

# Figure Skater Kaori Sakamoto Says Ajinomoto Helped Her Eat Better

「食べること」と「体をつくること」は同じようでいて、実は難しい関係かもしれません。フィギュアスケートの坂本花織さんの話題からは、競技を続ける人たちが日々どんな感覚と向き合っているのかが見えてきます。あなたなら、結果を求められる場面で食事とどう向き合いますか。



## 1. Article

Read the following article aloud.

Figure skater Kaori Sakamoto, who won a team silver at the Beijing Olympics and silver medals in both the individual and team events at the Milan Olympics, visited Ajinomoto's headquarters in Tokyo on April 23.

There, she revealed that she had been taken to the hospital by ambulance with [gastroenteritis](#) during the two Olympics before Milan, and stressed the importance of proper [nutrition](#).

Sakamoto began by expressing her gratitude to Ajinomoto for its support, saying, "Thank you very much for all your help over the past year."

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# 1. Article

During a talk session with Rui Takashiba of Ajinomoto, who had supported her with nutrition guidance, Sakamoto said that although she loves white rice more than anything, she used to cut back on it during her competitive career. She also revealed that last season (2024–25), she spent as many as 40 days in poor physical condition.

"With so many competitions, eating starts to feel like something bad," she said, reflecting on her time as an athlete. "All figure skaters think about how to lose weight, and the first thing we do is reduce how much rice we eat."

The athlete explained that cutting back too much can lead to a lack of energy, reduced stamina, injury, and slower recovery, creating a [vicious cycle](#).

"I personally didn't suffer any injuries, but I was often unwell," she said. "I would quickly come down with gastroenteritis and end up bedridden, which meant wasting a lot of time."

Sakamoto said she had to change her mindset and stop seeing eating as something negative. Under Takashiba's guidance, she made major changes to her diet, including eating rice—a vital source of energy—at all three meals, and drinking soup after late competitions to warm her stomach after long hours on the ice.

Carbohydrates are often seen as the enemy in dieting, but rice is actually a powerful source of energy, the athlete explained. It also fuels the brain and supports the endurance and [concentration](#) needed for jumps.

"As an active skater, I tried every diet imaginable," Sakamoto said. "Even if I lost weight during competitions, it would rebound once they were over. You have to eat properly, build strength, and train. That leads to more [effective](#) practice."

Sakamoto hopes to use what she has learned through her own experience to pass that message on to younger skaters.

Before the Milan Olympics, figure skaters gathered locally for a pre-Games send-off, where they raised a toast with a special tiramisu based on an Ajinomoto recipe containing fewer than 100 calories. At the April 23 event, the same tiramisu was served to Ajinomoto employees.

To suit the athletes, the tiramisu was made with decaffeinated coffee, and the usual high-calorie mascarpone was replaced with cottage cheese.

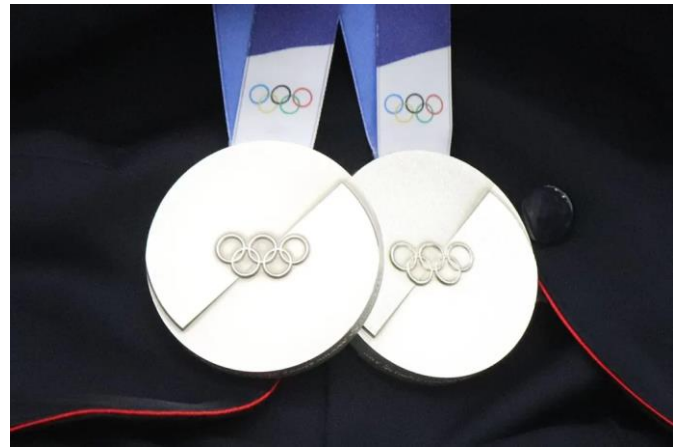
Sakamoto seemed delighted with the reward dessert, saying it "got me fired up."

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# 1. Article

Sakamoto is also known for describing a fall with the sound "scone," a playful twist on her own sound effect for a fall. Fans have turned that into a running joke, eating scones and posting about them on social media to cheer her on, saying they have "taken on Kaori's scones" themselves.

So at the event, Sakamoto and Ajinomoto employees ate scones together and posed for a commemorative photo.



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[Japan Forward](#)

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## 2. Key phrases and vocabulary

First repeat after your tutor and then read aloud by yourself.

### 1. gastroenteritis 胃腸炎

Several students missed the first day of class because of gastroenteritis.

### 2. nutrition 栄養

Good nutrition is important for both growing children and adults.

### 3. vicious cycle 悪循環

Lack of sleep created a vicious cycle of stress and fatigue.

### 4. concentration 集中力

The loud music made it difficult for Kaori to keep her concentration.

### 5. effective 効果的な

Short meetings are often more effective than long ones.

## 3. Questions

Read the questions aloud and answer them.

1. What health problem did Kaori Sakamoto suffer from during earlier Olympics?
2. Why did Sakamoto reduce the amount of rice she ate during her career?
3. What changes did Sakamoto make to her eating habits to improve her health and strength?
4. Why do you think many athletes become afraid of eating too much?
5. Do you think schools should teach more about nutrition and health? Why or why not?

## 4. 食べることは罪ではない 後輩育成の道に進むフィギュアスケート・坂本花織さん

ミラノ、北京と2回のオリンピックで個人、団体ともに銀メダルをとったフィギュアスケートの坂本花織さんが4月23日、現役時代に食事サポートを行ってきた味の素本社（東京）を訪れ、ミラノの前2回のオリンピックでは胃腸炎で救急車で運ばれたことを明かし、食べることの重要性を説いた。

坂本さんは最初、「この1年間のサポートをありがとうございました」と味の素のサポートに感謝の言葉を述べた。

食事サポートで伴走してきた味の素の高柴瑠衣さんとのトークセッションで、坂本さんは白米が何より好きだが、選手時代は、ご飯の量を減らし、昨シーズン（2024～25年）は40日間も体調不良に陥っていたことを明かした。

「ゲームが多いので、どうしても食べるのが悪になってしまう。体重を減らすにはどうするのかと（フィギュアの選手）全員が思い、まずご飯の量を減らしていた」と振り返った。しかし、そのためにエネルギー不足に陥り、体力が衰えてケガをして回復も遅れてしまうと悪循環のリスクを説明。「私自身は、けがはなかったが体調不良が多く、すぐに胃腸炎になって寝込み無駄な時間が多かった」と話した。

「食べることは罪悪ではない」とマインドを切り替え、大切なエネルギー源であるご飯を3食食べ、試合で遅くなる時は、スープを飲むなどしてリンクで冷えた胃腸を温めるなど、高柴さんの指導のもと、食生活を大幅に変えたという。

糖質はダイエットでは悪者にみなされがちだが、ご飯は最強のエネルギー源であり、脳のエネルギー源でもあり、持久力、ジャンプに必要な集中力につながるという。

「現役時代、ダイエットというダイエットを試した。試合中は体重を落としても終わると、リバウンドしてしまった。しっかり食べて力をつけて、練習をする。それが練習の効率につながる。今までの経験を生かして後輩たちに伝えていきたい」と語った。

次頁に続く

出典：食べることは罪ではない 後輩育成の道に進むフィギュアスケート・坂本花織さん  
[Japan Forward](#)

## 4. 食べることは罪ではない 後輩育成の道に進むフィギュアスケート・坂本花織さん

ミラノオリンピック前に、現地で行われたフィギュアスケート選手らの決起集会では、100kcal以下にした味の素のレシピによる特製ティラミスで「乾杯」が行われたという。この日のイベントでも、同じレシピで作ったティラミスが味の素の社員らに振舞われた。

選手に配慮して、ティラミスで使うコーヒーはカフェインレス、チーズもカロリーが高いマスカルポーネではなく、カッテージチーズで代用したという。

坂本さんは「やる気を起こさせてくれた」とご褒美ティラミスに満足げだった。

また、坂本さんは転倒を「スコーン」と表現しており、ファンは坂本さんを応援するために「カロリのスコーンは引き受けた」として、スコーンを食べてSNSに投稿するのが定番になっている。このため、この日、味の素の社員とスコーンを食べて記念撮影を行った。