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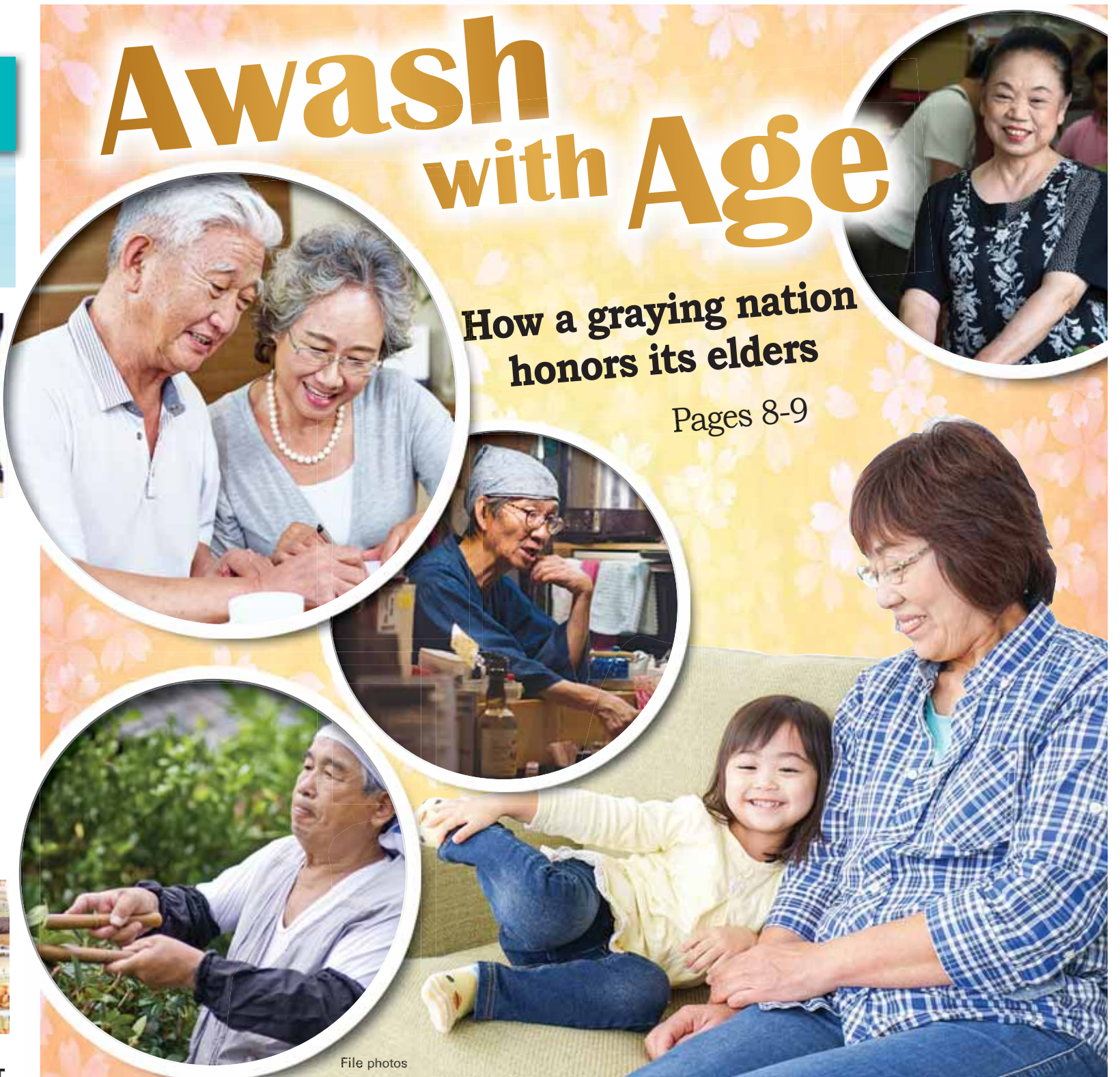
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Establishing normalcy in changing climate

Editor's note: At Stripes Japan, we love to share your stories and share this space with our community members. Here is an article written by Jennifer Brown, a hospital corpsman at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa. If you have a story or photos to share, let us know at japan@stripes.com.

BY JENNIFER BROWN,
STRIPES JAPAN

Normalcy is something we all try to aspire for. In one way or another, we all want a “normal” life. We all have aspirations and goals for our life, our current circumstances, our career, etc. Many people ask themselves: “how can I attain my goals?” Perhaps a better question, however, is how can we establish our “normal” in this constantly changing world and is establishing it even possible?

This year and throughout the pandemic, our perception of what is normal has changed. If you were to ask one another if you would have predicted we would all normalize such high cleanliness standards and social distancing in 2020, would you have believed it? While life certainly throws us curveballs, suffering from a worldwide pandemic was not anything we would have considered “normal.” Sadly though, here we are

months into this pandemic, and we are now becoming used to following the new rules to ensure our survival.

Despite the struggles we continue to face, there is hope for us moving forward. Establishing a new sense of normalcy is possible and something we can each work on. Most importantly, we should remember that our “normal” continues to change as often as we do. When we do something over and over again, we create habits; but do not forget, habits can be changed and altered. We now have had to adapt to a new work environment, perhaps homeschooling the kids, and taking proper precautions if, and when, we decide to go out in public.

While these changes have undoubtedly been stressful, we do have more control over this than we think. Whether we develop new habits of only going to the grocery store every Tuesday or work virtually from home, we do have the power to control some things. Moreover, even though these changes will take time to fully set in, this is also the time to experiment in different coping mechanisms to see which work best for you.

Another way to establish



coronavirus. Instead of going to church in person, attend an online livestream. Instead of attending school physically, pull up online school and create a schedule similar to that of a school day. There are so many options now that we're all adjusting to the changes that do not allow for a physical presence.

With some creativity and support, we can establish new senses of normalcy among our lives as we continue to face this virus. Instead of giving into the wave of uncertainty and fear, we can rise above and be successful. Even if the way we get to our destination is not how we originally anticipated it to be, we can choose to have the flexibility and openness to the changes we face.

.....

Jennifer Brown is a hospital corpsman at U.S. Naval Hospital Okinawa. Originally from Florida, she joined the Navy in 2018 and has been on island for over a year. During her free time, Brown enjoys spending time with animals, running, rock climbing, and hiking. She is a graduate of the University of Central Florida and holds a Bachelor of Science in Psychology. Her professional interests include social work, animal welfare, and children.



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Mental Notes with Hilary Valdez

Inner management

BY HILARY VALDEZ,
STRIPES JAPAN

Thinking is natural. We all have a conscious mind from the second we are born. However, improving positive thinking involves becoming more self-aware and using positive affirmations help to replace less positive thinking.

Understanding your thinking process, then gaining and predicting what you need in the future, is important. And in this global world where everything is interdependent and interconnected, the need to understand and how to react is key.

In 1967, Marshall McLuhan wrote: "The Medium is the Massage." He described a future where our senses would be massaged by technology and how it would become integrated into our daily lives. However, this environment seems to drag us down with daily negativity which is perpetuated by our own negative thoughts.

As humans we routinely use judgment in determining what to accept and what to reject. Two thinking routines to ponder. "See-Think-Wonder" and "What do you see?" To start, name the qualities of the image you see. What do you think? What does the image make you think about? And, what do you wonder? What questions do you have about the image?

According to Dr. Linda Elder, educational psychologist, all reasoning has a purpose, so state your purpose clearly. Examine your assumptions, identify your point of view, verify your information, then look at the implications and consequences of your reasoning.

Our everyday thinking patterns determine our abilities, talents and personal attributes. To function efficiently in today's world, we need to determine between what works for us and what works against us. This is where self-awareness comes into play: Don't worry so much. Don't procrastinate. Have a schedule with deadlines. Set goals. Start early. Listen actively and ask questions. If your thoughts are calm, you are calm, and so is your mind. You are what you think you are. Don't be smothered by global events.

Here's the hard part, a convergent thinker sees limited options. A divergent thinker constantly explores options. We need insightful, problem-solving thinking skills. But when we are emotionally fired up, those grumbling thoughts stay with us for a while.

Watch people when you're walking out in town, you'll notice people talking to themselves, answering themselves, and arguing with themselves. This is called incessant thinking. Do you do that? To stop this, just focus or observe details around you. When you analyze little things, the brain starts processing the little things and your brain begins to switch gears. This also works for stress reduction.

Here's the bad news about balancing all the global news, misinformation, multitasking, and talking to yourself: Your mental health could suffer. Pay attention to your well-being. If you are chronically tired, avoiding social activities, having changes in weight and eating habits, frequently angry, have a bad temper, or displaying memory problems— it's time to re-boot!

Be proactive, think positively, declutter— both physically and mentally, take notes, journal, and multi-task. Be more selective of information to read and receive. Don't overload yourself with trivial and useless information. Your thoughts create your environment.

Use what we learn in basic resiliency training: your thoughts affect your feelings; your feelings affect your behavior. Your mind is connected to your thoughts, and your thoughts to your actions, which is in turn connected to our consciousness.

Finally, you're human. You'll have moments of anguish and despair, just release that energy. Don't dwell on it. Anger is a dangerous place to stay. Work towards managing your thoughts, navigating out of troubled thinking and then make a plan. It takes practice, but it works when you work it!



Hilary Valdez is a retiree living in Japan. He is an experienced Mental Health professional and Resiliency Trainer. Valdez is a former Marine and has worked with the military most of his career and most recently worked at Camp Zama as a Master Resiliency Trainer. Valdez now has a private practice and publishes books on social and psychological issues. His books are available on Amazon and for Kindle. Learn more about Valdez and contact him at www.hilaryvaldez.com or at InstantInsights@hotmail.com

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Red lips, white face

The cultural history of Japanese beauty

LIVE JAPAN

Have you ever wondered about the development of Japanese beauty ideals that we see today? Although the trends have vastly changed, the modern look of Japanese fashionistas has its root buried deep into Japanese history.

The chronicles called *kojiki* (“Records of Ancient Matters”) and *nihon shoki* (the second oldest book of classical Japanese history) reveal that even in ancient times, specific beauty customs such as of painting the face with red pigments did already exist. Diverse forms of makeup - such as cheek colors and facial powders - were imported into Japan, along with other cultural aspects from China and Korea. It is said that the first Japanese face powder was produced by a Buddhist priest. Apparently, he delighted the Japanese Empress with his newest invention so much that he set the trend for what should soon become one of the biggest cosmetic markets in the world.



Black teeth as a symbol of beauty and liberty

During the Heian period (794-1185), Japanese beauty products broke free from the influence of Chinese models and created a more distinct aesthetic of its own. This included straight long hair, white powdered faces, and repainted eyebrows. Despite this transformation, most make-up remained only available to the world of the elite. About the same time, a quite unusual beauty ideal set foot in Japan - the blackening of teeth, called *ohaguro*.

Teeth, black as night, were seen as beautiful and

remained popular as a beauty ideal until the 19th century. Many Westerners who visited Japan described *ohaguro* as a repugnant Japanese custom which disfigured Japanese women by making the women intentionally unattractive. However, many Japanese girls were allowed a relatively large degree of both social and sexual liberty, so it is much more likely that this social ritual is a celebration of the determination of matured women.



Utagawa Kunisada



Utagawa Kuniyoshi



Kitagawa Utamaro

The beautiful harmony of red, white, and black

By the early Edo period (1600-1868), the focus shifted onto detailed treatises on etiquette, which also included teachings on the adequate way of using cosmetics. During this period, cosmetics generally centered on a palette of three basic colors: red (lip rouge, fingernail polish), white (face powder called *oshiroi*), and black (tooth-blackener, eyebrow pencil). The white face powder was used to create a stark white complexion, often artfully contrasted to the natural shade of the surrounding skin with a carefully contoured edge at the lower neck below the hairline. The lips were painted onto the white foundation and usually rendered smaller and

slightly higher than the natural lip shape.

It was during this era when women were particularly concerned with the application of face powder in order to create a flawless complexion that was regarded as “the essence of a beautiful woman.”

Although refinement and sensitivity were cherished traits when it came to the general application of make-up, a trend in the late Edo Period made the use of heavier lipstick increasingly popular. Pigments that were produced from fresh safflowers became so expensive, it was said to be even worth its weight in gold.

Modern aesthetics for modern beauty

With the beginning of the 20th century, the focus shifted toward quick application and more convenient make-up practices that were in strong correlation with the advancement of women in society and, more importantly, the workplace. Face powder and lipsticks began to be sold in a broader range of shades other than the traditional white and red.

Emulsions and variations of skincare products appeared on the market as the cosmetics industry became increasingly aware of the Western sphere of influence from the 1910's onward. Especially after World War II, Japan's aesthetics became heavily influenced by Western mass media, especially American magazines and movies.



Kiyoshi Kobayakawa

The beauty of old is the beauty of today

In present days, Japan has been able to become one of the worldwide market leaders for cosmetics and beauty products and has furthermore been able to firmly establish itself with miscellaneous innovations made in the name of beauty.

Although the white heavy face powder look of the Edo period doesn't hold true today and mainly survives in a re-enactment on stage, beautiful

white skin is still a crucial beauty ideal for many Japanese. The leading advancements in scar tissue reduction techniques of the beauty industry are directly linked to the emphasis placed on unblemished skin - a beauty ideal that has been existent long before any Western influence touched the Japanese islands.

Official Approved Notice from Bankruptcy Court



Sexual Abuse Claims in Boy Scouts Bankruptcy

Regardless of how old you are today or when the sexual abuse occurred, you need to file your claim by 5 p.m. (Eastern Time) on November 16, 2020.

The Boy Scouts of America (“BSA”) has filed bankruptcy in order to restructure its nonprofit organization and pay Sexual Abuse Survivors. Please read this notice carefully as it may impact your rights against BSA, BSA Local Councils and organizations that sponsored your troop or pack and provides information about the case, *In re Boy Scouts of America and Delaware BSA, LLC*, No. 20-10343 (Bankr. D. Del.). This notice is a short summary. For more detail, visit www.OfficialBSAClaims.com or call 1-866-907-2721.

Who Should File a Sexual Abuse Claim?

Anyone who was sexually abused during their time in Scouting, on or before February 18, 2020, must file a claim. This includes sexual abuse in connection with Boy Scouts, Cub Scouts, or any entity or activity associated with Scouting. Sexual Abuse Claims include, but are not limited to: sexual misconduct, exploitation, or touching, sexual comments about a person or other behaviors that led to abuse, even if the behavior was not sexual or against the law, and regardless of whether you thought the behavior was sexual abuse or not. These acts could be between a: (1) child and an adult or (2) child and another child.

When and How Should I File a Sexual Abuse Claim?

You should file a claim using the Sexual Abuse Survivor Proof of Claim by **November 16, 2020 at 5:00 p.m. (Eastern Time)**. **If you do not file a timely Sexual Abuse Claim, you may lose rights against BSA, BSA Local Councils or organizations that sponsored your troop or pack, including any right to compensation.** Only BSA is in bankruptcy. If you have a claim against the BSA Local Councils or other organizations, you must take additional legal action to preserve and pursue your rights.

Your information will be kept private. You can download and file a claim at www.OfficialBSAclaims.com or call 1-866-907-2721 for help on how to file a claim by mail. Scouting participants who were at least 18 years of age at the time the sexual abuse began may also have claims related to sexual abuse and should consult the appropriate claim form at www.OfficialBSAclaims.com.

ACT NOW Before Time Runs Out:



File a Sexual Abuse Survivor Proof of Claim.



If your claim is approved, you may receive compensation from the bankruptcy.



Have questions? Call or visit the website for more information.

If a plan to reorganize BSA is approved, it could release claims you hold against certain third parties, including against BSA Local Councils and organizations that sponsored your troop or pack. Please visit the website to learn more.

Other Support

BSA will fund in-person counseling for current or former Scouts or their family. To request in-person counseling, please call 1-866-907-2721 or email restructuring@scouting.org.

Your information will be kept private.

www.OfficialBSAclaims.com

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Japan's Old Tokaido Road invites visitors to step back in time

Editor's note: Due to COVID-19 restrictions, some locations may have different admission measures in place. Please plan ahead if and when you decide to travel. Follow safety guidelines set by your base and always remember to practice proper hand-washing and social distancing.

STORY AND PHOTOS BY HANA KUSUMOTO,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: March 28, 2019

The long history of Japan is told in many historic sites around the country — and at sightseeing spots along Hakone Hachiri in Kanagawa and Shizuoka Prefectures, visitors can step back in time to experience what it was like to travel the country almost 400 years ago.

Hakone Hachiri is a 20-mile-long section of the Old Tokaido Road that runs between Odawara and Mishima cities, located about an hour away from Tokyo by shinkansen, the country's high-speed rail system. (The journey via car, bus or local trains is a bit longer, and can run anywhere from 2 to 3 hours.)

While most foreign tourists are familiar with the general Hakone region due to its proximity to Mount Fuji, as well as its many upscale ryokan, or traditional Japanese inns, there's plenty of history in the region worth exploring as well. For history buffs, a day spent exploring this small section of the historic Tokaido Road is a welcome respite to the hustle and bustle of Tokyo.

The Old Tokaido Road was one of the five main highways that connected Kyoto, the former capital of Japan, and Edo, which is now modern-day Tokyo. The route was used primarily to transport goods but was also utilized by travelers.

The Hakone Hachiri section of the Tokaido is famous for its many inns and shops, created to serve weary travelers who stayed in the area overnight. While many visitors used their stay along this section of the Tokaido to prepare for the hike up Mount Hakone, many more were waiting to pass through the Hakone Sekisho, also known as the Hakone Checkpoint.

People in the Edo period liked to travel, according to Koji Tanaka, the director of Zenkoku Kaido Koryu Kaigi, an association dedicated to studying the old highways of Japan.

"There is no other country where its

people traveled so much," Tanaka said.

According to Tanaka, most people traveled the Old Tokaido Road by foot — but this practice lasted only until the Meiji period, when people began to travel by train. The new mode of transportation meant that travelers soon passed through the towns of Odawara, Hakone and Mishima, instead of staying for long periods of time.

Today, Hakone's popularity with both domestic and foreign tourists alike has transformed the region back into a must-visit destination in Japan — and the sights along the Hakone Hachiri remain popular attractions. Here are some of the can't-miss spots along this historic route nestled in the shadows of Mount Fuji.

Odawara Castle

Located 10 minutes by foot from Odawara Station is Odawara Castle Park, a popular location for locals to eat lunch or enjoy seasonal flowers — such as azaleas, irises and hydrangeas — during the spring and summer months.

The castle is believed to have been built sometime in mid-15th century. However, details of the castle and its history are unclear. The original castle was destroyed by earthquakes over the years, and the current structure was built in the 1960s.

At the top of the castle, visitors can enjoy a panoramic view of Odawara City and the Sagami Bay from the observation deck, while the castle's interior offers an exhibit on the building's history, complete with swords and armor. A separate building at Odawara Castle, called the Tokiwagimon Samurai Kan, contains exhibits dedicated to the history of samurai.

There is also a small children's park nearby, with a train and go-kart ride for little ones.

Want to get the full samurai experience? Consider renting a kimono, ninja suit or armor and take a commemorative photo on the castle grounds. Rental fees are 500 yen (or about \$4.50) for adults and 300 yen for children ages 12 and under.

Hakone Sekisho

The Hakone Sekisho, or the Hakone Checkpoint, was set up by the Tokugawa shogunate during the Edo period and was intended to serve as a security measure to defend Edo from rival clans. The checkpoint, which dates to 1619, was one of the largest and most important among the 53 sekisho located in Japan at that time.



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➤ An extensive restoration of the Hakone Sekisho, based on detailed documents dating from the end of the Edo Period found in Shizuoka prefecture in 1983, began in 1999. The restored grounds officially opened to the public in 2007. Today, visitors can learn about Edo-era Japan through the many exhibits and displays located on the grounds of this former important stopping point along the Old Tokaido Road.

Hakone Cedar Avenue

About 400 cedar trees are situated along this 1,600-foot-long dirt path which runs from Moto-Hakone to Onshihakone Park along Lake Ashi. The trees, which were planted about 350 years ago, are said to have protected travelers from harsh weather conditions as they walked along the Old Tokaido Road.



Some of the cedar trees are in poor condition, and it is said that only a third of them will survive the next 100 years. The town of Hakone is making efforts to preserve them.

Hatajuku Ichirizuka

Ichirizuka are large mounds of dirt topped with trees that were used as mile markers on the Old Tokaido Road. The ichirizuka were placed every ri — an old unit of measurement equal to 4 kilometers, or roughly 2.5 miles.

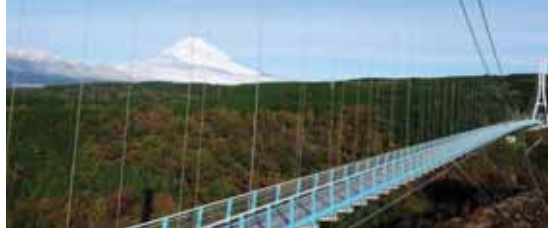
The Tokugawa shogunate began placing the ichirizuka beginning in 1604, completing the construction of all markers along the Old Tokaido Road in 1612. The ichirizuka in Hatajuku was set up 23 ri (or 57 miles) from the Nihonbashi neighborhood of Edo.

Unfortunately, the original Hatajuku ichirizuka was demolished. The current marker was



reconstructed in 1997.

Part of the old, stone-paved path leads away from the ichirizuka to a steep, mountainous part of the Old Tokaido Road. Here, the Tokugawa shogunate purposely ran the road along the cliffs as a way to defend Edo against approaching enemies. This section is said to be the most difficult segment of the Hakone Hachiri, so it's best to be extra cautious when hiking in this area.



Mishima Skywalk

One of the newer sightseeing spots along the Hakone Hachiri, Mishima Skywalk is the longest walkable suspension bridge in Japan. Opened in 2015, the bridge offers visitors a fantastic view of Mount Fuji.

The 300-meter-long bridge was created to bring tourists to the area and to provide a rest spot for drivers, according to the company that manages the bridge. Visitors can also enjoy outdoor activities, such as ziplining and other family-friendly outdoor sports in the area surrounding the Skywalk.

Mishima Taisha

Mishima Taisha is the most important shrine in the located on the Izu peninsula.

Minamoto-no Yoritomo, the founder and the first shogun of the Kamakura shogunate, worshipped here while plotting to overthrow the Heike clan during the Genpei War in 1180 in an effort to restore power to the Genji family. In later years, samurai visited the shrine to pray for victory before going off to battle.

Documents from the Nara and Heian periods refer to Mishima Taisha, making this shrine nearly 1300 years old. However, the shrine's original buildings were destroyed by an earthquake in 1895. The current wooden shrine, which is a restoration featuring detailed wood carvings, was designated an important cultural property by the Japanese government in 2000. It is also a famous spot to view sakura, or cherry blossoms, in the spring.

kusumoto.hana@stripes.com
Twitter: @HanaKusumoto



Odawara Castle

- **DIRECTIONS:** Odawara Castle is accessible via train from Odawara Station (10-minute walk) or via car by taking the Oi-Matsuda Interchange off the Tomei Expressway (40-minute drive).
- **HOURS:** 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., with last admission at 4:30 p.m. Closed on Dec. 31 and Jan. 1. The castle tower is also closed on the second Wednesday in December.
- **COST:** 500 yen (or about \$4.50) for adults and 200 yen for children under the age of 12. Admission to the Tokiwagimon Samurai Kan exhibit is 200 yen for adults and 60 yen children under the age of 12. Slightly discounted tickets are available to enter both the castle and Tokiwagimon Samurai Kan.
- **FOOD:** A small restaurant in the park serves yakisoba, curry rice, drinks and desserts.
- **INFORMATION:** <https://odawaracastle.com/>

Hakone Sekisho

- **DIRECTIONS:** The Hakone Sekisho is accessible via bus at the Hakonemachi bus stop (2-minute walk), which is a 5-minute bus ride from Odawara Station.
- **HOURS:** 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. daily, except from Dec. 1 to Feb. 28, when it's open from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Last admission is 30 minutes before closing.
- **COST:** Admission is 500 yen for adults and 250 yen for elementary school students. On weekends, children under the age of 12 can enter the facility for free.
- **INFORMATION:** <http://www.hakonesekisyo.jp/english/main/main.html>

Hakone Cedar Avenue

- **DIRECTIONS:** Hakone's Cedar Avenue is located a 1-minute walk from Hakone's Shisho-mae bus stop, located along the Hakone Tozan bus' H line. The ride takes approximately 39 minutes when departing from Hakone Yumoto Station.
- **COST:** Free
- **INFORMATION:** <https://www.hakone.or.jp/520>

Hatajuku Ichirizuka

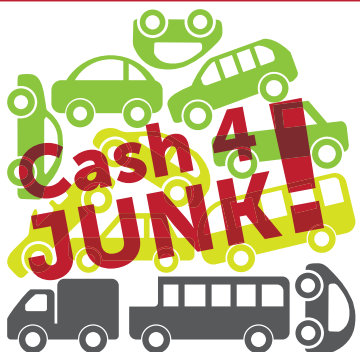
- **DIRECTIONS:** The Hatajuku Ichirizuka is located a 1-minute walk from the Hatajuku bus stop on Hakone Tozan buses bound for Hatajuku, Amasake-Chaya and Moto-Hakone Port. The ride takes about 15 minute when departing from Hakone Yumoto Station.
- **COST:** Free
- **INFORMATION:** <https://www.hakone.or.jp/en/561>

Mishima Skywalk

- **DIRECTIONS:** Mishima Skywalk is best accessible via the Tokai Bus at the Mishima Skywalk bus top (20 minutes when departing from Mishima Station). If driving, take the Haoke Toge Interchange off the Hakone Shindo (10-minute drive)
- **HOURS:** Open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
- **COST:** Admission to the Mishima Skywalk is 1,000 yen for adults, 500 yen for junior high students and 200 yen for elementary school students. Children under 6 are free. Additional fees are required for outdoor activities such as ziplining
- **FOOD:** There are three restaurants in the immediate vicinity of the Mishima Skywalk, serving a variety of Japanese and Western-inspired dishes
- **INFORMATION:** <http://mishima-skywalk.jp/>

Mishima Taisha

- **DIRECTIONS:** Mishima Taisha is accessible via JR Mishima Station (15-minute walk).
- **HOURS:** Open daily.
- **INFORMATION:** <http://shizuoka-guide.com/english/detail/page/detail/3664>



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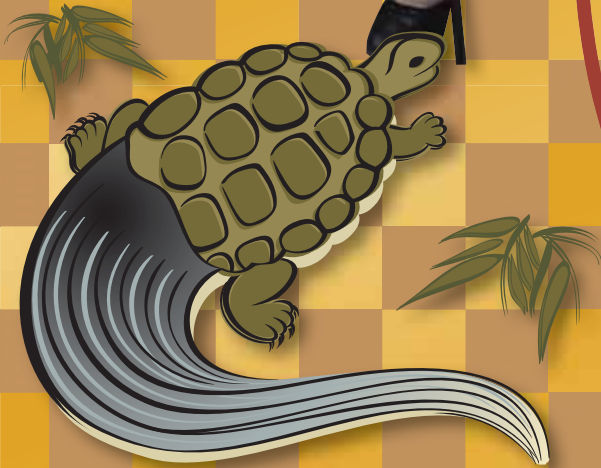
AGING WITH GRACE

Life's sunset in the Land of the Rising Sun

How old is old in Japan?

- In Japan, people age 65 and older are considered elderly, according to the Act on Assurance of Medical Care for Elderly People. The act defines people 75 and older as "late stage elderly."
- Japan has the highest life expectancy at 84.2 years (80.98 for men, 87.14 for women) out of 194 surveyed nations, according to the World Health Organization in 2018. (The U.S. ranks 34th at age 78.5.)
- 28.4 percent of Japan's population – 35.9 million people (20.3 million women, 15.6 million men) – is age 65 and older. The number increases by 320,000 annually *
- There are 18.5 million people in Japan age 75 and older, up by 530,000 in two years.*
- There are 71,274 centenarians in Japan. The number increases by 1,489 annually *
- The number of the elderly is rapidly increasing in Japan as the number of children being born declines, causing major concerns over how a shrinking workforce will continue to fund healthcare and social security.

* Japanese Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2019 statistics
- Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan



Respect for the

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Respect for the Aged Day may call to mind Japan's rapidly aging population, but that only underscores this national holiday's emphasis on honoring and appreciating the contributions senior citizens have made to society.

or Toshiyori-no-Hi. They held a ceremony to honor seniors and listened to their stories in order to benefit from their wisdom. The idea spread throughout the country, then spread nationwide. "Respect for the Aged Day (Keisei no Hi) was legislated in 1966 according to the National Holidays Act," said Yukio Miura, from the holiday section of the Cabinet Office's General Affairs Bureau. "The purpose of this holiday is to show respect for the elderly in our country and wish them longevity."

"I think sometime after Japan started recovering from the devastation of the war, people began to think that they could appreciate the elderly who had contributed so much to the country," how to glean from the past, Miura added. "Although the holiday is a day to show respect for the elderly, it is also a day to show respect for the elderly who have contributed so much to the country."

'Harajuku for old people'

STRIPES JAPAN

A statue of Arai Kannon (literally, washing deity) at Koganji temple in Sugamo, also known as Togenuki Jizoson, is one of the most popular temples for the elderly to visit in Tokyo. Many believe that if you pour water on the statue and polish that part of it with a cloth that corresponds to your own bodily ailment, you will be healed. Senior citizens can be seen queuing up to wash the statue in hopes of a healing every day. The area is not only popular because of the temple's statue; the street the temple is on is also a well-known shopping district for older patrons. Over 200 shops line a half-mile stretch of Jizo Dori shopping street, featuring all kinds of goods coveted by the elderly such as clothes, health foods and souvenirs. With Tokyo's famed shopping district for young hipsters in mind, some locals have even dubbed this street, "Harajuku for old people."

This is a great place to buy Japanese souvenirs because of variety of traditional goods – and pocketbook-friendly prices. The area is particularly lively on the 4th, 14th and 24th of every month when the temple holds a small festival. Jizo Dori shopping street begins a five-minute walk northwest of Sugamo Station on the JR Yamanote and Mita Subway lines.





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Aged Day

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was originally observed on Sep. 15, the National Holidays Act was amended in 2003, introducing the so-called Happy Monday system which moved several holidays to Mondays to create three-day weekends. Respect for the Aged Day has been celebrated on the third Monday of September ever since.

On this day, many communities honor the elderly with parties or ceremonies and present them with gifts. TV stations usually air senior-related programs such as features on the number of elderly in Japan or the oldest people in the country.

And school children often visit facilities for the elderly to entertain them with song and dance.

How will you honor the elderly in your community on Respect for the Aged Day?

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



Western ways changing Okinawa longevity

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Okinawa Prefecture was once long recognized for having the highest longevity rate out of all 47 prefectures in Japan. But times have changed according to a Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare study conducted every five years. Apparently, nothing really does last forever. While a 1995 survey showed that overall there were 22 centenarians for every 100,000 persons in Okinawa – 3.8 times the national average at the time – survey figures show longevity has been declining in Okinawa ever since. By 2005, male Okinawans had dropped from first to 25th place.

Most recently, in 2015, Okinawan women dropped to seventh place in the survey with a life expectancy of 87.44 years, slightly higher than the ministry's national average of 87.01. Okinawan men, however, plummeted to 36th place at 80.27 years, just shy of the national life expectancy for males of 80.77 years. The results are no surprise to Dr. Makoko Suzuki who predicted the trend a decade ago in an interview with Stars and Stripes in 2013.

Suzuki, now a retired medical doctor, Ryukyu University professor emeritus and co-author of the best-selling "The Okinawa Program: How the World's Longest Lived People Achieved Everlasting Health," conducted a 25-year study of the traditional Okinawa diet. He said the prefecture's claim as a haven for centenarians (once the most per capita in the world) came from an old island lifestyle that literally has been dying out. This has opened the door to diseases associated with obesity – once rare on Okinawa – like diabetes, heart failure and strokes that are now becoming all too common.

"The chief factor is diet," he said in 2004, pointing a finger at ubiquitous fast-food chains like A&W, McDonald's and Kentucky Fried Chicken. "Their (younger Okinawans') eating habits are more westernized, which raises their cholesterol."

While older Okinawans still take walks, he added, their younger counterparts, "have the tendency to hop into a car."

"The last two factors are the loss of the Okinawan culture and tradition in our everyday lives," Suzuki said. "Traditionally, Okinawans were more involved with their community and religious activities, which kept them active."

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Silver Week glitters like gold

You may have heard of Golden Week, Japan's string of four consecutive holidays from late April to early May, but you probably didn't know that there is also a "Silver Week" which occurs once every few years in September. Here's how it works:

Autumnal Equinox Day is a national holiday that falls on Sept. 23 (Sept. 22 during leap years). Japan's National Holiday Act dictates that when Respect for the Aged Day, celebrated the third Monday in September, falls on Sept. 21, and it is not a leap year, the day between the two holidays becomes another holiday – National People's Day.

Combined with the weekend that precedes the Monday holiday, you get the five-day aptly named, Silver Week. The last Silver Week occurred in 2015 after 2009. The next Silver Week will be in 2026. In this leap year of 2020, Autumnal Equinox Day is celebrated on Sept. 22 and along with Respect for the Aged Day (Sept. 21) and regular weekend make up four-day holiday weekend. It can be named a "Bronze Week", can't it?

– Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Japan



Tasting Tsugaru

Where tradition and innovation coincide

Editor's note: These are uncertain times, so please plan ahead if and when you decide to travel. Follow to safety guidelines set by your base and always remember to practice proper hand-washing and social distancing.

BY MELINDA JOE,
JAPAN TRAVEL

The roads that wind through the lush landscape of the Tsugaru Plain in Aomori Prefecture are lined with rice paddies and orderly groves of fruit trees. Once a sparsely inhabited marshland, the region was transformed into an agricultural center by land reclamation projects during the Tokugawa Period (1603 - 1868).

Bounded to the north by the volcanic peaks of the Hakkoda mountains, the densely forested Shirakami mountain range to the south, and the Sea of Japan to the west, Tsugaru was notoriously inaccessible in ancient times, and the combination of the area's secluded geography and heavy snowfall gave rise to a unique culture rich in culinary traditions. Today, a current of innovation runs through the region, building on its heritage and adding diversity to the food culture.

Viewed on background photo, the tiny village of Owani, which lies south of Hirosaki City, resembles an alpine hamlet in Central Europe, with clusters of colorful rooftops surrounded by sylvan mountain slopes. The covered footbath outside of the train station, where visitors can dip their toes in the warm water, points to Owani's history as an onsen (hot spring) resort. The town's geothermal spring, however, provides more than mineral-rich water for bathing: the heat it generates is also used to farm Owani onsen moyashi, an heirloom variety of bean sprout prized for its extraordinary, crisp texture.

In the past, the people of Owani relied on bean sprouts as a valuable source of protein and nutrients during the harsh winter months. At the Yagihashi Moyashi farm, Jun Yagihashi and Yuya Yagihashi use special techniques developed more than 350 years ago. The process starts with pouring 50 kg of golden kohachi-mame soybeans into a deep, rectangular pit. The beans are then sprinkled with a fine coating of soil the color of dark chocolate and then covered with bundles of straw sandwiched between hand-woven straw mats. A network of crisscrossed underground pipes funnels water from the hot springs beneath the seedbeds to warm the soil.

This labor-intensive method was kept a closely



Yagihashi Moyashi Farm

ADDRESS: 11-11 Owani Kawabe
Owani-machi, Minami Tsugaru-gun,
Aomori (Wanicome)
TEL: 0172-49-1126

Yagihashi Moyashi Farm



Photos by Luuvu Hoang

guarded secret for centuries. But as the number of producers has dwindled over the decades, the residents of Owani decided to create a program to train farmers and encourage young people like the Yagihashis to enter the industry in order to prevent the heirloom sprouts from disappearing.

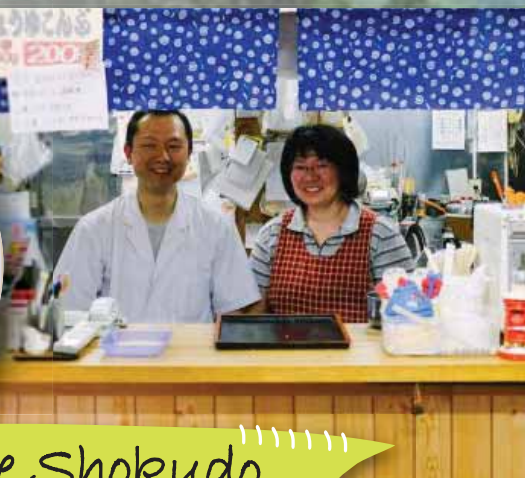
Yuya Yagihashi began farming them as an off-season side project. "Once I started, I got really into it. It's rewarding work," he says, cradling a handful of onsen moyashi in one arm. With their long, slender shoots and yellow tops, the vegetables look like a bunch of white-stemmed flowers.

From October to May, onsen moyashi bean sprouts are a fixture on menus at local eateries such as Hikage Shokudo, a classic Japanese diner with a history of more than 120 years. The sprouts are the star ingredient in the restaurant's specialty, moyashi ramen.

On the outskirts of town at Owani Shizen Mura, entrepreneur Hiroshi Miura and his son, Takashi, are using new technology to bring back an old idea: free-range pork farming. Owani Shizen Mura is a seven-hectare expanse of greenery. At the entrance, visitors are greeted by the farm's pets – a miniature pony, two sheep, a couple of goats, and a brood of fluffy chickens. The ↗

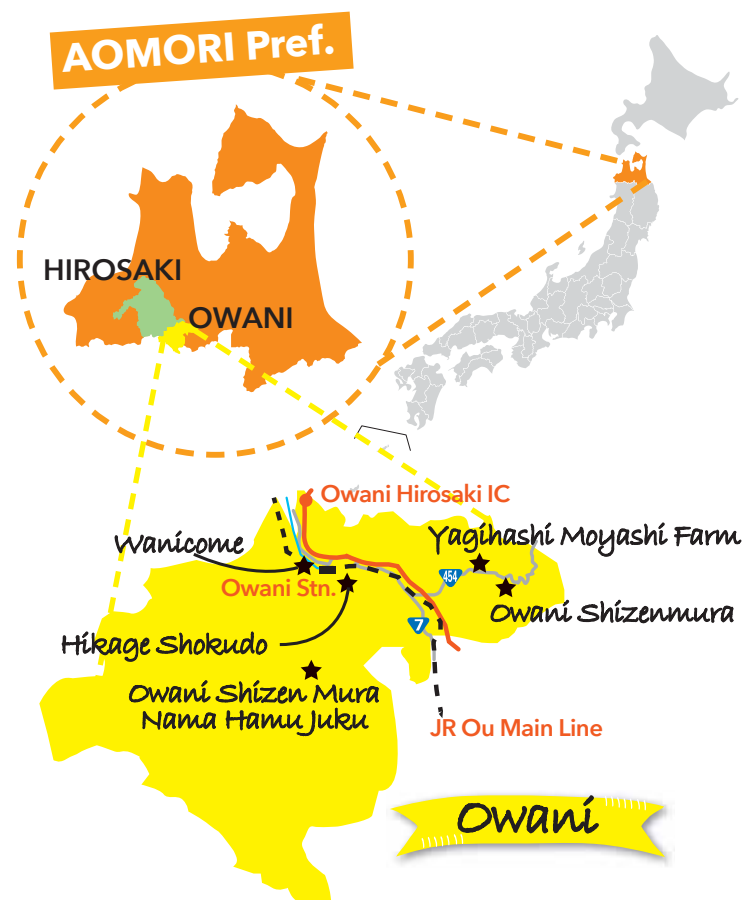


Hikage Shokudo



Hikage Shokudo

ADDRESS: 55-2 Owani-aza
Owani, Owani-machi, Minami
Tsugaru-gun, Aomori
TEL: 0172-48-3430
HOURS: Open daily 11 a.m. -
7 p.m., irregular holidays



→ main area is the domain of several round-bellied pigs that roam the pasture, rooting for bugs and nuts and taking occasional dips in the mud pool.

“We do our best to create a stress-free environment. Removing stress on the animals leads to healthy development,” explains Takashi Miura, who oversees the farm. The pigs graze for 240 days – 80 days longer than average – to ensure that the meat is tender and marbled with sweet fat. Owani Shizen Mura is an outstanding example of closed-loop agriculture. The farm supplements the pigs’ natural diets with additive-free animal feed made with leftovers collected from supermarkets and convenience stores. The food is sterilized and then treated with lactobacillus bacteria before being turned into dry feed.

The pig farm is an extension of founder Hiroshi Miura’s aim to combat food waste – a serious problem in Japan. In 1998, Miura started Eco Net, a company that recycles discarded food to make fertilizer and animal feed. Nine years later, he launched Owani Shizen Mura.

“I had been thinking of how to create a local industry that would reduce waste and simultaneously turn it into a resource, and this is the result,” he says.

Miura has recently embarked on a new project to take his waste-not-want-not vision one step further. 2016 marked the opening of the Owani Shizen Mura Nama Hamu Juku, a repurposed elementary school building where Miura is now producing long-aged cured ham. The facility’s name – which literally means, “cured ham cram school” – is a reference to the building’s history, as well as a play on the Japanese word for maturation, juku. Rows of salted ham joints hang in the school’s old music room in front of a green chalkboard. Miura ages them for a minimum of two years, and the meat has a distinctive, deep flavor.

SEE TSUGARU ON PAGE 12



Owani Shizenmura

ADDRESS: 420-200 Komakizawa Nagamine,
Owani-machi, Minami Tsugaru-gun, Aomori
Pref.

TEL: 0172-47-6567

WEBSITE: <http://owani-s.com/>

Owani Shizenmura Namahamu Koubou

ADDRESS: 48-2 Koganezawa Hayaseno,
Owani-machi, Minami-Tsugarugun, Aomori
Pref.

WEBSITE: <http://namahamukoubou.owani-s.com/>



Hirosaki Kimori Cidre Koubou

TSUGARU: PRESERVING AOMORI REGION'S CULINARY PAST

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

"I'm not trying to imitate Spanish or Italian ham," he says. "I want to make something that people can only find here, in Owani."

New developments are also afoot in the nearby city of Hirosaki, the apple-producing capital of Japan. Apples have been a major crop ever since the fruit was first brought to the region in the late 1800s. However, the number of producers has been declining as a result of the country's aging population, coupled with the younger generation's reluctance to take up agriculture. When hailstorms severely damaged apple crops in the Tsugaru region in 2008, orchardist Satoshi Takahashi realized that he needed to find ways to make the business more stable.

In 2014, he began making Kimori, Japan's first artisanal hard cider, in a beautifully designed brew house in Hirosaki's Apple Park. In addition to creating a new revenue stream for his farm, Takahashi says that his goal is to bring locals together and attract visitors to the region. He hopes that the Kimori project will prompt people to take a second look at the humble apple – a staple that many now take for granted.

Apple farming in Japan – where adverse weather

conditions pose constant threats to crops – is no easy task. But Takahashi finds great value in the endeavor: "Growing apples cultivates character and shapes you as a person."

Kimori's label, which depicts a single red apple on a tree, encapsulates his philosophy as a farmer. Every year after harvest, Takahashi leaves one apple as a gift for the birds.

"Nature doesn't exist for humans alone. We have to share," he observes.

While Tsugaru's producers are looking to the future, the ladies' cooking collective Tsugaru Akatsuki no Kai is making sure that the region doesn't forget its culinary past. Led by Yoshiko Kudo, a keen-eyed grandmother with a kind face, the club gets together to share kitchen wisdom and prepare local specialties using traditional techniques for community gatherings or groups of visitors.

The focus is on intensely seasonal ingredients – many of which are foraged or grown by the women themselves. The mizu (a plant in the nettle family) that goes into a tartare of the vegetable's roots comes from the garden, while the slender bamboo shoots that are folded into steamed rice are gathered from the mountains.

"We try to use vegetables picked fresh in the morning

and prepare dishes based on what's available right now. In winter, when there are no fresh ingredients, we use preserved foods," Kudo says. "Real food is made with what's in season."

In the mountainous areas of Aomori – where preserved foods were essential to surviving the long winters – salted, dried and fermented ingredients form the base of the cuisine. The meals prepared by Akatsuki no Kai showcase an array of unique delicacies such as apples pickled in salt brine; tofu and vegetables simmered with dried cod; and hatahata-izushi, fermented Japanese sandfish. One of the region's most iconic dishes, izushi is made by first salting the gutted fish, hanging them to dry, and then layering them with koji (an enzymatic catalyst made from rice and the mold *Aspergillus Oryzae*) to induce fermentation. The process takes roughly four months, and the finished product resonates with umami intensity.

In today's busy world, such time-consuming practices are in danger of fading, but Akatsuki no Kai is working hard to pass the traditions and flavors of Tsugaru on to the next generation.



Hirosaki Kimori Cidre Koubou

ADDRESS: 52-3 Terasawa

Tomita-aza, Shimizu,
Hirosaki-shi, Aomori

WEBSITE: kimori-cidre.com



Tsugaru Akatsuki no Kai



Tsugaru Akatsuki-no Kai

ADDRESS: 44-13 Ishikawa
Yagishi, Hirosaki-shi,
Aomori





PLEASE DON'T STOP THE MUSIC!

Japanese company creates safe solution for musicians

LIVE JAPAN

There's been a lot of talk concerning face masks lately, with people discussing where to use them, when to use them, and if to use them. Here in Japan, however, a large majority of the population is masking up wherever and whenever possible, even at times when it might seem unnecessary or impractical. One of those impractical occasions would be at band practice, when you're a musician trying to use your mouth to play a wind instrument while all the other musicians around you are masking up. Instruments like the saxophone, trumpet, flute, clarinet, or even the humble recorder all require unobstructed access to a human mouth to produce sound. So how can you get your lips near your instrument while wearing a mask?

Tokyo-based Shimamura usually

specialises in musical instruments, but seeing a need for masks for musicians, they teamed up with Gifu-based Technad, a manufacturer of silica gel products, to create the "Silica Clean Wind Instrument Compatible Antibacterial Deodorised Three-Dimensional Mask". Shimamura says they wanted to create a mask that allows musicians to enjoy playing music during the pandemic, while also helping them to respect the group environment where they're required to play in close vicinity with other musicians. Now there'll be no more deathly side-eyes from fellow musicians or audience members as this face covering has a slit for your lips to poke through, allowing you to keep your nose — and your mouth when you're not using it — covered while you play.

The inside of the mask is covered with a special cloth containing silica, which keeps it deodorised while maintaining a suitable level of humidity for maximum comfort and breathability. Silver ions embedded in the fabric provide antibacterial protection and the shape of the mask provides a lot of room for movement as well, which is a plus for wind instrument players. The mask comes in small and medium sizes, suitable for young children and adults, and there are three colour

variations: white, light grey, and black. The reusable mask will retail for 1,848 yen (US\$17.31) at Shimamura Music stores nationwide and online. The mask will look right at home on your dresser beside your ramen face mask, which is a head-turner as well but considerably less practical, as it fogs up your glasses to make it look like you're wearing a steaming hot bowl of noodles on your face.





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LIVE JAPAN

Japan's convenience stores are amazing in many ways and as you travel, you'll find yourself stopping by on more than one occasion. One of the most enjoyable things to do in a "konbini," as the shops are affectionately called, is to browse for unique and limited sweets and snacks! If you don't know where to start, we've chosen our 10 favorite treats from Japan's 7-Eleven that you absolutely have to try!



1. Ebi-mirin-yaki, shrimp rice crackers

Rice crackers are a staple snack in Japan, perfect for nibbling on while watching TV or having a beer with a friend. 7-Eleven's rice crackers are known for their large size, flavorful seaweed, and wonderful crispiness. We especially recommend the ebi-mirin-yaki, or rice crackers with shrimp and rice wine flavor. The crackers are thin but they're surprisingly hard and crunchy, so they won't crumble in your bag either!

Price: 108 yen



2. Ika-ten mentai mayonnaise, squid rice crackers

If you're a fan of barbecued squid, this crunchy cracker treat is perfect for you! It boasts a gentle seasoning of mayonnaise and mentai (Alaska pollock) that harmonizes great with the squid flavor and as soon as you open the bag, the aroma will make your mouth water. It's best enjoyed with a cold glass of beer!

Price: 108 yen



3. Smoked salami and cheese snack

These crunchy bites are a great choice if you're craving something for a more Western palate. They were inspired by Italy's delicious cheese ravioli and the flavor of smoked salami is rich and mouthwatering. For what looks like a simple snack, this combination is surprisingly luxurious!

Price: 108 yen



4. Hojicha crunchy chocolate

Hojicha is a roasted Japanese green tea and like green tea in general, it goes excellently well with chocolate. This crunchy chocolate snack will conquer your heart with the tasty combination of sweet chocolate and the gentle bitterness of tea, enhanced by the little crunchy bits!

Price: 128 yen



5. Ume-nori-maki, seaweed rice crackers

Nori, dried seaweed, is a traditional and healthy snack that is enjoyed in Japan since ancient times. The "ume-nori-maki" snack makes the most out of this seaweed and rice crackers by combining them into bite-sized rolls. These little crisps are then enhanced by ume, or Japanese plum, boasting a unique taste that is hard to describe. It's best to just try this traditional snack for yourself!

Price: 127 yen



6. Rich chocolate cake

For chocolate and sweets enthusiasts, 7-Eleven's rich chocolate cake is an absolute must-try. Look forward to four flavorful, sweet slices separated into two little packages, perfect for sharing with a friend. It even comes with a little fork to prevent unpleasantly sticky fingers. This cake will have you craving for more in no time!

Price: 288 yen



7. White chocolate chip matcha cookie

Matcha is an amazing ingredient for baking and there is a plethora of different matcha-flavored sweets and snacks. 7-Eleven's white chocolate chip

matcha cookie is one of them, fusing tasty American-style cookie dough with Uji matcha powder. This makes for an incredibly delicious treat that'll delight every sweet tooth!

Price: 127 yen



8. Crunchy chocolate sticks

Crunchy sticks are a favorite children's treat all over Japan, although they're usually enjoyed as chips and with a savory flavor. 7-Eleven has created a version of this popular snack for sweets lovers and while it looks simple, the combination of crunchy core and mellow chocolate coating is simply amazing.

Price: 108 yen



9. Juicy matcha baumkuchen (Spit cake)

Baumkuchen, the German word for spit cake, is massively popular among the Japanese population. As such, it comes as no surprise that 7-Eleven boasts a delicious matcha version of the baked classic. The juicy, flavorful cake is generally on the more expensive side, but a pack of 7-Eleven's version nets you eight individual pieces for very little money.

Price: 321 yen



10. Rich cream raisin sandwich

For a luxurious, rich treat, opt for the rich cream raisin sandwich. This kind of creamy treat is closely associated with Hokkaido, but you don't have to go to a specialty store to get your hands on it – just head to the nearest 7-Eleven. Mellow cream with flavorful raisins is sandwiched between two crunchy cookies and individual packaging guarantees that this treat keeps its crunch and tastiness for weeks!

Price: 354 yen

Sightseeing and exploring is fun but requires quite a bit of energy – energy that is best recharged with a tasty snack on the go! On top of that, Japanese treats also make for excellent souvenirs to gift your snack-happy friends and family at home. Don't miss out on trying Japan's many unique flavors!

*All of the above prices are including tax.

*Availability may vary by store.

*The information on items and prices are based on 7-Eleven Japan.

Stripes Sports Trivia

The last 5 NFL teams to lose one game or less in the regular season have all failed to win the Super Bowl. Most notably, of course, is the 2007 Patriots - the 2nd team to ever finish the regular season undefeated. Can you name the most recent team to finish with one loss that failed to win the Big Game?

Answer
Carolina Panthers (2015)

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Japanese often associate “Power Spots” with Shinto shrines and Buddhist temples, along with large mountains, islands and lakes. In fact, there are about 165,000 shrines and temples, more than three times the number of convenience stores (50,000) within the nation. Among tens of thousands of Power Spots, Meiji Shrine (Tokyo), Osorezan (Aomori Pref.), Ise Shrine (Mie Pref.), Miyajima Island (Hiroshima Pref.) and Izumo Shrine (Shimane Pref.) are extremely popular and widely worshipped.

Kanji of the week

寝

Neru/shin (Sleep)

Language Lesson

How much is this?

Kore wa ikura desuka?

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Puts in stitches
- 5 Tiptop
- 9 Hot sauce
- 14 Cookie for dunking
- 15 Watch-step link
- 16 French farewell
- 17 Kewpie, for one
- 18 Connery film of 1999
- 20 Go off-script
- 22 Trepidation
- 23 Engrossed by
- 24 Match, in poker
- 25 Conclusive trial
- 28 Poe's middle name
- 30 Bic filler
- 31 Long, long
- 34 On the way
- 36 Ammunition wagon
- 38 Arithmetic sign
- 39 Kind of cavity
- 40 Summer beverage
- 43 Unable to sit still
- 45 Hollywood's Danson
- 46 Make a goof
- 47 Mr. T's group
- 48 False show
- 50 Dog reprimand
- 53 Certain dancer
- 56 Staff symbol
- 57 Kind of cap
- 59 One-sided
- 62 Reduce, as expenses
- 63 Money substitute
- 64 iPhone assistant
- 65 Spellbound
- 66 Spartan slave
- 67 Leak slowly
- 68 Telephoto, for one

DOWN

- 1 Bubbly drinks
- 2 Lose ground?
- 3 Justly deserved
- 4 Songs for one
- 5 Sailor's assent
- 6 Keep in custody
- 7 Like some colors
- 8 Unpredictable
- 9 Tree trickling
- 10 Cop to
- 11 Bank claim
- 12 Email folder
- 13 Pilot starter
- 19 Gladiator's place
- 21 Railing part
- 26 Felix, for one
- 27 Like beauty, they say
- 29 and clear
- 31 Gathering, as of things
- 32 Capricorn's creature
- 33 One's partner
- 34 Shed
- 35 "Way to go!"
- 37 Sprawling story
- 41 Standing
- 42 Unpretentious
- 43 Showy display
- 44 Computer pros
- 48 Salk's conquest
- 49 Chilling
- 51 Singer Neville
- 52 Bottom of the barrel
- 53 Overdo the praise
- 54 Enough, for some
- 55 Kind of scout
- 58 Translucent gem
- 60 Anagram for "tap"
- 61 Sassy talk

Answers to Last Week's Crossword:

S	A	S	S	D	E	B	T	B	A	S	S	O
A	B	E	T	A	R	E	A	U	L	C	E	R
T	E	A	R	G	R	A	N	D	S	T	A	N
E	L	B	A	G	O	U	G	E	E	L	S	E
R	I	S	E	R	C	A	R	E	E	R		
O	P	E	N	E	R	T	R	A	C	E		
P	I	E	A	S	T	R	O	L	O	G	E	R
U	N	Z	I	P	A	I	M	L	O	Y	A	L
S	T	E	N	O	G	R	A	P	H	Y	E	G
C	R	E	E	D	U	T	M	O	S	T		
A	L	L	O	T	S	S	T	E	E	P		
M	A	I	M	S	C	R	A	M	N	E	A	P
I	N	V	I	G	O	R	A	T	E	A	N	N
S	C	E	N	E	A	K	I	N	C	E	N	T
S	E	R	G	E	G	E	N	T	E	R	A	S

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

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:

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

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The background is a rich, textured collage of Japanese culinary elements. In the top left, there are two small dark bowls filled with a light-colored liquid, possibly soy sauce or miso, next to a small brown teapot. To the right, a cluster of bright orange citrus fruits, likely daidai (citrus), is shown. Below the citrus, a black plate holds a piece of salmon topped with a green garnish. In the center-right, a wooden bowl is filled with white rice, with a pair of wooden chopsticks resting on top. The bottom of the image is dominated by a variety of fresh ingredients: several pieces of nigiri sushi (salmon and tuna) are in the bottom left; a basket of fresh green onions and other vegetables is in the bottom center; and a large, vibrant platter of seafood, including crab legs, mushrooms, and other delicacies, is in the bottom right. The entire scene is set against a dark, vertically-grained wooden background.

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RESTAURANT INFO

The beginner's guide to Mochi

BY LUCY BAKER,
BY FOOD

Deeply tied in the cultural roots of Japan, mochi is a type of rice cake and signature Japanese food that has been around for centuries. A lot of people arrive in Japan and are confronted with these seemingly unusual blobs of rice and wonder, “What on earth is that...?” With its sticky and stretchy texture, mochi is a real curiosity for those who have never tried it. But don’t be wary of mochi; find out all about it here in this ultimate Beginner’s Guide to Mochi!

What is Mochi?

The umbrella term “mochi” covers all different styles and flavors of Japanese rice cakes, which is a kind of dough made from pounded steamed rice. Eating and

Types of Mochi

So, what types of mochi are there and in what kinds of dishes will you find it? Mochi is largely used in many types of wagashi Japanese sweets (lovely when eaten alongside matcha green tea), as well as in many savory Japanese dishes. Here we’ll introduce 15 types of mochi:



Source: tokyotreat

1. Daifuku

Daifuku mochi is a type of mochi that is big, soft, and round, with anko (sweet red bean paste) inside. You can also find other filling variations such as ichigo (strawberry).



Source: olive-hitomawashi

2. Bota Mochi

Bota Mochi is like a daifuku turned inside out, where the mochi ball is on the inside and the filling, such as red bean paste, is coated on the outside. Ohagi is another variation of bota mochi that is eaten in the autumn and has a slightly different texture.



Source: woman.excite.co.jp

3. Kinako Mochi

This type of mochi is sprinkled in kinoko soybean powder and sugar and is the best when the mochi is freshly made and warm (also known as, Abekawa Mochi).



Source: gurunavi.jp

4. Kiri Mochi

Kiri Mochi describes basic blocks of mochi cut into rectangles in its preserved state. These can be added to various dishes or grilled (see #12).



Source: thespruceeats

9. Sakura Mochi

An extra-sweet pink colored mochi, this one is sold in spring for hanami, cherry blossom viewing season. Usually containing red bean, it is wrapped in a salty sakura blossom leaf.



Source: japanesecooking101

10. Dango

Well, technically dango is not mochi but can fall under the mochi category, as instead of being made from rice, it is made from rice flour. There are many types of dango, but typically you’ll find three to five rice balls on a stick. In the springtime, you will see dango sticks with white, pink and green balls in celebration of hanami. Dango that is drizzled with in sweet soy sauce is called mitarashi dango.



Source: japancentre.com

11. Warabi Mochi

This one is again a little different from mochi, but due to its gooey texture it is also considered a type of mochi. It is made from bracken starch rather than rice powder, giving it a jelly-like consistency. It is eaten in a warm soup or rolled in kinoko soybean powder.



Source: missmochi

12. Yaki Mochi

This type of mochi is toasted over a fire or hot coals, and usually eaten during wintertime. The hard mochi puffs up and becomes soft again as it is heated. Dango is also often eaten this way, called yaki dango. Yaki mochi is another term in Japanese for jealousy.

making mochi is rooted in many traditions of Japanese culture and is tied to the significance of rice as Japan’s staple food, with thanks to Shinto gods for providing the harvest. In ancient Japan, it was believed that mochi held a divine presence, so it was regarded as a sacred food that was eaten to pray for health and good fortune. Now eaten all year round, mochi still has long-standing associations with various festivals and seasonal events throughout the year, such as for Japanese New Year’s celebrations. On its own, mochi tastes like rice but has a sticky, stretchy, soft, and chewy texture. However, mochi is very versatile with endless flavor possibilities, and is used in a number of different Japanese dishes. Different regions of Japan have different mochi specialties. Mochi is also widely used in home cooking. A typical piece of mochi is a sticky and stretchy rice that has been pounded until smooth and can take on a variety of

sweet and savory forms.

How is it made?

Mochi is made from glutinous, short-grain rice called mochigome (mochi rice), which is known for having a chewier texture than regular rice. Firstly, the mochigome is soaked in water overnight, then it is steamed, and finally mashed and pounded into its soft, sticky state. Making mochi the traditional way involves a mortar and a heavy mallet with at least two people. This pounding of the rice into mochi is called mochitsuki. One person is needed to pound the mochi, and the other person to turn it over and add water to get the right consistency and texture. Mochitsuki is hard work, but now of course there are machines to do this process. However, making mochi together with family and friends is still commonly practiced throughout Japan as a part of celebrating the New Year. A

group activity, the collaborative nature of making mochi brings people together. Once smooth and stretchy, you can eat the mochi immediately. Mochi can be made into small bite-sized pieces and eaten in many ways. Freshly made mochi will become hard over time, so to preserve it, the mochi is wrapped in Japanese paper and then freeze-dried to keep for up to a year. If you grill or boil it, it will return to its original stretchy and chewy consistency.



Source: travelsintranslation



Source: uncutrecipes.com

5. Isobe Maki

Isobe maki is made of individual pieces of mochi wrapped in a sheet of nori seaweed and dipped in soy sauce. A simple yet delicious snack, isobe maki is also best when served with warm, fresh mochi.



Source: mognavi.jp

6. Kusa Mochi

Made from yomogi (mugwort), this mochi is naturally colored green, and translates to “grass mochi”. It tends to have a leafy fragrance, often with anko red bean paste inside, and is usually sold in the springtime.



Source: allabout-japan.com

7. Yatsushashi Mochi

This is a triangle shaped mochi that originated in Kyoto. Baked or raw, they come with many possible fillings between thin layers of mochi, however they are typically made with cinnamon.



Source: kashinmaruichi.co.jp

8. Hanabira Mochi

With hanabira translating to “flower petal,” this mochi is in the shape of a flower petal. Usually, a thin layer of translucent white mochi surrounds a red bean and burdock root filling, whose pink color you can see peeking through the mochi.



Source: kirbiecravings

13. Mochi Ice Cream

Like daifuku, the ball of mochi is stretched around the outside, but inside there is ice cream!



Source: gurunavi.com

14. Hishi Mochi

“Hishi” means diamond, and you’ll find these three-layered mochi pieces in the shape of a rhombus. Used as a decorative symbol for fertility, these hishi mochi are sold around the time of Hinamatsuri, or the Girl’s Day festival. This festival, held in Japan on March 3rd, celebrates the success and health of girls.



Source: folklore.usc.edu

15. Kagami Mochi

Kagami, meaning “mirror,” refers to the shape of this mochi. Kagami mochi consists of a stack of two pieces of mochi, topped with a citrus fruit. It resembles the shape derived from bronze mirrors used in ancient Japan. An iconic symbol of Japanese New Year, you can see it in December decorating shrines, homes, and offices, as Japanese people pray for long life and a happy year with good fortune.



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SEE MOCHI ON PAGE 7



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RESTAURANT INFO

MOCHI: Versatile, nutritious and delicious sweets

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

Other dishes!

You can find endless variations of mochi all over Japan throughout convenience stores, supermarkets, department stores, or specialty stores. In cooking, mochi is incorporated into other dishes in a number of different ways. For example, you will typically

find balls of mochi as a component of a dessert called anmitsu, which is made of sweet syrup poured over agar jelly, red bean paste, fruits, mochi balls and sometimes ice cream. Shiruko, another popular Japanese style dessert, is a soup made from anko red beans with juicy balls of mochi dropped inside.

For savory dishes, the gooey texture of mochi goes well in okonomiyaki, and also becomes stretchy and delicious

when cooked in nabe (hot pot). Chikara udon, or “power udon,” features slices of toasted mochi together with udon noodles, a starchy meal to really fill you up. And, during New Years in Japan, a traditional soup called ozoni is eaten. Despite regional differences, generally, it is made from vegetables, meat or fish and includes pieces of mochi in the broth.

Taking on all kinds of sweet and

savory forms, mochi is as diverse as it is curious. With a legacy of hundreds of years in Japan, there are so many styles of mochi to try, even beyond those covered in this guide. This quintessential Japanese food can also be very divisive, with some who love it and some who hate it! But with the over fifteen types covered in this guide to mochi, you are sure to find one type of mochi that pleases your palate.



Anmitsu Source: goodlucktripjapan



Shiruko Source: asia453



Ozoni Source: favy-jp.com

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