One member of Team Misawa is trying to spread positivity by delivering classic entertainment to others on base. Mr. Charles Mason is the proud owner of the Free Yellow Door Library, a collection of donated books inside a refrigerator outside of his house off base. Mason started this initiative as a way to recycle gently-used books and spread positivity to Team Misawa.

In order to reach a larger audience, Mason often brings books onto base. However, not everyone in Misawa can easily borrow books from Mr. Mason’s library, especially people in unique circumstances caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

At Misawa, and many other places throughout Japan, a recent spike in COVID-19 cases has resulted in many service members and
families in isolation or quarantine. The quick COVID-19 mitigation efforts can catch some people off guard, allowing time to pack only essentials prior to isolation. Members and families are restricted to their residence to prevent the spread of COVID-19. This is also known as Restriction of Movement (ROM). During ROM, many have to rely on others to drop off additional items they might need or want like personal entertainment.

After speaking to a friend, Mr. Mason thought people might enjoy having his books to read during their ROM. He set up an online signup sheet where people can request books to be dropped off to help make ROM a more comfortable experience.

“So that’s where it got developed. Go online, enter in the ages of your family members, even the adults, and we’ll deliver two books per person,” said Mr. Mason. “We’ll put them in a bag and drop it off at your door.”

Charles Mason hopes that delivering books to people in isolation will help increase morale.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

BOOKS: Keeping folks in ROM well read

This is Mason’s second time here at Misawa and he’s very fond of the community. He wants to bring the same positive energy he felt back then to the people who are here today.

As a member of Team Misawa, Mason believes doing these kinds of services, and reaching out to people, strengthens the community. In addition to the Free Yellow Door Library initiative, he works with the Food Pantry on base to supply ROM Bags, a prepared food kit and household items for sponsors to give to incoming members when they enter ROM.

“It’s people like Charles that make Misawa a family,” said Mrs. Audrey Meininger, spouse of the 35th Fighter Wing command chief. “I hope things like this catch on and inspire others to spread kindness.”

To Mason, it’s not solely about books or giving people something to do.

“IT’s all about helping each other,” said Mason. “My wife and I definitely want to make sure Misawa members have a great time. We love it here. We think it’s such an amazing assignment.”

Charles Mason hopes that delivering books to people in isolation will help increase morale.

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Zama NCO, single mom making difference in Army

BY SEAN KIMMONS, U.S. ARMY GARRISON JAPAN

CAMP ZAMA – As a competitive person, Staff Sgt. Sharonica White doesn’t like to be told she can’t do something. She had learned some of that mindset a decade ago while attending basic training. At the time, a Black female drill sergeant planted a seed in her after she advised White she would need to prove herself throughout her Army career.

“I think because I had gotten that [advice] at such a young rank that I’m always trying to compete with my male counterparts,” White said.

White, 31, of San Antonio and a religious affairs specialist assigned to U.S. Army Garrison Japan, said she seeks to lead from the front when given the opportunity.

In an Army birthday event in 2020, she was the sole woman in an Army Combat Fitness Test competition. A photo of her performing a deadlift was placed on posters and shared on military websites. While embarrassed at first, she said she hopes the photo at least helped motivate someone.

White’s name can also be seen on a wall inside Yano Fitness Center for completing the 500-pound weightlifting challenge. And there are trophies in her office that she has earned in other sporting events on post.

In January, she was chosen for her next challenge – Officer Candidate School. But her selection almost didn’t happen.

White had initially applied for OCS in 2017, but was denied due to medical reasons. She said she had previously been seen for behavioral health, and was later medically cleared after the denial.

White then moved to Japan, settled into a new role and eventually decided to apply again. Her second packet was denied for the same reason.

Determined, she reached out to Army Medical Command, which noticed it was a glitch in its system and her paperwork was quickly fixed and she was cleared.

With help from her chain of command, her packet was resubmitted and finally approved.

Despite the delay, White still encourages other soldiers to seek behavioral health options when needed, so that they can become stronger.

“Fight for what you want,” she said. “You have to fight for it, because no one is going to fight besides yourself. You have your supporters, your leaders, your family, but it takes you. You have to be resilient to bounce back.”

CHANGE AGENT

White, a single mother of two who is also pursuing a master’s degree in business administration, looks forward to the chance to lead as an officer.

She considers herself a “change agent,” a person who can help transform their organization by inspiring and influencing others.

“I try my best to be a change agent, because I don’t like being a stereotype – a female soldier, a Black soldier or soldier in general,” she said. “When I walk into the door, I want them to see me as an individual and the wealth of knowledge that I bring to the table.”

While the term “melting pot” is often synonymous with diversity, White believes “stew” may be a better term. People should not be melted, or changed, to form something, she said, but rather stewed to bring out the best parts in them.

“You want to keep people however they were brought up, whatever culture [or] tradition they have,” she said. “You want to bring that into your organization, so you can learn from everybody.”

One challenge she expects as a new officer will be to gain the trust of everyone in her unit. As a noncommissioned officer, she has acquired tools to help her do that, but she is ready to learn more in her upcoming training.

“As leaders, when you take care of your people, your people will take care of you,” she said. “You don’t want people to just respect your rank; you want them to respect you as a whole.”

Maj. Doug Ochner, deputy chaplain for USAG Japan, believes White has the right attitude and intellectual abilities to someday become an effective officer.

“She is tenacious and persistent,” said Ochner, who is also her supervisor. “We have been faced with a lot new systems pushed down on us from [Army Installation Management Command] since COVID started, and she has navigated those systems in order to continue paying contractors and basically continue religious support operations here at our chapels.”

The road ahead for White will not be easy, but Ochner said her mindset of always seeking self-improvement will help her along the way.

“Officers are made; they’re not born, so it’ll be a process,” he said. “She’ll have to go through three months of OCS, and then followed on by a basic course. That will definitely shape and guide her in what is expected of an officer.”

ROLE MODELS

One of White’s role models who has inspired her to do well is former Lt. Gen. Nadja West, the first Black woman to be a lieutenant general in the Army.

“When you see a female of color in a position that she was able to obtain, it just motivates you,” White said. “You can realize that you can do it, too.”

She has also admired former Gen. Colin Powell, the first Black chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, for his leadership philosophy, which she has incorporated into her own approach, she said.

Today, more than 190,000 Soldiers who identify as African American or Black serve in the Army, which is about 19% of the total force, according to Army officials.

Among them, there could be the next trailblazer for the Army.

“We can do whatever we set our heart to do like anybody else,” White said. “We’re no different. We all breathe the same air at the end of the day.”
Rozafa (Rosie) Bytyqi

Rozafa (Rosie) Bytyqi was born and raised in Kosovo, a small country in Southeast Europe. She spent most of her life there until she married her husband and moved to Japan in February 2020. Being away from her home country was difficult in the beginning, however, in September 2021, volunteering at the USO gave Rosie the chance to integrate, meet new people, and give back to the community here at Yokota Air Base. During this period, Rosie has recorded 74 hours spanning over 26 Center Volunteer shifts. Despite her fear of being shy, she has stepped out of her comfort zone by participating in and leading seven special events and programs. These events included Spouse Coffee Connections, Fly by Airmen lunches and the installation-sponsored Winter Wonderland event that had over 3,000 in attendance. It was through these special events and programs that Rosie had the opportunity to foster friendships with other like-minded volunteers and patrons who have never been away from home or to a new country and make them feel at home. Moreover, her support to our center has connected well over 860 patrons back to their families, homes, and countries, in which she has been an integral part over these last four months. Though she has had a short time volunteering with the USO, the impact she has made with our center, programs, and the community have been noticed by all and commented on. In fact, her commitment and dedication to the USO’s mission cemented Rosie earning the January 2022 Volunteer of the Month Award.

Q. What is your favorite memory volunteering at the USO?
A. “My favorite memory from volunteering is the Spouse Coffee Connections. Seeing new spouses being welcomed to the community and connecting with each other brings me joy.”

Q. Besides volunteering, what else do you like to do in your free time?
A. “Besides volunteering, I like to go on hikes and read books.”

– Amber Ferro, USO Yokota
Japanese people love hot springs! With hot spring resorts often being featured on television and in magazines, you can find these facilities packed with visitors during the vacation season. In the mountainous areas of Japan’s Tohoku region, there are many secluded hot springs otherwise known as hitou. The hitou’s waters’ superb qualities warm any who make the trip. Chosen by one of our writers who’s a huge Tohoku fan, here we will introduce the top five must-visit hitous in the region. Being surrounded by both a snowy and steamy landscape is a truly extraordinary experience!

Many of these hot spring resorts are in the middle of nature, so we recommend taking a car.

**Health & Safety Measures**
- Indoor disinfection measures taken - Sanitizer installed - Ventilation measures in place - Staff wear masks, gargle, wash hands regularly, and monitor body temperature - Guests are required to wear masks.

**Zao Onsen**
- Located a 40-minute drive from JR’s Yamagata Station.
- Over 1900 years ago, Yamato Takeru, who was part of the imperial family, rose to power and sent his troops to the Tohoku region.
- During this time, Kibino Tagayu, one of the military leaders leading the army, was said to have stumbled upon the hot spring. During the Edo period (1603~1868), the area around this spring was used as a western mountain pass to get to the Buddhist mountain deity, Zao Gongen.
- Furthermore, in the Taisho period (1912~1926), a path was built from the foot of the mountain to the hot spring’s source. After this, a ski resort was opened on the mountain in 1925, making Zao Onsen a pioneer in the hot spring resort industry.
- Zao Onsen’s hot spring water comes from a highly acidic sulfur spring. The spring’s water is known to promote blood flow and make skin stronger by strengthening the epidermis.
- In addition to the hot spring baths available at the resort’s traditional Japanese inns and hotels, there are also three communal baths, three footbath facilities, and five day-use hot springs to enjoy!
- Zao Onsen’s large open-air bath is a short walk from the hot spring resort. This is a hot spring that you absolutely cannot miss!
- Using water from a mountain stream, the healing properties of this hot spring target all five of the senses!
- Here, you can enjoy a truly luxurious experience while being soothe by the sounds of chirping birds and a lapping river.
- Unwind and enjoy the rustic atmosphere provided by the communal baths and traditional Japanese inns at this hot spring resort!

**Tohoku Region**

BY MAGAZAKU
LIVE JAPAN

Japanese people love hot springs! With hot spring resorts often being featured on television and in magazines, you can find these facilities packed with visitors during the vacation season. In the mountainous areas of Japan’s Tohoku region, there are many secluded hot springs otherwise known as hitou. The hitou’s waters’ superb qualities warm any who make the trip. Chosen by one of our writers who’s a huge Tohoku fan, here we will introduce the top five must-visit hitous in the region. Being surrounded by both a snowy and steamy landscape is a truly extraordinary experience!

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Goshogake Onsen

An elegant hot spring resort with views of rising steam

Goshogake Onsen is located a 50-minute drive from Katsuno-Hanawa Station on JR's Hanawa Line. This house-style inn surrounded by forest is along the Hachimantai Aspite Line, connecting Akita and Iwate prefectures.

The hot springs come from a sulfur spring that offers a range of sulfide minerals. The waters here are said to have healing properties for those who suffer from gastrointestinal disorders, neuralgia, low back pain, knee arthritis, after-effects from car crashes, rheumatoid arthritis, asthma, health conditions specific to women, menopause, psychosomatic disorders, circulatory disorders, and hemorhoids.

It also aids those undergoing rehabilitation therapy for broken bones and other injuries, those recovering from organ surgery, those in need of treatments for cold sensitivity, as well as those in need of treatment for any other conditions dealing with being overly sensitive to the cold.

In addition to the traditional Japanese inn, there is a toji facility on the hot springs grounds. Here you can even find ondol, heated floor power by geothermal energy from the hot springs.

When laying down on the floor, your body absorbs heat at a continuous rate. This is said to relieve any burden on your heart while also alleviating neuralgia symptoms in your legs and hips.

Those who book long stays will experience an overall rise in body temperature, contributing to strengthening immunity. It’s also said to make you more receptive to natural healing treatments.

Types of baths include kazan-buro, baths where bubbles rise to the water's surface; doro-buro, mud baths that act as a heat patch alleviating pain that comes from neuralgia, rheumatoid arthritis, or after-effects from injuries; and bako-mushi baths.

Here, you will have more than enough options to enjoy the hot spring waters fully! And with no other homes or buildings in sight, you can experience a striking night sky lit brightly by the moon.

Located on a mountain with an altitude of 1,000 meters, the air surrounding the night sky is clean and crisp, and the view from the open-air bath will make you feel as though you could reach the stars. Prepare to be embraced by Tohoku's nature!

Address: Kumazawa, Hachimantai, Katsuno-shi, Akita Pref.
Nearest Station: Tazawako Station (Tazawako Line)
115 minutes by bus
Phone Number: 0186-31-2221

Sakayu Onsen

A hot spring birthed from volcanos on the Hakkoda Mountains

Sakayu Onsen is located a one-hour drive from JR’s Aomori Station. The hot spring source is said to come from a volcanic mountain range called the Hakkoda Mountains.

According to legend, in 1684, hunters found this hot spring while chasing after a wounded deer that led them into the mountains.

What’s left of the old explosion crater where the hot spring now lies is known as Jigokunuma or hell swamp.

To this day, sulfur dioxide and hot spring water can be seen gushing from the crater's fumaroles. Starting from the Edo period (1603–1868), many people looking to use the hot springs for toji visited Sakayu Onsen.

What’s more, the region’s locals built cabins around the communal baths so that hunters and people who came to the mountain to gather vegetables could use the hot springs regularly.

Some of the various springs available include an acidic spring, an iron-filled spring, an aluminum sulfate spring, a salt spring, and a highly-acidic sulfur spring.

Bathing in these springs is said to soothe those suffering from neuralgia, rheumatoid arthritis, skin diseases, or health conditions specific to women.

For accommodation, you have the option of either staying at a traditional Japanese inn or a toji facility. However, it’s good to note that the majority of the guest rooms available are for toji accommodation.

The large communal bath is called Hiba Sennin-buro, which translates to bath for 1,000 people. Two large baths made from cypress are located in the spacious bathing facility that spans approximately 256 square meters.

Although there are separate changing rooms for men and women, this is a mixed-gender hot spring where the bathing areas are split down the middle.

There was a partition placed in the middle of the bath in the past to separate each section further. However, many people claimed that the partition took the charm out of Sakayu Onsen, so it was quickly removed.

There’s a women-only time frame early in the morning for women who have reservations about the unisex bath. Moreover, at the bathing facility Tamanoyu, you can enjoy gender-separated bathing areas.

There are English guides as well as staff who can speak conversational English at this facility. Take this opportunity to learn more about Sukayu Onsen and Amori’s culture!

Address: 50 Yuzawa Kobayashi, National Forest, Arakawa Minami-Arakawayama, Aomori City, Aomori Pref.
Phone: 0117-738-6400 (Sakayu Onsen)

Oyasukyo Onsen

Enjoy beautiful views of a gorge

Oyasukyo Onsen is a 50-minute drive from JR’s Yuzawa Station.

The hot spring resort is built around Oyasukyo Gorge, formed through fluvial erosion caused by the Minase River. People began to enjoy the hot spring’s waters around the beginning of the Edo period (1603).

As to how the hot spring was discovered, a well-known origin story is that, around this time, people found a crane that had injured its leg dressing its wounds in the spring’s healing waters.

The hot spring water comes from a simple thermal spring, relieving the body of stiffness by alleviating low back pain, muscle aches, and stiff shoulders. Also, because drinking this spring water is said to lower blood sugar, it’s widely popular among people who have diabetes.

At a scalding 98°C, large quantities of hot spring water gush from Oyasukyo’s fountain. Even the famous Edo period traveler and writer, Masumi Sogae, documented his experience here in a journal entry. One excerpt from this entry includes, “I heard an explosive sound like the roaring of a thunder god as water gushed from the spring.”

Furthermore, you will find a famous traditional Japanese inn at this hot spring village that offers baths for day use, a communal bath, and a free football area. We recommend taking a tour of these three facilities that all have something special to offer.

You can find signs and guides in English at all the sightseeing spots. Services differ at each accommodation, so we recommend checking beforehand to see what is offered.

Address: Arakawa, Minase, Yuzawa-shi, Akita Pref.
Nearest Station: Yuzawa Station (Ou Line)
50 minutes by bus
Phone: 0183-47-5080

Enjoy a hot spring tour while taking recommended safety precautions!

In addition to what was introduced in this article, the Tohoku region has countless numbers of spectacular hot springs to visit.

With most facilities being located deep in the mountains, these secluded hot springs can be hard to get to. Due to accessibility being even more difficult in the past, you can imagine the allure of these hot springs that have continuously drawn visitors.

Although hot springs have wonderful rejuvenating qualities, they can also be dangerous when used for prolonged periods of time. Please make sure to follow all safety precautions while enjoying a one-of-a-kind bathing experience!

Address: 50 Yuzawa Kobayashi, National Forest, Arakawa Minami-Arakawayama, Aomori City, Aomori Pref.
Phone: 0117-738-6400 (Sukayu Onsen)
Prior to the construction of the Yokosuka naval facility, American Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794 - 1858) and his four battleships of the East India Squadron Fleet would make the historic arrival at Uraga in Sagami-no-kuni (currently, Yokosuka City in Kanagawa Prefecture) in 1853. Back then, Uraga was only a small fishing village and its residents enjoyed a relatively stable and peaceful society under the Shogunate government’s closed-door policy for nearly 250 years.

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

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

Kurihama Beach is a tiny, quiet beach only about a 20-minute drive from Yokosuka Naval Base. The white sand beach and peaceful waves are in stark contrast to the sight some 170 years ago when Perry and his ships arrived. Across the street from the beach, Perry Park features a large monument dedicated to the historical arrival. The large stone has the following inscription: “This monument is to commemorate American Admiral Perry’s landing” in white kanji letters with the date of the landing. A bronze map showcases where Perry had stopped during his excursion. According to the map, his voyage lasted three years and included stops to Madeira, St. Helena, Cape Town, Mauritius, Ceylon, Singapore, Macau, Hong Kong, Shanghai and Okinawa before reaching mainland Japan.

The memorial museum on the park grounds highlights Perry’s life, his excursion and the historical landing in detail through various documents, Perry’s handwritten letters, along with drawings, scriptures and diorama models of Tokyo Gulf and Perry’s fleet.

Along the western bayside, there are many old traditional houses and buildings along with Tomoyo, a wooden lighthouse reminiscent of Perry days. The lighthouse was built by the Shogunate Government in 1648 and though it is no longer in use, it is still a beautiful sight amongst its surroundings. According to a signboard, the lighthouse was fueled with grapeseed oil and lit up the sea surface as far as five miles away, which very easily could have led Perry as he approached Uraga.

**Meet Perry in Kurihama and Uraga**

**Commodore Matthew C. Perry**

Yokosuka, south of Tokyo, is a naval meet. Here, you can trace the footsteps of the most well-known American Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry (1794 - 1858) and his four battleships of the East India Squadron Fleet which became Japan’s first Western-style shipyard built numerous historical ships in its time (148 feet long and 738-feet long) in 1920 and the aircraft carriers in 1944. After World War II, U.S. Seventh Fleet was in 1871 when François Verny and other Frenchmen, which became Japan’s first Western-style shipyard, was built numerous historical ships in its time.

**Editor’s Note:** Please use this article for planning purposes. Always follow the guidelines set by your base command.
In Yokosuka, you can also trace the footprint of Admiral Heihachiro Togo (1848 – 1934), a Japanese naval great. A bronze statue of Togo greets visitors at Mikasa Park, next to Yokosuka Naval Base. The park is where the 120-year-old battleship Mikasa has been permanently preserved in concrete right on the water.

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

Today, the battleship is a museum and visitors can go aboard to learn more about its history and Admiral Togo. Aboard the Mikasa, visitors can peruse the deck, bridge and chart room, check out the 6- and 3-inch guns, and marvel at the intricate woodwork of the admiral’s quarters. Areas and structures roped off with colored tape indicate actual battle damage or portholes from which cannons were once fired. The lower decks of the Mikasa is home to extensive exhibits featuring artifacts and video displays related to the ship’s and Togo’s history.

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

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

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

Though today Yokosuka is a thriving city and host to U.S. sailors and their families, it is a city full of rich history that dates back over 100 years. A visit to Yokosuka is to trace the footsteps of many historical greats that played a major role in how the area has developed today.
FEEL 150 YEARS OF HISTORY!
12 iconic buildings & exotic historical landmarks in Hokkaido

BY MASAKAZU
LIVE JAPAN

A relatively young region in Japan, Hokkaido began full-scale development about 150 years ago. When traveling there, you'll see many Western-style historical buildings. Hokkaido's natural environment is very harsh. While it's difficult for wooden buildings to withstand the cold and heavy snow, the influx of Western culture was intense when the region was developing, and choosing Western-style architectural styling was to be expected. Paying closer attention to these historic buildings, you'll discover another facet of Hokkaido's charm. Here we'll present twelve classic buildings that convey the atmosphere of Hokkaido's pioneering days.

1 Sapporo Clock Tower
Keeping the city on time for over 100 years (Sapporo)

About an 8-minute walk from JR Sapporo Station or a 5-minute walk from Odori subway station, the Clock Tower is one of Sapporo's most iconic tourist destinations. Opened in 1876 as a performance hall for the Sapporo Agricultural College, the predecessor of Hokkaido University, it's easily accessible and is oft-visited by tourists.

Nicknamed the "Clock Tower" by the local citizens, there wasn't actually a clock installed at the time of completion. Reportedly, the clock was added under the direction of the Pioneer Secretary, who had attended the original completion ceremony of the performance hall. The clock tower was rebuilt in 1881, taking on its current design.

The 1st floor of the building displays materials from the Sapporo Agricultural College era, while the 2nd presents the clock tower's history, with explanations in English, Chinese, and Korean. Additionally, the Sapporo City Tourism Association website introduces major tourist sites in English, Korean, Chinese, Thai, and Indonesian.

Health & safety measures
- Indoor disinfection measures taken
- Sanitizer installed
- Ventilation measures in place
- Staff wear masks, gargle, wash hands regularly, and monitor body temperature
- Guests are required to wear masks

ADDRESS: Chuo-ku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido
NEAREST STATION: Odori Station (Namboku Line / Tozai Line / Toho Line)
TEL: 011-231-0838
Please note that hours and closures are subject to change due to the effects of Covid-19.

Photo courtesy of Sapporo Tourist Association

2 Former Hokkaido Government Office Building
A beautiful place to relax in all seasons (Sapporo)

The Hokkaido Government Office, Former Main Government Office, about an 8-minute walk from Sapporo Station, is nicknamed "the Red Brick Office." Completed in 1888, it's an American-inspired neo-baroque building that was the seat of politics for about 80 years until a new government building was constructed.

The office's garden is like an "oasis in the city." With cherry blossoms in spring, rugosa roses and lilacs in summer, colorful leaves in autumn, and a snowy landscape in winter, the premises are beautiful in any season.

Tourists and locals alike can often be seen drawing or painting the Red Brick Office, while others are content to sit on nearby benches and eat lunch with a view of the impressive structure.

Items related to the history of Hokkaido are exhibited in the Red Brick Office, and while admission is usually free, it's currently closed for renovations to be completed in 2022.

ADDRESS: 6-chome Kitasanjo Nishi, Chuo-ku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido, 060-8588
NEAREST STATION: Sapporo Station (Hakodate Main Line) 7 minutes on foot
TEL: 011-204-5019

Photo courtesy of Sapporo Tourist Association

3 Hohei Kan
A prestigious Western-style building that has hosted emperors (Sapporo)

Hohei Kan, about a 5-minute walk from Nakajima Park Station on the subway, in the center of present-day Sapporo, was built in 1880 as a hotel managed by the Hokkaido Development Commission. It's the oldest wooden hotel in Japan and is a venerable building visited by three emperors, in the Meiji, Taisho, and Showa eras.

Even after the Hokkaido Development Commission was abolished, it was used as a hotel and banquet hall and later as a public hall managed by Sapporo Prefecture (currently Sapporo City) and the Imperial Household Agency. Relocated to Nakajima Park near the Susukino area in 1958, Hohei Kan served as a wedding hall until 2011 and hosted more than 20,000 weddings.

While the building is based on an American style, it's a fusion of multiple cultures, incorporating European-style balconies and Japanese design features like autumn leaves and peonies on the ceiling. There are many exhibits related to the imperial family which bear a sense of elegance and dignity. There's also a coffee shop with a calm atmosphere, so why not enjoy a cup of tea in this elegant setting?

The exhibits' explanations are in Japanese only, but English, Chinese, and Korean leaflets are available, and the Hohei Kan website is conveniently available in English so you can learn more when touring the building with a smartphone or tablet.

Health & safety measures
- Indoor disinfection measures taken
- Sanitizer installed
- Ventilation measures in place
- Staff wear masks, gargle, wash hands regularly, and monitor body temperature
- Guests are required to wear masks

ADDRESS: 1-20, Nakajimakouen, Chuoku, Sapporo-shi, Hokkaido, 064-0931
NEAREST STATION: Nakajima-koen Station (Namboku Line)
TEL: 011-211-1951
Please note that hours and closures are subject to change due to the effects of Covid-19.

Photo courtesy of Sapporo Tourist Association

*Selling hours and regularly scheduled closures are subject to change due to coronavirus conditions. Please check with each location before visiting.

*Information in this article is accurate as of December 2021. Please check official websites for latest information.

English translation by Gabriel Wilkinson
A 1-minute walk from Odori subway station, Akino Sohonten Pharmacy is the oldest drugstore in Sapporo. Founded in 1872, the current building was completed in 1901 and features a sloping gabled roof and a classically-styled stone storehouse. The pharmacy is close to shopping areas around Odori Park and Tanukikoji Shopping Street, so it’s easy to stop by when you’re in the neighborhood. However, the Akino Sohonten Pharmacy isn’t technically a tourist site, so there’s no English notation. Entry for sightseeing purposes isn’t allowed, so be careful not to interfere with business if you visit.

**ADDRESS:** 1-12 Minami 1-jo Nishi, Chuo-ku, Sapporo City, 060-0061

**HOURS:** 10 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**CLOSURES:** Sundays and January 1st and 2nd

**TEL:** 011-221-2460

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**Otaru Canal**

A path of history and romance (Otaru)

Completed in 1923 to streamline transportation from Otaru Port, Otaru Canal is about a 10-minute walk from JR Otaru Station. Found to be an attractive tourist area, the quay was renovated, and more footpaths and nearby parks are under development. The walkway is decorated with cut granite arranged in a ginkgo pattern and also features reliefs depicting the history of Otaru. At dusk, 63 gas lanterns illuminate the stone warehouses, creating a fantastic atmosphere. Once the center of Otaru's economy, you can take a walk through the city and read the history of the Otaru Canal on placards in English, Russian, Chinese, and Korean.

**ADDRESS:** 3-11, Akasaka Bridge, Otaru-shi, Hokkaido 047-0031

**TELEPHONE:** 0134-32-4111

**NEAREST STATION:** Otaru Station (Hakodate Main Line)

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**Former Mitsui Bank Otaru Branch**

Conveying the historical prosperity of Otaru (Otaru)

Otaru was once called “the best economic city north of Tokyo,” and was home to multiple financial institutions at its peak. Imposing former bank buildings still stand to this day, conveying Otaru’s former prosperity. One example is just a 10-minute walk from JR Otaru Station – the Former Mitsui Bank Otaru Branch, which opened in 1880 and remained in operation until 2002. The Renaissance-style granite exterior and Greco-Roman design made it a luxurious main branch. While it has been renovated, the original atmosphere has been preserved in every detail from the vault and light fixtures to the atrium and hallways. In use as an “Otaru Art Base” since 2016, the history of the former Mitsui Banking Corporation Otaru Branch is presented in English, Russian, Chinese, and Korean on an informative sign for passersby to read.

**Health & safety measures**

- Indoor disinfection measures taken
- Sanitizer installed
- Ventilation measures in place
- Staff wear masks, gargle, wash hands regularly, and monitor body temperature
- Guests are required to wear masks

**ADDRESS:** 1-2-17 Irouchi, Otaru City 047-0031

**TELEPHONE:** 0134-32-4111

**NEAREST STATION:** Otaru Station (Hakodate Main Line)

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**Hakodate Red Brick Warehouse**

A symbol of the port’s prosperity (Hakodate)

In southern Hakkaido’s Hakodate City, the Kanemori Red Brick Warehouse is about a 5-minute walk from the Hakodate Tram Jujigai tram stop. In 1887, founder Kumashiro Watanabe bought up unused warehouses and land to start his warehousing business. Due to the era’s shipping boom and the need for more cargo storage, he could expand the scale of his operation further.

In the 1980s, the warehouse industry lost momentum because of changes in shipping routes and the fishing industry decline. Still, the stately red-brick warehouses attracted attention as buildings that told the history of Hakodate, and in 1988, they were reimagined as the Kanemori Red Brick Warehouse shopping mall. Divided into three sections, “Bay Hakodate,” “Kanemori Yobutsukan,” and “Hakodate History Plaza,” it’s a treasure trove of restaurants and shops.

Hakodate City’s official tourist website provides more information and is available in English, traditional and simplified Chinese, Thai, and Indonesian.

**Health & safety measures**

- Indoor disinfection measures taken
- Sanitizer installed
- Ventilation measures in place
- Staff wear masks, gargle, wash hands regularly, and monitor body temperature
- Guests are required to wear masks

**ADDRESS:** 14-12, Suehirocho, Hakodate-shi, Hokkaido, 040-0053

**NEAREST STATION:** Jujigai Station (Hakodate Tram Line 2 / Hakodate Tram Line 5)

**TELEPHONE:** 0138-275530

Please note that hours and closures are subject to change due to the effects of Covid-19.
Hakodate Museum and Municipal Archives (former Kanamori Western Goods Store)

A heavy brick structure that escaped the great fire (Hakodate)

The former Kanamori Western Goods Store, located about a 1-minute walk from the Hakodate Tram’s Suehirocho tram stop, opened in 1880 and sold foreign-made products. While surrounding stores burned down in the Great Fire of Hakodate in 1907, the Kanamori store remained standing as it is constructed of heavy bricks. After ceasing retail operations, it became the Hakodate Museum and Municipal Archives. Due to deterioration, it was closed for restoration in 1998 and reopened in October 2000. The first floor is a partial reproduction of the store and bookstore with historical artifacts exhibited under the theme of “Hakodate’s high collar culture in the Meiji era.”

A Swiss-made Karakuri music box the store’s founder purchased during a trip to Europe and the United States in 1892 is also on display, and a recording of its music played in the museum. On the 2nd floor, a diorama depicting the history of the Kanamori Western Goods Store, photographs from that period, a wax cylinder gramophone, and more are on display.

Although the exhibits don’t have many non-Japanese explanations, Hakodate’s tourist attractions are presented in English, traditional and simplified Chinese, Thai, and Indonesian on the official Hakodate tourist information website “Hakorabu” so you can easily learn more via smartphone or tablet.

Health & safety measures

- Indoor disinfection measures taken
- Sanitizer installed - Ventilation measures in place
- Staff wear masks, gargle, wash hands regularly, and monitor body temperature
- Guests are required to wear masks

ADDRESS: 19-15 Suehirocho, Hakodate City 040-0053
TEL: 0138-23-3095
HOURS: April - October 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., November - March 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
ADMISSION: Adults 100 yen, students and children 50 yen
CLOSURES: Mondays, the last Friday of every month, public holidays (excluding November 3 and during Golden Week), year-end and New Year holidays (December 29 - January 3)

Please note that hours and closures are subject to change due to the effects of Covid-19.

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Old Public Hall of Hakodate Ward
An Important Cultural Property of Hakodate City (Hakodate)

The Old Public Hall of Hakodate Ward is about a 7-minute walk from the Suehirocho tram stop or a 3-minute walk from the Hakodate bus’s Kokaido-mae bus stop.

The Great Fire of Hakodate in August 1907 destroyed the town hall and chamber of commerce, so volunteers started the “Public Hall Construction Council” and solicited donations for reconstruction. However, due to the impact of the fire, collections failed to meet expectations. Hence, council members approached Soma Teppei, a wealthy merchant who funded the construction of Hakodate’s Public Hall, which was completed in September 1910. It’s still widely used for concerts and exhibitions, and the emperor’s family has even visited.

In addition to furniture and other furnishings that create a gorgeous atmosphere, the building also houses the “Hakodate Halkara Costume Museum,” where you can try on period costumes and stroll through the hall and take pictures.

The building also houses the “Hakodate Haikara Costume Museum,” where you can try on period costumes and stroll through the hall and take pictures. The exhibits don’t have many non-Japanese explanations, Hakodate’s tourist attractions are presented in English, traditional and simplified Chinese, Thai, and Indonesian on the official Hakodate tourist information website “Hakorabu” so you can easily learn more via smartphone or tablet.

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Abashiri Prison
A frigid prison that struck fear in the hearts of criminals (Abashiri)

Abashiri Prison, located in eastern Hokkaido’s Abashiri City, is the northernmost prison in Japan, established in 1890. It’s about a 5-minute walk from the Abashiri Prison bus stop.

When opened, it was called “the most modern prison in Japan” and was built in a Western architectural style. The Kushiro Shuji Superintendent incarcerated 1,392 prisoners in Abashiri and set them to work constructing the main road to Sapporo.

More than 30% of the prisoners were sentenced to life imprisonment, while the other felons served at least 12 years. In just one year, a 160km stretch from Abashiri to Kitami Pass was completed, but injuries and malnutrition from harsh working conditions resulted in more than 200 deaths.

Renovation on the prison began in 1983, and gradually much of the facility’s history disappeared, with only the red brick walls remaining. It’s still under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Justice, so tourists can’t enter, and there are no information signs. Still, there are details on the Abashiri City Tourism Association website in English and traditional and simplified Chinese.

ADDRESS: 1-1, Yobito, Abashiri-shi, Hokkaido, 099-2421
NEAREST STATION: Abashiri Station (Sekihoku Main Line / Senno Main Line) 7 minutes by bus
TEL: 0152-45-2411

Find “Exotic Japan” in Hokkaido

The Western buildings scattered throughout Hokkaido also incorporate Japanese design elements and can be found not only in tourist area, but also in the form of local station buildings, private homes, and warehouses. Visit Hakodate and make your own architectural discoveries of “Exotic Japan”!
In Japan, diners will find plenty of places to try “yoshoku,” a Japanese take on French, Italian or Spanish dishes. The word literally means Western dish, and this variety of Japanese food can be found at every price point—from specialty, gourmet dining to casual, family restaurants at reasonable prices.

You’ve probably already seen some of Japan’s yoshoku dishes as these have become staples both at restaurants and at home. Omurice, a fried rice omelet drizzled with ketchup; hambaagu, or hamburger steak; and, naporitan spaghetti, pasta smothered in ketchup and stir-fried with onion, green bell pepper and ham, are some of the most popular yoshoku dishes you’ll find on yoshokuya (restaurants specializing in yoshoku) menus in Japan.

For a taste of these local favorites, I made my way to Shimbashi District, known as Tokyo’s “salarymen haven,” where many eateries and izakaya pubs line the streets. I chose Musashiya, a well-known yoshokuya established in 1875, for a taste of the past.

The tiny eatery near JR Shimbashi Station is always busy and you’ll find a line of salarymen anxiously awaiting the time-honored yoshoku Musashiya served up hot. I arrived at 11:30 a.m. on a weekday and already there were a dozen salarymen ahead of me. As I stood in line, I perused the menu offerings displayed on a bulletin board outside. I was in line for over 30 minutes, so come prepared to wait, especially if it’s getting close to the lunch hour. By the time I set foot inside, I knew I would be ordering the omurice with mini hambaagu for 1,050 yen ($9).

As quickly as I was seated, my order was served. The service here is catered for the busy office worker with not a second to spare. My large omurice plate came with a side of bright-red naporitan spaghetti and a small hambaagu patty drenched in brown demi-glace sauce. A small bowl of miso soup completed my set.

This presentation was like a visit from the ghost of lunchtime from years’ past. My first bite took me back to my youth back in the 70s when yoshoku was the trendy new kid on the food scene. The rich butter and ketchup flavors melded with the soft egg and steamed rice with chicken. This was a taste of the good ol’ times, despite being a little too seasoned and a bit too greasy for me. This greasiness continued onto the naporitan spaghetti, where the sweet and sour flavors were still what I remember from being a teenager. The hambaagu, arguably the best part of the meal, was tender, juicy and well-seasoned. This gastronomic step back in time was shaken up with the miso soup. It was interesting that this Japanese standard would be what would bring a balance to the variety of flavorful items on my plate. After finishing a large portion of my meal within 10 minutes of receiving it, I knew I shouldvacate my seat for the next office worker waiting patiently for their turn to grab on some much-needed yoshoku fuel to survive the long workday ahead.

My quick lunch-turned-nostalgic-visit-to-my-youth left me very full and very satisfied. Visit Musashiya and check out the fusion dishes of the yoshoku and salaryman lunch bunch institution. It’s a unique Japanese take on Western food you have to try!

Musashiya offers their menu for take-out bentos and also has COVID-19 prevention protocols in place.

MUSASHIYA
Location: 2-16-1 [1F] Shimbashi, Minato-ku, Tokyo
Hours: Mon – Fri, 10:30 a.m. – 8 p.m., Sat, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m. (close Sun and holidays)
URL: https://tabelog.com/tokyo/A1301/A130103/13023938/ Tel: 03-3501-3603 (Japanese)

Rub elbows with Tokyo salarymen, enjoy savory Japanese yoshoku
Backgammon: a game that thrives in Japan

By Alvin DeWalt, Stripes Japan

You may never have heard of backgammon, but it’s believed to be one of the earliest board games, originating in ancient Mesopotamia over 5,000 years ago. There’s even a Japanese version called sugo-roku (double sixes) which was played by Emperor Temmu back in 685 A.D.

Modern backgammon is a board game played by two people rolling a pair of dice. The board has four sections and starts with each player’s 15 checkers distributed around the 24 points on the board. The objective of the game is to move all of one’s own checkers to the home board and then remove (bear off) the pieces from the board before the opponent does.

Today, Japan boasts some of the world’s best players. The number one player in the world, Masayuki Mochizuki, or “Mochy” as everyone calls him, is joined by three other Japanese players currently ranked in the top 10. In 2021, Japan’s five-person team won the prestigious World Backgammon Internet Federation online championship—all without their best players!

I remember my dad, who was a Navy chief, teaching me to play a similar game, Acey-Deucey, back in the 1950’s. By the time I joined the Navy in 1969, backgammon was all the rage and shipboard matches helped pass the time on those long WestPac cruises.

Many years passed and in 1999, I was assigned by the Department of Defense Dependents Schools to teach at Yokosuka Middle School and later at Nile C. Kinnick High School at Yokosuka Naval Base. I continued to play backgammon, but just with my Japanese wife and our two sons on onsen trips.

When I retired from teaching in 2017, and with all sorts of time on my hands, I thought of playing backgammon again. After an extensive online search, I found the Japanese Backgammon Society and they welcomed me with open arms despite my limited Japanese language skills. Mochy replied to my initial email in English and then my backgammon hobby took off.

Since then, I’ve played in laid-back, local backgammon meetings around the Kanto Plain where I’ve met a mix of serious and recreational players. Everywhere I went, people went out of their way to make sure I felt comfortable.

Eventually, I gathered the courage to venture to the Society’s Sunday meetings for serious players in Akasaka-Mitsuke and have been going there ever since.

My hobby has taken me to all corners of Japan for games in tournaments against players of all levels. However, one of my most memorable matches was not a rated one, but against a nine-year-old boy at the Yotsuya meeting. He had a winning smile and showed no signs of being intimidated by a grown adult foreign competitor. Though I tried to go easy on him, he quickly proved he was skilled in backgammon and kicked my butt in a five-point match.

Unfortunately, due to the on-going pandemic, many league matches have gone online. Still, they have been exciting and lots of fun. I even landed in the top four of Japan Throne Tournament, held online in October 2021. Somehow, I won my pool and beat out two members of the Japanese Team World Champions and professionals. Absolutely amazing!

I have to say, my game has improved being in the presence of so many backgammon greats. And, not just playing with them, but watching these backgammon sensei competing against each other. We all have our own paths to backgammon Nirvana. I am blessed that mine has been paved by some of the finest jewels of the game.

About the writer: Alvin DeWalt is a retired DODDEA teacher who has lived in Japan 23 years. He served in the Navy as an ETN3 from 1969-1972. DeWalt has been playing backgammon for almost 50 years.

If you are interested in playing backgammon in Japan, please feel free to contact the Japan Backgammon Society. Email: support@backgammon.or.jp
FEBRUARY 18 – FEBRUARY 24, 2022

Stripes Sports Trivia

Less than three months after his father’s murder, Michael Jordan shocked the world and abruptly retired from the NBA in 1993. A few months later, “His Airmness” signed a deal to take his talents to the baseball diamond. Which Double-A minor league affiliate of the White Sox did Jordan hit three home runs for?

Answer

DID YOU KNOW?

With Family Mart located literally across the street from other Family Marts, and a 7-Eleven seemingly on every single street corner, it may be a surprise to know that convenience stores are outnumbered by sanctuaries in Japan. In fact, there are three times as many temples (77,000) and shrines (81,000) combined than there are convenient stores (49,000) in the Land of the Rising Sun.

Language Lesson

I’m angry.

Okotte masu.

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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.

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Jyomata Yokusuka Bldg. 1F, 1-21 Odaki-cho Yokusuka-shi, Kanagawa-ken
TEL: (046)874-8528 www.gorkha-palace.com
Located just outside Yokusuka NB Womble Gate on the corner of R1 16 (same bldg. as 7-11)

A taste of Yokosuka you’ll never forget

We ensure that in every dish we prepare, we add the best herbs and spices specially handpicked from Nepal and India. With our belief deeply rooted in the Eastern philosophy, we regard every customer as a god, and make sure in every way that we treat them as one. Our 5-star experienced cooks and chefs ensure the food looks as good as it is healthy. Once you come and visit us, we are confident that you will make plans to come again. We eagerly await the opportunity to serve you our delicacies!!
FOODS TO PICK UP AT THE KONBINI

1. Calbee Jagabee
Calbee Japan makes many of the most popular Japanese crackers and chips, but Calbee Jagabee potato sticks stand out proudly among them. In contrast to Jagariko, a more brittle potato chip, Calbee Jagabee provides a heartier crunch and rich flavor reminiscent of its glory days as a real potato. I especially recommend my all-time favorite savory Japanese snack, the shouyu (soy sauce) butter flavor of Jagabee!

2. Seasonal Pocky
When you think of popular snacks in Japan, for many foreigners, Pocky naturally springs to mind! Pocky, Japan loves to innovate on the already winning premise of chocolate on a biscuit stick, so keep your eyes peeled for special seasonal varieties like heart-shaped cherry blossom in the spring, lemon in the summer, and even Japanese sweet potato in the fall. Your top-tier flavor is Winter Butter Caramel Pocky (冬のきらめき), which is so addictive I’d pay Glico to keep it in stock year round!

3. Black Thunder
One of the lesser known snacks to buy in Japan is Black Thunder, a sleeper hit that’s bound to have you renewing your visa! Black Thunder is a chocolate-covered candy bar with a cocoa cookie base and Japanese rice puffs, forming a crispy chocolatey delight. Look out for the many twists on this old favorite available in the konbini! In my experience, the custard apple pie flavor and Shittori Premium made with fresh cream are the ones to beat.

4. Sandwiches
Japanese convenience store sandwiches are handy not only for their plethora of snacks, but also their quick and easy meal options when traveling. All konbini have a refrigerated section with perfectly triangular sandwhiches, filled with quality goodies such as teriyaki chicken katsu, tuna and lettuce, egg, and even special offerings like blueberry jam and whipped cream from time to time!

5. Fresh hot food
The must-try Japanese convenience store foods includes a variety of hot, fresh food kept in glass containers at the register. Here you’ll find treats such as the all-powerful Famicchi, FamilyMart’s beloved take on impossibly juicy fried chicken, piping hot nikuman meat buns, and occasionally special Hello Kitty-shaped cream buns. A pivotal part of appreciating Japanese junk food is having your world rocked by Famicchi, so I recommend ordering it at least once!

6. Baumkuchen
When it comes to Japanese sweet snacks, baumkuchen takes the cake for me! Technically a German dessert that became disproportionately popular in Japan, baumkuchen is many thin layers of cake baked into a ring of soft deliciousness I didn’t know I needed. I constantly spot new spins on the classic cake in the konbini, so check both the regular dessert section and the refrigerated section to join my mission to try them all!

7. Limited time ice cream
No listing of konbini snacks would be complete without a ringing endorsement of Japanese ice cream! The goodies in the konbini freezers rotate within weeks, or even days, so check often for seasonal treats like white peach Coolish or custard ice cream melon pan. Whether it’s a hazelnut praline ice cream bar with black currant jam from FamilyMart (pictured above) or some other fleeting beauty gone too soon, you’ll want to stock up with haste if you find a favorite!

8. Limited time breads
Out of all Japanese convenience store food, the special breads are my oldest and fondest standby. While classics like melon pan and Japanese curry bread may be the saviors of any foreigner looking for a safe but yummy lunch, the bread aisle is often ripe with innovations! Keep an eye out for zany new varieties like kinako whipped cream bread or strawberry steamed cakes.

9. Wagashi
If you’re hungry for some traditional Japanese wagashi sweets, I especially recommend trying an Oni Killer box of wagashi from 7-Eleven. 7-Eleven’s original line of wagashi-inspired desserts ranges from matcha cookies to yomogi daifuku to red bean rice cakes, so you can sample a wide variety of unique Japanese confections for cheap.

10. Kirin strong chuuhai
Thirsty for some crisp alcohol to wash down all those Japanese snacks? For me, no trip to a konbini is complete without picking up a tall can of chuuhai, a popular Japanese alcoholic drink that comes in tons of fruity flavors. The seasonal flavors of Kirin Strong, like mixed berry and double ume (Japanese plum), score especially well in my book!

11. Wine/sake in a juice box
An honorable mention goes to those charming little juice boxes filled with one single serving of sake or wine, found in the alcohol section of some konbini. For the novelty factor, I recommend trying an Oni Killer box of sake, just to say you’ve washed out your inner demons!

Japanese konbini represent many of the wonderful aspects of Japan, filled with colorful novelties, unexpected flavors, and a special appreciation for the changing of the seasons. Whether you’re hunting for the perfect Japanese snack food to satisfy your cravings or in need of a quick but quality meal on the go, I hope the konbini brings as much joy to your life as it does to mine!
Japanese Condiments

Starting off with classic Japanese condiments, here is a comprehensive list of the most essential Japanese pantry items that your kitchen can’t go without when it comes to making Japanese food at home!

1. Soy Sauce

Made from fermented soybeans and wheat, soy sauce or shoyu is the number one Japanese pantry staple ingredient you should always keep stock of in your kitchen. Whether it’s just a splash served alongside your sushi, or it’s the main component giving your sweet sukiyaki hotpot a spicy kick, you will find that soy sauce is used in almost every savory Japanese recipe.

Japanese soy sauce is lighter than soy sauce products from other countries, with a distinctively delicate yet clean and complex flavor to it. As it is used in almost all savory Japanese recipes, it is a good idea to buy a high-quality Japanese soy sauce.

2. Miso Paste

Miso is thick, fermented soybean paste that comes in different varieties including shiro (white), akas (red or dark), and awase (mixed). Each type of miso gives different flavors and intensities.

Not just for making traditional miso soup, miso paste is used for a variety of different sauces, marinades, and even dressings. It can be used in a range of Japanese dishes, such as making a broth for miso ramen or a glaze for miso eggplant.

3. Toasted Sesame Oil

Toasted sesame oil is a rich, golden oil that gives a lot of Japanese dishes an intense, nutty essence and flavor. While it can be used for stir-fry dishes, often it is used as a finishing oil, like for adding extra flavor into a hot bowl of ramen. However, toasted sesame oil is used in many salad dressings as well.

4. Rice Vinegar

In comparison to Western vinegar, rice vinegar or rice wine vinegar is sweeter and milder in flavor with a significantly less pungent essence. It is a vinegar that is made from fermented rice, and it is generally used to season rice used for sushi or onigiri rice balls. Other common uses in Japanese cuisine are pickling, salad dressings, and sauces.

5. Chili Oil

Japanese chili oil (also known as raujio) is a spicy oil condiment that has been infused with chili pepper flakes. You will find it commonly used in Japanese-style Chinese dishes. You can pour some into your ramen to give it a bit of a spicy kick, or dip crunchy gyoza dumplings into it for extra flavor.

Check out these gyoza cooking classes in Japan and learn how to make your own Japanese dumplings from scratch!

6. Cooking Sake

Almost as essential as soy sauce, is Japanese rice wine (Japanese sake). Cooking sake is a lower grade of cooking alcohol that is used to enhance and intensify the flavor of a range of Japanese dishes. It is incredibly versatile as it can be used in soups and simmered dishes, as well as marinades for meat, fish, and even more heartily-flavored Japanese foods.

7. Mirin

More like syrup in viscosity, mirin is a sweet condiment that is commonly used in Japanese cooking. It is part of the rice wine family, like sake is, but its alcohol content is lower and it is used more typically as a seasoning. It is used to help tenderize meat and seafood, and to add a distinct sweetness to some Japanese dishes. Due to its higher sugar content, mirin is often used in sweet dishes.

Essential Dry Goods

So once you have your Japanese condiments sorted, you should arm your Japanese pantry with these essential dry goods as a basic foundation for Japanese home cooking.

1. White Rice

Sometimes labeled as “sushi rice,” Japanese short-grain rice is what you need to stock your pantry with. This type of rice is short and plump, with a sticky yet fluffy texture that is iconic when it comes to Japanese cuisine. It is used in sushi (obviously), or it can accompany almost any Japanese dish.

2. Bonito Flakes

Bonito flakes, or katsuobushi in Japanese, are finely shaved dried bonito fish flakes. These are the wiggling brown flakes you might see sprinkled on top of takoyaki or okonomiyaki. Bonito flakes are used in broths and are a key ingredient for making dashi (Japanese soup stock) which is used in soups, sauces, and as the base of many other Japanese dishes.

Join the Dashi Workshop and Katsuo-bushi Factory Tour in Kagoshima to see firsthand how this product is made!

3. Wakame

Wakame is a type of Japanese seaweed that is also an essential ingredient used to flavor various dashi soup stocks. Wakame can be bought as a dried product from the wiggling brown sheets you might see in most any Japanese dish. It is used to help tenderize meat and seafood, and to add a distinct sweetness to some Japanese dishes. Kombu is often used in noodle soups.

5. Shiitake Mushrooms

There are a lot of other types of mushrooms like shimeji or enoki which are commonly used in Japanese cuisine, but shiitake mushrooms are great as they are available both fresh and dried. Dried shiitake mushrooms can be kept on your cupboard shelf and rehydrated for use in simmered dishes or Japanese soups. Shiitake mushrooms are a rich textured great fish substitutes in vegan or vegetarian dishes.

7. Panko Breadcrumbs

Literally translating to “bread powder,” Japanese breadcrumbs panko are mainly used for crumbing deep-fried foods in Japan. The difference between more standard Western breadcrumbs and panko is that panko breadcrumbs are larger, lighter flakes, and they don’t absorb as much grease as standard bread crumbs as a binder in or on bakes.

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Whether you’re a seasoned MasterChef or simply an entry-level Japanese cooking enthusiast, there are certain essential Japanese pantry items you should keep in your kitchen at all times to whip up a washoku (Japanese cuisine) dish at a moment’s notice.

From soy sauce to cooking sake, we’ve outlined 23 essential ingredients in your home cooking an au

Japanese dishes. Kombu is often used in noodle soups.

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A TASTE OF JAPAN

23 must-have staples f

BY LUCY BAKER,

FEBRUARY 18 – FEBRUARY 24, 2022

byFood

Japanese dishes. Kombu is often used in noodle soups.
Japanese pantry 

for foodies

Japanese ingredients being readily available at your nearest Japanese grocery store, you just need to know what to look for. So to help you get familiar with what is needed for Japanese cooking, keep reading for our tips on how to stock a Japanese pantry.

To make your shopping list easy, you will find our Japanese pantry staples split up into two sections covering key Japanese condiments and essential dry ingredients.

4. Kombu
Kombu is another type of Japanese seaweed, a type of edible algae that can be bought as a dry pantry good. It is typically used as a base soup stock ingredient, and responsible for imparting a deep and indispensible umami flavor (derived from glutamic acids) in many soups and stock dishes. Used in hotpots and Japanese cuisine. Used liberally and with great versatility, white sesame seeds are frequently used as a dusting for donburi or stir-fries, and they are also used in sauces and even sweets!

5. Nori
Nori can be purchased either as nori (seaweed) sheets, check out some of the ready-made seaweed rice seasoning (furikake). Nori is also used in hotpots and Japanese cuisine as it is nutritious and healthy. In this case, dried nori seaweed is responsible for giving many Japanese dishes a dry complex flavor and make for an essential in any Japanese cooking.

6. Potato Starch
Also known as katkuriko, potato starch is used as a thickening agent to make Japanese sauces. This is often the case when cooking chuka- or stir-fries, and they are also frequently used as a coating for donburi or stir-fries.

7. Matcha
A type of Japanese green tea, matcha is a real thing, however, you can still use it for adding to sushi or sashimi. Much like soy sauce, matcha, a green tea powder, is a powerful condiment that can be mixed together and can easily be shaken over the top of your rice to give it some extra flavor.

8. Sesame Seeds
Available as black or white seeds, sesame seeds, or goma, are a classic garnish when it comes to Japanese cuisine. Used liberally and with great versatility, white sesame seeds are used in sauces and even sweets!

9. Potato Starch
Also known as katakuriko, potato starch is used as a thickening agent to make Japanese sauces. This is often the case when cooking chuka- or stir-fries, and they are also frequently used as a dusting for donburi or stir-fries.

10. Green Tea
Also known as “Japanese seven spice,” shichimi togarashi is another key Japanese pantry item to give a little spice to your homemade Japanese dishes. As in the name, it is made up of a blend of seven dried aromatic spices that make it both hot in flavor and citrusy. This includes chili flakes, ginger, nori, sesame seeds, shiso, dried orange peel, and Sichuan pepper (with room for some other spice mix variants, depending on the brand).

11. White Pepper
As opposed to black pepper which is more commonly used in Western countries, when it comes to Japanese cuisine, white pepper is used as an alternative. It’s a bit hotter on the tongue than black pepper, yet also milder in flavor to better suit the delicate nature of Japanese dishes. It can be used in dishes like Japanese ramen, fried rice and stir-fries, as well as for seasoning meat and vegetables.

So, were you wondering what is needed for Japanese cooking? For anyone who loves cooking Japanese food, these are the 23 most important condiments and dry ingredients that are essential for stocking a Japanese pantry. Plan on purchasing your Japanese ingredients like soy sauce, seaweed, sauces, and Japanese rice so you can create an authentic Japanese dish anytime!

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

Beginning with an Eric Clapton guitar, Hard Rock Cafe owns the world’s greatest collection of music memorabilia, which is displayed at its locations around the globe. For fans of music, great food and good times, Hard Rock is the go-to restaurant to get that authentic American diner-inspired cuisine wrapped in a unique musical experience. So, it’s time to strike up the band! Events, like great music, are born to inspire others. At Hard Rock Cafe, we pride ourselves on delivering an exceptional experience with a rock ‘n’ roll twist for each and every one of our guests.

Special tasty deal for Military community

Looking for a charcoal-grilled steak cooked just the way you like it, and at a reasonable price? Well, head over to Ikinari Steak! Our premium steaks will melt in your mouth. Choose between Ribeye, Sirloin, and Filet. Each slice of meat is freshly cut in front of you based on your weight request. You can have your steak as thick as you want. Just tell us how much you’d like to have. We’ve got your back! Show us your military ID and you and your family members can get two items for free from our array of side dishes and toppings and a drink for free.
Let’s cook something easy, healthy, and fun with your kids! This tuna okara sandwich contains a good amount of soy protein and fiber from okara (soy pulp that you can get from local supermarket at quite a reasonable price). Slicing the tomato just a little bit makes it easier to keep it on the bread. I kept the stem of the tomato to make antennae, but it will do without them.

**Healthy cooking with the kids!**

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

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

**Caterpillar Sandwich**

**Servings:** 2 sandwiches  
**Cooking time:** 30 min (with kids)
PIZZA HUT LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1000-2100
DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE
Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and multiple drinks.

Atsugi 1030-2000
DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE
Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and multiple drinks.

*We extended Pizza Hut Delivery hours on Friday and Saturday until 2200.

TACO BELL LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1000-2100
DRIVE-UP WINDOW AVAILABLE
Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.

*We extended Yokosuka Taco Bells Drive thru hours on Friday and Saturday until 2200.

Atsugi 1000-2000
Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.

Sasebo 1030-2000
Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.