood-turner Satake san. To be able to get such a fine finish turning into the end grain of oak for example is top quality wood-turning. In a world of branding and influencing it is wonderful to work with people who have such humility and a lack of ego.



Yamanaka  
Ishikawa Prefecture



## Small "Motion" Bowl

Sen wood can range in colour from nearly white, through yellow and even green tones. It is a relatively hard wood which is also easy to work and steam. These bowls are turned in Ishikawa prefecture and then Suyu san steams and pinches them himself to create their interesting organic shape. They are then sent to the lacquer workshop for a coat of dark brown lacquer. Surprisingly light, they are a pleasure to hold and use.

Proud to be working with



Sansho seeks out and works with traditional Japanese craftsmen to develop beautifully made but practical Japanese homewares. Inspired by Fukanzen no bi, or the beauty of imperfection, all their pieces show the trace of the craftsman's hand and the dialogue between the craftsman and nature.

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