

MAGA Divided Over Iran

07.11-18.2025

Newsweek®

HOW
**ROCK
CLIMBING**
BENEFITS
BOTH
MIND AND
BODY

PEAK
PERFORMANCE

\$10.99

28>



0 14014 08321 8



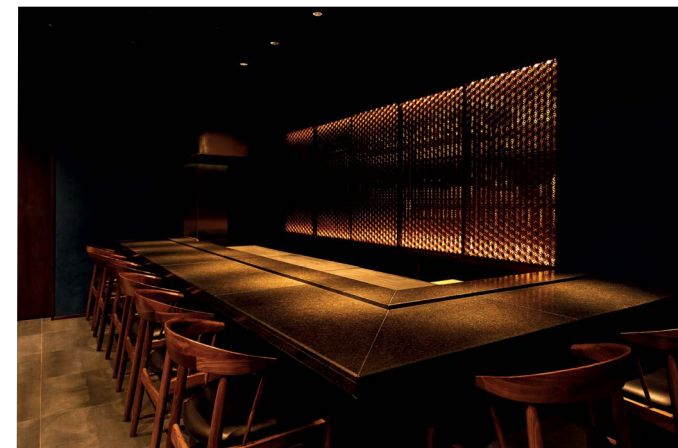
“We’re committed to offering food that’s not only delicious but also genuinely good for people.”

Kodai Fujii
President,
Sanmaruko Foods Pty., Ltd.
www.sanmaruko.co.jp

DR. DISH: THIS IS FOOD INNOVATION

SANMARUKO FOODS IS TRANSFORMING JAPAN’S APPROACH TO HEALTH AND NUTRITION WITH INNOVATIVE, SCIENCE-DRIVEN MEALS DESIGNED TO ENHANCE WELL-BEING THROUGH SMARTER, MORE MINDFUL EATING. *By Daniel de Bomford and Cian O’Neill*

The first bite of a meal is often the most difficult to savor. As flavors flood the tastebuds and fragrant aromas caress the senses, taking one’s time can feel impossible. With the focus on creating tasty foods, it’s easy to see why studies show that people are chewing food for fewer seconds than ever before. An overreliance on intense flavors, additives and salts is shortening chewing times and can lead to poor health outcomes. Sanmaruko Foods President Kodai Fujii considers this a significant challenge, both for enjoyment and, most importantly, for health. The Hokkaido-based food manufacturer Sanmaruko Foods was founded in 1979 and specializes in



the production of frozen foods. Its groundbreaking medical and functional Dr. Dish line, which supports health management, is emblematic of the company’s philosophy of supporting customers’ happiness through high-quality products.

In the wake of increasing diabetes diagnoses in Japan, Fujii describes the current food market as filled with “food tragedies,” driven by low prices and convenience at the cost of nutritional quality. He goes on to say that food-related health education is a “missing piece” of society, and poor eating habits can lead to poor body image and emotional struggles. “At our company, we’re striving for the opposite: to enrich lives through the products we offer—empowering people to feel better, live healthier, and regain confidence,” he says. This is particularly close to Fujii’s heart, after he himself lost over 50 kilograms. “It was a long journey, but through it, I gained a deep understanding of both health and taste. That experience fundamentally changed how I think about food,” he says. The company has decided to move away from conventional formulas that focus solely on taste and cost. “We’re committed to offering food that’s not only delicious but also genuinely good for people—something we can stand behind with pride,” he says.

Sanmaruko Foods is addressing this societal challenge through its Dr. Dish frozen meal delivery service, backed by evidence-based health foods that are also delicious. The meals are primarily designed to support individuals with diabetes. A key indicator is reducing the level of HbA1c, or glycated hemoglobin, which reflects average blood sugar levels over the past two to three months. Dr.

Dish meals are precisely balanced to meet the dietary guidelines set by the World Health Organization (WHO) and Japan’s Ministry of Health and limit salt intake to less than two grams per meal.



While similar products exist, most are not as strictly nutritionally controlled, and Sanmaruko Foods noticed that consumers often give up using them. Through its research, the company identified three key issues: the meals frequently lacked flavor due to low salt content and tended to be watery, limited menus and there was often no clear evidence that the meals improved health. In response, Sanmaruko Foods expanded its menu and conducted clinical trials to gather data that showed the meals effectively reducing HbA1c levels. It also focused on enhancing texture, which specifically targeted the sensory experience.

Through its research, Sanmaruko Foods has developed a new approach, utilizing its “four-dimensional sensory design.” The X axis represents the materials, like the meat or the vegetables, and the Y axis represents flavor, such as that of spices and herbs. The Z axis captures umami, richness and depth. “Most product development ends at the two-dimensional level, but we include a fourth: time,” Fujii explains. The fourth dimension relates to the timeline of eating, specifically how long food is chewed. The company’s research indicates that the minimum ideal is 17 seconds, with 30 seconds being optimal to prevent spikes in glucose. Time influences not only digestion and nutrition, but also how flavors unfold in the mouth.

The company discovered that overly intense flavors can prompt people to swallow more quickly, potentially leading to overeating. By carefully adjusting the way the ingredients are

cut and heated, the food’s texture and seasoning are engineered to promote slower chewing and broader contact with the tongue. It also focuses on building long-lasting flavors that intensify with each bite, making the food feel rich and satisfying, even with the reduced salt. The meals are designed to allow the eating experience to unfold in the mouth, encouraging slower chewing and a more satisfying sensory experience. “This multi-dimensional thinking—grounded in both sensory experience and science—is what sets us apart and guides the way we create and evaluate our food,” Fujii says.

Fujii himself eats Dr. Dish daily for this very reason. The dimension of time also affects the perception of flavors as well as digestion and nutrition. “This multi-dimensional thinking—grounded in both sensory experience and science—is what sets us apart and guides the way we create and evaluate our food,” he states.

Sanmaruko is planning to open a clinic in Ginza that offers food-based therapy, treating patients through the consumption of specially formulated foods, essentially Dr. Dish as medicine. The clinic doesn’t simply serve those with health conditions, but also those who are looking to improve their wellness proactively. Clients can receive health assessments and personalized recommendations for the ingredients and nutrition their bodies need. The company operates a restaurant in Sapporo called “fw”, where people can enjoy Sanmaruko Food’s four-dimensional approach firsthand. The restaurant serves a delicious, carefully crafted menu with an extremely low salt content. The meal provides customers with the opportunity to detox and experience the difference in their body the next day.

Fujii says the company is committed to tackling society’s challenges through food innovation, relying on precise, measurable data and clinical evidence. “More than anything, we want to be a company that society truly needs—one that helps people live healthier, happier lives,” he says. However, it cannot tackle these challenges on its own. The company is open to collaborating with partners who share Sanmaruko Food’s dream of empowering people to feel better, live healthier and regain confidence. It is seeking food manufacturers and contributing to broader solutions. As Fujii states: “Our vision is for the human species to prosper—and we believe that’s a goal we can all get behind.”



北海道から もっと美味しく健康に

サンマルコ

