Odate Magewappa
the art of bent wood



The history of Magewappa: the functional elegance of Akita

Originating from Odate, in Akita Prefecture, Odate Magewappa is one of Japan's most revered traditional wooden crafts, certified as a Japanese National Traditional Craft. Its origins date back more than 400 years, to the late 16th century, when local foresters used straight-grained Akita cedar to make lightweight, durable containers for their daily meals in the mountains. Supported and encouraged by the local samurai lords of the Satake clan, this humble craft flourished to become a refined form of artisanal art.

Magewappa is made by steaming thin sheets of straight-grained cedar, skilfully bending them into a circular or oval shape, and then stitching the overlapping parts with wild cherry bark (yamazakura).

Untreated natural cedar (Shiraki): Unlike lacquered wooden objects, untreated Magewappa retains the natural breathing qualities of raw wood.

It absorbs excess moisture from cooked rice while keeping it fresh, soft and fragrant, offering a sensory culinary experience unparalleled by modern materials. Warmth and longevity: Highly insulating, lightweight, naturally antimicrobial and imbued with the soothing aroma of Akita cedar, Magewappa embodies the Japanese philosophy of Mingeikan, which involves finding beauty in functional everyday objects that become richer over time.

Officiel Website of Shibata Yoshinobu Shoten

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Yoshimasa Shibata

President and Master Craftsman Yoshimasa Shibata represents the second generation of Shibata Yoshinobu Shoten, a world-renowned workshop celebrated for elevating untreated wood Magewappa to the status of international art.

After graduating from university and working in the corporate world, Yoshimasa returned to his hometown in 1998 to apprentice under his father, Yoshinobu Shibata, a legendary master craftsman.

Over the past two decades, Yoshimasa has upheld his family's philosophy: "To make tools that are useful in everyday life, passed down from parents to children, and from children to grandchildren."

As a certified traditional craftsman (Dentou Kougeishi), Yoshimasa combines rigorous historical technique with modern design. He has won numerous prestigious awards, including the Prime Minister's Award at the National Traditional Crafts Competition and several Good Design Awards. Beyond the workshop, he actively promotes regional revitalisation and global recognition of bentwood craftsmanship, creating the "Wappa Building" in Odate to showcase bentwood arts from around the world.



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