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Stars and Stripes is asking readers to write about their own piece of paradise. Yes, that means you! Our annual Destination Paradise magazine highlights must-see travel spots across the Pacific – and your bit of paradise could be included in our 2025-26 edition that hits the streets on Pacific bases in September. Submit your story and photos to paradise@stripes.com by **July 15**. We'll make you famous! Check out our previous Destination Paradise magazines

Near Hardy Barracks and New Sanno Hotel!

A walk around Tokyo's high-end Akasaka district

PAGE 4



INSIDE INFO

**ROAD TAX ART
TURNING HEADS**
PAGE 6

**Special 8-page
pullout inside!**

Step back in time in Sawara

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPE JAPAN

Only a few hours' drive from most bases in the Kanto Plain, Sawara in Chiba Prefecture is an attractive town, known as "Koedo," or little Edo, that preserves the original townhouses and streets from the Edo period, allowing for a glimpse at the former glory of the samurai capital. Situated along the Tone River, Sawara accommodates various canals, ponds and waterways. The district is known for being a host to beautiful iris flowers, which draw many locals to enjoy them during the rainy season in early summer.

SEE SAWARA ON PAGE 2

Sawara
Narita Airport
Chiba Prefecture

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SAWARA: Lovely setting

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For the famous blooms, visit Sawara Iris Park, where there are over 400 different types of irises and over 1.5 million iris flowers in total between June and July. You can catch a park full of white, pink, violet and blue irises. The ponds, small rivers and bridges, along with traditional boats operated by ladies in blue kimonos, brought a touch of nostalgia.

Hop on a boat to enjoy the irises on water. The park's souvenir shops offer iris flowers, local food and sweets, and even a sweet potato ice cream!

Be sure to stroll around the center city of Sawara after visiting the park.

With a classic-looking wooden bridge, the old town of Sawara is surrounded by storehouses and merchant buildings, still standing and in remarkable condition, dating back to the late Edo period. Willow trees line the riverbank and the streets are surrounded by dark-brown wooden buildings and grey-tiled roofs, making you feel

like you've been transported into an old samurai movie.

Back in its heyday, Sawara's waterway was vital for the transport of soy sauce, miso and rice from the countryside. Some of the wooden boats are still around and you will see a few of them, except now they carry tourists instead of food.

During rainy season, Sawara is the place to go if you want to enjoy graceful iris and hydrangea in a traditional Japanese setting. Check it out!

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



SAWARA IRIS PARK

ADDRESS: 1837-2, Ogishima, Katori City, Chiba Pref.

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STORY AND PHOTOS BY
TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Akasaka, located in the center of Tokyo and a short 20-minute walk from Hardy Barracks, is known for being an upscale district. Here you'll find Akasaka Palace, the Prime Minister's official residence, first-class hotels, Michelin-starred restaurants, a broadcasting station and numerous foreign embassies and office buildings packed into one area.

Let's stroll around the stone-paved street near TBS broadcasting station, also known as "Big Hat." There is a large shopping, restaurant and residential complex called "Akasaka Sacas" where you can find a variety of unique food and souvenirs on the street. During mealtimes, the street becomes very busy with business and traveling folks who form a line in front of popular eateries.

Originally, Akasaka was a residential district for feudal lords during the Edo Period (1603 – 1867). The area was then developed as home to high-ranking government workers, military leaders and businessmen in Tokyo. Geisha houses and premium eateries were also built to entertain these wealthy figures a century ago. Go off the main street and explore the side streets where you'll find trendy, high-end "ryotei" Japanese restaurants housed in chic, classical buildings.

Across the large Akasaka Intersection down the street from TBS, is Hie Jinja, a Shinto shrine and famous Tokyo power spot.

Although the picturesque shrine is located high on a hill, there is a large escalator to take you up. The top of the escalator offers a nice view of Akasaka, and the shrine itself has stunning vermillion shrine buildings worthy of a photo or two.

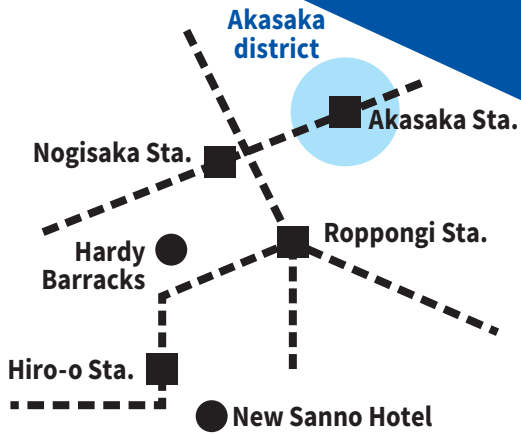
Every other year in mid-June, Hie Jinja hosts Sanno Matsuri, one of Japan's three biggest festivals (along with Kyoto's Gion and Osaka's Tenjin Matsuri). The festival draws thousands to enjoy the processions, performances and festival food. The next one is expected to take place in mid-June in 2026, according to Hie Shrine.

So, when you stay at Hardy Barracks or New Sanno, be sure to walk around Akasaka to feel some high-end atmosphere that Tokyo has to offer!

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com



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Odawarajo

Majestic castle offers superb day trip-destination in Kanto Plain

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Selected as one of Japan's most majestic castles, Odawarajo is a great day trip destination from bases in the Kanto Plain. From Camp Zama or NAF

Atsugi, it is only a 40-minute drive away. Originally founded about 550 years ago, the Odawara Castle has been a landmark of the western Kanto area with its 5.5-mile-long circumference, four-story tower, dozens of turrets, moats and stone walls. The current four-story castle tower is a

concrete reproduction of the original. Enter the tower to check out the castle's history in exhibits featuring facts and figures, details on its founder and feudal lords and battles fought. The castle's grounds include a vast flower garden spread along stone walls, a classical teahouse and a couple of museums

housed in traditional buildings, which display historical armor, swords and facts and figures of Ninja warriors. Odawara Castle is a nice way to spend the day outside. There are a variety of restaurants, ice cream parlors and souvenir shops around the castle, too!
takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Things to know

ADDRESS: 6-1 Jonai, Odawara City, Kanagawa Prefecture

CASTLE TOWER ADMISSION: High schoolers and older - 510 yen, elementary and middle schoolers - 200 yen.

SAMURAIKAN ADMISSION: High schoolers and older - 200 yen, elementary and middle schoolers - 60 yen.

NINJAKAN ADMISSION: Highschoolers and older - 310 yen, elementary and middle schoolers - 100 yen

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Flower Village Kamu no Sato. Photos by Yasuhiro Muneno, Stripes Japan



BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

While spring is flourishing on Japan's mainland, you'll notice different flowers taking center stage throughout the most refreshing season of the year. Sera Kogen is a short two-hour drive from MCAS Iwakuni and is home to four huge flower farms growing moss phlox, nemophila, roses and wisteria. Flower Village Kamu no Sato reopened for hydrangea and hollyhock blossoms on June 7, so make plans to enjoy the colorful beauties. At Sky Flowerbed Hana no Mori you can enjoy 7,200 roses of different varieties year-round. The farm's Rose Festival runs until the end of June and offers rose-themed experiences, foods, goods and more. Walk through the spacious farms where colorful flowers spread as far as the eye can see and enter this

springtime dreamland. After you've enjoyed the local blossoms, make a stop for a delicious lunch or early dinner at Ramen Café Pig Bone. This ramen shop offers some tasty noodles to make your trip to the area complete. Yasuhiro Muneno of Stars and Stripes Iwakuni Office recommends the ramen lunch set made up of ramen noodles with pig bone broth, karaage fried chicken, salad, steamed rice and pickles for 1,180 yen (\$8). "The thin but well-springy noodles of ramen paired well with the rich and savory pig-bone broth," Muneno said. "The karaage is very crispy and juicy and that goes well with the hot broth with rich flavor. It is a nice lunch set to sample before or after exploring vast flower fields." Make plans for a fun, quick trip for flowers and a side of ramen.
takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Feel dreamy on colorful flower farms

Sky Flowerbed Hana no Mori
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Ramen Café Pig Bone
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ADDRESS: 1012-3 Hongo, Sera Town, Sera-gun, Hiroshima Pref.
PHONE: 0847-22-0981



INSTAGRAM

Sera Fuji-en Wisteria Park
HOURS: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m.
ADDRESS: 1124-11 Bessako, Sera Town, Sera-gun, Hiroshima Pref.
PHONE: 0847-22-0020



Sera Fuji-en



Flower Village Kamu no Sato



Tomoko Hyatt has been designing annual road tax stickers for U.S. Forces Japan since 2018. Photos by Joshua L. DeMotts, Stars and Stripes

ROAD TAX ART

AF civilian’s colorful sticker designs turn heads

BY JUAN KING,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: May 22, 2025

YOKOTA AIR BASE — Tomoko Hyatt has no formal art training, but her designs are in high demand across Japan, displayed by tens of thousands of people and growing in popularity.

Hyatt, a civilian employee at this U.S. airlift hub in western Tokyo, creates the colorful sticker that anyone under the status of forces agreement must display each spring on their personal

vehicle to prove they have paid the annual Japanese road tax.

“I’ve always admired art and artists,” she told Stars and Stripes this month via Messenger. “My mother once enrolled me in a drawing class when I was 6, not because I showed talent, but to get me to sit still for more than 30 minutes.”

As forms manager for the 374th Communications Squadron, Hyatt is responsible for procuring the annual road tax sticker — an adhesive disc with a holographic print, displayed on windshields and motorcycles.

“Some people might remember that the stickers used to have the same crane pattern, just in different colors each year,” she said.

In 2018, she began designing the sticker herself, starting with a fresh take on the traditional crane motif. The following year, she drew inspiration from Japanese Emperor Naruhito’s accession to the throne.

“I wanted to mark the occasion by redesigning the road tax decal,

making it more meaningful for the U.S. Forces Japan community,” she said.

Her designs have since gained popularity, each year reflecting traditional themes such as dragons, tigers and cherry blossoms. This year’s sticker features a serpent, inspired by the current Chinese year of the snake. Mount Fuji and a torii gate also make an appearance.

“I design dozens of options annually, and only one is selected,” she said. “It’s a long but rewarding process.”

Hyatt said she submits between 10 and 20 designs to her squadron for consideration. Her command trims the selections and sends them to the USFJ Provost Marshal’s Office for final input before finalizing the design. The decals are displayed on vehicles at U.S. bases across Japan.

Despite her lack of formal training, Hyatt taught herself the craft. “I’m mostly self-taught,” she said.

Her husband, Matthew Hyatt, a meteorological technician with the 374th Operations Support Squadron, has a background in graphic design and introduced her to Adobe Illustrator.

Her work has sparked a following. She recently launched a Facebook page — Tomoko’s Tokyo Treasures — where she sells items featuring her designs, including patches, ceramic ornaments and stickers.

“The artist is INSANELY talented,” Chelsea Morrison, a contractor’s spouse at Yokota, wrote April 27 on the unofficial Yokota Community Facebook page.

“I’m pretty excited to see that Tomoko is opening up orders for patches, not only for this year’s designs, but the last few years,” Morrison told Stars and Stripes in a recent email. “I’ve been very impressed with the designs, I collect patches, I put them on the roof of my car and I’m so excited to add some from her.”

Hyatt said her work had been pirated by individuals who used her designs on collectible coins without her permission. She reported the infringement to Yokota’s legal office after consulting her command.

Despite that setback, her audience continues to grow. More than 200 people from Yokota and other bases have contacted her about purchasing merchandise featuring her work. Nile C. Kinnick High School on Yokosuka Naval Base is one her main customers, she said.

“People have encouraged me to pursue my art, and I’ve expanded into designing ornaments, coasters, bags and apparel,” she said. “It’s always a thrill to spot my designs out in Tokyo.”

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“I’ve always admired art and artists,” she told Stars and Stripes this month via Messenger. “My mother once enrolled me in a drawing class when I was 6, not because I showed talent, but to get me to sit still for more than 30 minutes.”

- Tomoko Hyatt



Tomoko Hyatt poses with U.S. Forces Japan road tax stickers that feature her artwork.

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Kanji of the week

足
Ashi [Foot]

Language Lesson

Please take me to [military installation].

[Kichi] made tsurete itte kudasai.

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BEST OF THE PACIFIC 2024 WINNER

The Weekly Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1 "Famous" cookie guy
5 Not quite shut
9 One who's not "it"
14 2022 Jordan Peele flick
15 Bit of baby talk
16 "Easy on Me" singer
17 Much-loved
19 Burrowing rodents
20 Ultimate goal
21 Direct info source
23 Marginal marking
25 Vintner's vessel
26 Electrician's device
29 Put out
31 Beer topper
32 Like legal voters
37 Ship of Greek myth
38 Dry cell part
39 Surfer's concern
40 Restores to office
42 Rider's grip
43 Rest area sight
44 Basketball stat
46 Panama, for one
48 Insulating foam
51 Farmers' spreads
53 Brisk, in music
57 Case opener?
58 B-24 bomber of WWII
60 ____ Dame
61 Diner offering
62 Centers of activity
63 Cornered, in a way
64 Very Soho
65 Spic-and-____

DOWN

1 Neat anagram
2 Daybreak, poetically
3 Kind of column
4 Reef predator
5 Tainting
6 Condiment container
7 Highly capable
8 Diameter halves
9 Poor one
10 Object of worship
11 Amazon drop-offs
12 Kagan of the court
13 Bowler's button
18 Coin opening
22 In a clingy manner
24 Amphitheater
26 Many miles away
27 Additional
28 Judicial officer
30 Recoveries
33 Understood
34 Perfect model

35 Make corrections
36 Cub Scout groups
41 Bad-mouthed publicly
45 Excitement
46 Start to "got a clue"
47 SAG member
49 1965 march site
50 Basket material
52 Emerald Isle
54 Resting on
55 Cola lead-in
56 2000 film, "____ Brockovich"
59 Slugger's need

Answers to Previous Crossword:

OPEL	TASS	MEWS
FLUE	HABIT	ALOE
FARE	ABERRATION	
SNOW	FALL	EXITED
PAUSE	CALLERS	
AVERS	SMOKED	
READS	PAIRE	ACTS
PANYA	OUNDE	HOE
ALSO	BODE	USAGE
PRUNER	LEMON	
HAPPENS	SLEEP	
ADORED	STARTLED	
MALEFACTOR	HAZE	
AGES	NOUNS	EIRE
LESS	STONE	SNAP

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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:

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

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

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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 dark teapot. To the right, a cluster of bright orange citrus fruits, likely mandarin oranges, is shown. Below the oranges, a black plate holds a piece of salmon topped with a green garnish. In the middle 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 assorted sashimi, including salmon, tuna, and various types of mushrooms, is in the bottom right. The entire scene is set against a dark, vertically-grained wooden background.

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35 unique ice cream flavors you can try in Japan



BYFOOD

Humid weather throughout most of the country is the perfect breeding ground for creative twists on a classic frozen treat. Japanese companies and independent producers take their ice cream game very seriously — if you’re visiting Japan, you can expect to be spoiled for choice when it comes to flavors.



It goes without saying that you’ll easily find classic ice cream flavors like vanilla, chocolate, and the extremely controversial chocolate mint. But if the opportunity presents itself, traveling foodies should give one of these 35 unique twists, ranging from fruity varieties to there’s-no-way-that’s-good flavors.



1. Ramune (Japanese soda)

Let’s start with one you probably already know about: ramune. This Japanese soda, one of Japan’s must-try drinks, is a popular flavor for all types of sweet treats, but it is especially popular among children and adults alike when it comes in ice cream form.



MUST-TRY DRINKS

2. Milk

Milk-flavored ice cream may not be exclusive to Japan, but it can be hard to find outside of Asia. Milk ice cream is creamy (duh), rich and filling. It’s also a perfect flavor to pair with almost any other ice cream flavor, including ramune and fruit sorbets. It’s best used as a mixer if you’re ordering a double or triple cone.

3. Shirasu

Shirasu (or Japanese whitebait) are small white fish. In the Kanto region, they are most commonly associated with Kamakura in



SHIRASU

Kanagawa Prefecture. Typically, you’ll find shirasu as a topping in kaisendon (seafood bowls) or mixed in a tamagoyaki batter as a savory street food, but you can also find ice cream topped with shirasu in select shops in Kamakura and Enoshima. This one is definitely for adventurous eaters!

Photo courtesy of Stripes Okinawa

4. Gyoza

Yes, you read that right. Gyoza izakaya Dandadan Sakaba has gyoza ice cream on its menu. This unique dessert comes with two gyoza skin senbei, in case you crave the crunch. Definitely a flavor that’s out there and makes for a great night-out story.



Dandadan Sakaba is a chain with locations around Japan, but here’s a quick list of their locations in Japan’s top destinations:

- Dandadan Sakaba Shibuya (Tokyo)
- Dandadan Sakaba Naka-ku (Nagoya)
- Dandadan Sakaba Namba (Osaka)
- Dandadan Sakaba Chuo-ku (Fukuoka)



5. Adzuki (Japanese red beans)

Adzuki is a quintessential ingredient in wagashi. It’s not overwhelmingly sweet but still satisfies if you’re in the mood for a treat. Japanese company Imuraya’s adzuki bar has consistently been one of Japan’s best-selling ice cream products. If you’re already planning to travel to Hokkaido, chances are you can find hard or soft-serve ice cream, too.

6. Shine Muscat grape

Grape is another staple summer flavor in Japan — specifically the Shine Muscat variety, which was first grown and harvested in Japan in the late 1980s. This luxurious Japanese fruit is generally considered a late summer flavor, though you can find Shine Muscat ice cream throughout the warm season.



7. Lavender

Did you know you can find lavender-flavored ice cream if you visit a lavender farm? Furano in central Hokkaido is famous for its lavender fields, but you can visit these three lavender farms around Tokyo to get a taste of creamy, lavender goodness without leaving Kanto.

8. Yubari melon

Yubari melon is a type of cantaloupe melon grown in Hokkaido in the town of Yubari, not too far from Sapporo. This melon is known to be especially sweet and fragrant — and also particularly pricey. Definitely on the top of the list of Japan’s luxury fruit lineup, but you can taste Yubari melon without splurging too much by searching for Yubari melon ice cream.

9. Kyoho grape

That’s right, there are not one but two Japanese grape ice cream flavors on this list. Kyoho grapes are purple grapes that have been cultivated in Japan since the 1930s. They are significantly more sweet than the Shine Muscat varieties. If you like grapes and you like sweetness, then opt for Kyoho grape ice cream!



10. Sakura (cherry blossom)

It’ll come as no surprise to know that in the spring, you might also find sakura-flavored ice cream (sometimes even sakura mochi-flavored ice cream). The flavor will be subtle and light, much like the shade of pink this ice cream tends to be, but it makes for a refreshing dessert nonetheless.

11. Chestnut

Continuing with seasonal flavors, around September and October, keep your eyes peeled with chestnut-flavored ice cream. Like some of the others on this list, this flavor is usually seasonal and available for a limited time only!

12. Miyazaki mango

Another luxury fruit flavor on this list (yes, there are many) is Miyazaki mango. Nissei, one of Japan’s leading producers of soft cream, produces an array of limited-edition premium flavors under its Japan Premium brand, and one of its summer flavors is Miyazaki mango. You need to plan a trip to Miyazaki Prefecture to try this one, but it might just be the best mango ice cream you’ll ever taste.



13. Amaou (Japanese strawberries)

Strawberry ice cream is obviously available in plenty of other countries, but only in Japan can you find Amaou-flavored ice cream. If you’re thinking that Japanese strawberries are not that different, think again. These strawberries, primarily grown in Fukuoka, are known for their size and rich flavor.

14. Corn

Japan does have a penchant for savory ice cream flavors. Nissei has an Aomori-exclusive corn flavor. If you like sweet corn, you might like corn ice cream. Sure, it’s a bit of a trip to get there, but hey, northern Japan is way cooler in the summer.

See ICE CREAM on Page 7



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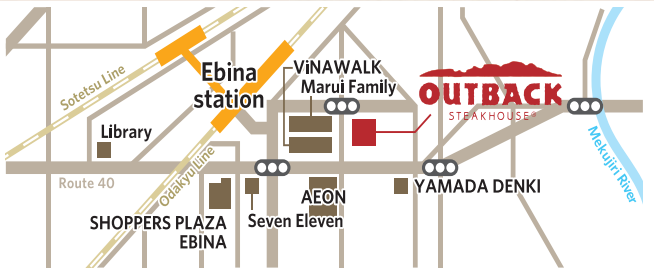


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RESTAURANT INFO



Shaved ice COOLS DOWN the Japanese summer

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES JAPAN

Summer in Japan gets scorching and steamy. Mid-summer Temperatures often reach 95 F or higher depending on the region. Along with beer, watermelon and soomen (cold udon noodle), kakigoori (shaved ice) is a popular cold food that cools us down during summer.

For many Japanese, the memories of a banner with the red kanji letter of koori (ice) in white and a blue background are fond ones. These banners are seen outside shops offering kakigoori and often meant a sweet, snow-like treat to help us cool down as kids.

Besides at local sweets stores, kakigoori can be found at matsuri and bon odori festivals or fireworks events, along with other festive foods.

“Kakigoori is one of the most popular traditional cold sweets throughout history,” says Ryusuke Koike, managing director of Japan Kakigoori Association. “This cold food goes back to more than 1,000 years and has been enjoyed as festive food for special occasions.”

Kakigoori is not only available during

the summer, but it is a year-around cold dessert, according to Koike.

“Since a lot of kakigoori joints make their syrups and sauces using fruits in season, they offer different types of throughout the year,” Koike said.

In fact, there are countless types of syrups and sauces. While many places offer the standard strawberry, cherry, lemon, green tea, melon and colorless syrup, others offer unique syrups made from vegetables, sake, wine, or even vinegar, miso or soy sauce.

Japanese kakigoori may remind many of a snow cone, but there are few significant differences between the two iced sweets.”

“Japanese kakigoori has a really fine, smooth fluffy ice consistency, just like fresh fallen snow,” Koike said. “While Americans make snow cones with extreme hard ice, we would never do that to keep it soft and fluffy.”

Besides the difference of ice, snow cones usually come with artificial flavors, while kakigoori uses more natural syrups and ingredients, such as sweet beans, matcha and brown sugar.

But, despite a key difference in the

flavoring, the main part of kakigoori is actually the ice, according to Koike.

“Most of kakigoori joints pay more attention on the quality of ice, rather than varieties of syrups, since quality and condition of ice determines the taste of kakigoori,” Koike said.

For Japanese kakigoori, extreme cold ice is not good. For a fluffy snow-like soft texture, the ice temperature needs to be kept around 14 F.

“Since ice in freezer is usually around -4 F, we need to take out the ice and warm it up before we shave it,” Koike said.

Clean and transparent ice is ideal, as it can make smooth, fluffy kakigoori. Water that takes a long time to freeze can make clean ice.

“Natural ice is considered the best,” Koike said.

Why not make kakigoori yourself?

You can make a transparent ice yourself. Wrap an ice tray with a towel before putting it into a freezer. This will make the ice take longer to freeze which should ensure the ice is transparent, according to Koike.

Then, you can shave it by using a hand-spinning ice shaver, which can be found at various stores for around \$20-30.

The hand-cranked ice shaver is a popular kitchen item in Japan. It is fun making kakigoori by spinning a block of ice over a blade by turning the lever by hands. Syrups for kakigoori are available at most of supermarkets or grocery stores.

According to Japan Kakigoori Association, there are some tips to making tasty kakigoori at home: Use mineral water instead of tap water when you make ice. Serve it in a glass bowl to make the colors stand out, and be sure not to put on too many toppings as it can spoil the fluffy texture.

Now that you know, get out and enjoy the hot Japan summer with some cool kakigoori!

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

Did you know?

Kakigoori is a popular cold treat in ball parks. Yokohama Stadium offers Mikan Goori (ice orange) while Jingu Stadium (Tokyo) offers Pine Goori (pineapple Ice) during ball games. Koshien Stadium (near Osaka) offers simple “Kachiwari” (literally shaved ice).

Make your own

BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES JAPAN

It doesn’t get much better than eating shaved ice during the summer. But making the cold shaved ice at home offers a different sense of joy.

Kakigoori-ki (shave ice machine) is a common item for families with children in this country. Like many flavors are introduced at shops even shaved iced machines are also evolving to show variety. But there is a trend commonly seen of them: nostalgia.

“Kyro-chan” is a shaved ice machine that looks like a cubby bear doll.

Originally released in 1976, this cute looking machine became a hit back then. When the hand-



Did you know?

In Japan, kakigoori has been enjoyed for more than 1000 years. In an essay by Seisho Nagon, a description of people enjoying kakigoori in the 11th century.

Kakigoori parlors near you

During summer months, you can find sweets joints and cafes serving kakigoori virtually everywhere in Japan. The followings are some of the most popular and highly rated joints in the region. Visit one or more and enjoy the traditional treats.



Tamura Koori Hanbaiten (near Misawa)
Tamura Koori Hanbaiten is a long-established ice dealer. It offers popular fluffy shaved-ice made from local Mishima spring water with various syrups for 1,200 - 1,800 yen.
Location: 8-5-16 Konakano, Hachinohe City, Aomori Pref.
Hours: Mon.–Fri. Noon–10 p.m.
Sat. & Sun. 11 a.m.–7 p.m.
Phone: 0178-22-1549



TABELOG



Jindinro Lalaport Ebina (near Zama and Atsugi)
Sample Mango Kakigoori for 680 yen. The unique fluffy milk-flavored shaved-ice, topped with rich mango sauce lets you enjoy the authentic taste of Taiwanese shaved ice.
Location: Lalaport Ebina 3F, 13-1 Ougicho, Ebina City, Kanagawa Pref.
Hours: 11 a.m.–9 p.m.



WEBSITE



Hinode-en (near Yokosuka and Zama)
The popular tea shop in Hayama Town offers kakigoori in various tea flavors. Among more than 10 options, macha or toasted tea kakigoori with sweet beans and milk for 930 yen are popular.
Location: 1413-212 Nagae, Hayama-cho, Kanagawa Pref. (30-min. drive from Yokosuka Naval Base)
Hours: Thurs.–Tue. 10 a.m.–7 p.m.



FACEBOOK



Photo by Takahiro Takiguchi



MELANGE De SHUHARI Creperie (near Iwakuni)
They make quality ice for kakigoori using pure water. Tiramisu, made from coffee syrup and mascarpone cheese sauce, is one of the most popular kakigoori.
Location: 9-19 [3F] Hondoori, Naka-ku, Hiroshima City, Hiroshima Pref. (5-min. walk from Hondoori Station of Hiroden Line)
Hours: 11 a.m.–8 p.m.



WEBSITE



Aizengama No. 1210 (Sasebo)
Hasami-yaki pottery shop Aizengama No. 1210 has a café offering strawberry milk and espresso kakigoori ices for 780 yen in the summer. The espresso kakigoori features a fresh shot over fluffy milk-flavored shaved ice. The bitter yet rich, sweet flavor is sure to refresh and reenergize you!
Location: 1210 Yumutago, Hasami Town, Higashi Sonogi-gun, Nagasaki Pref.
Hours: 11 a.m. – 6 p.m.



INSTAGRAM

popular versions of shaved ice

- **SHIROKUMA:** originated in Kagoshima Pref.: Shaved ice with condensed milk, small colorful mochi, fruits, and sweet bean paste, along with orange, cherry, pineapple, and raisins on top.
- **YUKIUSAGI:** originated in Komazawa, Tokyo: Shaved ice with sake and sugar syrup, served on New Year's Day.
- **UJIKINTOKI:** originated in Okayama Pref.: Shaved ice made up of matcha syrup and sugar, along with sweet beans.
- **SUDAMARI KOORI:** originated in Yamagata Pref.: Shaved ice with vinegar, soy-sauce and strawberry syrup.

- **AKAFUKU GOORI:** originated in Mie Pref.: Shaved ice with sweet bean paste, rice cake, and matcha syrup on top.
- **ZENZAI:** originated on Okinawa: Popular kakigoori dessert on the island. Sprinkle shaved ice on sweet beans.
- **COBALT ICE:** originated in Kumamoto Pref.: Shaved ice with bright blue syrup made from honey and condensed milk.



1926 ~



1976



2000 ~



goes further back in time to dig up people's memory of shaved ice. It is said that Kakigori-ki became commonly available in the Showa era (1926 – 1989). This machine has wheels and a logo that can remind Japanese of when they ate shaved ice at stores in their neighborhood back in the day.

Thanks to an updated system, this retro-looking machine can shave ice to fluffy flakes, something only stores could provide back then.

These shaved ice machines are closely associated with people's happy memories of having the cold sweets as a child. The sense of fun and nostalgia is so strong that you could feel it even if you didn't live in Japan in those days.

top is turned, the cubby's eyes move left and right. The name Kyoro-chan refers to this gimmick, which was very appealing to kids.

Although it was discontinued for a while, Kyoro-chan was brought back in 2016 with the same design. "Ice Robo III Hatsuyuki" is another popular shaved ice machine with a retro look. At first glance,

the yellow, red and green machine almost looks like a character out of an old Nintendo game. But, on the inside, this machine has an advanced system that can automatically make shaved ice, even allowing to adjust sizes.

"Dendo Honkaku Fuwafuwa Kakigori-Ki" (electric-powered machine for totally fluffy shaved ice)

McDonald's new Misawa branch!

Enjoy your McDonald's favorites, from classic Big Macs to crispy fries and creamy soft serve at their new Misawa location! Whether you're craving breakfast on the go, a family meal, or a quick lunch, the new branch features a convenient two-lane drive-thru and bilingual self-order kiosk system in-store. For even more convenience, place your order in advance on the McDonald's Mobile Order app! Just download the app and place dine-in or to-go orders ahead. Next time you're looking to grab a quick bite or even a pick-me-up with a fresh McCafé coffee, make McDonald's Misawa your next stop!

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RESTAURANT INFO

ICE CREAM: Acquired tastes



CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

15. Rice

Continuing with exclusive flavors, in Akita, you can find rice ice cream, also courtesy of Nissei. This Tohoku prefecture is known for its high-quality rice, so of course, the natural course of action is to turn its top export into a not-savory-but-not-too-sweet dessert.



16. Squid ink

Another fishy flavor makes the list! This time, it's squid ink, an exclusive Nissei flavor that you can only find in Fukui. Unlike shirasu ice cream, squid ink ice cream is more visually striking than it is an attack on the taste buds — makes for a cool photo, though!

17. Olive

Shodoshima, an island off the coast of Kagawa, is Japan's leading producer of olive oil. If you want to know how it claimed the number one spot, you should visit the Shodoshima Olive Park and learn about the island's rare characteristics that make it a prime location for growing and tending to olive trees. Here, you can also find olive ice cream. Try it in a cone or in a cup. If you've feeling extra adventurous, opt for an extra dash of olive oil.



18. Soy sauce

Did you really think there would be no soy sauce flavor on this list? Often thought of as a simple pantry staple, soy sauce comes in different variations. Soy sauce makers who offer factory visits will also offer eclectic soy sauce treats, including (you guessed it) ice cream.



19. Amazake

Amazake ice cream (sometimes amazake sorbet) is less commonly found at the grocery store but not uncommon at wagashi specialty stores. Amazake, literally "sweet sake," is a sweet non-alcoholic rice drink. Amazake ice cream brings the distinct flavor of this Japanese drink without its usual grainy texture.



20. Onion

This next flavor might just be the rarest on this list. You can find onion ice cream in Hyogo Prefecture. Onions are a beloved ingredient for a good reason: their sweetness is key to most of your favorite Japanese dishes! You can even order onion ice cream.



21. Unagi

We're back at it again with a sweet and salty combination! One Japanese company is almost entirely dedicated to making unagi-flavored ice cream — yes, unagi like the eel. You can buy this eel-flavored ice cream online.



22. Salt

Occasionally, you'll find salt ice cream, which is essentially milk ice cream with double or triple the amount of salt. For lovers of snacks that combine sweet and savory, this one is for you.

23. Tofu

Recently, you can find soy milk ice cream in supermarkets and convenience stores, but did you know you can also find tofu ice cream? If you visit Nikko in Tochigi, you'll find local shops with tofu ice cream on offer since the area is known for its yuba (tofu skin)!

24. Soba (buckwheat)

Savory buckwheat noodle ice cream is a surprisingly popular flavor in Japan. It has a nutty taste with a hint of bitterness. It's tricky to find, but your best bet is to hit traditional neighborhoods and roadside stations in rural areas.



25. Wasabi

The same company sells wasabi ice cream, though wasabi ice cream is fairly common all around Japan. You can find wasabi soft cream or vanilla soft cream with a plop of freshly grated wasabi. This spicy dessert is especially easy to find throughout the Izu Peninsula.

26. Mountain yam (tororo)

One last shoutout to Unagi Ice, this time to share that they also make a mountain yam (tororo) ice cream. If creamy potato soup works, why wouldn't creamy potato... ice cream?



27. Sea grapes

Sea grapes, a type of seaweed, add a puchi puchi or "bursting" texture to this unique ice cream. They also have a slightly salty flavor. This one is definitely more of a novelty flavor, but if you see it in the wild (most likely in Okinawa), don't hesitate to try it!



28. Wakame

Another seaweed-infused ice cream, wakame adds a refreshing taste of the sea. It has a mild seaweed flavor and something like a crisp texture. You can find it at Shiokaze-no-sato Tsunoshima in Yamaguchi.



29. Hibiscus

Hibiscus ice cream offers a tart and floral flavor, perfect for a summer day. It's made from the hibiscus flower and has a beautiful pink or red color. The easiest way to find this flavor is to look at Blue Seal's offerings at one of their stores.

30. Okinawa salt cookies

Being a brand that's most commonly associated with Okinawa, Blue Seal sells Okinawan shortbread-flavored ice cream. These sweet and salty cookies are one of the most popular food souvenirs to bring back from Japan's tropical region.

31. Ube

Ube (or purple sweet potato) is a delicious vegetable that's widely consumed in Asia, and its vibrant purple color makes it a great ingredient to add a pop of color to any sweet. Ube is a popular topping for baked foods and even as an ice cream topping, but ube die-hard fans should just go full steam ahead and get ube-flavored ice cream.



32. Ryukyu tea warabi mochi

Our last Blue Seal recommendation is the brand's Ryukyu tea warabi mochi flavor. Just as you might expect, this is essentially wagashi in a cup. With swirls of kuromitsu (brown sugar syrup) and chunks of warabimochi, this one is for those who like texture in their ice creams.

33. Royal milk tea

A popular flavor year-round, if you love royal milk tea's comforting sweetness, you'll love it in ice cream form. In 2024, Häagen-Dazs released a limited-edition caramel royal milk tea flavor, which you can find in select convenience stores and supermarkets.

34. Yuzu

Though yuzu is usually considered a winter citrus, many still prefer its bitter and sweet taste over lemon or even orange. It's not uncommon to find yuzu-flavored ice cream at specialty shops or even among limited-edition flavors in the ice cream section of a Japanese supermarket.



35. Chocobanana (frozen chocolate banana)

If you attend a summer festival in Japan, in addition to coolers filled to the brim with ice and ramune bottles, you'll also find chocobanana stands. This frozen treat is a hot weather staple and has become such a nostalgic flavor for older Japan citizens that you can find chocobanana-flavored ice cream, too. Same cooling effect, significantly reduced risk of it sliding off the stick and falling on the sidewalk.

Chocobanana is a flavor offered at Ushigoyaice, an eclectic ice cream shop in Hokkaido that offers 16 different flavors every day pooled from a rotation of 50-plus recipes!



USHIGOYAICE

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