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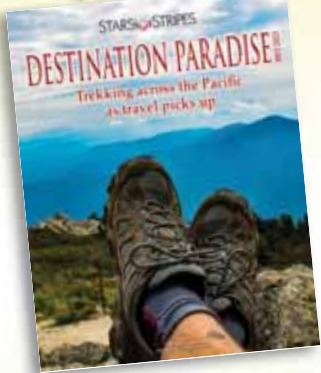
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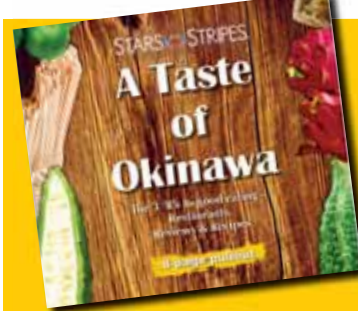


Chilling out on island's northern coast

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YUMMY STEAK,
GENEROUS SERVINGS AT
AMERICAN AMERICAN
PAGE 4



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Happy military wife, happy military life

“You’re never satisfied!” my husband hurled at me (among other choice phrases) many times throughout his 28-year active-duty Navy career. I catapulted my own cliched insults, too, such as, “It’s always all about you, isn’t it?!”

When conflicts and resentments rose to the surface during our three-decade marriage, I never consciously attributed our relationship strife to my husband’s military service. I always believed we were lucky to be a military family. I blamed other factors — primarily me.

I thought my decision to do extensive home therapy for our son who was diagnosed with autism at age 3 was the main reason my legal career came to a screeching halt. I thought my difficulty in making friends was because I was awkward and insecure. I believed I was supposed to be “resilient.” I thought I needed to rise to every challenge or be branded whiny.

I didn’t blame the fact that we were stationed overseas and moved often to locations where I didn’t have a license to practice law. Nor that Tri-care, 25 years ago, didn’t even recognize autism as a coverable diagnosis, forcing me to seek treatments we could afford out-of-pocket or do myself. Nor that finding affordable care for any child, much less one with special needs with two younger sisters, was more difficult for military families who PCS often. Nor that it was hard to create support networks after each PCS move. Nor that my career aspirations and personal interests came second to the practical requirements of my husband’s military service.

On one hand, I was very happy as a military spouse and extremely proud of our life. But on the other hand, I had an underlying sense of shame for having let my law career slip away, for disappointing my parents’ expectations for their daughter, for having trouble finding friends, for not contributing to our household income, and for letting myself be “just a housewife.”

I thought the problem was me, but recent studies show that I was wrong. I wasn’t the only one feeling dissatisfied. Spouse satisfaction with active-duty military life has reached an all-time low, according to the most recent DoD biennial Active Duty Spouse Survey (ADSS), the results of which were released in February and involved 12,000 active-duty military

The Meat and Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari



spouses. Less than half of respondents indicated that they were satisfied with military life, the all-time lowest rating since the survey began in 2012.

ADSS results also showed the chronic military spouse unemployment rate of 21% (six times the national average) has not budged since 2015, and spouses spend an average of 19 weeks looking for

employment after each PCS move.

These findings also jumped out at me: 1. Military spouses’ marriage satisfaction is the lowest percentage since the survey began in 2012; 2. Military spouses seeking mental health counseling has reached the highest percentage since 2012; and 3. Fewer military spouses want their member spouse to stay on active duty now than in 2012.

The 2023 Blue Star Families annual Military Family Lifestyle Survey (aMFLS) results released in March support the ADSS findings, indicating that unemployment is the top concern for military spouses, followed by the service member’s time away from family, lack of affordable housing, insufficient military pay and relocation/PCS issues. Military spouses who struggle to find employment and childcare and feel financially stressed reported lower “relationship satisfaction.” Sixty-three percent of active-duty spouses would not recommend the military to a young family member due in part to “challenges to families.”

In a military retention study released last August, scientists asked, “Why do service members leave the military while they are still highly qualified?” They found that “milsponse-reported work-life conflict and military satisfaction” were the most likely influences on service members’ decisions to separate from the military voluntarily. Considering that recruiting goals are not being met and half of all active-duty service persons are married, some argue that the best way to improve retention and readiness is to focus on retaining the modern military family by promoting stability and allowing for greater advancement.

In other words, “Happy military wife, happy military life.” And that goes for husbands, too.

Read more of Lisa Smith Molinari’s columns at: themeatandpotatoesoflife.com and in Lisa’s book, *The Meat and Potatoes of Life: My True Lit Com*
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Curry Savila serves up a plate of Yanbaru curry, complete with a large pork spare rib, for 1,080 yen.



Onna no Eki Nakayukui Market is an amalgamation of restaurants and vendors.

Photos by Matthew M. Burke, Stars and Stripes



Onna no Eki Nakayukui Market opened primarily as a farmer's market in 1990. Its fruits and vegetables come from 400 Okinawa farmers, the majority of whom are local to Onna village.



Colorful Onna bazaar serves up island's best in one place

BY MATTHEW M. BURKE AND KEISHI KOJA,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: May 4, 2023

A bazaar in Onna village offers the very best of Okinawa in one convenient location.

Onna no Eki Nakayukui Market, whose name translates roughly to "Roadside Station," is an amalgamation of restaurants and vendors hawking every island souvenir, including sea grapes, moringa and shisa dog underwear.

The market also has 10 stalls serving up fresh Okinawan staples like doughnuts and soba.

Onna no Eki opened primarily as a farmer's market in 1990. Its fruits and vegetables come from 400 registered farmers, the majority of whom are local to Onna village.

Tropical fruits are seasonal. Tankan mandarin oranges are available in January and February; passion fruit from March to June; mango and pineapple from June to September; dragon fruit from July to November; and bananas from September to October.

Shekwasa, which resembles a lime, is sold from September to December, and papaya is available year-round.

In the winter months, the market sells strawberries from its own farm. The first yield from a new passion fruit endeavor is expected toward year's end.

Onna no Eki has nearly all of the souvenirs available at Naha Airport and then some. There is chifon cake, called "the blues," that comes from the acclaimed Mitsuya honpo company, known locally for its delectable Okinawan doughnuts.

Those doughnuts are like the sweet, plain treats common in the United States, except they are deliberately misshaped to maximize nooks and crevices, which in turn form a crispy outer crust, encapsulating the fluffy cake inside.

The market also sells its own passion fruit liqueur, a tomato curry made by a local farmer and Sango No Umi, awamori from a local distillery.

About a million people visited Onna no Eki last year, according to market manager Chikako Iha.

The market employees are warm, welcoming and helpful, using gestures and translation apps to

communicate; most do not speak English.

The market periodically schedules performances in the outdoor food court and special events every three months.

On a sunny day at the end of March, Onna no Eki was buzzing, its outdoor picnic tables filled with tourists slurping down steaming bowls of noodles and broth.

The main market was awash in a flurry of colors and scents, including royal blue Okinawa glass, colorful bags of locally produced sea salt, tarts made with Okinawa's purple sweet potatoes and rows of atemoya.

A pair of shisa, the dog-like guardians placed at the entrance to Okinawan homes, sell for just under \$6.

A bottle of the local awamori liquor that had been aged at the bottom of the sea sells for 9,800 yen, or about \$75. The bottle came with a special cloth to open it so you didn't cut your hand on a barnacle.

The seller claims pressure at the sea bottom helps quickly mature the liquor inside. There may be something to that; the liquor was sweet and smooth when served with a splash of water on the rocks.

Pickled goya and some Chinsuko sugar cookies finished the shopping trip, which elicited quite an appetite.

Curry Savila, a dining spot just outside the market, serves up a plate of Yanbaru curry, complete with a large pork spare rib, for 1,080 yen. Yanbaru is the name given to Okinawa's heavily forested north.

The brown rice was shaped with a mold into the island of Okinawa and served on a hot skillet with salad. The curry flowed around the rice island like the waters around Okinawa. The presentation was stellar.

The curry was hearty with just the right amount of spice, but the real star of the dish was the rib meat, which fell effortlessly off the bone.

Onna no Eki is Okinawa, commoditized, packaged and sold in all its vibrant and delicious glory.

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Things to know

Directions: 1656-9 Nakadomari, Onna, Kunigami District, Okinawa 904-0415, behind the Onna Village Museum, off Route 58 in Onna Village.

Times: Open daily, 10 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Costs: Parking (133 spots) and admission is free. Meals can cost anywhere for a few dollars for a bento or freshly baked bread, to as much as \$10 for soba or curry. Cards are accepted.

Food: Onna no Eki features 10 stalls serving up fresh Okinawan staples like doughnuts and soba.

Phone: 0989641188

Website

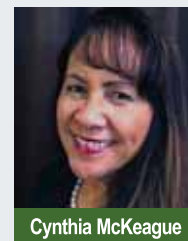


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Yummy steak, generous servings at American American

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

If you take a walk around the south side of the Sunabe Seawall area, a quaint white house with the mood of an old stateside residence may catch your attention. American American is a local chain of eateries known for serving up various pies and hefty 400-gram (0.9 lb) steaks. On Okinawa, there are many steakhouses, but the vintage exterior of American American stands out. It might not be a place you'd think to go to for a meal, but after years of passing it, I recently decided to give it a try while walking around the Sunabe area around lunchtime. One step inside and I felt like I was in a diner from the 1960s or even before. The wooden interior is warmly lit and has a cozy mood. The old American flags draped against the

window and colorful boxes give the place a blend of American and Okinawan feel.

American American has a full dining room, but though I didn't see any American customers, the waitress said the regulars to the restaurant work on base.

Just like me, many of the base employees were there for lunch. I sat in the corner and opened the menu. All the items on the menu featured steak with a variety of sides, ranging from tacos and teriyaki rice to fish meuniere. It was difficult to choose, but I settled on "American a la carte" for 1,500 yen (about \$11). American a la carte includes Japanese-style chopped steak, doria (rice gratin), teriyaki chicken, cream soup, rice (or bread), a slice of pie of the day, and coffee.

When my meal arrived, the generous servings were impressive. From the menu, I knew there would be a lot of food on my plate but seeing it in person was surprising. The plate full of food reminded me a bit of my school lunch and of going to steakhouses as a kid with my parents.

I dug in and found the chopped steak and teriyaki chicken to be tender with a homecooked feel, which I liked a lot. By the time I savored the last bite of the cheese pie with coffee, I was pleasantly full. I couldn't believe I hadn't visited American American sooner.

If you've seen this place before and hesitated to visit, give it a try next time. You'll love their delicious meals and quaint interior.

Kudaka.Shoji@Stripes.com

American American (honten/central branch)

Hours: 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. (last order at 8 p.m. closed on Thu.) *Subject to change

MAP



American American (Branch No. 2)

Hours: 10 a.m. – 7 p.m. (Closed Thursdays) *Subject to change

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American American (Branch No. 3)

Hours: 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. (Closed Tuesdays)

MAP



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Get taste of Gotanda at Chinmaya

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Seeking a familiar flavor of my time years ago in Tokyo, I visited Chinmaya Izumizaki Icchoume-ten in Naha for spicy mapo tofu over rice.

The restaurant is the only Okinawa location of the 23-branch Chinmaya chain. Back when I lived in Tokyo until 2009, I was a regular at Chinmaya's original location in Gotanda District. In 2022, Chinmaya Gotanda Higashiguchi Ekimae-ten unfortunately closed but I still have fond memories of this spot and their signature mapo tofu over rice. To this day, I can still taste the burn the dish left on my taste buds. The first branch was popular and mapo tofu over rice is considered the "taste of Gotanda," so two other branches remain in the area.

Missing the days when this spicy food helped me rejuvenate after a long day at the office, I decided to try the branch on Okinawa. The Chinmaya location here is called Izumizaki Icchoume-ten, and you'll find it near the south end of Kokusai Street nestled among business and government office buildings in Naha.

Izumizaki Ichhoumen-ten is a small restaurant with a striking resemblance to the one I frequented in Gotanda. Over the entrance I could see the letters "陳麻家" (Chinmaya), just like the former Gotanda branch had. However, there were also letters "担々麵" (dandan noodles) along with the letters "陳麻飯" for mapo tofu over rice. The unexpected additional menu item made me a little anxious for what was in store.

On the inside, the eatery looked like a cozy ramen joint. There was no counter with seats; seats were available at tables. I took one of the seats for single diners and ordered chinmahan (650 yen, approx. \$4.90) just like in the old days.

I still remembered that the joint in Gotanda served up orders at a surprising pace. It probably took less than a minute to get an order out. In Naha this wasn't the case, but I was happy to see my chinmahan arriving within a few minutes.

The chinmahan looked exactly like the one I remember from Gotanda. Better yet, it even left the same spice and fire in my mouth I knew and

loved. With each bite, the spiciness almost felt like it might go over my tolerance, but then it would disappear. The flavor and fire of the dish lured me to continue and in five minutes my plate was cleared.

Though it was lunchtime, Chinmaya Izumizaki Icchoume-ten's spicy mapo tofu was a much-needed refresh and walk down memory lane for me. Though I'm sad that the restaurant I frequented in Tokyo is now gone, I'm relieved to know that I can head to the Naha location for a familiar taste and burn.

If you love spicy dishes and mapo tofu, you'll definitely enjoy Chinmaya Izumizaki Icchoume-ten's fiery offering. Give it a try!

Kudaka.Shoji@Stripes.com

陳麻飯



Chinmaya Izumizaki Icchoume-ten

Hours: 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (LO 2 p.m.)/ 5:30 – 9 p.m. (LO 8:30 p.m., weekday); 11 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (LO 2 p.m., Sat)
*Closed on Sun, holiday
*hours subject to change

MAP



Chinmahan (mapo tofu over rice) a.k.a. the "taste of Gotanda" dazzles spicy food lovers on Okinawa as well.

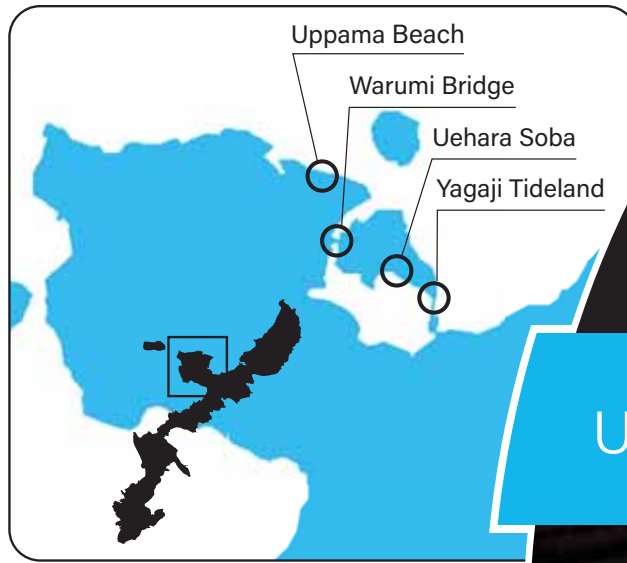
Chilling out on island's northern coast



STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

For the first time in 2023, I set out for the north to hit the beach. Though the temperatures were still a bit cold in early May for a swim, I couldn't wait to take a dip in the ocean water any longer..

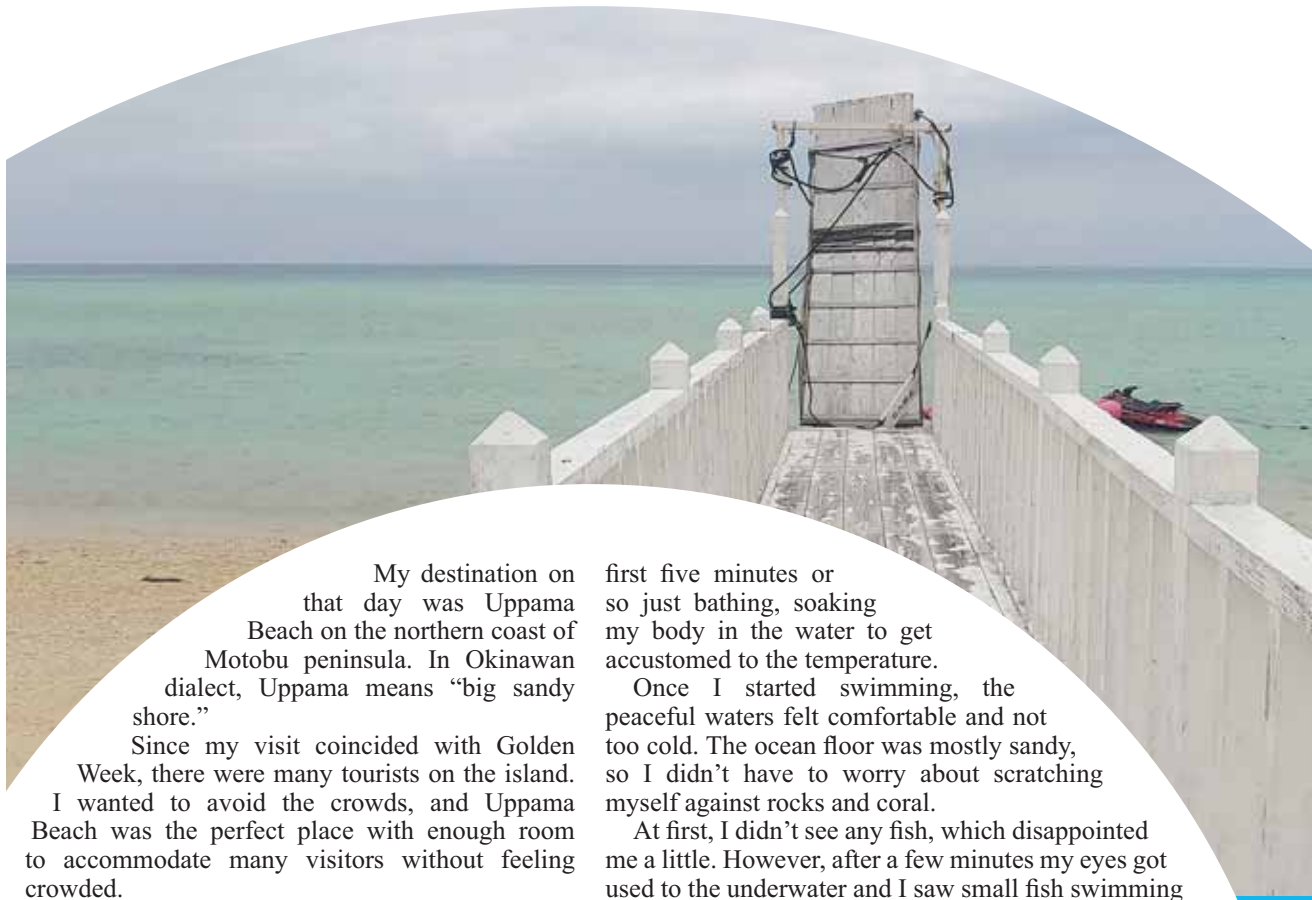
Kudaka.Shoji@Stripes.com



Uehara Soba



I letter and an a row took n the southern It was housed what appeared to ing. From how it I was expecting a mo ing eatery, but this pl café-style interior. Uehara Soba was p tomers, most of whom from mainland Japan. cure a seat by the wind (inland sea). From their extensive picking my lunch. I s (1,200 yen), which ca belly, and ashitebichi toppings). It seeme cause the three top for a soba enthus



Uppama Beach

My destination on that day was Uppama Beach on the northern coast of Motobu peninsula. In Okinawan dialect, Uppama means "big sandy shore."

Since my visit coincided with Golden Week, there were many tourists on the island. I wanted to avoid the crowds, and Uppama Beach was the perfect place with enough room to accommodate many visitors without feeling crowded.

Although Uppama Beach itself is a public beach and can be used for free, I decided to use Hotel Bel Paraiso's paid services for convenience. I paid 500 yen for parking, 300 yen for showers and 500 yen for a beach parasol.

I expected many tourists on the beach when I left the shower room at the hotel but found there were only a few. I was the only one daring enough to jump into the water at first, too.

I had heard that this long stretch of white sand turned black when pumice stone swarmed Okinawa in 2021. Some black pebbles remained on the shore, but the beach looked beautiful as advertised, and the waters were clean.

Seated by the water's edge, I put on fins, mask and snorkel. As expected, the water felt cold. I spent the

first five minutes or so just bathing, soaking my body in the water to get accustomed to the temperature.

Once I started swimming, the peaceful waters felt comfortable and not too cold. The ocean floor was mostly sandy, so I didn't have to worry about scratching myself against rocks and coral.

At first, I didn't see any fish, which disappointed me a little. However, after a few minutes my eyes got used to the underwater and I saw small fish swimming here and there. At one point, I found a concrete structure that appeared to be used to moor a boat. As I approached it, I could see many fish in the area. They didn't seem to be bothered by the unexpected swimmer who hit the beach a little too early. I guess they were just taking it easy in the peaceful waters just like I was.

I was about 20 meters offshore and thought if I swam out a little further, I could have seen more fish. But my legs started cramping so I stayed closer to the shore.

I spent about 40 minutes in the water then took a rest under the parasol and enjoyed the views of the beach and Kouri Island off in the distance.

If you are into adventure, Uppama Beach may not be at the top of your list, but if you are looking for a beach where you can relax and enjoy a swim with some fish, this is a perfect destination.

Uppama Beach
GPS: N 26.691585, E 127.991939

Hotel Bel Paraiso
GPS: N 26.69125, E 127.99261
*parking fee costs 500 yen at Hotel Bel Paraiso
*use of shower costs 300 yen



MAP
Uppama Beach



MAP
Hotel Bel Paraiso

See more

Ya gre on



Yagaji Tideland



Before crossing Yagaji Ohashi, a bridge to Ojima Island and further east to Okinawa's main island, I decided to swing by this dry beach west of Yagaji island. While Yagaji Beach on the east coast was crowded with campers and beachgoers, this tideland on the west was very quiet. There were only a few people there, most digging the sandy beach, possibly looking for clams.

It was around 2 p.m. and the tide was low, so I strolled about 100 meters on the tideland away from the shore before reaching the water. There were

numerous holes in the sandy ground but no sign of crabs or any other sea creatures.

This tideland is known as a haven for wild birds, such as oxeye, white-eye, and eastern reef heron. It is also a destination of migration for birds like Terek and black-headed gulls in autumn through winter.

I didn't bring binoculars with me so I couldn't tell which birds were with me on the tideland. The birds confirmed their presence with chirping and swooping, adding to the serene atmosphere.

GPS: N 26.646057, E 128.032770
*Free parking space available



MAP

Five minutes later, the food was brought to my table with more quantity than I had expected, which made me happy. With fatigue kicking in after the first swim of the year in the ocean, this was exactly what I needed to rejuvenate myself.

The soba was slightly brown, somewhat different from the pale color of Okinawa's local soba. I learned later that Uehara uses wheatmeal and powdered bonito fish in their noodles.

The soba was cooked to a perfect, chewy texture. The pork-bone broth was rich and different from the usual bonito-based stock you'll find in other soba noodle bowls. The broth's rich taste hit the spot and the toppings all paired deliciously with my meal.

I was glad I happened to stumble across Uehara Soba because I left with a satisfied tummy and recharged battery for the long drive home.

After crossing Warumi Bridge, I found a sign with the name "Uehara そば(soba)" in hiragana. Following the arrow, I came to this soba joint on the coast of Yagaji Island. Located on the second floor of an apartment building, it looked on the outside, I modest (and quaint) look-ace turned out to have a

backed with many cus- appeared to be tourists. Fortunately, I could see-ow facing Haneji-naikai

menu, I had a hard time settled on Uehara Soba. I came with pork ribs, pork (pig's feet) as sides (or d to be a good deal be-ppings are a golden trio iasts like me.



Hours: 11 a.m.-4 p.m.

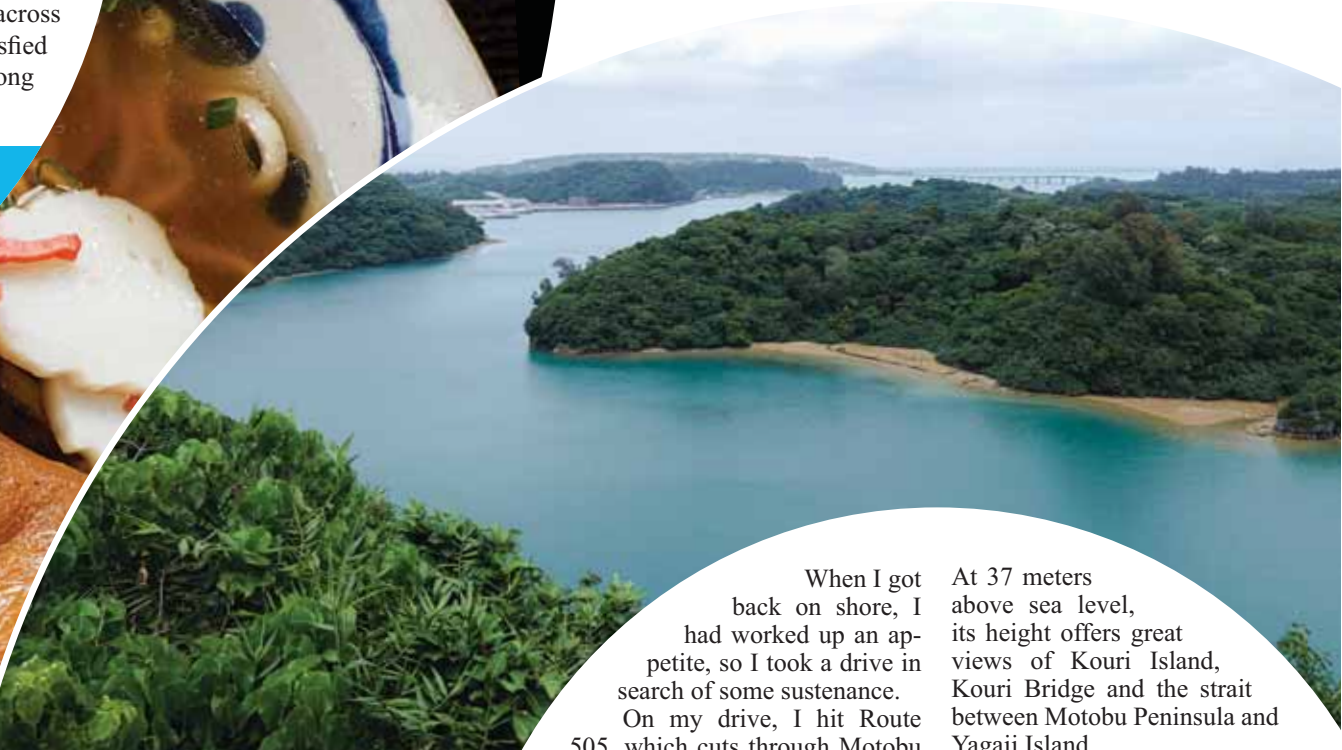
*Closed on Thu.

GPS: N 26.658899, E 128.014538



MAP

Warumi Bridge



When I got back on shore, I had worked up an appetite, so I took a drive in search of some sustenance.

On my drive, I hit Route 505, which cuts through Motobu Island. Two years ago, I cycled this area on a road bike and the memories of the uphill slopes along the road came flooding back. At the time, I was too exhausted from cycling to enjoy the views, but this time, behind the wheel, I could appreciate the lush greenery and peaceful mood of the area.

Eventually, I turned on Route 248 and headed east. A few minutes later, I approached Warumi Ohashi (bridge). The 315-meter-long bridge connects Nakijin Village's Amesoko District and Yagaji Island and is the fifth longest among all concrete arch bridges in Japan.

At 37 meters above sea level, its height offers great views of Kouri Island, Kouri Bridge and the strait between Motobu Peninsula and Yagaji Island.

To the south, Haneji-naikai, an inland sea often called "Okinawa no Setonaikai," because of its similarity to a famous inland sea in the western part of Japan's main island, can also be seen.

After leaving my car in a parking area nearby, I took a walk on the bridge which opened in 2010. Though relatively new, the bridge now seems to fit into its surroundings. The view of the peaceful waters was also alluring and soothing, letting me forget about the time (and hunger) for a short while.

GPS: N 26.667269, E 127.994809
*Parking space available at (N 26.668458, E 127.993135)



MAP WARUMI BRIDGE



MAP PARKING

VIDEO Yagaji Beach heat escape in Okinawa



VIDEO Sesoko Island small in size, big in fun



VIDEO Snorkeling, diving at Gorilla Chop



7 ways to soak in Japan's rainy season traditions

BY SHOJI KUDAKA AND TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES OKINAWA

Constant gray skies and gloomy showers can only mean one thing in the so-called Land of the Rising Sun: The rainy season.

It starts to fall on Okinawa in late May followed by mainland Japan and Kyushu Island in early June. Cold northerly and warm southerly air masses collide to create 45 to 50 days of a continuous dreary weather front of clouds dropping anything from drizzle to torrential downpours.

But there's no reason to let the bad weather get you down. Look on the bright side.

The rainy season is cheerily

referred to as "tsuyu," or plum rain, in Japan, as it coincides with the seasonal ripening of this luscious fruit. And with southern to central temperatures in the mid to high 70s (the high 60s farther north), Japan offers more seasonal outdoor activities than you can shake an umbrella at.

For starters, it's one of the best times of the year to visit the northern island of **Hokkaido**. Chances are you may not even need that umbrella. Since Hokkaido is barely affected by this weather front, many locals travel there during the rainy season to escape the stifling humidity often visited upon the rest of Japan.

If you can't make it that far north there's still no need to resort to long weekends indoors with **video games** or TV. It may be the rainy season but it actually does not rain every day. (For example, the average number of rainy days in June is only 12 on the Kanto Plain, according to Japan Meteorological Agency.)

Even if it does rain, it will add a certain ambiance to your strolls along the streets of **old towns** and quaint neighborhoods. The rain makes old temples, gardens and traditional houses seem all the more elegant.

While out, look for cute small white ghost-like dolls made from single piece of cloth or tissue hanging from the eaves or on the windows of houses. Often children, and even some adults, make these little "teruteru bozu," or sunshine monks, to ward off bad weather for the next day when a fieldtrip or other outdoor event is planned.

In fact, why not make your own **teruteru bozu**?

Also, don't miss the opportunity to take in the beauty of seasonal foliage.

With plenty of water falling amid the early summer warmth, several pretty **flowers** are also in bloom this time of year. Both hydrangeas ("ajisai") and irises ("shobu") are in full bloom in mainland Japan, while irises and shell ginger ("gettou") are abloom on Okinawa. Flowering shell ginger heralds the rainy season on the southern islands; hydrangeas embody the season on the mainland.

The hydrangea's original colors can vary from white, pink, violet and blue, and they gradually shift to different colors. Some change from pink to purple, and others from blue to violet or fade in intensity throughout the course of the 4- to 6-week season.

Peak flower viewing season on Okinawa is mid-May to the end of June, while it runs from mid-June to early July on the mainland.

In Japan's central regions firefly viewing, or "**hotaru gari**," (literally firefly hunting) is another favorite rainy season pastime. Lightning bugs are active at riverside, ponds, bushes or rice fields in the humid evenings, right after it rains on windless nights without

moonlight.

Countless slowly moving tiny lights filling the air and drifting from one leaf to another make a spectacular sight. But don't catch them, as the endangered bug's life lasts only seven to 10 days. Like **fireworks** festivals in Japan, "yukata" (summer kimono) and an "uchiwa" (fan) are appropriate attire for this traditional pastime.

On Okinawa, rainy season usually begins just after the Golden Week holidays that take place around late April to the first week of May, and that means dragon boat races galore. Dragon boat races are held in fishing communities throughout Okinawa. These "hari" are also known as "kaijin-sai" (unjami) or fishermen festivals; they are a way to give thanks to the sea god and pray for safe and prosperous fishing.

Memorial services on Okinawa Memorial Day (June 23) is another important event during the rainy season. Okinawans commemorate the end of the Battle of Okinawa during a big memorial service for the war dead at Itoman Peace Memorial Park every year.

So take up your umbrella and enjoy the rainy season outdoors. By walking in the rain, perhaps while singing, you just might discover attractions that are only available during this time of year.

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Hydrangeas lighten up Rainy Season

If you would like to lighten up your rainy season, Yohena Ajisaien should be on the list of your next destinations. About a 90-minute drive from Camp Foster takes you to this flower garden with 300,000 hydrangea flowers and other beautiful and colorful plants and flowers. According to the staff at Yohena Ajisaien, now is the best time to view the hydrangeas. Although the flowers are expected to be enjoyed through the month of June, it depends on the weather.

Yohena Ajisaien
(Hydrangea Flower Park)
ADMISSION FEE: 500 yen for adults, 200 yen for students
HOURS: 9 a.m. - 6:30 p.m.
(Subject to change)
*Free Parking
GPS COORDINATE:
N 26.647309,
E 127.945379



Iris



Hydrangea



Photo by Aya Ichihashi

Speakin' Japanese

"Tsuyu" Talk

June is the rainy season in Japan. While making your way around town, try using some of the following Japanese words and phrases to talk about it.

- "**Tsuyu**" = Rainy season
- "**Tenki**" = (Nice) weather
- "**Ame**" = Rain
- "**Mushimasu**" = Humid
- "**Suberiyasui**" = Slippery
- "**Nureteru**" or "**Bisha-bisha**" = Wet (object)
- "**Zibunure**" = Dripping wet (person)

- "**Kasa**" = Umbrella
- "**Tsuyu wa itsu akemasuka?**" = When will the rainy season end?
- "**Tenki ga yokunai desu-ne?**" = The weather is bad, isn't it?
- "**Kyo wa mushimasu-ne?**" = Today it is humid, isn't it?

- Stripes Okinawa

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

Photo by Aya Ichihashi

Kick the rainy-day blues with fun places to stay dry

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Every year, the rainy season arrives early in Okinawa. This year, the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) announced the beginning of the season on May 18.

If you are new to the island, you may be let down to hear that dismal weather will most likely continue over the next month and a half. However, there is no need to be disappointed. There are places where you can have fun under an umbrella or while taking shelter from the rain!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



Enagic Sports World Southern Hill

This sports/amusement complex is the only place on the subtropical island where you can enjoy a wintertime favorite— ice skating. Take a break from the heat and hit the ice on the 28-meter-wide, 58-meter-long rink which is also used for ice hockey.

GPS Coordinates: N 26.20806, E 127.72836



GPS

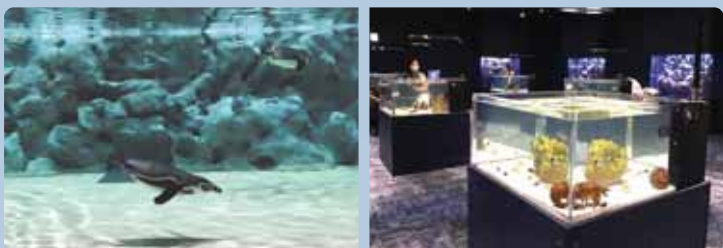


Website

DMM Kariyushi Aquarium

Since its debut in May 2020, the DMM Kariyushi Aquarium in the southern part of the island has become a popular spot. Enjoy the aquatic life displays enhanced with VR technology. Meet some penguins or walk over a huge tank to look down through the glass at the circling sharks and gliding manta rays in the water below.

GPS Coordinates: N 26.156288, E 127.650801



GPS



Website

Round 1 Stadium (Arcade)

Just about 15 minutes away from MCAS Futenma, this is one of the largest arcades on the island. In addition to video games, you can bowl, get behind the wheel of a go-kart, enjoy karaoke, and more.

GPS Coordinates: N 26.275893, E 127.731040



GPS



Website

Chatan Sports Center

This sports area is in the same neighborhood as Kadena Air Base and Camp Foster. Go here for some homers at the batting cages or work on your swing on the golf range or on the tennis courts.

GPS Coordinates: N 26.325135, E 127.763439



GPS



Website

Yohena Hydrangea Garden

Enjoy over 300,000 hydrangeas at this expansive flower garden in the mountainous area in Motobu Town. During the rainy season, Yohena Hydrangea Garden becomes a hotspot for visitors looking for beauty in the soggy weather. Depending on your location, getting there is about a little more than an hour drive away. Grab your umbrella and head to this beautiful spot.

GPS Coordinates: N 26.646998, E 127.945460



GPS



Website

Cooking Studio Kae Project

If you are one of those folks that took to the kitchen during the stay-home period, why not continue learning and step up your culinary skills? Kae Project is a cooking school friendly to English speakers. Try your hand at Okinawan dishes such as goya champloo (bitter melon stir fry) and rafte (braised pork rib).

GPS Coordinates: N 26.37476, E 127.75570



GPS



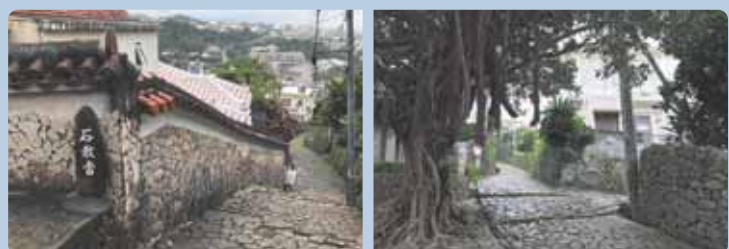
Website

Kinjo-Cho Ishidatami Michi (stone-paved road)

This is another outdoor location worth visiting during the rainy season. The geometric shapes of the Ryukyu Sekkaigan limestones are contrasted with greenery growing around each stone. When the stones are wet, the contrast becomes even clearer. The north end of the road is a 10-minute walk from Shuri Castle. It starts with a straight stretch that goes through a tunnel of trees before winding downslope with moderate curves.

GPS Coordinates: N 26.217130, E 127.716753 (North-end)

* Paid parking available near Shuri Castle.



GPS



Ocean Expo Park New Spots Okinawa Culture and Center Zone

The Okinawa Culture and Center Zone, the area between the Central Gate and the Fountain Plaza, is at the center of Ocean Expo Park. It overlooks the Okinawan Sea and Ie Island. The view of flowers and the sea relaxes and lifts visitors' spirits. Its main facilities are themed around the Pacific Rim and Okinawan culture.

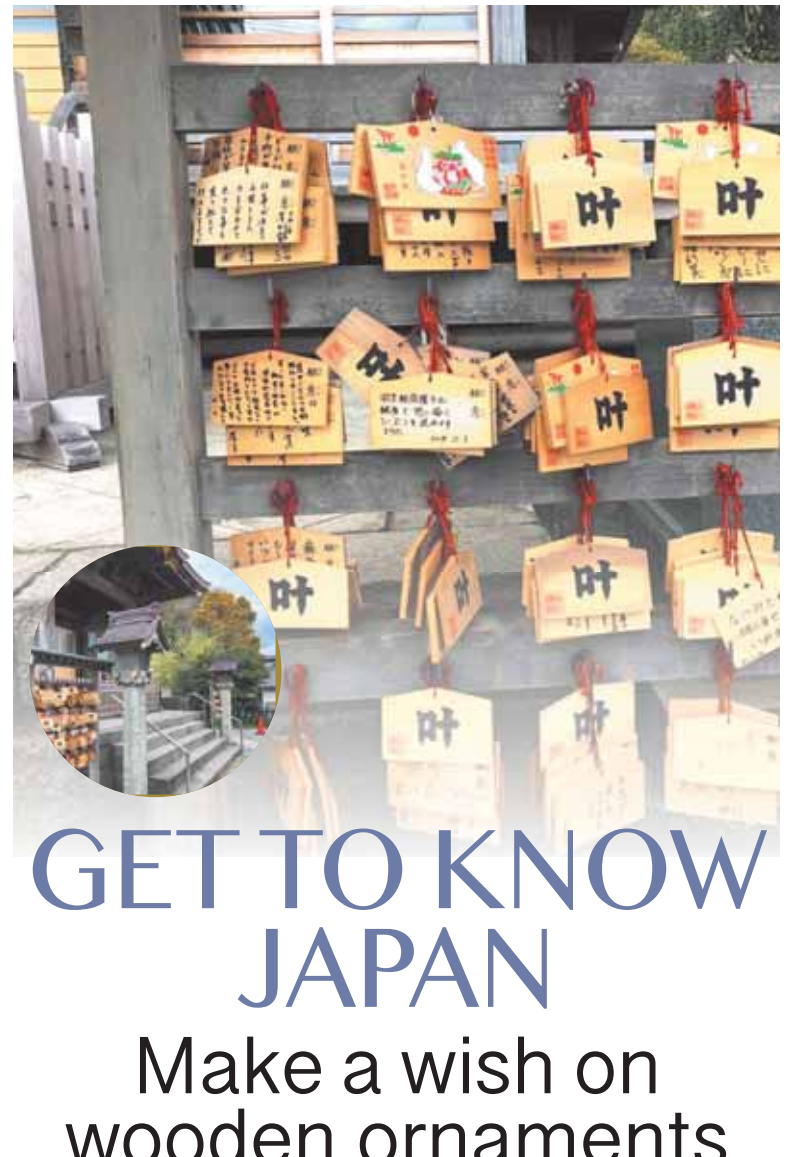
Oceanic Culture Museum **Native Okinawa Village** **Playground Equipment**

The exhibits in the Oceanic Culture Museum introduce the wisdom and courage of our ancestors who once crossed the great Pacific Ocean.

The Native Okinawa Village recreates a village of the Ryukyu Kingdom era. Visitors can imagine the life in those days by looking at the houses, thatched storage cottages, a sugar mill, and other structures of various times.

One of the largest playgrounds in Japan themed on the "Okinawa Sea."

OCEAN EXPO PARK **OCEAN EXPO PARK**
<https://oki-park.jp/kaiyohaku/en/>
 Please check our website for hours through the QR code.



GET TO KNOW JAPAN

Make a wish on wooden ornaments

STORY AND PHOTOS BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI, STRIPES OKINAWA

You may have seen these wooden plaques when visiting Shinto shrines around Japan. These are decorated with drawings of the year's zodiac sign or the temple's symbol along with special Kanji characters.

These are called ema, which also means horse in Japanese. Ema are used to write prayers and ask for good luck in certain endeavors. Followers believe that wishes and prayers will come true if we go to a temple and write our wish and hang them there as an offering to the Shinto gods. Some of the common wishes asked for include work, family peace, health and — yes, you guessed it — school entrance examinations. Now since exam season is over for the students of Japan, you might still catch many of the ema asking for good final grades.

You can get your very own ema at Shinto shrines starting from about 200 to 1,000 yen (about \$1.40-\$7).

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Stripes Sports Trivia

A member of MLB's 3,000 hit club, Ichiro has more total hits in his career than Pete Rose, if you include his time playing in Japan. The longtime Mariners outfielder racked up 1,278 of his 4,300+ hits while playing for which Nippon Professional Baseball team in Japan?

Answer

Orix Blue Wave (Buffaloes)

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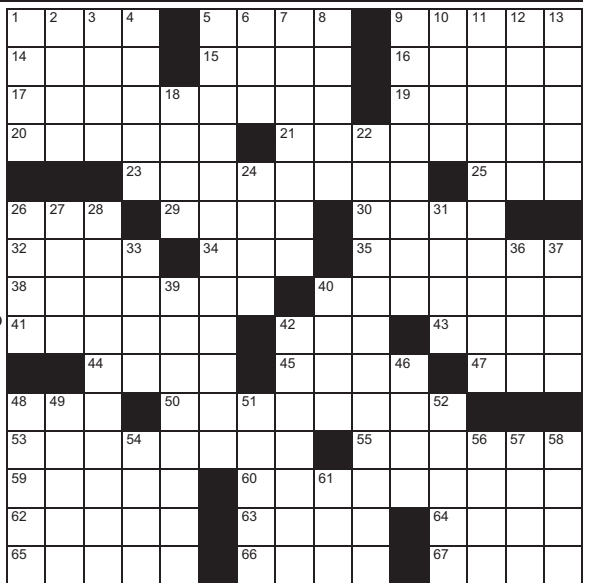
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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Makes a scene?
- 5 Bratty talk
- 9 Flat-bottomed rowboat
- 14 Inn's offering
- 15 Jacob, to Esau
- 16 ___ sanctum
- 17 Fancy enamel-work
- 19 Religious doctrine
- 20 Summertime top
- 21 Brain part
- 23 Like some copper
- 25 You-here link
- 26 Machinist's letters
- 29 Texas flag feature
- 30 Pillow
- 32 Word before beer or canal
- 34 Wish otherwise
- 35 Well-behaved
- 38 Deodorant type
- 40 Ulna locale
- 41 Drunk, slangily
- 42 Slammer
- 43 Proton's place
- 44 Wagon tongue
- 45 Skin eruption
- 47 SFO posting
- 48 Feathered scarf
- 50 Whistle blowers?
- 53 Surpass
- 55 Comedian's asset
- 59 Chilled
- 60 Like articles in The Onion
- 62 Search through
- 63 Disneyland transport
- 64 "Gladiator" setting
- 65 Looks after
- 66 Drought-ridden
- 67 Patella's place



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DOWN

- 1 Garden wedding feature
- 2 Pepsi or RC
- 3 Workshop item
- 4 Maggie who played Minerva
- 5 "Star Wars" soldier
- 6 Beard on grain
- 7 Heartfelt
- 8 Curl one's lip
- 9 Escape route, for some
- 10 Door opener
- 11 Bring into favor
- 12 Thigh bone
- 13 Bowling unit
- 18 Salty septet
- 22 7 minutes for EMS, say
- 24 Stake driver
- 26 Seafood item
- 27 Holiday carol
- 28 Crowning ceremony

- 31 Pet's pest
- 33 Shopper's bag
- 36 Meadowlands pace
- 37 Jane Austen heroine
- 39 First-string players
- 40 Trepidation
- 42 Whip up
- 46 Inheritor
- 48 Hike
- 49 Weight measure
- 51 Pugilist's pair
- 52 Smug grin
- 54 Desert Storm missile
- 56 Coin anagram
- 57 Dogtag datum
- 58 Singing club
- 61 Roof goop

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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



DID YOU KNOW?

In Japan, about 15.5 million fans attend about 21,000 horse races annually with 25 horse tracks throughout mainland Japan. But thanks to the recession and competition from other forms of amusement, the industry shrank from 45.5 trillion yen (\$422 billion) in revenues and 27 million participants in 1993 to 34.5 trillion yen and 15.5 million participants within only a decade.

Kanji of the week

親
Oya (parent)

Language Lesson

I understand.

Wakari mashita.

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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:

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

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

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Where's the banh mi?

Kon's Burger brings taste of Vietnam to Okinawa

Despite the name, Kon's Burger on Okinawa specializes in the banh mi, a popular Vietnamese sandwich.

STORY AND PHOTO BY FRANK ANDREWS,
STARS AND STRIPES

Kon's Burger is a tiny café that serves Vietnamese-style sandwiches, fresh juice, tea and coffee near Okinawa's capital city.

Despite the name, the café specializes in the banh mi, a popular Vietnamese sandwich, and not beefy burgers. The classic banh mi is a crusty French baguette filled with a combination of meats, veggies and topped with sauce.

Kon's Burger offers five banh mi sandwiches: vegetarian, egg, pork, beef, or the special banh mi that is a combination, all stuffed with a mix of bright green coriander leaves, pickled onion and crunchy cucumber strips, topped with a sweet orange sauce.

The sandwich's perfect, crusty submarine-like rolls are freshly baked every morning, according to the shop's Instagram. Each month, Kon's Burger offers a special sandwich; January's flavor was shrimp avocado and beginning next Tuesday, February's special is Xiu mai banh mi, which is meatballs stewed in tomato sauce, according to the owner Instagram.

The banh mi are served hot and range from 450 yen (about \$3.45) to 750 yen. The café also offers five freshly made iced drinks: Vietnam coffee, Vietnam au lait, lemongrass orange tea, yakuzen tea and ginger ale tea (350 yen each). You can also get the yakuzen tea and coffee served hot.

I stopped in on a Saturday evening and ordered two banh mi sandwiches: the special banh mi and the hamburg banh mi with a chilled lemongrass orange tea. My order arrived within seven minutes and

the first thing that caught my attention was the fresh aroma of the Vietnamese-style veggies and mouthwatering meats.

Each bite began with a delightful crunch from the warm bread accompanied by a fresh taste from the herby veggie mix and well-seasoned meat filling. The lemongrass tea was lightly sweetened and refreshing.

While there are three tables inside the café, an employee said most customers order their sandwiches to go.

Kon's Burger, run by Chef Cong from Vietnam, according to the café's Instagram bio, sometimes offers specialty dishes, including fresh shrimp spring rolls, fried spring rolls and yakiniku salad.

The café has a small section with a few Vietnamese grocery items such as instant noodle packets, rice vermicelli and nam ngu fish sauce. There is no dedicated parking, but I found plenty of street parking near the storefront.

Kon's Burger has two restaurants -- the storefront, where I ate, and their food truck. Both menus are the same, yet the food truck serves only large sizes and does not serve the restaurant's specials. Both are open until the food sells out, so it may be best to call ahead if you plan to eat there later in the day. Check out Kon Burger's calendar on their Instagram to see when they're open.

A female staff member spoke just enough English to help me place my order and the menu is written in both Japanese and English.

Stars and Stripes reporter Keishi Koja contributed to this report.

andrews.lynn@stripes.com
Twitter: @FrankAndrrws

EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
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KON'S BURGER

Restaurant

Location: 2-36-13 Nishizaki, Itoman City, Okinawa 901-0305

Hours: Open Tuesday through Sunday from 11 a.m. until items are sold out. Closed Mondays and holidays.

Food Truck

Location: JA Toyosaki nanairo batake, 3-86 Toyosaki, Tomishiro City

Hours: Opens at 11:30 a.m. and closes when it's sold out, or until 5:00pm.

Prices: Banh mi start at 450 yen.

Dress: Casual

Phone: 080-649-45545



Instagram



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4-page pullout

Cook up *Ebi-chili* like an Iron Chef

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Ebi-chili is a sweet and spicy shrimp dish you'll find at many Chinese restaurants in Japan.

The popularity of this dish is often credited to Chen Kenichi, one of the cast members of "Ryori no Tetsujin," the Japanese version of the "Iron Chef."

However, it is actually the Kenichi's father, Chen Kenmin, who is the mastermind behind the sweet and spicy shrimp recipe.

Chen Kenmin was born in 1919 in a deep part of Szechuan Province and at age 10, he began his career as a cook, according to the website of Shisen Hanten. This restaurant chain based in Tokyo was founded by Chen Kenmin in 1958 and passed down to Chen Kenichi.

After years of working in kitchens around China, Taiwan and Hong Kong, Chen Kenmin arrived in Japan in 1952. Back when Chen Kenmin arrived in Japan, dou ban jiang (chili bean sauce), a cornerstone of the taste of his hometown, could not be imported. Instead, he replicated the condiment with some adjustments to the Japanese palette. The dou ban jiang sauce led Chen Kenmin to

his now-famous Ebi-Chili recipe, TV-Asahi reported.

Kenichi's appearance on the Iron Chef back in the 1990s solidified the prominence of the saucy and spicy shrimp dish created by his father.

Last year, a video showing Chen Kenichi cooking up the dish on YouTube garnered over 200K views. Kenichi didn't use any special material or expensive tools. It was a simple recipe and comments below expressed surprise at its great flavors and ease to make.

As a fan of the Iron Chef and spicy food lover, I had no other option but to give it a try.

Since this was my first time cooking Ebi-Chili, I found myself a bit confused with the timing of adding the several condiments the recipe calls for. But the result of my awkward cooking far exceeded my expectation. The frozen shrimp I bought at a bargain price from my local supermarket somehow transformed into a fine dish and the best Ebi-Chili I have had in my life.

I recommend that you "allez cuisiner!" and treat yourself to this Iron Chef-certified dish!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



View Video!



INGREDIENTS

- Peeled shrimp (10 pieces)
- Green onion 30g (10cm)

Condiments to wash shrimp

- A little bit of salt, pepper, and a moderate amount of water

Condiments to pre-season shrimp

- A little bit of salt, pepper, starch
- Oil for frying (15cc, 30cc)

Ingredients for chili sauce

- Grated ginger (10cc)
- Grated garlic (7.5cc)
- Tomato ketchup (22.5cc)
- Dou ban jiang (chili bean sauce, 7.5cc)

Ingredients to adjust flavor

- Cooking sake (15cc)
- Sugar (1.67cc)
- Salt (a little)
- Chinese soup stock (a little)
- Pepper (a little)
- Water (200cc)
- Starched mixed with water (200cc each of water and starch)
- Chili oil (5cc)
- Vinegar (1.67cc)

DIRECTIONS



1. Preparation of shrimp before cooking

1. Make a slit in the back of each shrimp and de-vein it. **Photo 1-1**
2. Put the shrimp in a bowl and a pinch of salt, starch, and water (moderate amount).
3. Knead the shrimp in the bowl. **Photo 1-3**
4. Rinse the shrimp.
5. Put the shrimp on a plate with kitchen towels, and carefully wipe up the water.

2. Pre-seasoning of Shrimp

1. Place the shrimp in a bowl and add a small amount of salt. Mix in with a bit of pepper. Next, add some starch and mix until the shrimp are thinly coated. **Photo 2-1**
2. Transfer the shrimp to a plate.

3. Preparation for Chili Sauce

1. Put the following condiments in a bowl: grated ginger (10cc), grated garlic (7.5cc), ketchup (22.5cc), dou ban jiang/chili bean sauce (7.5cc). **Photo 3-1**
2. Slice a white portion of green onion (30g/10cm) into pieces and put them in a separate bowl.

4. Time to cook

1. Pour oil (15cc) in a frying pan on a stove over high heat.
2. Add the pre-seasoned shrimps and heat them for 20 to 30 seconds. Flip them in the pan to do the same to the other side. (The idea is to create a barrier around each shrimp to seal its flavor inside.) Set the shrimp aside. **Photo 4-2**

3. Pour oil (30cc) into the same frying pan.

4. Add grated ginger (10cc), grated garlic (7.5cc), ketchup (22.5cc), dou ban jiang/chili bean sauce (7.5cc) and fry them. (It is recommended to gather them in one portion of the pan to fry them together at first before spreading and mixing them on other portions of the pan.)

5. Turn the stove off once bubbles start to appear on the surface. Let the ingredients cook with the remaining heat.

6. With the stove still off, add water (200cc) to the pan. **Photo 4-6**

7. Add cooking sake (15cc), sugar (1.67cc), a pinch of salt, Chinese stock, and pepper. Mix them together. (Check the flavor and adjust as needed.)

8. Add the shrimp into the pan and return to heat.

9. Add the sliced green onion (30g).

10. Make sure that the sauce boils once. This takes about 30 seconds.

11. Turn the stove off.

12. Add starch mixed with water (30cc).

13. Mix and stir them together to prevent them from having solid portions. **Photo 4-13**

14. Once the sauce gains thickness, turn the stove back on.

15. Make sure the sauce and shrimp are cooked thoroughly.

16. Add chili oil (5cc), if you want to add more spice.

17. Finish up the recipe by stirring in vinegar (1.67cc).

18. Serve the dish with a side of steamed rice, over rice, or alone.

19. Enjoy and いただきます (itadakimasu)!



Why is Hokkaido milk, cream and cheese so popular?



BY ANDY CHENG,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Historically, Japan has never been a large-scale dairy producing country. However, in the Northern Island of Hokkaido, some of the finest milk, cream and cheese are attracting global interest. At the forefront of Hokkaido's dairy produce is its famous milk, 60% of which is used for whole milk and the remainder for other dairy products. The cool climate, fresh air and plentiful grazing land make for ideal conditions which help Hokkaido contribute to more than half of all of Japan's milk production. In 2018, Hokkaido produced over 4 million tons of milk, accounting for 55% of Japan's annual production of 7.3 million tons (FY2018 "Milk Dairy Products Statistics," Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Statistics Department). So how did Hokkaido gain its reputation as the "Kingdom of the Dairy Industry?"

Taking a brief look at the history of milk production in Japan, it was not widely prevalent until the Meiji Era (1868-1912). The boom of drinking milk led to the production of Japan's first cheese at Nanae Public Garden in 1875. The Emperor of Japan indulged in Hokkaido's cheese and other dairy products, which put the area in the spotlight of Japan's culinary scene. This triggered the rise of dairy farms throughout Hokkaido as the Sapporo



Photos courtesy of Metropolis magazine



Agricultural College began to import "Ayrshire" and "Holstein" milking cows. In the 1960s, the westernization of the Japanese diet increased the demand for milk and dairy products, leading to the expansion of dairy farms, facilities and the improvement of grasslands. This remarkable rise in

demand led to environmental problems due to the heavy consumption of imported concentrates. Cows were now producing extra feces and urine, which could not be absorbed and used by plants — thus it was not a sustainable method of dairy production. The solution was to promote a more soil-grass-animal interaction based on land use.

As a result, grazing on open lands became the most viable sustainable production system in harmony with the environment.

Now, dairy cattle are predominately raised in Eastern and Northern Hokkaido — the vast meadows and cool climate lend themselves to environmentally friendly dairy production. Betsukai Town, located on the Eastern coast of Hokkaido, boasts the largest milk production in Japan — with roughly seven cows per person. Vast grasslands and the neighboring Lake Mashu help filter water, creating the perfect conditions for raising healthy cows. Niseko Takahashi Dairy Farm and Furano Cheese Kobo are just a selection from a host of farms and producers that are free to visit in order to catch a glimpse into the world of dairy production.

One of Hokkaido's most popular foods is soft cream, the sweet and creamy texture from the Hokkaido milk is beloved all over Japan. Minatogaoka Street in Hakodate is an entire street in the Motomachi neighborhood dedicated to soft cream. For those outside of Hokkaido, Cremia soft serve is instantly recognizable for its graceful wavy silk pattern, and thin langue de chat cone.

Hokkaido's special miso ramen, which is often topped with a slice of butter, attracts thousands of ramen lovers across the world each year. The use of butter is an added unique twist to the traditional bowl of ramen. For those that associate Japanese food with tradition, this type of ramen might be a surprise but it is a perfect representation of Hokkaido's use of its delicious dairy.

A Taste of Okinawa

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COOKING CLASSES



Gen a real gem on Okinawa

Offering authentic Japanese and Okinawan cuisine at a reasonable price, Gen was recognized in Stripes' Best of the Pacific 2013 as the best restaurant to experience the local culture on Okinawa. Owner and Head Chef Naoki Tsukayama highly recommends the "Fish Garlic Butter Combo," a popular dish among American customers. Tsukayama and his staff make you feel at home, so stop by and enjoy a delicious meal. Gen is located across from Camp Foster's fire station. Just look for shi-shi dogs on a traditional Okinawan tile roof outside Foster's Fire Station Gate.

RESTAURANT INFO

RESTAURANT & SUSHI BAR GEN



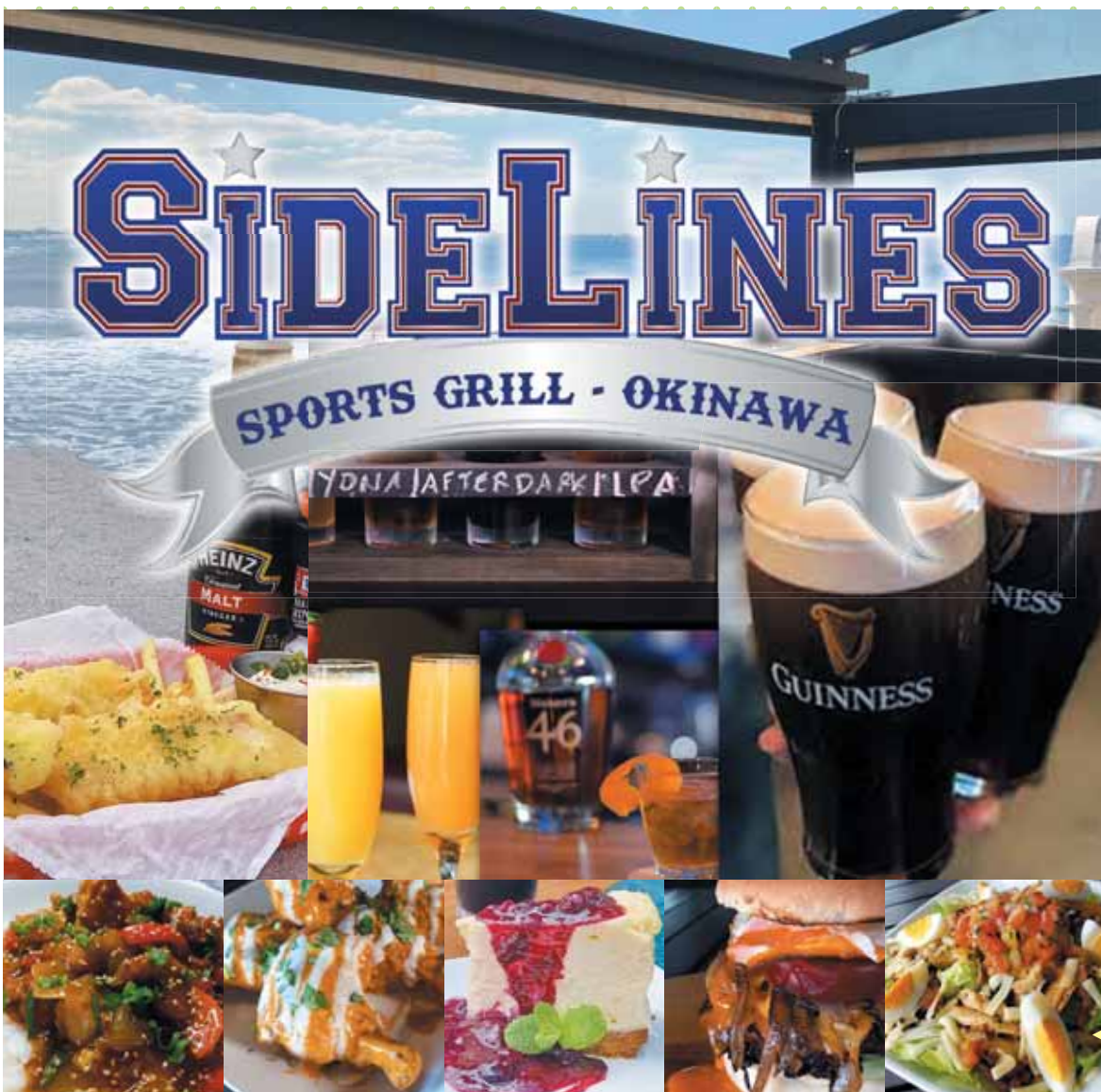
We're located just outside Camp Foster Globe & Anchor Gate No.3



Open every day 11:30-22:00
(Last order 21:00)
Cash Only(\$/¥)



A Taste of Okinawa



Great Food and Fun for Everyone at Sidelines

Established in 2012, Sidelines is a family owned, family friendly upscale sports themed restaurant. Offering a quality menu with something for everyone including classic American choices, Vegan menu, kid's options and weekly Specials. Our Homemade Cheesecake and Fish & Chips are undoubtedly best on Island and most of our menu is completely homemade! Theme-nights including Trivia Tuesday, Ladies' Night Wednesday and Game-Night Thursday offer welcome mid-week distractions, weekends are busy and vibrant. We pride ourselves in providing unrivalled service in an attractive space with full bar, large outdoor seating area and unobstructed ocean views. We're looking forward to meeting you!

RESTAURANT INFO