

A Lost Art Rediscovered

(QR code, Room 3)

Suzu's distinctive pottery was largely forgotten until an urn was excavated in 1951. Further excavations uncovered 40 kilns around Suzu. Early Suzu ware was fired in tunnel-shaped *anagama* kilns (sometimes called tunnel kilns) built into hill slopes. These large kilns had a chamber around 9 meters long, with a small door at the front for loading the pottery and stoking the fire, and a flue and chimney at the back. There is a full-sized reconstruction of a thirteenth-century *anagama* kiln on the grounds of the museum.

Temperatures could reach over 1,200°C, and the kilns required continuous stoking with firewood to keep the temperature up. A firing could take from 48 hours to a week. At the end of a firing, the fire was extinguished, and the furnace opening, and flue were sealed. Starving the kiln of oxygen in this way caused the wood ash and soot to interact with the minerals in the clay, producing a grayish-black hue and a natural glaze.

In 1972, potter Onodera Gen (1934–2016) started experimenting with Suzu clay to revive the traditional methods of making Suzu ware. Currently, there are around 40 potters making Suzu ware on the Noto Peninsula. Some of these contemporary works are on display at the museum, and a video presentation outlines the processes of making Suzu ware.