

Japan's legendary sushi chef still working at 100

30th October 2025



A famous sushi chef in Japan has decided to continue working, even though he just turned 100. His name is Jiro Ono. He celebrated his 100th birthday on the 27th of October. He is one of around 4,380 people in Tokyo who have reached or will reach the

age of 100 this year. Just before his birthday, Mr Ono spoke to Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike. She asked him about his secret to living a long and healthy life. He replied, "To work." He said: "I can no longer go to my restaurant every day...but even at 100 years old, I'll try to work if possible. I believe the best medicine is to work." Ono-san said he has no plans to retire from his job. He told Ms Koike: "I plan to keep going for about five more years."

Jiro Ono was born in 1925. He started working in a restaurant at the age of seven. Eighteen years later, when he was 25, he moved to Tokyo and worked in a sushi bar. He qualified as a sushi chef in 1951. Fifteen years later, in 1965, Ono opened his own restaurant, called Sukiyabashi Jiro. It was a tiny 10-seat place in an upmarket area of Tokyo called Ginza. He worked for decades trying to make the perfect sushi. In 2007, his efforts were rewarded when he received three stars in the Michelin Guide. In 2011, a documentary about him was released, called "Jiro Dreams of Sushi". In the film, he said: "I haven't reached perfection yet. I'll continue to climb and try to reach the top, but nobody knows where the top is."

Sources: mainichi.jp / ntv.co.jp / wikipedia.org

Writing

Eating raw fish is better than eating cooked fish. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

sushi chef / the age of 100 / birthday / Tokyo / governor / healthy life / medicine / restaurant / the age of 7 / upmarket areas / rewarded / documentary / perfection

True / False

- 1) There are more than 4,000 in Tokyo over the age of 100. T / F
- 2) Mr Ono said work is the secret to a long and healthy life. T / F
- 3) Mr Ono said he takes medicine every day at work to stay healthy. T / F
- 4) Mr Ono said he would continue working for another 10 years. T / F
- 5) Mr Ono opened his first sushi bar when he was 25. T / F
- 6) The sushi bar Mr Ono opened in 1965 had just 10 seats. T / F
- 7) The Michelin Guide awarded Mr Ono three gold stars. T / F
- 8) Mr Ono said he likes climbing mountains. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|------------------|
| 1. famous | a. stop working |
| 2. turned | b. continue |
| 3. secret | c. get to |
| 4. retire | d. relocated |
| 5. keep going | e. become |
| 6. moved | f. 10 years |
| 7. tiny | g. well known |
| 8. decade | h. got |
| 9. received | i. magic formula |
| 10. reach | j. very small |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What is your perfect job?
- c) Is your personality suited to working in a restaurant?
- d) What business would you like to start?
- e) What things do you want to do perfectly?
- f) Would you like to see the movie 'Jiro Dreams of Sushi'?
- g) How important is it to reach for perfection?
- h) What questions would you like to ask Jiro Ono?

Phrase Match

1. He celebrated
 2. his secret to living
 3. I believe the best medicine
 4. he has no plans to
 5. I plan to keep going for
 6. he moved
 7. He qualified
 8. in an upmarket area of
 9. In 2011, a documentary
 10. I haven't reached
- a. Tokyo called Ginza
 - b. about five more years
 - c. to Tokyo
 - d. perfection yet
 - e. is to work
 - f. his 100th birthday
 - g. about him was released
 - h. retire from his job
 - i. as a sushi chef in 1951
 - j. a long and healthy life

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think of sushi?
- b) What do you think of the job of a sushi chef?
- c) What do you think of working at the age of 100?
- d) What will you do on your 100th birthday?
- e) What is the secret to a long and healthy life?
- f) When do you want to retire?
- g) Do you agree that 'the best medicine is to work'?
- h) What advice do you have for Jiro Ono?

Spelling

1. He redbtcelae his 100th birthday
2. Mr Ono spoke to Tokyo rnerogov Yuriko Koike
3. She asked him about his cretes
4. living a long and hylthea life
5. I believe the best miedcnei is to work
6. he has no plans to eerrti from his job
7. He faeluiqdi as a sushi chef
8. in an uetpkram area of Tokyo
9. He worked for desedac
10. his efforts were erawredd
11. a etdumaryonc about him was released
12. I haven't reached pinfotcree yet

Answers – Synonym Match

1. g	2. e	3. i	4. a	5. b
6. d	7. j	8. f	9. h	10. c

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	When is Jiro Ono's birthday?
2.	Who did Jiro Ono speak to before his birthday?
3.	What did Jiro Ono say his secret to a long life was?
4.	What did Jiro Ono say work was?
5.	For how long does Jiro Ono want to continue working?
6.	How old was Jiro Ono when he started his first job?
7.	What happened to Jiro Ono in 1965?
8.	What did Jiro Ono try to do for decades?
9.	What did the Michelin Guide give to Jiro Ono?
10.	What did Jiro Ono say he hasn't reached yet?

Speaking – The Best Age

Rank these with your partner. Put the best age at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|-------|------|
| • 100 | • 20 |
| • 75 | • 16 |
| • 40 | • 10 |
| • 30 | • 5 |

Answers – True False

1 F	2 T	3 F	4 F	5 F	6 T	7 T	8 F
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.