Yokota commander again delivers goods as Santa

BY SETH ROBISON, STARS AND STRIPES
Published: December 10, 2021

YOKOTA AIR BASE – Clad in a familiar Santa hat, Col. Andrew Campbell relishes the fact that few airlift pilots have flown as many missions for Operation Christmas Drop as he has over the years.

As commander of Yokota’s 374th Airlift Wing, Campbell added two flights this year in C-130J Super Hercules airlifters to drop bundles of aid onto remote Pacific islands. He’s made about 20 flights for Operation Christmas Drop over several years.

“For the children on these little islands, the only aircraft most of them have seen is a C-130,” he told Stars and Stripes by phone recently.

SEE SANTA ON PAGE 2

Col. Andrew Campbell smiles from the cockpit of a C-130J Super Hercules on Dec. 5. Photo by Joshua Edwards, U.S. Air Force
Campbell said he gets a kick out of wearing a Santa hat and seeing airmen with America’s allies getting into the Christmas spirit. He was back at Yokota after his fifth trip to Guam for the operation.

Airlifters from Japan, South Korea and the U.S. work as one team to deliver the aid, he said. During the operation — now in its 70th year — cargo planes parachute large bundles of donated food, clothing, tools, toiletries, toys and other supplies to thousands of people living on more than 55 tiny South Pacific islands. Most of the beneficiaries live in the Federated States of Micronesia — Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei and Kosrae — and in the Republic of Palau.

The primary participants are the 36th Wing at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam; the 374th Airlift Wing out of Yokota; and the 515th Air Mobility Operations Wing from Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Hawaii, according to Pacific Air Forces.

From 2012-2015, Campbell, originally from Pennsylvania, flew Christmas Drop missions as commander of Yokota’s 36th Airlift Squadron. As base commander in 2020, he missed the event, which was scaled back with fewer drops and limited personnel to mitigate further spread of the coronavirus, he said. This year was the first time South Korea’s air force participated. Japan has been part of the operation since 2015. Both countries operate C-130H Hercules aircraft, the predecessor to the C-130J Super Hercules flown by the 374th.

Airmen from the three countries stayed at the same hotel, drove the same vehicles and planned operations from the same headquarters during the drill, Campbell said.

“It’s a real team effort,” he said.

Operation Christmas Drop began unofficially during yuletide season in 1951 when the crew of a WB-29 Superfortress bomber noticed people waving at them from Kapingamarangi in Micronesia. They parachuted a bundle of supplies to the denizens of the isolated island, and a tradition was born.

The 374th has been involved in Christmas Drop for 35 years, exactly half of the time it’s been running, Campbell said. The experience sets up the airlifters to work together in an emergency, such as responding to a typhoon, earthquake or tsunami where they must get aid to people in dire straits in a region that spans vast distances across a vast ocean, Campbell said.

“Most of the air drop training we do is on ranges with carefully surveyed drop zones,” he said. “For Christmas Drop we are flying to remote islands and analyzing winds and water currents. Our crews are making real-time decisions about how and where they want to put the bundles based on a whole host of conditions.”

Kevin Robson/Santa
Twitter: @sethrobson1
Archery is an ancient tradition in Japan. The earliest known images of people shooting bows in the country date to the Yayoi period, from 500 B.C. to 300 A.D.

An instructor teaches visitors the basics of Shihan Mato archery.

Shihan Mato is a style of Japanese archery in which the shooter unleashes arrows at a target from a seated position. The sport started in lands governed by the Shimazu clan during a time of warfare between 1467 and 1603 in modern-day Miyazaki prefecture on Japan’s southern island of Kyushu.

Archery is an ancient tradition in Japan. The earliest known images of people shooting bows in the country date to the Yayoi period, from 500 B.C. to 300 A.D.

Kyudo archery is the most common form of the sport in Japan and was the type practiced by samurai. However, peasants living in Shimazu lands were allowed to practice archery only when seated because their feudal overlords feared they might use their bows to rebel.

You can try out this ancient art at Obi Castle Town in Miyazaki’s Nichinan City for a small fee. Archers can either kneel on a mat or sit on a small platform and shoot at targets about 27 feet away. The arrows you fire are quite long – about 3 feet – and tend to veer slightly to the right of where you’re aiming. The folks at the range have added a little dot left of the target for people to shoot at.

The lightweight bows and short distance to the target make the sport something that doesn’t require much strength to compete in. It’s an activity that older people and men and women can participate in together. Early 20th-century film of Japanese people doing Shihan Mato archery shows huge crowds of people who look a little tipsy. It was common for people to drink local shochu before competing. In recent years, drinking has been banned at official contests, but some locals say the sport isn’t fun without alcohol.

If you hit the target, an employee will bang a drum; a bulls-eye gets you a small prize.

OBI CASTLE TOWN

ARCHERY

LOCATION: 9-1 Obi, Nichinan, Miyazaki 889-2535
DIRECTIONS: The archery range is next to a public parking lot and bathrooms and a short walk from Obi Castle.
HOURS: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily; last entry at 4 p.m.
PRICES: Adults, 310 yen ($2.73); children, 210 yen ($1.85) for 10 arrows.
INFORMATION: Phone: 0987-25-1905

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An instructor teaches visitors the basics of Shihan Mato archery.

DECEMBER 17 – DECEMBER 23, 2021
A STARS AND STRIPES COMMUNITY PUBLICATION

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If you are stationed in the Kanto Plain and are looking for a day trip to relax yourself in nature, I strongly recommend Jindai Botanical Park in Tokyo. The vast grounds, which include an abundance of plants and a historied temple, have the making of an easy and relaxing afternoon.

When I heard roses were in full bloom at the park, I made sure to visit it the very next day despite a drizzly weather report. I hopped on a train to Chofu Station and then a bus to the park, which took me less than a two-hour commute from my home in Chiba Prefecture. If you go there from Camp Zama or NAF Atsugi, it will be well under two hours to get to the park.

About Jindai Botanical Park
Though the park is in Chofu City, close to the heart of Tokyo metropolis, the area is still saturated with nature. The park opened to the public in 1961 and marked its 60th anniversary in October 2021. According to their website, its ground area is 489,731.10 m2 and it has 100,000 trees in about 4,800 cultivars, and about 30 gardens divided by plant species such as roses, azaleas, ume trees, and hagi or Japanese bush clovers. In 2016, its greenhouse was refurbished and about 1,300 cultivars are currently planted. Rare tropical plants and a colorful assortment of flowers can be seen there all season. At 500 yen per adult and free admission for children below elementary school age, the entrance fees are pretty reasonable.

Chrysanthemum Show
Soon after I passed through the main gate, I was greeted by an elaborate display of chrysanthemums. I was surprised to see that there are so many ways to arrange them, and I did not know that a chrysanthemum can be potted dwarfed. The exhibit runs every year from the end of October to the end of November since 1961, so make sure to catch it next year. The flower was originally introduced from China into Japan as a medical herb and for appreciation. You’ll notice chrysanthemum designs on many items including the Japanese Imperial crest and the Japanese passport, making it the second-most recognized flower besides the cherry blossom.

Rose Garden
As expected, the rain was falling during my visit. But the beauty of the roses and their fragrant scent were unaffected by the weather. Many visitors were taking photos of them in full glory. I was not the exception, and I took a lot of photos, believing the saying, “even poor marksman will hit the bull’s-eye if he shoots enough rounds.” Fortunately, I found some of them quite satisfying when I checked them at home.

Those roses were so beautiful that I spent almost one hour in the...
A stroll through Jindai Botanical Park near Camp Zama

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As the rain started to get stronger and I had already enjoyed a lot of time in the rose garden, I moved on to the greenhouse. This impressive structure is divided into six rooms each with their own specialty. One was for tropical flowers and trees; another for orchids; the third for begonias; fourth was for tropical water lilies; the fifth for Ogasawara; and the final room was for dryland.

The first room transported me into a tropical forest. Here I saw banana trees, mango trees and even carnivorous plants. The aristolochia salvadorensis, which is famous because its flower looks like Darth Vader in the Star Wars, was interesting to look at. This particular plant blooms close to the ground, so keep that in mind as it is easy to miss!

Next, I visited the orchid and begonia rooms which face each other. The signboard says that they bring and exhibit orchids from other countries, and I saw many beautiful varieties. In Dryland Room, there was a cactus plant that was about three meters high, and another spherical succulents on exhibit. In this room there was a cactus plant that was about three meters high, and another spherical succulent plant that was about one meter wide. Before this, I had only seen cactus like this on TV.

The botanical garden is full of many plants and flowers you might have never seen in person before. And it’s great year-round since every season has a different flower to enjoy. The greenhouse is also a great feature as visitors can escape the weather and elements outside and still check out the variety of plants and flowers on display.

Jindaiji Temple

Across from the garden, Jindaiji Temple is another spot to make sure to stop in. This temple was founded in 733, making it the oldest temple in Tokyo after Asakusa’s famous Sensoji Temple.

Jindaiji has a garden with many trees offering an atmosphere of solemn magnificence. Though it was raining, there were many visitors, and I saw some family groups visiting 7-3-5 festival, marking their children’s growth and longevity.

The temple is famous for warding off evil fortune and matchmaking, but it is most famous for about 20 soba or buckwheat noodle restaurants leading up to the temple gates. The land of the botanical park used to be the territory of the temple, and buckwheat used to be cultivated in the territory and lands nearby. According to one theory, the reason why this area is famous for soba is that farmers could utilize a great deal of springs there to cultivate, make and cook soba.

I didn’t visit during lunch time, so I didn’t get to try soba. Now that I know, I will definitely plan to have soba ahead.

A visit to the botanical park offers visitors the opportunity to get to know the area’s native plants as well as introduce plants and flowers from other climates. This area is one of the best spots to be one with nature near the center of the metropolis. It isn’t so far from most of the bases in the Kanto Region, so why not visit there this weekend!

katayanagi.ichiro@stripes.com

Heritage Site in 2011. You can see some rare species and endemic ones. In Dryland Room, the last one in the greenhouse, you can see cactus and other succulents on exhibit. In this room there was a cactus plant that was about three meters high, and another spherical succulent plant that was about one meter wide. Before this, I had only seen cactus like this on TV.

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Japan is home to countless seasonal events throughout the year. Among them, however, New Year holidays, called “Oshogatsu,” are still the most important. After preparing for the new year by cleaning up the house, cooking festive dishes and writing New Year’s greeting cards, most Japanese take three days to a whole week off in the beginning of January. During the time, the bustling Japanese economy practically comes to a standstill while schools, companies and shops close down. The closings bring cities to an almost eerie quietness until the great rush back home and return to work the second week of January. While you’re in Japan for the holiday season, take part in some of the New Year’s traditions. Here are a few of my favorites:

### Omisoka
Oshogatsu begins with various events on Omisoka (New Year’s Eve), and I like the day more than any of New Year’s days, as I can see people - young and old - excited and full of anticipation for a happier new year. On the day, I usually visit a large market with my wife in search of high-end festive foods, such as bluefin tuna or premium wagyu beef. The list prices of many things drastically drop, as shops look to sell off as much as possible before closing down for the holiday. The prices might start at 30 percent off, but they go up - 50, 60 and even 70 percent off or more. Trains run all night, so crowds of people are walking on every street towards shrines and temples for their New Year’s visit. The lights are on at every house in town, showing how everybody is awake in anticipation for a happy turn of the calendar. All of it together makes me extra cheerful and happy.

### Everything is new!
In The Land of Rising Sun, everything is reborn with the new year! In the early days of January, we often call any action and event by using the prefix “Hatsu-,” “-hajime,” or “-zome,” which literally mean “first time”. Hatsumode is the first visit to a temple or shrine, Kakizome is the first writing or drawing and Shigoto Hajime is the first writing or drawing and Shigoto Hajime. These three actions or events are for onenga (gift of new year’s greetings) - cakes, cookies or towels in traditional Japanese wrapping paper. We traditionally give cash in a decorated envelope to children after New Year’s greetings. The amount of money given to a child depends on the age, but it is around 1,000 yen to 10,000 yen ($8.50 - $85). So, middle or high schoolers who have many relatives can make a lot of money! While most of the money is put into the bank, some would find its way to Akhabara. I can remember buying a radio-controlled car, cassette recorder and the latest Walkman with the newfound money. I remember that my 29-year old daughter would often go clothes shopping with her otoshidama. She always purchased Fukubukuro (lucky bag), which is a mystery bag filled with unknown contents that sells for 50 percent off or more. Although she couldn’t tell what she was going to get, she said it is one of the great chances to obtain luxurious clothes or goods at a special price.

### Strolling in a vacant city
Different from the extremely cheerful New Year’s Eve, New Year’s Day is very quiet, as most people stay at home enjoying sake and food. Shops and restaurants in town are closed and you see very few cars and pedestrians passing through the streets. I feel the day is the perfect time to enjoy checking out fascinating decorations without the hustle and bustle of a normal day. While strolling, you can see unique traditional New Year’s decorations, such as Kadomatso (gate pines made of bamboo stalks and pine branches) and Shimekazari (straw rope strung with small angular strips of white paper) installed at the entrance of houses, office buildings, supermarkets or shopping malls. They are believed to purify the entrance and invite new life into the home and workplace. You may also find temporary booths installed next to convenience stores. They are for onenga (gift of new year’s greetings) - cakes, cookies or towels in traditional Japanese wrapping paper. We bring the gift when we visit relatives and friends for our New Year’s greetings. It’s really a fun experience strolling in town on New Year’s Day!

### Otoshidama and Fukubukuro
When I was a little boy, a wonderful tradition kept driving me to visit my grandparents’ home every year. It’s Otoshidama - when parents and relatives traditionally give cash in a decorated envelope to children after New Year’s greetings. The amount of money given to a child depends on the age, but it is around 1,000 yen to 10,000 yen ($8.50 - $85). So, middle or high schoolers who have many relatives can make a lot of money! While most of the money is put into the bank, some would find its way to Akhabara. I can remember buying a radio-controlled car, cassette recorder and the latest Walkman with the newfound money. I remember that my 29-year old daughter would often go clothes shopping with her otoshidama. She always purchased Fukubukuro (lucky bag), which is a mystery bag filled with unknown contents that sells for 50 percent off or more. Although she couldn’t tell what she was going to get, she said it is one of the great chances to obtain luxurious clothes or goods at a special price.

### Otoso and Kagamiwari
Oshogatsu means the time to eat, drink and sleep for many Japanese. And sake is important in celebrating the New Year’s holiday! Celebrations begin by sipping Otoso (New Year’s spiced sake). It is made of sake and various herbs and spices. We make it by dipping a small paper bag of spices and herbs, such as bark, pepper and bellflower, into a sake bottle for a couple of days. The herb-flavored sake is thought to be effective in preventing illness, expelling evil influences and inviting good health for the coming year. In public facilities, various firms and local communities, New Year’s is traditionally celebrated with Kagamiwari (barrel opening ceremony). During the ceremony, participants open the sake barrel with a wooden hammer before distributing the drink in hundreds of square wooden cups called masu. After everyone has received their drink, they shout “kampai” (cheers) and take a sip. With ceaseless Shinnenkai (New Year’s parties), this is the time to enjoy sake with relatives, families and friends.

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**Shinagawa Shrine (Tokyo)**

Shinagawa Shrine is a majestic Shinto shrine located in this old town. The shrine is known as a strong “power spot” - a location that many believe gives you power and luck.

Since Shogun Minamoto Yoritomo founded it in the 12th century, numerous feudal lords visited and worshipped here as they sought safety of sea travel and victory in battle.

High above on long gray stone stairs, you will find a traditional black shrine hall with two torii gates. Go through the torii gates and make a wish in front of the shrine hall by casting a coin, making two bows, two hand-claps and again, one deep bow.

**Location:** 3-15 Kita Shinagawa, Shinagawa-ku, Tokyo
**URL:** shinagawajinja.tokyo/
**Tel:** 03-3474-5575

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**Hikawa Shrine (Omiya, Saitama Pref.)**

Hikawa Shrine in Omiya Town is known as one of the most prestigious Shinto shrines in the Kanto Plain and as such, the town is fittingly and literally named “large shrine.”

According to legend, it was founded more than 2,000 years ago, and has been respected by shoguns and lords throughout its history. Beautiful architecture, torii gates and gardens give this shrine a kind of majestic, yet mysterious atmosphere.

More than a mile long, the wide approach to the shrine is lined by impressively large elm trees, some that are more than 2,400 years old. Omiya Park, the first modern park of Saitama Prefecture, is located behind the shrine and features a pond, zoo and traditional garden with various flowers.

**Location:** 1-407 Takahanacho, Omiya-ku, Saitama City, Saitama Prefecture
**URL:** musashiichinomiya-hikawa.or.jp/
**Tel:** 048-641-0137

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The Land of the Rising Sun is home to numerous Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples. It may be surprising to know these outnumber the 56,884 convenience stores, which seem to be everywhere you turn. In total, Japan boasts a whopping 81,000 shrines and 77,000 temples, according to the National Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Aside from the religious function of many of these unique locations, tourists flock to them for the colorful facades, towers and gates fit for great photo ops and history.

Kyoto, Nara, Kamakura and Tokyo are host to thousands of shrines and temples. You may have already visited the famous Kiyomizu-dera Temple and the Golden Pavilion in Kyoto, Tsurugaoka Hachimangu Shrine and Daibutsu in Kamakura and Sensoji Temple and Meiji-jingu Shrine in Tokyo on sightseeing trips. Since these are definitely must-sees for tourists, the crowds can get a little overwhelming for locations meant to bring a sense of calm.

So, considering the other thousands of shrines and temples not mentioned above, below are a few of my favorite spots where you can feel the zen and beat the crowds. Visit one or more. I’m sure you will feel purified in the calm and solemn atmosphere of these temples and shrines. The New Year is a great time to visit these locations as it is tradition in Japan to wish for luck for the coming year.

--Takiguchi, takahiro@stripes.com
Zama Shrine
(Zama, Kanagawa Pref.)

Located behind the Camp Zama, Zama Shrine is a majestic Shinto Shrine. With the traditional main building, well-arranged shrine garden with 300-year-old shii tree (Japanese chinquapin), old stone stairway approach and grey large torii gates, the shrine is filled with power and spirit.

The shii tree has been considered a tree of God, and the locals believe that touching the tree helps you recover from disease. A cat had another saying, “May my deceased dog be accepted in heaven.”

The origin of Zama Shrine dates back to 539-571, when an epidemic prevailed around the region. An old man in white attire told the locals to use spring water in the forest where the shrine is currently located. Sooner after the locals started using the water, the epidemic completely stopped. To commemorate this amazing event, the locals built the shrine, according to legend.

The legendary spring water is still available near the shrine’s stairway and you can bring some of it back home. I always do. The water is very clear and sweet, and perfect for making coffee or tea.

Zama itself, blessed with plenty of water. There are 15 springs located within the city, which provide 85 percent of the city’s water supply, according to Zama City.

Zama Shrine
Hours: 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.
Location: 1-3437 Zama, Zama City, Kanagawa Pref.
URL: www.zamajinja.or.jp/
Tel: 046-251-0245

Shrine

Sojiji Temple
(Tsurumi, Kanagawa Pref.)

Sojiji Temple is one of the largest and busiest temples of Zen Buddhism in Japan. Each of its 26 temple buildings, such as Buddha Hall, the bell tower and main hall has a unique majestic look with traditional tile roofs and elaborate black wooden walls. The buildings are old, but very clean and well-maintained. Corridors in the buildings were polished to look like glass, which is apparently because monks polish all of the corridors thoroughly twice each day.

There is an abbot (Master of Zen), or Zenji, along with 200 monks and novices that practice at the temple.

Sojiji Temple
Location: 2-1-1 Tsurumi, Tsurumi-ku, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Pref.
Tel: 045-581-6021

Temple

Risshakuji
(Yamadera, Yamagata Pref.)

Risshakuji, aka Yamadera (literally, mountain temple), is a large scenic temple located on Mount Hoju outside of Yamagata City.

I visited this temple high above 1,000 stairs in 2016 with my wife. The temple, built over a 1,000 years ago, is known for a visit from the famous poet Matsuo Basho, who composed one of his most popular haiku poems about the temple.

To encourage us during the long climb up the temple’s many stairs, a staffer told us that making a wish and concentrating on it as we climbed would guarantee it being granted when we reached the top.

The hike up was fun and there are many attractions to see along the way, including a stone sculpture on a cliff wall and a lot of stone towers and monuments. Each attraction provided us a chance to stop and catch our breath. After about 40 minutes of hiking up the steep stone stairs, we finally reached the main hall and Gojado, the observation hall. The panoramic view from the hall over the cliff onto the pastoral valley was simply fantastic and breathtaking. I felt as if time had suddenly stopped as I looked down into the valley filled with rice fields in a golden state as harvest approached, along with villages of traditional black wooden houses with grey tile roofs surrounded by beautiful green steep mountains. The view, I believe, has not changed much since the ancient ages.

After climbing down from the temple, we walked along the street packed with shops selling local delicacies, treats and crafts, including naturally dyed silks, wooden toys, iron and pottery pieces.

Risshakuji (Yamadera)
Hours: 8:30 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Location: 2456-1 Yamadera, Yamagata City, Yamagata Prefecture (5-minute walk from JR Yamadera Station or 20-minute drive from center of Yamagata City)
Admission: 300 yen ($3)
URL: rissyakuji.jp/
Tel: 023-695-2843

Shomyoji Temple
(Kanazawa, Kanagawa Pref.)

Shomyoji Temple’s red wooden gate is a pleasant site at the entrance of the 750-year-old grounds.

Two 10-feet-tall, fierce-looking wooden statues of guardian gods on each side of the inner gate scowl as people pass through. The signboard says the sculptures were created and installed in 1323 and nominated as an important cultural asset of Kanagawa Prefecture.

The temple is host to a large pond and peaceful Jodo-style garden. The temple garden reflects the paradise of Buddhism, according to the temple’s documentation.

Two red bridges over the pond and a flat island between the bridges are considered to represent the time (past-present-future). The first arched bridge represents tough and tumultuous experience in the past, while the second flat bridge represents the peaceful state of mind in the future. And the flat island between the two bridges represents right now, inviting us to learn the teachings of Buddha.

The peaceful and quiet setting of the old wooden temple buildings in the garden seem to reflect the peaceful state of mind. Shomyoji Temple offers a calm atmosphere fit for a pleasant stroll.

Shomyoji Temple
Hours: 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.
Location: 212-1 Kanazawa-cho, Kanazawa-ku, Yokohama City, Kanagawa Pref.
URL: https://yokohama-kanazawakanko.com/spot/institution/tera/tera001/
Tel: 045-701-9573
Baked Salmon Teriyaki

Simplicity is at the heart of this tasty teriyaki dish. Salmon is super healthy and easy to cook, so this one's perfect for when you want to whip up something fast and still count the calories.

Traditionally, “teriyaki” refers to broiling or grilling food in a sweet soy sauce marinade, but the sauce itself is easy to make and a popular lunch in Japan. So popular, in fact, that it's also made its way to the west! Here's how Hana from the US makes her own beef gyudon.

Ingredients
- 150ml water
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- ½ tbsp sugar
- ¼ tsp salt
- 30ml white wine
- 170g rice
- 200ml water

Recipe
1. Marinate the sliced beef with honey and ginger paste, then leave it for around 10 minutes.
2. Pour water, soy sauce, white wine, sugar, and salt into saucer and simmer over medium heat.
3. Add sliced onion and marinated beef, stirring until beef has cooked through and liquid has reduced to a broth.
4. Ensure all the pieces of sliced beef are cooked evenly, then add salt and sugar according to taste.

- Recipe by Hana, United States

Beef Gyudon

Gyudon is a dish of thinly-cut beef strips, cooked in a sweet mixture of soy sauce, mirin, and served on top of white rice. There are different things which can be made in 30 minutes or less. You don’t need to be a master chef to pull off any of these recipes off!

Ingredients
- 450g salmon (de-skinned and cut into two fillets)
- 100g white rice
- ⅛ cup mirin (sweet Japanese cooking wine)

Recipe
1. Combine the ingredients for the sauce (mirin, soy sauce, water, sugar) together in a large bowl.
2. Place your two salmon fillets in the bowl and marinate for 15 minutes, making sure both sides get covered with sauce.
3. In the meantime, preheat your oven to 200°C and prepare a baking sheet by lining it with aluminum foil.
4. After 15 minutes, remove your salmon from the sauce, but keep the leftover sauce to the side. We will be reducing this to a thicker sauce to spoon over our salmon at the end.
5. Place your salmon fillets on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 12-14 minutes, flipping halfway.
6. While your salmon is baking, heat up a small pot over medium-low heat with a side of rice
7. After your salmon is done baking, spoon the sauce over each fillet and serve with a side of rice.

- Recipe by Kevin, United States

Ochazuke

Ochazuke isn’t that well-known of a dish outside of Japan, despite it being very simple to make and packed full of Japanese goodness. It’s a staple of the Japanese diet because it’s light, easy to prepare and full of nutrients. “Ocha” refers to tea, and “zuke” refers to submerging or soaking. So, quite simply, ochazuke is white rice drizzled with either hot water, green tea or dashi (a Japanese soup stock or broth). Pieces of salmon are then added to the top for a rich contrasting flavor.

Samantha has recreated this traditional Japanese classic at home in the Netherlands. She’s made the dashi version for that authentic Japanese touch, and she’s added a little twist with wasabi and tenkasu at the end. Here’s how she does it.

Recipe
1. Bake the salted salmon fillet (shiojake) at 200°C for degrees for 25 minutes. If you’re using regular salmon, season the salmon with salt and set aside for 10 minutes before baking. When it’s cooked, remove the skin and bones and break up the salmon flesh into flakes. Set aside.
2. Combine all the ingredients in a small saucepan and bring it to a boil. Pour the soup into a small teapot.
3. Now serve the cooked rice in the serving bowl. Place the shredded salmon and sprinkle the rice cracker, nori, and sesame seeds on top.
4. Pour the dashi until it covers half of the rice and top with kameya wasabi furikake and tenkasu.

- Recipe by Samantha, Netherlands

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5. Place your salmon fillets on the prepared baking sheet. Bake for 12-14 minutes, flipping halfway.
6. While your salmon is baking, heat up a small pot over medium-low heat and pour the remainder of the sauce in. Slowly simmer the sauce until it thickens up. If the sauce bubbles when you tilt the pot, your sauce is ready! Remove from heat and wait for your salmon to finish baking.
7. After your salmon is done baking, spoon the sauce over each fillet and serve with a side of rice.

- Recipe by Kevin, United States

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- Recipe by Samantha, Netherlands
We’ve already looked at a salmon teriyaki, but cooking the chicken version can involve some quite different steps, and tastes drastically different! So how do we make it?

Just a quick note, some people like to marinate the chicken in this dish for a few hours before cooking it, so this one might need a little prepping beforehand. However, most Japanese people don’t marinate it at all! So you can choose whether to marinate it for as long or as short as you like.

We’ve touched on the meaning of teriyaki, but the word itself comes from ‘teri’ meaning shiny or glazed, and ‘yaki’ meaning fried, and it combines to create a much-loved dish consisting of meat cooked in soy sauce or rice wine. If you want to finish the dish off with a side, it works amazingly well with white rice, noodles or a side salad.

Garnishes can be adjusted to suit your tastes, but Xacher from the UK has finished his teriyaki glazed pan chicken off with toasted sesame seeds to add a little crisp to the dish. Here’s his recipe:

**Ingredients**

- 1 tsp Sesame seed oil/tahini oil
- 2 tsp olive oil
- 50g brown sugar
- 120ml soy sauce
- 150ml mirin
- 50ml sake
- Toasted sesame seeds (for thick sauce)
- 2 boneless chicken thighs, skin on
- 2 teaspoons olive oil
- 4 tbsp lemon juice
- 2 tbsp lemongrass powder
- 2 tbsp brown sugar/molasses
- 10g curry powder
- 10g fresh coriander
- Salt and pepper
- 1 sprig rosemary
- 1 sprig thyme

**Recipe**

1. Pre-heat your pan to high and add in your oil, garlic and ginger. Cook until golden brown and burning, about 2 minutes.
2. Add in your brown sugar until it starts to caramelize, about 30 seconds.
3. Add in your soy sauce, mirin, and sake. Add in your toasted sesame seeds for a thicker sauce, opt out for a runnier sauce. (If you can’t buy toasted sesame seeds, just roast them normal sesame seeds in the oven for about 10 minutes on 200°C)
4. For a runny smooth sauce, cook for about 5 minutes and stir constantly. Remove from heat when done. For a thick sauce, cook until stiff, about 8 or 10 minutes.
5. Set sauce aside. (Recommendation: microwave it for about a minute before pouring to keep it hot at max power).
6. Chop up your chicken thighs into cubes/smaller chunks.
7. Rub your chicken thighs with olive oil and season all ingredients.
8. Mix and marinate with chicken as desired.
9. Pre-heat pan to medium high, add in oil and sear for about 6 to 8 minutes on each side.
10. While searing, add in rosemary and thyme sprigs. Baste chicken until it turns dark golden brown.
11. Place your chicken on a plate and glaze your teriyaki sauce over it. Garnish with sesame seeds and serve with fried rice/white rice.

- Recipe by Xacher, UK
MY FAVES

Local foods of cities hosting U.S. bases

Visting a new place for the first time can make for some exciting discoveries. One of these is especially true when trying the local food for the first time. New flavors and local delicacies always make our travel more memorable and allow us to learn more about the history, culture and traditions through food.

In Japan, every major city, region, and prefecture has its own locally sourced dish and produce, so do some research before heading out. Enjoying the local offerings is a great way to enhance your trip and try something new.

Here are some of my favorite local foods available in or near the city of U.S. military bases. Try sample one or more, and you will see what I mean!

**Barayaki (Misawa)**

Barayaki, which is grilled beef rib, is known as one of Misawa’s soul foods. This dish consists of well-seasoned meat and onions in a soy-sauce-based broth grilled in a large iron pan. The tender, sizzling beef will make you feel warm and happy in Misawa’s chilly temperatures, especially in the winter.

You can find this dish at many restaurants in Misawa, but you don’t have to travel far from Misawa Air Base’s main gate to find a good spot serving up delicious barayaki. Check out Akanoren, only a five-minute walk from the gate. Akanoren’s red-illuminated sign invites visitors into its cozy and retro interior. When the barayaki arrived at the table in a sizzling pan, the dish’s smell and size were overwhelming, but made me hungry. I enjoyed the tender, flavorful beef with accompanying rice and miso soup.

**Okonomiyaki (Hiroshima)**

In Hiroshima, more than 2,000 restaurants are dedicated to or include okonomiyaki in their menus. This dish is so popular that other cities around the country also have their own versions. Interestingly, there are two different styles in cooking this popular dish—the Osaka and Hiroshima styles. In general, while the Osaka one applies more mayo and sweet sauce to the dish, the Hiroshima style uses more ingredients such as meat, seafood, and cheese.

You can enjoy this savory pancake-like specialty in the authentic Hiroshima-style at Okonomi Mura (Okonomiyaki Village) near Hachobori Station. The building houses 25 different okonomiyaki restaurants, but it also has other Japanese favorite eateries like Yamachan, Sarashina and Hashso.

In Nagasaki Pref., home to Sasebo Naval Base, the champ is the franchise that reigns king. The dish typically features chewy noodles, chopped fried pork, seafood and vegetables, but the ingredients for the noodle dish differ depending on whether you’re ordering in Nagasaki, Sasebo, Shimabara, or Hirodo.

I like the champ in Hirodo City because it has incredibly thick and chewy noodles served in a tasty pork-bone broth with fish, squid, clam and local vegetables.

Check out Ichiraku Shokudo, an 85-year-old restaurant near the center of Hirodo City, for some champ at a reasonable price. Although my recommendation is its signature noodle dish, Hirodo Champoon, for 710 yen (about $6.50), you can enjoy another popular local food, “ago” (flying fish), in the Ago Champoon for 880 yen.

**Yokosuka Navy Curry (Yokosuka)**

Yokosuka is primarily a naval city, and as such, its delicacy is Yokosuka Kaigun (Navy) Curry. This Japane-se-style curry is thicker, slightly oilier, and features ample use of meat and vegetables. Did you know that this special curry was created in 1908 by the Imperial Navy stationed at Yokosuka?

Modeled after British Navy’s curry stew, the Kaigun Curry was adjusted to a Japanese taste and served with rice. The dish soon became very popular among sailors and throughout the nation, eventually leading to Yokosuka declaring itself the “Town of Curry” in 1999. Today, more than 40 restaurants in the city serve the navy curry dish.

Dobuita Shokudo Perry is one of the most recognized restaurants serving the authentic navy curry. The restaurant follows the original recipe by stewing quality chicken and local vegetables for more than five hours. They then add various spices to give it a nice kick. Sample the Yokosuka Kaigun Curry Plate set for 1,000 yen ($9). The set is served the same way it was originally served on ships—with a salad and milk on the side. And for an added bonus, the set also includes fried rice and fried chicken.

**Location:** 2-19 Honcho, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref.
**Hours:** Mon. – Fri., 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
**Tel:** 046-807-5441

**Okonomiyaki (Hiroshima)**

Hiroshima is an hour drive from MCAS Iwakuni and is also the birthplace of okonomiyaki. This savory pan-cake dish consists of batter, cabbage, noodles and varying ingredients such as meat, seafood and cheese.

You can find this dish at many restaurants in Misawa, but you don’t have to travel far from Misawa Air Base’s main gate to find a good spot serving up delicious barayaki. Check out Akanoren, only a five-minute walk from the gate. Akanoren’s red-illuminated sign invites visitors into its cozy and retro interior. When the barayaki arrived at the table in a sizzling pan, the dish’s smell and size were overwhelming, but made me hungry. I enjoyed the tender, flavorful beef with accompanying rice and miso soup.

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**Okonomi Mura (Okonomiyaki Village)**

**Location:** 5-13 Shintench, Naka-ku, Hiroshima City, Hiroshima Pref. (3-minute walk from Hachobori Station of Hiroshima Dentetsu line)
**Tel:** 082-241-2210 (Japanese)

**Champ (Nagasaki)**

In Nagasaki Pref., home to Sasebo Naval Base, champ reigns king. The dish typically features chewy noodles, chopped fried pork, seafood and vegetables, but the ingredients for the noodle dish differ depending on whether you’re ordering in Sasebo, Nagasaki, Shimabara, or Hirodo.

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**Ichiraku Shokudo**

**Location:** 477 Kikidokido Hirodo Nagasaki Pref.
**Hours:** Tues. – Sun., 11 a.m. – 9 p.m., 6 – 9 p.m.
**Tel:** 0950-22-2269 (Japanese)

**Dobuita Shokudo Perry**

**Location:** 2-19 Honcho, Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref.
**Hours:** Mon. – Fri., 11 a.m. – 5 p.m.
**Tel:** 046-807-5441

**Bread Garden**

**Location:** 1046 Fussa, Fussa City, Tokyo
**Hours:** Mon. – Sat., 10:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.
**Tel:** 042-553-7234 (Japanese)

**BARAYAKI**

**Fussadog**

**NAVY CURRY**

**OKONOMIYAKI**

**CHAMPION**

**FUSSADOG**

**MY FAVES**

**VENICE**

**MY FAVES**

**MY FAVES**
The world-renowned floating torii on Miyajima near Hiroshima is closed for restoration, but the island boasts one of the world’s best spots for grilled eel, and it is still open.

The Fujitaya restaurant serves only one set meal, anago-meshi, which is conger eel on a bed of rice with three small side dishes. Popular side dish options include pickled vegetables and liver.

This longstanding restaurant does this one dish so well, it received a one-star rating from the Michelin Guide in 2018. The prestigious rating doesn’t mean you’ll break the bank for a meal, however. The main course runs about $22, with $7 for each side dish.

Other restaurants serve up their versions of conger eel, but Fujitaya stands apart. Its ingredients are sourced at the local fish market every morning, made to order and served up hot and fresh.

Conger eel has a savory flavor that melts in your mouth. The eel is deboned and simmered, and its head and spine make the stock that is seasoned with soy sauce and used to cook the accompanying rice.

The eel is filleted and grilled with a soy-based sauce. Expect a short wait while your order is prepared.

During peak tourist season on the island, it’s not unusual to find a long line out the door at Fujitaya. It’s open from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday through Tuesday, but the restaurant will close for the day once it runs out of food.

An English menu is available, but the staff does not speak much of the language. Ample seating is available at the bar, at tables and chairs or on traditional Japanese seating.

Fujitaya near Hiroshima serves only one set meal, anago-meshi, which is conger eel on a bed of rice with three small side dishes.
Holiday talk in Japan
During the holiday season in Japan, you will see KCs filled on Christmas Day, while on New Year’s Eve, you will hear bells from temples heralding the arrival of the new year. Here are some useful Japanese words and phrases you can use during the holiday season.

“How are you planning to spend Christmas day?”
= Kutsimusu wo dō sugoshimusu ka?
  • Kutsimusu = Christmas day
  • dō = how
  • sugoshimusu = spend

“I will go to Kentucky Fried Chicken with my girlfriend.”
= Kanojo toi kentakkii ni ikimasu.
  • kanojo = girlfriend
  • toi = with
  • kentakkii = KFC
  • ikimasu = will go

Pizza, pizza!
Pizza is a universal treat that’s loved the world around; but you still have to use the local language to place an order. Next time, try using some of these words and phrases.

“Please give me a pizza.”
= Pizza wo kudasai.

“Would you please give me one large [one]?”
= Eru saizu wo ichi-mai onegai

Greet gods of the Land of Rising Sun!
In Japan, there are thousands of Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples located throughout the nation, and we Japanese often visit them to purify ourselves on various occasions, such as birth, marriage, traditional 7-5-3 celebrations or during Oshogatsu New Year Days. Why not drop by a shrine or other power spots on your one-day trip to Oshogatsu New Year Days. Why not drop by a shrine, temple or other power spots on your one-day trip to

Today’s Japanese phrase:

“Please give me a pizza.”
= Pizza wo kudasai.

“Would you please give me one large [one]?”
= Eru saizu wo ichi-mai onegai

“Have a wonderful holiday season!”
= Sutekina holidee wo!

Pizza is a universal treat that’s loved the world around; but you still have to use the local language to place an order. Next time, try using some of these words and phrases.

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Today’s Japanese phrase:

“I came here to..”
= kareshi = boyfriend

Do you accept credit card payments?
In Japan, some local stores and restaurants only accept cash. When you shop or eat out locally, it would be a good idea to check by asking,

“Can I use a credit card? / Do you accept credit cards?”
= Kurejitto kaado wa tsukae masuka?

Let’s eat
In Japan during mealtime, we often say “itadaki masu,” which literally means: “I have this meal with gratitude.” It’s a phrase to thank those who cook the meal, and also a Japanese way of saying “let’s eat.”

“Thank you for the meal.”
= Itadakimasu

Check, please!
Many restaurants in Japan, once your food is brought to the table, you will likely receive a check even if you don’t ask for one. However, if you are visiting an izakaya and bars, you may need to ask for one when you are ready to pay.

“Could you repeat that?”
= Mou ichi-mai onegai

Telephone talk
What would you say when you wrap up a telephone call or in-person conversation with your friend?
Be sure to say “Okowo Tsukete,” which means “take care of yourself!” before you hang up your phone or leave your friends. This is a nice, heart-warming expression that shows your considerations to your friend’s health and safety.

Today’s Japanese phrase:

“Take care of yourself.”
= Okowo Tsukete.
Strikes Sports Trivia

Despite being the alma mater of the great Jim Brown, it might surprise some that Syracuse University is tied for having the fourth most NFL Hall of Famers. The top of that list is led by some less-surprising schools. Can you name the school that tops all others with 13 former players enshrined in the NFL Hall of Fame?

Answer

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The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 Eat like a bird
2 Peter I, for one
3 Take off
4 Privy to
5 Wi-Ski wiggle
6 Delve into
7 Greedy cry
8 Ardent
9 Bow coating
10 Agree to, as terms
11 List of passengers
12 Those with the vote
13 One of the Cartwrights
14 Runner’s sore spot
15 Room for church garmens
16 Storage spot
17 Blood classification
18 Loafer, e.g.
19 Put a shine on
20 Elector loser
21 Make revisions
22 Brewski topper
23 Like an attentive dog’s ears
24 Pull out
25 Morgan’s “Seven” co-star
26 “Caught your” concern
27 One’s own classification
28 7-Up alternative
29 Fleets of ships
30 Make possible
31 Pale purple bird
32 Kent State’s state
33 Carpenter’s need
34 Loafer’s ears
35 Wax eloquent
36 Deck feature
37 Study all night
38 Surrounded by 
39 Male protagonist

DOWNS

1 Reebok rival
2 Grand tale
3 Like some circles
4 Prepare to be knighted
5 Roofing straw
6 Kia Telluride, e.g.
7 Divorce demand
8 Speeder’s bane
9 7-Up alternative
10 One of seven
11 Give the slip to
12 Hieroglyphics bird
13 Party setup
14 21 Joe of “Goodfellas”
15 Belly button
16 Church offering
17 Innocent ones
18 Piano exercise
19 Well-worn
20 Repulsive insect
21 Glossy gal
22 Without a will
23 Print with a mission
24 Beach souvenir
25 Four-door car
26 Isaac’s father
27 Frost remover
28 Long-standing
29 Plant life
30 One of the Muppets
31 Junior’s junior

Answers to Previous Crossword:

The land that Tokyo Station currently sits on was once part of the Edo Bay. The center of Tokyo used to be called Edo, and most of the district was sea, ponds and badly marshy. In the late 16th century, Ieyasu Tokugawa began the process of making the land useable. Ieyasu and his successors cultivated the district and promoted various industries, developing it into one of the world’s largest cities in just two centuries.

I’m thirsty.

Nodoga kawate imasu.
Wonderful Christmas Season at COASKA with your favorite Japanese, Chinese & Western Foods and Sweets!

COASKA Bayside Stores

Winter Fair

SKA-1 Dining
- Kamakura Pasta (Fresh Pasta Specialty)
- Marugen Ramen (Dinner Shop)
- OOTOYA (Japanese Restaurant)
- Shabu Shabu Gyuta (All you can eat Shabu Shabu & Sukiyaki)
- Tonkatsu Wako (Cutlet specialty)
- TSUKIHI-SHIKUDI GEN-CHAN (Japanese Seafood Cuisine)

SKA-1 Kitchen
- AMARA (Curry & Rice)
- Dipper Dan (Eiscreen)
- Kentucky Fried Chicken (Dried Chicken)
- Kooshin Farm (Street Dining)
- McDonald's (Burger Restaurant)
- Mister Donut (Donut & Donut sundae)
- OHITSUHON HIROKICHI (Japanese Cuisine)
- Ringer Hut (Cafeteria Champion)
- Taploca Sweets Bull Pulu (Tapioca Drink)

Restaurant & Cafe
- Gyu-ku (Yakiniku Restaurant)
- Starbucks Coffee (Speciality Coffee Store)
- SUSHIRO (Conveyor Belt Sushi)
- TULLY'S COFFEE (Speciality Coffee)
- Yosoku Gourmet Kantai (Cupcake-Hamburger-cheese Cake)

SKA-1 Food Sales
- Aeon Style (D utter Marinit)
- GODIVA (Chocolate)
- Nagai Suisan (Fresh Fish and Shellfish)
- WAKU WAKU HIROBA (Sugal Direct Sales Open space)
- Yosoku Kooshin (Vegetable, fruits and vegetables, side dishes)

Newly opened
- Beef tongue dish SANDAIMI BUNJI
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Now that we’ve taken care of the happiness portion of the New Year food courses with burdock, it’s time to summon money with kumquats!

In Japan, this tiny citrus fruit is called kinkan and forms part of the Osechi Ryori because the name in kanji is “金桔” (jin jié), meaning “wealth” and “good luck”, according to the Japan Weather Association. Besides the prospect of more wealth, kumquats are delicious and delicately sweet! They can be eaten raw but for the New Year, we have it in kanroni, which stews kumquat with sugar and mirin sweet cooking rice wine. The cooking process brings up a distinct sweetness and fruitiness with a marmalade-like consistency.

Commonly called kinkan-no-kanroni, stewed kinkan is a regular menu item for the New Year’s meal. Try the recipe below, adapted from the Japanese Consumers’ Co-operative Union. With just a few simple steps to follow, this would arguably be one of the easiest Japanese New Year foods that you can make on your own.

The only daunting part of the entire recipe is removing the seeds. However, for 30 pieces of kinkan, I was able to complete this task in 10 minutes by making small slits on the delicate skin and using a toothpick to pry out the seeds with a little patience.

From start to finish, it took me about 90 minutes. Though it is a bit longer than I usually spend on cooking, the end result was totally worth it. The heavenly scent of the kinkan, sugar and mirin will entice you to give it a little taste, but just be careful not to burn yourself.

Another good pointer to know is that this can be cooked in a big batch and stored much like you would marmalade or jelly. Refrigerated in a jar or airtight container, the kanroni will last about six months to a year.

So, add this sweet dish to your New Year’s lineup and see if it brings you good luck and wealth in 2022!

INGREDIENTS
- Kinkan (kumquat) 30 pieces
- Water 450cc
- Mirin (sweet cooking rice wine) 22.5cc
- Sugar 135cc
- Soy sauce 67cc
- Liquor (cooking sake) 100 cc
- Carrot 450g

RECIPE
1. Rinse and wash off kinkan with water.
2. Put kinkan in a deep pot with water and place over high heat. (Make sure there’s enough water to cover the kinkan. Stop heating just before the water is boiled.)
3. Drain water and take kinkan out of the pan. Let them cool.
4. Once cool enough to hold, remove the seeds. Do this by making about six vertical slits on each kinkan with a kitchen knife and using a toothpick to bring the seeds up and out. Be sure to remove stem ends as well.
5. Heat 450cc of water, 135cc of sugar, 22.5cc of Mirin (sweet cooking rice wine) in a deep pan on a medium-high heat for a few minutes.
6. Add kinkan to the mixture and slowly heat it on a medium heat, until the tangerine starts to glister and soften.
7. Serve on small plates cold (you can also enjoy this dish warm if you let it cool a little after cooking). Bon appetit and good luck in the New Year!

Kinkan-no-kanroni (stewed kumquat)

*For a family of four, this recipe should be enough for a few servings per person.

Try gobou-no-nikumaki for a lucky new year

In Japan, every New Year we eat a variety of foods which form part of the Osechi Ryori (or New Year’s foods) meant to bring us good luck, health and happiness. Gobou-no-nikumaki, a rolled slice of beef with burdock root at the center, is one of the popular dishes in the Osechi lineup.

Burdock is a reminder of the grain harvest because it’s black and elongated appearing resembles the Japanese crane, which comes flying when a rich harvest is gathered. The rolled dish includes burdock because it is eaten with the hope that happiness will last long like burdock grows.

Depending on where you’re celebrating the New Year burdock and meat rolls have a different name. On the mainland, it’s called yawatamaki, after Yawata City in Kyoto Pref. On Okinawa, not only is its name different – it’s called Gouboumaki — but, so is its secondary ingredient – pork instead beef.

Just recently, I had a chance to try the Okinawan version following a recipe I found in an old cookbook at home. I happened to also have carrots on hand, so I modified the recipe to include them. The recipe was simple enough even for a first-timer like me. The only challenge was peeling the skins of the burdock roots, but once the prep work was done, the rest of the cooking went smoothly.

As the rolls simmered in a broth of sugar, cooking sake and mirin sweet cooking rice wine, the delicious scent spread throughout the kitchen. I couldn’t resist giving one a try before they were fully cooked. One bite and the savory juices exploded over my taste buds. The well-seasoned and tender ingredients were delectable — no wonder this is also a popular item for kids’ bento boxes year-round.

This is a great option or those eating into Japanese cuisine, plus the veggies and pork or beef are a good source of nutrients.

Cornbread, peas, soba, mochi and beans are also popular ingredients used in New Year’s dishes. But, make sure to include some burdock, carrots and pork or beef for good health and good luck in 2022!

INGREDIENTS
- Sliced (or) Pork loin 600g
- Burdock 220g
- Carrot 450g
- Water 600cc
- Sugar 100 cc
- Liquor (cooking sake) 100 cc
- Soy sauce 67cc
- Salt (a little)
- Mirin (sweet cooking rice wine) (a little)

RECIPE
1. Rinse and wash off burdock, then peel skins. Rinse carrots.
2. Slice burdock and carrots into small pieces. Make sure each piece will match the width of sliced pork.
3. Boil sliced burdock and carrot in hot water for about 3 minutes each.
4. Slice burdock and carrot with one (or two) slice of pork loin. (You can use a toothpick to secure the rolls if necessary)
5. Place the rolls in a deep pan, then add 100cc of water to cover the rolls and boil for 5 minutes.
6. After the initial cooking process, add 500cc of water, 100cc of cooking sake, 100cc of sugar, 67cc of soy sauce to the pan. Loosely put a lid on the pot and lower the heat and simmer between 30 minutes to 1 hour.
7. Add soy sauce, mirin/sweet cooking rice wine, and condiment to perfect the flavor to your taste. (You can do this in step No. 6 as well before simmering)
8. Once they’re tender, remove them from the pan and slice into bite-sized pieces. Enjoy!

Gouboumaki (Okinawan style roll of pork, burdock, and carrot)
New Year’s is Japan’s biggest and longest holiday. People take Dec. 29 through Jan. 3 off from work to celebrate the first three days of the year praying at temples and shrines for the coming year. It is our Christmas and Thanksgiving – a time to relax with family and friends over special foods and sake.

When I was a child, every year my family would go to my grandfather’s house in the Oita countryside to celebrate New Year’s with relatives. It was an important time of year when we enjoyed a traditional New Year’s feast around the “kotatsu,” a low table with a heater underneath to keep us warm and cozy.

There are traditional Japanese foods to ring in the new year that are as pleasing to the eye as they are the palate. I can’t say that I liked them all as a child. But these days, I find that their traditional meanings as well as the childhood memories they bring back make this a feast that I look forward to all year long.

You can look for what makes the holiday meals special for each family. Some people enjoy homemade soba or, on Okinawa, Okinawan soba; others eat a cup of instant soba noodles. It does not matter, as long as it is soba noodles. If you are lucky enough to be in Okinawa for New Year’s you’ll find elements of two culinary traditions to sample. Because of its Ryukyu Kingdom history, Japan’s southernmost islands have their own indigenous dishes as well as dishes from mainland Japan.

“In Okinawa, families gathered to celebrate New Year’s with special foods that were served at ceremonies and feast year round, not just foods for New Year’s,” says Yayoi Kohagura, of the Okinawa prefectural government. “But ever since Okinawa was returned to Japan (in 1972), New Year’s foods have caught on. Nowadays, many people eat Okinawan and Japanese foods for New Year’s.”

Local dishes you should be on the lookout for in restaurants include “rafute” (pork belly), “tsamii” (taro) and “mersperi” (white miso soup with chopped pork). While at the same time, stores across the island will have traditional Japanese New Year’s fare on offer.

The first quarter or half of January is commonly called “oshogatsu.” It refers to the whole month of January as well. Plus, the first three days of the month are called “sanganichi.” During those days, “ozoni” and “osechi” are the main dishes on a typical Japanese family’s table. Ozoni is a clear soup that contains “mochi,” a glutinous rice cake; fish cake; chicken; leafy greens; carrots; shiitake mushrooms; and maybe more.

The soup stock varies from region to region. In most of mainland Japan it may be flavored with seaweed or “bonito” (dried fish flakes). People make miso soup or ozoni in western regions like Kansai. In Okinawa, instead of ozoni, people eat “nakamijiru,” a soup made with chitterlings.

From ancient times, mochi has been a celebratory food in Japan representing fortune. Today, you can still see it at traditional events and elsewhere in the form of white, stacked, circular cakes (or packaged squares at grocers) – especially this time of year. You’ll also see a lot of mochi pounding events where large mallets are used to pound steamed rice into mochi. Although mochi is not a traditional ingredient in nakamijiru, nowadays it may be added to this Okinawan dish just like ozoni. It’s tasty but be careful.

“There have been cases when people, especially the elderly and small children, have severely choked on this densely chewy treat. So watch out when you eat mochi for the first time. But once you eat really good ozoni, you will be obsessed with the awesome taste. This is, by far, my favorite New Year’s dish. Then there is osechi, which literally means beginning a new season and represents the start of the new year.

This is a set of selected dishes. It’s kind of like a fancy bento box for the entire family that is eaten during sankanichi, sometimes for all three meals.”

They are designed to nourish and wish the family well, while expressing thanks for the past year. The foods are beautifully arranged in a “jubako,” which is traditional lacquered food box with three or four tiers.

Osechi consists of foods that can be prepared in advance and keep for a few days without spoiling. Traditionally, it ensured everyone got a three-day break, even mothers and wives who wouldn’t have to cook and wash dishes. Also, most stores and restaurants used to be closed during oshogatsu.

These days, some stores open Jan. 1 because business can be good. It is believed that osechi started during the Edo Period (1603-1867) when coming up with a variety prepared foods that would keep for three days was a pretty amazing feat.

For those who don’t have a lot of time or desire to prepare osechi, you can order them from companies at supermarkets and online. You can even order one at

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Osechi is a decorative set of dishes eaten on New Year’s. Each traditional Japanese dish has a special meaning, expressing well-wishing for the coming year. These osechi can be found at department stores or supermarkets. Here are some of the classic dishes.

- **Kurikinton** is sweet simmered black beans.
- **Kazunoko** (herring roe) are tiny yellow fish eggs. The texture is chunky and the eggs are not loose. They are marinated in a broth of bonito soup stock, sake, and soy sauce. You can often find them at sushi restaurants.
- **Kurumame** (sweet simmered black beans) is soft and sweet. You may also notice a bit of soy sauce flavoring. Kurumame represents good health and diligent work.
- **Tazukuri** are small sardines that have been dried and cooked in a sweet sauce of sugar, sweet rice wine, soy sauce and

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**Get to know your ‘osechi’ dishes**
Osechi dishes

Tazukuri

Kutukiri

Kuromame

Okinawan delicacies

Nakamijiru (pork guts soup)

Nakamijiru is popularly known as celebration food from Ryukyu Kingdom. The key of cooking this soup is you need to prepare well to take out the smell of pork guts. The soup taste simple yet rich.

**Ingredients for 4 servings:**

- 10.6 oz pork intestines and stomach or nakami
- 3.5 oz konnyaku
- 4 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 4 cups bonito flake soup stock
- 2 tsb salt
- small soy sauce
- small grated ginger
- flour

1. Soak shiitake mushrooms into water until soft. Slice them to the same size as nakami pieces.
2. Put konnyaku into boiling water and cook for 2-3 minutes and slice them.
3. In a bowl, put wet nakami with water and add flour. Rub nakami with flour and rinse with running water. Repeat 2 to 3 times until nakami to take out the grease.
4. Put nakami into boiling water and cook for 20 mins. Change into fresh boiling water and cook for 20 mins. Repeat three times. This is to take out the smell of guts.
5. When nakami is soft, drain the water. Slice nakami into 0.6 cm by 1 cm pieces. Boil nakami pieces in a sauce pan again. Drain and dry nakami in a bamboo basket or strainer.
7. Serve in a Japanese soup bowl with grated ginger to taste.

Kubuirichi (stir-fried seaweed)

Okinawa is one of the most sea-food consumption prefectures in Japan. Okinawans loved seaweed from long time ago. The combination of seaweed and pork makes very rich flavor. Seaweed contains lots of dietary fiber which helps to clean intestine system.

**Ingredients for 4 servings:**

- 0.44 lb seaweed
- 1.25 lb pork belly
- 7 dried shiitake mushrooms
- 0.44 lb konnyaku
- 0.22 lb fishcake
- 4 tbs mirin
- 4 lbs sake
- 6 lbs soy sauce
- 4 cups of bonito flake soup stock

(Sauce)

- 4 lbs sugar

1. Rinse seaweed with running water, wipe with kitchen towel and slice it about 1.1 inch width. Boil the seaweed for a minute and take it out.
2. Soak shiitake mushrooms into water until soft. Cut into pieces.
3. Put konnyaku into boiling water and cook it for 2-3 minutes and slice them.
4. Cut fishcakes into pieces about half inch width.
5. Cut pork belly into pieces. Put oil into frying pan and cook pork until cooked.
6. And then add konnyaku, seaweed and shitake mushrooms and stir fry.
7. Add sauce and cook with low heat for 20 mins.

the nearest convenience store and pick it up. There is a wide variety available, including traditional Japanese as well as Chinese, Western and even Disney-themed osechi. Prices range is from the equivalent of about $150 to $200 for a three- to four-person osechi.

“This traditional Japanese food was recognized on UNESCO’s Intangible Cultural Heritage list in 2013,” says Fumitoshi Kumagai, a spokesperson for osechi maker Kibun Foods Inc. “Since then people have been paying more attention to traditional osechi. So they are quite popular this year. But character-themed osechi such as Disney are also popular with families who have small children.”

It’s too bad they didn’t have those fancy kiddy osechi when I was growing up. Honestly, I was not a big fan of osechi as a child because a lot of the traditional foods were kind of bland vegetable dishes and I would have preferred something like steak or fried chicken. I was also not too thrilled about eating the same food for a couple days. But times, and I, have change.

Now I really enjoy and appreciate osechi. It comes from the wisdom of my ancestors. The colors and designs of each dish are works of art with meanings intended to bring good fortune in the coming new year. I guess my sense of taste has grown – grown for a taste of Okinawa.

Kobumaki or Kombumaki is kelp roll and stuffed with salmon or chicken, which has been cooked in a sweet soy sauce-based sauce. The name of kobumaki is a play on words, which mean joy in Japanese, so it’s eaten for good lucky food during New Year’s.
**WRAPPING UP YEAR WITH SOBA SAID TO BRING LONGEVITY**

**STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES JAPAN**

Toshikoshi soba (year-crossing soba noodles) is a traditional food that many Japanese eat every year on December 31. Eating soba noodles to mark the end of the year is a custom believed to have been established around the Edo Period (1603 – 1868).

There are many theories surrounding how or why the noodles became a part of the year-end ritual. According to the Nihon Menruigyo Dantai Rengokai, an association of noodle makers in Japan, the most common theory involves the belief that the thin and long shape of soba noodles represents the hope for longevity and good luck.

Other theories include the breaking of bad cycles of struggle, misfortune, and debt because soba noodles are easy to cut. Or, another is that the noodles could bring gold foil. Or, another is that the noodles could bring good luck.

No matter what kind of luck it brings or which of the theories you subscribe to, there are many eateries where you can find soba noodles, made from flour not buckwheat flour, the main ingredient of soba noodles, to gather scattered gold foil.

No matter what kind of luck it brings or which of the theories you subscribe to, there are many eateries where you can find soba noodles, made from flour not buckwheat flour, the main ingredient of soba noodles, to gather scattered gold foil.

My soba noodles and broth were so good, I am now wondering whether I should go with Japanese-style or my usual Okinawa-style soba noodles for Dec. 31. This will be a difficult choice, but either way, I am on track for eating a lot of soba noodles to bring luck for 2022.

My soba noodles and broth were so good, I am now wondering whether I should go with Japanese-style or my usual Okinawa-style soba noodles for Dec. 31. This will be a difficult choice, but either way, I am on track for eating a lot of soba noodles to bring luck for 2022.

**RECIPE**

**PREPARATION**

1. Peel the shell off shrimp except for the closest portion to the tail. Devein the shrimp. Sift the tip of the tail diagonally and squeeze out water.

2. Sift the stomach of the shrimp a few times and bend backward and straighten them by stretching the slitted portion. Wipe water off the shrimp and sprinkle salt and flour on them.

3. Chop nagane (shallot) finely and drain the slices.

**COOKING INSTRUCTIONS**

1. Mix beaten egg and cold water in a bowl. Add flour and mix them together to prepare tempura batter.

2. Heat salad oil in a pan to 160°F (320°F). Holding the shrimp’s tail, dip into the batter, then transfer to heated oil. (Make sure its tail is not soaked in the batter.)

3. Sprinkle additional batter on top of the shrimp and fry for about 3 minutes. Take it out and drain excess oil.

4. To prepare a broth, put water (600cc), soy sauce (45cc), mirin (sweet cooking rice wine, 30cc), dashi (stock powder, a little more than 5cc), and salt (for broth, 1.25cc) in a pan, and heat the mixture.

5. In a separate pot, bring water to a boil. Add the soba noodles and let it simmer until the noodles are cooked through (about 1-2 minutes for raw noodles, and 3-4 minutes for dried noodles/see note below). Then, turn off the heat and drain excess water.

6. Portion out your noodles into a bowl and pour the broth around and straighten them by stretching the slitted portion.

7. Top with shrimp tempura and other toppings to your preference.

**INGREDIENTS**

For two people

- Shrimp (x 2)
- Soft flour (100cc)
- Salt (for broth, 1.25cc)
- Soy sauce (45cc)
- Mirin (sweet cooking rice wine, 30cc)
- Dashi (stock powder, a little more than 5cc)
- Salt (for broth, 1.25cc)
- Salad oil (for frying tempura, appropriate amount)

**Recipe adapted from Ajinomoto (https://park.ajinomoto.co.jp/recipe/card/705786/), a major food company in Japan.**

**SHICHIMI TOGARASHI**

“Shichimi” literally means “seven flavor chili pepper.” This mixed spice consists of red chili pepper and six other ingredients.

- Red Chili Pepper
- Black Sesame Seeds
- White Sesame Seeds
- Dried Ginger
- Dried Orange peel
- Nori seaweed
- Perilla Seeds
- Hemp Seed

You can make the taste better by sprinkling this on soba noodles. Shichimi is available in grocery stores.
It tastes as good as it sounds

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