



BY [JEN MURPHY](#) | AFAR Editor

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## WANDERING CHEF: DANIEL HOLZMAN IN JAPAN

*Photos by Daniel Holzman*

Daniel Holzman, chef and co-owner of [The Meatball Shop](#) restaurants in New York, recently returned from a trip to Sakai City, Japan where he got an exclusive tour of Suisin Knives. At the factory, he was paired with a translator and guide who turned out to be Saori Kawano, the founder of Korin Japanese Trading Corp., America's leading importer of Japanese knives. What Kawano showed Holzman was as authentic as it gets: craftsmen hand forging knives from raw iron in a coal fire. The artisans worked in extremely dark rooms so they could see exactly when the flame was prime for detailing. If even the tiniest facet of the iron was less than perfect, the blades were immediately tossed away. Each of the craftsmen was responsible for a specific part of the knife engineering process, right down to fastening of the handle onto the blade. And with some Korin chef knives priced over \$3,000, Holzman says this intense attention to detail was not only fascinating to watch but proves their products is a true investment. After he geeked out on knives, Holzman set out to explore Kyoto, Osaka, and Tokyo. Here he shares his adventures.



Suisin Knives in Sakai City, Japan.

## The Ultimate Insider Guide

“For dinner in Tokyo, we hooked up with translator and guide **Shinji Nohara**, known as **The Tokyo Fixer**. He’s an extremely cool dude and a great guide. The guy has Tokyo entirely wired. He brought us to an amazing sushi restaurant then a couple of bars, the coolest of which was down in a high-rise basement. The bar top and chairs were all Nakashima. They served warm corn nuts and excellent beverages.”

[tokyofixer.com](http://tokyofixer.com)



### An Evening in Sendai

“We walked way out into the suburbs of Sendai for the best bowl of ramen I’ve ever had in my life at a little spot called **26 Hours** (they are open till 2 am) then dinner at **Hinotori**, a yakitori joint. Hinotori is super smoky but they make some excellent meatballs! We ended the night at a great jazz and whiskey bar, **The Count**. I fell asleep on the bar before I was dragged home to bed. The next day we had a bowl of ramen by the train station and got on the bullet down to Osaka. They serve canned whiskey sodas on the train, which are amazing.”

*Hinotori: Kanemaru Building 2F, 4-6-15, Ichibancho, Aoba-ku, Sendai-shi,*

### Take Me out to the Ball Game

“In Osaka, we went to see the **Hanshin Tigers** play the **Tokyo Giants**. The game was bananas. The Japanese take their baseball extremely seriously. Everyone dresses up in their team’s uniforms and they go completely crazy whenever there’s any action on the field. Even if a player gets walked, the crowd goes berserk like it’s a grand slam! At the stadium we ate delicious *tako yaki*, grilled octopus balls. Girls with kegs built into backpacks walk through the stands pouring draft beers. At the 7th inning stretch everyone in the stadium blows up balloons that look like giant condoms and all let them go in unison creating a chaos of flying objects everywhere for 20 seconds. Then everyone goes back to their orderly cheering in unison.”

[npb.or.jp/eng/](http://npb.or.jp/eng/)



### Seeking Soba in Kyoto

“For the most authentic soba, go to **Misoka-an Kawamichiya** in Kyoto. This soba shop has been making incredible noodles since 1710. The soba gets served with poached Kyoto-style herring.”

*On the west side of Fuyacho, north of Sanjo, 075-221-2525, [kawamichiya.co.jp](http://kawamichiya.co.jp)*



### Michelin-Worthy Fried Food

“On our last day in Tokyo, we went to the Michelin-starred tempura restaurant, **Raku-Tei**. At the restaurant, an older man stands by himself in front of a counter with just eight seats. He peels live shrimp and then batters and fries them right in front of you. It was wild and delicious. Bamboo was in season at the time and the young shoots tasted phenomenal.”

*6-8-1 Akasaka, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 81/(0)3-585-3743*

### Tokyo's Best Cocktails

“We got drinks at **Gen Yamamoto**, where flights of three juice-based cocktails are made to order. The drinks will blow your mind. The bar has just nine seats and one young master making your beverages.”

*1-6-4 Azabu-Juban, Minato-ku, Tokyo, 81/(0)3-6434-0652, [genyamamoto.jp](http://genyamamoto.jp)*

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