



## <Masanori Shirakata>

Country/Region: United States (California)

Age: 49

Occupation:

President, Shirakata Denshiro Shoten, Inc.

President, Den's Tea, Inc.

### ○ Promotion of Japanese tea in the United States

- Mr. Masanori Shirakata has been engaging in direct promotional activities, such as organizing Japanese tea seminars, mainly in the western region of the United States, while at the same time working to promote Japanese tea to a broader spectrum of consumers via his company's website.
- He has chosen to sell his products via mail order and had it accepted as a means to supply fresh and high-quality Japanese tea to customers in the vast U.S. market, and established consumer confidence in Japanese tea.
- By promoting Japanese tea in parallel with building distributing channels to reach final consumers, he is now contributing to an increase in exports to the United States.

Mr. Masanori Shirakata is the third-generation president of Shirakata Denshiro Shoten, a long-established producer of Japanese tea with a history of nearly 100 years, based in Shizuoka, a premier tea growing region in Japan. In the latter half of the 1990s, he became aware that the North American market for green tea was growing rapidly. Thus, in 2000, he established Den's Tea, Inc., a U.S. subsidiary in Torrance near the City of Los Angeles. Concurrently serving as the president of the U.S. subsidiary, he moved his residence to the United States several years after its establishment, thus contributing to the promotion of Japanese tea in North America since before the green tea boom began.

Back then, Japanese tea was hardly known to ordinary consumers in the United States although it was sold at retail shops run by those of Japanese or other Asian origin and served at Japanese restaurants. Thus, Mr. Shirakata has made full use of his company's website and email newsletters to let people know the charm and attraction of Japanese tea. Also, taking advantage of being a certified Japanese tea instructor, he has organized numerous seminars to teach the history and health benefits of Japanese tea and how to brew the best cup of green tea. Held as part of tea and food events and in such locations as business establishments, community halls, and churches, those seminars served to communicate the magnificence of Japanese tea to a broad spectrum of audience ranging from professional tea traders to elementary school students.

In addition, by focusing on mail order selling, which has enabled reductions in distribution costs, his company has been selling high-end products at reasonable prices, thereby contributing to the market penetration of high-quality Japanese tea. This successfully introduced the authentic rich flavor of Japanese tea to general consumers, going beyond those customers at certain cafes and restaurants.