



# Fine French Cuisine, *Kappo* Style

Chef Dominique Corby from France serves fine French cuisine using Japanese ingredients and seasonings at his friendly *kappo*-style (open kitchen) restaurant.

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## SATO KUMIKO

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**F**RENCH *Kappo* Dominique Corby, a restaurant run by Dominique Corby from France, is located near Shimbashi Station in Tokyo. The dishes served at the restaurant all look like gorgeous French cuisine. However, Corby's dishes use little flour, butter and cream, which form the basis of French cuisine. Instead, his dishes use traditional Japanese seasonings, such as soup stock and miso. The miso he uses is of his own making.

"I hope that customers will enjoy savoring the taste of all the menu items through to dessert, the last item on the menu. That is why I try not to use anything that weighs heavily on the stomach, such

as butter and flour," says Corby. "And Japanese soup stock culture is extremely profound. Soup stock extracted from quality kelp and shiitake mushrooms creates an outstanding, delicate flavor."

Corby became a chef when he was 14 years old. Recognized in French cuisine circles early on in his career, Corby was headhunted by La Tour d'argent, a three-star restaurant in Paris, and assumed the post of head chef of La Tour d'argent Tokyo, Tour d'argent's only branch restaurant outside France, at the age of 28. He subsequently moved to a hotel restaurant in Osaka where he encountered *kappo*, which determined the course of direction of Corby's current restaurant. *Kappo* restaurants are restaurants that serve traditional Japanese-style cooking and where it is common for customers to enjoy dining while sitting at the counter facing the kitchen.

"I became a regular customer at a *kappo* restaurant in Osaka. At this *kappo* restaurant, I could relax and enjoy my meal alone and also talk to the chef over the counter. I made up my mind to open that style of restaurant myself," says Corby.

Corby launched his own business in 2015, opening



Dominique Corby's homemade miso  
Photo: Kato Kumazo



Corby preparing food  
at the counter  
Photo: Kato Kumazo



Sake is served with a  
dish at the counter  
Photo: Courtesy of  
Dominique Corby



Bottles of sake and  
French wine  
Photo: Kato Kumazo

French Kappo Dominique Corby in Tokyo. He has since relocated his restaurant several times, but he has consistently adhered to the kappo style that enables customers to watch Corby cooking and talk to him.

His restaurant has a menu change two or three times a month. Each time, Corby introduces ingredients that he has found himself in many parts of the country and develops the menu further.

“The climate of Japan is so diverse that each region has many delicious ingredients of its own, such as seafood, meat and vegetables,” says Corby.

In early October when we interviewed him, Corby was using Higashidori beef from Aomori for the salad, the appetizer; sea urchins from Hokkaido for the amuse bouche—a *chawan-mushi* steamed egg custard; and figs from Osaka for the dessert. Corby also introduces ingredients that are unique to Japan to his cooking, such as ginkgo nuts and blood clams, which are not used in French cuisine.

Corby spends about a year looking for ingredients and participating in events in the local regions of Japan. During these trips, he enjoys visiting local

sake breweries.

“Today, people enjoy sake in Europe and the United States as well. However, unknown small local sake breweries have many types of truly tasty sake,” says Corby.

Corby’s restaurant always has about seventy brands of sake in stock. Some of them are brewed by a sake brewery managed by a married couple, and others are brewed by a sake brewery run solely by women. All these brands of sake have extremely small production quantities and rarely appear on the market. But Corby visits the sake breweries in person, tastes their sake and purchases them directly from the producers. At his restaurant, Corby recommends the perfect sake match for each dish from among his stocks of sake and French wine.

Corby was for many years the executive chef of the Japanese branch of French cooking school Le Cordon Bleu, many of whose graduates now work around the country. Corby has a dream to open a new French kappo restaurant together with several graduates of the school as apprentices and looks forward to realizing this dream. 