

## **Wakame Sushi Experience**

Members of the fishing community at Obiki Fishing Harbor offer workshops introducing visitors to the daily lives and traditions of local fishermen and their families. In one of these, visitors can learn how to make sushi rolls using dried sheets of wakame seaweed, a regional variation of a nationwide dish that typically uses nori (dried laver).

In Yura, wakame is usually harvested in winter, and much of it is dried or preserved in salt for use throughout the year. The wakame for sushi is processed using techniques perfected over generations to offer an alternative to laver, a seaweed that does not grow locally and was once difficult and costly to source.

Participants in sushi roll workshops learn about the dish and the local wakame industry. Workshops begin with an explanation of the traditional process of making dried sheets of wakame, which is highly seasonal and labor intensive. The work is only possible for a short time in February, when the weather is optimal for drying and the young fronds of wakame are tender.

After a demonstration, participants make their own sushi rolls, selecting fillings from a selection of prepared ingredients. These typically include strips of cooked egg, shiitake mushrooms, and vegetables such as cucumbers and carrots. With guidance provided on everything from the rolling technique to the optimal ratio of rice and fillings, participants can soon learn the art of making sushi rolls. Too few fillings and the roll may not be satisfying enough, but too many and the wakame sheet is likely to tear, and the roll may fall apart.

At the end of the session, everyone sits down together to try their creations and talk over tea as the workshop leader shares anecdotes and insights about the history and culture of Yura and the fishing community of Obiki. Workshops are held outdoors at Obiki Fishing Harbor, with the bay in the backdrop. Reservations are required. Other workshops and activities available at the harbor include fisherman-led sightseeing cruises and fish filleting experiences.