

The Secret Episode of SUGIYO Crab Sticks

It has been 900 years since the word "KAMABOKO" first appeared in a document.

Various anniversary projects are being planned in the industry. Yanagiya News also celebrate this event by featuring on Crab Stick, which is widely spread all over the world, and introduce its history with full-cooperation by SUGIYO - the inventor of Crab Stick.

(Article & Photo / provided by SUGIYO)



Chikuwa Line in early age

2. Investing Crab Sticks from Failures

Since R&D capability of SUGIYO became highly esteemed among people in the industry, a wholesaler asked SUGIYO "Is it possible to make imitation Jelly Fish?" That resulted the birth of the first Imitation Crab Meat named "Kani-Ashi (Crab Legs)". Having Yoshito Sugino, the former president of SUGIYO, as a leader, SUGIYO succeeded to mimic characteristic texture of jelly fish. However, it never be sold to market. The reason is that once it's dipped in soy sauce, the texture become softer, because of its chemical characteristic. This failure on jelly fish became a clue for a new product. In 1972, SUGIYO has introduced "Kani-Ashi". In the following year, SUGIYO made improvement on its texture, then Kani-Ashi recorded a explosive sales.



1. Originated in HOKURIKU (west of Tokyo on Japan Seaside)

Today, Crab Flavored Fish Cake (Crab Stick) is commonly seen everywhere along Japan. This innovative product was invented by SUGIYO located Nanao City - NOTO Peninsula in 1972. SUGINO family, predecessor of SUGIYO, has been a leader of fishers and wholesale dealer of fishes since over 300 years ago, and their trade name was "SUGIno-ya Yosaku". SUGIYO started production of chikuwa since 1907, and has kept introducing various hit products.



3. Creating Market

In its early time, SUGIYO introduced Kani-Ashi to Tsukiji Fish Market (the biggest fish market in Japan). A wholesaler refused flatly "Such minced fish cake is unsalable". However, another wholesaler said "It's interesting. Let's give it try." and sold it as a trial. The promotion of Kani-Ashi was successful, and buyers made additional orders in a short time later. After that, the orders explosively increased. There is a story which describes its popularity: As soon as SUGIYO truck arrives at the dock, buyers jump onto its box, and unload Kani-Ashi by themselves for buying as many Kani-ashi as possible. As a matter of fact, daily sales of Kani-Ashi was record of Tsukiji Fish Market in its 50 years of history. At the same time, TV commercial starring a famous comedian was broadcasted over the nation, and it raised recognition of Imitation Crab Meat rapidly. On the other hand, there were claims such as "How can we distinguish real and imitation?" "It is FAKE crab meat!" from Consumer Organizations and Fair Trade Commission. For raising the recognition of the product, we responded to those claims in good faith, and finally changed the Product Name. We also started export to the U.S. Fortunately, raise of health consciousness and Japanese food boom boosted the project. Our product are used for in-flight meal of United Airlines. Crab Stick gained reputation as Salad Menu in international market. After a while, other companies also began to process Crab Stick, and total production of Crab Stick has leached to 70,000t/year in mid 80's. It is said that Crab Sticks bore hope of rescue in the depressed Japanese Fish Cake Industry at the time.



Advertisement at the time of 1975



Awarded the Emperor's Cup

KAORI BAKO 香り箱

"A Big Hit from Local Region! Creating New Category of Foodstuff the Greatest Happiness as Food Company"



Mr. Tetsuya Sugino President of SUGIYO

4. Entering Foreign Market, Brushing Up Technology

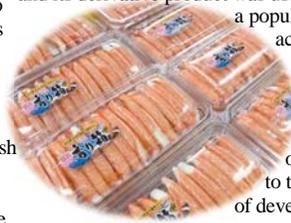
Our export was steadily increasing until Plaza Agreement in 1985. Strong YEN at the era brought us negative earnings in export business. The breakthrough was made by exsecutive managing director Tetsuya Sugino (current president of SUGIYO). He directed the construction of Washington factory, and assumed presidency of SUGIYO U.S.A. SUGIYO U.S.A. has contributed to increasing share and popularization in the US market. In 1990, we brought out "Royal Carib" after 3 years of development. Such V-shaped fabric, just like leaf vein, requires high level technique and know-how. Still now, SUGIYO is the only maker who can process V-shaped Crab Stick.



Royal Carib & V-shape

5. Pride as Pioneer, Aiming for the Best Quality

In 2004, a new project started at a company order "Develop new Crab Stick which transcend the quality of Royal Carib". Our goal was to achieve taste, texture and flavor of beach-boiled snow crab. As a result of deep analysis of leg meat of snow crab, development of "Kaori-Bako", which said to be "the one most similar to real crab meat", has completed. Not only its appearance, but also its taste, texture, and how the fabrics raveled out are said "transcend real crab meat". Even professional buyers say "It must be molded real crab leg." Because of its quality, Kaori-Bako is NOT displayed with other Crab Sticks at Fish Cake section, but with SASHIMI (raw fish) at Fish section in many supermarkets. Moreover, Kaori-Bako was introduced in several TV show, and its derivative product was used instead of real meat in a popular movie starring famous actors. In 2006, SUGIYO was awarded the Emperor's Cup at the 45th Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Festival due to our long year contribution to the industry, and technology of developing Kaori-Bako.



6. Unchanging Attitude and Passion

President Sugino describes the background of development of Crab Sticks as "Because SUGIYO is located in local region, we developed a policy that we must be different from the other makers to survive. Also, we Noto people have a disposition to challenge difficulties." SUGIYO is proud of that we developed Crab Stick, which regarded as one of three greatest food invention after WWII. SUGIYO will keep up efforts, and aim to develop next three greatest food invention of the 21st century.

SUGIYO's motto is "Health, the Very Essence of Happiness Efforts, Victory at the Very Last" By following this, SUGIYO keep providing Health, Security & Safety to customers.



ヘルシー＆ハッピー	Company Info.
スギヨ	[Establish] January, 1962
SUGIYO CO.,LTD.	[Capital] 300 million JPY
	[Employees] 600
	[Location] Nanao City, Ishikawa Pref.

New serial essay of Willow

Cooperate Company of YANAGIYA

Representative of
JAPAN TOOL SERVICE LTD.
(former Moscow Branch Manager of MITSUI & CO.)

Shigeru Iwamoto
Letter from Moscow

In 1984,

The First Crab Stick Line in Russia



I was in charge of industrial machinery import/export, especially for machine tools in MITSUI & CO. Since early 80's, while I reside in Moscow, I had been in charge also of negotiation and technology exchange with major fishery company, and I had frequent contact with USSR Ministry of Fisheries, Staple food of Soviet people at the time was beef. A large amount of foreign currency payment for importing US grains for feeding beef cattle was a matter of concern. Under such situation, then Minister of Fisheries, Mr. Kametsev visited NISSUI factory in Japan, and he decided the first installation of Crab Stick Line in Russia for saving foreign currency. The first Crab Stick Line in Russia was installed in St-Peterburg.



← On-site Technical Guidance by NISSUI

A fact revealed through a tasting event at Ministry of Fisheries surprised all of Japanese people there. We have prepared various recipe, 3% Salt, 5% Salt, etc. The Russian people judged 5% salt Crab Stick has the least salt content. That revealed the fact that Russian people of the time was in condition of excessive salt intake, nearly lifestyle-related diseases. I regret that people in Russia today are still in condition of insufficient exercise, and excessive salt / fat intake.

Contact with Ministry of Fisheries became more frequently. Even though I was in charge of machinery, have started import of caviar at recommendation by a Vice Minister of Fisheries. Since then, MITSUI & Co. had been importing caviar for 20 years, but now it became almost impossible, because of the Washington Convention. At this distance of time, I cannot believe that I used to put plenty caviar on black bread more than I can eat.

After that I have experienced installation of mass production line in Murmansk factory and close cooperation with YANAGIYA in Russian market has begun.

During the Soviet era, PR activities in the country side was strictly limited. However, if there are customers' request, we could conduct business negotiation after complicated procedures. Using promotion VTR brought us a success in USSR.

After I resigned as the branch manager of MITSUI & CO. Moscow branch, I started a machinery company. After a while, I and YANAGIYA reconstructed cooperation relationship at President Yanagiya's request.



In country side at the time, there were no good restaurants. So I always bring handmade rice ball. Now it is still one of my habit.



the first crab stick

With YANAGIYA, we achieved satisfactory results not only in Russian market, but also in Ukraine, Belarus, etc. Today, Crab Stick consumption in Russia is said to be 50,000 tons/year, and it still shows upward tendency.

Health-consciousness of Russian people is gradually increasing, and Japanese foods are regarded as "Healthy Food" also in Russia. But most of the Japanese restaurants serve robot-made sushi, and only a few restaurants serve various dishes cooked by trained cook. As a matter of fact, there used to be over 20 Japanese Sushi Chefs in 2007, but today there are only 4-5 Japanese chefs in Russia.

Under such situation We have installed some machines to Japanese Capitalized Udon (Japanese noodle) restaurants. It seems Udon culture has not grown in Russia yet. However, the variety of ingredients for Udon is getting wider. I think that there is a possibility for popularizing not only Crab Stick, but also the other kind of fish cakes.

Because of the Ukraine situation, import of foodstuff from Western countries is totally prohibited. I expect that possibility of domestic production of Japanese Food will increase.



Udon Restaurant in Russia



Various Menu



<Shigeru Iwamoto>

Born in 1946, Age: 68
1970 Enter MITSUI & Co.
2000 Moscow branch manager
2004 Retiring Age
Establish Japan Tool Service
Hobby - Contrabass(Jazz, Orchestra)
Played in Hanoi with Tokyo Orchestra.

30 years ago, he bought golf course equipment at his private expense for Japanese businessmen, and opened the first golf course in Russia. It is highly appreciated by Moscow Sports Committee and he have served as a commissioner of Moscow Country Club for 12 terms.

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1 Coloring by spraying on molds



2 Filling material to molds



3 Folding molds by handling robot



4 Carrying molds to steamer by handling robot



5 Steaming



6 Opening molds by handling robot



7 Taking out products from molds



8 Carrying molds to washing C/V by handling robot



9 Washing molds (Return to process No. 1/Coloring)

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