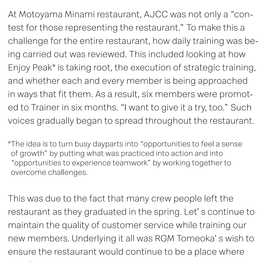
Special Feature:
50th Anniversary of AJCC

Move Forward, Be Yourself

The ALL JAPAN CREW CONTEST (AJCC) which will be celebrating its 50th anniversary in 2026 is not just a stage for a select few. It is a place where everyone can feel their own growth by taking small steps forward, being better today than yesterday and better tomorrow than today. Again this year, many crew people from all over Japan continue to work hard toward their respective goals, sometimes cheering on the challenges of fellow crew while moving forward one step at a time.

AJCC is a contest where crew people from across the country demonstrate the results of their training and take a step toward further growth.

It is a recognition program where the results of daily training are demonstrated and challenges are made to gain further growth in order to deliver restaurant experiences that exceed the expectations of our customers. It is also a place where each person' s challenges and efforts are recognized and praised. The first contest was held in 1977 with the participation of over 3 million crew in total. All crew people across Japan, regardless of their length of service, are eligible for judgement and through an annual training cycle that makes use of AJCC, support is offered for the realization of "growth of crew equals growth of McDonald' s."



(From the left) Manager Amagasaki-san, Trainer Inoue-san, Manager Otasan, RGM Tomeoka-san, Manager Fujii-san, Crew Hayashi-san, Manager Yamamoto-san

A Restaurant Where the Idea of "Let' s Give It a Try" is Becoming Widespread

Making AJCC a Stage for All of Our Crew to Take on New Challenges: In Motoyama Minami Restaurant (Kyoto)

AJCC Begins with the Development of Trainers

At Motoyama Minami restaurant, AJCC was not only a "contest for those representing the restaurant." To make this a challenge for the entire restaurant, how daily training was being carried out was reviewed. This included looking at how Enjoy Peak* is taking root, the execution of strategic training, and whether each and every member is being approached in ways that fit them. As a result, six members were promoted to Trainer in six months. "I want to give it a try, too." Such voices gradually began to spread throughout the restaurant.

*The idea is to turn busy daypart s into "opportunities to feel a sense of growth" by putting what was practiced into action and into "opportunities to experience teamwork" by working together to overcome challenges.

This was due to the fact that many crew people left the restaurant as they graduated in the spring. Let' s continue to maintain the quality of customer service while training our new members. Underlying it all was RGM Tomeoka' s wish to ensure the restaurant would continue to be a place where people can grow.

Peak Hours Are the Most Fun

The first thing that was focused on in preparation for AJCC was promoting the idea of Enjoy Peak. Peak hours such as Lunch Time and Dinner Time where a large number of customers visited (peaks) were transformed from "busy and stressful" to "a time to put daily training to good use." Such a positive atmosphere gradually spread throughout the restaurant, bringing about positive changes in operations.

To make this idea take root in the entire restaurant, Manager Fujii, who also participated in AJCC herself, along with six trainers in charge of each daypart, reviewed the mechanism of training. While sharing the skill levels and issues of each and every crew member, training was carried out in a planned manner during each daypart of morning, afternoon, and night. Building on such daily training, AJCC became a stage where everyone from the restaurant could take on challenges rather than being just a contest for representatives.

The Idea of "Let' s Try" Grows People

As preparations were being made for AJCC, it was not only those that were being trained that changed. Those offering the training also started to change.

How to communicate with each and every crew member of diverse backgrounds, such as non-Japanese crew that were working while overcoming language barriers, needed to be considered. "I wasn' t very good at speaking in front of people either, so I know exactly how they feel," says Fujii-san. This is why she kept in mind to not only say "That' s great" and "Good job" but to also explain why it was good and what values such actions offered the customer. She thinks about how to approach each individual and teach them while considering ways to really get her ideas across.

By building on this, those offering the training continuously thought about how messages could truly be conveyed and were able to feel themselves evolve. More and more crew members are raising their hands, saying, "I want to compete in AJCC, too" and "I want to take on a new position." Among them was a crew member such as Inoue-san that while being supported by those around her, was able to be promoted to Trainer after just one year of working part time.

"I want to try it, too." With such thoughts becoming widespread, new challenges are being taken on again today at Motoyama Minami restaurant.

Three Tips on Making AJCC a Target for Everyone at the Restaurant!

1 "Enjoy Peak": Having fun because of the busy time

By viewing lunchtime as a "time to demonstrate skills" and a "time to experience the restaurant' s teamwork," a mindset where crew people encourage one another and approach peak hours with a positive attitude is being fostered.

2 Strategic training based on the calendar

Enter who will be learning what, when. Review each crew member' s skill level, consider their training schedules, and maintain a mechanism that ensures different crew people are always given opportunities to take on challenges.

Ota-san, who calls herself a Potato Pro, helped improve bagging skills for fries

3 Approaches tailored to each individual

Always keep in mind to communicate not only that actions were good but also how such actions offered customers value and to approach each person in a way that fits them.

Crew Member Hayashi-san's Determination for AJCC!

Looking at other crew participating in AJCC made me feel that "I want to participate, too." I feel that the contest isn' t just for those that are special; it' s a target that anyone in the restaurant like me can aim for. This time, I will be representing the restaurant as a Drive-Thru Runner. I want to build on the experience that I' ve gained through my daily interactions with customers, continue to prioritize a supportive approach, and take on new challenges in my own way.

(From the left) Manager Sakurai-san, Manager Yamamoto-san, RGM Miyamoto-san, Manager Mita-san, Crew Sato-san, OC Sakatoku-san

"Succeeding" Leads to the Next Step

AJCC Widens the Possibilities of Each and Every Person:

In Isemiyagawa Restaurant (Mie)

I Want Untapped Potential to Be Discovered

"I want people to discover potential that they themselves are unaware of by gaining numerous successful experiences." What RGM Miyamoto wants to convey to crew through AJCC is more than just winning or losing. She wants them to gain confidence by taking the first step and discover strengths they themselves did not know they had. As if to symbolize this thought, a poster featuring the theme for AJCC 2026, "Move Forward, Be Yourself," is displayed in the Crew Room. These words continue to give the crew a boost today.

Valuing an Approach that Looks for "What Was Successful"

To further build excitement throughout the entire restaurant for participating in AJCC, the first thing that was focused on was aligning the mindset of the members involved in training. Managers and Trainers relearned not only their approach to training but also "what to look for" and "how to communicate" through judging.

Sakatoku-san looks back at her experience, saying "At first, crew tend to freeze up from becoming aware that they are being 'judged.' This is why I made suggestions to the managers to 'make the judging process more enjoyable by having crew themselves reflect on what went well instead of pointing out what went wrong.' "

As each Manager and Trainer reaffirmed their understanding of what training should be, the way they provided feedback also began to change. Instead of just offering praise, what was successful was shared with those around them and everyone joined in on celebrating by clapping. Gradually, at Isemiyagawa restaurant, the judging process stopped being just "a time to be checked" and instead became a time that crew people could truly feel their own growth, making them think that they "want to give it another go."

Having Everyone Support the Challenges of One Person

At Isemiyagawa restaurant, as a result of various activities, the rate of crew that had operations scored by Managers and Trainers reached 100%. Many crew members have begun actively working to improve their skills and the average number of expert positions owned has exceeded four.

Manager Sakurai states that she "is careful to observe the expressions and actions of crew regularly and not only during training to check if anything is worrying them. She herself found it difficult to maintain a positive attitude when participating in AJCC. This is why she believes it is important to connect with the feelings of each crew member and not only their operations.

One person that received such support is Sato-san, who competed in AJCC 2026 as a Potato Person. "I remember Managers and fellow crew members taking the time to think with me what the cause was of not being able to perform well when practicing. I was able to feel the strong connection of Isemiyagawa restaurant. It' s my turn to pass on what I learned and experienced to crew that will be participating next," she says.

The sense of accomplishment gained through taking on challenges builds confidence and leads to the next challenge. Such experience is then passed on to the next generation of challengers. One person' s success story can serve as a catalyst for expanding the potential of someone else. The succession of challenges continues to be born today at Isemiyagawa restaurant.

Three Tips on Supporting Participation in AJCC!

1 Increase opportunities to learn about AJCC and make taking on challenges feel more accessible

Display posters that show AJCC targets in the Crew Room. By making targets and activities visible, crew become aware of AJCC during their daily work and are able to tackle it positively as their own challenge.

2 Visualize the skills of each individual

Among themselves, Managers regularly confirm how highly they rate crew operations and how many expert positions crew own. Who, when, and what positions are to be judged is aligned on and leveraged to develop strategic training schedules.

3 Rather than being a one time activity, judging should be executed repeatedly

To score crew operation, the same position is repeated two to three times. Make sure that acquired skills take root and have them lead to the achieving of even higher levels.

Manager Mita-san' s Determination for AJCC!

During AJCC in the past, I was so nervous that I couldn' t perform as well as I' d hoped. Learning from this experience, this time I will participate as a Shift Leader. As it is a role that needs to act flexibly according with the restaurant situation, there is much to learn every day. Actually, my daughter works as a Shift Leader at a different restaurant and we are "allies" that can learn off of each other. Working together with everyone from Isemiyagawa restaurant and my daughter, I want to grow one stage at a time.

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