

ANOTHER SENDAI

Vol.2

A free journey beyond the everyday city

¥0 FREE ENGLISH

Second Issue!

Each issue is a journey to another Sendai, places that are all too easy to pass by without noticing. This publication is a collaboration between the Sendai Tourist Information Desk and expert local writers.

[Edition Theme] 100-Year-Old Stores

A glance around downtown Sendai reveals many stores which are part of national chains. The reality is that there are also many local stores with a long legacy in Sendai. A few of those shops have even been in business for more than a century. This issue heads inside two unique and very different stores which are both involved with Sendai's seasonal festivals.

Miyoshido

Elegant hand-selected crafts change every season

The interior of 110-year-old Miyoshido is unadorned—just simple concrete and wood worn smooth with age. Its merchandise is so exquisite that it needs no further embellishment.

The eponymous shop was founded in 1909 by Kazuo Miyoshi's great-grandfather, and is now owned and operated by Kazuo and his wife Wakako. The shop's primary business used to be large ceremonial flower arrangements. However, when a relative gifted baby Kazuo a miniature *yoroi* (armor and helmet set for boys) of his own, his father became inspired to begin selling children's holiday heirlooms as well.

In February, the Miyoshis display *hina* dolls in anticipation of Girls' Festival. The contrast between the elegance of the displays and the simplicity of the shop's interior enhances, rather than diminishes, the dolls' opulence. Close scrutiny yields amazement at the attention to detail inherent in every aspect of their craftsmanship: from the fine, perhaps single-hair, brushstrokes used to paint the dolls' faces, to the ornate textiles the dolls wear. They seem destined to become family heirlooms. Some come accompanied by certificates of authenticity, not just for the dolls themselves, but also for the traditional fabrics their robes are made of. Come April, equally intricate miniature *yoroi* are displayed in anticipation of Boys' Festival.



Miyoshido



Taishoen



Exquisite items destined to become family heirlooms

After the children's holidays come to an end, Miyoshi puts out an inventory of collectable handcrafted Japanese cooking tools and tableware. Kazuo and Wakako individually select every item they carry in the shop: "Before we sell the product, we use it ourselves. If it's not a good one, we won't sell it." This extra care ensures the items are as practical as they are beautiful.

In summer, Miyoshido celebrates the Tanabata festival by hand-making *kazar* (the iconic Sendai Tanabata decoration, a paper orb with dangling streamers) to hang in front of the shop. It used to be that all of the

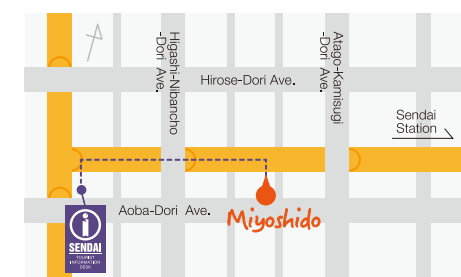
shops in the area handcrafted their own decorations; nowadays only a few still do.

Casual shoppers needn't be shy about venturing in, as they are encouraged to browse the displays and the shop also stocks a range of affordable handicrafts. Prices start at around 200 yen for a decorative *senjafuda* card, hand-printed in Kyoto. 700 yen buys a business card case (or 1,000 for a passport case) made out of upcycled Sendai Tanabata paper, a charming way to recycle the decorations once the festival ends.



Miyoshido

Chuo 2-2-29 Aoba, Sendai, Miyagi
Hours: 10:00-18:00
Closed days: irregular
Tel: 022-261-2361
URL: <http://www.miyoshido.aoba.sendai.jp>



i-sendai.jp



Taishoen

Historic tea shop from 1902

Taishoen is a shop easy to walk by without noticing. It's located just across from Sendai Station, just inside the covered shopping arcade. The storefront is bright and overflowing with interesting products, belying the shop's role to this day as a fixture of Sendai culture. Historical figures who have frequented Taishoen over the past century include even the beloved Sendai Shiro, renowned for bringing prosperity to businesses he patronized.

Taishoen was founded in 1902 very near its current location. Like much of Sendai, its original buildings were decimated by bombing at the end of WWII, and a later

conflagration. As a result, the shop now operates from its contemporary storefront inside the well-trafficked shopping arcade.

Every year Taishoen contributes to Sendai's famous Tanabata *kazari* tradition. Proprietress Ekuko Sato and staff get together to hand-make large paper streamers to hang in front of the shop. The *kazari* are so big that they can't be made by a single person. Working together, it takes the group two weeks to complete a single *kazari*. Though Sato demurs, others insist that Taishoen's decorations are some of the most elegantly traditional of the entire festival every year.



Taishoen

Chuo 1-8-33 Aoba, Sendai, Miyagi
Hours: 10:30-18:30
Closed days: none
Tel: 022-223-3080
URL: <http://www.taishoen.jp>

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A cafe to savor authentic matcha tea

Since its inception, tea and tea ceremony have been Taishoen's core business. Sato takes special pride in her tea. Ever since the shop's founding, Taishoen has made its own tea blends from tea leaves purchased from specially contracted estates. The estates use as little machinery as possible; harvesting and processing are done mainly by hand. Taishoen's green tea blends are highly regarded, so much so that the shop's matcha blends are even presented at the Shiogama-Jinja Shrine's Grand Tea Ceremony.

Sato wants people to enjoy Taishoen tea not just on special occasions, but as part of their everyday lives. She recently converted the rear of the shop into a matcha cafe space. People can drop in for a quick pick-me-up on the way home from work or while waiting for a train. For those with time to spare, linger. Enjoy the feel of the fine *chawan* in your hands. Contemplate the seasonal significance of the *wagashi* confections. Appreciate being the latest in a long line of connoisseurs to savor this time-honored tea.