



Essence of Japan within The Okura Tokyo as the Atelier of Beauty Vol. 1 Nickel Silver Tableware

Series offering a glimpse of how our treasures are being passed on for the September 12 opening

Silverware plays an important role at restaurants and hotels. Cutlery such as knives and forks, serving items such as soup tureens and coffee pots, and large silverware pieces such as German platters and decorative stands that add glamor to weddings and parties—there are about 500 types at Hotel Okura Tokyo alone.

■ History

Even in 1962 when the hotel opened, there were grades of plating clearly defined by the Japanese Industrial Standards (JIS). Like the design elements reflecting the Japanese essence of elegant restraint found in various areas of the hotel, there are still records about the furnishings created to meet an “Okura-grade” quality, far exceeding the JIS standards.

“No other hotel uses such thick base metal. With proper maintenance, these could be used for another 50 years,” says the craftsman who has long been handling the maintenance and repair of metal tableware. Among the silver cutlery used at the hotel, there are a number of pieces engraved with the Mt. Fuji logo and “1962,” or “1973,” the year the South Wing was opened.



■ Through the Ages

Many of the luxurious large silverware pieces were crafted at small local factories specializing in Western style tableware. These used to be silver decoration workshops in the Edo period. Most are located in Katsushika-ku and Arakawa-ku, where the Okura custom-made silverware was created. Large plates with grape relief, and large Chinese serving dishes embellished with a phoenix motif—these masterpieces of Tokyo silverware craftsmanship featuring the very best in metalwork have been carefully passed down to the present day.



With economic growth, stainless tableware that is cheaper and easier to handle became widespread, and the local factories have suffered from the economic cycles and a lack of successors. Now, Okura cannot order new parts or replacements, so even broken pieces are saved as repair parts. Our precious silverware, lavish in form and quantity, is currently being prepared to be passed on to The Okura Tokyo as a treasured asset of the hotel.



■ Nickel Silver

The Okura silverware is made from thick pieces of flexible and easily-processed silver alloy called nickel silver, used for coins, decorations, and brass instruments, with silver plating. The finish is matte instead of the ornate mirror polish often seen on European silverware, so as to suit the interior design based on the hotel's main concept of traditional Japanese beauty. Okura was the first post-war Japanese hotel to introduce nickel silver items, with exclusive designs based on Japanese aesthetics.





■ Maintenance

Silverware reacts with ultraviolet rays and substances in the air, which produces tarnish, so meticulous care after use and regular maintenance by craftsmen are essential. Tarnished silverware undergoes sheet metal processing, polishing, and re-plating at Minato Mekki Kogyosho*, a company that has taken care of the silverware maintenance since the hotel's opening. For Okura, there is an extra step in the nickel silver finishing process, to create a matte finish using a soft solid abrasive called buff, restoring the pieces to their original beauty.

Currently, approximately 40,000 items of 210 types are each being given a hand-crafted makeover in preparation for The Okura Tokyo's opening.

*Minato Mekki Kogyosho

<http://mm-ag.jp/>

Minato Mekki Kogyosho was established in 1950 in Minato-ku, formally a swordsmith in the prewar times. As the demand for swords diminished after the war, they began providing plating and polishing of silverware. Since the company's establishment, it has been the leading processor for silverware used at hotels and restaurants in Japan. They are significantly expanding business with the new technology of on-site plating.

Media related inquiries

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