

藤谷 愛 (Ai Fujitani)



Profile

While helping out at her parents' home "Gourmet Wakakiya," she renovated a rented house and opened "Keres", which offers Usuki chiropractic therapy and miscellaneous goods. She has been posted overseas for 8 years and is fluent in English.

■What we value:

- Taking on new challenges

■What you can learn and do:

- Town food guide • Migrants' perspectives • Town preservation • Entrepreneurship

■Sights to see and flavors to savor:

- Townscape of Usuki • Old buildings

■My "SDGs×#○○"

- # Revitalization of old folk houses # Antique miscellaneous goods

Loved for Half a Century A Popular Western-style Restaurant in a Back Alley.

In the narrow and intricate alleys of Usuki, where there are many Japanese-style buildings, the profound exterior of a brick structure stands out. This is "Gourmet Wakakiya." Opened by Mr. Yoshio Fujitani in 1971, this restaurant has been loved by many people and celebrates its 50th anniversary this year.

"All the food is handmade. With the wish to fill customers' stomachs, all the dishes my father makes are full of volume," says his daughter Ai. After working for a long time in Kanto and overseas, she returned to Usuki for the first time in 27 years. She now works with her brother You and his wife and is also in charge of public relations for the restaurant.

"My father is only in the kitchen on weekends, but the flavors of the restaurant have been passed down to my younger brother. The famous 'Wakakiya Lunch' was a luxurious dish costing 1,000 yen when the restaurant first opened, and its price has only increased by 200 yen in 50 years. The taste and volume are still the same as before," she says brightly. Her words gently exude the length of time the restaurant has accumulated and the trust it has built with its customers.

While helping with the family business, Ai is also promoting Usuki's charm in various ways. She used to think of Usuki as a "town with nothing special" when she was young, but now that she has seen the wide world, she sees it as a "town with a unique and beautiful atmosphere." The flavors of the long-established restaurant and her attachment to her hometown may deepen slowly over time.



A brick exterior typical of a Western-style restaurant.



Signature dish: "Wakakiya Lunch"



The store Keres, opened by Ai, is a general store that also offers chiropractic services and travel info.