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How the human spine works with the brain

Editor's Note: At Stripes Japan, we love to share your stories and share this space with our community members. Here is an article written by Spc. Colene Copeland from U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria. If you have a story or photos to share, let us know at japan@stripes.com.

BY SPC. COLENE COPELAND,
STRIPES JAPAN

Some readers might know that orthopedic surgery and neurosurgery cross paths in many ways. Because of the connection between orthopedics and neurosurgery, it is very important to understand the way the human brain works with the human spine, as the human spinal cord is in many ways basically an extension of the brain because of the information carried from the brain down the human spine to control the body. The main job of the spinal cord is to be the communication system throughout our body. Each nerve has a specific job for movement and feeling in our body. The neck part of the spinal cord which is called the cervical spine is made up of seven different bones. Below the neck portion of the spine is what we call the thoracic spine which is made up of 12 different vertebrae bones which all connect to the lungs. Below the thoracic spine, is the lumbar spine which, for many people, is a site of pain. Next down, the sacrum is made up of a collection of bones which are integral to the pelvis. Unlike the vertebrae above it, the sacrum is fused together. Below the sacrum, the coccyx, or

tailbone, also has fused vertebrae.

In total, the spinal cord has a total of 33 vertebrae. At the center of each, there is a small hole called a spinal canal. This area is important because it houses spinal cord fluid protected by a sack-like membrane. Information travels from the brain down the spinal cord through the spinal cord fluid telling the body how to move and function throughout the day.

The human brain controls the whole human body. The human nervous system consists of the brain and the spinal cord. In the womb, the spinal cord is actually attached to the human brain more closely than it is when we develop outside the womb. The ventricles in the human brain actually have spinal fluid inside our brains. This is how and why the brain and spinal cord work together.

Since the human brain is connected to the spinal cord and with the spinal fluid, if someone suffers a spinal cord injury, it can create physical and cognitive problems. Severe spinal cord injuries can lead to nerve cell loss in the brain, thus can cause inflammation and changes in behavior and mental health. In the worse case scenario, spinal cord injuries can cause quadriplegia or other physical loss. The brain controls the whole human body, so if there is an interruption, it can cause a severe loss of functionality.

The disease scoliosis is a different example of a brain and body disconnection.



One can be born with scoliosis which is a curvature of the spine that usually goes side to side. This can cause compromised breathing as the curvature can compress the lungs and ribcage. In the 20th century, some polio patients developed scoliosis. In the absolute worse cases of scoliosis, a slow death can occur from compromised circulation and breathing. The chiropractor, back braces and certain surgical procedures can help ease the pain of scoliosis and fix some of the issues associated. Alzheimer's Disease and dementia are examples of the cognitive effects when the brain and body suffer from a disconnection.

Our spinal cord plays a vital role in our bodies. Although there are genetics and sometimes-incontrollable factors involved with many diseases and illnesses, it is important to keep your mind and body active. Exercise, reading, crafting are just a few great ways to do so.

Spc. Colene Copeland with U.S. Army Garrison Bavaria. She is pre-med studying Forensic Medicine, Space and Aviation and Engineering. Spc. Copeland is working towards becoming an orthopedic trauma surgeon focused on the musculoskeletal and joint system. Follow along as she writes about interesting bones in both humans and animals, dives into space medicine, forensic science, engineering, healthcare and medical topics.



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Iwakuni students grow as global thinkers

BY JONATHAN SNYDER,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: September 1, 2021

MARINE CORPS AIR STATION IWAKUNI — American students at several bases in Japan can immerse themselves in their host nation's culture, including the language and food, during educational and cultural exchange sessions this school year.

At each two-day camp, students will take part in hands-on activities designed to develop problem-solving skills, encourage a diverse perspective on the world and a sensitivity to accept others' differences, according to a recent Department of Defense Education Activity news release.

"We are always looking to provide our overseas military-connected students with opportunities to grow as global thinkers," Lois Rapp, DODEA's Pacific Region director for student excellence, said in the release. "This program allows our students to engage with their host nation peers in an educational setting that fosters collaboration and the formation of friendships."

Middle and high school students at Misawa Air Base, Marine Corps Air Station Iwakuni, and Sasebo and Yokosuka



Students at Department of Defense Education Activity schools in the Pacific will soon have a chance to join Japanese students for two-day culture-exchange camps at their on-base schools. Photo courtesy of DODEA

naval bases can apply to participate in the program.

Sessions are scheduled Oct. 2-3 and Nov. 6-7 at MCAS Iwakuni, Oct. 23-24 and Feb. 5-6 at Sasebo, Dec. 4-5 at Misawa and Jan. 22-23 at Yokosuka.

Spots are limited to 15 American and 15 Japanese

students at each event and applications will be given to students about a month out, DODEA-Pacific's chief of staff, Todd Schlitz, told Stars and Stripes by phone.

"The Japanese students have some English speaking ability," he said. "The

instructors also serve as translators to help facilitate discussions and communication among the students."

The Japanese students will be chosen from schools near the bases that are hosting the event.

"It's going to be first-come

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first-served," Schlitz said. "We're not asking for any particular requirements. We want to make sure it's open to all students."

A great deal of coordination between DODEA and Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs was required to make the sessions happen, Schlitz added.

"This program provides a great opportunity for students of Japan and the United States to forge new friendships," Keiichi Ichikawa, director-general and assistant minister for the ministry's North American Affairs Bureau, said in the statement. "I hope they would become a bridge between our two countries."

Some students, such as Tristan Tanjuaquio, an 11th-grader at MCAS Iwakuni's Matthew C. Perry High School, are showing interest in the program.

"It would be interesting to see what Japanese students my age think about living in Iwakuni and what they do here," he told Stars and Stripes.

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The hidden gem of Mt. Fuji

Editor's Note: These are uncertain times, so please make sure to follow local and military travel guidelines, and practice proper hand-washing and social-distancing.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
SIMONE ARMER,
SIMONEARMER.COM

Lake Shoji is a hidden gem at the base of Mt. Fuji. The smallest of the Fuji Five lakes, it is beautifully quiet and serene, and completely removed from the rest of the bustling, touristy scene surrounding the famous volcano.

Almost untouched, the lake only has four hotels, 2 restaurants and a conbini. It's hard to imagine why; it offers a completely unobstructed view of Mt. Fuji, Mt. Omuro and Aokigahara forest.

We spent two nights on the lake in

conjunction with our visit to Aokigahara forest. In that time, we were able to see Fujisan at many different hours of the day, in varying light and weather conditions.

The water of Lake Shoji is green with plankton, supporting a wide variety of fish, most notably the Crucian Carp. It's also a popular spot for rowing and boating.

There is also a small camping ground on the lakeshore and a panorama observatory a short hike away.

We stayed at the Mount Shoji Hotel which offers a view of the lake and volcano from every room. It also has two public baths and addictive massage chairs, both free of charge.

I'd really love to climb Mt. Fuji one day, but waking up to her peering through the window was also quite a treat.



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Left: The Rokuya Daibutsu sits about three feet taller than its counterpart in Kamakura. Right: A hiker admires the scenery.

DIRECTIONS: Hokoji is a 20-minute drive from the main gate of Yokota Air Base; the Google GPS code is P7W7+Q4 Hinode, Tokyo

TIMES: The grounds are open daily, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

COSTS: Admission to the Buddha is 300 yen for adults and 100 yen for children.

FOOD: There are vending machines for snacks and drinks on the grounds.

INFORMATION: entakuzan-houkouji.or.jp



Find serenity at the base of 60-foot Buddha at Hokoji Shrine

STORY AND PHOTOS BY THERON GODBOLD,
STARS AND STRIPES

We could all use a little serenity right now as the coronavirus pandemic drags on, and if you live and work at Yokota Air Base, the Buddha of Rokuya, or Rokuya Daibutsu, isn't far from the home of U.S. Forces Japan.

The 60-foot-tall bronze Buddha, about three feet taller than the more famous, much older Buddha in Kamakura, is a 20-minute drive from

Yokota's main gate. A leisurely bike ride gets you there in about 45 minutes.

Located on the grounds of Hokoji, a Buddhist temple in Hinode, the Buddha was unveiled in 2018, partly with hopes of bringing more tourists to the area.

Built on a mountainside, the approach to this giant Buddha is through a bare landscape, with acres of newly planted trees still attached to supporting stakes. Several paths, steep in places, lead from the admission office to the top.

Arriving visitors will turn from the street along the Hirai River onto the street heading uphill along the temple complex. On the right is a parking lot. From here, visitors may backtrack to the entrance of a paved, forested path along which statues point the way to a large gate before the temple.

Built in 1478, Hokoji was erected to convert a Tendai sect temple to the Soto sect of Zen Buddhism, according to the temple's website.

Continuing along the path leads to

Akigawa cemetery, a vast, traditional Japanese burial ground on the bowl-like hillside above. Cresting the steep hill, you'll see the Buddha across the ravine, looking over the valley.

To reach the Buddha, pay a fee at the admission booth — 300 yen, or about \$2.87 for adults, and 100 yen for a child. The helpful staff speaks minimal English.

Winding your way uphill through a small forest of Japanese cedars brings you to Rokuya Daibutsu. Here you will find benches and a modern, motion-sensor fountain for the ritual hand-cleansing upon arrival.

Inside the base of the Buddha, visitors may purchase incense to leave at the 1/10th scale gold-plated version of the bronze monolith sitting above you. Also, prayer ornaments and fortune papers are available for suggested donations of 300 yen.

Vending machines can be found at the rest area near the admission building. Ample free parking and public restrooms are also available.

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Ropeway provides amazing views in Nikko

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
EKATERINA BESPATOVA,
JAPAN TRAVEL

The Akechidaira Ropeway, located just off the famous Irohazaka Winding Road in Nikko, offers unsurpassable views over Lake Chuzenji and Kegon Falls from the top of a nearby mountain. The ride itself is short and not very exciting, but the views are of a kind you won't get anywhere else.

Only here can you truly appreciate the amazing geology of this area, part of Nikko National Park. The lake is surrounded by mountains on all sides but one, where its waters fall down in a straight line as if trying to escape the confines of its stone basin. Mount Nantai towers to the right, and from late October through November the mountain slopes are ablaze with colors. Winter will present you with the unforgettable sight of Kegon Falls turned into one giant icicle.

Of course, to be able to see all this you need to visit on a clear day. It may get quite chilly at the observation point at any time of year, so bring an extra layer. Also, be prepared to wait in line — Akechidaira is a popular tourist spot and gets crowded on weekends, especially during the fall season.

GETTING THERE:
The ropeway is about a 30-minute drive from Nikko Station via the Irohazaka winding road to Lake Chuzenji—you will not miss the ropeway's large parking lot. No matter what transport option you use, you will only be able to use the ropeway on your way up, not down, so plan accordingly.
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1 Venus Line



A drive on scenic Venus Line

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

As the high temps and pandemic continue, there's nothing better than a quick escape to get some cool air in the beautiful country landscape. Lately, my wife and I have been experiencing some cabin fever since we've been cooped up at home for the better part of the 18 months. So, we decided to head toward Nagano Prefecture's nice, cool mountainous terrain.

Scenic highway in Nagano Prefecture

On a Saturday morning in late August, we left our home in Yokosuka City around 5 a.m. looking forward to getting a view of Nagano's beautiful mountains and breathing in the fresh, cool highland breeze. The traffic was unexpectedly smooth, and we made great time getting to Suwa IC via the Yoko-Yoko, Tomei, Ken-o and Chuo Expressways. From there, we stopped for a coffee at a 7-Eleven and made our way on the Venus Line highway, known for the exquisite views of Nagano's landscapes.

The Venus Line is a 47-mile-long stretch connecting Chino City and Utsukushigahara Heights, and besides the views, also features beautiful parks and a large open-air museum perfect for breaks along the way.

We enjoyed the drive along the Venus Line and were able to spot bright green hills, lush forests of

pine trees, the majestic Southern Alps of Japan and the crystal-clear lakes from the road. Although it was a bit cloudy, the complicated colors and shapes of clouds added a kind of nice effect on the celestial landscape and made us feel as if we were dreaming.

Two beautiful lakes

Our first stop on the Venus Line was Lake Tateshinako, a tiny man-made lake located 4,100 feet above sea level. We took a brisk walk on the lakeside promenade surrounded by white birch and pine trees.

Next, we took a short 10-minute drive to Lake Shirakabako, much larger and surrounded by dozens of hotels and restaurants. Unfortunately, most of the businesses here were closed due to the state of emergency. From the lake's observation deck, we got a view of the water and a fountain splashing at its center.

Exploring the hills of Mt. Kirigamine

Next stop on our Venus Line trip we stopped at Fujimidai parking lot for a view of Mt. Kirigamine. The temperature here was below 65 degrees Fahrenheit, so my wife wore her jacket as we took a short hike up a hill to get a look at the foliage. As the name Fujimidai (literally, Mt. Fuji viewing spot) indicates, we could see Mt. Fuji standing high over the tall mountain ranges of the Southern Alps. No words could describe the great view!

3 Yamabe Winery



Nearby, Kurumayamagata is another parking lot featuring a couple of restaurants and lodging facilities, and also serves as a mountain hiker station. We weren't here to hike as we are not hardcore hikers, but we did take a leisurely walk for 30 minutes to check out the large marsh and wooden trails and enjoy the fresh, cool mountain breeze.

Open-air museum like ruins of old civilization

Utsukushigahara (literally, beautiful field) is a plateau 6,562-feet high above sea level and marks

the end of the open-air museum. It features modern sculptures and beautiful pieces of art that make us feel as if we are in an old civilization.

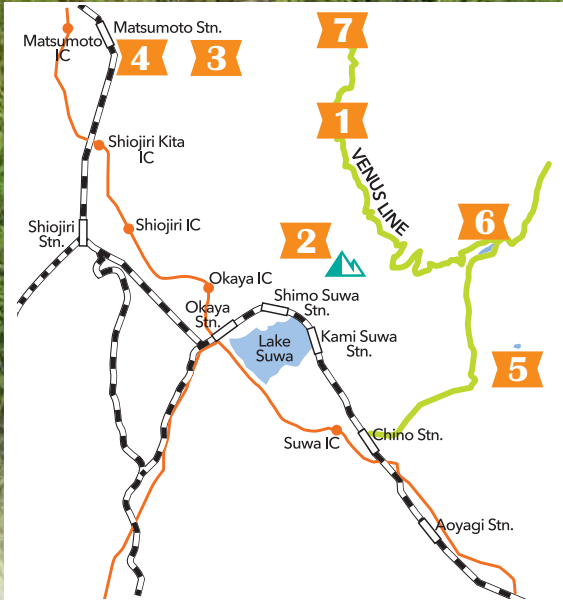
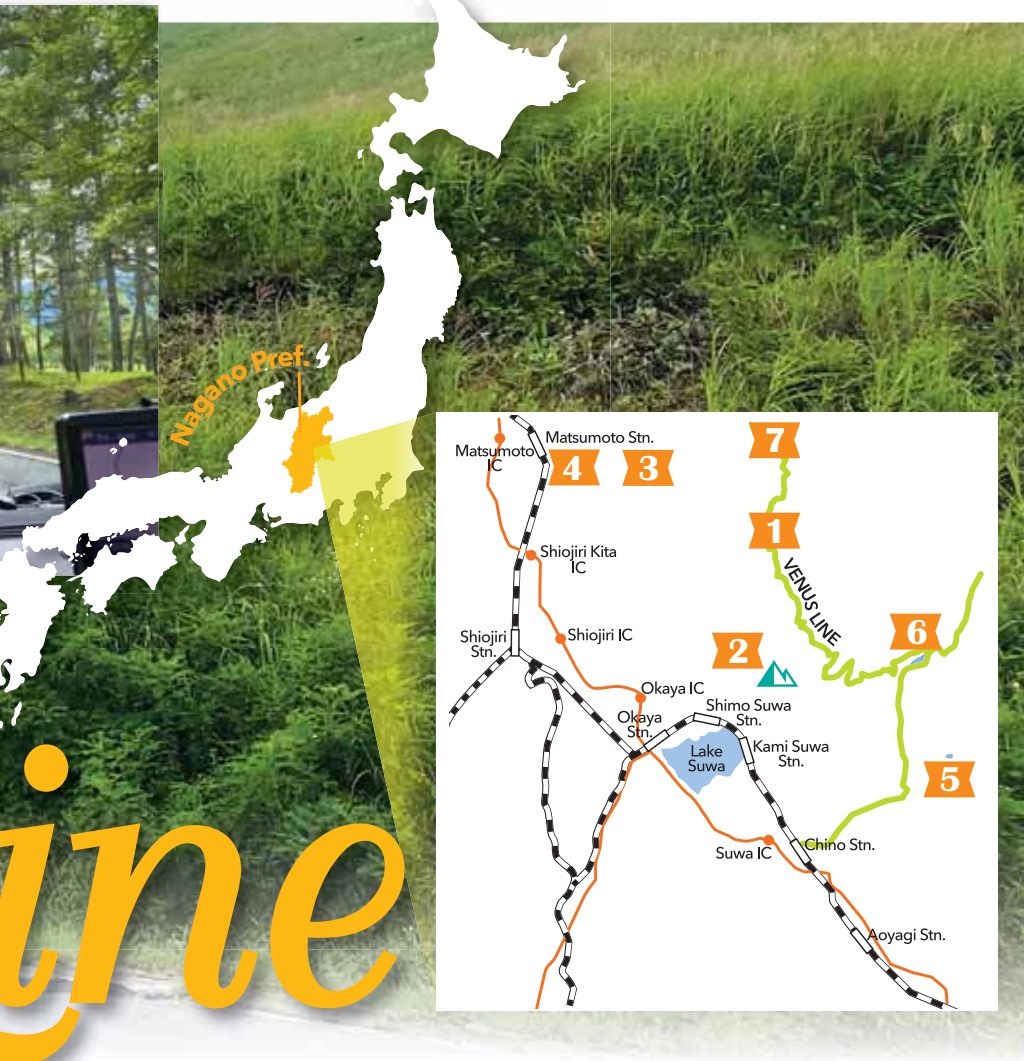
Yamabe Town

After we spent the day in the fresh air of Yamabe Town, far



2 Fujimidai (Kirigamine)





4 Yoikana Brewery



vegetables. We parked the car at a town winery and local farmer's market and purchased a lot of fresh vegetables.

The elegant city of Matsumoto

Back on the road, it took us 30 minutes to reach Matsumoto, an old castle city with plenty of rich history and culture. By this time, it was already 4 p.m. so we avoided crowded restaurants and enjoyed bento lunch boxes in our car.

Compared to other old castle towns, Matsumoto is an elegant city despite its traditional atmosphere. Since it was too late to visit the castle or museums, we explored Nakamachidori and Nawatedori Streets. Lined with clay-walled and tiled-roof buildings, the architecture and ambiance here were great and very telling of why Matsumoto is a popular tourist destination.

One block from Nawatedori Street, we made a stop at Yoikana Shuzo, an old sake brewery we've visited before. We were driving and were not able to sample sake products this time. But, if you are not the designated driver, don't forget to sample the brewery's high-end sake brand "Metoba-no-izumi," as the extremely mellow and smooth flavor pairs well with any food.

Yoikana Shuzo didn't let us go home empty-handed. Instead of sampling sake, the staff filled up a large bottle with Metoba water, spring water drawn from their well which is used for brewing high-end sake.

It was 6 p.m. when we left Matsumoto and began our journey back to Yokosuka. We had smooth traffic on the way home as well and were back home by 10 p.m.

Our one-day drive along the Venus Line recharged us enough to last until the next time we're able to go out for a drive. It's only four hours from Tokyo and many of the Kanto Plain's U.S. military bases. If you're due for some recharging, plan your own trip to the mountains via the scenic and refreshing Venus Line.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

the Venus Line. On this plateau, the museum greets visitors with 350 modern and artwork. Walking amongst the ruins in this "museum in the sky" made us feel like we were exploring in the ruins of an ancient city.

be Town – home to many grapes, veggies

spent a couple of hours taking in the beautiful and complex art, we drove to Yamashiro, famous for its grapes and highland

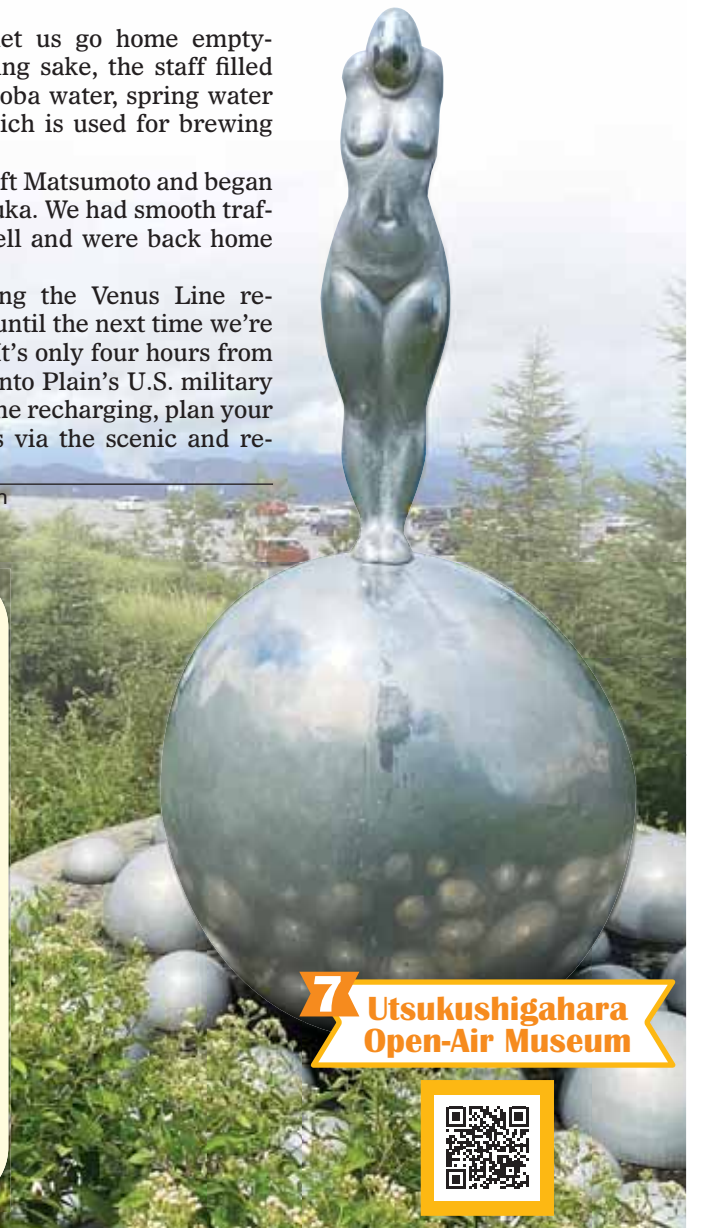


Since I have felt a kind of cabin fever at home in my steamy city, I decided to drive down to Utsukushigahara Open-Air Museum an impressive 6,562-feet high above sea level. Here I could take a nice deep breath of fresh, cool air. As the hot days continue, let's take a rest, get relaxed and enjoy some nice deep breaths in a cool place.



Shinkokyu wo shimasho!
= Let's take a deep breath!

VIDEO LESSON



Pancake lovers rejoice!

Try this Okinawan crepe recipe today!

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES JAPAN

Chinpin is an Okinawan sweet often described as a pancake or crepe flavored with brown sugar.

According to Jitsuyou Ryukyu Ryori, a textbook on Okinawan cuisine, this sweet used to be a special treat made to celebrate Yukkanuhi, a seasonal festival marked on May 4 or May 5 of the lunar calendar.

Today, you can have chinpin year-round at local cafes with a cup of tea or coffee. It's really easy to make and doesn't require special ingredients you don't already have in your kitchen.

The recipe for chinpin calls for brown sugar, which gives it a delicate and restrained sweetness different from traditional pancakes and crepes made with regular granulated white sugar.

Adding to the sweetness is the brown sugar syrup topping which will not ruin the taste of the treat itself. So, let's dig in and try this Okinawan delight!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

INGREDIENTS (for approx. eight cakes)

FOR CHINPIN CREPE/PANCAKE

- Flour (approx. 600cc)
- Baking powder (a small spoonful)
- Salt (a little)
- Brown sugar (Crushed and powdered, 500cc)
- Water (600cc)
- Egg whites of one egg

FOR BROWN SUGAR SYRUP

- Water (100cc)
- Powdered brown sugar (50g)

RECIPE

FOR CHINPIN CREPE/PANCAKE

1. Crush and powder brown sugar.



2. Pour the powdered brown sugar and an egg white in a pot and mix in water. Smooth out clumps with a whisk.



3. Heat the pot on a stove with moderate heat while constantly whisking the mixture.



4. If the mixture starts to boil, stop stirring and continue heating the pot for about five minutes more until the brown sugar melts in the pot.



5. With a strainer, remove the foam that collects at the top. (If you have a larger strainer, you can carefully pour the hot mixture into a bowl instead.)

6. Let the mixture cool.



7. Sift flour and baking powder into a separate bowl.



8. Pour the cooled mixture into the bowl and add salt.



9. Whisk the mixture and let it sit for about 10 minutes with a wet towel covering the bowl.



10. In a pan, pour a little mixture as you would a crepe or pancake. Use oil or non-stick spray so the cakes do not stick to the pan.



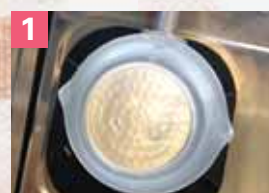
11. As it starts to cook, make sure to roll your crepes.



* Ingredients (especially the brown sugar) can be adjusted to your preference.

FOR BROWN SUGAR SYRUP

1. Pour 100cc of water and 50cc of powdered brown sugar in a pot stirring until the sugar dissolves. Let the ingredients reach a boil.



2. Once the ingredients start to thicken into a syrup, it is time to top your chinpin!



VIEW
VIDEO!



Bon
appetite!





Berry picking farm offers quaint family fun near Yokota

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RAY MCINTOSH,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: September 2, 2021

Just a 15-minute drive from Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo can bring you to a family-friendly garden that gives visitors a chance to pick their own fruit and try seasonal baked goods in an ethereal cottage environment.

An ideal day trip amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, Berry Cottage is a unique stop that allows for family fun while social distancing and staying within protective health guidelines.

Guests can enjoy the pure and simple activity of roaming the gardens to pick, or “hunt,” as they call it in Japan, fresh seasonal fruits. After a quick tutorial on how to identify the most desirable berries and properly pluck them, visitors get 30 minutes to pick as much fruit as they want. Patrons pay by the weight of their pickings.

The entry fee for adults is 500 yen (about \$4.60) and 300 yen for children in elementary school and younger. Berries cost around 216 yen per 100 grams.

Kiwi-picking season at Berry Cottage is October and November. Kiwis cost 600 yen per kilogram. The farm also has a raspberry picking season in June and July but had to cancel this year because of a lack of sufficient crops.

The cafe portion of Berry Cottage is a wood cabin-style building where guests can relax and enjoy baked goods made fresh from the property’s seasonal produce. The café seats around 20 people.

During blueberry season this summer, the Berry Cottage menu included a blueberry tart that resembles an almond blueberry coffee cake for 660

yen; a rich and gelatinous blueberry cheesecake for 550 yen; and drinks like the creamy blueberry yogurt smoothie for 760 yen and their fresh blueberry and raspberry ice cream was for sale for 350 yen per cone.

Below the cafe, they sell specialty candles for around 1,000 yen, bottles of blueberry wine for 3,000 yen, and various fruit or nature-themed knickknacks.

Reservations are required for berry picking and can be made by phone. They are not required if you just wish to dine at the cafe, but keep in mind that groups larger than four people will most likely not be able to sit at the same table due to limited space and coronavirus safety regulations.

The cafe and garden are kid-friendly but not stroller or wheelchair-friendly, and there are steep stairs to get to the café and cottage.

Berry Cottage is cash-only, and you must take off your shoes and change into provided slippers upon entering. There is no English on the menu, and the staff does not speak much English, but a translation app can help you maneuver ordering with ease.

Berry Cottage uses organic fertilizer and cultivates without chemical pesticides, according to signs and pamphlets around the store and garden. They claim that blueberries are the “most nutritious summer fruits (compared to peaches, pears and grapes),” rich in vitamins and antioxidants.

If you hope to make a homemade pie or cake with your berry loot, most recipes call for three to five cups of blueberries. When kiwi season starts in October, the adventurous can try a traditional Japanese confection called daifuku, a juicy dessert made by stretching mochi over a whole kiwi.

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Hours: Open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

Prices: \$5 admission for adults, \$3 for children, fruit by weight

Dress: Wear casual shoes you don’t mind getting a little dirty.

Phone: 0428-31-3810

URL: berry-cottage.com



Seasonal desserts at Berry Cottage, a cafe and farm in Ome, include homemade blueberry tarts.

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byFood

MELON PAN

Why are people crazy about this melon-shaped bread?

Editor's Note: These are uncertain times and this article mentions places to try melon pan in Tokyo, which is currently off-limits. There are plenty of melon pan options at your local convenience store and supermarket to try in the meantime. Use the locations mentioned here for future planning. And, always remember to practice proper hand-washing and social distancing.

BY KELLIANE THACH,
BYFOOD

When it comes to Japanese desserts, most people know about matcha-flavored foods or wagashi (traditional Japanese sweets) such as taiyaki or ichigo daifuku. Generally, people in the West usually use bread in sandwiches for lunch, rather than eating it as a dessert. But

in Japan, bread is life, with bakeries housing a variety of sweet buns filled with custard, chocolate cream, and anko (sweet bean paste).

Bread is essential in Japanese food culture due to how portable and tasty it is. The melon bun (melon pan in Japanese) is an extremely popular type of bread that can be found in convenience stores, bakeries, and even in specialty melon pan shops. Among all the Japanese snacks out there, melon pan is one of the most iconic.

What is melon pan (Melon bread)?

Melon pan is a sweet Japanese bread that is known for its soft and fluffy interior and cookie-like crust. Its signature look is the patterned grid on top and it comes in a huge range of flavors, from chocolate chip to matcha to strawberry. We cover more of the delicious flavors available later in this blog post.



Photo by Janin, Flickr



Photo by George N, Flickr

Why is it called melon pan?

Due to its name, most people assume that the bread is filled with melon-flavored cream (which is sometimes the case), but traditionally melon bread is not made with melon flavor. Instead, melon bread has just a sugar cookie crust. The name melon pan stems from its patterned cookie topping, which resembles the skin of a melon.

Why do people love melon pan?

Why is there so much hype around melon pan? Many people believe it is just like any other sweet bread, but do not be fooled. After you try this Japanese melon bread, it will leave you craving more.

Popularized in anime, you may see the protagonist being late for school and running out of the house with a piece of melon pan in their mouth. The bread guest features in many anime and manga, such as Nichijou. This Japanese melon bread is perfect for a quick bite on your way to work or school, or just as a special treat. There have been many different flavors and variations of this beloved bread, such as ice cream, custard, chocolate and more.

Its portability, cute name, variety of flavors, and pop culture associations, make melon pan beloved across Japan.

Where to eat melon pan

1 Melon Pan Ice



Photo courtesy of Melon Pan Ice

You probably guessed it by the title, but this restaurant specializes in melon pan ice cream. What makes this different from other ice cream melon pan is the bread itself. It is cut into a cone shaped and covered with parchment paper. The ice cream and design is then placed in the middle. If you want the "Tokyo Kawaii" look, they even have Gudetama as an option for your ice cream. With two locations in the Tokyo metropolitan area, it is convenient for you foodies who want to try this Japanese snack. It is the perfect Instagram-worthy dessert!

ADDRESS: Iwase Bldg. 1-15-9 Jinnan, Shibuya-ku, Tokyo

DIRECTION: 12-minute walk from Shibuya Station

HOURS: Monday-Sunday 11a.m. - 10 p.m.

2 Kagetsudo

Sensoji Temple, located in Asakusa, Tokyo, is one of Tokyo's most famous tourist hotspots. With traditional food and markets around the area, why not stop for a quick snack at Kagetsudo? With two locations in the area, it is easy to access when you are visiting. Established in 1945, Kagetsudo has a long history as an Asakusa favorite among locals and tourists. They never fail when it comes to providing customers with freshly baked bread. This bread is perfect to share with your travel buddy due to its jumbo size, or you can enjoy this sweet goodness all to yourself.

Spice up this jumbo bread with some ice cream! Depending on the time of year, they have seasonal flavors such as sakura or sweet potato. Best to get there early since the queue could last over an hour!

ADDRESS: 2-7-13 Asakusa, Taito City, Tokyo

1-18-11 Asakusa, Taito City, Tokyo

DIRECTION: 3-minute walk from Asakusa Station

HOURS: Monday-Sunday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.



Photo by Antonia Tajuelo, Flickr

3 Duca Di Camastra

If you are ever headed towards Yokohama to visit the famous ferris wheel or Chinatown, make a pit stop to Tamamachi Station (don't mix this up with Tamachi Station since both are in opposite directions). Right outside the station, there is a small bakery that you can smell from a mile away! The shops sell various types of bread and desserts, but my favorite by far is their melon pan. The melon pan is very simple, but this feature is actually its strong point. With an extra crunchy shell and creamy texture, it is quite different from the larger melon pan chains. This local mom and pop bakery is loved by many locals in the area.

ADDRESS: 1-1-1 Matsumotocho, Kanagawa-ku, Yokohama, Kanagawa Pref.

DIRECTION: 1-minute walk from Tamamachi Station

HOURS: Tuesday - Sunday 8 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.



Photo by Kelliane Thach, byFood



Melon pan flavors to try



1 Chocolate

This beloved chocolate flavored pan has a gooey, chocolatey middle, almost reminiscent of a lava cake. Surprisingly, this flavor is easy to find anywhere, even at your nearest convenience store.



2 Ice cream

If you can't tell already, ice cream is a very popular addition to your melon pan. The ice cream adds a great contrast to the fresh bread encasing it. You can enjoy this melon pan even in the winter by pairing it with a cup of tea on the side.



3 Strawberry

This defining fruit of the winter months in Japan is a seasonal specialty loved by all. Strawberry melon pan provides the perfect balance between sweet and tangy.



4 Matcha

Matcha melon pan is perfect for those who love bread but aren't too fond of sweets. If luck is on your side, you can find matcha melon pan in cute shapes, such as a turtle, due to its bright green color.



5 Zunda

Eat this special melon pan bread without feeling guilty because it's made out of edamame! If you ever visit Sendai, home of zunda, you can easily find this melon pan at Sendai Station along with other zunda-flavored treats.



6 Milk tea

For all you milk tea lovers out there, this bread is for you. This milk tea infused melon pan has notes of the tea while still providing that crunchy, cookie-like top. Though it is uncommon, there are speciality stores that do sell it seasonally.



7 Pumpkin

Sweater weather only happens once a year, but in Japan, have it any day with pumpkin flavored melon pan. Pumpkin is used as an ingredient in many dishes in Japan so it is no surprise when it comes to melon pan.



8 Hojicha

Discover another side of Japan and step towards traditional Japanese tea with hojicha melon pan. The rich, earthy aroma of roasted green tea will be sure to capture your heart as you dig in.



9 Melon

You can't finish your melon pan journey without checking out melon-flavored melon pan. This piece of bread truly lives up to its name not only in shape, but also flavor. Biting into one of these is almost like biting into a real melon!



10 Glazed

If you are missing that original glazed donut while traveling in Japan, you can get the melon pan version! This beautiful piece of bread has a sugary glazed coating instead of your typical cookie crust. Every bite you take will still have the perfect balance of sugar and soft crumbly bread.

Now you know all about Japanese melon pan, a classic breakfast and quick snack in Japan, perfect to satisfy a sweet tooth! With a huge range of melon bread flavors to try, you'll never get bored eating this fluffy-on-the-inside, crunchy-on-the-outside treat.

byFood is a platform for food events in Tokyo, with over 80 experiences to choose from and a fantastic resource for learning about Japan's thriving food culture! What's more, byFood runs a charitable outreach program, the Food for Happiness Project, which donates 10 meals to children in Cambodia for each person who books a food event through our platform!



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So you thought you didn't like manga?

A dive into the English-language side of Japan's alternative manga world

BY ERIC MARGOLIS,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Do you think manga is all blustering fantasy action or slow-burn high school romance? Think again. Alternative manga has a long, storied history with experimental art forms, sophisticated literary conceits, adult themes. And it's starting to emerge more prominently in English translation.

While the manga that most readers are familiar with has fantastic storytelling and beautiful art, alternative manga engages in exciting, unique and even abstract styles. And nowadays, more mainstream and small publishers in the U.S. and UK are starting to pursue experimental, sophisticated manga for

translation and publication in the U.S., based on a veritable treasure trove of old material — and a continuing contemporary pipeline of exciting literary comics.

"I think interest in the west shifted in the 2000s with the release of *Drifting Life* by Yoshihiro Tatsumi," says Ryan Holmberg, a translator and historian focusing on literary and alternative manga. "Tatsumi was historically important in Japan in the 1960s, and his biography became a huge hit in the States. That came on the wave of so-called literary graphic novels becoming big in the English language publishing world in the early 2000s."

Even today, the alternative manga world in some ways rides on the coattails of the explosive

60s and 70s. At the center of the movement was the magazine *Garō*, a publication that became the centerpiece of leftist student movements in the late 60s and 70s, and which expanded manga into unexplored realms.

Per Liu Xing of *Leap Magazine*, *Garō*'s main readership was leftist students influenced by avant-garde art who were willing to accept anything that broke away from traditional tastes. "*Garō* was able to veer from common perceptions of beauty and entertain alternative tastes," writes Xing. One of the first artists that shocked and captivated this generation of leftist students, Yoshiharu Tsuge, has only recently emerged in English translation despite his status as a bestseller and legend in Japan.

One of Tsuge's masterpieces, *A Man Without Talent*, was just published in English earlier this year, and is a great introduction into the world of literary manga. "Part of *The Man Without Talent*'s success is that it fits so well into the market and genre of literary graphic novel in the U.S.," explains Holmberg, the translator of the work. *Man Without Talent* is about the daily life, meditations and human interactions of Tsuge's cartoon stand-in, Sukezo Sukegawa, as he attempts to support his family through selling stones, fixing up broken cameras and any other endeavor that seems destined to fail. It is a thoughtful work enveloped in the authenticity and crudeness of its self-centered protagonist, while the art captures images, stories and mythologies with beauty and sensitivity shifting smoothly from background to foreground and back again.

In the Japanese market, literary and alternative manga aren't 'separate' from other manga. Japan's wider diversity of manga genres spills over into the experimental. While the contemporary experimental manga world is far from what it was in the 60s and 70s, the scene continues to thrive.

"Small arthouse galleries and bookstores that mix exhibition/retail and publishing activities, independent manga magazines and a self-publishing culture help to foster and simplify artists' self-publishing activities and make it easier to follow interesting new works and artists," says Emuh Ruh at Glacier Bay Books, an Oregon-based publisher of alternative manga. "Tracing this back, we try to follow interesting artistic comic work and look at connecting with people working in this area." Seirin Kogeisha's Web Reads and the independent zine scene found in stylish retail spaces like Taco Shop are just a few rich sources



An issue of leftist student movement magazine *Garō*. Courtesy photos

While this growth is driven largely by popular action and fantasy titles, insiders agree that broader industry growth has some trickle-down effect on more experimental comics. Other new readers are manga fans entering new arenas or long-time fans of Western graphic novels, checking out manga as Japanese culture continues to win new fans abroad.

(Japanese literary fiction has also made strides in recent years, with a diverse set of writers earning broad critical and commercial success.)

"Our titles have had a strong appeal among readers that run in both manga and 'indie comics' circles," says Ruh. "We're seeing a growth of interest in more unusual and artistic works as new readers from different backgrounds become aware of these kinds of works, and continuing readers begin to look for more variety."

While the common perception of manga is as genre fiction, the world of literary manga has a serious pull and punch. Drawn & Quarterly, Glacier Bay Books, Breakdown Press in London, and others have a wide variety of offerings for interested readers, and their horizons are expanding.

While literary manga has historically been a masculine world, Holmberg says that the publishing

industry is making an effort to redress the balance by bringing in more female artists.

The Sky is Blue With A Single Cloud by Kuniko Tsurita, translated by Holmberg, is one of these titles, with Tsurita lauded as a "formally ambitious and poetic female voice like none other."

"I'm very optimistic for the future of literary manga," says Ruh. "I think it's fair to say that members of this new wave are broadly premised on the idea that the current situation in publishing has not reflected the true diversity of both comic creation, nor readers' interest."

Thanks to new translations and publication efforts, English-language readers are able to find a wide variety of artistically brilliant and philosophically deep manga. The common perception of manga as pulp fiction deserves serious reconsideration in the English language.

of new alternative manga getting released in Japan.

In recent years, more English-language publishers have started to explore this world. Glacier Bay Books is one of those publishers, with exciting titles such as their newest, *Children of Mu Town*, a classic yakuza crime manga that intermingles themes of gentrification and rebirth. The story focuses on children in an aging residential housing complex who are struggling to survive. The art is more standard than some of the art seen in a work like *Man Without Talent*, but the story carries impressive weight.

"*Children of Mu Town* has been lauded for its contemporary socio-political commentary as well as its awe-inspiring inky depictions of a city's night visage, its tenements and neighborhoods; the lost dreams of a generation resting in its bones," says Ruh.

"I'm interested in expanding the infrastructure of different publishers out there," says Holmberg. "Some of this artsy manga won't sell that much, so it's good to have smaller publishers in the mix."

The emerging audience for these works comes together due to a variety of factors. The broader manga market has exploded in recent years and continues to grow at a remarkable pace.



An issue of leftist student movement magazine *Garō*.

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Answer

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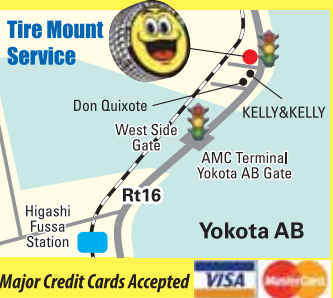
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Kanji of the week

鶏

Rooster (niwatori/kei)

Language Lesson

Let's go.

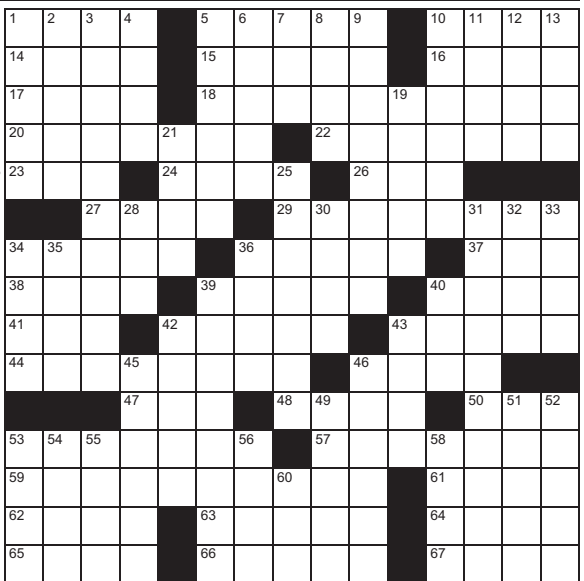
Iki mashoo.

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- February forecast
- Golf strokes
- "What are the ...?"
- Improve, as skills
- One way to fall
- Like TV title housewives
- Thunderous applause
- Extraordinary
- Break, as a habit
- Like fangs
- Hair stuff
- Musical conclusion
- Nautical journal
- Fuss
- High male voice
- Animal track
- Place for fishing
- Post Malone's genre
- Give praise
- Bake, as eggs
- Kate of "House of Cards"
- 30-day mo.
- Like much Cajun cuisine
- Plane anagram
- Vatican attraction
- Hustles
- Palindromic name
- Christmas carol
- What the "Scooby-Doo" gang rode in
- Cannabis product
- One way to follow
- Call attention to
- Sis to Katniss
- Back end
- Church leader
- Rush job notation
- Verge
- Out of practice



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67 Fit together

DOWN

- "Beats me" gesture
- Nary a person
- Crawling, say
- "The Way We ..."
- Pirate's pet
- Flip
- Flat hat
- Fairway feature
- Baby transport
- Sherbet flavor
- Balance sheet item
- Cowgirl Evans product
- Downhill racer
- Mall booth
- Computer brand
- Kind of violet
- Serling of Sci-fi TV
- High nest (var.)
- Set crosswise
- Mitchell mansion
- Milky stone
- Concrete section

- Bearded Smurf
- Stylish
- Old maid
- R&B's Boyz II
- Struck down
- Marco
- Beckoning words
- Stuffing ingredient

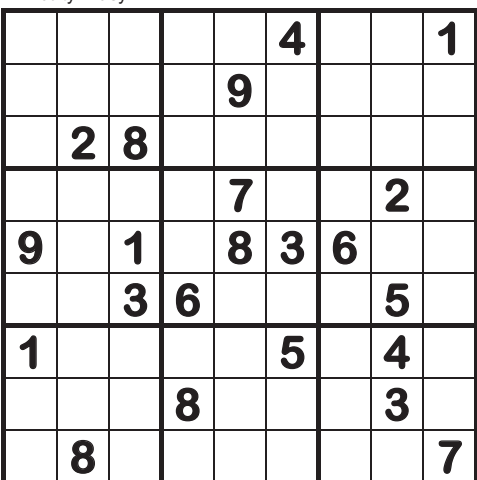
- Musical eight-some
- Assumed name
- Woodland deity
- Fabled racer
- Got a perfect score
- Heroin, slangily
- Netflix rival
- Junk E-mail
- Commercials

Answers to Last Week's Crossword:



SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy



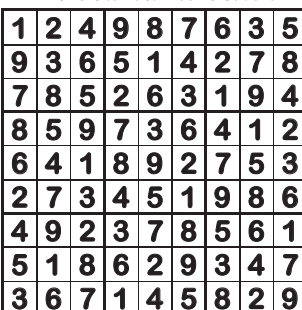
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Edited by Margie E. Burke

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Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answers to Last Week's Sudoku:



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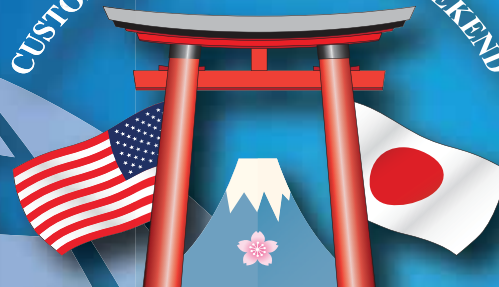
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