



When in Kyoto



Yohan Bonnet

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Bryan Eastlake

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Bamboo basketmaking workshop

In expert hands

A short stroll west from the Kyoto Imperial Palace Gardens will bring you to Yokoyama Bamboo Products Co., a 100-year-old family-run bamboo business. Primarily a quality wholesale bamboo merchant, the company also lends its expertise to a range of architectural and aesthetic activities, such as creating bamboo features for gardens supplying materials for the creation of Japanese tea rooms and both home and shop interiors. Fourth generation artisan Yuki Yokoyama established a workshop ten years ago for Japanese and foreigners to get an insight into the techniques used in traditional bamboo crafts. "I would like people to know just how closely bamboo is intertwined with Japanese culture, how it is used to make the utensils that support the tea ceremony,

and how it is represented through traditional Japanese crafts and aesthetics."

Through the workshop visitors can get hands-on experience in creating three different objects: weaving from a selection of three uniquely beautiful ornamental baskets, carving a set of authentic bamboo chopsticks or creating a traditional bamboo tea scoop. The shikainami flower basket is one of the most popular crafts that can be made here, and features an intricate traditional design incorporating a motif of four waves. The adjoining Takenoko store showcases an exquisite collection of traditional Kyoto bamboo crafts and is definitely worth a visit. Depending on how busy the workshop is, you can request a brief tour of the bamboo factory, where you'll



see a wondrous display of exotic bamboo species, and get a glimpse into the traditional techniques used by the skilled craftsmen that work there.

Steps

Making a *shikainami* flower basket in six simple steps. Instruction in English provided by artisan Megumi Tanaka.



1 The whole process begins by moistening thin strips of bamboo, which helps to maintain their flexibility. These strips will form the basic frame of the basket.



2 Once this is done, the weaving process begins! Ten vertical and ten horizontal strips are woven under and over each other into a simple lattice structure. This becomes the base of the basket.



3 The size of the lattice is then made smaller and thin strips are added to each side to add strength. Tip: Each square hole should be big enough to allow a strip of bamboo to pass through it.



4 Five strips from each side are grouped together, then tied under an opposing group of five strips eventually forming the emblematic *shikainami* wave pattern. Don't worry—it's simpler than it looks!



5 By pulling the excess strands together, you can adjust the overall size and shape of the basket. This step is where you want to check for correct symmetry.



6 Once the excess strands have been trimmed, the basket is completed by gently tucking the end of the strips back inside the body. *Otsukaresama!*

Available courses:

- Bamboo Baskets
 - Shikainami* Flower Basket 3500 yen
 - Yorozukago* 4200 yen
 - Ebikago* 4200 yen
- Bamboo chopsticks 4000 yen (with sliding bamboo case)
- Japanese tea scoop 3500 yen (5000 yen with white bamboo case)



Reservations:

Reservations are required at least two days in advance. Send an email detailing the time, date and which craft you would like to experience to:

yokotake@amber.plala.or.jp

*Workshop open: 9:00am - 3:00pm

*Workshop time: Approximately 2 hours

*Number of participants: 1 - 30

*Please note: shoes need to be taken off inside the tatami-matted room

*Photography permitted

Takenoko Yokoyama Bamboo Products Co.

【Address】京都市上京区亀屋町155(油小路通下長者町角)
【Access】A five-minute walk from the Horikawa-shimochojya-machi bus stop on the Kyoto City bus lines, or a fifteen-minute walk from Marutamachi station on the Kyoto City Subway Line.
【Open】9:00am - 5:00pm 【Closed】Sundays and public holidays
【Phone】075-432-3620 【Credit cards】Accepted
*English guidance available

www.yokotake.co.jp

