

Report Cultural & Friendship Committee



We welcomed the year 2019 with the New Year Cocktail reception at the Steigenberger hotel.



After welcome words by Professor Declerck, Member of the Board imec International and BJA President, His Excellency Ambassador Hayashi, the then Japanese Ambassador to Belgium, delivered his New Year greetings to over 100 guests. His speech was followed by the “Kagamiwari”, traditional sake barrel breaking, jointly performed by HE Ambassador Hayashi, HE Ambassador Kodama of the Mission of Japan to the EU, Professor Declerck, and Mr. Van Overstraeten, Partner at Linklaters LLP and BJA Vice-President.



The evening was enchanting with our most amiable guests enjoying their conversations and ample delicious sushi and drinks. A joyous way to start 2019 and to bring us to many interesting places.



We enjoyed 2 Friendship Café sessions ...

At Le Coq bar and Le Pantin Bar we brought the members together in an informal setting to enjoy friendships, laughter and good company.



The younger generation also met at the Cross Chamber Young Professionals Networking Night.

The Cross Chamber Network is an initiative born out of the wish of several chambers of commerce, including the BJA, in order to expand the networking opportunities of their members, especially the younger generation. Together with Amcham Belgium, AmCham EU, the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, the Belgian-Italian Chamber of Commerce, ICC Belgium and with the support of several other chambers of commerce, the BJA invited young professionals to a thrilling networking night kindly hosted by Microsoft.



The 120 participants were welcomed at the Microsoft Innovation Center, where they could try Microsoft's latest interactive technologies, such as virtual reality and movement-controlled computers.



They then listened to an inspiring speech by Mr Gosseye, Senior Director at Dell Technologies Marketing, on B2B marketing in the digital era.



The event ended with a networking cocktail where the participants had the opportunity to make new business contacts and exchange ideas. They each received a copy of Mr Gosseye's newest book.



Exchanging ideas and research was also on the agenda at last year’s Annual General Assembly. After the normal proceedings of the AGM, the BJA was able to give the floor to Dr Lacombe, EORTC Director General, and Dr Mitsumi Terada, EORTC Medical research fellow, for a presentation on the *partnership between EORTC (European Organisation for Research & Treatment of Cancer) & JCOG (Japan Clinical Oncology Group)*. The topic was “Improving survival and quality of life of cancer patient by accelerating process in surgical oncology.”



After these insightful speeches, Prof Declerck invited all the participants for a networking cocktail, kindly offered by KPMG | K Law.



Some more networking took place on Sunday 19 May when the BJA Cultural Committee had the pleasure in inviting the members and friends to an exclusive “Kaiseki Ryori” workshop led by two exceptional Chefs, Yosuke Suetsugu of Nonbe Daigaku and Tomoyasu Kamo of Restaurant Kamo, both holders of the title of Knight of the Order of Leopold II from the Belgian Government.



The workshop began with a demonstration by the two Master Chefs, with a highlight on the importance of 'Dashi' - Japanese soup stock usually extracted from sea weeds. Following this introduction, every participant took their turn to make every dish under the thorough guidance of the team of Master Chefs.



Once the participants completed the preparations, they had the opportunity to savour their own creations. It was the moment of pure joy to taste the refined delicacy of the meals they had just made themselves.

After these pleasant, delicious and relaxing events, time for sports is required as you know!



Thanks to the generous sponsorship by EY, together with a number of BJA company members and other organizations, the BJA could welcome members and friends at The National Golf Brussels in Sterrebeek on Saturday, 14 September 2019 for the 15th BJA Golf Cup and Golf Initiation, followed by dinner and prize giving party.



While the heat of the Indian summer was with us, over 30 golf players enjoyed playing 18 holes with pleasant partners



and about 15 guests joined together to experience a complete golf initiation program on one of the newest golf courses in the vicinity of Brussels.



Starting with a delicious lunch buffet, the participants received refreshments throughout the day, cocktails before the dinner and numerous fantastic prizes to take home with them before the event adjourned.



The EU vs. Japan team competition result brings always an exceptional excitement. After a sweet revenge by the EU team to steel the victory from the Japan team last year, the EU team successfully snatched the victory again in 2019. Mr Turna, Partner at EY and the Captain of the EU team was so thrilled to reclaim the winning replica on behalf of his team while Mr Goto, COO of Panasonic Energy Europe and the Captain of the Japan team promised to take revenge next year!



The BJA would like to thank once again wholeheartedly the sponsors for their generosity, and the enthusiastic participation of the members and partners. Thanks to all of you, this annual BJA Golf event was once again a great success!



To also indulge in the best of culture the BJA was delighted to invite the members to celebrate the end of the year at the MAS museum in Antwerp, for a private visit of *Cool Japan*, the exhibition that explores the global fascination for Japanese visual culture. This was thanks to the support of Umicore and JTI.



Over 50 members, including His Excellency Makita Shimokawa, Ambassador of Japan to Belgium, joined the event that started by a privately guided visit of the exhibition in 2 groups, where the guests could admire ancient and contemporary Japanese art, discover how Belgian fashion designers were inspired by Japan, and get to know the colourful 'Kawaii' culture, not to forget interacting with a dancing robot!



After the visit, the guests were welcomed on the ninth floor of the museum for networking cocktails, where guest speaker Willy Van de Walle, Professor Emeritus Japanese Studies KU Leuven and BJA Board Member, shared his immense knowledge of the Japanese culture to comment on the exhibition and the Antwerp-Japan relations.



This was the report of the 2019 Cultural and Friendship activities again rich of memorable and unique moments.