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The misery of expecting company

On Monday morning, I sat at the kitchen island to write my to-do list for the week. Company was coming on Thursday, and there was much to do.

This wasn't just any company. Not our siblings, who were easygoing enough to ignore the tumbleweeds of dog hair blowing through our house. Not our mothers, who were too old to see the moldy caulk in the corner of the shower. Not our high school or college friends, on whom we had enough blackmail "dirt" to keep them from complaining.

The houseguests coming Thursday were Doug and Suz, friends we'd met in 2001 while stationed in Norfolk, Va. Although Doug and Suz were Navy folks like us, our lives had been very different. When we met, we were in our mid-30s. Our family lived in a suburban house on a cul-de-sac with a playset in the back yard. I drove a minivan sprinkled with cold french fries, and my idea of luxury was taking long showers at the YMCA while the kids were in childcare.

Doug had recently left active duty to be an airline pilot, so he and Suz bought a house in a cool part of Virginia Beach, steps from the ocean. Without any kids to worry about, they owned a vintage red Jeep Wrangler, and their "family room" contained a large pool table and a stocked liquor cabinet. Their home decor included original paintings from their favorite modern artists. They went to rock concerts, took winter ski vacations and ate at Michelin Star restaurants around the globe.

At the top of my to-do list, my handwriting started at a pleasingly legible 16-point script. But as I thought of more and more tasks to squeeze onto the small slip of paper, it became barely visible. "I can't let them see our kitchen like this ... they make their own sushi, for criminy's sake," I muttered, as panic set in.

I dug underneath the sink like a deranged underground miner, coming up with three sponges, six bottles of cleaning products and the frayed toothbrush I used to scrub dog doo out of tennis shoe treads. In a frenzy, I scoured the cabinets, appliances and backsplash. I feather-dusted the fan blades, mopped the floor and collected cobwebs in the

The Meat and Potatoes of Life

Lisa Smith Molinari



corners.

While wiping up crumbs, I spied the melange of health aids I kept on the countertop for easy access — Metamucil for regularity, and a large pill organizer packed with a self-prescribed assortment of vitamins intended to delay my eventual demise. "How embarrassing," I realized, quickly stuffing it all into a drawer.

On Tuesday, while vacuuming the living room, I noticed the

water rings on Aunt Millie's buffet and the fresh chew marks on my parents' 1978 coffee table from our seven-month-old lab, Gilligan. The hodgepodge of secondhand furniture that once passed for "shabby chic" suddenly looked like dusty old junk. Remembering Doug and Suz's sleek modern home decor, I futilely plumped pillows and hid knickknacks.

On Wednesday, while putting fresh sheets on the guest bed, I saw myself in a mirror and gasped. I was young when I met Suz. In the last 22 years, I'd raised three children while moving seven more times. I'd lost my legal career, countless friends and bladder control. I'd grown squishier, wrinklier, saggier and infinitely more tired. Conversely, Suz and Doug had spent that 22 years living at their beach house, developing careers, working out, straightening their teeth and growing their enormous friend group.

"The Navy did this to me!" I scrambled for an explanation for why I'd let myself go, envisioning Suz looking me up and down with her aqua-blue eyes, blonde locks and lean frame.

Just then, the retro "dance" ringtone I'd selected on my phone startled me. "Hello, Suz?" I answered, apprehensively. We discussed their arrival time and our plans for the weekend, before I confessed, "I'm really old now, by the way."

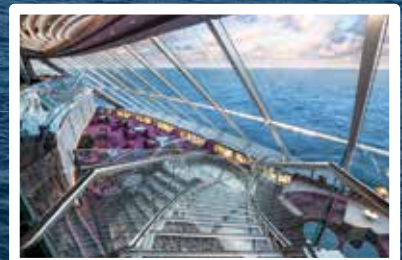
To my surprise, my military spouse friend of 22 years replied, "Me too," and we shared stories about the pains in our hips and knees. They say, "Misery loves company," but I was just happy that my friend and I still had something in common after all.

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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Japan moves to combat 'over-tourism' train congestion, bad manners

BY HANA KUSUMOTO
AND ALEX WILSON,
STARS AND STRIPES
Published: October 20, 2023

TOKYO — It may soon become more expensive to ride one of Japan's famously crowded trains thanks to measures recently approved by lawmakers to combat the side effects of "over-tourism."

Visitors have been pouring into Japan ever since tight COVID-19 restrictions on foreign travelers were relaxed in October 2022. More than 2.18 million people came in September, just short of the 2.27 million who visited in September 2019, before the pandemic, according to the Japan National Tourism Organization.

But the flood of tourists is raising concerns, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said during a meeting Oct. 18 with the Ministerial Council in Tokyo.

"There are concerns that excessive crowds and bad manners in some areas and during certain times of the day are affecting the lives of local residents and reducing tourist satisfaction," Kishida said at the meeting, according to the Prime Minister's Office's website.

Later that day, the Ministerial Council approved a series of measures meant to limit or prevent overcrowding and tourists' bad behavior.

Some of the measures are an attempt to alleviate train congestion near sightseeing attractions by allowing operators to increase fares based on overcrowding, according to a document on the measures released by the Prime Minister's Office.

The system would utilize one already in place that lets train operators adjust prices depending on passenger levels. Price hikes must also be intended to alleviate congestion and not be an attempt to

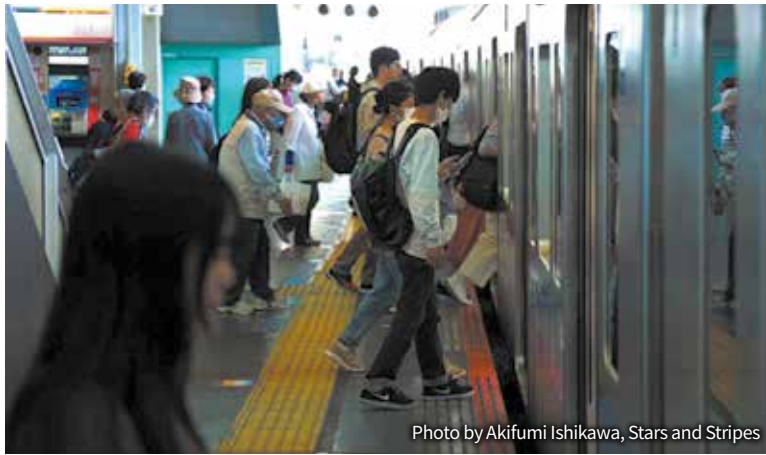


Photo by Akifumi Ishikawa, Stars and Stripes

increase revenue, according to the document.

It's unclear when the new measures will go into effect. The document identified this fall as a possible start date but did not give specifics.

Raising train fares isn't a major concern for Petty Officer 2nd Class Olivia Reyes, a sailor assigned to Yokosuka Naval Base, due to the exchange rate. One dollar is equivalent to approximately 150 yen.

"Everything in Japan is relatively cheap for Americans," she said by phone Friday. "Sure, I'll spend \$8 instead of \$5, but that's not too bad, especially if it means it'll cut down on people traveling during busy hours."

Other measures include establishing express bus lines that connect train stations to major tourist destinations and allowing taxis to operate outside their usual areas to alleviate shortages.

To combat "bad manners," the council plans to display signs and graphics that are "easy to understand for foreign tourists," the document said.

Some tourists have caused trouble since Japan reopened, according to the document. In Hokkaido, the country's northernmost prefecture, tourists were reported to be trespassing on private farmland to take photos of scenery.

In Kyoto, about 280 miles west of Tokyo, the document reported instances of tourists taking photos of professional entertainers including geisha, without permission. While it is not illegal in Japan to take photographs in public, it can be considered rude if it's done without consent.

"There are a lot of tourists that aren't used to Japanese customs," Reyes said.

More security cameras may be installed to prevent trespassing on private property or vandalism at tourist sites, according to the document.

American YouTuber and live-streamer Ismael Ramsey Khalid, 23, who goes by the moniker "Johnny Somali," was arrested Sept. 21 in Osaka on trespassing allegations, the Asahi newspaper reported Sept. 23.

Known for broadcasting nuisance behavior, Khalid was taken into custody after police say he broke into a hotel construction site with another man, the report said.

Both were rearrested a few weeks later for allegedly filming inside an Osaka eatery without permission and playing loud music, the Mainichi newspaper reported Oct. 13.

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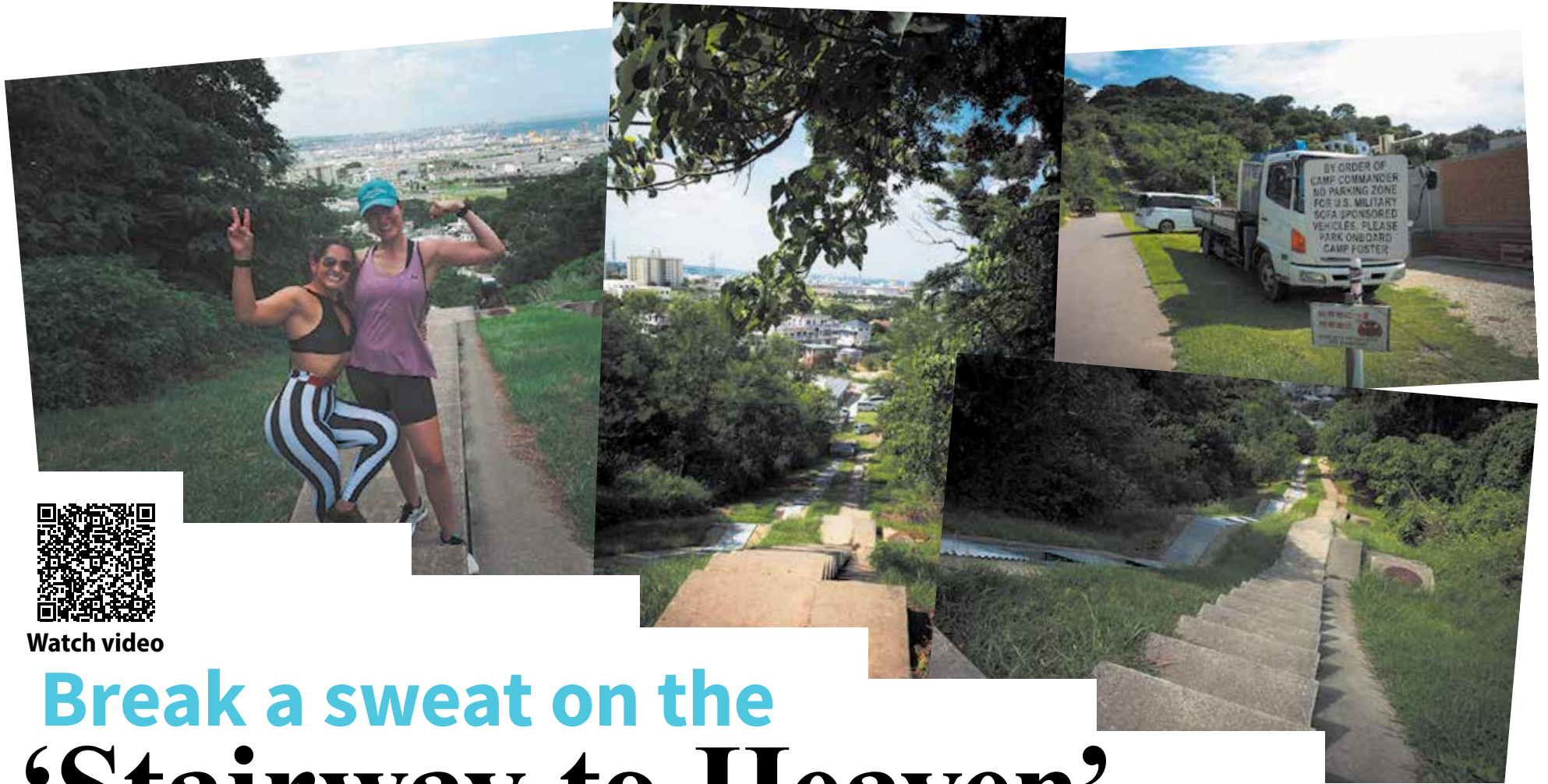
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Break a sweat on the ‘Stairway to Heaven’

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

One day in mid-October, I climbed the “Stairway to Heaven”, a long series of stairs that run up a hill north of Camp Foster. The location borders the west end of Plaza Housing Area and is a great place for some cardio.

It had been a while since my

coworker had told me about this sweat-inducing set of stairs, but getting there is a bit difficult. Not only do you have to navigate the small roads in the residential area, but parking is not available in the area for SOFA members and other folks coming from U.S. military bases. Plus, climbing stairs has never been my thing.

A photo of the view from the top of the stairs was what finally

convinced me to make the trek to the Stairway to Heaven. It was the perfect way to get active for “Supōtsu no Ak,i,” or autumn for sports in Japanese.

A day after seeing the photo of the enticing landscape, I decided to go see it for myself.

To get there, I parked on Camp Foster near the Firehouse Gate. I took a 10-minute walk past Killin Elementary School toward the

stairs. A sign reminding SOFA members to not park there signaled that I’d arrived at the spot.

From the bottom of the stairs, I saw several people jogging up and down. And since I could see straight up from the bottom, the stairs seemed very steep.

The stairs looked challenging, but since I was on a mission, I started my ascent. As I climbed, I realized the steps were a little bit on the wider side, making them a bit easier to walk up than I had thought. Though it was a little easier, it took less than 20 seconds to be drenched in sweat. The climb was difficult, and I had to step aside several times to let others pass me. With a camera in hand, climbing these stairs soon became an intense workout for my legs and arms.

Naturally, I had to stop several times to catch my breath. Halfway up the hill, I was already exhausted. But even from there, I had a very nice view of the west coast, which motivated me to go higher. I tried to count how many steps I covered, but I lost track of the number after 200. (Several websites indicate that this stairway has 268 steps in total). Albeit my struggle, I reached the top in about 15 minutes.

Under the sunny sky, the west coast looked calm and peaceful. The view felt very fresh since the area I was looking at had always seemed noisy on the ground level due to heavy traffic and many stores lining the streets. Once I took photos of the nice view, I joined other folks who were taking a rest at the top.

“I don’t come here very often. I must tell you, this is a very intense cardio, a lot of stairs,” said Tyemi Avanti, a military spouse who was there with another military spouse, Alene Sanchez. They said they were still new to the location, explaining that this was the second visit for Avanti, and the first for

Sanchez. But they were already in their third-round trip of the day, and they seemed rejuvenated and full of energy.

“The view is absolutely beautiful,” Avanti said. “The ocean from here just gives me peace.”

“I believe when you are climbing the steps, and in my head, I think, I have to work hard to be able to get on top and have a beautiful view,” she continued. “Just like life, everything for you to get to a point of life, you have to work hard. Nothing is easy, nothing is for free.”

We agreed that the stairs are aptly named since the end of all the hard work is a beautiful view and the pleasure of a job well done that feels like Heaven on Earth.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

Stairway to Heaven

GPS Coordinates:

26.310783, 127.775813

*No parking space available on site.

*I did not measure the distance from the bottom to the top of the stairs, but the healthcare app on my smartphone indicates that I walked roughly 250 to 300 m.



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Every day is sandwich day at Five Star Deli in Chatan

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Five Star Deli near the Sunabe Seawall in Chatan City has garnered a lot of popularity on Okinawa. I was curious about the sandwich joint, so I decided to give it a try.

You'll find Five Star close to skateboarder hangout Sunabe Baba Koen inside a "gaijin juutaku," or foreigner residence. Gaijin juutaku are houses that were once used as homes for Americans living off base and are now experiencing second lives as local businesses.

The spacious interior with a counter at the end allows for the constant stream of customers to enter without crowding each other. Soon, it was my turn to order from the menu listing many familiar sandwiches I'd tried before. Some of the standard deli sandwiches on the menu include a Philly cheesesteak, BLT, roast beef sandwich and Reuben.

My initial instinct was to go for the "Five Star Club." I thought the best option would be the sandwich carrying the name of the restaurant. To my surprise, however, owner Benjamin Taku Marceau suggested the Reuben sandwich when I approached the counter.

Marceau is friendly and because he is bilingual, he can easily converse with all the customers. His helpful suggestion convinced me that perhaps a Reuben would be a good choice for my first visit to Five Star. To wash it down, I also ordered a Coca-Cola (330 yen, approx. \$2.20).

If you're not in a hurry, Five Star Deli has plenty of seating to enjoy their delicious sandwiches on site, including outdoors. I took a seat by the window for lunch and a view.

The last time I had a Reuben sandwich was more than two decades ago. I was living in

Miami then, and you could order the sandwich consisting of pastrami (or corned beef), Swiss cheese and sauerkraut, smothered in thousand island dressing and served on rye at just about any sandwich shop. But to be honest, Reuben sandwiches were hardly my go-to. They were just what I ordered when I was tired of Cuban sandwiches, so I wasn't sure how Five Star Deli would change my mind.

One bite in and I knew why Marceau confidently suggested the delectable Reuben. The salty sauerkraut and greasy pastrami paired with the melted Swiss cheese was a nice balance for the aroma and texture of the baked rye. The creamy, tangy thousand island dressing added a burst of flavor to tie it all together. Soon, the sandwich was something I didn't want to end.

Marceau explained that in New York City delis are open around the clock and that the meat for Reuben sandwiches takes hours to prepare. Unlike in New York, Five Star Deli is not open 24 hours, but the restaurant dedicates a tremendous amount of time to the preparation of their sandwich ingredients. For Five Star Deli's Reuben alone, the pastrami is marinated for a week in 13 spices and herbs, four different sugars and three different salts.

The time and dedication are what makes the Reuben so delicious. And, though its birthplace is contested between Omaha and New York City in the States, there's no denying that a good Reuben is hard to resist.

And for someone getting reacquainted with the Reuben like me, there is no better place to dive back into that taste of Omaha, New York (or in my case, Miami), than heading to Five Star for a delightful meal.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



Instagram

Five Star Deli
GPS Coordinates: 26.333528, 127.746305
Hours: 11 a.m. - 7 p.m. Closed on Wed.
*No on-site parking space
*Philly Cheese Steak (1,540 - 2,200 yen, approx. \$10.27 - \$14.76), "The BLT (990 yen)", "Roast Beef (1,500 yen)", and "The Ruben (1,400 yen)"
*The above prices include 10% dine-in tax. To-go purchases will be 8% tax with additional 50 yen for box charge.
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Sara Hewitt



Did you always want to come to Japan, and did you know a lot about the country before coming?

I did not know a lot about Japan before I arrived. I had visited briefly on a work trip years ago where I managed to squeeze in a few days in Kyoto after a few days of jetlag and meetings, but that was the extent of my knowledge of Japan. Work initially suggested I go to Japan on Halloween of 2017, and I arrived in Iwakuni on Nov. 4 for a TDY of indeterminate length. And that TDY then became me moving to Iwakuni.

I've always liked traveling, so when I found out that I was moving I very quickly ordered a guidebook because I was excited by the prospect of getting to explore Japan. And because I had no idea where, exactly, Iwakuni was located. Iwakuni is a great town, but it is a little remote – I used to joke (except it was true) that the nearest Starbucks was in Hiroshima, which is a 40-minute train ride from Iwakuni. Iwakuni is lovely – it's famous for the Kintai-kyo (the Kintai Bridge), a pretty castle near the bridge and for growing a lot of lotuses. Given that the base is pretty small, it's a great way to really immerse yourself in a Japanese town. Lots of the Japanese staff in my office got bento for lunch, so I signed up to get bento and I never had any idea what I was going to get for lunch until I opened the container. It was a great way to get a real sense of what life in Japan is like.



Osaka City Central Public Hall



Danjiri Matsuri

How did you start traveling around Japan?

One of the great things about Iwakuni is that it's on the Japan Rail network, so I could hop on a train after work and be miles away by the time I went to bed that evening. Initially, I explored Hiroshima, which is a day trip from Iwakuni. Then over Thanksgiving, I had my first real trip when I took the train up to Nagano to see the snow monkeys. It was an easy trip – I went to the Iwakuni train station, showed the station master where I wanted to go, and he printed out a receipt showing me what train I was going to take, when and where to switch trains and how long I had to switch trains. I was initially a little surprised/concerned to see that I was scheduled to take trains that only had a few minutes for transfer time, but given how punctual trains are in Japan, it worked out fine. After that I was a convert to train travel – the seats are comfy and recline and I could get an ekiben (train bento) and have dinner on the JR train if I was riding through dinner time.

Once I officially moved to Iwakuni, I started to plan more weekend trips to take advantage of any long weekend. After finishing work on Friday, I'd head to the train station with a small backpack and go off on an adventure for the weekend. I also went through my guidebook and identified a variety of festivals, because even if the town was a little quiet, there was going to be a big event for me to see. After a little over a year in Iwakuni and exploring Nagano, Tokyo, Osaka, Nagasaki and Kobe and festivals like the Tenjin Matsuri, Gion Pyramid Festival, Danjiri Matsuri (sort of like Tokyo drifting, but with floats that had to be pulled with giant ropes), a torch festival (where I got covered in ash), a firefighting festival and Setsubon (where I learned that uncooked mochi being tossed into a crowd is like getting hit by a hockey puck), I had a chance to move to Okinawa.

47 out

DOD contractor explores all of Japan

STRIPES

Back in 2017, Sara Hewitt suddenly found a new duty station. The DOD contractor from Okinawa was exploring her surroundings little by little. Eventually, she decided to travel and instead became a goal to visit all of Japan. Through COVID-19 restrictions and a move to Okinawa, she spent a year with visits to Shiga and Fukui Prefectures. Here are some details of her time in Japan and why she chose to move.

After living in the mainland, you move to Okinawa. How was that?

Okinawa is fascinating, but slightly different than living on mainland. So, it's another version of the same adventure, but now I also get to see the Ryukyu culture in Okinawa. I also enjoy getting a chance to explore Okinawa and the various water-based activities that are a great idea to do on a tropical island. But I still go up to mainland every now and then for long weekends.

When COVID hit, I had use or lose vacation, but it was incredibly difficult to leave the country (or, more accurately, it was easy to leave Japan, but incredibly difficult to get back to Okinawa). So, I would look at the map that III MEF put out that showed red zones and green zones. I would figure out which airline would fly me directly into a green zone and then I'd figure out what I could do in that random location (and that location probably wasn't a city). And that is how I started to visit a few locations that were slightly more off the beaten path.



Gion Pyramid Festival

● Iwakuni

ukushima ■ 8 Ibaraki ■ 9 Tochigi ■ 10 Gunma ■ 11 Saitama ■ 12 Chiba ■ 13 Tokyo ■ 14 Kanagawa ■

of 47

on Okinawa an's prefectures

OKINAWA

a TDY to MCAS Iwakuni becoming her permanent resident in the Washington D.C. metro area took to exploring Japan's 47 prefectures. Hewitt said, her trips stopped being random and became a goal. Hewitt spoke to Stripes Okinawa to give us the inside story on her lofty goal to better get to know her new home.

What's the key to making the most of your time in Japan?

Part of the key to making the most of your time in Japan is to just go. Find a cool thing to do or see or eat and then build a trip around that. Japan is pretty easy to explore. Even with a language barrier (my Japanese is terrible, but I can say thank you, and I'm really good at asking if people speak English, I know the word for "map", and I can respond that I know "little, little, little" when people ask if I can speak Japanese), it's easy to navigate around and reasonably safe as a single female traveling by myself. The Japanese Rail line works really well, and the subway system is fantastic. In Tokyo there's a number to go with each subway station, so even if you can't say the station name, you just need to know, for example, that you started on the pink line at station 12 and you need to get to pink line, station 16. Even small towns will have a tourist information center (usually next to or in the main train station) and they're really thrilled to see tourists and usually speak at least a little English. If they don't, I just ask "recommendation?" in a translate app and I get pointed in the right direction for a museum, activity or dinner.

A great trip that I did started because one of my friends in DC sent me a link to an art exhibit in Japan – it was an exhibit about creating sculptures out of the leftover straw from the rice in Niigata. That trip ended up being 5 days, and in addition to seeing the straw art, I also saw two mummies, went through two purification rituals, and panned for gold on an island that had been a gold mine/exile colony. It all just sort of snow-balled off of my friend's one line email that said, "this might be interesting."



What's your favorite place in Japan and why?

I don't think I have a favorite place in Japan. That's a little like picking a favorite kid, and I don't think you're supposed to pick favorites. I think Japan has something for everyone. If you like cities, Tokyo is the largest city in the world and Kyoto is absolutely gorgeous. Nagoya is one of the largest cities in the world that I had never heard of, but it's the home of Toyota and therefore has a really cool Toyota museum if you want to geek out on engineering (I'm a mechanical engineer – I spent 4 hours there) and an amazing Science museum that will let kids (and adults) push buttons and crawl through tunnels and play with magnets and sand.

But if cities aren't your thing, there's gorgeous countryside outside of those cities. Japan is really into bicycling, so there are a couple of superbly well-marked bicycle routes, like the Shimanami Kaido in the Hiroshima and Ehime prefectures that connects six tiny islands, or the route around Lake Biwa in Shiga prefecture.

There are a couple of pilgrimage walking routes in various prefectures (and sometimes across multiple prefectures). There are the Japanese Alps in the mainland towards Nagano, which get an amazing amount of snow and some gorgeous national parks in Kyushu, near some fascinating geology like the 7 Hells of Beppu. There's a massive sand dune in Tottori with a really impressive sand castle museum. Or maybe you want to focus on culture – Japan has 25 UNESCO world heritage sites for temples in Nikko (a short train ride from Tokyo) and Nara (a day trip from Osaka) or monuments to when Japan was one of the leading producers of Silver (Iwami Ginzan) or silk (Gunma prefecture). Japan has a lot of festivals – for celebrating the end of a plague, or as part of moving shrines from one place to another, or as an excuse to carve ice sculptures or to have mountain monsters scare small children into not being lazy.

Or there are sporting events – seeing a sumo bout in person is fascinating and baseball games are great. Japan also has a wide range of foods – Hokkaido is famous for dairy and so their ramen has snow crab and a pat of butter, while Yamanashi is considered the wine region of Japan and has a delicious local noodle dish called "hoto".

There are also Christmas lights. I once planned a trip with a co-worker that took us to four different Christmas illuminations in three prefectures in one weekend. One of the illuminations (at Nabana no Sato in Mie Prefecture) had over 5 million LEDs. It was gorgeous and a great way to get in the festive spirit if you think Christmas in Okinawa is a little too warm. There's a lot of excuses to visit various locations – you just have to start.

So, 47 prefectures. When and why did that become a goal?

I've always liked lists, but I was probably a third or halfway through all the prefectures before I decided to sit down and list out every prefecture and see what prefectures I would have to navigate to in order to visit to all 47. And I like the idea of going to all 47 prefectures to get a more complete view of what Japan is like – to not just see the major cities, but to explore the smaller, quieter areas of Japan. For most of the 20+ prefectures I still needed to see I would flip open my guidebook, look for some suggestions of cities/towns to visit or festivals in that location, and I would look up the local tourism center and start to plan a trip. This generally worked as a plan, although some of the last few prefectures were getting very remote and my guidebook literally had nothing about them, which just meant I had to be a little bit more creative about looking for activities in a prefecture.



Shimanami Kaido

Check the prefectures you have visited.

47

26 Kyoto ■ 27 Osaka ■ 28 Hyogo ■ 29 Nara ■ 30 Wakayama ■ 31 Tottori ■ 32 Shimane ■ 33 Okinawa

15 Niigata ■ 16 Toyama ■ 17 Ishikawa ■ 18 Fukui ■ 19 Yamanashi ■ 20 Nagano ■ 21 Gifu ■ 22 Shizuoka ■ 23 Aichi ■ 24 Mie ■ 25 Shiga



12 must-try fall foods in Japan

BY ANNE UEKI,
BYFOOD

A temperature shift from sweltering heat to mild and pleasant, the comforting smell of roasted sweet potatoes fills the air, and chestnut-themed cafe menus can

only mean one thing: the fall season has begun. As the vibrant hues of summer gradually give way to the warm, earthy tones of fall, Japan undergoes a culinary transformation that is nothing short of magical. Fall in Japan brings forth a treasure trove of seasonal ingredients

and dishes, each meticulously crafted to capture the essence of this breathtaking time of year. Join us on a journey through Japan's unmissable fall foods, followed by a trip to the supermarket or your nearest restaurant or cafe!



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Matsutake Mushrooms (松茸)

The revered matsutake mushrooms are the undisputed kings of the Japanese forest. Their distinct aroma and flavor make them highly sought after and an essential part of traditional Japanese cuisine. Matsutake mushrooms boast an earthy, spicy aroma that is unlike any other. Their rich, meaty texture and subtle, nutty flavor add depth to a variety of dishes. You'll find matsutake in sukiyaki, clear broths, and rice dishes. They symbolize the season and are integral to fall traditions like tsukimi (moon-viewing).



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Sanma (サンマ) Pacific Saury

Sanma, or Pacific saury, is a migratory fish that travels to Japanese waters in the fall. This humble fish is celebrated for its delicious flavor and affordable price, making it a seasonal staple. Sanma is often salted and grilled whole, emphasizing its natural oils. The crispy skin and tender flesh are a delight, especially with a dash of grated daikon radish and soy sauce.

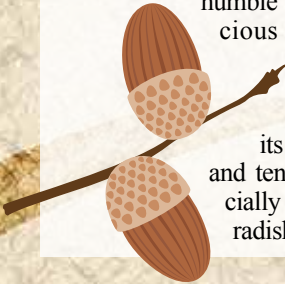


Photo courtesy of 123RF

Kuri (栗) Chestnuts

Chestnuts, or kuri, are synonymous with fall in Japan. These glossy brown gems are not only a symbol of the season but also a versatile ingredient. From chestnut rice (kuri gohan) that combines its nuttiness with perfectly cooked grains to chestnut mont blanc desserts that showcase their sweet side, this seasonal ingredient lends itself to both savory and sweet creations.



Photo courtesy of 123RF

Ginnan (銀杏) Ginkgo Nuts

Strolling down the streets of Japan in the fall, you might come across the distinct aroma of roasting ginkgo nuts. These pale green nuggets have a slightly bitter flavor that pairs beautifully with various dishes. You'll find them in chawanmushi (savory egg custard) or hidden within fragrant rice, adding a delightful crunch. Ginkgo nuts are typically roasted or boiled, which removes the bitterness associated with their raw state. Once prepared, they make for a crunchy and slightly sweet snack, often enjoyed with a sprinkle of salt.



Shine Muscat Photo courtesy of 123RF

Budou (ぶどう) Grapes

Grapes are another delightful autumn fruit in Japan, especially in vineyard-rich regions like Yamanashi and Nagano. Japanese grapes are celebrated for their exceptional quality and varieties. Japan cultivates numerous grape varieties, including the celebrated Kyoho and Shine Muscat. Kyoho grapes are known for their enormous size and intense, sweet flavor, while Shine Muscat grapes offer a delightful muscat aroma and a crisp, juicy texture.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Kaki (柿) Persimmon

Kaki, or persimmons, are a quintessential autumn fruit in Japan. Their vibrant orange hues adorn trees across the country, making them an emblematic symbol of the season. Japanese persimmons are known for their sweetness and unique texture. The two primary varieties are Fuyu and Kaki. Fuyu persimmons are crisp and can be enjoyed like apples, often sliced and eaten raw. Kaki persimmons, on the other hand, are sweeter and are typically enjoyed when fully ripe and soft.



Photo courtesy of 123RF

Nashi Pear (梨)

Nashi pears, often referred to as Asian pears, are another highlight of Japan's fall bounty. These crisp and juicy fruits are a refreshing addition to the seasonal palate and are enjoyed for their taste and versatility. Nashi pears are prized for their refreshing sweetness, which is balanced by a slight tartness. You can enjoy these pears fresh or in various culinary applications. You'll sometimes find them in salads, where their crispness adds a delightful crunch. Nashi pears can also be found in desserts, where their natural sweetness enhances the overall taste.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Yaki-imo (焼き芋) Roasted Sweet Potato

Fall means the aroma of roasted sweet potatoes wafting through the air. Yaki-imo, or roasted sweet potatoes, are a common sight in Japan during the fall. Street vendors often sell them from trucks equipped with wood-burning stoves, creating a nostalgic and comforting experience for all who pass by. Sweet potatoes also appear in tempura and a range of traditional Japanese sweets.



Sukiyaki Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Nabe (鍋) Hot Pot

Nabe, or hot pot, is the epitome of comfort food in the fall and winter. This communal dish is not only warming but also highly customizable. As the temperatures drop, Japanese households turn to nabe, a hot pot dish that brings family and friends together. There are countless nabe variations, but the most popular in the fall include sukiyaki and yosenabe. Sukiyaki features thinly sliced beef, vegetables and tofu cooked in a sweet and savory soy-based broth, while yosenabe is a throw-everything-in hot pot filled with seasonal ingredients.



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Oden (御田)

Oden is a hearty one-pot stew known for its simplicity and rich flavors. This beloved Japanese dish holds a special place in the hearts of locals, offering a comforting and soul-soothing experience during the brisk fall season. It typically consists of a simmering broth, often dashi (a savory fish and seaweed stock), filled with various ingredients that absorb the savory essence of the broth as they gently cook. While the ingredients can vary by region and personal preference, common additions include daikon radish, boiled eggs, konnyaku (a jelly-like yam cake), fish cakes and tofu.



Try oden on our
Osaka Food Tour!



Photo courtesy of Shutterstock

Shinmai (新米) New Harvest Rice

The arrival of shinmai, or new harvest rice, is a highly anticipated event in Japan. Harvested in the fall, shinmai rice is celebrated for its exceptional quality. It's characterized by its tender texture and sweet, nutty flavor that sets it apart from rice harvested in other seasons. Shinmai is typically enjoyed in its simplest form: as a bowl of freshly steamed rice. Its delicate flavor and slightly sticky texture make it the perfect accompaniment to a wide range of Japanese dishes, from sushi and sashimi to tempura and hearty rice bowls. It represents the bounty of the harvest season and the idea of renewal and fresh beginnings.



Photo courtesy of 123RF

Nihonshu (日本酒) Sake

Sake, Japan's take on rice wine, takes center stage in the fall. Sake brewing is closely tied to the changing seasons, making fall a highly-anticipated time for sake enthusiasts. During this time of year, breweries release a special type of sake known as hiyaoroshi. This sake is brewed in the spring and then aged over the summer. It's typically milder and smoother than sake served fresh in the spring, making it a favorite for autumnal gatherings and festivals.

In Japan, the changing seasons are celebrated with gusto, and fall is no exception. From street food stalls and convenience stores to local cafes and restaurants, fall foods in Japan make their mark — and we're here for it!

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



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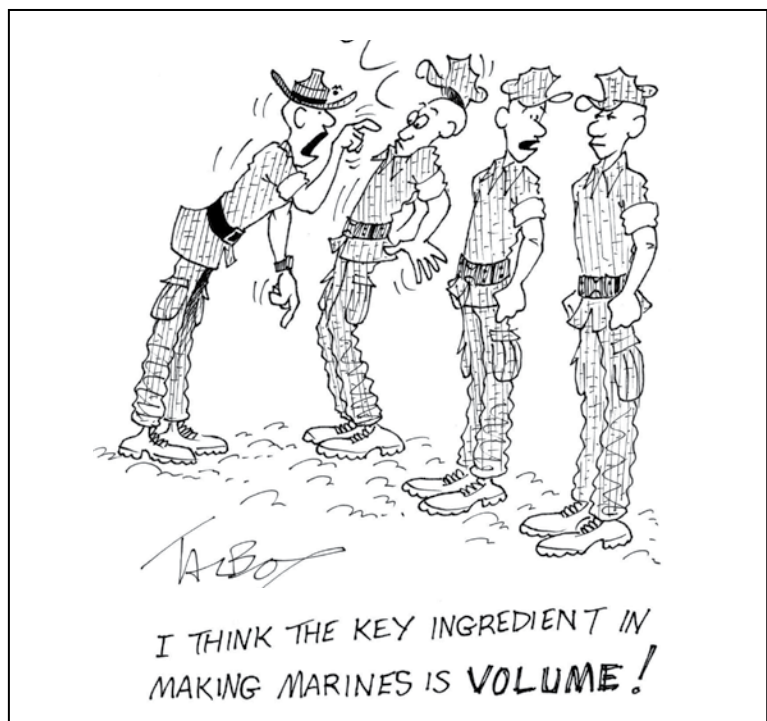
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– Daryl Talbot

Marvelous Miyako

STORY AND PHOTO BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPE OKINAWA

Miyako Island is quick flight from Okinawa. Miyako Island has plenty of culture, shopping, activities and food, which make it a great place for a getaway.

Some of the must-see spots on Miyako Island include:

Sunayama Beach

Only a 15-minute drive away from Miyako Airport, this sandy beach is as its name in Japanese suggests: a beach beyond a small “sand mountain.” Once you reach the bottom of the “mountain,” you will be greeted by a cove in the shape of a gateway welcoming you to this beautiful location. (As of Oct. 2023, this cove is cordoned off and designated as an off-limits area.)

Higashihennazaki

This is a cape stretching about 1.2 miles providing a dynamic view you will not find anywhere else in Okinawa. As you travel through this stretch, you’ll notice large rocks and boulders along the coastline thought to be remnants of an earthquake from 250 years ago.



Watch Video



Irabu-Ohashi Bridge

The bridge, at 2.2-miles long, is the lengthiest toll-free bridge in Japan and it connects Miyako and Irabu islands. This bridge also provides stunning ocean views.

Tooriike on Shimoji Island

This area along the island’s rocky coast is a popular diving spot and consists of two interconnected ponds.

While touring Miyako, make sure you try some local mango. Especially during the summer, the juicy taste of the island’s signature fruit dazzles many tourists and locals.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

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Cynthia McKeague

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USAG YONGSAN

Stripes Sports Trivia

SAY MY NAME! Horse racing fans everywhere waited a long time for me. Not since Affirmed in 1978 had a horse taken all three legs of the Triple Crown. Then I came along. My Egyptian-American owner and I did it with relative ease, despite my name being misspelled. Who am I?

Answer
American Pharoah

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DID YOU KNOW?

Commodore Matthew C. Perry and the U.S. Navy were not the only ones that paid a visit to Okinawa in the 19th century. Representatives of other western countries such as France and the Netherlands visited Okinawa around the same time. As a result, the Ryukyu Kingdom signed treaties with them. Just like the one between the kingdom and the U.S., these treaties with the European countries covered agreements on commerce, replenishment, and consular jurisdiction.

Kanji of the week



Cat (neko/byo)

Language Lesson

Interesting!

Omoshiroi

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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Christian's "Ford v Ferrari" co-star
- 5 Present occasion
- 10 Flower stalk
- 14 Bounce back
- 15 Strong dislike
- 16 Tuesday treat?
- 17 Large amount
- 18 Vegas' Park MGM, previously
- 20 Guaranteed
- 22 Caning need
- 23 Panache
- 24 Drops a hint
- 26 "Elementary" actress
- 28 Grocery carrier
- 30 Soothsayer
- 31 Safe to swim in
- 34 "Beetle Bailey" dog
- 38 Potbelly, for one
- 39 Convent dweller
- 40 Islamic text
- 41 Sharpen a knife
- 42 Type of camp
- 44 Ceremonial act
- 46 Windsor, for one
- 47 Freudian topic
- 48 Repairs the wall
- 52 Diner dish
- 54 Alternative word
- 55 Compromise
- 59 It often replaces human labor
- 61 Run the show
- 62 The Bee Gees, e.g.
- 63 Prey grabber
- 64 Computerphile
- 65 Diplomacy
- 66 Fluid buildup
- 67 Part of G.M.T.

DOWN

- 1 Clutter
- 2 Censorship-fighting org.
- 3 Contract adverb
- 4 Beach accessory
- 5 Small, as a fee
- 6 Nostril wrinkler
- 7 Middling poker pair
- 8 Studio shout
- 9 Came into view
- 10 Officer's quarters, at sea
- 11 Fruity desserts
- 12 Striking success
- 13 Mars has two
- 19 Parakeet keeper
- 21 Aesop piece
- 25 Early online forum
- 26 Luxurious
- 27 Very fond of
- 29 Artillery unit member
- 32 Go farther than intended
- 33 Egyptian boy king
- 35 Kid's backyard retreat
- 36 Astronaut drink
- 37 Not taken in by
- 40 Work with dough
- 42 Say again
- 43 "Love on the Brain" singer
- 45 Big-ticket
- 48 Chris of "The Magnificent Seven"
- 49 First lady after Hillary
- 50 Room at the top?
- 51 Subway entrance
- 53 Antidote
- 56 Motel offering
- 57 Dog parasite
- 58 Spore producer
- 60 Youngest Lincoln

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Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

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

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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:

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

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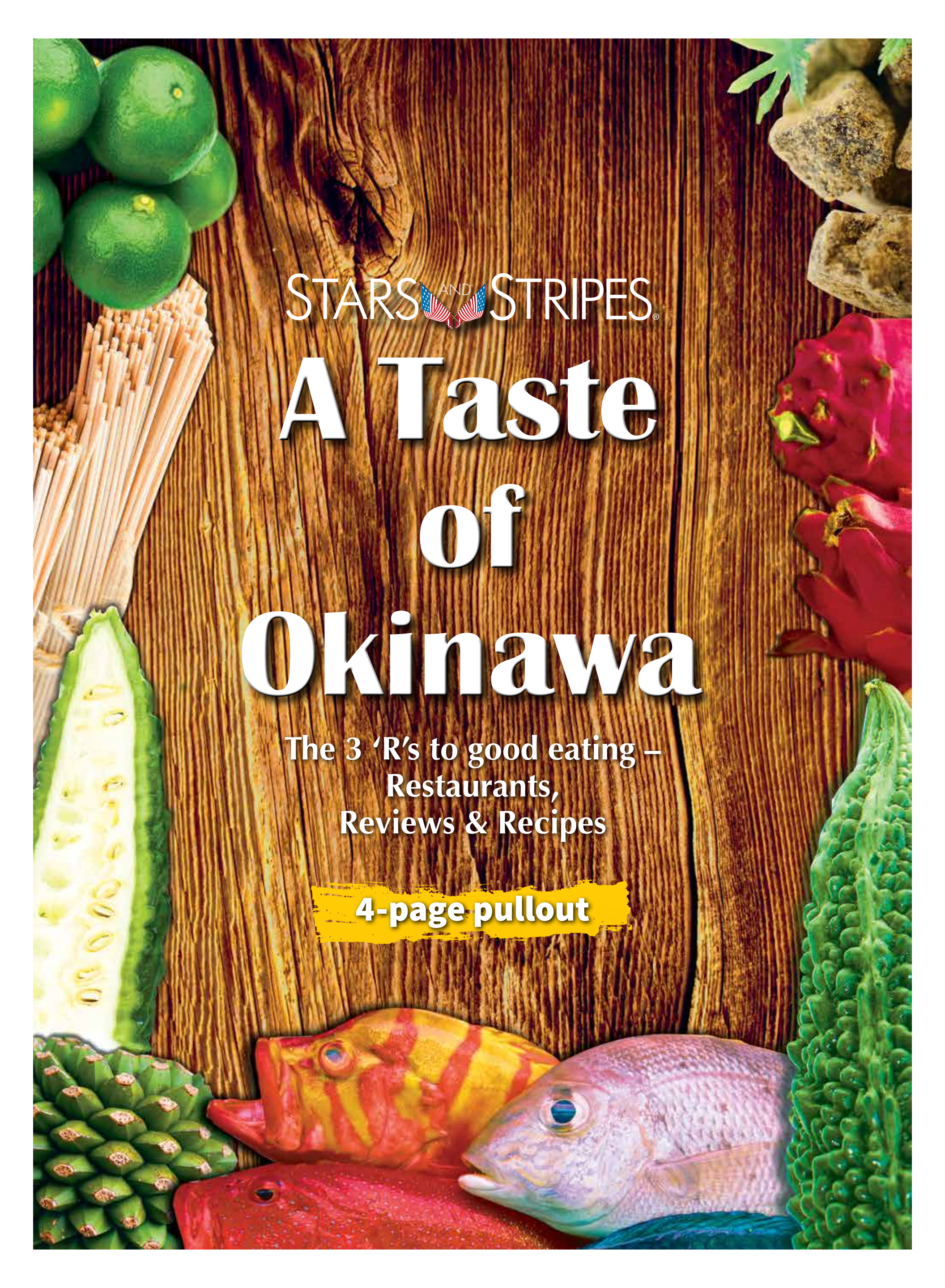



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A Taste of Okinawa

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LIVE JAPAN

Oden is something you want to eat during the cold winter. You can readily eat oden at a Japanese restaurant or a pub. It is a meal of boiling things like chopped radish and eggs, or tasty chikuwa fish cakes in a soy sauce or kombu soup stock for a long time to gain flavor. The ingredients inside oden are called “odentane.”

History

Oden originated back to dengaku, that is the meal of cutting tofu into rectangles and eating with miso on top. The popular way of putting “o” at the beginning of every word the court



Photos courtesy of Live Japan

ladies used inside the Imperial Court in the Heian period and dengaku were mixed together and it became the name “oden.”

Differences in areas

Mainly in eastern Japan people use the concentrated taste of soy sauce to cook oden so the color of the soup looks darker and in western Japan, people use the light taste of soy sauce

Introducing oden Japan's scrumptious winter soul food



Dengaku

to cook oden so the color of the soup looks paler. In Kyushu or Okinawa, a richer taste is popular and the soup has the flavor of chicken or flying fish. In Kyoto, a delicate taste is popular and the soup has the flavor of shaved dried mackerel and kelp.

Convenience store oden

Convenience stores sell oden from autumn until spring. Lawson, one of the biggest convenience stores, uses a base soup of katsuobushi (dried bonito flakes) from Yaizu and kelp from Hokkaido. For the Chubu region they add a flavor of muroaji-bushi (horse mackerel flakes). And for the Kyushu region, they add a flavor of beef, chicken and flying fish. There are different kinds of flavors depending on the area.

A unique canned oden

You can even buy oden from some vending machines. The ingredients inside are almost the same as regular oden, but the odentane are not anything fragile like tofu. It can be preserved for a long time and can be used as emergency food in case of a disaster.

cooking oden Isekai Izakaya Nobu-style

LIVE JAPAN

Welcome to the first of a series of articles spotlighting select Japanese recipes from the new anime series, Isekai Izakaya Nobu! Whether you're a fan already or have just stumbled upon the show, one thing is for sure: the dishes of gourmet anime Isekai Izakaya ~Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu~ look absolutely amazing! Japanese star chef Ryuta Kijima created simple recipes based on the food served at Izakaya Nobu itself, for you to cook in your own kitchen at home. (Even if you're not a giant anime fan, you're still bound to enjoy these authentic Japanese foods!)

Today, we're savoring the main dish of the first episode “Potatoes in Oden.” As the name suggests, oden is the star of Nobu's menu this time! It's a one-pot dish that is an iconic Japanese winter food recipe and features plenty of ingredients: eggs, daikon, potatoes, and more delights!

During the cold months, Japanese convenience stores sell oden as bowls of different sizes or as individual ingredients, making it a much-beloved snack or meal all throughout Japan. Now, let's start cooking!



Isekai Izakaya Nobu - Behind the scenes of studio sunrise and discovering how anime comes to life



Photos courtesy of Live Japan

Side: Japanese oden-style potato salad

At Isekai Izakaya Nobu, potatoes are a rather big topic in the first episode. That's why Chef Kijima has come up with a special oden-style potato salad! Quickly made, this yummy side dish adds a fun, Japanese kick to your meal!

Yield

Makes 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 Oden potatoes (*2)
- 1/4 Onion
- Fukujinzuke (as much as you like) (*3)
- 1 tablespoon French dressing
- 2 tablespoons Mayonnaise
- Coarsely-ground black pepper (a pinch)

Preparation

- 1) Thinly slice the onion vertically, wash with water, dry, and add French dressing. Let it marinate for 5 minutes.
- 2) Add hot potatoes to the onion and crush them with a fork. Let it cool for a bit.
- 3) Add mayonnaise and fukujinzuke. Mix well.
- 4) Itadakimasu!

*2 Chef Kijima uses oden-boiled potatoes. Buy or make them the same way as the daikon described above.

*3 Fukujinzuke are pickled vegetables, a popular Japanese condiment. If you cannot find them in the Asian supermarket of your choice, you can make them yourself. Cut vegetables of your choice (commonly used: daikon, cucumber, eggplant, Lotus root, and so on. Feel free to add "less exotic" veggies such as carrots, white turnip, and ginger.) Boil them in a sauce made of sugar, soy sauce, mirin, sake, and rice vinegar and then cool in the refrigerator.

With these quick and easy recipes, you can bring both the taste and atmosphere of Izakaya Nobu to your own kitchen. And don't hesitate to enjoy Chef Kijima's creative creations with a frosty beer!

Japanese oden daikon steak

Often seen in many food anime, daikon radish has recently found its way into Western supermarkets - but how to cook with daikon remains somewhat elusive! We think you'll agree that when soaked in a hearty oden broth and then fried or grilled, this curious veggie turns into a delectable dish!

Yield

Makes 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 Oden daikon pieces (*1)
- 2 Green onions
- 1 tablespoon Salad oil
- 10g Butter
- Sauce: 2 teaspoons soy sauce, 2 teaspoons cooking sake, 1 teaspoon mirin

Preparation

- 1) Chop the green onion finely.
- 2) Use a paper towel to soak up extra soup from your daikon pieces. Put them in an oiled, cold frying pan before turning up the heat.
- 3) Flip the daikon once they're golden brown, put a lid on the pan and fry for another 5 minutes on low heat. Then arrange them on a plate.
- 4) Making the sauce: mix all ingredients for the sauce in the hot pan. Once little bubbles form, add the butter and mix well.
- 5) Pour the sauce over your daikon steak with a spoon. Top with green onions.
- 6) Itadakimasu!

*1 Chef Kijima uses daikon that has already been boiled in an oden soup. If you're in Japan, you can easily buy the daikon readily made at a convenience store or buy oden soup and make it yourself. If you're not in Japan, simply make oden soup yourself by using dashi soup stock and seasoning it with soy sauce, sake, and sugar. Bring it to a boil, then put the daikon in and let it simmer for about 15 minutes. Important: the longer the daikon sits in the soup, the better it tastes! If you have time, turn off the heat and let the daikon swim in the soup for an hour or more.



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Gobble till you wobble with Kadena FSS’ endless array of delectable dining options. The Rocker Enlisted Club and Kadena Officers’ Club are hosting Thanksgiving Day Buffets from 10:30 am - 2 pm, each with a splendid menu filled with Thanksgiving favorites. The Kadena Clubs can take stress out of holidays with their Thanksgiving Packages To-Go... but order early! Visit Okuma Beach for a Thanksgiving Buffet with an international twist. For something closer to home, checkout the Marshall Dining Facility’s Thanksgiving Meal from 10:30 am - 2 pm. No matter how you celebrate Thanksgiving, Kadena FSS has you covered! Visit us at www.kadenafss.com.

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Thanksgiving
WITH KADENA FSS

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KADENA AIR BASE
SUPPORT SQUADRON
FORCE

RESTAURANT INFO

A Taste of Okinawa

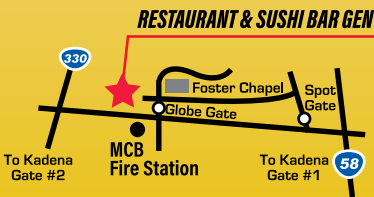
RESTAURANT &
SUSHI BAR GEN



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(\$/¥)



Gen a real gem
on Okinawa

Learn how to prepare mouthwatering dishes that will leave your dinner guests begging for more, all from the comfort of your home in a virtual cooking class hosted by Luca Manfe, winner of Master Chef Season 4. Fish tacos, braised beef short ribs and homemade gnocchi are all on the menu for the remaining courses. By attending a class, you are automatically entered for a chance to win a private virtual cooking class, and an in-person gala dinner at your installation cooked by Chef Luca! Sign up now at www.kadenafss.com/blog/af-campaigns and watch your cooking skills become five-star level!

RESTAURANT INFO



Tasty food, great drinks, fun events at Sidelines

Established in 2012, Sidelines is a family owned, up-scale sports-themed restaurant. The menu offers many great homemade options, including classic American items, vegan dishes, a kid's menu and delicious weekly specials. Try the fish n' chips, undoubtedly the best in Okinawa. And don't miss a slice of our delicious Homemade Cheesecake. Visit us for Trivia Tuesday, Ladies' Night Wednesday, Game Night Thursday, Weekend morning Mimosa Specials and regular Live Sporting Events! You'll love our unrivalled service, full bar, ample outdoor seating and the unbelievable Ocean View from our upstairs bar area! Make plans to join us soon at Sidelines!

RESTAURANT INFO



A Taste of Okinawa

STEAK HOUSE

FOUR SEASONS

Credit card accepted
VISA JCB MasterCard

TEPPANYAKI SINCE 1972 www.the4seasons.jp

Four Seasons Urasoe

2-4-5 Iso, Urasoe City
TEL: (098)877-0429 / Open Hours: 11:00-

Please make a reservation for your party.

Enjoy great teppanyaki just five minutes from Camp Kinser!

Four Seasons Awase

4-12-13 Awase, Okinawa City
TEL: (098)937-0029 / Open Hours: 11:00-

Awase branch has 2 parking places.

Lunch

Hours: 11:00-

Lunch Steak Set ¥1,595-

Dinner

Hours: 17:00-

Dinner Steak Set ¥2,090-

Seafood & other menus are widely available. All sets come with soup, salad, bread or rice, tea or coffee.

Four Seasons Okinawa City

3-1-25 Sonda, Okinawa City / TEL (098)933-5731

Four Seasons Mihama

2-5-2 Chatan, Mihama Town / TEL (098)926-1329



Four Seasons will dazzle you in Awase & Urasoe

Four Seasons Teppanyaki Steak House in Awase and Urasoe will not only dazzle you, but also tingle your taste buds! Watch as our talented chefs slice, dice and cook up your entrees right at your table. It's more than a meal, It's a special event! Our restaurant is the perfect place to relax, unwind and simply enjoy some foodie fun with your family, friends or that special someone. If you haven't had the pleasure of enjoying Japanese teppanyaki, come in for a visit! We promise that you won't be disappointed, so what are you waiting for? Reservations recommended.

RESTAURANT INFO