

Traditional Crafts

Traditional Wakasa crafts have been passed down through many generations. These include Japanese paper (washi), carved agate, clay roof tiles, and lacquerware. Visitors to the Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum may see these crafts being made in the Wakasa Workshop, and also experience making them firsthand.

Wakasa Lacquerware

Well-known in Japan and prized for its luxurious appearance, Wakasa lacquerware is distinguished by the use of a combination of red, yellow, green, and gold colors. Layers of colored lacquer are inlaid with natural objects such as seashell, eggshell, and dried leaves. The pieces are then gilded before being overpainted with more lacquer. Finally, they are highly polished to reveal the underlying designs and colors. The resulting products have tremendous depth and softness to the touch, with patterns that are sometimes said to resemble the seabed of Wakasa Bay. The craft has its origins in the Keicho era (1596–1614), when a lacquer tray was imported and presented to the domain lord Sakai Tadakatsu. Local artisans gleaned inspiration from this piece, and subsequently developed the Wakasa lacquer style. Traditionally, lacquerware was a luxury reserved for the upper classes. A meal served using lacquer tableware and chopsticks made in Obama is both beautiful and sophisticated. Obama produces more lacquer chopsticks than anywhere else in Japan.

Wakasa Papermaking

Papermaking is another craft that has been practiced in the Wakasa region for centuries. Wakasa washi is made from the bark of the paper mulberry. The process is considered to be environmentally friendly because the paper mulberry grows quickly. The only other necessary materials are water and sunset hibiscus root. Traditionally, washi was used to produce items such as accounting books, umbrellas, and paper screens. It is also applied to Wakasa lacquerware to strengthen the joints in the wood. Today, washi is often used by hobbyists for creating watercolor paintings, stationery, and other artworks. The ornately patterned washi known as *katazome*, often seen covering Japanese tea canisters, was originally created from Wakasa paper and printed in Kyoto. The region's paper was selected for its durability, as it was specially designed to withstand the printing process.

The Wakasa Obama Food Culture Museum endeavors to preserve the region's historically significant crafts. In the workshop area on the second floor, visitors may see skilled

craftsmen at work and can view or purchase their creations at the adjoining gift shop. Visitors may also learn firsthand how the crafts are made. There are many workshop activities to choose from, including papermaking, creating food models, and sanding Wakasa lacquer chopsticks. Visitors can take home their creation as a memento of their trip to Obama.