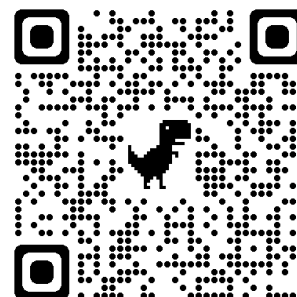


New ship hopes to put whale back on Japanese plates



<https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/en/news/videos/20240412153610394/>

It's been 5 years since Japan restarted commercial whaling with catch limits. Domestic demand is not what it used to be, but as NHK World's Hirayama Akihide shows us, some are hoping to put whale meat back on the menu.

This new whaling ship is called the Kangei Maru, priced at almost 50 million dollars. Big bucks for some big catches. Company Kyodo Senpaku says it can load whales weighing up to 70 tons through here. The ships crew will do everything from processing to packaging on board.

We would like to make products that people can enjoy.

These containers can each hold 15 tons of whale meat. The question now is whether there is still an appetite for it on Japanese plates.

Japan has a long history with whale. It was a popular school lunch meat after a postwar food shortage. But after a so-called moratorium, Japan switched to only hunting whales for research purposes. It had asked the international whaling commission to allow Japanese ships to hunt them for their meat again, claiming certain species were abandoned. After years of negotiation, Japan decided to withdraw from IWC in 2019. It restarted whaling in Japanese waters shortly after, citing its long history with the meat. Japan isn't the only country that hunts whales. Iceland and Norway are among the others that allow it. But many IWC members disagreed with the move.

We set catch limits using a calculation method adopted by the IWC. Japan's commercial whaling won't affect resources for a hundred years. We want people to understand our sustainable use of living marine resources, including whales.

Whale restaurants still exist in Japan, serving customers who are fans of the dish.

It's so soft and delicious. I can't believe this is whale. I was served deep fried whale meat for school lunch back in the old days. I feel nostalgic eating it.

But the current harvest is capped at about 2000 tons a year. That's less than 1% of the annual amount compared to 60 years ago. That means that many people today have never even tried whale meat.

I don't think I would choose whale meat among other meat and fish options.

I have never eaten it and I don't think I'm going to eat it.

Kyodo Senpaku, the company behind the whaling ship is trying to build an appetite for it. It is providing schools with whale meat with government subsidies and it's looking to get more schools on board. It's also selling whale using a Japanese staple, vending machines, as a promotional tactic.

I think it's crucial to create opportunities for people to enjoy tasty whale dishes. We're targeting young people. We need to focus on future consumers.

The ship is said to start operations in May. The company hopes it sails for decades, but only time will tell if the Japanese market will put its money where its mouth is.

Source: (NHK World News)

Now discuss the questions with a partner.

1. Have you ever eaten whale? If so, where did you eat it? How was it prepared? Did you like it?
2. Would you like to eat whale again? If you haven't eaten it, would you like to try it?
3. Do you feel like whaling is an important part of Japanese culture? Why or why not?
4. Many countries are against eating whale. Is there anything you are against eating?
5. Can you think of any other strategies to make eating whale more popular?