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**Walk in history**  
Follow footsteps of two admirals  
in  
**Yokosuka**

**Pages 4-5**

**INSIDE INFO**



IT'S CHERRY BLOSSOM SEASON AT STARBUCKS  
PAGE 2



**Special 8-page pullout inside!**

**ICE COLD**

**Misawa sailors sculpt Sapporo Snow Fest entry under frosty conditions**

BY KELLY AGEE, STARS AND STRIPES  
Published: February 6, 2023

U.S. Navy sailors created a chill version of the guided-missile destroyer USS Arleigh Burke, first in its class, as their contribution to the first Sapporo Snow Festival in three years. This year's eight-day festival opened to visitors on February 4 with 160 sculptures, according to Kyodo News. The annual event, which brings ice sculptors from around the world to the city of Sapporo on Hokkaido, the northernmost of Japan's four main islands, began in 1950.

**SEE SNOW ON PAGE 3**

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# Until Mar. 14

# It's cherry blossom season at Starbucks

BY DENISSE RAUDA, STRIPES JAPAN

These frigid temperatures may have you thinking that spring isn't really around the corner. Good news, it is! And, Starbucks Japan is helping you think happy, warm thoughts with its new cherry blossom seasonal offerings through March 14.

Cherry blossom season is one of the highly-anticipated times of the year and so are the coffee chain's sakura-themed goods, drinks and desserts. This year, Starbucks Japan is taking the experience a step further with the addition of Augmented Reality (AR) to animate their drinks using customers' cellphones.

To use the VR feature, simply scan the QR code found on the in-store poster with your smartphone and it will open the Sakura AR content. Take pics of yourself, your drink and desserts with animated cherry blossoms and a Starbucks Bearista teddy bear.

Beyond the augmented reality, Starbucks Japan is rolling out some real drinks to mark the occasion. Get your hands on a Sakura Saku Frappuccino or the Sakura Soy Latte. According to the coffee conglomerate's website, your heart will "bounce" with the Frappuccino's ingredients, including a cherry blossom-flavored jelly mixed with cherry blossom petals at the bottom of the layered drink, strawberry blended ice, and a whip cream topping sprinkled with strawberry macaron pieces.

The drink is only available in tall size (starting at 6.90 yen or \$6.25), so it might not be as much of a sugar rush as it sounds. The Sakura Saku Frappuccino embodies the colors of the upcoming season and will definitely make your friends outside of Japan pink with envy.

For something a little more subtle, the Sakura Soy Latte, is a hot drink available in tall, grande and venti (starting at 540 yen or \$5.10). According to Starbucks Japan, this drink is inspired by cherry blossoms in full bloom and pairs steamed soy milk with sakura strawberry sauce, then topped with "Sakura Strawberry Shave," which looks like pink-hued white chocolate shavings and "Pink Silver Sugar."

If the looming sugar high isn't of concern, then add on one of the cherry blossom-themed pastries to go along with your drink. The coffee giant will add a sakura donut, sakura matcha donut and sakura chiffon cake to its lineup. Sakura and matcha powdered sugar cookie balls will also go on sale in prepackaged cans in the retail display section.

Another coveted Starbucks Japan cherry blossom season release is drinkware. The company announced this year's tumblers, mugs and other sakura-themed items on Feb. 15. Browse the collection online.

Like cherry blossom season, the seasonal drinks at Starbucks are only available for a limited time. So, hurry in if you want a taste of spring in your cup and AR blossoms on your phone.

Rauda.Denisse@stripes.com

**Taste the sakura**  
More info at Starbucks Japan's website



**Cherry blossom coffee, donuts and cakes – oh my!**




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# SNOW: 'We came to represent the United States Navy'

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The COVID-19 pandemic put the festival on ice in 2020, although a virtual version kept its spirit alive in the interim. Some measures are still in place to curb the spread of the coronavirus, such as wearing masks and no eating or drinking at the venues.

The handpicked team of eight Navy ice sculptors from Naval Air Facility Misawa worked outside at Odori Park in central Sapporo for five days in single-digit temperatures to complete their entry by Feb. 4. They created the bow portion of the ship's hull with a bridge on its snowy deck.

"Although the team



came from the same base, we all belong to different commands," the team's leader, Chief Petty Officer Monica Michel, 32, of Cabangan, Philippines, told Stars and Stripes by email. "It's the first time we all worked together despite that we all came together as one. We came to represent the United States Navy."

The Navy has sent a team to the festival 38 times, Chief Petty Officer Aiden Campbell, a spokesman for Naval Forces Japan, told Stars and Stripes.

Petty Officer 2nd Class Daveon Fitzgerald, an operations specialist with Patrol and Reconnaissance Wing One at Misawa, was the lead designer for the team.

Fitzgerald, 27, of Roanoke, Va., studied graphic design and fine art at Bluefield University in Virginia, he said by email. He said he has sculpted with clay, but never before with ice and snow.

"The hardest part is making the first cuts into the ice block because you can always take away, but it is hard to add on



VIEW VIDEO



A sailor poses with a Japanese man in front of the Navy's ice sculpture. Photos by Unique Byrd, U.S. Navy

more snow sometimes," Fitzgerald said.

The sailors started with a large block of snow and ice atop a platform of more snow and ice.

"We wanted to make a design that represented the U.S. Navy and what is better than a destroyer?" Fitzgerald said.

The team began with the very top corner of the block, cutting it to form the hull. Once the shape was completed, they slowly added details to give the ship a realistic appearance, Fitzgerald said.

Japanese visitors stopped to watch and talk to the sailors while they worked, he said.

"Japanese locals have been so kind and were very interested in our sculpture," Fitzgerald said. "We recently had a Japanese national bring their son to our sculpture to take photos. He gifted us with hot coffee so I

traded an 'Iron Ike' patch from my 207-day deployment with no ports to the young boy. Such a nice moment."

The aircraft carrier USS Dwight D. Eisenhower spent an extended time at sea during the pandemic, from January to August 2020, to reduce the potential for exposure to the coronavirus.

The sailors took occasional breaks to walk around the park and inspect the other teams' snow-and-ice sculptures, Michel said. Life-sized sculptures were built on every block of the park, he said.

"The event has been fun thanks to the positive attitudes and hardworking team I have," Michel said. "Everyone has the initiative and focus to reach our goal and we did just that. Thanks to them!"

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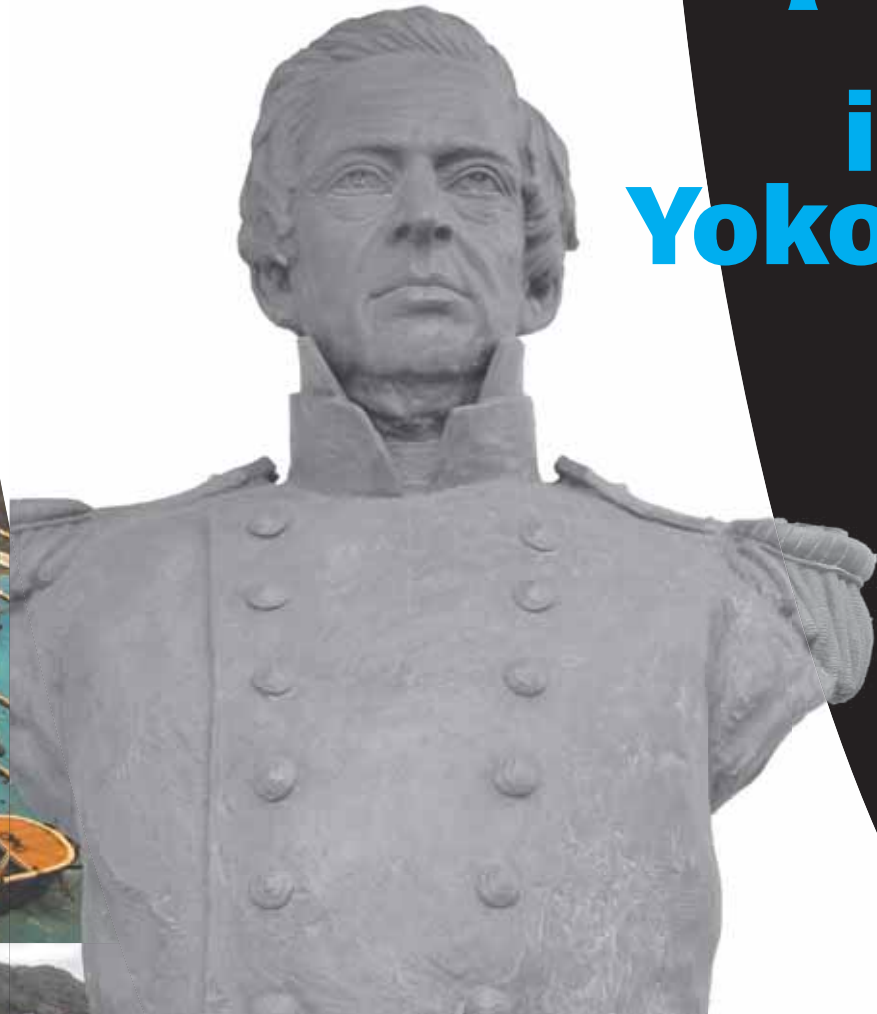
# in Yokosuka



Perry Museum



Perry Museum



Commodore Matthew C. Perry



Perry Park



Tomyodo Lighthouse



Uraga Gulf

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
STRIPES

**Y**okosuka, south of Tokyo, is a naval meet. Here, you can trace the footprint of the most well-known American admiral. The city is in Kanagawa Prefecture in 1871 when François Verny and other French became Japan's first Western-style shipyard with numerous historical ships in its time, including the in 1920 and the aircraft carrier Shinano (69,000-U.S. Seventh Fleet vessels would be home port

[takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com](mailto:takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com)

## Meet Perry in Kurihama and Uraga

Prior to the construction of the Yokosuka naval facility, American Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794 - 1858) and his four battleships of the East India Squadron Fleet would make the historic arrival at Uraga in Sagami-no-kuni (currently, Yokosuka City in Kanagawa Prefecture) in 1853. Back then, Uraga was only a small fishing village and its residents enjoyed a relatively stable and peaceful society under the Shogunate government's closed-door policy for nearly 250 years.

It was a shock then when Perry's Black Ships swept into Uraga Gulf just three miles south of where Yokosuka Naval Bases stands today. Despite local officials' demands for Perry and his Black Ships to leave, the commodore refused while stressing his desire to meet with a representative of the ruling government. Perry was persistent, even resorting to intimidation by firing blank shots from the ships' 73 canons.

Eventually, Japan would allow Perry to meet with Shogunate delegates at Kurihama Beach, southwest of the Uraga Gulf. Perry presented the delegates with U.S. President Millard Fillmore's letter asking Japan to open the door for bilateral trading relations. In hopes of avoiding war with the United States, officials agreed to sign the U.S.- Japan Treaty of Peace and Amity in 1854 and opened a few ports internationally to the world.

Kurihama Beach is a tiny, quiet beach only about a 20-minute drive from Yokosuka Naval Base. The white sand beach and peaceful waves are in stark contrast to the sight some 170 years ago when Perry and his ships arrived.

Across the street from the beach, Perry Park features a large monument dedicated to the historical arrival. The large stone has the following inscription: "This monument is to commemorate American Admiral Perry's

landing" in white kanji letters with the date of the landing. A bronze map showcases where Perry had stopped during his expedition. According to the map, his voyage lasted three years and included stops to Madeira, St. Helena, Cape Town, Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore, Macau, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Okinawa before reaching mainland Japan.

The memorial museum on the park grounds highlights Perry's life, his expedition and the historical landing in detail through various documents, Perry's handwritten letters, along with drawings, scriptures and diorama models of Tokyo Gulf and Perry's fleet. This relatively small museum is free to enter.

A short 10-minute drive from the Kurihama Beach, Uraga Gulf, where Perry's fleet arrived, is a narrow bay that shields ships from heavy wind and high tide, offering an ideal port for any type of ship.

Along the western bayside, there are many old traditional houses and buildings along with Tomyodo, a wooden lighthouse reminiscent of Perry days. The lighthouse was built by the Shogunate Government in 1648 and serviced until 1872 for about 220 years. It eventually collapsed due to powerful winds and rains and a stonewall has left. In 1988, the facade of the lighthouse was reconstructed on the remaining stonewall. According to a signboard, the lighthouse was fueled with grapeseed oil and lit up the sea surface as far as five miles away, which very easily could have led Perry as he approached Uraga. Although it is no longer in use, it is still a beautiful sight amongst its surroundings. You can access Tomyodo by Keikyu Bus from Uraga Station. The lighthouse is a five-minute walk from the Tomyodo Entrance stop.

Kurihama Beach



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Commodore Perry's visit to Okinawa

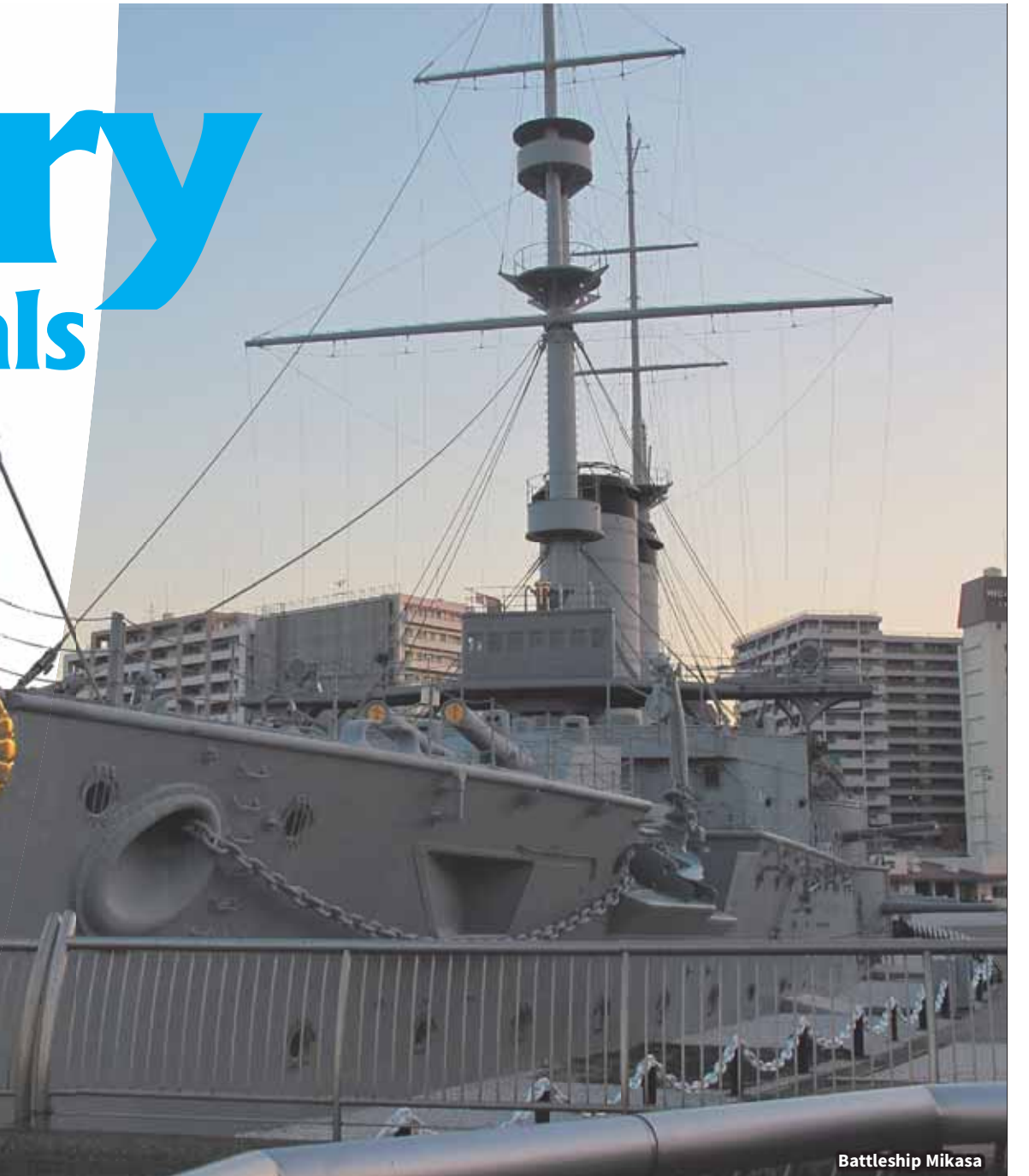


Yokosuka Naval Museum

# history

## of two admirals

### in Yokosuka



Battleship Mikasa

### Admiral Heihachiro Togo

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

Yokosuka is a city where U.S. and Japanese nautical history meet. It is the home of Commodore Perry and Admiral Togo, two of the most famous U.S. and Japanese admirals. Yokosuka is the home of Yokosuka Naval Base. It was here that U.S. engineers founded Yokosuka Iron Works, which built the ship's dry docks. The Imperial naval shipyard built the battleship Mutsu (39,000 tons and 738-foot long) in 1904 and the battleship Mikasa (8,100 tons, 872-foot long) in 1944. After World War II, the ship was moved here.



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Yokosuka  
Memorial  
Ship  
Mikasa  
Museum



A virtual tour  
aboard the  
Memorial Ship  
Mikasa in  
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### Meet Togo aboard memorial ship, outside U.S. naval base

In Yokosuka, you can also trace the footprint of Admiral Heihachiro Togo (1848 – 1934), a Japanese naval hero.

A bronze statue of Togo greets visitors at Mikasa Park, next to Yokosuka Naval Base. The park is where the 120-year-old battleship Mikasa has been permanently preserved in concrete right on the water.

The ship gained great fame during the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905), where she served as the flagship for Japan's Combined Fleet under the command of Togo and destroyed 34 of Russia's 38 warships in the Battle of Tsushima.

Today, the battleship is a museum and visitors can go aboard to learn more about its history and Admiral Togo.

Aboard the Mikasa, visitors can peruse the deck, bridge and chart room, check out the 6- and 3-inch guns, and marvel at the intricate woodwork of the admiral's quarters. Areas and structures roped off with colored tape indicate actual battle damage or portholes from which cannons were once fired.

The lower decks of the Mikasa is home to extensive exhibits featuring artifacts and video displays related to the ship's and Togo's history.

Interestingly, it was a U.S. fleet admiral that played an important role in the restoration and preservation of this memorial ship. Chester W. Nimitz, who admired Togo, donated his own money and encouraged the U.S. Navy to support the ship's restoration.

Today, the Commander of U.S. Naval Forces, Japan, participates in a memorial ceremony aboard Mikasa every May 27, and holds reenlistment ceremonies for sailors there.

After the war, Togo admired Yokosuka's naval facility and dry docks and said they were indispensable for keeping his fleet ready and greatly contributed to the victory during the Russo-Japanese War.

Though today Yokosuka is a thriving city and host to U.S. sailors and their families, it is a city full of rich history that dates back over 100 years. A visit to Yokosuka is to trace the footsteps of many historical greats that played a major role in how the area has developed today.

#### Perry Park

**Location:** 7-14 Kurihama, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref.

**Hours:** 24/7

(Perry Museum: Tue – Sun, 9 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.)

**Admission:** Free  
**Tel:** 046-834-7531



#### Tomyodo (traditional lighthouse)

**Location:** 6 Nishiuraga, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref.

**Admission:** Free  
**Tel:** 046-822-8301



#### Memorial ship Mikasa

**Location:** 82-19 Inaoka-cho, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref.

**Hours:** Open Mon – Sun, 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

**Fee:** 600 yen (\$5); seniors, 500 yen; high school students, 300 yen; junior high students and younger, free.

**Tel:** 046-822-5225



# Japan to celebrate emperor's birthday Feb. 23

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

While Americans celebrate the first President's birthday on Feb. 20, a few days later Japan will also be celebrating their own emperor's birthday on Feb. 23 as one of the 16 Japanese national holidays. Employees in Japan will have the day off and government offices will be closed on this day so plan ahead if you have official business.

Since former Emperor Akihito renounced on April 30 and the crown prince Naruhito was enthroned as the 126th Emperor of Japan in 2019, this will be the fourth time to celebrate the newly enthroned emperor.

Called "Tenno Tanjobi," the people of Japan celebrate the birthday of reigning emperor every year. Emperor Naruhito was

born in 1960, and 2020 marked the first year where Feb. 23 will be a holiday for years to come.

Although the current designations of emperor's birthdays as national holidays was only legislated in 1948, the celebrating their emperor has been a custom since the ancient ages.

Birthdays of former emperors are no longer celebrated today except for the birthdays of the Meiji Emperor and the Showa Emperor. Today, the country observes Bun-ka-no-hi (Culture Day) on Nov. 3, the Meiji Emperor's birthday, and Showa Day on Apr. 29, the Showa Emperor's birthday.

## Rare opportunity

To celebrate the birthday of the reigning emperor, the public is invited to partake in the rare opportunity to see the emperor and inner garden of the Imperial Palace.



Photo courtesy of the Prime Minister's Official Residence

## Japan's national holidays associated with Emperor's Birthday

- Feb. 23 - Emperor's Birthday - Emperor Naruhito (current emperor)'s Birthday
- Apr. 29 - Showa Day - Showa Emperor (Emperor Hirohito 1901- 89)'s Birthday
- Nov. 3 - Culture Day - Meiji Emperor (Emperor Mutsuhito 1852-1912)'s Birthday

For the occasion, around 30,000 gather to greet the Emperor, Empress and other members of the Imperial Family as they take their place on a balcony to receive the congratulations. This is one of only two chances each year where citizens are allowed to enter the inner garden; the other is Jan. 2.

During the appearance, the Emperor will often say a few words of gratitude while the visitors wave miniature Japanese flags and shout out birthday salutations.

This year will be Emperor Naruhito's first birthday public appearance since the event was canceled the past three years due to the pandemic. This year the Imperial Household Agency is still taking precautions and is limiting the number of attendees with a lottery system. Out of 61,031 applications only 4,826 were chosen to attend the emperor's birthday appearance, officials said.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

## Ex-emperor's birthday still celebrated

Like the birthday of Japan's current Emperor Naruhito (Feb. 23), April 29 was originally celebrated as the birthday of his grandfather, Emperor Hirohito. He reigned before, after and – most notably – during World War II. After his death in 1989, he was renamed Emperor Showa, and Japan's parliament kept his birthday as a national holiday.

His birthday, along with Constitution Memorial Day (May 3), Greenery Day (May 4) and Children's Day (May 5), form the string of holidays that comprise Golden Week.

The Showa Era is the longest and most dramatic reign of an emperor in Japan's history. Emperor Showa was the longest living emperor. He died at age 87 after reigning for 63 years. In fact, the Showa Era literally covers some of modern Japan's brightest and darkest hours.

– Takahiro Takiguchi



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# Stripes Sports Trivia

Hockey is known as a tough guy's sport. Playing with broken bones, missing teeth and injured organs is all part of the game. To hold the record for the most games played in the NHL, one would surely have to tough out more than a few of such injuries. The current record holder played in 1,767 games and officially retired at age 52. Who is it?

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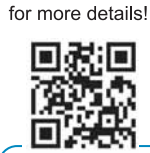


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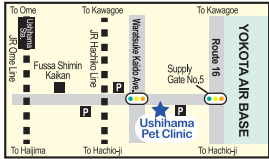
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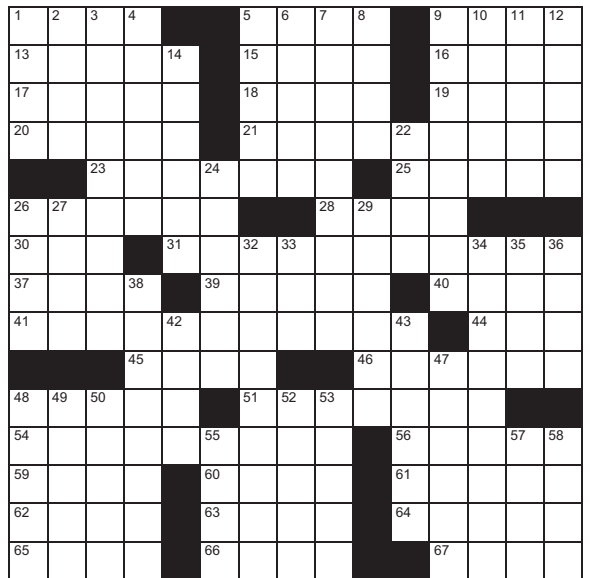
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## The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

### ACROSS

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- 5 Gridiron play
- 9 Call's companion
- 13 Some nerve
- 15 Chills and fever
- 16 Astronaut Shepard
- 17 Belt size, basically
- 18 Measuring instrument (var.)
- 19 Roman 57
- 20 Like some angles
- 21 Rented pad
- 23 Less of a mess
- 25 Valentine's gift
- 26 Toward the rudder
- 28 Coffin stand
- 30 Serengeti grazer
- 31 Idle monitor's display
- 37 Dumbo's are jumbo
- 39 "\_\_\_ Johnny!"
- 40 In person
- 41 Dashboard dial
- 44 Old Navy's parent, with "The"
- 45 Hard to come by
- 46 Vegas attraction
- 48 Less of a risk
- 51 Kind of law
- 54 Platter holder
- 56 Horse's hangout
- 59 Notion
- 60 Dick Van Patten's "Mama" role
- 61 Bert's buddy
- 62 Told a tall tale
- 63 Birch or beech
- 64 Axes
- 65 Rich supply
- 66 "\_\_\_ It Romantic?"
- 67 Amanda of "Brockmire"



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- 2 Sony label
- 3 Framework
- 4 Dot above the i
- 5 Heathen
- 6 Open-mouthed
- 7 Sweet vegetable
- 8 Palmist, e.g.
- 9 Royal castle in Scotland
- 10 Keebler's crew
- 11 Duvall's "Secondhand Lions" co-star
- 12 Makes a scarf, say
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- 47 Persian governor
- 48 Movie photo
- 49 Part of a TV signal
- 50 Liberated
- 52 Type of wrench
- 53 Odometer button
- 55 Start to freeze?
- 57 Take a shine to
- 58 In the event that

### Answers to Previous Crossword:



## DID YOU KNOW?

**C**ommodore Matthew C. Perry and the U.S. Navy were not the only ones that paid a visit to Okinawa in the 19th century. Representatives of other western countries such as France and the Netherlands visited Okinawa around the same time. As a result, the Ryukyu Kingdom signed treaties with them. Just like the one between the kingdom and the U.S., these treaties with the European countries covered agreements on commerce, replenishment, and consular jurisdiction.

## Kanji of the week

# 女

Onna (female)

## Language Lesson

Please take me to [military installation].

● \_\_\_\_\_ ●

**[Kichi] made tsurete itte kudasai.**

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## SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

				5				
	6	3		4				8
7			6	3			9	
	1			2			6	4
			9					
		2			5	1		
6		7	5					
3			2	4			1	
		1			6			7

**HOW TO SOLVE:**  
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.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

8	4	6	9	2	1	5	7	3
2	5	9	7	8	3	4	1	6
3	1	7	5	4	6	8	9	2
4	3	8	6	5	9	7	2	1
7	2	5	1	3	8	6	4	9
9	6	1	4	7	2	3	8	5
1	7	4	3	9	5	2	6	8
5	9	2	8	6	7	1	3	4
6	8	3	2	1	4	9	5	7

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# My faves Spring Traditions

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

During your time in Japan, you might have noticed that we have many traditions to go with every one of the four seasons. Spring brings a bounty of flowers, seasonal foods and traditions for you to experience.

The season is one of the most anticipated seasons as it involves the arrival of warmer temperatures and cherry blossoms. Soon, cherry blossom spots will draw people in for hanami, a spring tradition for picnics under the blush blooms. Hanami is one of the more popular and well-known traditions, but there are many more for you to ring in the arrival of spring.

These are some of my favorite spring traditions. Enjoy the long-awaited season with the joy and fun of the unique traditions.

## ■ Setsubun – Kick off spring by warding off evils and inviting happiness in

If you were able to venture out in town on Feb. 3 this year, you may have encountered flying beans and fleeing demons. We celebrate Setsubun, which literally means “change of seasons,” on the day to kick off the preparation for the upcoming planting season.

Although it is still very cold in the beginning of February, the fun tradition of mamemaki bean-throwing reminds me that spring is just around the corner every year.

We purify our homes with mamemaki on the day: Someone in the family dressing up as a demon and others throwing handfuls of beans and chasing the demon away while shouting “Demons out and happiness in!”

When we practice the spring tradition at home, I always make it sure to shout the magical phrases as loud as I can while throwing the beans with all my strength, so that our home will be purified and filled with happiness, health and prosperity.

## ■ Hinamatsuri (Doll Festival) – Annual celebration of daughters

Hinamatsuri, also known as Doll’s Day or Girls’ Day, is a time when Japanese families display “Hina Dolls,” or a set of the emperor and empress in traditional kimono attire. Celebrated on Mar. 3, the holiday is a celebration of Japan’s daughters and prayers for their happiness.

On the day, we decorate the set of the hina dolls and offer special sweets and peach blossoms on the altar. So, the holiday often called “momo-no-sekku,” or festival of peach. You may have noticed giant displays of dolls and celebratory foods on sale at your local department stores, all for Hinamatsuri.

My wife handmade a set when our daughter was born 30 years ago. We have kept celebrating the holiday with the set without missing since then, although our daughter no longer lives at home. Looking at the set of dolls always reminds us of the arrival of spring, and a lot of pleasant memories with our daughter.

## ■ Higan (memorial) – A visit with our ancestors

There is a saying in Japan that goes, “No heat or cold lasts over the equinox.” The autumnal and spring equinoxes are considered the border, and thus the end, of the respective hot and cold seasons. In Japan’s Buddhist tradition, these times also represent passing from one realm to the next.

Higan (literally, “other shore”) is a seven-day Buddhist memorial service held on the equinoxes (three days before and after). The concept can be likened to Memorial Day in the U. S. in that it is a special time set aside to remember friends and family who are no longer with us.

On Mar. 20, we visit our family tomb in temples or common cemeteries to offer prayers for

deceased family members and friends. Sweet rice-gluten balls, or “botamochi,” are commonly eaten during these periods. (The name botamochi comes from spring flower “botan,” or peony.)

In Okinawa, there is a similar tradition of tomb visiting called “Shiimi,” which takes place April and early May.

Both the Vernal Equinox (Mar. 20 or 21) and Autumnal Equinox (Sept. 22 or 23) have been observed as holidays for more than 1,000 years in Japan. Originally, the Higan ceremony called on devout Buddhists to visit temples and offer prayers for the souls of the dead. Records indicate Higan was widely observed as far back as the 9th century A.D. when the equinoxes became religious holidays and the emperor called on Buddhist monks to read scriptures for these rites.

## ■ Ichigogari – Enjoy the sweet smell and taste of spring

In Japan, strawberry picking is a popular spring activity. When the fruits become ready to pick in early January, many families (like us) flock to strawberry farms. Some even making a trip to famed picking spots in the country’s mountainous regions for a taste of the sweet berries. Strawberry-picking at local farms can be enjoyed until around the consecutive Japanese holidays, referred to as “Golden Week,” in early May in mainland Japan.

My wife and I always visit a strawberry farm in Yokosuka City where our home is located or neighboring regions, such as Chiba Peninsula or Atsugi City nearby NAF Atsugi and Camp Zama to enjoy the taste of spring. While walking around in a greenhouse of a strawberry farm, I probably ate 50 or more strawberries within 30 minutes.

It is fun to pick different types of strawberries and compare their textures and flavors with each other, too. Sachinoka is a smaller, crispier berry with slightly sour taste; Akihime strawberries are larger, with a soft, springy textures and sweeter taste. Benihoppe, which is a cross-breed of the two, is large and bright red with a well-balanced taste.

Be sure to visit a strawberry farm this spring. Here is my advice - choose smaller berries that are red, as they are usually sweeter and tastier than big ones. And white berries don’t mean they weren’t ripe. They are ripe and tasty, just like red one. So, pick both red and white fruits and find a new favorite variety!

## ■ Hanamatsuri – Celebration of Buddha’s Birthday

Just like Christmas, there is also a birthday of Buddha and that usually celebrated on April 8 in Japan, and it that reminds us of being the midst of spring. You may have seen anyone pouring sweet tea onto a small statue in the garden of a temple in April.

On this day, Buddhist temples place the statue of Baby Buddha in a small shrine so visitors, using a ladle, can pour sweet tea over it.

Although not a national holiday, many Japanese observe Buddha’s birthday, including students. When I was a student many years ago, my elementary school teachers would bring our classes to a nearby temple to take part in the traditional service.

According to the legend, when Buddha was born in Nepal on April 8, 566 B.C., a lot of beautiful lotus flowers blossomed from the earth and surrounded him while celestial birds chirped beautiful songs. Perfumed blossoms rained down from heaven, and two streams of sparkling water poured from the sky to bathe him. Pouring sweet tea onto the statue of Baby Buddha symbolizes the scene.

The celebration of Buddha’s birthday is always an annual reminder for me to remember Buddha’s precious teaching that is “regard yourselves as precious ones and don’t compare with others, thus you can stay much more at ease,” in the warm air of mid spring in April.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



SETSUBUN

HANAMATSURI

File photo

Photo by katorisi, Wikipedia



HINAMATSURI

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HIGAN

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ICHIGOGARI

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RESTAURANT INFO



Photo by Sydney Seekford, byFood

## What is it?

It's a dish that comes in the form of huge blocks of tofu and daikon wheels, mysterious balls, and edible tubes. I learned the hard way. In person, with many a boiled egg sloppily dropped into hot broth. I invite you to discover the history and particulars of oden from the safety of your screen first rather than throwing you right into the soup. Again...no pun intended.

Try oden for yourself on our Osaka Food Tour!



## The history

In the 1400s, thick cuts of firm tofu were skewered, roasted/grilled, and served with a slather of miso. This came to be known as “tofu dengaku”, because the skewers resembled the wooden pogo sticks used by dengaku street performers. Dengaku was written 田楽, and oden still uses the reading of this first character, “田”. During the Edo period, dengaku was popularized and sold fresh alongside grilled dango and unagi eel at street stalls and stop-ins. At this time, dengaku expanded outside of tofu to include vegetables. In Osaka, blocks of konnyaku were prepared the same way and introduced as konnyaku dengaku.



Photo by Sydney Seekford, byFood

There are several stories tracing the origin of today's boiled oden, but the general consensus is that at some point in the late 1800s to early 1900s, various ingredients started to be boiled together in broth, leading to a delicious dashi soup and readily available street food.

For a long time, oden was limited to eating outside of the house, and many oden-ya only even catered to men who would stop by after work. In the 1950s, oden finally became a household product, thanks to economic recovery after the war. Markets could sell food that was ready to eat but difficult or time-consuming to make, like soup stock and surimi/fish cake. Thus, it was much easier to buy the ingredients and finish off the dish at home.

Oden is now available in supermarkets, pre-made at convenience stores, and easy to eat at an izakaya or specialty shops. Because it's a nimono (boiled food, like nabe or sukiyaki), it's traditionally eaten during the colder months, in the range of October to April.

## What does oden mean in Japanese?

As mentioned above, the first iteration of oden was “tofu dengaku”, named after its wooden skewers. When the dish was popularized in the Kantou region around the Edo period, the gaku was dropped. An honorific “o,” the same one we see heading words like omiyage (souvenirs), was added.

In Kansai, boiled oden was called Kantou-boil, “Kantou daki”, after it was introduced by chefs from Tokyo. The name evolved over time, but oden always refers to the ingredients boiled in broth and eaten individually rather than as a stew.

# What is Oden?

## Everything you need to know

BY SYDNEY SEEKFORD,  
BYFOOD



It's Oden!  
Oden is a wintertime favorite among Japanese people. The term oden encompasses many different ingredients and cooking styles but boils down to fish cakes and veggies in a pot with broth. No pun intended. Until I moved to Kanazawa and was thoroughly schooled, I always assumed that oden was its own word, with the emphasis on the “O” and a little den, probably officially spelled with the kanji for electricity or tradition.

The best Oden Restaurants in Tokyo



## Ingredients

Japanese oden really only has two definite elements: broth for boiling and the ingredients that get boiled! In 2021, the most popular oden choices were daikon radish, boiled eggs, chikuwa, konnyaku, and hanpen rounding out the top five. Other widely available ingredients are mochi-purses (kinchaku), beef tendon skewers, and of course, tofu.

### Konnyaku & Shirataki

Fourth on the list is an ingredient you may recognize for its recent popularization as a health food. Shirataki noodles and konnyaku are very firm jellies or “cakes” made of yam. They soak in the flavor of whatever they are prepared in, like daikon, but have a crunchy-bouncy-chewy texture likened to squid sushi or jellyfish.



Shirataki

### Beef tendon & Tsukune

Gyuu-suji, or beef tendon, and tsukune (meatballs or meatloaf on a stick) are two of the popular meat options in oden. Gyuusuji is skewered tendon boiled until soft and chewy. It is savory and delicious, not to mention pretty healthy, thanks to its high protein content!

Tsukune come in lots of flavors, just like meatballs: soy sauce, barbecue, etc. Cabbage rolls are popular too, featuring a hunk of meatloaf or other protein thickly wrapped in cabbage and cooked until the leaves soften in oden broth.

### Kinchaku

Kinchaku are purse-shaped tofu skins named after small bags used in the Edo period for carrying one's personal belongings. They are often filled with mochi that softens during boiling. Sometimes shirataki or other small ingredients come in these tasty little sachets, but mochi is by far the most common.

### Daikon

Thick rounds of daikon boiled over a long period of time are the perfect ingredient to enjoy the particular flavors of oden soup. The mild veggie softens as it soaks, making it easy to break into pieces with chopsticks and enjoy bite-by-bite. Daikon is an essential ingredient in a bowl of oden!

### Hard-boiled Eggs

Peeled hard-boiled eggs were the second most popular oden. Their preparation is similar to the ajitama found topping ramen. Pre-boiled and then soaked during the oden-making process, hard-boiled eggs take on the tasty brown hue and flavor of the broth. They are filling, nutritious, and admittedly dangerous. One wrong move and that hefty member of the oden party will splash broth all over your shirt and the table. I rarely see it served skewered, but if you ask me...it would be a good idea!



File photos



Atsuage tofu

# Oden? What you need to know

What is that...  
supposed to be?

## Hanpen & other fish cakes

Hanpen was the fifth most popular oden ingredient in 2021, and is said to be named after the chef who invented it in the Edo period (but I didn't come across any relation to it with oden at that time).

Hanpen is white and spongy surimi with a fluffy texture.

Surimi fish paste, made into cakes or mixed with other ingredients, comes in many styles. There's Kagoshima's satsuma age which is fried and has veggies mixed in and dense slices of kamaboko that are found in ramen and regional oden.

Japanese fish balls and fish cakes come in all sorts of other shapes and flavors too.



Hanpen

Surimi fish paste



## Tofu

Rounding out the bottom of the list is oden's original player: tofu! Atsuage tofu (thick-cut, fried tofu), simple boiled tofu, tofu with vegetables mixed in and fried...all kinds of tofu can be found in your typical bowl of oden. True to form, tofu absorbs the flavor of the oden broth, becoming more delicious the longer it soaks.



Chikuwa

## Chikuwa

Chikuwa are a type of Japanese fish cake that looks like a brown and white tube and have a chewy texture that falls between a chicken nugget and tofu. The unique shape makes it fun to eat, and the mild seafood flavor is well suited to oden's broth. It's a uniquely Japanese and highly recommended ingredient if you want the full "oden" experience.

## Regional cuisine

Japan is famous for its regional cuisine and the characteristic taste of each area. Thanks to a wide range of climates and natural resources across the nation, oden has adapted quite a bit to local preferences!

### ■ Tokyo style

The "original" home of oden, Tokyo-style oden relies heavily on fish cakes and fish-paste-based ingredients, and katsuo-boshi dashi broth. It has a light brown (beef-broth-looking) stock and a soy sauce-forward, sweet taste! Sometimes, oden is called Japanese fish-cake soup or fish-ball soup. This makes a lot of sense, considering the most widely available version relies on various shapes and flavors of fish cake for its unique look and taste!



Photo by Naoto Shimoda, byFood

### ■ Kyoto style

An even lighter broth than its Tokyo cousin, the broth of Kyoto oden takes its flavor from salt and kombu. Kyoto Oden's special ingredients are taro and simple, light-tasting tofu.

### ■ Nagoya style

Because it uses hacchou miso, Nagoya's version of Oden looks totally different! Its rich, deeply flavored broth soaks into roasted tofu and pork skewers.



Photo by sasazawa, Shutterstock

### ■ Shizuoka style

Using ingredients like black hanpen and a dark, rich-tasting broth makes Shizuoka Style Oden stand out. All of the ingredients in this oden are skewered. Its unique features come from the beef tendon broth and dark-fleshed fish used to make it.

### ■ Kanazawa and the North

Between the Touhoku region, Hokkaido, and Kanazawa, the Northern regions of Japan enjoy the fruits of the Japan sea. Oden from these areas features fresh seafood like crab and shellfish. My own Kanazawa reports that its particulars are the high-quality crab, pretty sea snails, and fragrant soy-sauce broth unique to our oden. Hokkaido's claim to fame is a marriage of the flavors of land and sea, while those from Aomori top their boiled oden with a slather of miso like the old days.

### ■ Other unique offerings

In Okinawa, trotters and chilled summertime oden are common offers. There's even a sweets shop in Tokyo that served dessert oden with an oolong tea base! Osaka oden uses a chicken broth soup, and there are areas known for unique add-ins like chicken wings or gyoza-style fish cakes with dumpling filling. Overall, oden has a reputation for being healthy because of its low-fat content and filling, digestion-promoting ingredients like konnyaku, daikon, and fiber-filled gobo maki. In fact, it was even served and promoted at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics.



Photo by Naoto Shimoda, byFood

## How do you eat?

The easiest way to get a steaming bowl of oden is to have it ladled out at one of Japan's convenience stores during the winter months. Simply point to what you want and watch as it gets politely arranged in a big styrofoam bowl, topped with a lid reading, "Please eat this soon!". They have free flavor packets to change the broth to your liking, like yuzu koshou for citrus brightness, shichimi for a little heat, and thick miso tare sauce. It's common to enjoy oden with Japanese karashi mustard, but be careful! Like wasabi, a little goes a long way.

In terms of physically eating the multitude of shapes you might find in an oden bowl, it really depends. Of course, chopsticks are the utensil of choice, but from there, you might un-skewer your oden and leave it to sit in the broth, carefully pinch and pull tofu into smaller pieces or just pick up the whole hunk and take bites. I will admit, eating oden is not a graceful affair. But it is delicious!

Abroad, oden-style fish cakes are easy to find in any East-Asian market. Pre-arranged oden sets with recommended ingredients and broth bases can be found in the frozen foods section of retailers like H-mart. Simply simmer the ingredients in your preferred Japanese-style konbu or dashi stock, miso soup base, etc., for a couple of hours (admittedly, I am lazy and usually cap out at about 30 minutes when making it at home...) and enjoy a healthy, unique taste of Japan!



Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

## A pun intended



Photo by Naoto Shimoda, byFood

"There's a sale? O! Den, I guess I'll have one of each!"

It's a joke, but not a bad option! Every ingredient is unique and has its own merits. Oden is one of the most fun, novel dining experiences you can enjoy in Japan, and taste-testing is exciting in itself. From ready-to-go

convenience store oden that pays homage to its street-food beginnings to specialty shops with broths boiled and concentrated for months or years, oden takes many forms and flavors. Plus, the regional variety will keep you coming back no matter where you travel! Next time you scroll through the emoji page, we hope you'll remember that little stick of goodies, "oden".

## Eating oden at Miyuki

For this article, I took a trip to one of Tabelog's (like YELP!, but only in Japan) top 5k restaurants in the whole country: Miyuki in Kanazawa! While waiting for about 45 minutes in line outside, you could hear people calling out orders for nama-beer and oden. It was only about 30 degrees out, so perfect oden weather, although I was freezing!

The owners were kind enough to teach me a little about Kanazawa's oden, its uniquely light, unsweet broth that highlights the delicate flavors of seafood, and the sources of their products. Kaga lotus root, sea salt from the Noto peninsula, and local produce come together to make a delicious meal.

Miyuki's owners didn't just celebrate their own menu and innovation, they made a point to tell me about how great all of their sources were. One of their most popular menu items is a traditional eggplant dengaku, so you can enjoy the oden of today and its origins at the shop. I got really lucky too—their beef tendon is so popular that it sold out only 2 hours after opening, but the owners gave me the last one!

You can feel the masters' pride in their tightly packed counter space, which was filled with every type of customer (the other solo-dining woman next to me had brought her anime figures and was photographing them with her oden, it was awesome.). I was very thankful that they were so open to offering recommendations and letting me photograph inside!

*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!*

Cooking  
with kids

# Homemade pop tarts

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ALLIE WHALEN,  
STRIPES JAPAN

I have learned through the past six years of homeschooling my kids that my favorite way to teach math is by cooking together. Kids get to master the basics like addition and subtraction and they also get to practice new concepts like geometry and fractions. Cooking and baking with kids also gives them life-long skills that will help them learn to take care of themselves. One of my most important tasks as a mom is to make sure that my kids know their way around a kitchen and can make healthy choices as adults.

Now for the fun part that you probably came here for - homemade pop tarts! We adapted this recipe from the “Baking Class” cookbook by Deanna F. Cook. This is my kids’ favorite cookbook when they feel like cooking something but they aren’t quite sure what to make. It has everything from sweet to savory and has the best step by step guide. “Baking Class” makes it easy for young bakers to help and it also makes it possible for older bakers to complete a project on their own!

The original recipe calls for homemade pie crust but we decided to use store-bought. You can use whichever crust you prefer, or whatever level of mess you want to clean up in the kitchen when you’re done!



### Here’s what we used for the adapted recipe:

- 2 Pillsbury pie crusts
- 1/4 - 1/2 cup natural raspberry jam
- 1/2 cup Okinawa powdered brown sugar
- 1 tablespoon coconut milk
- Rainbow sprinkles

**1** First, roll out the pie crust and cut the circle into 3 even-ish sections with a pizza cutter. Don’t worry too much about getting the shapes perfect. Sometimes it’s better to let your kids just have fun with it and let their creativity shine. As long as the pieces mainly fit together it’ll work out just fine!



**2** Next, spread the raspberry jam onto half of the squares and triangles. If you use a circle pie crust you will have an uneven number of cut crust, but it’ll work out perfect when you cut the second pie crust.



**3** After cutting out the pieces and spreading the raspberry jam on half, match up the halves with the closest-shaped piece of pie crust. Then crimp around the edges of the pop tarts to seal them. If you want, use a pizza wheel and trim the super thin pieces of pie crust so it won’t burn in the oven.



**4** When all of the beautiful and imperfect pop tarts are crimped, put them on a parchment paper lined baking sheet and bake them at 425 F for 10-12 minutes.



**5** Bake until the pop tarts are golden brown. We also used the leftover pie crust and cut out little sakura blooms to decorate the pop tarts.



**6** Spread a thin layer of icing over the top of the cooled pop tarts. We used local Okinawan brown sugar but if you use standard powdered sugar the icing will be white. The Okinawan brown sugar really took the flavor of these pop tarts to another level! It had more of a molasses taste after using the powdered Okinawan sugar.



**7** About half way through we learned that the icing dries quickly! So if you want to decorate with sprinkles, make sure you do it before the icing hardens.



These homemade pop tarts were a fun project to do together on the weekend. It wasn’t very involved and didn’t take much longer than an hour. If you really want to let the kids go crazy with decorating the pop tarts, give them free reign and let them get fancy! Whether you have kids or not, pop tarts are a blast to make! Scroll down just a little further to find the links to my favorite ingredients and baking tools that we used for this fun project.

Allie Whalen is a culinary artist and amateur photographer with a love for the outdoors. She has recently begun sharing her experiences online where she talks about natural and healthy ways to take care of your body and the world around you. She is a military spouse based in Okinawa near Camp Hansen. Allie and her family are excited make beautiful Okinawa their best move yet. There they enjoy the rugged, tranquil life on the northern parts of the island. You can find Allie’s blog at [alliemwhalen.com](http://alliemwhalen.com), where she details her travels, basic conservation techniques, home education, and leading a healthy lifestyle.



## A Very Hungry Caterpillar Sandwich

STORY AND PHOTO BY RIEKO SUZUKI, METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

(soy pulp that you can get from local supermarket at quite a reasonable price). Slicing the tomato just a little bit makes it easier to keep it on the bread. I kept the stem of the tomato to make antennae, but it will do without them.

Let's cook something easy, healthy, and fun with your kids! This tuna okara sandwich contains a good amount of soy protein and fiber from okara

Servings: 2 sandwiches  
Cooking time: 30 min (with kids)

### Ingredients

- ☺ 2 pieces of french baguette (15cm long each) or any bread you like
- ☺ 40g of canned tuna (drained) ☺ 4 tbs of raw okara
- ☺ 2 tbs of finely chopped onion ☺ 1 tbs of yogurt
- ☺ 1 tbs of mayonnaise ☺ A pinch of salt ☺ A pinch of pepper
- ☺ 1 tbs of butter ☺ 1 cucumber ☺ 2 mini tomatoes
- ☺ Small amount of hard cheese (for caterpillar's eyes)
- ☺ 4 pieces of black sesame seeds (for caterpillar's eyes)

### Directions

- 1 Combine tuna, okara, onion, yogurt, mayonnaise, salt, and pepper, and mix well.
- 2 Slice bread if needed, and toast lightly. Spread butter, then the tuna okara mixture.
- 3 Place cucumber slices and mini tomatoes on tuna okara spread.
- 4 Put small pieces of hard cheese on tomatoes, then black sesame seeds to make eyes.



# A Taste of Japan

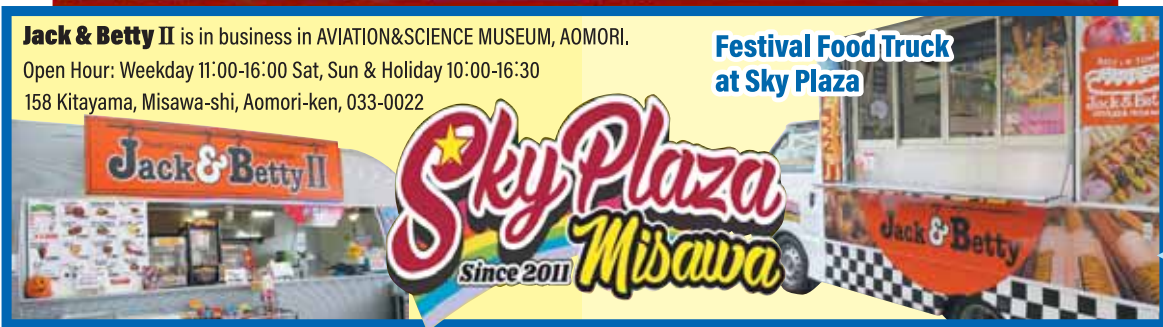


## Tasty hot dogs, creamy gelato

Jack & Betty food truck offers a variety of mouth-watering hot dogs served on local fresh baked buns that will leave your stomach grumbling for more. Our eight original homemade hotdogs are popular with the military community and all lovers of hot dogs. And, don't forget dessert! Try our creamy homemade, naturally flavored and additive-free gelato, a perfect ending to a delicious meal. Find Jack & Betty food truck at the Sky Plaza Misawa parking lot and Jack & Betty II inside the Misawa Science & Aviation Museum. Come on over for a taste of home you've been missing!

Jack & Betty II is in business in AVIATION&SCIENCE MUSEUM, AOMORI.  
Open Hour: Weekday 11:00-16:00 Sat, Sun & Holiday 10:00-16:30  
158 Kitayama, Misawa-shi, Aomori-ken, 033-0022

Festival Food Truck  
at Sky Plaza



RESTAURANT INFO



**A Steak experience crafted just for you!**

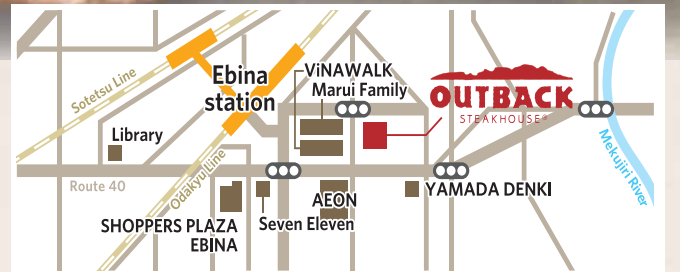
Outback Steakhouse starts fresh every day to create the flavors that our mates crave most. Our signature steaks are seasoned, hand-carved to order and grilled to perfection. Our specialty is Slow-Roasted Prime Rib offered during weekend dinnertime. But there's so much more to enjoy, including our famous Blooming Onions. So, come and enjoy our authentic American food and let us make you feel at home. Or, get your food to go and enjoy it relaxing at home. Even easier, order through Uber Eats, with delivery available from our Shinagawa Takanawa and Shibuya Ikebukuro locations.



**Ebina** Tel. 046-292-4286

**3 minutes walk** from "Ebina" station of Odakyu Line and Sotetsu Line

VINAWALK 6-Bankan 1F, 1-18-1, Chuo, Ebina-shi, Kanagawa-ken



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[www.outbacksteakhouse.co.jp/en](http://www.outbacksteakhouse.co.jp/en)

RESTAURANT INFO

**A Taste of Japan**

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- Budweiser

This ticket is valid until May 31, 2024.



**Where's the meat? It's at Hungry Tiger!**

Hey, meat lovers, you looking to get your fill? Well, head to Hungry Tiger! Hungry Tiger is a popular hamburger and steak specialty restaurant that first opened its doors in Kanagawa Prefecture in 1969 and branched out to Yokosuka 2021. Locals and foreigners alike flock to Hungry Tiger to enjoy our perfectly grilled-to-order meat and tasty side dishes. Our charcoal broiler in the center of the restaurant allows you to soak in the delicious aroma of marvelous meat. Do your taste buds a favor and tingle them with Hungry Tiger's fabulous hamburger and steaks! Check out our menu on QR code.

RESTAURANT INFO