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STARS AND STRIPES®

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MOVIE TIME!

Don't miss the great cinema experience off base

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Unworldly view of spider lilies coming soon to parks in Kamakura, Saitama

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPE JAPAN

Though the summer humidity and heat seem to be never-ending on mainland Japan, small signs of the forthcoming autumn are starting to spring up.

I am looking forward to enjoying colorful chrysanthemums and uniquely shaped bright reddish higanbana or manjushage (spider lilies) coming into full bloom all around the mainland.

Starting in late September, you'll find stunning spider lilies sprouting up in surprising spots. Keep your eyes peeled for them on walks, in temple gardens, various parks or even cemeteries around your neighborhood.

There are many places to go to enjoy the crimson beauties within

Eishoji (Buddhist temple)

LOCATION: 1-16-3 Ougigayatsu, Kamakura City, Kanagawa Prefecture (10-minute walk from JR Kamakura Station)

HOURS: Fri. – Wed., 9 a.m. – 4 p.m.

ADMISSION: Adults 300 yen, high schoolers 200 yen, middle schoolers and younger 100 yen

PHONE: 0467-22-3534



WEBSITE



Kinchakuda Spider lilies Park
Photo by Keiko Nomura

Kinchakuda Spider-lily Park

LOCATION: 125-2 Komahongo, Hidaka City, Saitama Prefecture (a 45-minute drive from Yokota Air Base)

(SPIDER-LILY FESTIVAL) PERIOD:

Sept. 21 – Oct. 6

HOURS: 7 a.m. – 5 p.m.

ADMISSION: 500 yen

PHONE: 042-982-0268 (Kinchakuda Spider-lily Park Management Office)



WEBSITE

unique view of hundreds of bright reddish spider lilies against the backdrop of classical temple buildings and bell tower.

If you're near Yokota Air Base, you're even luckier.

Kinchakuda Park in Saitama is only a 45-minute drive from Yokota and is home to about five million spider lilies.

The park is surrounded by beautiful green forest and sits along the Koma River making it a great spot for an early fall stroll.

As of Sept. 14, the spider lilies have just started blooming at Eishoji and Kinchakuda Park. Check the park websites before your visit to make sure the spider lilies are ready.

Just a little more summer and it will be time again for fall!

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

the Kanto Plain. Eishoji Temple in Kamakura City is one of the most popular spots for fall flower viewing.

The elegant temple founded in

1636, is home to refined wooden temple buildings and a bell tower that are designated as National Important Cultural Assets. The temple is also known for its large

variety and population of flowers in the garden, which attract visitors throughout the year.

Walking in the scenic temple field in this season lets you enjoy a

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Marie Antoinette's style on display in Yokohama

BY KEYAN LI,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

The “Marie Antoinette Style” exhibition in Yokohama gathers 200 gowns, jewelry, furniture, prints and photographs that trace 250 years of fashion history from the late 1700s to 2025 haute couture. The exhibition goes beyond the queen’s reputation for extravagance to reexamine her lasting influence on style and design.

Explore items once owned by or linked to Marie Antoinette, including diamonds believed to connect to the Diamond Necklace Affair. View a guillotine blade reportedly used in her execution, displayed alongside a smaller section covering the broader history of the French Revolution.

Curators reworked the exhibition for its Asian tour and added roughly 20 works from Japanese collections, giving the Yokohama run a lineup that differs from the original London version. The Victoria and Albert Museum in London organized the exhibition.

Marie Antoinette Style

Created by the V&A - touring the world

2026 8/1 [Sat.] - 11/23 [Mon.]

V&A 横浜美術館 YOKOHAMA MUSEUM OF ART

Things to know

VENUE: Yokohama Museum of Art

LOCATION: 3-4-1 Minatomirai, Nishi-ku, Yokohama 220-0012 Kanagawa

DATES: Until Nov. 23

HOURS: 10 a.m. – 6 p.m. (until 8 p.m. on Nov. 21 and 22), closed Thursdays (open Sept. 24 and Nov. 19) Last admission 30 minutes before closing.

WEBSITE

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Kyoto International Manga & Anime Fair

Get your fix of all things animated and drawn

BY SERENA OGAWA,
JAPAN TRAVEL

Kyoto is often imagined as the seat of tradition, culture, and Japanese history—and while all of that is true, it's also a fun-loving and modern place to visit. No time is this truer than during the Kyoto International Manga Anime Fair!

Visit the ancient capital of Kyoto to experience this two-day show celebrating everything anime and manga. Held at Miyako Messe/ROHM Theatre Kyoto (9 a.m.–5 p.m.) and Kyoto International Manga Museum (10 a.m.–7 p.m.), KYOMAF is also a show, market, and festival and one of the largest



Illustration by 芽護こうせい ©CITY OF KYOTO
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2013-2026

events in Kansai.

Be prepared to see amazing skills in the form of cosplayers, a character café, job fair, and even

the Kyoto International Manga Awards. There is a free stage as well as the main stage that requires an additional reservation. Take part in the various anime-and-manga related workshops while trying to spot your favorite characters. It's good wholesome fun that the whole family can enjoy.

Things to know



WEBSITE

VENUE: Miyako Messe,
ROHM Theatre
Kyoto & Kyoto
International
Manga Museum
DATES: Sept. 19 - 20
*A ticket is required.

Kuniyoshi Immersive Art

The ukiyo-e world comes to life in Kyoto

BY KIM BERGSTRÖM,
JAPAN TRAVEL

Fans of ukiyo-e and digital art will have a chance to step inside the imaginative world of Edo-period artist Utagawa Kuniyoshi this summer when the KUNIYOSHI IMMERSIVE ART Exhibition opens at the Kyoto City Kyocera Museum of Art.

Running from July 18th to September 23rd, the exhibition combines traditional Japanese art with modern projection mapping and 3DCG technology. Visitors will be surrounded by large-scale visuals inspired by more than 50 of Kuniyoshi's most celebrated woodblock prints, transforming iconic scenes into a dynamic, three-dimensional experience.

The immersive installation is being presented as part of the larger "Ukiyo-e Super Creator Utagawa Kuniyoshi Exhibition," which showcases approximately 200 works spanning the artist's



Photo courtesy of HITOHATA, INC., PR Times

remarkably diverse career. Often referred to as the "master of warrior prints," Kuniyoshi was equally known for his humorous caricatures, striking depictions of beautiful women, dramatic landscapes, and playful cat-themed works.

Among the featured masterpieces brought to life through animation are "Miyamoto Musashi Subduing the Whale" and "Takiyasha the Witch and the Skeleton Spectre," allowing visitors to experience the artist's bold imagination in an entirely new way.

The accompanying exhibition is divided into six themed sections, highlighting the many genres Kuniyoshi explored during the late Edo period. Together, the traditional gallery displays and immersive digital installations offer a fresh perspective on one of Japan's most innovative ukiyo-e artists.

Whether you're already familiar with Kuniyoshi's work or simply looking for a unique cultural experience in Kyoto, this exhibition promises a fascinating blend of history, art, and technology.

Things to know



WEBSITE

VENUE: Kyoto City
Kyocera Museum
of Art
DATES: Until Sept. 23
HOURS: 10 a.m. - 6
p.m.
*A ticket is required.

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Don't miss the great experience off base

STORY AND PHOTOS BY LUIS SAMAYOA,
STRIPES JAPAN

Now that I'm more comfortable with my duty station, I've started to explore some of the off-base activities. Sometimes going off base can be cheaper, more technologically advanced, or a better experience. Catching a movie at the local cinema off base is one of those cases worth looking into.

I'd tried the base movie theater before when I was stationed in Camp Casey. The ticket prices were the same as I had paid when I was in San Diego. The disappointment continued to the concessions which were absolutely horrible with stale popcorn and limited candy selection at a hefty price. To make matters worse, the seating was outdated and dirty. This was not what I expected and after that, I avoided theaters until I was finally home.

Though I decided to avoid the theater experience on base, my experience off base in Japan has been better than I expected. I'm a member of two of the local cinema chains' loyalty programs which save me money and have allowed me to return to the movies, an activity I enjoyed as a kid.

Catching a flick at the movie theater in Japan is a great way to sit back, relax and unwind from work. Being stationed in a foreign country, it might be difficult to get the nostalgia of going to the movies, but it's not that different to what we have in the States. The language barrier might scare some people, but buying tickets and snacks at the Japanese cinema can be easier than navigating the local train system. So, if you've mastered that, grabbing some popcorn and a ticket for the new release should be a piece of cake!

Recently, I went to Toho Cinema in Lalaport Tachikawa during the rainy season just to get out of the house and off base. Out of the two major theater companies in Japan, I like going to Toho the most because they sell ICEE frozen drinks, a throwback to my childhood trips to the movies.

One thing I do appreciate is the cost of concessions and variety offered in some theatres. Back in the States, I remember picking up a box of "Bunch of Crunch" chocolate for five dollars and a large popcorn for \$20—a pricey trip to the movies. But in Japan, the snacks

are affordable. For 1,400 yen (about \$8.50), I can get a regular popcorn, drink and churro. If you crave candy for your feature, many theaters offer a variety of chocolates and gummies you scoop and pay for by the gram.

A few years ago, I thought all movies in Japan were in Japanese, but I was wrong. Some movies have English subtitles or are in English with Japanese subtitles, just check the title online or at the theater to make sure what it has.

If you are interested in watching Japanese movie releases but with English dub, sometimes those movies can appear on the screening schedule. Check the theater schedule or search the film official site for English dub information.

Once you know what movie you're picking, purchasing tickets is simple. Use the kiosk in the lobby or purchase online. Toho Cinema's ticket system has an English language option and so does the concession menu.

Another slight difference that can be inconvenient is film release dates. Some movies don't hit the theaters in Japan until after they've already had their run in the U.S. and Europe. For example, Toy Story 5 premiered in U.S. theaters on June 19 this year, but in Japan it premiered a few weeks later on July 3. The Japan release included the Japanese dubbed version and the English version with Japanese subtitles. So far, it's been okay for me, I don't use social media, so I didn't get any spoilers and was able to enjoy the movie off base.

Depending on the film, release of foreign movies, including Hollywood films, might have longer delayed releases ranging from weeks to months or even years. The best bet is to check your preferred theater or social media accounts of the production company of the film to find out what projected release dates might be.

Overall, I would highly recommend stopping by the movies when you are in Japan. It's a great way to relax throughout all seasons and very simple to do. Going to the movies off base is a great way to just get out and explore without burning a big hole in your pocket.

samayoa.luis@stripes.com

■ TOHO Cinemas Tachikawa

ADDRESS: 935-1 Izumicho, Tachikawa, Tokyo 190-0015

HOURS: Opening times vary per cinema and screening schedule, 7 days a week.

PAYMENT: Electronic payment and yen accepted.



TOHO WEBSITE
(JAPANESE ONLY)



Catching a movie by yourself in Japan

The theatres in the U.S. may be considered a social event and usually people come in pairs or groups. It's a lot different here in Japan where you can be completely alone, and its normal and accepted here.

One thing I do appreciate about Japan and their culture is the solo experience they have to offer. I have grown more introverted the longer I am in the Army, and sometimes I just go off on my own to explore. Being in this country, you can experience a lot of the culture by yourself and experience zero judgement about it.

For example, some theatres in Japan offer that by having special chairs with dividers to just enjoy the film alone. You can even enjoy some restaurants, bars, amusement parks, and even karaoke alone. In Japan, this type of event is called "solo-katsu" and it's quite common as you might think.

If you just arrived at your new base in Japan and don't know anyone to go out with to check out the city, it's completely okay to just hop on the train and go alone. Many places accommodate the solo traveler, and it even has its perks.

Did you know you can skip most of the lines at Universal Studios Japan (USJ) or Tokyo Disney parks for riding alone? I thought about doing that with my wife just to shorten the long lines a few times instead of spending more money opting into Disney Premier Access (Express pass) or dropping 14,000 yen for overpriced passes at USJ.

I've eaten alone and traveled around Tokyo alone without ever feeling like an outcast for doing so. It's normal in Japan to do things alone and since you're on your own time, there's less stress.

Don't be scared to go off alone to travel in this safe country. There's plenty of things to do here with some occasional perks to solo-katsu.

Cinema use!



Buckle up and swing into Japan's 4DX cinema experience

Editor's Note: Camryn Rosa is a senior at Zama Middle High School in Camp Zama. If you or someone you know would like to contribute your story to Stripes Japan, let us know at japan@stripes.com!

STORY AND PHOTOS BY CAMRYN ROSA,
STRIPES JAPAN

Japan's 4DX cinemas have become more than just a mere afternoon of enjoyment, it is an experience like no other. Crowds form—you'd think it's for an amusement park—with excited moviegoers ready for a memorable time.

After a long couple of months in the United States, I was itching to do something where you could say, "only in Japan." With multiple mainstream movies hitting the box office recently, it only felt right to go see "Spider-Man: Brand New Day" in 4DX at 109 Cinemas Grandberry Park.

The theater lobby has the same aroma of buttery popcorn we're used to in the States, but it also has a section selling merchandise like keychains and plastic folders from all the latest movie releases, including "Minions versus Monsters," "Chikawa" and "Michael."

The theater is about a 30-minute drive from Camp Zama and offers new releases in standard, IMAX and 4DX formats. While the standard experience brings its own uniqueness, IMAX and 4D offer more immersive viewing at premium prices.

Adult ticket prices at 109 Cinema start at 2,200 yen (about \$14.30) for general admission. IMAX tickets are 2,900 yen, 4DX are 3,200 yen and ULTRA 4DX go for 3,700 yen. TIP: Don't miss special theater discounts for students: General admission was 1,100 yen just by showing a school ID, but depending on the student's grade, discounts may vary. Check the theater website for more.

IMAX vs. 4DX vs. ULTRA 4DX

IMAX delivers audience members sharper, higher contrast laser projection in addition to a 12-channel sound system, creating a booming quality of life-like audio. Meanwhile, 4DX provides immersive environmental elements like wind and water, along with seat movements, and ULTRA 4DX includes all the elements, plus a panoramic 270-degree screen, which is the reason for the 500-yen difference between regular 4DX and ULTRA.

The audience for 4DX is immersed in a high energy environment where all the wind, water and movement are shared amongst laughs, gasps and maybe even tears.

The movie-going experience

Arriving early was extremely helpful for not feeling rushed and enjoying the pre-show environment. Walking around Grandberry's outdoor shopping center is enjoyable, but the theater is a great place for a break that allows you to get off your feet and catch a flick.

THINGS TO KNOW

Tips

- Check the theater website multiple days prior to showtime to order tickets (they sell out fast!).
- Pay attention to whether the movie is Sub. for subtitled, or Dub. for dubbed in Japanese.
- Movie previews start promptly at ticket time, so try to be in your seat early.

109 Cinemas at Grandberry Park

ADDRESS: 3 Chome 4-1 Grandberry Park,
Tsuruma, Machiada, Tokyo 194-0004 2F



WEBSITE

After admission tickets are scanned, moviegoers are then led to lockers to store their belongings. Staff members were also handing out plastic covers for food and drinks, a practical gesture given the water element and vigorous movements throughout the showing.

Interestingly enough, a majority of the audience purchased concessions despite being faced with challenges throughout the movie. The person next to me did attempt to grab some popcorn during the big action sequence, which was no easy feat as the seats were jolting back and forth. Let's just say, eating is not as mindless compared to normal viewing. Personally, to limit distractions, I would advise avoiding getting food, but for first timers who want the WHOLE Japanese theater experience, go for it!

After the typical ads and trailers, lights dimmed and the excitement set in, but not before a curated list of rules played in a creative anime-style video engaging viewers. In addition, mini previews featured a plane crash and boat simulation, getting newbies familiar with the experience. High energy trailers continued after, including "The End of Oak Street," a dinosaur-filled spectacle that hinted at how 4DX amplifies action-packed movies.

A part of the action

As soon as the movie title appeared on the screen, the entire theater came alive. Though the immersion elements and movements were used sparingly, the majority occurred during tense battle scenes. Seats shook and tilted like a mini rollercoaster, water misted across faces during rain scenes, and combat hits were timed precisely as punches in the back of the chair. Despite the sensory chaos, all audience members remained quiet and respectful, thoroughly enjoying the movie all the way till the post-credit screen.

Japan's 4DX theater succeeds because of the balance between effects and enjoyment. The special elements that bring this simulation to life are used to enhance the film rather than overwhelm. For action films like "Spider-Man: Brand New Day," which is preferably best to see in 4DX, the format doesn't just show the story, it throws viewers directly into the scenes.



Travel to Japan's Edo Period at Asakusa's Sensoji Temple in Tokyo

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Among the many options you have for attractions in Tokyo, Asakusa's old temple should absolutely be at the top of the list.

Sensoji Temple, it's impressive

Kaminarimon gate and the surrounding narrow streets filled with shops and food stalls are just the nostalgic taste of old Japan you'll want to experience.

Founded in 645 A.D., Sensoji is the oldest temple in Tokyo and is dedicated to Avalokitesvara Bodhisattva, who is said to embody the mercy of all Buddhas. According

to the temple's website, this important temple draws around 30 million visitors annually.

When you pass under the bright red Kaminarimon gate with its massive chochin lantern, access to the temple itself takes you down the stunning Nakamise-dori lined with many souvenir shops. You may be surprised to learn that



many of these shops have been run by the same families for over 150 years!

Continue your walk through Hozomon, a wooden gate known as the treasure gate, before entering the main temple grounds. There you'll notice the elaborately detailed main hall up ahead and a five-story pagoda to the left. It is one of the best photo spots at the temple so don't miss it!

As you approach the main hall, purify yourself like the locals with the incense smoke billowing out of the huge bronze domed burner. The smoke is thought to ward off illness and misfortune while making visitors smarter and healthier.

Sensoji Temple
website



After making a wish at Kannon in front of the statue of Bodhisattva of Mercy in the main hall, visitors can pick an omikuji, fortune slip, at the temple shop to test your luck.

To do this, pick up a bamboo stick from a wooden container nearby and give it to a young lady in a white kimono and red pants. Be sure to ask her for an English-written slip, which will tell you the current condition of your luck. I hope you will pick a lucky one.

If you're hungry or thirsty, the surrounding area has many izakaya bars, teahouses and restaurants you'll definitely want to try. Keep an eye out for the various street performers, so you can enjoy a meal and show while you rest for a while.

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DID YOU KNOW?

Genkan are the entrance to traditional Japanese houses and are usually built higher than ground level by about six inches, so you can take off your shoes before entering. If you are invited to a Japanese house, be sure to wear your clean socks, preferably the ones without holes, so you can take off your shoes without making your feet the talk of the party. Slippers can be used on the floors, but make sure you take them off when you enter a tatami room.

Kanji of the week

町 Machi/cho [town]

Language Lesson

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The Weekly Crossword by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- Doorframe part
- Gras
- Corn keeper
- Orchestral reed
- Hunter in the night sky
- Legendary Horne
- Weeps
- Pioneer places
- Masthead names
- Woodstock wear
- Serious offender
- Izzard and Albert
- Washstand vessel
- Community program
- Go over again
- Heavy burden
- Winter bug
- Military no-show
- Wading bird
- Barrel of laughs
- Toast topper
- Bit of physics
- Votes into office
- Speech opener, often
- Painter of melting watches
- Iroquoian people
- Weeper of myth
- Mogadishu resident
- Skeeter's given name in "The Help"
- Vests, to Brits
- Delivery vehicles
- "Excuse me..."
- Actress MacDowell
- Advantage
- Arsenal array
- Tends (toward)
- Crude wooden cross

DOWN

- IndyCar racer Newgarden
- Domicile
- Dwelling in a park, often
- Award
- Former SNL actor Jay
- Came up
- Tire support
- Mother rabbit
- Established
- Monty Python member
- "...em and weep!"
- Noted 500
- Barracks locale
- Levels
- Certain column
- Uniformed greeters
- Sandy hill
- Like some questions
- Enthusiast
- Coagulate
- Crude homes

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

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.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

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A taste of yoshoku in Yokosuka



STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAIYO REIMERS,
STRIPES JAPAN

Yoshoku is a catch-all label for foods of western origin that have been infused with Japanese sensibilities, originally a product of ingredient cost, availability, or palatability during the Meiji Period. I think it occupies somewhere between the intensity of a steakhouse and the subtlety of a shokudo cafeteria, in varying degrees more Western and more not, producing such arrangements as hambagu (hamburger steak) and miso soup, and a space where curry rice and vichyssoise appear on the same menu.



Bistro Queux

Bistro Queux sits past the JERA Yokosuka power station, to the left past the tunnel, before Route 212 turns onto Nobi-Kai-gan. In the foyer, a sheet of paper lists rules: all must order, no loitering, single diners at counters only. I'm asked to sanitize my hands then guided to a counter seat

in the corner. The restaurant is empty, but my little section is tidy, stocked full to predict my needs before I know them. A basket for my bag, a small bell, a fan. I'm handed a menu and reminded that 160-gram portions are recommended for females and larger for male diners.

I order a set meal. Almost instantly, the scent of demi-glaze drifts from the kitchen. Soon, a salad with balsamic dressing arrives, followed by spinach puree cream soup. Flattened rice accompanies the main course: delicately cut, and neatly arranged, pan-seared zucchini, carrots, and potatoes. The accompaniments tiptoe around a fist-sized hambagu in a puddle of sesame sauce. A golden liquid of water and fat flows from the meat, and I race to savor both it and the sauce. The rest I eat with rice.

Before long, the plate is empty and I sit quietly. It's the type of silence that turns spoon-on-porcelain and AC humming into whispers from the back of the kitchen. I stare at my water, the glass, the ice, the small floral arrangements and wheat bouquets. It's calming. It's brief. I pay, and exit.

ADDRESS: 5 Chome-7-5 Nobi, Yokosuka, Kanagawa 239-0841

Restaurant Ichiriki

Close to Kita-Kuriham Station, Restaurant Ichiriki sits on Route 134, but it offers no parking. When I went on a Wednesday afternoon in June, soon after opening for dinner, there was one couple seated in the corner; the bicycles outside were theirs. I'm a single diner at a four-top, it's just me and the condensation on my glass of tea. Asked if I'm ready to order, I ask if the salmon comes with rice. It does not. So I order salmon and a separate serving of rice.

I watch the road outside as students from nearby schools pass the plastic display case. The chef cooks and the server cuts vegetables. And a soundtrack of classical music plays above their soft chatting.

Soon, three bone-free cuts of salmon garnished with green onion and drizzled with a peppered, soy sauce vinaigrette arrives. On the side, a wedge of lettuce, tomato and cucumber with dressing, and of course, a side of rice. The buttered salmon was soft, with added zest courtesy of the lemon; it existed between a punchy salmon bake and gentle, home-broiled salmon breakfast. I turn, as unsuspiciously as I can, to the dessert board and order crème brûlée. I scrape every bit of the thin, silky custard beneath the broiled crust of caramelized sugar like ice on a lake waiting to crack and float away.



ADDRESS: 1 Chome-4-18 Negishicho, Yokosuka, Kanagawa 239-0807

Café Restaurant Gusto

Finally, Gusto, the family restaurant chain— to see if it fits the yoshoku category. I walk up the steps and am greeted by the one employee running the dining room. It is late on a Wednesday evening. I take my seat and unfold at least four different menus; so many options to order on the tablet. It's not crowded, besides young children, high schoolers and an elderly couple in the corner. Some with friends, some with family, some alone, crossed-legged against the partition. I look out the window over Route 134 – it might rain. The silence is a muted kind, filling the gaps between tablet beeps, notification pings, faintly indistinguishable music, and the delivery robot wheeling down aisles. I wait for my rice, salad, and hambagu, the latter two with a garlic-based dressing. And I eat, as I watch people leave, and enter, finding their favorite seats, or navigating the cashier-less checkout. By the time the tomato extract and onions settle at the bottom of my soup and the plates begin to dry, I have my banana sundae and pile the napkins in the center of the table. And as I go to pay, I ask myself: why did I think this was yoshoku again?

I don't need to return to any of these places. But now I have a little more reason to stay. Like I know something about the place. And it knows a little more about me. And so, I'm happy.

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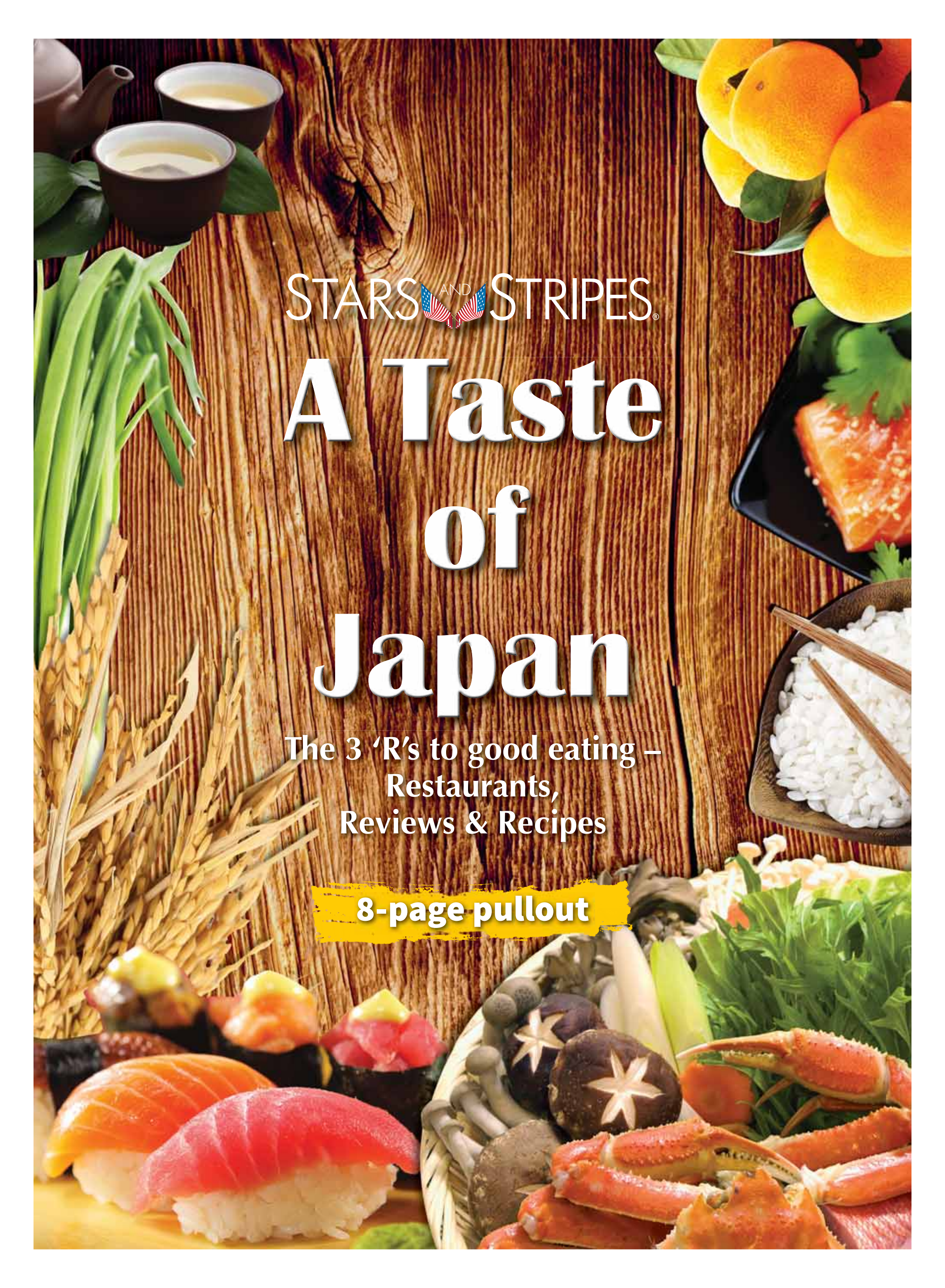
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The background is a rich, textured collage of Japanese culinary elements. At the top left, there are two small dark bowls filled with a light-colored liquid, possibly soy sauce or miso, next to a small brown teapot. Below them are fresh green scallions and a bundle of dried, golden-brown rice stalks. On the right side, there are several bright orange citrus fruits, likely daidai (citrus), and a black plate with a piece of salmon topped with green herbs. In the lower right, a wooden bowl is filled with white rice, with a pair of wooden chopsticks resting on top. The bottom of the image features a variety of fresh seafood, including several pieces of nigiri sushi with salmon and tuna, a whole cooked crab, and a platter of assorted sashimi including mushrooms, green onions, and other seafood. The entire scene is set against a dark, vertically-grained wooden background.

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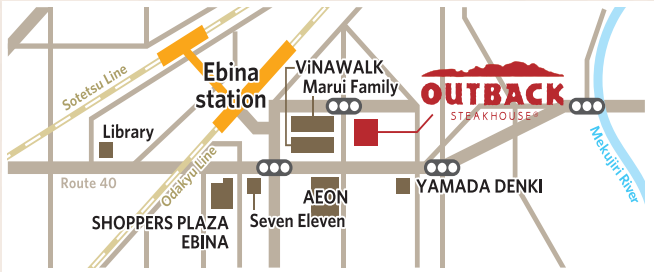


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A Taste of Japan



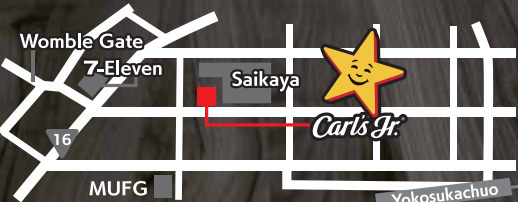
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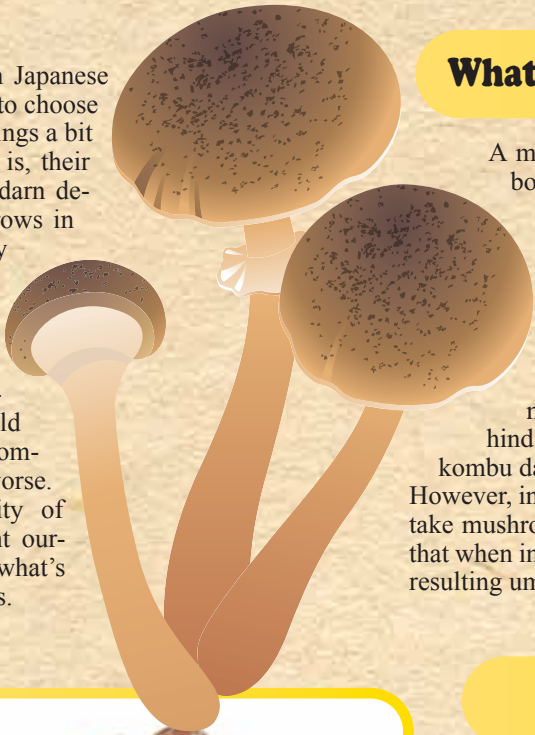
JAPANESE MUSHROOMS

An umamitastic world of endless flavor

TOFUGU.COM

Mushrooms are an essential ingredient in Japanese cuisine, and there are so many varieties to choose from. Hopefully this guide will make things a bit easier on you. It will tell you what a mushroom is, their types and uses, as well as what makes them so darn delicious. I couldn't cover every mushroom that grows in Japan, but I tried to cover the types you can usually find for sale. But before we start:

Warning: Do not go foraging for mushrooms unless you know what you're doing. That means you have lots of experience learning first-hand from another expert. There are lots of tasty mushrooms out there, but there are also many that could give you a stomach ache or worse. The vast majority of us should content ourselves with what's available in stores.



What are mushrooms and why are they so yummy?

A mushroom is, of course, a fungus. More specifically, it is the fleshy, fruiting body of a fungus. All mushroom are fungi, but not all fungi are mushrooms. Mushrooms sometimes usually have stems and caps, and typically have gills. Those are the little frills you see on the underside of a mushroom's cap. Those gills produce spores that, in turn, produce more fungi. The mushroom is connected to more fungal structure embedded in its food source, whether that be the soil, a tree, or something else.

A big factor in the flavor of many mushrooms is their umami. Umami basically means "deliciousness," but was applied by scientist, Ikeda Kikunae, to mean a sort of rich, savory flavor. Ikeda was studying the science behind the flavor, and discovered that glutamate was the cause. Ikeda mainly used kombu dashi for his studies, and subsequent studies also looked at dried bonito flakes. However, in 1957, Kuninaka Akira discovered that the ribonucleotide GMP found in shiitake mushrooms also gave an umami flavor. Based on that research he later discovered that when ingredients rich in glutamate are combined with those with ribonucleotides, the resulting umami is stronger than each individual part.

Buna-shimeji (Hypsizygus tessellatus)

Buna-shimeji are fairly small mushrooms with white, long, often-curved stems and tan caps. They taste bitter when raw, but this is replaced with a nutty flavor when cooked. They have a firm, slightly crunchy texture. They are good for most recipes.



File photos

Eringi (Pleurotus eryngii)

Eringi have many names in the West, perhaps most common being the King Oyster Mushroom. Unlike most of the fungi in this article, it is not native to Japan. It was mass cultivated there in the early 1990s and has become quite popular since. Eringi are rather large, with long, thick, meaty white stems, and relatively small tan caps. They don't have a lot of flavor raw, but when cooked the umami comes forward. I find them particularly good when grilled. Keep it simple and cook them over flame or in a pan with a bit of salt and pepper.



Enokitake (Flammulina velutipes)

Enoki mushrooms are named after the tree on which they grow, which is known as the Chinese hackberry in English. However, they also grow on other trees, like mulberry and persimmon trees. In the supermarket, they are easily recognizable as dense clumps of small, white mushrooms with long, slender stems. Cultivated enoki are grown in a dark, carbon dioxide-rich environment to keep them white and encourage long stem growth, respectively. Wild enoki tend to be dark brown, with shorter, thicker stems.

Enoki don't have a strong flavor, so they probably aren't the best mushroom to take center stage in a dish. They do have a relative crispness to them. For these reasons, plus their small size, they are often used in soups and stews. They could also be used in some side dishes or salads.



Nameko (Pholiota nameko)

Nameko are small and amber-brown. They have a nutty flavor and a thin layer of gelatin on their caps, which forms a sort of glaze when cooking with them. They are often used in miso soup, nabemono, and stir-fries.

Long popular in Japanese cuisine, nameko have recently gained notoriety in another field. A trilogy of smart phone games called "Nameko Saibai Kit," has become quite popular. The goal of the game is to raise various types of anthropomorphic cartoon nameko. Of course, with popularity comes merchandise, and you can find plenty of stuff featuring these cute little mushrooms.



Maitake (Grifola frondosa)

Maitake translates to "dancing mushroom." They don't look like your stereotypical mushrooms. They grow in a dense cluster and the stems flow into the frond-like caps, giving the whole cluster an appearance something like a head of cabbage. The clusters can get quite large: over 40 kilograms (100 pounds)! They have a woody, smoky flavor, but it isn't as meaty as some other mushrooms. They can be used in stir frying, simmering, roasting and other applications.



**Matsutake
(Tricholoma mastutake)**

Matsutake form a symbiotic relationship with the roots of certain tree species, most notably the Japanese Red Pine, hence the name matsutake (“pine mushroom”). Matsutake have long, thick stems and knob-like brown caps. Due to the difficulty in finding them, they are quite expensive. The average price is about \$90 per kilogram, but matsutake found in Japan at the beginning of the season can go for up to \$2,000 per kilogram! Matsutake grown in the U.S. can be had for a much lower price sometimes. If you get the chance to try them, one of the best ways to show off their flavor is in a simple rice bowl dish (matsutake gohan).



Mushroom medicine

Some mushrooms have been used in traditional medicine for centuries. For example, the fungus from maitake has long been used in China and Japan for enhancing the immune system. Modern research has indicated that the entire maitake may be useful in this regard. In addition, a 2009 study by Sloan-Kettering showed it to have anti-tumor effects. It may also have hypoglycemic effects. Shiitake mushrooms have also shown some promise in the fighting both cancer and viruses, but studies have not been conclusive. Still, as long as you’re enjoying some mushroom cooking, it’s nice to think they might be helping you too.

**Shiitake
(Lentinula edodes)**

Shiitake are named after the tree on whose dead logs they commonly grow, the Castanopsis cuspidate. Shiitake is probably the most popular Japanese mushroom, both at home and abroad. Who knows how long people have been collecting them in Japan, but somewhere along the line they discovered a method for cultivating them.



A shiitake bearing log would be placed next to freshly cut logs, allowing the fungus to spread to all of them. They even found that damaging the bark of the new logs would improve the efficiency of mushroom multiplication.

It’s easy to see why shiitake are so popular, as they are both flavorful and versatile. When cooked, they are aromatic and have a nice rich, woody flavor. Due to this and their chewy, dense texture they make a great meat substitute. Shiitake can also be bought dried, which actually intensifies their flavor and adds a bit of smokiness. The applications of shiitake are many and varied, from stir fries to grilling, from simmering to soups and nabemono (and that’s just in Japanese cuisine). I love making a shiitake nimono: simmering the mushrooms in dashi and soy sauce until the liquid reduces to almost nothing. You’ll have a bowl full of concentrated umami.



Kinoko no yama

Okay, so obviously these aren’t real mushrooms. However, they have been a popular snack ever since Meiji launched them in 1975. Their part milk, part dark chocolate caps sit atop crunchy biscuit stems, and make for an excellent combo. No list of Japanese mushrooms is complete without them.



How to choose and store your mushrooms

When selecting mushrooms at the store they should be dry, but not withered. If they come plastic-wrapped, look out for condensation. When storing them, sealing them in a paper bag is a good way to keep them from getting too wet or dry. If you keep them in a plastic-wrapped tub, poking a few holes in the plastic is a good idea. At any rate, you should use them within a few days. You shouldn’t wash them until you’re about to use them. Some say they shouldn’t be washed at all for fear of waterlogging them. Brush them instead. A brush is fine, but time consuming, so a light wash should be fine. If you don’t see any dirt on them, there shouldn’t be a need for either.



Magic mushrooms

Some mushrooms can have psychedelic effects on those who consume them. There are a number of such mushrooms, but the most popular by far are from the genus Psilocybe. They cause hallucinations due to two different chemicals: psilocybin and psilocin. Japan is a country that tends to take drugs quite seriously (apart from alcohol and tobacco), so it’s surprising that before 2002 magic mushrooms were legal. You could buy them in head shops, and apparently even in vending machines. In 2002 they were made illegal, perhaps because of the World Cup that was played in Japan that year. It’s thought that Japanese leaders changed the law in anticipation of an influx of foreign fans getting high and causing trouble.



Psilocybe mexicana - Jalisco, Mexico
Photo by Cactu, Wikipedia

Let’s put a cap on this

What more is there to say? Mushrooms are some tasty and versatile fungi. Go forth and try as many kinds, in as many ways as possible!



The season of miso

BY JOAN BAILEY,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Every January, after the New Year celebrations end and the decorations get put away, Yayoi Minowa turns her attention to miso. Once a week, from January to March, she will boil beans, measure salt, stir in koji (mold grown on rice that is essential for making miso), smash the beans, and stuff the mixture into 18-kilogram barrels. These will, in turn, be stored in a cool dark place to while away the spring and summer months. Come October the contents have gone a ruddy brown with the fermentation process. They are then hauled out again to be eaten as soup, dip, or any other delicious thing imaginable.

“We usually end in March because we start seeding around then,” Yayoi says before bending to peer at the gauge of one of the three giant pressure cookers, which are perched over blue gas flames on this bright February morning. The whole process, she explains, takes three days.

“On Monday, we steam the rice and mix it with the koji. It’s ready by Wednesday so we start soaking the beans. By Friday they are ready to be cooked, and we

can make the miso,” she explains.

The beans in use are koitodaizu, a local or heirloom variety of soybean from the Matsuo area of Chiba where the Minowa family have lived and farmed for generations. The beans are small and pale with a sweet flavor that locals believe make a perfect miso.

“The amount of salt used depends on the area,” Yayoi says, opening the lid of one of the giant pots. She presses a single bean between her thumb and pinky, and nods as it easily squishes. This is a sign that they are fully cooked. “In the North, the miso is saltier, but in Kyushu it tends to be sweet. Although,” she reflects, “that may be because they grow their koji on wheat there.”

Steam rolls out as she lifts an inner pot that looks like a giant strainer. The beans are spread in a large pan in which they are allowed to cool while the process is repeated with the other two pots. Once lukewarm, Tomohito, Yayoi’s son, adds the rice-koji-salt mixture to the beans and begins to blend them by hand. Outside, the sun waves through the branches of bamboo nearby, moving in the spring breeze.

Fifty years ago, miso was made

outdoors in a big pot over a fire pit. It took about half a day, Yayoi says, and the beans were mashed using their feet. “Every farm made miso for their own family,” she said.

The Minowas do not press the mixture with their feet, but use something akin to a meat grinder to smash the beans. Yayoi watches as Tomohito pours the beans into the top and then grabs handfuls of the bean-koji-salt mixture as it emerges. She quickly shapes it into a ball and throws it into the barrel she lined with coarse salt.

“Throwing knocks out the air,” she tells me between tosses, which would make any baseball team proud. The smack of their landing resounding through the kitchen. She continues this until the barrel is full, pressing firmly on the top and smoothing it before placing the lid securely in place and starting the next one.

Local governments began to set up community kitchens in the 1960s to encourage rural women to create cottage industries around their traditional food skills. Over time though, as the exodus from the country to the city continued, these kitchens and the traditional

knowledge they supported are beginning to disappear.

The Minowas hope to change that. Their annual miso-making workshop brings people together to learn how to do it for themselves and build a little community in the process. A renewed interest in traditional foods and practices has brought people together to make it, to learn, and to socialize. In exchange for a fee that pays for the ingredients and kitchen rental, participants get a hands-on lesson in miso-making and by October, a tasty share of the bounty.

“What is harvested from this land is suitable for making miso in this land,” Yayoi says as the last barrel is filled and capped. Words to eat by, if you ask me.



File photo



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PIZZA HUT

ATSUGI

1000 - 1900 (Delivery 1600-1830)
DSN: 264-4040/Commercial: (046)763-4040

YOKOSUKA

Main Street
1000 - 2100
(Delivery 1130-2030)

Bayside
1000 - 2100 (Delivery 1130-2030)

DSN: 243-FOOD/Commercial: (046)816-3663



Offering:
Pizza
Personal Pan Pizza
Wings
Pasta
Multiple Drinks
Breadsticks
Dessert

**Yokosuka's New
Online Food Ordering Program**

- Pier 7 Bayside Pizza Hut @ #A920
- Main Street Foodcourt @ #G59

Delivery or Order pick up \$15 Minimum Order
<https://nexcomanchoreats.com>

TACO BELL

YOKOSUKA

1000 - 2100 (Drive-thru & Dine-in)

ATSUGI

1000 - 1900

SASEBO

1000 - 1900

Offering:
Tacos
Burritos
Quesadillas
Salads
Desserts
Tostadas
and many other TB
promotional Items

