



MASTER CRAFTSMAN

Name: Kenichi Chen Occupation: Chef (Chinese Cuisine)

## Master *Craftsmen*

Here we introduce two of the 150 people chosen in 2008 by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare as “Contemporary Master Craftsmen.”

Chen is Japan’s foremost exponent of Szechwan cuisine. Szechwan style cooking ranks as one of the four main schools of Chinese cuisine, alongside those from Beijing, Guangzhou and Shanghai. The most popular Szechwan dish in Japan is probably

*mabo dofu*, a stir-fry dish made using pork mince, tofu, red chili peppers and a spicy, soybean paste.

The person who first introduced *mapo dofu* to Japan was none other than Chen’s father, Kenmin, who is also known in Japanese culinary circles as the “King of Szechwan Cuisine.” Kenmin’s toning down the trademark spicy flavor of the original dish in bringing it from China to accommodate the Japanese palate was instrumental in this dish becoming incredibly popular in Japan. Chen took over his father’s “Szechwan Restaurant” in Tokyo’s Akasaka district and, in addition to inheriting his father’s approach to the flavors on the

menu, he is creating new taste experiences by fusing his father’s style with the essence of Szechwan cuisine learned during his own time spent in China’s Szechwan Province.

“A restaurant’s approach to its cuisine changes from one generation of owner to the next. So, the current approach used at the Szechwan Restaurant is mine, but even so, it goes without saying that the essence of my father’s ideas will continue to be honored.”

The watch manufacturer Seiko is one of Japan's most famous companies. At the Seiko Epson Shiojiri Plant, located in Nagano Prefecture, one of Seiko's many manufacturing bases, there is a room called the "Micro Artist Studio." The ten men chosen to work in this studio are an elite collection of craftsmen who apply themselves to the creation of wristwatches of the very highest quality. Yoshifusa Nakazawa is in charge of the work that goes on in the studio. He is a master craftsman who operates in a microscopic world, a man who in his childhood created an origami bird out of a 5-mm square piece of paper.

The culmination of their work was the wristwatch released in 2006 called the Credor Spring Drive Sonnerie. The Sonnerie is a complex timepiece which automatically indicates the passing of the hour with the sound of a bell. It has more than 600 component parts, including one section smaller than a grain of rice that has to be assembled using 19 tiny parts. The fact that each year only five are created, and that their price is 15.75 million yen is testimony to the incredible effort behind the creation of each of these watches.

"We want to be making timepieces that can be used for two or three hundred years and so can be handed on to the next generation," says Nakazawa.

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<http://www.seikospringdrive.com/sonnerie/>



PHOTO: SHINO CHIKURA

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Name: Yoshifusa Nakazawa Occupation: Watchmaker