

Japan University, Food Companies Develop Halal Soy Sauce

FUKUI, Japan, March 20 (Kyodo) — A soy sauce maker and a food company in the central Japan prefecture of Fukui along with the Fukui Prefectural University have jointly developed an alcohol-free soy sauce-like seasoning with the aim of marketing it to Muslim consumers in Japan and abroad.

The new seasoning, named "Fukumurasaki," has already been approved as "halal," which means that the product is processed according to Islamic law. The law requires food to be completely alcohol-free.

Soy sauce usually contains a slight amount of alcohol as it is made through the fermentation of soy beans by rice malt.

But a newly developed method of fermentation, discovered by Takashi Utagawa, 66, specially appointed professor of applied microbiology at the Fukui Prefectural University, enables the production of Fukumurasaki, which is free of any alcohol.

When fermenting fish to produce the fish sauce that serves as the basic ingredient of Fukumurasaki, Utagawa utilized a degradative enzyme contained in the fish entrails in order to reduce the fermentation time. As the fermentation was shortened to one day as opposed to the six to 12 months needed for the production of regular soy sauce, Utagawa successfully produced a fish sauce that is completely alcohol-free.

The new fermentation method was prompted by a product development project launched in 2008 at the Fukui Prefectural University. The project is aimed at developing new products using the internal organs of fish, which are usually disposed of when making Fukui's local specialty "heshiko," or mackerel pickled in salted rice-bran paste.

Local soy sauce maker Muroji Co. will be in charge of production, while sales and marketing will be handled by Fukui BioTech Co., also based in Fukui.

Saeed Akhtar, 45, director at the Japan-based Nippon Asia Halal Association that issues halal certificates for food items produced in Japan, said Muslims around the globe will feel comfortable using Fukumurasaki.

The soy sauce-like seasoning made its debut at an international food fair held in March at the Makuhari Messe convention center in the city of Chiba, east of Tokyo.

"Soy sauce flavor is a basis of Japanese cuisine," Utagawa of the Fukui Prefectural University said, adding he hopes people from around the globe will enjoy Japanese food during the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo.

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