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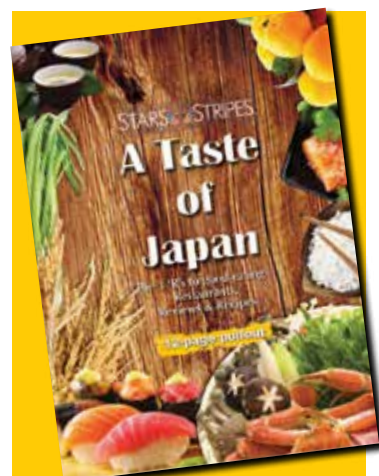
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# Tokyo's river walk

The Sumida River full of  
great views & plenty to do

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File photo

# GODZILLA RETURNS AT TOKYO EXHIBIT

BY EDWARD L. HOLLAND,  
STRIPES JAPAN

**G**odzilla, together with his friends and enemies, continues to entertain in theaters and on television screens around the world. The latest film, *Godzilla: King of the Monsters*, will debut in the U.S. in 2019. But, back in Japan, a committee of artisans, producers, and archivists have brought their collection of film props, models, art, and displays to the DNA Exhibition at the Japan Kogakuin University College in Kamata, Tokyo.

SEE GODZILLA ON PAGE 4



Mechagodzilla Photo by TM&©Toho Co., Ltd © 特撮のDNA



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# The lame duck in the chicken coop

BY LISA SMITH MOLINARI,  
SPECIAL TO STARS AND STRIPES

In my 23 years as a military spouse, we lived in base housing four times, for a total of 11 years. Although living among sterile government buildings enclosed by fences sometimes made me feel like an inmate in an asylum, the social culture in military housing more closely parallels the behavior of chickens in a coop.

Of course, no one ever threw feed corn at me. I never laid an egg, or molted my feathers. However, people who live on post are constrained by a social “pecking order” that can make military spouses feel like they live in a cage full of clucking hens, strutting roosters and peeping chicks.

Every time we moved into a base house or stairwell apartment, I became cognizant of the unspoken hierarchy in the neighborhood. As a new arrival, I took time to establish a new home with my family (“feather the nest”). But after my husband, Francis (“the rooster”), went to work (“flew the coop”) and the kids (“the chicks”) went off to school, loneliness inevitably set in.

I found myself wandering the base in search of a flock to huddle with. Sure, there were always hens everywhere — and a few stay-at-home roosters, I wouldn’t

want to ruffle any feathers — but I soon realized that I was at the bottom of the pecking order. I knew I would have to walk on eggshells before I could roost with the established military spouses on base.

Careful not to count my chickens before they hatched, I got my ducks in a row and laid the foundation for my social acceptance into the flock. I watched the other spouses like a hawk, waiting for right opportunity to introduce myself. Sometimes the hens took me right under their wings, but quite often, my desperation made me seem crazy as a loon, and establishing friendships took time.

It wasn’t overly easy, but I never chickened out. Usually, by the end of my first year, I became an integral part of the gaggle, clucking away as we walked our chicks to school, hatching plans for shopping trips, and cackling about our wattles and

chicken fat.

By the end of my second year, I was securely perched at a comfortable elevation in the social pecking order, as proud as a peacock. As new chickens entered the coop, it was clear to them that my friends and I ruled the roost.

Frankly, we got downright cocky.

But then, toward the end of every tour, my family would receive new orders telling us to take wing to our next duty station. Thoughts of moving would leave me a little wistful and reflective. I found myself pondering weighty ideas such as, “Why did the chicken cross the road?” and “Who came first, the chicken or the egg?”

This melancholy state would compel me to seek the comfort and companionship of the other hens in my coop, but alas! I discovered that, as an outbound hen, I’d slipped to the bottom of

the pecking order again! Did I do something fowl? Do I have egg on my face? Had I become an albino around someone’s neck?

My pea-sized brain realized, “You silly goose, you’re the lame duck in this chicken coop.” I was no longer a contender in the social order because I was leaving. My friends began to look for my replacement in our bunco group and book club, and I heard them clucking about plans for a girls’ trip after our move. Clearly, the other hens didn’t want to invest valuable time further incubating our friendship.

As the lame duck, I had to understand that it wasn’t personal. There was nothing to crow about; the sky wasn’t falling. It was a bitter pill to swallow (although it tasted strangely like chicken), but I had to accept that it was just the way things worked.

I had to stop myself, cold turkey, from brooding over my social status. Instead, I offered each of my fine friends a peck on the cheek, bid them a final cock-a-doodle-doo, and flew away. As graceful as a swan, as wise as an owl, as happy as a lark, and as free as a bird.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari’s columns at:  
[themeatandpotatoesoflife.com](http://themeatandpotatoesoflife.com)  
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# Moxibustion

## Feel the burn

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

**W**ith the cold of winter upon us, many people will begin to “feel” the weather. Lower backs will hurt, while bones and joints will ache just a little more than normal as the temperatures start to drop.

In the U.S., many turn to acupuncture to heal these pains. In Japan, there’s a traditional oriental therapy, called moxibustion, which uses heat on certain points of the body to help heal.

Living in Japan, you may have heard a Japanese coworker or friend talk about hari and kyu when referring to back or leg pains.

Hari (acupuncture) and kyu (moxibustion) may sound mysterious and painful, but they are known as the two most popular oriental medical therapies, and many Japanese consider them effective, time-proven treatments for chronic symptoms.

I’ll often employ these therapies after straining my back, have stiff shoulders or just feel too tired after a long walk.

While I visit a licensed practitioner for a normal acupuncture treatment, I always apply moxibustion myself at home. I feel the smoke and smell of the burning herb in moxibustion helps me relax despite its penetrating heat.

According to Akira Oikawa, a licensed practitioner of acupuncture and moxibustion, the latter is a traditional heat therapy that burns dried mugwort, called “moxa.” Moxa is a small, rice grain-sized cone of mugwort that is applied directly to particular points on the



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skin.

“Moxibustion is effective in treating chronic problems, fatigue, digestive problems, insomnia and gerontology,” Oikawa said. “It also works for pains due to injury or arthritis, gynecological and obstetrical problems. It can help protect against cold and flu strains.”

Oikawa usually makes coned moxa by picking up and rolling dried mugwort with his index finger and thumb. He adjusts the amount of heat depending on

the symptoms.

“If you make the cone tighter, it becomes hotter when you light it,” Oikawa said.

Then, the moxa is lit with an incense stick and applied to particular healing points.

The heat of moxa usually lasts 20-30 minutes, stimulating the points to alleviate the symptoms.

### How does it work?

According to oriental medicine, energy and blood flow along the meridians of the body, but it is often jammed and blocked due to an accident, injury, fatigue or unhealthy life habits. Stimulation by heat to proper moxibustion points dissolves the blockage, restores energy and improves blood flow.

There are about 600 moxibustion points, and where you apply depends on the symptoms. For example, Oikawa applies moxa on the sole, called “yusen,” when a patient seems to be suffering from insomnia. For those who are suffering from stomach pains, he usually puts moxa on six points on the back.

According to Oikawa, one of the most important facts in moxibustion is applying it repeatedly to the same point for a greater result.

“I actually apply moxa on the navel no less than 50 times when I treat patient who complains chronic cold hands and legs,” he said.

There is a risk of being burned from moxibustion. Traditional coned moxa burns near the skin, but the heat needs to be put out before the fire contacts

skin.

In fact, the traditional method of moxibustion used to a form of punishment for Japanese children. As a child, my parents would threaten me with moxa if I was misbehaving.

### Modern forms of treatment

Recently though, moxa has become instant and much safer. The new and improved version is called “sennenkyu” (literally a thousand-year moxa cautery), and it enables us to enjoy moxibustion ourselves without getting burned.

Sennenkyu is placed on a paper-pulp pad. The hole of pad conducts heat to skin surface while the pad prevents fire from directly contact skin.

Boxed sennenkyu, containing 100-200 moxa, is available at most of drugstores for \$10-20.

There are varieties of moxa, from soft to strong, so you can choose one according to your condition. Attached instruction and curated body map of healing points shows where to apply them.

The usage is fairly easy.

After picking up moxa from box, peel off the seal of pad. Ignite the top of moxa with match or lighter and stick to healing points in accordance with the attached map. Don’t move for 10-20 minutes until the fire of moxa burns out and cools down. Then remove the burned moxa.

Moxibustion has been around for hundreds of years, and the traditional therapy just might be the key to get rid of that nagging back or joint pain you can’t seem to shake.

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





Photo by TM&amp;©Toho Co., Ltd © 特撮のDNA

# GODZILLA: Exhibit ends Jan. 27

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

At the exhibition, 64 years of Godzilla special effects illustrate the rich sense of Japan's tokusatsu (special effects) film-making history in eight different zones, which include 200 artifacts in tribute to an industry that has slowly given way to CGI laden effects driven entertainment.

After previous engagements, the Tokyo edition is located near where scenes were filmed in the blockbuster Shin Godzilla (2016).

Tickets for the exhibit, which runs through Jan. 27, range from 500 to 1,600 Yen and can be purchased at Lawson, Ticket Pia, Seven Ticket, or at the venue.

The exhibition showcases the work of special effects master Eiji Tsuburaya, along with director Ishiro Honda and producer Tomoyuki Tanaka, who transcended the boundaries between reality and fantasy. Shinichi Wakasa, suit sculptor for every Toho-produced Godzilla film from 1993 to 2004, features many of his works so patrons can see his monstrous craft in detail.

"This exhibition is the fourth time the curators have presented such an event, and the contents and the number of pieces will change depending on the location and size of the venue," Wakasa said.

You'll see mechanized vehicles, like the rare Maser Tank from Godzilla vs. Biollante (1989) and the Oxygen Destroyer developed by Dr. Serizawa in Godzilla (1954). Time almost stands still for a moment when you gaze at items from some of the greatest monster movies of all time. The large flying monster Varan (1958)

## GODZILLA ON DISPLAY

**WHEN:** Through Jan. 27

**HOURS:** 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Closed Jan. 12)

**WHERE:** Japan Kogakuin College of Technology "Gallery Hon"  
5-Chome 23-22, Nishikamata Ota Ward, Tokyo (JR Kamata Station)

**COST:** 500 – 1,600 Yen (preschool kids free)

\*Tickets can be purchased at Lawson, Ticket Pia, Seven Ticket, or at the venue.



Making of Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla 1974 Photo by TM&©Toho Co., Ltd

appears after a 60-year slumber made by veteran monster modeler Keizo Murase.

The original Mechagodzilla 2 suit used in the shooting of Terror of Mechagodzilla (1975) is a popular photo spot for visitors, and it is no small miracle that the robot kaiju costume has been preserved in such a beautiful state. Keiichi Sakurai, special effects cinematographer on Shin Godzilla, Godzilla vs. Mechagodzilla (1974), and Zone Fighter (1973), was surprised at the number of miniatures on display at the exhibition.

"Now, when you look at the miniatures that are barely left, you can imagine shooting special effects during that time," said Sakurai, the last working cinematographer from Toho's golden days. "What you are seeing and studying in front of you reconfirms the splendor of special effects."

There is also a mechanical Godzilla head used in Godzilla (1984) and

Godzilla's bones resting on the ocean floor, the twin faeries from Mothra (1961) and much more. At the epidermis station you can actually check the texture of Godzilla's skin made in the same way as the monster suits are fabricated for the films. An exquisite highlight is the large cityscape display of Millennium Godzilla battling Mothra, while nearby a mini theater features a 28-minute film with some of the featured artisans.

Kyle Yount, host of KaijuCast podcast, traveled from Portland, Oregon to attend the pre-opening red carpet ceremony commenting.

"The DNA tokusatsu exhibit is something I will never forget, and I was completely blown away with the incredible amount and choices of props on display," Yount said.

Many others have also had the same experience being just inches away from

legacy items that date back to the first film in the series.

Limited edition toys, shirts, bags and more will be for sale as well.

Hardcore fans and those not acquainted with Japanese monster movies will both enjoy the cinematic charm of the Ota, Kamata area are encouraged to explore the special effects of the new era and see first-hand the visual documents which built the rich tapestry of Japanese special effects filmmaking at the DNA Exhibition through Jan. 27

*Edward L. Holland is a photojournalist working in Japan. He has written for Stars and Stripes, Famous Monsters of Film magazine and assisted American and Japanese directors, actors, and artists at various conventions in the US and Japan.*

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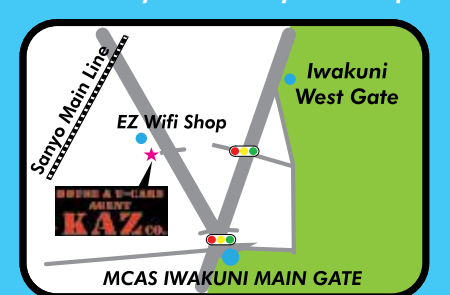
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# How to shop for auto financing

## Servicemembers, arm yourself with basic car buying skills

BY PATRICK CAMPBELL,  
CONSUMER FINANCIAL  
PROTECTION BUREAU

It's not very much fun when you land at your first duty station with no groceries in the fridge, no idea where to get food to eat, and no car to get around. Asking for a ride can be a pain and many bases have limited public transportation options. If that sounds like you, you're not alone.

Many servicemembers buy or lease a car shortly after joining the military. Unfortunately, we hear from many servicemembers who didn't fully appreciate the woes of high rates and other unaffordable terms when they signed their auto financing contract.

Before you rush off to the nearest car dealer advertising "Military – low payments, no interest, or zero down," let us arm you with some basic car buying and car financing skills.

Over the next few weeks the Bureau of Consumer Financial Protection (BCFP) and the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) will share information highlighting things you should know when you're thinking about getting a car.

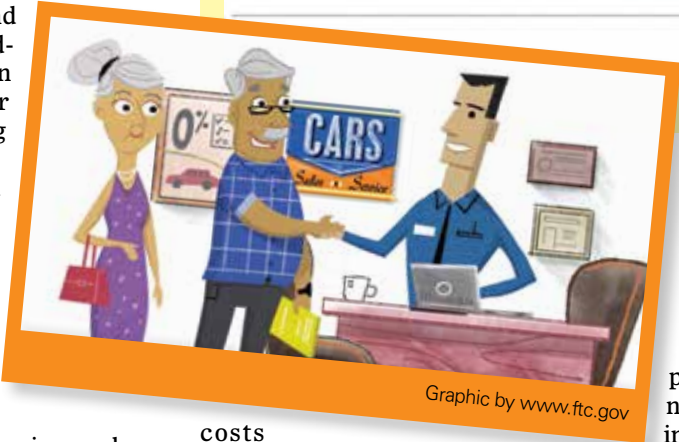
### Shop for the best financing deal

You might think that the first step in buying a car is to go to a dealership. If you plan to finance your purchase, however, you may save money by making your first step to shop for auto financing. If you decide to finance your car, you may obtain better terms by considering several financing sources in addition to dealership financing.

Shop around for financing terms by contacting multiple banks and credit unions and compare these offers to what the dealership offers. Obtaining financing directly through your bank or credit union may get you lower rates, but is not a guarantee. It's possible you can qualify for an even lower rate if you have automatic payments taken out of your account. Automatic payments can help ensure your payments are made when due but it is still helpful to check statements regularly, when possible, to ensure proper payments (and not extra amounts) have been made. You should also ask about any military specific discounts that may be available.

Take the time to fully understand the terms, conditions, and

Financing term	Monthly payment	Total interest paid
36 months (3 years)	\$597	\$1,498
48 months (4 years)	\$458	\$1,999
60 months (5 years)	\$375	\$2,508
72 months (6 years)	\$320	\$3,024



Graphic by www.ftc.gov

to properly budget for a car you can afford.

### Length of financing

When comparing your offers and negotiating financing, it's important to know if you can afford the monthly payment, but be sure you look at the total cost of the financing. A smaller monthly payment may mean the financing extends over a longer period of time—72 months or more, instead of 36,

48, or 60 months.

Try to keep the length of your financing as short as your budget can afford. The sooner you're able to pay off the car, the less interest you'll pay. For example, you can see in the figure below how a lower monthly payment over a longer term increases your total cost. This example assumes \$20,000 financing and an interest rate of 4.75 percent.

You should still consider putting cash down when purchasing a car. Cash down helps lower your payment and lenders may provide lower rates depending on how much cash you can put down.



If you're going to get car financing, start by thinking through what you can afford, check your credit report, then shop around, paying attention to the total amount you will pay.

costs involved in financing a car before you sign a contract. Know that the total amount you'll pay depends on several factors.

Two important things that you should pay close attention to are:

### Annual percentage rate (APR) Length of the financing

### Annual percentage rate (APR)

It's important to consider the APR when comparing auto financing offers. A lower APR will lead to significant savings in the long term. For example, a three-year \$15,000 financing contract with a 5 percent APR, and payments of \$450 monthly, would save you about \$500 overall compared with a three-year, \$15,000 contract at 7 percent APR.

To negotiate the best APR, it's wise to check your credit reports before looking into options. This information lets you assess how lenders are likely to view your creditworthiness. Make sure that your credit reports don't have any errors, and if they do, you should take steps to correct them. Errors on your credit reports can reduce your credit scores and can mean you get charged a higher rate or even have your financing application denied. Better credit will help you secure a lower rate and reduce the amount of money that you end up paying. Looking up your credit scores in advance allows you to research the average rate for someone with a similar score. You can use that rate as a basis

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# Tips to recover from holiday shopping

BY DAKOTA FINDLEY,  
STRIPES JAPAN

**Y**ou've made it through your grandpa's jokes during the Christmas meal and handed out all of your gifts. The holiday season has officially wrapped up, but the bills from your holiday shopping certainly haven't. Post-holiday financial stress is no joke. As the holidays become memories, the fun indulgences give way to large bills and pressing due dates.

January doesn't have to be such a shock, however, if you put some practices into place. If you start now, you can transform the unpleasant experience of paying the price for the holidays into stress-free chore.

Let's take a look at some ways to recover from overspending.

## Make sure you have the funds to pay credit card bills

Adding a line in your December budget

to pay for higher credit card costs is a smart way to plan ahead. Many of you are using the gift-giving and party days of December to rack up points and rewards on credit cards, and while that can be a solid strategy, don't forget to plan for the results.

Even a simple extra payment in January can reduce your overall bill total and get you set up to win with your finances for the rest of the year.

## Create a slush fund

Even better than planning for your minimum payments in January is creating a budget all year to save for holiday expenses. You can still use your credit cards if you want to rack up points, but now you have the funds already sitting in an account to pay off the total when everything is over.

Alternately, you can pay cash for your holiday merriment and not even worry about a looming credit bill come

January. All the better to enjoy the gifts of the season knowing you've paid for them outright.

## Assess the situation

Ok, you didn't plan throughout the year or in December for larger bills, and now you have a situation on your hands. While this may be a time you'd like to ignore the total cost, that's only going to cause you a headache in the long run.

It's important to sit down and take an honest look at your finances in January since this both sets the tone for the coming year, and allows you to reconcile the previous year. Once you rip the band-aid off and understand what you owe, this makes it easier to make a sound plan to pay off the debt.

## Find creative solutions

Don't just make the minimum payments. You can find creative ways to lessen your debt load. Consider transferring

balances to cards with lower interest rates, or consolidating credit balances to make one easy payment.

You can also rethink your overall budget to find ways to put more money into repaying the debt. No one says to give up all your luxuries forever, but you might put a hold on that fancy coffee for a few months until you reach your goal. When you get something paid off, use the minimum payment you used to make to reward your efforts.

## Get cash back

If nothing else, finding ways to get cash back can give you some extra momentum. Did you love all the gifts that you received? If not, consider returning them if you can to get cash to fund your pay-off.

Even if you can't get cash back, many stores will issue gift cards. If your gifts came from stores that carry a multitude of different types of items, this might free up your budget to put down cash if you can pay for groceries or household items with the gift card.

You can also check on reward points you've accumulated and apply them towards items in the budget that will benefit your paying off debt. You might be surprised how getting rewards from online retailers through your credit card will save you in household expenses.

You can also go the old-fashioned route and put things up for sale. It's likely that others are looking for things they didn't receive during the holidays, and this can give you some immediate cash.

It isn't necessary to panic when January 1st rolls around. With some planning for the future, and a creative attitude now, you can recover from your holiday indulgences in no time.

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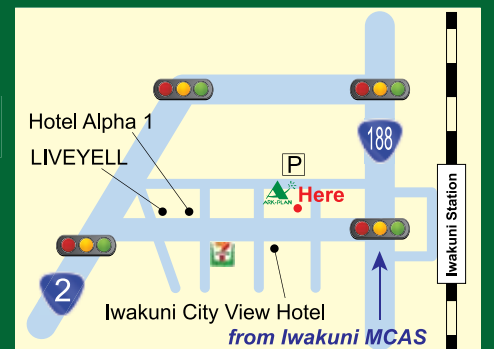
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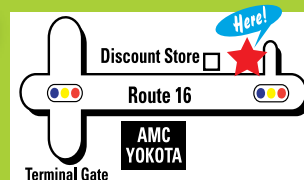


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# Tips to refresh yourself in the new year

**P**lanning some New Year's resolutions? Instead of simply resolving to lose weight or drop a clothing size, consider placing a more positive spin on your objectives. Whether your stated goal is to try new sports and hobbies or to get in touch with nature, you can better refresh yourself this new year with resolutions that help you get in shape while appreciating your surroundings and having fun.

## Try Something New

Testing out new sports and hobbies doesn't need to require a great deal of time or financial commitment. There are plenty of ways to dip your toe in the water. Thanks to online marketplace coupon services, it's easy to find discounted access to local experiences like orienteering and rock climbing classes, fishing excursions, white water rafting journeys and more. Consider giving your fun and fitness goals a recharge by trying out something completely different.

## Make More of It

Whether you're hiking, biking, skiing or trying any other new outdoor sport, consider



Photo by Statepoint

making the most of your excursions with tech gear that enhances the experience and keeps you safe. For example, the PRO TREK Smart Outdoor Watch WSD-F20 from Casio, powered by Android Wear 2.0, has GPS capabilities, a full color map display and water resistance of up to 50 meters, making it well suited for rugged adventures. Because it can

be used offline in areas without cellular service, it can free you up to go farther off the beaten trail and help you find your way back. Find a great fishing spot or vista on a hike? Spot some beautiful wildlife on the trail? Its Location Memory app instantly reads a user's current location, so you can add notes to otherwise unmarked map spots. Additionally, Casio's

Moment Setter app gives users an opportunity to automatically receive important alerts, such as best fishing times, rest break intervals, and sunrise/sunset times.

## Get Competitive

Having a race or competition ahead on the calendar can be the motivating force that drives you to get off the couch, get fit

*Whether it's a 10k, obstacle race or a triathlon, training for such a competition can have cascading effects.*

and enjoy the outdoors. Whether it's a 10k, obstacle race or a triathlon, training for such a competition can have cascading effects, leading to new healthy habits beyond more frequent workouts, such as getting more rest and hydration and eating a healthier diet. Completing your goal can be a truly rewarding experience.

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# KNOWING YOUR SAKE AND SHOCHU

Become an expert at the Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
YUKARI SAKAMOTO,  
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

The local beverages sake and shochu present themselves in a variety of expressions that many people — both foreigners and Japanese alike — find tricky to wrap their heads around. The best way to develop your palate for understanding these is *nomi kuraberu* (trying several in one sitting). Learning which ones speak to you and which ones are not to your liking is the first step in building your knowledge. The Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center (JSS Information Center) is an education center helping to promote sake and shochu. It is a short walk from Toranomon station on the first floor of an office building. Look for the *sugidama* (cedar ball) hanging outside of the building.

The walls are an impressive black and red lacquer. A large cedar tub, the type used for used for *moromi* (mash in the sake-making process), hangs from the ceiling. Wooden boxes around the room present bottles of sake and shochu along with glasses. There are also big screen televisions playing videos of the

sake-making process and tables and a counter where staff can help you decide what to order.

The menu is impressive, with a range that covers basic shochu and a complete selection of all sake styles, including sparkling and cloudy nigori. Beyond that there are fruit liqueurs like *yuzu-shu* (yuzu liqueur), *ume-shu* (plum liqueur), *amazake* (a sweet fermented rice liqueur) and even *hon-mirin* (a Japanese pantry staple which can taste like a sweet sherry). I often drink a small glass of hon-mirin as an aperitif while cooking dinner. Additionally, seasonal sake is included on the list — this time of year it is *hiyaoroshi* (a once-pasteurized sake only distributed in the autumn).

Still, there is more: currently the menu also boasts a five-year aged *koshu* (aged sake) and a selection of *kijoshu* (dessert wine-like sake). Many of the 30-ml pours are only ¥100 so there is no excuse not to try a wide variety of styles.

The staff at the JSS Information Center also create daily sets, such as a trio of *daiginjo sake* (the most prized bottling of sake) or five types of shochu, which can be ordered either in 30 or 60-ml pours. The menu is highly informative, including details such as



origin, alcohol percentage, polishing rate, the rice variety, acidity and Sake Meter Value (SMV). The higher the SMV number, the drier the sake; the lower the SMV number, the sweeter. Zero is the starting SMV — thus, if the SMV number is negative, the sake will be sweet rather than dry. A positive number may also be sweet, but smaller values—like one or two—are slightly dry. It's likely that you've been asked if you'd like your sake to be *karakuchi* (dry) — this sake is usually valued at five or higher. Something about a +5 would be considered *karakuchi*.

The website has a lot of information, including online video

classes which you could watch before your visit. Better yet, call ahead request a complimentary sake lesson in English. On our visit, Shuso Imada (General Manager for the JSS Information Center) was our guide. Even though I've worked in retail selling sake and shochu, I was still able to glean new information from our informative twenty-minute seminar that came with a Powerpoint presentation.

Perhaps the only downside is that the JSS Information Center is only open on weekdays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. For those whose schedule only allows for a visit on weekday evenings, check the website for special events. There

is a monthly "Sake Salon" that introduces a sake brewery in the evenings; the most recent one introduced Fukumitsuya, Kanazawa's oldest sake brewery dating back to 1625. Other breweries presenting include Daishichi, Fuchuhomare and Manotsuru. A tasting class is also available at ¥5,000, with food to complement your experience. Check the website for more details.

There is a selection of sake and shochu available for retail sale along with a variety of cups and glasses for both drinking and serving sake or shochu. The JSS Information Center is sponsored by the Japan Sake and Shochu Makers Association. There is no mark-up on the bottles sold and the prices for the tableware are very reasonable.

The JSS Information Center recommends calling ahead before visiting and making a reservation. It is possible to walk in if there are only a few of you, but for groups of four or more be sure to reserve some seats. On our recent visit I was surprised to see that it was quite busy from about 11 a.m.

A visit to the Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center will be an education and a great chance to try a wide variety of traditional Japanese libations. A good New Year's Resolution for 2019 could be to learn more about sake and shochu — and this is a great place to start.

## Japan Sake and Shochu Information Center

**ADDRESS:** 1-6-15 Nishi-Shinbashi, Minato-ku  
**TEL:** 03-3501-0101  
**URL:** [www.japansake.or.jp](http://www.japansake.or.jp)  
**HOURS:** Weekdays 10 a.m. - 6 p.m.  
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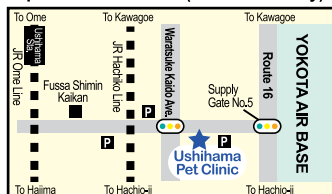
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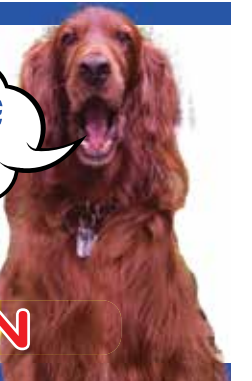
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STORY AND PHOTOS BY LINDA CORDES,  
IWAKUNIFOODIE.COM

The popular tourist destination of Miyajima has plenty of food choices, but these are my three must-eat foods when visiting.

## 1. Momiji Manju

Shaped like a maple leaf (momiji), these delicious sweets can be found all over the island of Miyajima.

While the sweet bean (anko) filling is the original flavor, there are many flavors to

choose from now. I do love the traditional anko filling the best, but the custard cream and the chocolate are also my favorites.

A little shop called Iwamura Momijiya is my favorite place to get a traditional Momiji Manju. They only offer the anko filling, but you get a choice of koshi-an or tsubu-an. Koshi-an is more of a smooth bean paste, and tsubu-an is a slightly chunky bean paste. The Momiji Manjus here are always fresh, warm, and delicious!

A very cool fact about Iwamura is that they are kind of the ones who started it all. I say kind of because they are a part of Iwaso Onsen and that is

where the Momiji Manju came to be. It started out as the sweet that they served their guests with tea.

While walking around, you'll see quite a few shops selling these delicious little cakes in many delicious flavors. Some places carry flavors that others don't so have fun with it by stopping at a few different shops. Grab some manjus to take home and enjoy later.

For all of the fried food fans out there, you might want to try a deep fried Momiji Manju. There are a couple of places that sell them in the sometimes-covered street with shops and restaurants.

## Getting there

You can either drive or take the train to Miyajima. By car it takes anywhere from thirty to forty minutes, depending on traffic. Route 2 can get pretty congested sometimes. There are a few pay parking lots right around the ferry port, but if there is something going on they can fill up pretty quickly. The one I usually use is ¥800 for the day. Then the ferry will cost ¥360 round trip.

If you decide to take the train, you can purchase a combo ticket for ¥1,000. This covers round-trip train from Iwakuni Station to Miyajimaguchi Station, and round-trip ferry. I like to use hyperdia.com to check train schedules before I go anywhere.

## 2. Oysters

If you stand on the right side of the ferry on the way to Miyajima, you will see a large number of oyster beds in the ocean. There are oysters at pretty much all of the restaurants here. You can get them grilled, steamed, deep fried, and in many dishes like udon and curry. So many choices!

My favorite way to enjoy them is grilled, with cheese on top.

There are some food stands that serve up grilled oysters with different topping and sauces. I love to bounce around and try the different kinds.

The best time to enjoy oysters is when it is cooler. The season begins in the fall and goes through the first part of spring. They are available all year, but in my opinion, they taste better when it is cold.

Every February there is a big Oyster Festival on Miyajima that is also worth checking out.

However, I did not really care for this yuba steamed bun. It was literally nothing but yuba inside and I felt that it was missing something in the flavor department.

Those are my three must-eat foods on Miyajima, but I also want to mention some interesting foods that are also worth checking out.

Deer poop ice cream. Need I say more? One of the places that sells it is located across from the little park at the ferry port. It's in a perfect spot so you can grab one as soon as you arrive, or before you get on the return ferry.

Have you ever tried melon bread? It is a soft, melon flavored bread that usually has a crunchy cookie top. This place near the Momijidani Park sells warm melon bread ice cream sandwiches.

They are very generous with the ice cream though which makes it really messy. I ask them to cut the amount of ice cream in half and that makes it perfect for me.

I don't have any pictures of them, but there are also quite a few places selling fish cakes on a stick. Some are wrapped in bacon and some have other seafood, like crab, in them. Some of them are quite fishy tasting so if you're not a huge fan of fish, you might want to skip this or just take a bite of someone's so you can say you tried it.

MISAWA YOKOSUKA ATSUGI ZAMA YOKOTA FUJI IWAKUNI SASEBO OKINAWA MISAWA YOKOSUKA

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## 3. Hiroshima Beef Steamed Bun

These steamed beef buns are made with local Hiroshima beef and they are pretty dang tasty!

I haven't tried the eel, but I did try the yuba. Yuba is the stuff that is skimmed off the top when making tofu, and it is something I normally enjoy.





# The Sumida River flows u

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

New York has the Hudson, Washington D.C. - the Potomac. London is highlighted by the Thames, while the Seine flows under the Paris sky.

Rivers form an important part of most large cities throughout history.

In Japan, the Sumida River flows through Tokyo.

Aka Ookawa (literally, large river), this 15-mile long river, branching from the Arakawa River, runs in the eastern part of Tokyo, through Asakusa, Ryogoku, Nihonbashi, Tsukiji, and flows into Tokyo Bay. Not only is it a transportation route, the river also serves

as a place of relaxation. From the banks, people enjoy the view throughout the four seasons - cherry blossoms in spring, fireworks in summer, full moon in autumn and snow falling in winter. Visitors can also cruise the river on a wooden boat called yakatabune.

The river has been a symbol of unique traditional culture of Tokyo and Edo (old name of Tokyo) throughout the ages. Kabuki, Ukiyo-e, Hanabi, Sumo and most of other traditional pop cultures were developed around the river.

With its first display in 1733, the longest running fireworks show in Japan

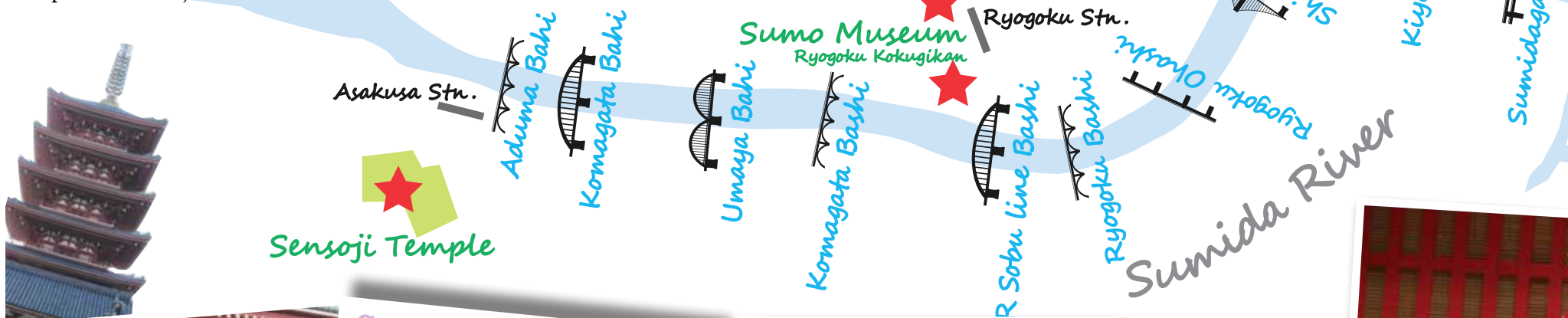
continues along the river to this day. The show is enjoyed on the last Saturday of July, and has only been stopped for earthquakes or war.

While Kabuki offered a popular pastime for townspeople when a theater was built in Asakusa in 1841, many famous Ukiyo-e artists, such as Utagawa Hiroshige, Toshusai Sharaku and Kitagawa Hokusai created their art and lived near the river.

Although much of the area around the river was completely destroyed during the Allies' air raids at the end of World War II (1939-45), remains of the Edo culture can

be found on each corner of reconstructed streets, temples, arcades, shops, stalls and gardens along the river.

I often enjoy my riverside stroll from Aduma Bridge (Asakusa) through Ryogoku Bridge, after enjoying the center town of Asakusa. It is really fun of strolling along the river while indulging in thoughts of people who lived in the Edo era.



## Sensoji Temple

**HOURS:** April-Sept., 6 a.m. - 5 p.m.;  
Oct. - Mar., 6:30 a.m. - 5 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** 2-3-1 Asakusa, Taito-ku,  
Tokyo (5-minute walk from Asakusa Sta-  
tion of Ginza Line)  
**URL:** [www.senso-ji.jp/about/index\\_e.html](http://www.senso-ji.jp/about/index_e.html)  
**TEL:** 03-3842-0181



## Sumo Museum (Ryogoku Kokugikan)

**HOURS:** Mon.-Fri., 10 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** 1-3-28 Yokoduna, Sumida-ku, Tokyo  
**ADMISSION:** Free  
**URL:** [www.sumo.or.jp/](http://www.sumo.or.jp/)  
**TEL:** 03-3622-0366



## Edo Tokyo Museum

**HOURS:** Sun.-Fri., 9:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.;  
Sat., 9:30 a.m. - 7:30 p.m.  
**LOCATION:** 1-4-1 Yokoduna, Sumida-ku, Tokyo  
**ADMISSION:** adult 600 yen, high school 480 yen, elementary 300 yen  
**URL:** [www.edo-tokyo-museum.jp/](http://www.edo-tokyo-museum.jp/)  
**TEL:** 03-3626-9974







# Under the sky of Edo

## Asakusa, riverside town, home to traditional pop culture

Situated on the left bank of river near Aduma Bridge, Asakusa provides the perfect place to start a Sumida River stroll.

I often begin my stroll at the Kaminarimon (thunder gate) of Sensoji Temple and walk through the long and narrow avenue called Nakamise-dori, which is surrounded by various food and souvenir shops. One treat offered is Ningyo-yaki, a

tasty doll-shaped cake at Kimura-ya, one of the oldest shop in the avenue. Some of the shops, including Kimura-ya, have been run by the same families for more than 150 years.

Passing through another traditional wooden gate, Hozomon (treasure gate), the main hall of the temple appears in front of me with a five-story pagoda on my left.

Here, I stop at a huge bronze incense burner located in front of the main hall, and bathe my head in the smoke, which is believed to ward off illnesses and misfortune, while making you smarter and healthier.

After making a wish at Kannon (statue

of Bodhisattva of Mercy) in the main hall, I usually go to a temple shop to pick an omikuji, a fortune slip to see if Bodhisattva has heard my wish. (See Omikuji story on the right.) To do this, pick up a bamboo stick from a wooden container nearby and give it to a young lady in white kimono and red pants. Be sure to ask her for English-written slip, which will tell you the current condition of luck.

There are a lot of izakaya bars or teahouses around the temple. I often enjoy cold beer while watching various street performers, acrobats, jugglers and strolling musicians performing for tourists.



Picking out an omikuji

## Omikuji at Senso-ji Temple Try your luck in Asakusa

STORY AND PHOTO BY CORDELIA DING,  
JAPAN TRAVEL

Omikuji are written fortunes offered at shrines and temples in Japan. Usually, omikuji require a small offering (¥100 usually), and are chosen randomly from a box. At Senso-ji Temple (Asakusa Kannon Temple), Tokyo's oldest temple, in Asakusa you can pick up an omikuji to try your luck.

Each shrine and temple has different ways of offering omikuji, but at Senso-ji, you place a ¥100 coin into a slot on the counter, as a voluntary and expected offering. You are then to pick up a metal box that has a tiny, rounded slot at the bottom where a stick will come out from. You can shake the box a few times, in hopes of receiving a good fortune. After you are satisfied with the shaking, turn the metal container over to drop out a stick with a number - the stick will fall out of the bottom of the container. If you are unable to read the Kanji numbers, do not worry, simply look at the characters and play a little "Eye Spy" as you match the characters to the ones on the drawers in front of you. The numbers will lead you to a specific drawer filled with omikuji, which you can then read and decipher. Some places even offer translations, but sadly, Senso-ji did not have a setup translation available.

After receiving your omikuji, if it is a good fortune and one that you would like to come out, you can take it home with you, as it symbolizes the fact that you are bringing the good fortune back with you. If it is a fortune that isn't as good, and one that you do not want to come true, you may tie the omikuji onto one of the omikuji "trees," nearby, symbolizing the fact that you are leaving this fortune behind and you hope to find a better one.

The experience of receiving an omikuji is definitely one that every traveler in Japan should go through at least once. It is a step towards understanding Shinto Buddhism and Japanese culture, so if you are looking for the full and authentic Japanese travel experience, be sure to test your luck and pick out an omikuji! If you are in Asakusa, make sure to try some Monja-yaki (Japanese pan-fried batter in the Kanto region that is like Kanto-style okonomiyaki) to celebrate your fortune, or to celebrate a future with better fortune!



## Museum

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museum.or.jp/en/



## Hamarikyu Gardens

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**LOCATION:** 1-1 Hamarikyu Garden, Chuo-ku, Tokyo  
**ADMISSION:** 300 yen  
**URL:** [www.tokyo-park.or.jp/english/park/detail\\_04.html#hamarikyu](http://www.tokyo-park.or.jp/english/park/detail_04.html#hamarikyu)  
**TEL:** 03-3541-0200



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# Kamameshi Kazu

Refined taste near Sumida represents traditional downtown

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

**A**way from the hustle and bustle of Asakusa's main streets, Kamameshi Kazu is situated on a quiet bystreet that lets you enjoy traditional dishes in a cozy and relaxing atmosphere for a reasonable price.

The eatery is known for its tasty kamameshi, a rice dish boiled with crab, chicken and other ingredients in a small iron pot. Although it may be less well known than other traditional Japanese dishes, such as eel, sukiyaki, tempura and sushi, kamameshi has been popular among locals since it originated in Asakusa more than 80 years ago.

Among the town's numerous kamameshi joints competing against each other with their original tastes, Kazu is considered one of the best shops by locals.

On pushing back the dark green curtain into the shop, I was welcomed by the friendly smiles of Mr. and Mrs. Yamazaki, who run the restaurant.

The cozy establishment has three tables on a tatami floor and a counter for six customers. Although I was the first customer, having arrived just as the shop opened at 5 p.m., others followed me, one after another, and all the seats were occupied in almost no time.

## Kamameshi Kazu

**HOURS:** 5-11 p.m. Thurs.-Tues.

**LOCATION:** 1-6-16 Nishi Asakusa, Taito-ku, Tokyo  
(2-minute walk from Tawaramchi Station of Ginza Line)

**URL:** [tabelog.com/tokyo/A1311/A131102/13163398/](http://tabelog.com/tokyo/A1311/A131102/13163398/)

**TEL:** 03-3841-5683

I ordered "gomoku" (mixed ingredients) kamameshi as soon as I got to a counter seat, as I knew the dish needs some time to cook. Besides the mixed ingredients version, "chicken" and "crab" kamameshi are also available.

While waiting for the dish, I enjoyed the conversation with the Yamazakis over ice-cold beer and fresh local vegetables. They told me how the town of Asakusa had changed in last decades with increasing numbers of tourists, especially from foreign countries. I found it interesting that one of the most traditional Japanese towns had been getting more and more attention from tourists.

In fact, Mrs. Yamazaki is learning English to cope with the increasing foreigners in town. So, speak up and ask her for anything in English when you visit the shop.

In about 15 minutes, I received my kamameshi in the steel pot with a wooden lid. When I took off the lid, the sweet aroma of well-steamed rice suddenly rose up from the hot pot and stimulated my appetite.

Various ingredients, such as crab meat, chicken, shrimp, mushrooms and vegetables, along with lightly seasoned rice were literally crammed in the iron pot. I mixed them well in the pot with a paddle while enjoying the savory smell and scooped them into a bowl to sample.

The dish was simple, but it had a refined taste. I realized that rice was the main player and the other ingredients just assisted the flavor of the shining, stuffy rice.

Miso soup and pickles, both seasoned lightly, went along with the dish.

Although it seemed too much for one person, I found I had finished it within only a few minutes.

Kazu is a must-visit kamameshi joint. Be sure to drop by when you visit Asakusa. I am sure you will have a great food experience that you won't easily forget.

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



## SUMIDA: A symbol of the unique culture in Tokyo

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

### Along the Sumida River

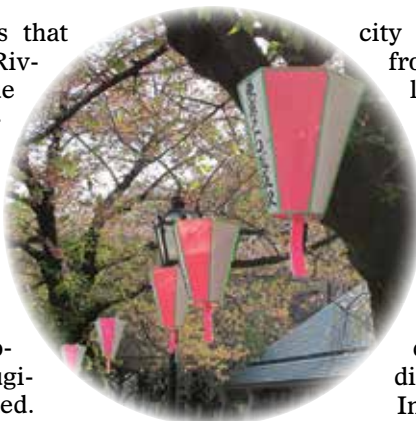
After exiting the temple from its Nitenmon Gate, straight along the street is the Sumida Park. This area is filled with numerous cherry trees, and is known as one of the best hanami (cherry blossoms viewing) spots in Tokyo. The park offers a great location to take a photo of the river with the backdrop of the 2115-foot high Tokyo Skytree, as well.

From the park, I walk through a stone paved sidewalk, called "Sumida River Terrace."

There are 16 bridges that cross over the Sumida River, each with a unique form and color. The distance between bridges is about a 5-10-minute walk, and it would take about 2 hours walk to the end.

I usually finish up my stroll around Ryogoku Bridge, where the Edo-Tokyo Museum and Kokugikan (sumo hall) are located.

In Edo-Tokyo Museum, you can scan the 400-year history of the capital



city with various exhibits from the 590,000 collected items. Here you can compare the view of the Sumida River now as opposed to that of the Edo period. A fascinating ukiyo-e printing process with various woodblocks and drawings is also on display.

In the Kokugikan, woodblock prints of sumo wrestlers, the aprons worn during the

ring-entering ceremony, along with various calligraphies, pictures and works are on display. The hall holds grand sumo tournaments in January, May and September.

Another unique attraction is the waterbus at Asakusa Pier, located at the corner of Sumida Park. The hour-long ride on the river costs 980 yen (\$8.80), and travels to the Hamarikyu stop (Tsukiji).

Be sure to explore the Sumida River the next time you visit Tokyo. Much like a river meanders through a city, a walk along the Sumida is like a stroll through Japan's long and storied history.

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

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# Speakin' Japanese



## Sumida River Stroll

Around the Sumida River is a treasure trove of exotic Japanese cultural traditions. After visiting the popular Senso-ji temple, you can drop by a couple of museums to see Ukiyo-e and Japanese calligraphies. Don't forget to take a photo of yourself on one of the river's bridges with a Tokyo Skytree backdrop. There are also various shops housed in traditional buildings that offer many colorful souvenirs and delicacies.

Enjoy your stroll along the Sumida River by using the following Japanese words and phrases.

### "Ryogoku Bashi ni ikitai desu."

= I want to go to Ryogoku Bridge.  
("bashi" = bridge, "ikitai" = want to go)

### "Senso-ji wa doko desu ka?"

= Where is Senso-ji Temple?  
("wa doko desuka?" = where is ..?)

### "Tokyo Skytree ga mie masu."

= I can see Tokyo Skytree.  
("ga mie masu" = can see..)

### "Shashin wo totte kudasai."

= Please take a photo of me.  
("shashin" = photo, "totte" = take, "kudasai" = please)

### "Omikuji no hikikata wo oshiete kudasai."

= Please show me how to draw omikuji.  
("omikuji" = fortune slip, "hikikata" = how to draw, "oshiete" = tell/show me)

### "Kokugikan de sumo wo mitai desu."

= I want to see sumo at Kokugikan.  
("de" = at, "Kokugikan" = sumo hall, "wo mitai" = want to see..)

### "Kabuki wa osuki desuka?"

= Do you like kabuki?  
("wa osuki" = do you like..)

### "Kono kimono wa kirei desu ne?"

= This kimono is beautiful, isn't it?  
("wa kirei desu" = ..is beautiful, "ne?" = isn't it?)

### "Kore wa ikura desuka?"

= How much is this?  
("kore" = this, "wa ikura" = how much is ..?)

### "Motto ookii-no wa arimasen ka?"

= Don't you have a larger size?  
("motto" = more, "ookii-no" = large one, "arimasen ka" = don't you have?)

### "Osusume wa nan desu ka?"

= What is your recommendation?  
("osusume" = recommendation, "nan desu" = what is..)

### "Kaado wa tsukae masu ka?"

= Can I use my credit card?  
("kaado" = credit card, "tsukae masu" = can use)

### "Kore wo itadaki masu."

= I will have this.  
("itadaki masu" = will have)

—Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan

Pronunciation key: "A" is short (like "ah"); "E" is short (like "get"); "I" is short (like "it"); "O" is long (like "old"); "U" is long (like "tube"); and "AI" is a long "I" (like "hike"). Most words are pronounced with equal emphasis on each syllable, but "OU" is a long "O" with emphasis on that syllable.

MISAWA YOKOSUKA ATSUGI ZAMA YOKOTA FUJI IWAKUNI SASEBO OKINAWA MISAWA YOKOSUKA

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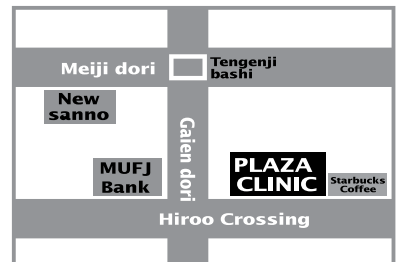
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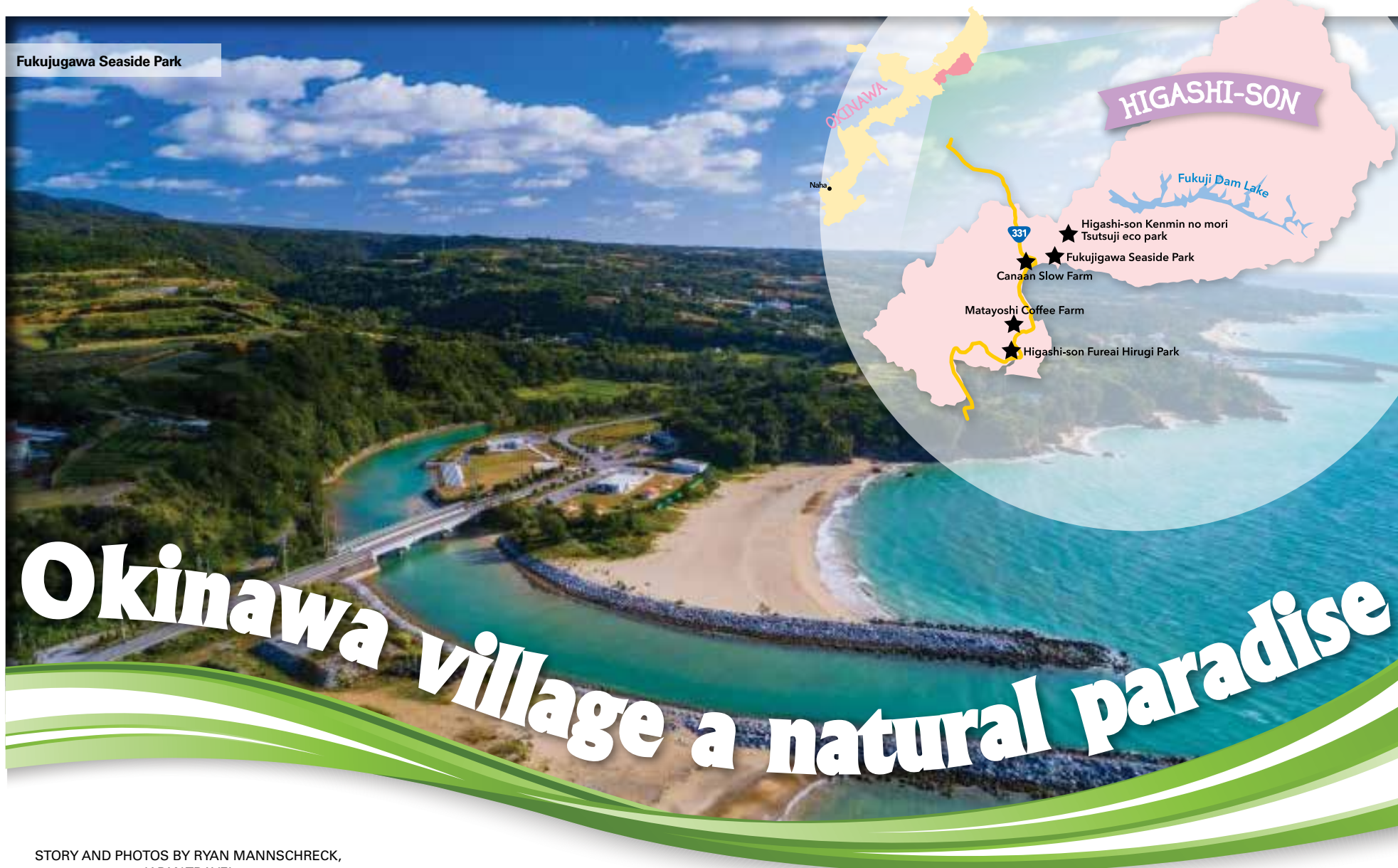
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STORY AND PHOTOS BY RYAN MANNSCHRECK,  
JAPAN TRAVEL

**A**n area of absolutely astounding beauty, Higashi-son village is a paradise in paradise. Higashi-son village is located in the northern regions of the tropical



paradise of Okinawa. The village lies inside the almost untouched Yanbaru forest, a natural national treasure of Japan. Dive deep into the rich blues of the ocean and the Gesashi

river. Bask in the green light filtering through the mangrove forests. Enjoy every natural color of this ecological tapestry that is Higashi-son village, which is ready to welcome visitors looking to connect with the local culture.

## Delving deep into Higashi-son



Sea of coral reef seen from Higashi Village

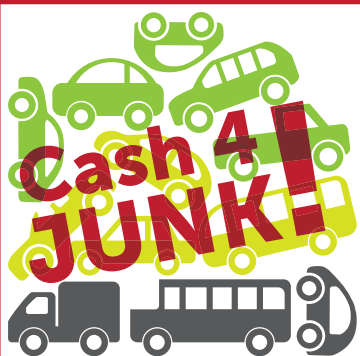


Over 72 percent of northern Okinawa is covered in forest. This area is lovingly called Yanbaru and has evolved some very unique flora and fauna. The forest section near Higashi-son is ribboned with a large river, the Gesashi river, that is home to many local species. Recently Yanbaru has been made a candidate for a UNESCO World Natural Heritage site. Higashi-son village is also home to Hirugi Forest Of Gesashi Bay, hirugi trees being very rare the site has been deemed a natural treasure. The small village has a population of 1,900 people. Everyone of them is working on the preservation of this area as well as promoting its tourism.

Okinawa is well known for its traditional crafts passed down from the original inhabitants of the island. A particular favorite in Higashi-son village is the art of Bingata. Bingata is a form of resist dyeing for cloth utilizing natural inks, stencils, and hand painting. This particular art form has been used to make everything from clothing to patterns on sails. While visiting Higashi-son Village try out their Bingata class where you can make your own keepsake and purchase some professionally made local items.

Higashi-son village is a great producer of pineapples. Despite its small amount of flat land for the roaming crop, Higashi-son enjoys growing the sunny fruit. Enjoy fresh pineapple dishes such as refreshing pineapple juice, grilled pineapple slices, and seasoned pineapple over pork and rice.

If your ready for a caffeine pick-me-up check out Hiro Coffee Farm. Locally grown in small batches right there in Higashi-son, Hiro (the owner), learned the skills to cultivate such a blessing on his uncle's farm in Hawaii. Enjoy a whole pot of fresh roasted, I mean as you order, coffee while you rest in the shade of his little getaway. You know you're there when you see the shops floors covered in coffee beans. Be ready for good smells.



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## Best things to do in Higashi-son

■ **Higashi-son Fureai Hirugi Park:** A park made up of the large mangrove forests of Higashi-son. Canoe through the forest on the peaceful river. Walk the promenade winding through the hirugi trees. Then get up close and personal with the native wildlife at the petting park! Meet several species of adorable fiddler crabs, tiny mudskippers, and elegant egrets.

■ **Fukujigawa Seaside Park:** Banana boat, canoe, snorkel, barbecue, camp, dive, and enjoy the soft white sands of this little beach park. A perfect place for families, small groups, and large events there is something for everyone. For more information you can refer to their English brochure. <http://fukujiipark.com/image/shisetsu/panf2.pdf>

■ **Higashi-son Azalea Festival:** March 1st till the 24th, Higashi-son celebrates the azalea flower. No small festival, the Azalea festival even has its own dedicated park. A large stretch of space chock full of expansive networks of bridges, towers, pavilions, viewpoints, and of course tons of azaleas. A picturesque stroll of multiple elevations affording you a majestic view of the coastline. When you need a rest there are many vendors selling festival treats of chocolate bananas, shaved ice, and more. A farmers market outside sells honey, fruits, and plants. Rest your feet and watch the Eisa drumming performances accompanied by traditional dances. Entrance fee is 300 yen.



Experience Hirugi Park at Higashi Village

## Get to know the Higashi-son locals

The locals of Higashi-son Village invite you to participate and enjoy their three branched approach to tourism.

### GREEN: Agricultural experiences

- Enjoy the bounty of the forest with the freshest fruits, mangos, pineapples, and citrus depressa.
- Learn to play the traditional Okinawan stringed instrument the san-shin.
- Create your own bingata dyeing masterpieces with local artisans.
- Try your hand at traditional Okinawan farming.
- Enjoy living life like an Okinawan in one of Higashi-son's guesthouses or become a part of a Japanese family with their homestay program.

### ECO: Eco-friendly experiences

- Trekking with local guides through the numerous ecosystems of Northern Okinawa.
- Embrace nature and sleep out under the stars in one of several camping grounds.
- Observe nature in all its forms by visiting the mangrove parks or Tsutsuji eco park.



Forest Yanbaru of Higashi Village

## Booking your Higashi-son experience

Higashi-son offers many different types of accommodations for its guests. Here are a few detailed suggestions and a couple of recommendations for your stay.

■ **Stay at Matayoshi Coffee Farm:** This cabin retreat features several 6-person capacity cottages with fabulous views. On the Matayoshi Coffee Farm premises, take part in harvesting or roasting coffee beans. enjoy their cafe and bakery or experience your own barbecue outside. <https://www.matayoshicoffee.jp/stay.html>

■ **Canaan Slow Farm and Eco Stay:** This is a large eco-friendly farm resort and a great stay for those who love the rustic lifestyle and farm fresh meals. They offer a cafe stocked by their very own crops and livestock. A true farm to table experience in sustainable living. Keiji



Unique experiences



Yoda the owner built the resort on the concept of humans living in harmony with nature. Accommodations and the fee varies depending on the season

■ **Yambaru Lohas:** A gorgeous villa on its own private beach. Enjoy a restful luxurious stay at this private resort that only takes two couples at a time. Relax in the hammock or swing adorning the front tropical garden. After taking in the gorgeous home walk down to the private beach to feel the true luxury of your own beach space. The home is split into two types of accommodations. The Private Villa from 13,500 yen per night per person, or the private Tamashida room from 5,400 yen a night per person (minimum two nights stay). The villa does have a full kitchen for longer stays or enjoy breakfast in the cafeteria for 1,080 yen. <https://yambaru-lohas.com/>

### BLUE: Marine, seaside experiences

- Kayak down the Gesashi river or over the cresting waves of the ocean.
- Bath in the warm sunlight on the white sandy shores.
- See the fishes with snorkeling or diving experiences.
- Get one of the best views of the ocean and island while paddle boarding (SUP).
- BBQ fresh fish from nature's grocery store that you fished up yourself from shore or boat.



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# Airport VIP services make flying easier

BY SHIVANI VORA,  
BLOOMBERG

**H**ow much would you pay to skip the security and customs lines at the airport: A hundred bucks? Or four grand?

Easing the pain of jet-setting is a promise that a growing number of “airport concierge” companies are making to frequent fliers, whether they’re departing or arriving.

These concierge companies are a fast-growing segment. At least 10 airport concierge companies have debuted in the last three years, according to Michael Holtz, the owner of SmartFlyer, a global travel consultancy specializing in airports and airlines. Their popularity is growing, he said, as more people fly more often and get increasingly fed up with the hassle of it all. “If you’re time pressed, hate waiting in long lines or simply want to feel like a VIP, these services are for you,” Holtz said.

For anywhere between \$100 to \$4,000, flyers can book online, by phone, or through travel agents, and get expedited security access, help with getting VAT refunds, even access to private lounges. Unlike TSA Pre Check, these programs don’t require participation from individual airlines; instead, they partner with airports to clear security hurdles necessary to operate across terminals. As such, their business is similar to stores and restaurants that pay airports a fee to run airport locations.

Established players in this under-the-radar industry are also reporting upticks. The five-year-old Asia Fast Track, which focuses on Asia Pacific, Africa and the Middle East, averaged 500 bookings per month this year, compared with 150 a month in 2016. Royal Airport Concierge, a global service that’s been around since 2006, has doubled its business in the past five years. Founder Ron Gorfinkel didn’t provide specific figures but said, “We’re talking about [bookings] in the thousands.”

For Albert Herrera, the senior vice president of Global Product Partnerships at the travel agent consortium Virtuoso, sales of VIP airport services still only comprise about 2 percent of the company’s \$22 billion of annual revenue, but that’s four times what it was two years ago. “VIP airport concierges used to be for celebrities or the ultra-wealthy, but they’re now for anyone who wants a seamless airport experience,” he said.

Here’s a look at how four of the most significant airport concierge companies compare and which might be right for you.

## 1 Royal Airport Concierge

■ **Where it operates:** In more than 750 airports globally, Royal Airport Concierge operates in most major hubs

– JFK, Heathrow, Seoul, Riyadh, Mexico City, among others – as well as in more vacation-centric spots such as Cancun, Miami, and Nice.

■ **How it works:** Flyers have the option to book different tiers of service, but the exact number of tiers depends on the airport itself. At the most basic end, travelers are assigned a greeter who will accompany them from the time they arrive at the airport to when they board their flight; they get assistance with check-in and their carry-on bags. (That’s most helpful for unaccompanied minors or big families with loads to lug.) Those who book the middle tier get fast tracked through security and immigration in most countries. Splurging for the highest level of service is a full-scale luxury production. It means a ride to the plane in a limousine and entry into a private suite in the airport terminal that has complimentary amenities such as a top-shelf bar, a full spread of food with caviar, showers, and an office. And, of course, a butler to wait on you.

■ **Best for:** Luxury-loving flyers, big families, unattended minors.

■ **The cost:** \$100 per person for the most basic service; \$750 gets you the works.

## 2 Blacklane PASS

■ **Where it operates:** Not as large as Royal Airport Concierge, at 500 airports worldwide, but it operates in many of the same hubs, including Paris, New York, Rome, Beijing, and Dubai.

■ **How it works:** Blacklane PASS launched this summer as an offshoot of the car service company Blacklane. Its customers get a standard escort service that fast tracks them through security, customs and immigration; carries their luggage; and helps process VAT refunds. On your departure, your greeter can wait at the gate and call you when it’s time to board so you’re free to roam the Duty Free. On the way back, they’ll be waiting at the gate as soon as you get off the plane – a luxury that few post-9/11 travelers get to experience. One caveat: Unless you have lounge access on your own, you’ll have to pay extra for Blacklane to book you into one.

■ **Best for:** Flyers who care more about efficiency than high-end perks.

■ **The cost:** \$100 per person for either departures, arrivals or connections. Children two and under are free. While most flyers tip their greeters, a company spokesman said that gratuity is optional and not required.

## 3 Asia Fast Track

■ **Where it operates:** In more than 300 airports in Asia Pacific, Africa, and the Middle East



Travelers wait in line at Ronald Reagan National Airport in Washington during last year’s Thanksgiving crush. Some travelers are willing to pay good money for somewhere peaceful to go while they wait to fly. Photo by Andrew Harrer, Bloomberg

■ **How it works:** Asia Fast Track specializes in a region of the world where VIP services are relatively easier to come by – airports in the most populous continent have fewer government restrictions than those in the Americas and Europe. All customers

are escorted through every step of their arrival or departure process, whether that means being met at the plane before immigration for an arrival service or at the curbside for a departure – at most airports that means expedited service, but not all hubs allow for that perk. (Be sure to ask ahead of booking.) At select airports like Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, in Taipei, flyers can get more handholding, with services like check-in at a private terminal or a tarmac transfer where they’re driven to or from the plane in a limousine.

■ **Best for:** Fliers who are intimidated to navigate airports in Asia on their own.

■ **The cost:** \$99 to \$299 per person for either arrivals, departures or connections and depending on the airport and level of service booked. Gratuity is included.

## 4 The Private Suite

■ **Where it operates:** Los Angeles International Airport – with New York’s John F. Kennedy coming soon.

■ **How it works:** Owned and operated by the prominent security firm Gavin de Becker & Associates, The Private Suite, which launched in May 2017, is perhaps the most full-service offering of the bunch – but it’s also most limited in its operations. It’s essentially a former cargo facility adjacent to LAX that’s been converted into a private terminal serving all commercial airlines. As the name hints, the space has eleven private suites, each with a two-person daybed, bathroom, a food pantry with snacks and a dedicated staff. Flyers willing to pay up for access can also take advantage of luxuries like private TSA screening, on-site customs and immigration processing, and a ride to their aircraft in a BMW 7-series sedan. They’re great perks, but not as extraordinary as the price tag might suggest.

■ **Best for:** Flyers who have an unlimited budget and aren’t afraid to spend it.

■ **The cost:** \$3,700 for domestic flights and \$4,000 for international flights – covering up to four passengers per reservation. Frequent travelers can sign up for an annual membership for \$4,500, which knocks \$1,000 off each reservation and adds extra perks, like multi-course meals, massages, haircuts and the use of a conference room.



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# 48 HOURS IN TAIPEI

## Cocktails, dim sum and mountain hikes

STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
LINDSAY, NEMETH,  
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Taipei's eclectic bar scene, vibrant night markets and relaxed vibe has made it one of Asia's trendiest destinations.

### – FRIDAY –

We touched down in Taipei with one goal for the night – to indulge in world-class cocktails at the city's notorious speakeasies.

Before embarking on the night's adventure, we checked into the impressive Renaissance Hotel in Shilin. Built in 2018, this ultra-chic property is a worthy rival to the W Taipei in Xinyi.

With its spectacular lobby, shimmering rooftop pool and views of Yangmingshan National Park, we were glad to have opted for a hotel on the outskirts of Taipei's busy core.

We jumped into a taxi and headed to Da'an, the heart of Taipei's burgeoning bar scene. We asked our driver to take us to Ounce, one of the city's most acclaimed speakeasies. As our driver dropped us off at a sleepy cafe, we wondered if he had taken a wrong turn. But with the subtlest mention of our intended destination, a man

pressed a button and the wall disappeared revealing a bar jam-packed with people. We elbowed our way to the front of the bar and flagged the attention of the bartender. The New Yorker sized me up with one look and then served up a gin cocktail. It was delicate, balanced and perfect – it made me wonder if she had read my mind.

After a few creative concoctions, we set out across the street and down a dark alleyway looking for our next speakeasy, PUN. We were told to pull the red fire alarm to get in, something I was



not keen to try, especially in a foreign country. With some liquid courage, I pulled the alarm and like the words "open sesame", a door swung open to another lively speakeasy. This city was shaping up to be a drinker's paradise.

Floating from one bar to the next like two cocktail-crazed zombies, we let the excitement of this new and unusual scene carry us away. Next was Draft Land, a no-fuss bar serving cocktails on tap. After one final nightcap at Tiger Lily, we took a blurry taxi ride back to our Shilin hotel.

### – SATURDAY –

After a long lie-in, I opened our curtains. Serene clouds rolled over the lush Yangmingshan Mountains and locals practiced tai chi in a park across the road. Our room's floor to ceiling windows provided an excellent vantage point for my morning coffee.

Feeling lethargic from the previous night's activities, we decided to kick-start our day with a rigorous hike up Elephant Mountain. Before setting out, we stopped for a much-needed Taiwanese breakfast of youtiao (Chinese fried churros) and soy milk at a hole-in-the-wall place near the metro station. Getting to the hike was easy enough. We rode the Taipei Metro to Xiangshan Station and then took a short walk to the base of the hike. We climbed for twenty minutes through the dense woodland, enjoying the challenge as we ascended. The view from the lookout was well worth the climb.

No trip to Taipei is complete without lunching at the world-famous Din Tai Fung restaurant. After hiking down, we made the 12-minute walk to Taipei 101 and waited in line for the best dim sum I have ever had. Feasting on pork buns, xiaolongbao and dumplings, we savored the delicious meal while planning our next stop – the observation deck of Taipei 101. Currently the fourth tallest building in the world, its most thrilling feature is the rocket-fast elevator that



traverses 84 floors in 37 seconds. The trip up made us dizzy but the view from the top blew our minds.

Come late afternoon, we returned to our hotel to rest up for the night's feature activity – Shilin Night Market. We took a refreshing dip in the rooftop pool before walking just a few blocks west to foodie heaven. Amidst the chaos of hungry market goers, we found pepper pork buns, grilled prawns, oyster omelets, biscuit crepe wraps and other delectable treats. With hundreds of food vendors to choose from, the trick to finding the best is to look for the longest queues. After all, one could spend a lifetime eating in Taipei's night markets and still never try everything.

### – SUNDAY –

Sipping my Sunday morning coffee, I kept wondering what lay beyond that lush mountain ridge visible from our hotel. To satisfy my curiosity, we hopped into a taxi and ventured 45-minutes through the heart of Yangmingshan National Park, bound for Taiwan's mineral hot springs.

As we ventured into the mountains, the sprawling metropolis gave way to dense jungle. The sun disappeared into thick, brooding clouds. After stopping to let monkeys cross the winding road, our driver finally dropped us at Tien Lei Spa. Up in the cool mountain air, we soaked our sore muscles, let the toxins drain from our pores and reminisced about our whirlwind adventure in Taipei. We concluded that this could well become an annual trip.

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Photos by Geoff Day



# SHIBUYA SCRAMBLE & SECLUSION

Shibuya is synonymous with nightlife in the minds of Japanese and foreigners alike. Once the shops and cafes begin to close, the lounges and clubs awaken and the neighborhood is filled with bright lights, music and laughter.

The first stop for most will be from the Hachiko Exit of Shibuya Station where you will be greeted with the scramble. The famous intersection needs little introduction, but at night time some especially good shots and video can be taken if you have the right equipment. From the scramble you can find anything you need from western bars and clubs to Japanese izakaya or karaoke bars with ease. Most locations will be foreign friendly and have English menus.

Couple of tips for those staying out late. Trains shut down in Japan around midnight and Taxi prices tend to double from this time of night. If you are looking for an all-night club remember that arriving before 11:00pm or so will save you in entrance fee.

Halfway between bar and club are the lounges which are a nice mix between relaxation and partying. Shibuya Oiran is a lively standing area and bar downstairs and a relaxing lounge with table seating upstairs. Both areas are treated to a live DJ and great music, but while downstairs is great for chatting with fellow travelers and locals, the upstairs area is perfect for a relatively quiet conversation over food and drinks.

An even further low-key activity would be taking a few night photos at a temple or shrine. Surrounded by the urban environment and open all hours these shrines can be an interesting and surreal experience

to take in after passing through the scramble.

Konno Hachimangu Shrine is one such place within walking distance just to the east of Shibuya Station. The shrine is open at night and there is just enough lighting to get around with ease.

## AKABANE IZAKAYA ROAD

Akabane, located in Tokyo's northern Kita Ward, is a lively neighborhood with a high number of pubs and izakayas even for Tokyo standards. With a strong Japanese traditional authenticity Akabane is a popular area for local Japanese looking to let loose after work.

The North Exit of the station is best for nightlife. Within a minute of walking, visitors are greeted with a multitude of izakaya bars distinguishable by the paper lanterns and bright lights. The Izakaya doors and windows are open and outdoor seating is available. The smells of local meats and grilled fish abound as you walk the streets so be sure to bring your appetite. Seafood options such as sashimi, eel and river fish are also abundant. In the colder months, you may want to warm up with some hot oden.

Most of the locals are drinking beer and sake types such as rice wine, plum wine and distilled varieties though you can also find wines and liquor aplenty. Reservations and timidity is lost with liquid courage and the locals are often receptive to speaking and greeting foreigners who are much more uncommon in a neighborhood like this. This can be a great opportunity to make a local friend and ask for recommendations in foods, drinks and even travel destinations.

Though not quite to the international standards of more well-known nightlife districts of Tokyo such as Shibuya, Akabane is certainly welcoming to foreigners who are willing to take a bit of an adventure and many locations support with multilingual staff and menus.

Akabane Ichibanchi is one of the well known streets so if you need to ask a local for directions remember this name. Recommended izakaya locations include the following:

- Akabane Torobako (赤羽ト口箱)
- Marumasuya (まるます屋)



## TOKYO NIGHTLIFE

Exploring bars, clubs and more in two vibrant but differing neighborhoods

JAPAN TRAVEL

Tokyo nightlife has many faces and exploring both internationally and locally known districts is a bit part of exploring the city and people. Places like Roppongi, Shibuya and Shinjuku are widely known areas abundant with young Japanese and foreigners alike looking for bars, karaoke and clubs. Neighborhoods well known to locals include Shinbashi, Yurakucho and Akabane and are abundant with authentic Japanese eateries and izakayas, perfect for relaxing and drinking after a long day. Let's take a quick look at two uniquely Japan, but vastly different neighborhoods in Akabane and Shibuya.





# Stripes Sports Trivia

As of late, the AFC has been dominated by a trio of future Hall of Fame quarterbacks. Tom Brady, Peyton Manning or Ben Roethlisberger have represented the AFC in the Super Bowl in 14 of the last 15 seasons. The one exception was the Joe Flacco year in 2012. Who is the last QB, outside of the 4 mentioned, to win the Super Bowl from the AFC?

Answer

Trent Dilfer (2000-01)

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**J**apan, which hosted the 1964 Summer Olympics in Tokyo, will once again host the summer games next year. The country has also hosted the winter games twice. The 1972 games were in Sapporo, while Nagano hosted the games in 1998.

## Kanji of the week

県

Ken (Prefecture)

I am in hurry.

**Isoide masu.**

## SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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

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Edited by Margie E. Burke

**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.

Answers to Last Week's Sudoku:

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

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## The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

**ACROSS**

- Dance maneuver
- Radiator sound
- Discussion group
- Blacken
- Part of BTU
- Obey, with "by"
- Feel the
- Surfer's concern
- Polynesian kingdom
- Nut tree
- Home owner's document
- Raptor's roost
- Bananas, so to speak
- Model of perfection
- Electrical unit
- Word before status or bliss
- Party favorite
- Long-legged bird
- Kind of soup
- Leaves high and dry
- Bend out of shape
- Before of yore
- Driver's need
- Spanish rice dish
- Like some legends
- Cooked in a wok
- Jabber
- Embroidered loop
- Docket entry
- Celestial bear
- Make reparation
- CBer's sign-off
- Kind of school
- Laser printer powder
- Within earshot
- Herbal brews

**DOWN**

- Diving gear

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14				15				16				
17				18				19				
20				21		22		23				
24					25							
			26		27					28	29	30
31	32	33					34	35	36			
37								38				
39					40		41					
42				43		44						
			45	46				47	48	49	50	
51	52	53						54				
55						56		57	58			
59						60			61			
62						63			64			

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**2** Crowd maker?

**3** Breathless

**4** Steep cliff

**5** QB's cry

**6** Part of a monogram

**7** Shingles, e.g.

**8** Western topper

**9** Eucharistic plate

**10** Dwelling place

**11** Prime-time hour

**12** Drop-off spot

**13** Tip

**21** Winter warmer

**23** Ointment ingredient

**27** Diamondback, e.g.

**28** Able to see right through

**29** Will beneficiary

**30** Hot sandwich

**31** Whipped up

**32** Testify

**33** Jack's love in "Titanic"

**35** Bungle

**36** Barge in

**40** High-tech valley

**41** Jordan River's outlet

**44** Split

**45** Lying facedown

**46** Subsequent to

**48** Wilkes-\_\_\_, Pa.

**49** Between ports

**50** Some tides

**51** Brief quarrel

**52** "Jackson 5" member

**53** Computer image

**57** Flub

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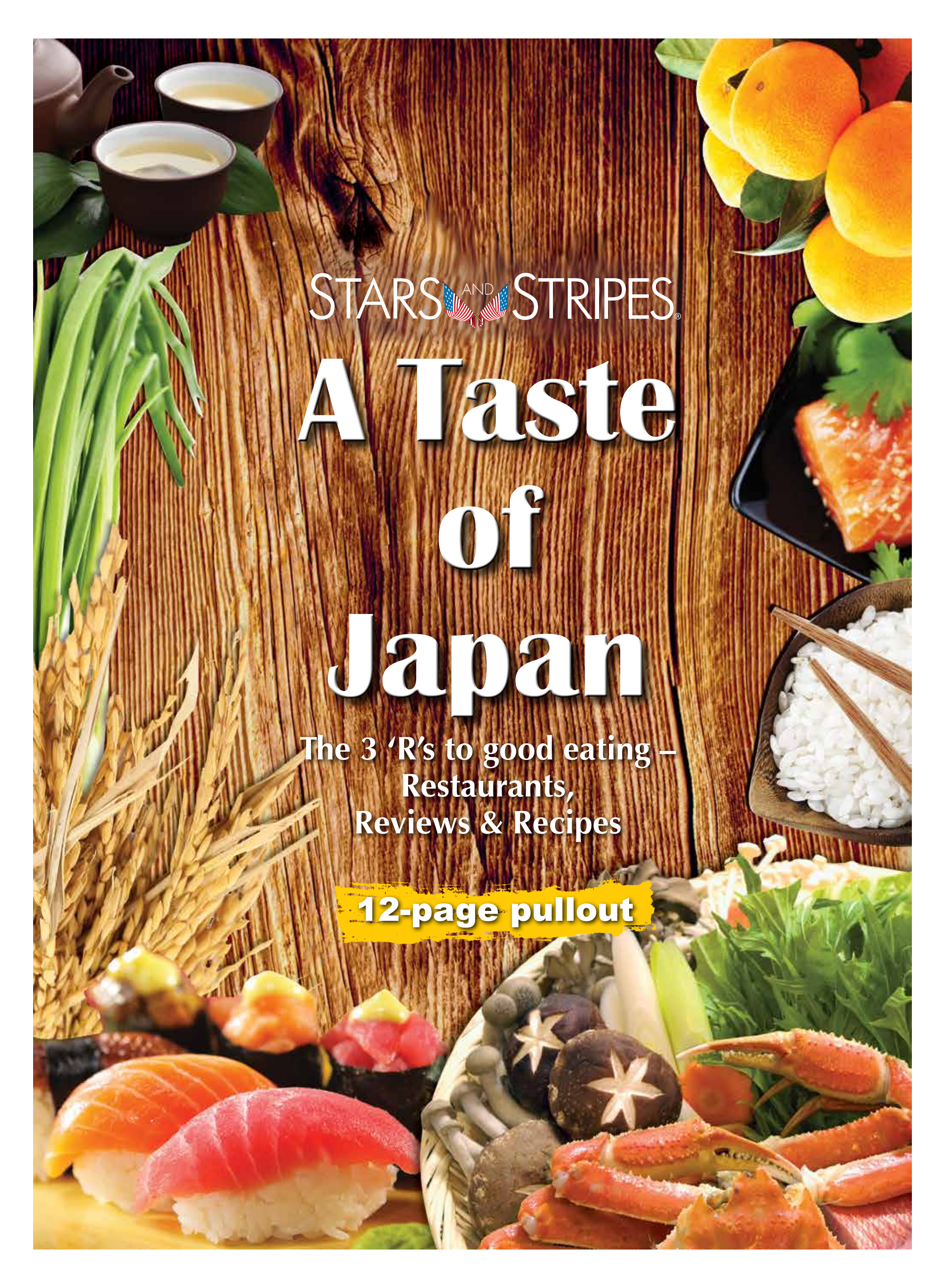
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# A Taste of Japan

The 3 'R's to good eating –  
Restaurants,  
Reviews & Recipes

**12-page pullout**



File photo

# Let's talk tempura

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPES JAPAN

If you think tempura is just another fried food – think again. This quintessential Japanese cuisine dates back to the Edo Period (1603-1867) and is perhaps second only to sushi as Japan's culinary contribution to the world.

Simple yet elegant, tempura is

ubiquitous in various forms throughout Japan. Tasty tidbits of lightly batter-fried vegies and seafood adorn almost every bento box and are found in virtually every grocery store for a mere 60-100 yen (\$0.60-\$0.85) each. It's a mainstay with noodles, and the essential snack food of Okinawa.

No Japanese restaurant is complete without some tempura on the menu and many do well specializing in it. A typical tempura restaurant usually has a counter where cooks prepare and then immediately serve tempura.

While a good bowl of

## Okinawa style ...

tempura-topped rice goes for a reasonable 600-1,000 yen at most chain tempura-ya, or tempura shops, their high-end counterparts draw connoisseurs willing dish out up to 20,000 yen for a multicourse meal featuring the dish.

"Tempura is the ideal food," says Akira Akashi of Ten-ichi tempura house in Sasebo. The traditional frying technique, he adds, preserves the flavor and texture of the food.

"Tempura is a really wonderful dish because the food is not cooked directly by the hot oil, but by steam under the batter," Akashi says. "This preserves the delicate nuances of the food. In fact, it is often considered a steamed dish."

So what is the ideal food to turn into tempura? What isn't?

Common ingredients include shrimp, squid, fish, green bell pepper, eggplant, sweet potatoes, pumpkin, mushroom, lotus root, bamboo shoots, carrot, burdock, green beans, okra and onion. But, that's not all.

There are seasonal and regional favorites such as oysters in the winter and, depending where you are,

chicken, pork and other meats. Even Spam, that Okinawan favorite, is commonly used down south where there is a slightly different twist on tempura.

Tempura is very popular on Okinawa, just like in the mainland. But it has a slightly different look and taste. While mainlanders cook tempura in thin plain batter for maximum crisp, Okinawans prefer a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6



Photos courtesy of Nakamoto Tenpuraten



## Mainland Japan style ...



Photos courtesy of Tan-nen





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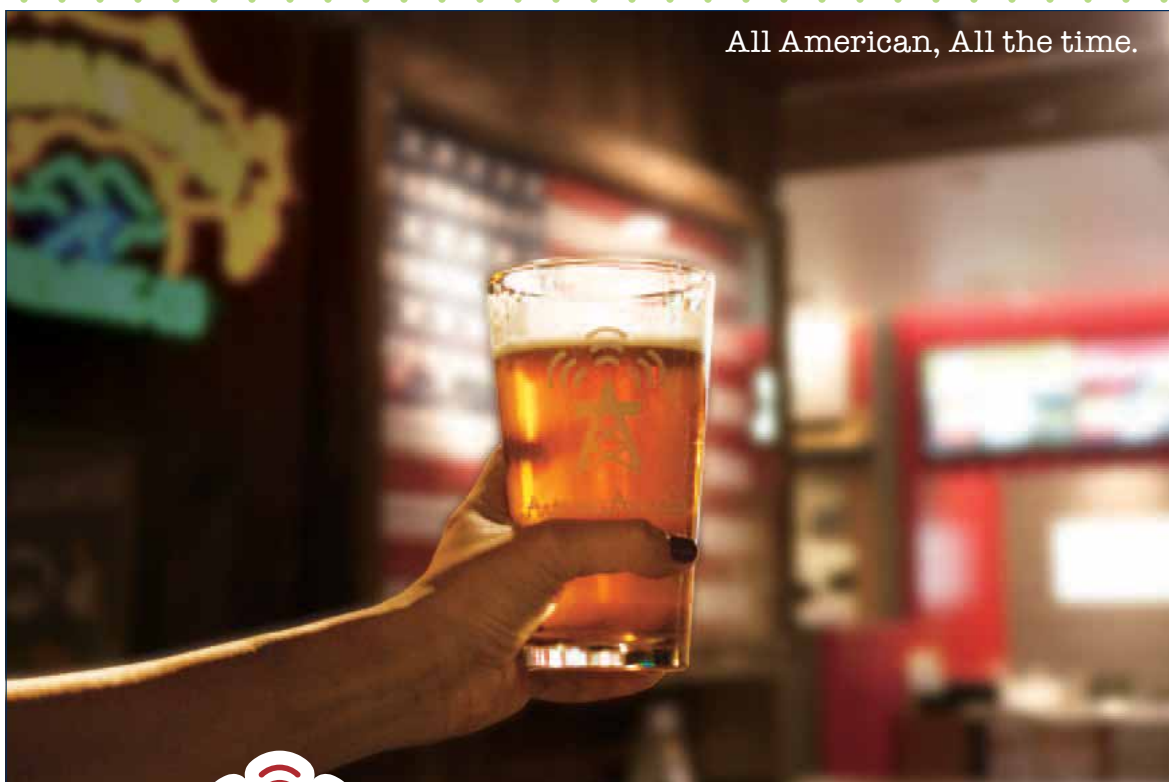
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### RESTAURANT INFO



# Take on your own tempura

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,  
STRIPE JAPAN

Tempura used to be a dish that required great skill and experience. However, since the birth of tempura powder – mix of flour, starch, rice flour and baking powder – anyone can fry up a batch tempura from the comfort of their own kitchen.

With the powder and a few simple tips, it's not so hard to make delicious tempura at home. Various specially formulated tempura powders are available at any supermarket or grocery shop. You can cook tempura using any of your favorite ingredients.

When making the batter, make sure to mix the tempura powder with water with a little ice, and don't mix it too much. You can also chill the bowl of batter by placing it in a larger bowl with ice in it. The batter is traditionally mixed in small batches using chopsticks for only a few seconds.

Be careful. Over mixing the batter and warm temperature will cause the flour mixture to become chewy and dough-like when cooked.

When cooking shellfish, squid, or hard-skinned watery vegetables, such as bell pepper or eggplant, the skin is usually scored with a knife to prevent the ingredients from bursting during deep frying.

Coat the thin slices of your f a -



The batter File photo

favorite vegetables or seafood with the batter, then deep fry in a hot oil.

The oil is an important factor of tempura, and helps determine the flavor and smell. Vegetable and canola oils are often used for cooking tempura at home, although sesame oil is traditionally used at many specialty restaurants. Try different types of oils that suit your tastes.

In general, the oil temperature should be 320 – 356 Fahrenheit. You can check the temperature with a drop of batter in the oil. The batter should sink then rise to float on the surface of the oil. If it sinks and does not surface, the oil is not hot enough; if it does not sink at all, the oil is too hot.

Scoop out the bits of tempura with a small mesh scoop. After cooking, let the tempura drain off excess oil on a steel rack.

Here are a few other guidelines:

- Prepare large, deep pan with plenty of oil. Tempura should be fried in oil that is at least about two inches deep.
- Wipe the ingredients to be fried well with a paper towel after you wash them.
- Use cold/iced water for the batter – this helps prevent it from absorbing too much oil.
- Make the batter right before frying tempura. Don't use too much batter to coat the ingredients.
- If you will fry both seafood and vegetables, fry the vegetables first.

takiguchi.takahiro  
@stripes.com



Tempura powder  
File photo

## Tips for perfection

There are three important factors in frying good tempura – oil temperature, the constancy and quality of the batter and timing, according to Ten-ichi tempura house's Akira Akashi in Sasebo

Timing is also important when it comes to removing tempura from the frying pan.

"Deep frying dehydrates," Akashi said. "The sizzling sound comes from the water evaporating from batter. Listen for the tone of the sizzling, when it changes tempura has yellowed that are cooked to the perfect crisp and tastiness."

When it comes to that tastiness, tasting tempura is also subject to good timing, according to Akashi. He says that former Prime Minister Shigeru Yoshida, a tempura enthusiast, is known to have once said, "You must eat tempura with (determination and ferocity) as if you were fighting your parent's enemy."

"He was right," Akashi said. "The best time to eat tempura is when it is hot and crispy – as soon as it has cooked. That is how to really appreciate the dish."

- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan



## Tentsuyu

(Tempura Dipping Sauce)

- 1 tablespoon dashi no moto (dried fish soup stock)
- 1 cup of water
- 2 tablespoons mirin (sweet rice cooking wine), or 1 tablespoon sugar
- 2 tablespoons sake or dry white wine
- 1/4 cup soy sauce
- ginger root to taste, freshly grated

Boil the dashi in the water for about 2-3 minutes, then remove from heat and stir in the remaining ingredients.

## The temperature

"In order to cook good tempura you have to keep the oil temperature stable," he says. "When you are frying, the oil temperature rises so you need to monitor and maintain it at a stable degrees."

"I usually set at 190 degrees Celsius (374 Fahrenheit), a little higher than the standard in order to make the tempura lighter and crispier," Akashi says. "The time needed for frying vegetables, shrimp or fish are vary depending on what kind they are, but oil temperature for them can be the same."

Cooking times range between a few seconds for delicate leaf vegetables, to several minutes for thick items or large "kakiage," or vegetable and shrimp fritter.

However, not all the expert agree on oil temperature. Tokio Nakamoto of Okinawa's Nakamoto Tempuraten insists on adjusting the temperature according to the ingredients being cooked.

"Seaweed definitely needs high temperature while potatoes fry better at rather lower temperature," she explains. "The most important thing about cooking tempura is adjusting the oil temperature."

## The batter

Akashi says using iced water is key to good tempura batter. He says he beats eggs into it first then mixes in the flour last.

## The timing

As for the timing, he says the faster ingredients are coated in the cold batter and added to the fryer, the better the tempura will be.

"You have to do it all at once within a second," Akashi says. "If you dip in the batter too much, or take too much time, the tempura would never come up crisp and beautiful."



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### RESTAURANT INFO





A "tenmori" combo plate File photo

# TEMPURA: It's more than mere fried food

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

richer thicker seasoned batter for maximum flavor.

"Selling for a mere 60 yen (\$0.50) a piece, on Okinawa tempura is considered more of a snack, like "takoyaki" (breaded fried octopus) or "nikuman" (meat buns)" says Kyoko Hirata of Okinawa Convention and Visitors Bureau. "It is usually made a little flatter here with well-seasoned yellow batter made with lots of eggs."

"Fish tempura – both tuna and white fish – squid, red potato, as well as

seaweed and sausage are popular ingredients," she adds.

For the most part, Hirata says, tempura is typically sold at fish and candy stores on Okinawa. However, tempura restaurants that serve fare like those in mainland Japan can also be found in larger Okinawan cities.

While Okinawan-style tempura can be easily enjoyed without a condiment, its mainland counterpart is almost always eaten with a special dipping sauce, salt or citrus juice.

The most common dipping sauce for this kind of tempura is "tentsuyu," a thin sauce made from soy sauce, sweet sake

and stock. However, straight soy sauce has also been used as a dipping sauce since Edo Era when tempura originated as an inexpensive food for commoners.

So whether you are looking for a quick snack or an elaborate traditional meal, check out the nearest tempura-ya outside the gates. It's a great way to get a true Land of the Rising Sun.

"The simple and quick process makes the flavor of anything that's cooked really stand out."



Tempura at an Okinawan s

## OKINAWA

### Nakamoto Tempuraten

Nakamoto Tempuraten is one of the most popular tempura shops on Okinawa.

Since the shop is running its own fish shop and cultivating seaweed, fresh fish and seaweed are always available for tempura.

"We use only local fresh fish for our tempura," says owner Tokie Nakamoto. "So, our ingredients for tempura change every day in accordance with the daily catch. It may be tuna some days, and swordfish or marlin on another day."

All tempura menu items with fish, squid, vegetables and seaweed are for 65 yen (\$0.55). "Mozuku" and "aosa" (types of seaweed) tempura are the most popular at this shop.

You can eat their tempura without any dipping sauce because the batter is seasoned, according to Nakamoto.

The shop is located on Oujima Island which you can access by bridge. They also offer tempura to go.

"Since our shop is facing a beautiful beach, groups of people often come and buy tempura here and enjoy it on the beach," Nakamoto said.



Photos courtesy of Nakamoto Tempuraten

### Uema Bento Tempuraten

Fish and shrimp tempura are the most popular at Uema Bento Tempuraten. "We use whiptail for fish tempura because it has a soft texture and it goes well with tempura," says owner Yoshikazu Uema. "Tuna, since the meat can be too hard for tempura."

According to Uema, texture of his tempura is "koyaki," or breaded octopus treats, in the mainland.

"With thicker and tasty batter, you can eat it without dipping sauce, but you may want to use sauce like mayonnaise or ketchup, too," he said.

"Our tempura may be a little tough to mainlanders. But it has a unique crispy yet puffy texture that I am sure everyone would enjoy."

The shop is located near Kadena Air Base and Camp Courtney, so you can drop by on the way home.

You can order 100 or more tempura for any occasion. "Call us 30 minutes or an hour before you need it, and your tempura will be ready to pick up within 30 minutes (may take longer on weekends)," Uema said.

This shop also offers home delivery, and you can

Location: 9 Okutake, Tamagusuku, Nanjo City  
Open April - October 10 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. (Nov - Mar, - 6 p.m.)  
URL: nakamotosengyoten.com/  
For more information, call 098-948-3583

Location: 3-23-20 Noborikawa, Okinawa City  
Open 5 a.m.- 8 p.m.  
URL: uemabento.com/  
For more information, call 098-937-9477





File photo



Photo courtesy of Uema Bento Tempuraten



Photo courtesy of Tan-nen

the taste of the  
cooking pro-  
ingredient  
," says Izumi  
Saka-  
moto of Tan-nen res-  
taurant in Hachinohe. "That is the great  
charm of tempura."  
takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



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Uema. "We don't use

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Photos courtesy of Uema Bento Tempuraten

# MAINLAND JAPAN

## Tan-nen Hachinohe, near Misawa AB

Located in the center of busy streets of Hachinohe City, you can enjoy traditional tastes of tempura in a cozy and relaxing atmosphere at Tannen.

Its counter seats enables you to appreciate newly fried tempura in hot while observing cook's skilled work. "The best way of enjoy tempura is eat one in hot after another," says Izumi Sakamoto of Tan-nen.

Besides prawn, sweet potato, asparagus, lotus roots and other popular seasonal tempuras, the restaurant offers its own unique sea urchin and chicken tempuras.

The restaurant prepared a couple of different salts of Ishikawa and Hiroshima prefectures for highlighting each ingredient, both vegetables and seafood.

"Through trial and errors, we have established our own style for cooking tempura with crispy batter along with tasty ingredients," Sakamoto said. "So, any customer will enjoy our tempura."



Photo courtesy of Tan-nen

Location: Kongo Building 1F, 18 Takajo-koji, Hachinohe City  
Open Mon - Sat, 11:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m., 5 - 10 p.m.  
URL: [kongou-group.com/%e5%ba%97%e8%88%97%e6%83%85%e5%a0%b1/%e4%b8%b9%e5%b9%b5/](http://kongou-group.com/%e5%ba%97%e8%88%97%e6%83%85%e5%a0%b1/%e4%b8%b9%e5%b9%b5/)  
For more information, call 0178-45-2812

## Hakata Tempura Naguya Atsugi, near NAF Atsugi

Although this restaurant is located near NAF Atsugi of the Kanto Plains, it serves tempura in the Hakata way, as the name indicates.

Chicken and pork loin tempura are served with free homemade garnish, such as salted and fermented squid, pickles and fried leaf.

The most popular menu item is the Hakata Set which contains tempuras of shrimp, whiting, squid, pork loin and three seasonal vegetables.

"Although we have a fixed set menu, we serve each tempura right after it is cooked," says Norimitsu Nagura, owner of the shop.

"Although restaurants usually use sesame oil in their tempura in the Kanto region, sometimes it can be too heavy. We use canola oil so people can eat it every day," Nagura said.

To highlight the flavor of ingredients, they always try to make the batter coating as thin as possible, according to Nagura.

"We pay special attention to the oil temperature and timing," Nagura said.

Garnishes are prepared fresh every day.

This restaurant is popular with day workers and families, alike.



Photos courtesy of Hakata Tempura Naguya

Location: 3-2-1 Tsumada Higashi, Atsugi City  
Open 11 a.m. - 10 p.m.  
URL: <http://naguya.com>  
For more information, call 046-225-7979

## Ten-ichi Sasebo, near Sasebo Naval Base

Founded 60 years ago, Ten-ichi is known as one of the oldest tempura restaurants in Sasebo.

This tiny shop can accommodate only 10 people at the counter at one time.

"In this tiny space, I feel I can manage everything myself, and it helps to me concentrate on cooking," says Aki-  
ra Akashi, owner of Ten-ichi.

Its popular tempura set for 1,500 yen (\$13) contains shrimp, cod, squid and three vegetables, along with red miso soup, pickles, a vinegared dish and rice.

"I visit markets every day to select the best seafood and vegetables in season," Akashi said. "So, the menu at my restaurant is different every day depending on the season."

In the middle of winter, they are currently serving oyster tempura. Throughout the wintertime, a special tempura set with oysters is available for 2,500 yen (\$22).

It contains three oysters, one squid, two shrimp and three vegetables. The restaurant has a contract with a local farm, which enables it to get fresh oysters.

English menus with pictures are available at this shop.



Photos courtesy of Ten-ichi

Location: 7-14 Kamigyo machi, Sasebo City  
Open Fri-Wed, 11a.m. - 2:30 p.m., 5 - 9 p.m.  
(Thu, 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.)  
URL: [tabelog.com/nagasaki/A4202/A420201/42003600/](http://tabelog.com/nagasaki/A4202/A420201/42003600/)  
For more information, call 0956-22-7732





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### RESTAURANT INFO

**10% DISCOUNT!!**  
 Show your Military ID.

**Chicken Quesadillas**  
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**BBQ Baby Back Ribs**  
Regular Size  
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**US ANGUS Rib-Eye Steak**  
300gms  
¥3,280

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Kurihama

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 2-30 Wakamatsu-cho, Yokosuka-shi,  
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www.outbacksteakhouse.co.jp/en



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### RESTAURANT INFO





## Check out Charlie T's new dinner lineup

At Charlie T's, we refreshed our dinner menu in a way that will leave your taste buds yearning for more. On Mondays, savor our new Family-Style Dinner, perfect for both hungry parents and children. Tuesday evenings we'll be featuring our delicious Pasta & Crepes, prepared right before your very eyes. Bring your friends and family on Friday and build your own pizza. And who can forget our popular Mongolian BBQ on Saturdays. Coming soon on Wednesdays, we'll be serving up our Filipino Sampler Platter Special. Dinner is served from 5-9 p.m. Be sure to present your virtual club card as a part of your numerous membership benefits!

### RESTAURANT INFO

WEEKLY DINNERS 5-9 p.m.				
MON	TUE	THU	FRI	SAT
FAMILY STYLE	PASTA & CREPES	BBQ	BUILD YOUR OWN PIZZA	MONGOLIAN
\$25 / TWO People \$10 / Additional Person \$6 / Ages 12 & Under	\$13	\$16	\$14	80¢ per Ounce

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ENLISTED CLUB  
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# A Taste of Japan

### McDonald's Burger Battle

**Dabuchi vs Teriyaki**  
You decide which is best!

#### Chee Chee Dabuchi

White and yellow cheddar cheese and two beef patties.

#### Chee Chee Teriyaki

White and yellow cheddar cheese and teriyaki burger.

#### Hee Hee Dabuchi

Spicy double cheeseburger

#### Hee Hee Teriyaki

Spicy Teriyaki McBurger

Tel: 0176-50-1415 URL [www.mcdonalds.co.jp/](http://www.mcdonalds.co.jp/)  
Address: 2-31-144 Sakae-cho misawa-shi, Aomori



## McDonald's burgers with a Japanese twist

For those of you who cherish a Big Mac and crispy fries, the Golden Arches in Misawa is the perfect safe-haven for you! The menu is complete with all your McDonald's favorites and even a few Japanese twists thrown in, including our tasty Dabuchi and Teriyaki burgers. We added two types of cheese to these burgers and also spiced them up for those who like it hot. These items are for a limited time only, so what are you waiting for? The Misawa branch has an indoor playground and is only 5 minutes from base.

### RESTAURANT INFO





## A little story about Jack & Betty hotdogs

Located in Sky Plaza Misawa, Jack & Betty Food Corner offers a variety of tasty hotdogs. Our eight original homemade hotdogs are popular with the military community and all lovers of hotdogs. Our large juicy "dogs" are served on local freshly baked buns, a combo that will leave your mouth watering and your stomach grumbling for more. And if you do have some room left, we recommend our homemade, naturally-flavored and additive-free gelato, the perfect dessert to any of our tasty hotdogs! So, stop by Jack & Betty. We'll make you feel at home while you chomp on our tasty dogs.

### RESTAURANT INFO



## A Taste of Japan

*The premier food service company  
serving Yokosuka base*

Weekdays 07:00 a.m. - 20:30 p.m.  
Weekends 08:00 a.m. - 14:30 p.m.



**"All You Can Eat" Breakfast Buffet**  
Monday - Friday, 7-9:30 a.m. Saturday and Sunday, 8-10:30 a.m.



## Breakfast buffet great way to start off day!

The Market Basket at Yokosuka Naval Base has just what you need to fuel your body to kick off the day - our "All You Can Eat" Breakfast Buffet! Enjoy a variety of eggs, meats, pastries, waffles, French toast, pancakes, fruits, veggies and more for \$9.99 (kids under 6, \$5.99). For \$1 more, savor our "All You Can Drink" fresh-brewed drip coffee. Chefs from around the globe developed the menu for the buffet and made-to-order options for the entire family. The Market Basket offers a taste of home without the work! Catering and private dining available. Friday Happy Hour specials 5 p.m. - closing.

### RESTAURANT INFO



# Replica food



STORY AND PHOTOS BY  
REY WATERS,  
JAPAN TRAVEL

**W**hile on your visit to Japan you will come across many restaurants that present food samples of their offerings. The plastic food looks so real and the details make your mouth water. Go to the top floor of any department store and almost all the restaurants will showcase realistic looking dishes. Many times when dining alone I show the waitress my choice by pointing to the display in the window.

Back in the Showa period a man

named Takizo Iwasaki decided to form a company to make replica food. In 1932 he opened a factory in Osaka and it became the largest food display company in Japan. Originally the sample food was made of wax, but after sitting in the display case for a long period of time during the hot weather their shape changed, so in the 1970's they switched to a durable plastic.

Miwa and I recently booked a class at Iwasaki's "Ganso Shokuhin Sample-ya" company in Tokyo, which holds workshops for making replica food. Today it was Lettuce and Tempura. I chose shrimp and potato for the tempura.

Toyama-san, our instructor, explained to me in English the

process we would experience during our class. She also noted that many foreigners join her workshops.

The first and most important step is to heat the water to 42 degrees Celsius (107.6 F). Today we used three colors to make our samples of green, white, and light yellow.

There were a total of 7 students, so the class moved along pretty quickly.

To make the Tempura pieces you need to hold a cup with the liquid 60 cm high and pour slowly into the vat. For shrimp, pour in a rectangular shape and for the potato pour in a circle. Place the shrimp onto the rectangle and slowly submerge in the water while wrapping the ends. When complete, place in cold water and there you have Shrimp Tempura. It does look real, even the one I made.

The lettuce process was a little

more complicated using two colors, however the results were the same. We chose to have ours cut in half showing the realistic inner texture.

Ganso offers several other choices of sample food making at their two Kappabashi locations.

The class was very inexpensive when you consider what the cost would be to purchase the three items we made. Our workshop cost 2160 yen (\$19). The prices vary according to the food you want to make.

I am by no means an artist, but this process will give you a feeling of accomplishment, and even children are welcome to take the class.

Downstairs from the workshop is a retail store where you can purchase items for your home or restaurant. They have two stores in Tokyo

and one at the Red Brick Warehouse in Yokohama.

During your visit to Japan this workshop is a nice way to spend a couple of hours while taking home a neat souvenir that you personally made.

For additional information go to their website, or call 0120-81-1839.

The workshops must be done in groups with a limit of 16 per class. Both workshop locations are just minutes walking distance from Tawaramachi Station or Asakusa Station in the Kappabashi-dori area of Tokyo.



Our colors for the workshop

Holding the cup 60cm high before pouring



## Facts from the Fryer

**C**an you imagine frozen ice cream served up as piping hot tempura?

### Deep-fried deepfreeze

Some of the more unusual tempura-prepared foods include "umeboshi," or pickled plums; "natto," or fermented soybeans, banana, mango and sushi.

Perhaps, however, the most unusual tempura of all is ice cream.

Although it is hard to believe you have "ice" cream deep fried in 350 degree oil, it is possible. The trick is to encase the ice cream in a pound cake-like shell or something similar with air pockets. The air in the cake prevents ice cream from melting in the heat until this unique tempura is cooked and ready to eat.

Needless to say, it should be eaten as soon as it is done cooking.

### All fried foods are NOT equal

You may have noticed that in addition to tempura there are also popular deep-fried foods in Japan that are usually coated with panko breadcrumbs. But make no mistake – as tasty as these foods may be, they are not tempura.

What sets them apart? It's simple – the breading.

In Japan, fried vegetables and seafood with breadcrumbs are

called "furai" (fry), such as "ebi" (shrimp) furai or "aji" (fish) furai, or "kaki" (oyster) furai.

Breaded meats and similar foods, on the other hand, are called "katsu" (cutlet) such as "ton-katsu" (pork cutlet) or bifu-katsu (beef cutlet).

They are considered to be completely different from tempura. Both furai and katsu are seasoned first, then flour, egg and breadcrumbs are applied before they are deep fried.

There is also another popular Japanese fried dish, called "karaage." This is usually, chicken pieces, shrimp or octopus that is seasoned then coated with rice flour or starch before being fried.



- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan

## WHAT'S IN A WORD?

### Speculation on the origins of tempura

**T**he recipe for tempura was introduced to Japan by Portuguese Jesuit missionaries particularly active in the city of Nagasaki also founded by the Portuguese, during the sixteenth century (1549).

Tokugawa Ieyasu, founder and first shogun of the Tokugawa Shogunate of Japan, reportedly loved tempura. Originally, tempura was a popular food eaten at street vendors called yatai since the Genroku era.

The word "tempura," or the technique of dipping fish and vegetables into a batter and frying them, comes from the word "tempora," a Latin word meaning "times," or "time period" used by both Spanish and Portuguese missionaries to refer to the Lenten period or Ember Days (ad tempora quadragesimae), Fridays, and other Christian holy days.

Ember Days or quattuor tempora refer to holy days when Catholics avoid red meat and instead eat fish or vegetables. The idea that the word "tempura" may have been derived from the Portuguese noun tempero, meaning a condiment or seasoning of any kind, or from the verb temperar, meaning "to season" has not been substantiated. However, the Japanese language could easily have



assumed the word "tempero" as is, without changing any vowels as the Portuguese pronunciation in this case is similar to the Japanese.

There is still today a dish in Portugal very similar to tempura called peixinhos da horta, "garden fishies," which consists in green beans dipped in a batter and fried. The end result is usually chewier than tempura.

It is also possible that the Portuguese picked the technique up from Goa which was their colony in India and this could very well be a variation of the pakora.

The term "tempura" is thought to have gained popularity in southern Japan; it became widely used to refer to any sort of food prepared using hot oil, including some already existing Japanese foods. Today, the word "tempura" is also commonly used to refer to satsuma age, a fried fish cake which is made without batter.

- Source: Wikipedia





## PIZZA HUT LOCATIONS:

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Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings  
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**Atsugi 1030-2100**

DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE

Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings  
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and drinks



*LIVE MÁS*

## TACO BELL LOCATIONS:

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Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items

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Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items

**Sasebo 1030-2100**

Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts  
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items

