



Happy Birthday: KAI Europe turns 40

四十
40 YEARS
kai Europe



Along with its participation in Ambiente 2020, KAI Europe GmbH is celebrating its 40th anniversary. As the European sales organization of the cutlery manufacturer KAI Japan, the mother company managed by Koji Endo, the subsidiary with headquarters in Solingen can look back on a distinctive success story of its own.

KAI Europe was founded in 1980 and its successful sales activities have, over recent decades, ensured that the brand KAI and its products "Made in Japan" have become known as a premium brand for high-quality cutlery far beyond the borders of Europe.

The company started its distribution in Central Europe with a high-quality range of scissors and cutter knives, as well as hunting and pocket knives. In the early years the small team around authorised officer Ryoichi J. Ogawa established valuable contacts and soon achieved business success. As the first milestones were reached and contacts expanded throughout Europe, the decision was made to set up the company's own central warehouse - which of course helped in the expansion of the sales potential of the company's products from Japan. Within the next steps KAI Europe added a hairdressing scissors portfolio (known under the brand name of KASHO) and the KAI Medical portfolio featuring scalpels and related surgical instruments, which are still successful today.

The company's next major development stage was at the turn of the millennium. With the "chef's knife project" initiated from Japan, KAI succeeded in appealing to a new and quality-conscious target group. Early during this period the company realised that the market for cooking knives was changing. This was partly due to the presumed new mindset of European professional chefs. These were not only interested in Japanese cuisine, which requires particularly sharp knives due to the demanding Kaiseki tradition, but were also impressed by the noticeable quality differences created by Japanese forging skills and the resulting premium knives. With the SHUN Damascus knife brand KAI Europe made a strong impact on its European customers and set new quality standards with its products. This development led to the Europe-wide establishment of the KAI knife product line, connecting KAI Europe with a wide network of retail partners and distributors.

In 2010 KAI Europe got together with Tim Mälzer. Their conversations did not only result in an initial cooperation and a joint knife line called SHUN Premier, but also in a special relationship between KAI and Tim Mälzer, which continues to the present day.



This close relationship, a mutual exchange of experiences, and extensive visits to Japan were the ingredients of a fruitful cooperation, which goes beyond the usual promotional contracts between industry and celebrities. Now, after 10 years, the cooperation agreement between Tim Mälzer and the KAI brand will be renewed by a symbolic signing ceremony at the trade fair stand in Frankfurt on 07.02.2020.

Due to the high-quality standards of the products, paired with close cooperation with their retail partners, KAI Europe has firmly established the KAI brand on the European market. The fascination with KAI products among consumers is now stronger than ever. The company serves the entire European market with more than 50 employees. The KAI Europe expertise and marketing focus is on professional hairdressing scissors, a wide range of cooking knives, medical blades and scalpels, the beauty care segment, and professional textile shears.

This year Takeshi Kuraku is (from 01.01.2020) taking over as the new authorised officer at KAI Europe GmbH, replacing his predecessor Ryoichi J. Ogawa. Mr. Kuraku will continue to develop the KAI Europe product range in close cooperation with the Japanese mother company in Tokyo. For this year the plans to expand the company's own premises in Solingen is already a decided matter.

"I would like to further expand the target groups of our KAI products in the future and am aiming at further product ranges for the European market. It remains important to me that the cooperation with our retail partners continues to take place on an equal footing", says Kuraku in outlining his plans for the upcoming years. "Together with a focus on sustainability, the success and popularity that we are experiencing with our authentic and high-quality premium products in Europe will - also in the digital age - remain the driving force behind a holistic brand orientation."