



Shodoshima
"even the island looks like a cow!"

Olive-fed Wagyu promotion association

<http://www.olivefedbeef.jp/>



Olive-fed Wagyu Beef



Over 1000 Years of Cattle Raising

The bucolic island of Shodoshima in the tranquil Seto Inland Sea East of Osaka has been home to raising cattle for over 1300 years. Raising Wagyu cattle for meat production began in 1882. In the early 20th century, Shodoshima welcomed a second industry to its shores and now produces 99% of Japan's olives and award-winning olive oil. Although it may seem that beef and olives have little in common, a local cattle rancher named Masaki Ishii felt differently.



Happy, Healthy Cows

After years of observing the leftovers resulting from olive oil production going to waste, Ishii hit on the idea of feeding this nutritionally rich material to his herd. Initially, the animals wanted no part of the bitter substance but after many trials and errors, Ishii hit upon a complex, time-consuming process of drying and roasting the pressed olives. This caramelized the natural sugars resulting in a sweetness the finicky bovines were happy to eat. The effort that goes into this process fits perfectly with the Japanese ethos of *mottainai*, to waste nothing.



It soon became evident that the cattle fed this mixture were producing superior beef. Not only was the meat rich, buttery, and supremely marbled, the high oleic content makes both the animals and the resulting beef very healthy.

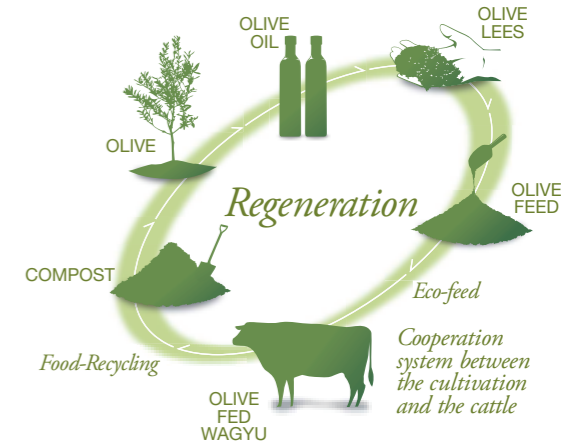
Award-Winning Beef

"Olive beef" quickly began to garner attention and has earned the industry's highest grades. With just 1700 animals, compared to nearly 16,000 in Miyazaki, the herd size is relatively small. Olive-fed Wagyu is as highly prized as it is carefully controlled. The beef is popular among chefs and savvy diners throughout Japan and fast gaining notoriety abroad.



A Perfect Circle

As a result of Ishii's idea, Shodoshima has achieved a balanced cycle: olives are grown, pressed for oil and the leftovers are fed to local cattle whose manure is then used to fertilize the olives. Although the drying process is costly, it's also efficient and environmentally sound.



What is Wagyu?

Literally, "wa-gyu" means Japanese beef. To qualify for the name, it must come from one of four specific cattle breeds or a cross-breed within the four. The most famous wagyu is Kobe beef (Kobegyu in Japanese), but in recent years other regions such as Shodoshima have begun raising their own delicious beef creating a competitive market.

Beef in Japan is graded according to yield (A, B, C) and quality (5-1), with A3, A4 and A5 showing superior quality meat and intense fat marbling. Olive-fed Wagyu consistently ranks at this level, while the high oleic acid increases flavor and marbling.

