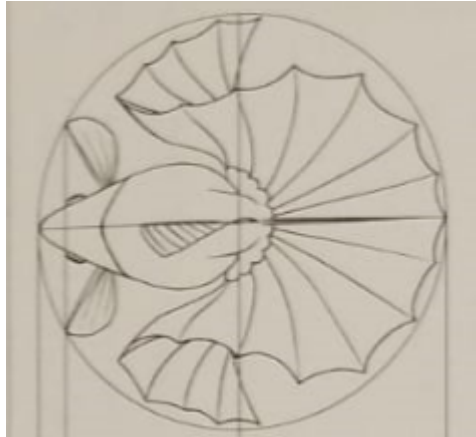


There are two aspects of goldfish keeping that fascinate me, science and culture. The science covers topics like genetics, diet, and water quality. The culture includes art, tradition, history and the lore surrounding goldfish and how they have survived for thousands of years. This story is about the latter and I would be doing the hobby a disservice if I did not share it. This is a Tosakin tale; now one of my favorite varieties of goldfish. The Tosakin is a Japanese variety that was developed in the Tosa fief which is now the Kochi Prefecture. They are known for their beautiful caudal (tail) fin which is fused in the center, spreads out horizontally from the body and comes forward up their body then flips back under on the leading ray.



I did not have much interest in this variety until a fellow breeder said they were hard to find; I like a challenge so I started digging. I came across a handful articles on various websites and forums, the lore surrounding the fish, their special requirements, pictures, etc. Not a ton of info out there but enough to go on. They need bowls?!?! That cannot be right. They originated in Japan. Makes sense. Only 6 fish survived the war and all of the existing fish are descendent from those original fish? Sounds romantic but maybe a bit embellished; I'll roll with it.

I reached out to Gary Hater to see if he knew anyone who had them, many goldfish hunts start and end with Gary. He pointed me to Jeff Hiller and Ted Thai. Ted has been keeping Tosakin for ages and was really helpful with information, but he is in Canada and shipping across borders is difficult. Jeff proved fruitful and I ordered a dozen or so juvenile fish. My curiosity started to turn into an obsession and I kept searching. If my delusions of grandeur were going to come to fruition, I would need more than one line to create the perfect Tosakin. I remembered a conversation on Instagram with a person who had Tosakin, luckily, I had taken notes because her account had vanished. She bought them from someone named David Salazar, and had shared his email address with me. I did some searches online and came across some old posts on goldfish forums but that was it, no website, no Facebook, no Instagram, Aquabid, Ebay, nothing; just an email address. I was doubtful this will work but hey, why not? I shot him an email.

Date: 5/17/18 11:44 PM (GMT-05:00)

Subject: Tosakins

Hi David,

I got your email from a friend on Instagram who went by xxxxxxxx but it looks like her account has since been deleted. I was wondering if you have any tosakins available and what you sell them for?

Thanks,

Gage

Sent: Saturday, May 19, 2018 6:24:30 AM

Subject: Re: tosakins

Hi Gage!

Yes I have tosakins for sale they are 7 months old +/- and they are 100% Japanese blood line the price is xx each plus shipping if you still interested let me know....thanks!



Yahtzee! We exchanged emails and texts for a bit, and then he asked if he could call me. A call? In this day and age? This guy is old school. I still remember it clearly, two strangers having a polite conversation feeling each other out. Is this guy a scammer? Does he know what he is talking about? We discussed our fish keeping backgrounds, tank sizes, breeding, methodologies, etc. It was clear David wanted to ensure his fish were going to a good home. I learned I was getting a lot more than just some rando fish. These fish come with a fascinating history.

David is originally from Colombia, his start with fish is a familiar story. As kids they would catch guppies in the creeks and streams. There was one kid in town who had a 10-gallon tank "The water was so green it looked like paint and you could see little red fish swimming up to the glass". David came to the U.S in 1987 and in 1992 was working as a delivery driver in Manhattan. He had not been keeping fish at the time but one day one of his coworkers came in to work a broken 10-gallon aquarium. They took the tank to a glass shop and managed to get it repaired. They started making trips to pet shops on their routes around the city. On one of their trips David noticed a beautiful image on a bag of Hikari fish food, he did not know it was fish food. At first glance he thought it was a flower and maybe the pellets inside were seeds. After studying the image for a little while he realized it was a fish. David started collecting goldfish books and it was in Matsui's Goldfish Guide that he learned the variety of fish was a Tosakin. He had to have this fish. It had begun; two months later he had a 30-gallon tank full of goldfish, a few years later, a dining room full of fish tanks.



Around 1994 or 5 David's hunts for the Tosakin led him to join the Goldfish Society of America. He started putting in legwork that was a lot more difficult without a search engine at your fingertips. He contacted every distributor he could as well as the chairman of The Goldfish Society of America. The chairman put him in contact with John Arellano in LA who used to keep Tosakin. He did not have Tosakin anymore but was willing to mail (not email) David some goldfish magazines and books he had from Japan. David made copies and mailed them back. In these magazines he found a new lead, addresses for Goldfish clubs in Japan. In Japan they take goldfish keeping very seriously. They have goldfish clubs dedicated to perfecting specific varieties of goldfish. Their clubs are led by master goldfish breeders with decades of experience. David sent off letters to seven goldfish clubs and waited.



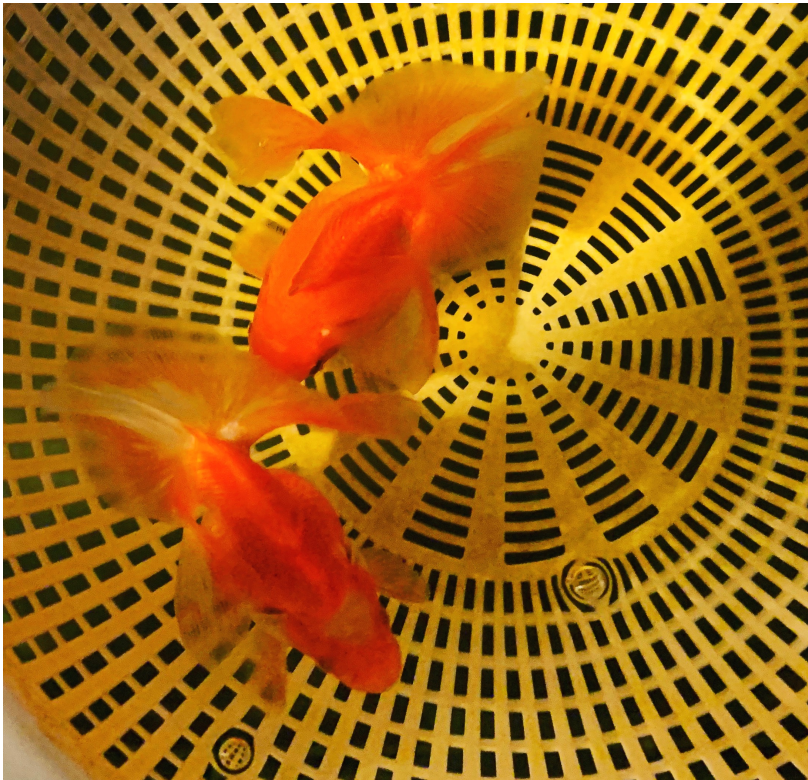
In 1997 he received a response from Sadaaki Wakabayashi, the chairman of the Toyohashi City Goldfish Association in the Aichi Prefecture. The Toyohashi City Goldfish Association raised Ranchu, Jikin, Nankin, and Tosakin. Wakabayashi was honored that David was interested in his fish, and working through translators they started corresponding regularly, by fax. For those of you too young to know what a fax machine is; it is like a telephone that takes a picture of your document, converts it to sounds and sends it over a phone line to the recipient's fax machine on the other end that converts the sounds back to an image and prints it out, on paper. They faxed 2 to 3 times per week, and at one point even found a friend of a friend who spoke Japanese and arranged a call, which was not easy considering the time

difference and that they were communicating by fax. Wakabayashi sent David books on Tosakin, Jikin, and Ranchu. Before he would send fish, he wanted to be certain the fish would be safe.



The two of them communicated for years and eventually came up with a plan to ship fish to David. The fish flew from Nagoya, to S. Korea, to L.A, and finally to N.Y. Shipping cost \$1,800 at the time and adjusted for inflation that would be about \$3000 today. They coordinated three shipments in total, and not just Tosakin. Wakabayashi sent Tosakin, Jikin, Ranchu, and Nankin. David kept these lines going for years but eventually lost all but the Tosakin. In 2006 he decided if he did not get serious, he was going to lose these fish and he refocused on his line breeding. When you have a limited number of fish to work with you need to separate the progeny into multiple lines, A and B for example. You continue crossing As with As and Bs with Bs, fixing the traits that you want in the line. Before the negative effects of line breeding start to show you cross fish from line A with fish from line B who are now different enough to add some genetic moxie back into your line. David has kept this line of Japanese Tosakin for 20 years!





David and I have stayed in touch since my first order, he is happy to offer advice when I have questions or problems. I even had a chance to visit when I was in the area. Like other hobbyist breeders he makes use of the space he has; tanks in the basement floor to ceiling, different generations of fish everywhere

you look, ponds outside, nets/bowls/colanders/kit organized on heavy duty shelving. This hobby allows people from any background to bond over a similar interest. The Tosakin in my tanks carry the same genes as the fish in David's tanks, Wakabayashi before him, and who knows how many friends and ancestors before him. I now have a chance to be part of something really special thanks to David's tenacity, dedication, and stewardship.



