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Bluefin tuna sells for record \$3.2M



Members of the press take photographs of a bluefin tuna that won the highest bid at the annual New Year auction displayed at Sushi Zanmai restaurant in Tokyo on Monday. LOUISE DELMOTTE — THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

TOKYO >> A massive 243-kilogram (535-pound) bluefin tuna sold for a record 510 million yen (\$3.2 million) at the first auction of 2026 at Tokyo's Toyosu fish market.

The top bidder for the prized tuna at the predawn auction on Monday was Kiyomura Corp., whose owner Kiyoshi Kimura runs the popular Sushi Zanmai chain. Kimura, who has won the annual auction many times in the past, broke the previous record of 334 million yen (\$2.1 million) he set in 2019.

Kimura later told reporters he was hoping to pay a bit less for it, but "the price shot up before you knew it."

The auction started when the bell rang, and the floor was filled with torpedo-shaped fish with their tails cut off so bidders could examine meat details such as color, texture and fattiness while walking around the rows of tuna.

The pricey fish was caught off the coast of Oma in northern Japan, a region widely regarded for producing some of the country's finest tuna, and costs 2.1 million yen (\$13,360) per kilogram (\$6,060 per pound).

"It's in part for good luck," Kimura said. "But when I see a good looking tuna, I cannot resist ... I haven't sampled it yet, but it's got to be delicious."

Hundreds of tuna are sold daily at the early morning auction, but prices are significantly higher than usual for the Oma tuna, especially at the celebratory New Year auction.

Due to the popularity of tuna for sushi and sashimi, Pacific bluefin tuna was previously a threatened species due to climate change and overfishing, but its stock is recovering following conservation efforts.