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We visited a laver wholesaler in Chiba to learn the story behind laver products sold at Sayamaen.



“Tani Nori Store” is a seaweed laver (Nori) wholesaler which was established after the war in Chuo-ku Chiba City. The store is now led by Mr.Saburo Tani (74 years old) after his father and oldest brother have passed away.

Tani Nori Store has the right to bid for lavers produced in Chiba. At the end of the year, laver seaweed harvesting starts there and gathers at the Chiba Fisheries Cooperative in Futtsu City, where the laver bidding (auction) process begins.

In recent years, the production of Chiba Nori has declined, and now accounts for about 4% of the nation's total production. Currently, the mainstream of production is in Saga, Kumamoto, and Fukuoka prefectures, centered on the Ariake Sea, which produces more than 50% of the nation's total.

Tani Nori Store mainly handled dried lavers (Yakinori) produced from Ariake as well. They purchase and stock lavers from major bidders of various

qualities to meet needs and distribute to their merchants and individual customers.

It is often said that Nori produced in Chiba are crispy and aromatic flavor, while Ariake Nori are characterized by its sweetness and melt-in-your-mouth quality.



Mr. Saburo showed us to their warehouse where there are so many stacks of cardboard boxes of Nori. Each box was labeled with the words "Saga Nori," "Kumamoto Nori," "Fukuoka Nori," "Chiba Nori," and so on, all in large letters. On the side of each box was the number of times it had been bid on, the grade, and the producer's number.

“ We purchase Nori around that time during the first and fourth bids. The first fixed nets with laver’s carpospores are set up after the autumnal equinox (around late September), and the seaweed is harvested in late November and goes out for the first bid. It is called "First harvesting Nori " or "Hand-care Nori, actually it is really soft and tasty. And this first net is then returned to the sea to await the next harvest. After three harvests with one net, then set up a new second net which has been kept in the freezer. Then the Nori harvested from this net goes to the fourth bidding. The Nori harvest from the first net is the best! That’s why the first and fourth bids are important.”

Mr. Saburo explains politely, but he also has some concerns about the natural environment.

“ I think global warming may be the reason why the production of Nori in Chiba is going down year by year. The Nori harvesting season is now about a month later than it used to be. In the past, a lot of Nori used to be harvested in the latter half of November, but nowadays not so many Noris are harvested that time of the year. It's the time of year when Nori sells the best though it's not being harvested anymore. Moreover, Nori fishermen are getting older, and it is hard for them to work in the late cold winter months.”

To make matters worse, It happen while feeding damage by black sea bream. They disappear when the sea water temperature reaches about 15°C, but when it gets to about 17°C, they come out to sea. Since seaweed nets set up right around that time, the nori are all eaten by black sea bream. It seems to be taking measure, but It is not perfect. It's a shame, because the Nori harvested from the Kohitsu River, Yoro River, and Ebi River is really good.”

Generally there are two methods of laver cultivation: pole-and-pillar cultivation, in which laver is cultivated by erecting a pole called a “Hibi” in the sea and stretching a net over it, taking advantage of the ebb and flow of the tide.

And other is floating cultivation, in which laver is cultivated while the net is submerged in the sea. Ariake laver in Kyushu is cultivated in this way. On the other hand, about half of the laver grown in Chiba is made from floating laver. The color of the laver is black, shiny, and firm.

Saburo said “I think Ariake's laver is blessed by the sun. When the tide recedes, the seaweed receives plenty of sunlight, and when the tide rises, it absorbs nutrients from the sea, so it grows well and the amount of seaweed harvested is incredible. However, even in the same location, there are hit and miss beaches, and the taste changes from east to west depending on the flow of nutrients. There are shiny black ones and tinted gray ones even within the same grade of Nori. The gray ones taste a little salty yet have a strong flavor when roasted. In fact, when bidding, the appearance and grade matter but we don't look at the flavor, so I think the buyer's taste and experience will be the deciding factors.

I believe that the quality of Nori from the first bid to the fourth bid is better. I prefer the Nori harvested from the net which set up at the end of summer when the ocean was stirred up by typhoons and the nutrients were at their richest. The color is a little brown, but the softness can only be the first time harvesting.” (smile)



In recent years, the demand for Nori in Japan has changed significantly. The number of specialty Nori stores and traditional sushi restaurants has decreased, and more and more of Nori are being consumed in Onigiri, take-out sushi, and bento boxes at convenience stores.

However Saburo says proudly,
"My business is really nich. But I always take into account the condition of Nori and the preferences of my customers, and we toasted Noris just before shipping so always at its best."

And today, We will received a special roasted Nori that carefully selected by Mr. Saburo for at our Autum seasons sales.

The name of the seaweed is "Saburo"

You can also watch a short video of the interview here. [The interview at Tani Nori store @chiba](#)



Thank you so much for the interview Saburo-san,
Please keep send up delicious Noris to Sayamaen!