



LE MINH TIEN

While working at a Vietnamese restaurant from 2016, he had the opportunity to help out at a local Japanese restaurant, and this was the catalyst that awakened him to the profound appeal of Japanese cuisine. He then decided to study in Japan and attended a Japanese language school. After that, he studied at a training school for Licensed Cooks in Japan and obtained a silver certification. After graduating, he worked at the prestigious Japanese restaurant *Happo-en* in Shirokanedai, Tokyo, and is currently the head chef at the modern izakaya restaurant *Wa Bistro Point Ten* in Shibuya, Tokyo. In 2024, he participated in the Asian competition of the “Road to Japanese Culinary Arts Award for Foreigners” organized by the Japanese Culinary Academy and won first place, and after being recommended by the judges, he took the exam and received gold certification this time.

“Japanese cuisine is basically a cuisine that uses seasonal ingredients, is carefully prepared and served, and has various characteristics depending on the region. Each dish in Japanese cuisine has its own story, and I want to continue to convey the ideas and stories behind the dishes to each and every one of our customers.

By participating in this contest and being certified as a Gold Chef, I feel that I have become stronger and grown as a Japanese cuisine chef.”

—Le Minh Tien



PHAM DUC DUY

He came to Japan when he was 18 years old, and while he was attending a Japanese language school, he got a part-time job at a Japanese restaurant, which led him to decide to become a Japanese chef. He then enrolled in a training school for Licensed Cooks in Japan and studied Japanese cuisine in earnest, graduating with a silver certification. After that, he joined *Kikunoi Honten* using the Kyoto City Comprehensive Special Zone System, which allows foreigners to work in Japanese restaurants as a special case, and is currently still acquiring various skills and knowledge of Japanese cuisine while gaining experience in various cooking departments, from the appetizer department to the simmered dish department.

“The Gold Level exam I recently took was a very important exam for me. I was able to receive Gold certification by making use of what I have learned through my work experience, but through this exam I also realized where I still need to improve and my current position in the food industry.

I will continue to study and train in Japanese cuisine, knowledge, techniques and culture. In the future, I would like to return to Vietnam and open my own restaurant to promote Japanese cuisine, and I will work hard to be able to fully demonstrate the results I have achieved in Japan.

—Pham Duc Duy



During the exam



Shōkadōbentō by LE MINH TIEN



Shōkadōbentō by PHAM DUC DUY



Tasting and judging



Feedback from the judges