



GOOD TASTE

THE WAY OF TEA

There is far more to sipping tea than simply quenching your thirst

Tea is not to be trifled with when you're the 10th generation of a family entrusted with creating pots for ritualistic tea ceremonies. Master potter Chozaemon Toshiro, known simply as Tenth Generation, has serious clay credentials, having earned himself the Person of Cultural Merit award from the Emperor.

Ohi Museum in Kanazawa City, less than three hours by regular rail from Osaka, exhibits pottery crafted exclusively by Tenth Generation and his ancestors. On the day of our visit to the museum, Tenth Generation was nowhere to be seen. Instead, his charismatic wife Yoko-san presides, dressed in a white



kimono adorned with embroidered silver blossoms. Exuding grace and charm, she glides into the *cha-shitsu* (tea room) effortlessly slipping onto the tatami mat, her legs primly tucked beneath her as she prepares the utensils for tea. I soon learn that a tea ceremony or *chado* (literally 'way of tea') is highly ceremonial and steeped in ancient traditions.

Yoko-san tells us that she learned the etiquette of *chado* after her 40th birthday as it then became necessary to host important visitors as Tenth Generation's star rose, particularly after he was awarded the Cultural Merit honour in 1976.

HIGASHI CHAYA

It's a popular place to wander around in, exploring ancient shops and teahouses. If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of a geisha or *maiko* (geisha in training) discreetly travelling to and from an engagement.

CLOCKWISE FROM MAIN: Yoko-san preparing tea; teahouses in Higashi Chaya district; signage at a teahouse

Once delicate sweets and bowls containing bitter-tasting green tea have been served, it is customary for guests to politely admire the bowl, complimenting the host.

Kanazawa City, often referred to as 'Little Kyoto', houses many traditional *ochaya* (teahouse) especially along the narrow lanes of the Higashi Chaya district.

Admittance to some *ochaya* is strictly by invitation so you'll need to come with good credentials to be allowed in. Shima Teahouse — now a museum providing historical insight into teahouses — and Kaikaro Teahouse are open to the public. Just around the corner at the dazzling Sakuda Gold & Silver Leaf Co, craftsmen and women carefully decorate lacquerware with delicate, wafer-thin gold leaf.

Back at Ohi Museum, Yoko-san indicates politely with a mere incline of her neck that *chado* is over. On my way out, I can't help noticing that beauty is everywhere in the small details. Delicate miniature paper cranes in cobalt blue paper rest atop the bathroom vanity. Created to please the eye and mind, a tea ceremony is much the same. If you participate in *chado* purely to satisfy your thirst, you've really missed the point. ★

Ohi Museum: 2-17 Hashiba-cho, Kanazawa
Higashi Chaya Teahouse District

Shima Teahouse: 1-13-21; **Kaikaro Teahouse:** 1-14-8;
Sakuda Gold & Silver Leaf Co: 1-3-27