

ALONGU 明論具

Embracing the beauty of nature.
Japanese tableware for a range of cuisine



On June 29, Tokyo Saikai Co., Ltd. (Headquarters: Setagaya, Tokyo; Chief Executive Officer: Kentaro Kodama) will release Alongu, a new tableware brand with a 38-piece lineup (9 ceramic items in 4 colours; 1 wooden item in 2 colours). Following the June launch, the brand will exhibit at Habitare in Helsinki this September, with plans in place to expand sales to the international market.

Alongu is designed by Japanese product designer Jin Kuramoto, whose works include the Knit coat rack for Hay and the JK chair for Arflex Japan, along with electronics including wireless earphones for Audio Technica. However, despite having worked across a wide range of genres, Alongu marks Kuramoto's first-ever tableware project. Working closely with Kuramoto, graphic designer Ray Masaki was in charge of art direction. Raised in New York and based in Tokyo since 2017, the Japanese-American designer brings his global perspective to the brand.



Photo/Kyogo Hidaka(@hdk.kt) Food/Hamamori Tamai(@tamaihamamori)

The name Alongu references the pursuit of tableware for today's Japanese cuisine, which encompasses various national and regional influences, while also signalling its future. Based on the word along, the unique spelling reflects the Japanese romanisation method, which combined with the kanji characters 明論具, expresses the concept of vessels made in Japan for a wide range of international cuisine.

Alongu's porcelain tableware is manufactured in the town of Hasami, Nagasaki prefecture. During the brand's development, Kuramoto and Masaki spent time in Hasami, where they observed a culture of coexistence, ingrained in the local area. In the porcelain industry, which dates back around 400 years, vast quantities of ceramics are fired in large climbing kilns, with local people coming together to take shifts managing the fire. The spirit of sharing extends to agriculture, with local farmers using a common water source to cultivate rice in terraced fields. These communal approaches, passed down to the present day, inspired Alongu to create products that enrich relationships between the people (manufacturers and customers) involved with the brand and the environment. This resulted in the development and realisation of a sustainable production cycle where natural variations are embraced, meaning that there are no so-called B-grade products.

DESIGN



Kuramoto spent two years developing a deep understanding of the raw porcelain stone and the production process, culminating in the gentle forms and rich expressions of Alongu. With a moderate thickness and lightness, Alongu tableware provides a beautiful platform for a range of cuisine, along with ease of storage and handling when washing, allowing it to fit seamlessly into everyday life. The individual character of each vessel contrasts the image of Hasami as a town for mass production, while the collection is priced with family sets and commercial use in mind.

Alongu Edition 0 was presented at Designart Tokyo in October 2021. A range of unique pieces showcased glaze experiments, drawing widespread praise and resulting in numerous items selling out. Based on the response to Edition 0, the lineup and glazes were refined to create the launch collection.

Comment from designer Jin Kuramoto

From a global perspective, our country of Japan is located on the edge of the Asian continent. Here in the Far East is where a range of culture from the continent eventually reaches and intermingles. The food culture has a colourful mix of European, American, Middle Eastern and Asian influences — even curry has become part of Japanese food. My desire to create tableware that reflects this abundant diversity, evident in our everyday food culture, led to the creation of Alongu. The vessels have the function and tactility of dishes for Japanese cuisine, yet at the same time, they have a size and feel equally suited to pasta and salad. We also worked to develop crystalline glazes conducive to variations, aiming to create products with individual characteristics and colours that vary from one piece to the next.



Designer

Jin Kuramoto

Jin Kuramoto (b. 1976 Hyogo pref., Japan) worked as an in-house designer at an electronics manufacturer before establishing Jin Kuramoto Studio in 2008. Kuramoto is involved in the design of products across a wide range of genres, from furniture to home appliances, eyewear and automobiles, communicating concepts and stories through clear forms. His studio is constantly filled with inspiration and discoveries, prototyping through a practical development process that involves working directly with materials and exploring function and structure through a process of trial and error, Kuramoto has received numerous awards, including the iF Design Award, Good Design Award and Red Dot Design Award, and was a member of the jury of Good Design Award (Japan) from 2015 through 2021, with the exception of 2018.



KNIT (HAY)



JK(arflex Japan)



Art director

Ray Masaki

Ray Masaki (b.1990 New York) is a Japanese-American graphic designer living and working in Tokyo since 2017. He studied illustration at Parsons School of Design, type design at The Cooper Union and is currently pursuing an MFA in graphic design at the Vermont College of Fine Arts.



"Why is the salaryman carrying a surfboard?"

ENVIRONMENT



Embracing the beauty of nature to redefine standards

Alongu believes in the charm of individual expressions, such as natural variations in glaze, while producing no so-called B-grade products.

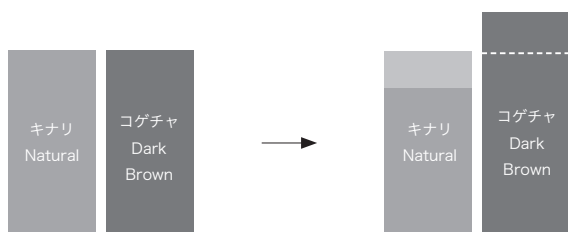
Porcelain products are often associated with an image of uniformity. However, they are in fact the result of numerous processes shaped by nature, from kiln firing, during which internal conditions vary with the season and climate, to steps completed by hand and even the product inspection process, which conventionally considers black iron spots and glaze variations as defects.

Alongu aims to present the beauty of nature and the individual characteristics of materials. Porcelain vessels are finished with a glaze that produces rich expressions through crystalline reactions, while wooden bowls have a translucent dark brown coating, providing a feel for the material's natural texture. Small dots and variations, generally considered defective, are embraced for their character as Alongu seeks to promote the individual charms of products to manufacturers and customers alike.

Soup Bowl — An ingenious approach to using resources efficiently

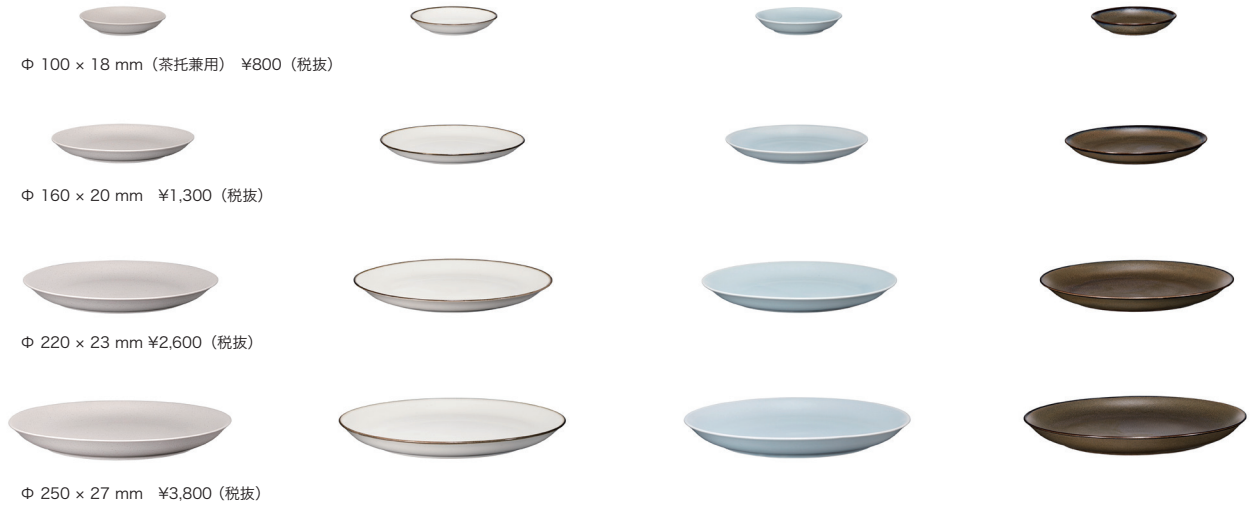
Made from jujube wood, the Alongu Soup Bowl is handmade by artisans in China. As a natural material, wood contains patterns such as knots and spots, which emerge as the tree grows. Yet rather than remove these parts from the raw material, they are instead retained throughout production. Bowls containing these patterns are finished with a translucent dark brown coating, while those with a more uniform appearance have a clear coating.

This commitment to reducing waste extends to the production quantities of each colour, which is dictated by the characteristics of the material, rather than predefined targets. Not only does this allow resources to be used efficiently, but reduces the burden on the factory.



ITEM

PLATE 皿



CUP 湯呑



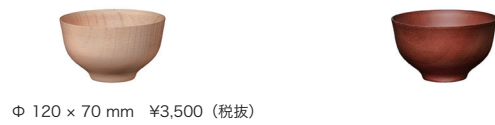
RICE BOWL 茶碗



BOWL 鉢



SOUP BOWL 汁椀



Plastic free packaging

Web site

『ALONGU 明論具』WEB : <http://alongu.jp/>

Instagram @alongu.jp : <https://www.instagram.com/alongu.jp/>

Company Profile 東京西海株式会社

Drawing on its roots in the famed porcelain town of Hasami, Tokyo Saikai specialises in the planning and development of long-life tableware products, working closely with designers to build brands that enhance our quality of life.

<http://tokyosaikai.com/>

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