



A sushi chef displaying freshly cut meat from the 212kg bluefin tuna which is sold for more than US\$270,000 yesterday. AFP PIC

NEW YEAR TRADITION

Tuna sold for US\$270,000 at Japan auction

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TOKYO: The top-selling tuna at the traditional New Year auction here sold for more than US\$270,000 yesterday, nearly double last year's price, breaking a pandemic trend of slumping demand.

Michelin-starred sushi restaurant Onodera Group and wholesaler Yamayuki forked out 36.04 million yen for the 212-kilo bluefin tuna in the auction at Tokyo's Toyosu fish market.

The figure was still only a fraction of the 2019 record price, but marks a recovery for the symbolic auction after three years in which prices slumped.

"It has all the qualities of a good tuna," sushi master and Onodera head chef Akifumi Sakagami said.

"We have had years of gloom (during the pandemic). I hope that we can deliver happiness to everyone by using opportunities like this."

Last year's top-selling tuna, bought by the same pair of bidders, went for just 16.88 million yen, with observers blaming subdued demand as a Covid wave ripped through the country.

The New Year auction is highly anticipated, and securing the top-priced tuna offers bidders bragging rights. For years, the top bid came from self-proclaimed "Tuna King" Kiyoshi Kimura, who paid a record US\$3.1 million in 2019. AFP



A sushi restaurant staff member holds the cut tail of the auctioned 212kg bluefin tuna in Tokyo, Japan, yesterday. EPA PIC