

## Wagyu Importer Looking to Bring Japanese Beef's Diversity to US



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By Frank Fuhrig

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Japanese wagyu beef

Japanese importer Wagyuman is widening the company's product range to bring U.S. restaurants secondary cuts with the same intensely marbled beef known from high-end wagyu steaks.

Wagyuman is not only CEO Dai Moriya's company but also his alter ego. In a recent presentation to Mid-Atlantic restaurateurs at the Japanese Embassy in Washington, D.C., sponsored by the Japan External Trade Organization, he demonstrated how to break down a large cut of wagyu, wielding an artful Japanese butcher knife and wearing a black martial arts gi and the wrestling-style Wagyuman mask.

"I started feeling like the customers started getting bored with those strip, loin, ribeye and tenderloin, those major cuts," Moriya told **Meatingplace**.



Wagyuman

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He described a Japanese beef culture with a greater diversity of cuts than has typically been shared in the West, while at high-end restaurants in Japan “you see a lot of menus with different cuts” and a wider range of styles for serving wagyu beef.

“That is something I really want to introduce into this new market,” Moriya. “If you go to the butcher shop in Japan, you see a lot of little different cuts, and even the steak cuts, or barbecue cuts or slices and so many different styles of serving as well. So that’s how we enjoy the wagyu.”

Wagyuman distributes in the Northeast through New Jersey’s Pat LaFrieda Meat Purveyors.

“What really is new is the fact that Wagyuman now has access to fresh, what we call off cuts — obviously still some of the best beef on Earth,” said Nick Solares, chief marketing officer for LaFrieda. “And the partnership is strong enough that we can bring those in and re-merchandise them in a way that no one else can.”

He described delivering Japanese beef to restaurants in tasting menu-style flights. Other options include dry aging, hamburger, sausage or thin-cut portions for shabu-shabu hot pot.

“You can eat through the whole animal, which heretofore was a little difficult to do because people were only interested in bringing in whole pieces (of wagyu) and weren’t really wanting to break stuff down,” Solares said. “We’re just really trying to present our chefs with more options, ... bring what we do with our domestic proteins to Japanese protein.”

Japanese wagyu beef slider

Even secondary cuts of wagyu are an expensive luxury but can be a lower entry point for diners getting a first try. Solares called it an educational service — to spread the gospel of wagyu.”

