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STARS AND STRIPES

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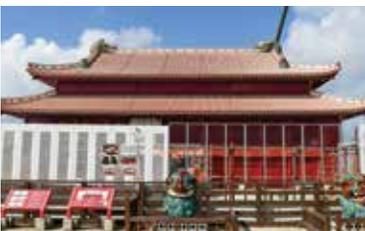
Soak up the sun

Okinawa's beaches set to open soon

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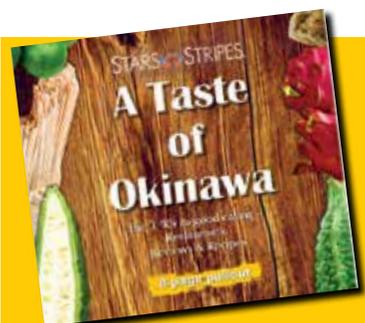
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Publishing and Media Design Writers

Shoji Kudaka Hyemin Lee
Luis Samayoa Takahiro Takiguchi

Layout Designers

Yuko Okazaki Kayoko Shimoda
Yurika Usui

Multimedia Consultants

Max Genao Doug Johnson
Hans Simpson Chae Pang Yi
Benjamin Yoo Gianni Youn
Robert Zuckerman

Graphic Designers

Mamoru Inoue Kazumi Hasegawa
Yukiyo Oda Yosuke Tsuji

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Great view, vibes at Hamabe no Chaya café

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ICHIRO KATAYANAGI,
STRIPES OKINAWA

During a winter vacation to Okinawa, a friend and I visited Hamabe no Chaya café in Nanjo City to fortify ourselves with breakfast before sightseeing in the southern part of the island.

Founded in 1994, the seaside café was the first of its kind and is now beloved by locals and tourists alike. Its centerpiece is the breathtaking view of the ocean that is visible from the interior of the café.

Unfortunately, when we entered the eatery, every counter seat offering a front row view of the ocean was filled. We were instead seated at a table, but we still could see the ocean blue. Framed by the six windows, it was like a painting. Some customers were laid-back and enjoying the scenery while others were busy taking photos of their meals with the blue ocean backdrop.

I ordered the “Limited Plate (Set A)” from their breakfast menu. From the four main options I selected pizza toast along with my soup option of Yushidofu Okinawan Tofu Soup. The



Limited plate (set A)

set also included a small salad and fruit.

My meal was light and well-balanced. I wish I could have breakfast like this every day.

The Hamabe no Chaya staff members were polite and attentive and there were several foreign customers enjoying the restaurant as well. Time flew slowly and I never tired of the ocean view; I felt like I wanted to stay there forever.

There were no signs indicating a time limit for staying in the café, but after we finished, we paid our bill and left.

Down a staircase next to the entrance, we reached the beach. It was low tide and was about another 100 meters to reach the water. According

Things to know

ADDRESS: 2-1 Aza Tamagusuku, Tamagusuku, Nanjo City

HOURS:

- Mondays - Fridays 8 a.m. - 6 p.m. (L.O. 5 p.m.)
- Saturdays, Sundays, and Japanese holidays 8 a.m. - 7 p.m. (L.O. 6 p.m.)

PHONE: 098-948-2073



MAP



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INSTAGRAM

to the café staff, the sea can rise to the middle of the staircase during the high tide in the spring.

Not wanting my shoes to get dirty, I removed them and explored the tide pools barefoot, a perfect activity for children and adults.

While we were heading to our next destination, my friend and I disused the beautiful scenery from the café and the walk in the mud. If you travel to the southern part of the island, this café is a must place to stop and enjoy the food, views and, if the tide is right, the beach, too.

katayanagi.ichiro@stripes.com



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BLADES OF GLORY

Hit the ice at rink in Haebaru Town

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA



VIEW VIDEO!

Born and raised in Okinawa, I describe myself as a stranger to winter sports. Although I have tried skiing a couple of times, my technique has never gone beyond snowplow.

Watching the Winter Olympics, I was curious to

see what it would be like to glide gracefully like the “Blade Angels” or jump high on the ice like the “Quad God.”

Although I would never reach the heights of those Olympians given my lack of experience, I decided to give it a go at Enagic Sports World Southern Hill in Haebaru Town.

The amusement complex in the southern part of the main island is the only place with an ice-skating rink in Okinawa.

The rink holds lessons for both adults and children several times a week. Sunday lessons, however, are specifically geared towards beginners, perfect for a novice like me.

After checking in, I was geared up with rental skates, helmet, and knee and elbow protectors.

A blast of cold air made me shiver as I opened the door to the ice rink. As my body tried to adjust to the temperature drop, the sudden realization that my group lesson was with children made me freeze.

Although I spotted some adults, they seemed to be either parents of the kids or coaches and were not there to participate in the lesson.

So, there I was, a fish out of water surrounded by a group of little girls as we wobbled onto the ice and grabbed onto the walls of the rink for balance.

Our coach, Rin Sonda, led us with some pointers. Sonda, a young woman in her 20s, told local media in an interview that she has been skating since she was five and even competed as a figure skater in her high school and college days.

“The key is to walk like a penguin, taking small steps,” chimed in the coach as I wobbled about. Following her advice, I did my best to shorten my stride.

My group was using half of the ice rink, which is about the size of an ice hockey rink. We warmed up and walked back and forth along the back wall behind the goal post. On the second try, we did the walk without holding onto the walls.

We practiced picking up cones, how to fall correctly and then how to get back up from falling.

The coach advised us that we should try our best to land on our bottoms. Then, she said, to get back up, we would need to first get on our hands and knees before rising one leg at a time.

Next, we moved onto more challenging drills like zigzagging between the small cones the coach had placed on the ice.

My classmates were skating smoothly, likely a stark contrast with my awkward scratches as I advanced on the obstacle course. I was able to keep up, but as soon as I crossed the last cone without knocking any down, I let out a sigh of relief.

For the rest of the one-hour class, we practiced a few advanced skills like swizzle, a technique of going forward and stopping by repeatedly spreading legs to a stance wider than shoulder length

THINGS TO KNOW

GPS COORDINATES: 26.208059, 127.728373

HOURS (ICE ARENA): 11 a.m. - 8 p.m. (weekdays), 10 a.m. - 8 p.m. (Sat., Sun. and holidays)

FEES FOR ICE SKATING: 1,900 yen (approx. \$12.30) for those 18 years old and above, 1,700 yen for ages between 13 and 17, 1,500 yen for those between 7 and 12, 1,300 yen for those six years old and below.

■ Sunday Ice skating class for beginners

TIME: 9-10 a.m. and 6-7 p.m. on Sundays

FEES: 2,500 yen per lesson (approx. \$16.17) for adults.

*The first lesson costs 1,000 yen for elementary school students and below, 1,200 yen for middle school students and above.

*Reservation required.

*The ice arena is open year-round.



WEBSITE

before bringing them together with the toes almost touching each other.

We also tried jumping and spinning on the ice as well. Of course, we did not dare to try a triple jump or a layback spin. A small jump and a slow spin were thrilling enough for me.

When the coach announced the end of the lesson, I was relieved that I had survived without falling and without causing any injuries to my little classmates.



Suyin and her mother at the skating rink's reception room.

Once back at the rink side, I had a chance to chat with Suyin, a youngster who took the class with me.

“I especially enjoyed the drills that we did because it’s a different technique, it’s just not normal skating,” Suyin said. She also said she found the swizzle challenging, especially the parts where the skater has to maneuver around cones.

Although Suyin admitted she doesn’t have any Olympics goals, she said she mostly skates for fun and would like to continue taking lessons.

After my first ever skating experience at the age of 51, I don’t think my skating skills will improve anytime soon. But I would not be surprised to see a girl like Suyin becoming the next top skater.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



Whale Watching in Okinawa

Meet the humpback whales up close



SCAN ME



The Shuri Castle reconstruction exhibition room displays restoration designs to visitors on Okinawa.



Designs planned for the restored Shuri Castle are on display at the site on Okinawa.

Shuri Castle is regarded as the heart and soul of Okinawa, which existed as a separate kingdom for centuries before becoming part of Japan in the 1800s.



Okinawa's Shuri Castle still attracts visitors as workers rebuild after 2019 fire

STORY AND PHOTOS BY RYAN M. BREEDEN, STARS AND STRIPES
Published: February 19, 2026

More than six years after Shuri Castle burned down, resilient reconstruction efforts are on schedule to allow the main hall to reopen in the fall.

But the park remains open to visitors while restoration of the iconic castle is underway. The exterior of the restored main hall, or Seiden, was completed in July and work goes on inside.

For 400 yen, or approximately \$2.65, visitors may walk guided paths on more than 10 acres of the historic property.

The park is on a small hill

overlooking the city of Naha, with Shuri Castle the imposing centerpiece.

Sometimes called "Uchinanchu," or Okinawa's heart and soul, the castle was rebuilt after World War II and represents the island's rising from the depths of destruction.

Previously the central hub for politics and government, the castle also served as the royal residence of the Ryukyu king and his family. The Kingdom of Ryukyu existed from 1429 until its abolishment by Japan and establishment of the Okinawa prefecture in 1879.

Today, the rebuilt main hall stands tall, surrounded by

construction barriers. Painted a distinctive red and colorfully detailed, its unique architectural designs were nurtured through Ryukyuan culture and trade with neighboring Southeast Asian countries.

Donations of nearly \$40 million from many sources — including an early GoFundMe campaign by a Marine Corps spouse that raised more than \$11,000 — helped pay for the reconstruction.

As you meander within the park, you'll discover several other structures from the time period as well as modern amenities.

The park is a moderate trek

with several staircases required to traverse the compound. Automated motion sensors along every staircase trigger recorded warnings to watch your step. Bring comfortable walking shoes and remember to stay hydrated.

Three facilities offer a place to stop, of which two are climate controlled. One is the Shuri Castle reconstruction exhibition room, and another is the Yohokoriden, or ascension ceremony site.

Both facilities provide more information about the castle's history and information regarding the current reconstruction.

The fire on Oct. 31, 2019, burned for more than 11 hours and destroyed eight buildings. It marked the fifth time the castle was destroyed. Its most recent

reconstruction took place in 1992 to restore its destruction in World War II.

breedden.ryan@stripes.com
[@Breedden_Stripes](https://twitter.com/Breedden_Stripes)

Things to know

DIRECTIONS: A 30-minute drive or less from most major U.S. bases on Okinawa.

ADDRESS: 1-2 Kinjo-cho, Shuri, Naha, Okinawa 903-0815.

TIMES: Open daily, 8:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., through March.

COSTS: Entry is 400 yen for adults, 160 yen to 300 yen for students, and free for 6 and younger. The maximum parking fee is 800 yen.

FOOD: Discover restaurants and shops nearby.



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File photo

Soak up the sun

Okinawa's beaches set to open soon



BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Just like spring arrives early with cherry blossoms, summer is coming up really soon in Okinawa. Starting in March, many beaches around the island reopen for swimmers, sandcastle-builders, sunbathers, and picnickers looking for a fun day on the shore. Plus, this year, more beaches are easing up on regulations to make them tattoo-friendly and welcome more beachgoers.

It's true that there are locations where you can swim all year round. But there's nothing wrong with celebrating the early arrival of spring or even summer.

Get your swimsuit ready and let's hit the beach!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

1 ANA INTERCONTINENTAL MANZA BEACH RESORT

MARCH 14: As a special offer for the day, Ocean Park water obstacles, which can normally cost 5,500 yen, will be available at 1,000 yen per person. Other water activities available include sea kayaking, jet ski bike rides, and more. No restrictions on tattoos.

- **PARKING FEE:** 3,000 yen per vehicle (free on March 14)
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Ocean Park will be closed between noon and 1 p.m. for maintenance. A ceremony is scheduled at 11 a.m.)
- **PHONE:** 098-966-1211
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.505998, E127.859180
- A 40-minute drive from Camp Foster.



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2 SHERATON OKINAWA SUNMARINA

The beach itself is open throughout the year. Water activities such as banana boating, snorkeling tours, and zip-lining are available. No restrictions on tattoos. Visitors can utilize the beach and shower for free.

- **PARKING FEE:** 600 yen per hour
- **HOURS:** 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. (subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 098-965-2222
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.462128, E 127.811506
- A 40-minute drive from Camp Foster.



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3 KARIYUSHI BEACH

MARCH 5: This beach is also home to jet-skiing, boat tubing, and more. No restrictions on tattoos.

- **ADMISSION FEE:** 2,000 yen for adults, 1,000 yen for ages 4-12.
- **PARKING FEE:** Free parking is available at Okinawa Kariyushi Beach Resort Ocean Spa.
- A free shuttle bus is available between the hotel and the beach.
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 098-052-4093
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N26.531863, E 127.929991
- A one-hour drive from Camp Foster.



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4 KANUCHA BEACH

MARCH 29: A resort beach 20 minutes away from Camp Schwab. This beach is tattoo-friendly, but visitors may be asked to cover their tattoos if others feel uncomfortable.

- **ADMISSION FEE:** 3,000 yen (adult), 1,000 yen (child), free admission for hotel guests
- **PARKING FEE:** Included in the admission fee.
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 6 p.m.
- **PHONE:** 0570-018880
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.546329, E 128.077174



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5 KIN SUNRISE BEACH

APRIL (TBD): This beach near Camp Hansen boasts of 800 m long sandy shore. Home to activities such as banana boating and sea kayaking.

- *Swimming is prohibited before the beach opening.
- **PARKING FEE:** 500 yen
- **HOURS:** 10 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
- *Office will be closed on Mondays with no lifeguards on site. If Monday falls on holiday, the office will be closed the following Tuesday.
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.459806, E 127.947202
- A 10-minute drive from Camp Hansen.



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6 NABEE BEACH

APRIL 1: This beach near Cape Manzamo is home to water activities such as a banana boat, sea kayaking, and more.

- **ADMISSION FEE:** Free
- **PARKING FEE:** Free
- Use of shower and locker cost 100 yen (two minutes) and 200 yen respectively.
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 6 p.m. (Subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 098-966-8839
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.502060, E 127.857871
- A 40-minute drive from Camp Foster.



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7 TIGER BEACH

MARCH 20: A resort beach of Hotel Monterey in Onna village. This beach is tattoo-friendly, but visitors may be asked to cover their tattoos if others feel uncomfortable.

- **ADMISSION FEE:** 1,000 yen (inclusive of usage fee for shower and locker)
- **PARKING FEE:** 500 yen
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (Subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 098-993-7108
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.454341, E 127.806077
- A 40-minute drive from Camp Foster.



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8 EMERALD BEACH

APRIL 1: Adjacent to Expo Park, this beach dazzles visitors with its emerald green and cobalt blue. Shower is available for free. No admission fee is needed.

- **PARKING FEE:** Free
- **HOURS:** 8:30 a.m. - 6:30 p.m. (subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 0980-48-2741
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.699195, E 127.877590
- A 90-minute drive from Camp Foster.



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9 SESOKO BEACH

MARCH 7: A popular beach on Sesoko Island. This beach boasts beautiful views of Ie Island and Motobu Peninsula. Use of shower and locker costs 500 yen and 300 yen respectively.

- **ADMISSION FEE:** Free
- **PARKING FEE:** 1,000 yen per day
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 4 p.m. (subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 098-047-2368
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.650026, E 127.856139
- A 90-minute drive from Camp Foster.

10 MOON BEACH

APRIL (TBD): A resort beach at a 40-minute drive from Camp Foster. Home to water activities such as a banana boat and more. Tattoos need to be covered.

- **ADMISSION FEE:** 3,000 yen for ages 12 and above, 2,000 yen for ages 11 and below.
- **PARKING FEE:** 1,000 yen
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (beach counter. Subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 098-965-1020
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.451104, E 127.802283
- A 40-minute drive from Camp Foster.

11 TROPICAL BEACH

APRIL 18: Resort beach near MCAS Futenma. Water activities such as banana boats and boat tubes are available.

- **PARKING FEE:** Free
- **HOURS:** 9 a.m. - 7 p.m. (Subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 070-3802-9963 (for water sports)
- **EMAIL:** tropical.beach.kaihinkouen@gmail.com
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.28148 E 127.731782
- A 10-minute drive from MCAS Futenma.

12 ORION ECO CHURA-SUN BEACH

APRIL 4 (TBD): Located near DMM Kariyushi Aquarium, this beach is home to many events and concerts. Water activities such as sea kayaks, banana boats, and water obstacles are available. A 40-minute drive from Camp Foster.

- **PARKING FEE:** - 500 yen
- **OPEN:** 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. (subject to change)
- **PHONE:** 098-850-1139
- **GPS COORDINATES:** N 26.156294, E 127.647378
- Close to Naha Air Port and Ashibinaa Okinawa Outlet Mall.



On-base Beaches

While local beaches are opening, don't forget about all the great beaches on base offering great choices for your next vacation. Good customer service, comfortable lodging, and recreational tours packed with fun, and adventures are waiting for you there.



Photo by Aya Ichihashi, Stars and Stripes

A Torii Beach

The peaceful waters of Torii Beach will be perfect for kayaking and SUP board riding. Camping and recreation gear are available for rent including a tent, grill, lantern, canopy, and frisbee. There are pavilions and a water slide as well.



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FACEBOOK



Photo by Shoji Kudaka, Stripes Okinawa

B White Beach

This naval base in the east can be a good place for relaxation. Cozy campers and cabins are available for rent. Enjoy kayaking, paddle boarding, and beach volleyball. There are also basketball courts and softball fields nearby.



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FACEBOOK

C Okuma Beach

This beautiful beach in the north is a great getaway destination. Home to water activities including wakeboarding, water skiing, kneeboarding, Jet skiing, and banana boating. You can also enjoy camping and golfing there.



VIEW VIDEO!



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FACEBOOK

D Kadena Marina

This small beach near the Air Force facility offers a quick getaway destination. Take diving and surfing lessons and embark on a tour for ocean adventures. During winter whale watching boat trips are available there. Plus, don't forget to grab a bite at Seaside.



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FACEBOOK

Grab a mask and snorkel!

Explore Okinawa's marvelous water world

STRIPES OKINAWA

If you are on the island of Okinawa, you have the opportunity to see world-class reefs in crystal clear water. And you can explore this marvelous water world with a mask, fins and snorkel. Once you learn how to snorkel properly, it could become your favorite hobby during your stay on Okinawa. I guarantee that your encounters with all the marine species will be a lifetime experience.

I've had opportunities to dive and snorkel in Hawaii, the Great Barrier Reef in Australia, La Paz, Baja Calif. and some islands in Thailand and Indonesia. But honestly, Okinawa is my most favorite place to snorkel because of the amazing colorful coral and countless tropical fish. There are many easy entry spots with shallow reef areas (5 to 30 feet) and dynamic drop offs. Water visibility is extremely high and on any given day, the sky is as clear as the water.

And if you're lucky, you'll also have the opportunity to swim along with turtles, manta ray and various types of reef sharks. You can literally spend hours floating over Okinawa's endless coral heaven.

Here are a couple places I recommend for snorkeling while in Okinawa:

- ★ **Cape Maeda**, in the center of Okinawa, is the most popular snorkeling spot on island. Many diving shops offer snorkeling tours to this area.
*Current status is indicated on the website (Check QR code.)
- ★ **Odo Kaigan, also known as John Man Beach**, near the southern tip of Okinawa Island, also offers good snorkeling and is less crowded than Cape Maeda.
- ★ **Yonehara Beach, Ishigaki Island**: This place has an amazing drop off at the outer edge of the reef. Please note the current is extremely strong at times, so snorkelers and divers should know what they are doing if they venture out a long way from shore. This beach also has a shallow inner reef area for beginner snorkelers, but there are no lifeguards or jellyfish nets to protect swimmers.
- ★ **Nishibama Beach, Hateruma Island**: Hateruma Island is the most southern island in Japan. There are so many amazing snorkel spots around this island, which makes it very popular with both single backpackers and families.

Listen, if you are not an experienced snorkeler, I highly recommend taking a snorkeling tour from a local diving shop, which will provide step-by-step instructions. Even if you are an experienced snorkeler, it is good to use local snorkeling tours because guides will brief you on the local fish, landscapes and condition of the area.

SAFETY TIPS

- Don't snorkel alone.
- Wear a life jacket if you are not confident in the water.
- Check the current and times of tides before entering.
- Always remember the entry spot and look back often to check your location. This will help you to recognize if the current is pushing you.
- If you are caught up by the current, swim parallel with the beach calmly until the current settles.
- Respect the reef. One of the main threats Okinawa reefs face is damage caused by humans. Avoiding direct contact with the reef is the first rule of snorkeling.
- Watch out for habu jellyfish and its poisonous tentacles.
- Make sure to put on lots of sunscreen.
- Drink a lot of water before and after snorkeling to prevent dehydration.

My faves

Good eats for a great picnic on Okinawa's beautiful beaches

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Although the temperature stays relatively warm throughout the year, winter in Okinawa can be a little too chilly for beachgoers. So, it makes sense that many beaches on the island don't open until the spring. During the season, you won't only find beachgoers soaking in the rays and waves. Every year on March 3 of the lunar calendar (April 19 on the 2026 calendar), Okinawans celebrate Hamauri, a tradition for women to pray for their health on the beach and be blessed with the water. This event for women is now considered rather an opportunity for family get-together to celebrate the arrival of the spring.

On the beach for Hamauri, you may notice many locals picnicking with bento and refreshments. Below are some of my favorite foods to bring along for a refreshing beach day and picnic, no matter what time year. Give these a try!

Fuuchi-muchi/yomogi mochi

Much like Japanese Hina Matsuri (girl's day) where people enjoy food like hishi-mochi (diamond-shaped rice cake) or hina-arare (cubic rice crackers), hamauri is celebrated with specific foods. One example is fuuchi mochi or yomogi-mochi. This is a type of rice cake mixed with yomogi or artemisia herb. You may recognize the herb since it is commonly served in Okinawa with soba noodles or seasoned steamed rice. Yomogi is considered a superfood because of its strong health benefits such as lowering cholesterol and relieving constipation. Being a textbook-example of the old saying "good medicine tastes bitter," its strong flavor and scent may be discouraging. However, fuuchi-muchi/yomogi-mochi utilizes the yomogi as a nice accent.

Inari-zushi & fried chicken

This Okinawan sushi wrapped in aburaage (fried tofu pouch) is a must-try. Flavored much lighter than those of mainland Japan, its delicate sweetness and sourness can get you hooked. And when you eat one, don't forget to couple it with some fried chicken.

Tempura

Tempura, in Okinawa, is often considered a snack food. Sakana (fish), ika (squid), and imo (sweet potato) are popular ingredients for tempura. Buy some at supermarkets and convenience stores before you hit the beach.

Pork tamago (egg) onigiri

Recognized as one of Okinawa's most popular signature foods, this delicious onigiri sandwiches baked pork spam and egg and is like Hawaiian musubi. You'll find these at any convenience store or supermarket, but there are even shops dedicated to this specific Okinawan delicacy. Let's take a bite and replenish energy for some fun on the beach.

Seaside Drive-in's soup

When you go to the beach, especially on the west coast of the island, I recommend that you make a stop at Seaside Drive-in Restaurant in Onna Village for a cup of soup. Their homemade pork bone broth-and cream-based soup is loved by locals and tourists alike. You can order one for a take-out and enjoy it on the beach. (GPS Coordinates: N 26.44261, E 127.80348)

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



INARI-ZUSHI

YOMOGI MOCHI

FRIED CHICKEN

TEMPURA

PORK TAMAGO ONIGIRI

SEASIDE DRIVE-IN'S SOUP



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the video on
how to make!



SANGUWACHI GUWASHI

A great Okinawan treat for a beach picnic

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Much like how Andagi is dubbed the “Okinawan doughnut,” “Sanguwachi Guwashi (sweets of March)” should be called the “Okinawan financier” in my opinion. This Okinawan sweet has a rectangular shape and a smooth, sweet taste just like a French madeleine.

Searching for a perfect beach treat, I found this simple Okinawan recipe to try. Sanguwachi Guwashi has a close tie to the Okinawan tradition of beach picnics and, better yet, it only requires ingredients you might already have in your pantry like flour, sugar, and oil.

March 3 of the lunar calendar in Okinawa is Hamauri, a day to pray for girls’ health as well as one where women and girls visit the beach to be blessed by the seawater. Back in the day, men were not part of this tradition, but today it is more of a seasonal family event to celebrate the arrival of spring.

One thing definitely hasn’t changed: the picnic food and treats enjoyed at a refreshing beach picnic.

Much like other Okinawan traditions, locals would pack bento meals in stacked boxes called “jyuubako” or “ujyuu.” In the case of Hamauri, four bento boxes are often stacked under the name “Sanguwachi ujyuu (bento boxes of March).”

According to Kayoko Matsumoto, an expert on Okinawan cuisine, side dishes such as fish tempura and burdock rolled with meat are usually what go in the top box. In the second level, red rice balls. The third and fourth boxes are for Sanguwachi Guwashi and “Fuuchi-muchi,” which is rice cake mixed with artemisia herb.

If you have tried Andagi doughnuts, you’ll find many similarities with Sanguwachi Guwashi because both sweets share similar ingredients and cooking methods.

Still, there are some differences. First, Sanguwachi Guwashi is rectangular with two or three vertical slits, while Andagi is round shape. Second, Sanguwachi Guwashi is thought to be crispier as it is thinner than

the Okinawan doughnut.

Though I knew about the difference between the two sweet treats, the Sanguwachi Guwashi I made looked more like Andagi. Molding the dough was a challenge. I also added too much baking powder, making each piece thicker than the recipe called for. Nevertheless, my first try at Sanguwachi Guwashi did render a lightly sweet, slightly crispier cake than Andagi.

This year, March 3 of the lunar calendar falls on April 19. With about two months to go before the Hamauri day, I’m thinking about taking another shot at the recipe. Give it a try yourself, it’s sure to make your beach picnic sweeter!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

INGREDIENTS

(for 8 pieces)

- Egg (1 piece) • Sugar (70g) • Oil (10cc)
- Flour (140g) • Baking powder (2g)
- Flour to be sprinkled on the dough and a cooking board (appropriate amount)
- Oil to fry the dough (appropriate amount)

DIRECTIONS

(Based upon recipe by Kae Izena, a cooking expert)

- 1 Sieve flour (140g) and baking powder (2g) together.



- 2 Put a beaten egg in a bowl and stir it with sugar (70g). Be careful not to let the mixture bubble.



- 3 Put the mixture of flour and baking powder in the bowl of egg and sugar. Stir until ingredients are about 80 percent combined. Add oil (10cc) and mix again until the dough becomes hard (and soft) enough to be slit with a knife.



- 4 Wrap the dough with plastic wrap and let it cool in the fridge for about 30 minutes.



- 5 Sprinkle flour on a cooking board. Stretch the dough with a rolling pin or hands into a rectangular shape of 7 cm in width and 1 cm in thickness. Slice the dough into pieces 3.5 cm in length. Create two or three slits on each of them.



- 6 Heat oil in a frying pan to 170°C (338°F). Place pieces of dough in the oil with slits facing up. Flip once the pieces float up in the oil. Fry until golden brown. Take the pieces out of the pan after they crack open with the slits and their inner parts are heated through.



- 7 Let excess oil strain from cakes on paper towels.

- 8 Enjoy warm or cool at your picnic.

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Higashi-son Azalea Festival runs through March 22

STORY AND PHOTO BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Although cherry blossom season may soon come to an end in Okinawa, it's just the beginning for some of spring's other beautiful blossoms.

Until March 22, the annual azalea festival will return to Higashi Village in the northeast part of Okinawa's main island.

Petals in white, red, pink, and purple will adorn the hill that overlooks the northeast coast of the island.

Just like last year, the 44th installment of the festival takes place at Azalea Park. Every year, this event attracts around 40,000 visitors. In addition to the colorful flowers, the festival will also include live music, dance performances and many food vendors to celebrate the early arrival of spring.

Known for its moniker "a village of flowers, water, and pineapples," Higashi Village is located about a 40-minute drive from Camp Schwab and 90 minutes from Camp Foster. The festival also welcomes pets, so bring along your four-legged friends to enjoy the festivities with you. Dogs must be kept on a leash and owners must pick up after them.

Other Higashi-son spots

The weather is expected to be great, so take advantage of your visit to enjoy other tourist spots near Azalea Park.

Near Fukuchi River, a pair of "looking glass" mangrove trees will dazzle you with an other-worldly look of their "bankon" (board root).

Ten minutes away from the park, visitors can enjoy a stroll along a boardwalk through a forest of Rhizophoraceae mangrove trees at Hirugi Park.

Another great spot for adventure is Matayoshi Coffee Farm, which offers a coffee bean-harvesting experience, an exciting zipline course and exhilarating ATV rides.

Don't miss the festival and all the activities Higashi-son has to offer to celebrate the spring!

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HIGASHI-SON TSUTSUJI MATSURI (Higashi Village Azalea Festival)

LOCATION: Higashi-son Min no Mori Tsutsuji en (Azalea Park in Higashi villagers' Forest)

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.637316, E 128.156506

DATES: Until March 22

TIME: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. (last admission at 4 p.m.)

ADMISSION: 500 yen (approx. \$3.27) for high school students and above; free for middle school students and below

- A group of 15 or more can get a discounted price (400 yen)
- Free Parking
- If you're bringing your pet, pets must remain on a leash, even during photo ops. Leashes must be 1.5m or shorter (approx. 60 inches or less). Stretchable leashes must be locked. Clean up after your pets and bring disposal supplies (water bottles, waste bags, etc.). Be responsible for your pets.

HIRUGI PARK

GPS Coordinates: N 26.604012, E 128.144792

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MATAYOSHI COFFEE FARM

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.60990, E 128.14384

Hours (coffee farm): 10 a.m. – 5 p.m. (9:30 a.m. – on Saturdays, Sundays, and holidays)

- Hours for zipline and ATV can be different from the above.
- Free parking
- The zipline ride costs 5,500 yen for those 16 years old and above, and 4,500 yen for those 15 years old and under.
- ATV ride costs 7,000 to 8,000 yen for 16-year-olds and above, 6,000 to 7,000 yen for ages between 11 and 15, and 500 yen for ages 4 – 10.

SAKISHIMASUONOKI

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.636944, E 128.163250

- Free Parking

ZIPLINE AND ATV

COFFEE FARM

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Stripes Sports Trivia

What city did the Thunder play in before making the move to Oklahoma City in 2008?

Answer

Seattle

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DID YOU KNOW?

Okinawa's famous Naha Tug of War used to take place after dark. Bonfires, or "te," were used to illuminate the event back then. Today, the event is hosted at around 4 p.m., drawing quite the crowd. Though the bonfire tradition may be over, the battle flag the competitors carry can still be lit on fire at the top— an homage to the event's nocturnal beginnings.

Kanji of the week

青

Ao/sei [blue]

Language Lesson

How old (are you)?

(Anatawa) Ikutsu desuka?

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

Each row must contain the numbers 1 to 9; each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9; and each set of 3 by 3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 to 9.

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

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

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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Highlands miss
- 5 Mosey along
- 10 Take for a ride
- 14 Bart's teacher
- 15 Asia's _____ Peninsula
- 16 Kind of wolf
- 17 Midday hour
- 18 Not up to snuff
- 20 Desert mount
- 22 Like a new candle
- 23 Part of a flower
- 24 Text, for instance
- 26 Indian royal
- 28 Aniston rom-com, "Rumor _____ It..."
- 29 Luxurious resort
- 32 Bahamas island group
- 35 Bedtime drink
- 37 Comparable (to)
- 38 Figure of speech
- 40 Painter Magritte
- 41 Infatuated
- 43 Like old-time gasoline
- 45 Thanksgiving side
- 46 Aquatic shocker
- 47 Twosome
- 48 Mediocre
- 51 Anatomical cul-de-sac
- 55 Red Square figure
- 57 Posh city dwelling
- 59 Indiana city on the Ohio
- 61 Fingerboard ridge
- 62 DeSoto's "Emergency!" partner
- 63 Hubby's mom, for one
- 64 80s flick, "St. Elmo's _____"
- 65 Small bills
- 66 Pharaoh's land

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13	
14					15						16				
17					18						19				
20				21							22				
23						24			25						
			26		27			28				29	30	31	
32	33	34					35					36			
37						38	39					40			
41				42					43	44					
45				46				47							
			48	49				50			51		52	53	54
55	56						57			58					
59							60						61		
62							63						64		
65							66								67

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DOWN

- 1 Gives for a bit
- 2 Really love
- 3 Rapping Dogg
- 4 Country within Italy
- 5 Encircled by
- 6 Bahrain's capital
- 7 Play loudly
- 8 Nobility title
- 9 Storm center
- 10 Hurlled through the air
- 11 Joined
- 12 Virus prefix
- 13 It often has dashes
- 19 Put down
- 21 Get-up-and-go
- 25 In a wise way
- 27 Act nervous
- 30 Glazier's item
- 31 Made like
- 32 Pampered one?
- 33 Swedish furniture giant
- 34 Run poorly

ACROSS

- 35 Doze (off)
- 36 Compromises
- 39 Telling, as a story
- 42 Low double digits
- 44 Apiece
- 47 Turkey's wattle
- 49 Swings for Tarzan
- 50 "Holy smokes!"

DOWN

- 52 Vatican tribunal
- 53 _____ manual
- 54 Distributes, with "out"
- 55 Toy with theme parks
- 56 Peters who played Dahmer
- 58 Pond denizen
- 60 Fight (for)

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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



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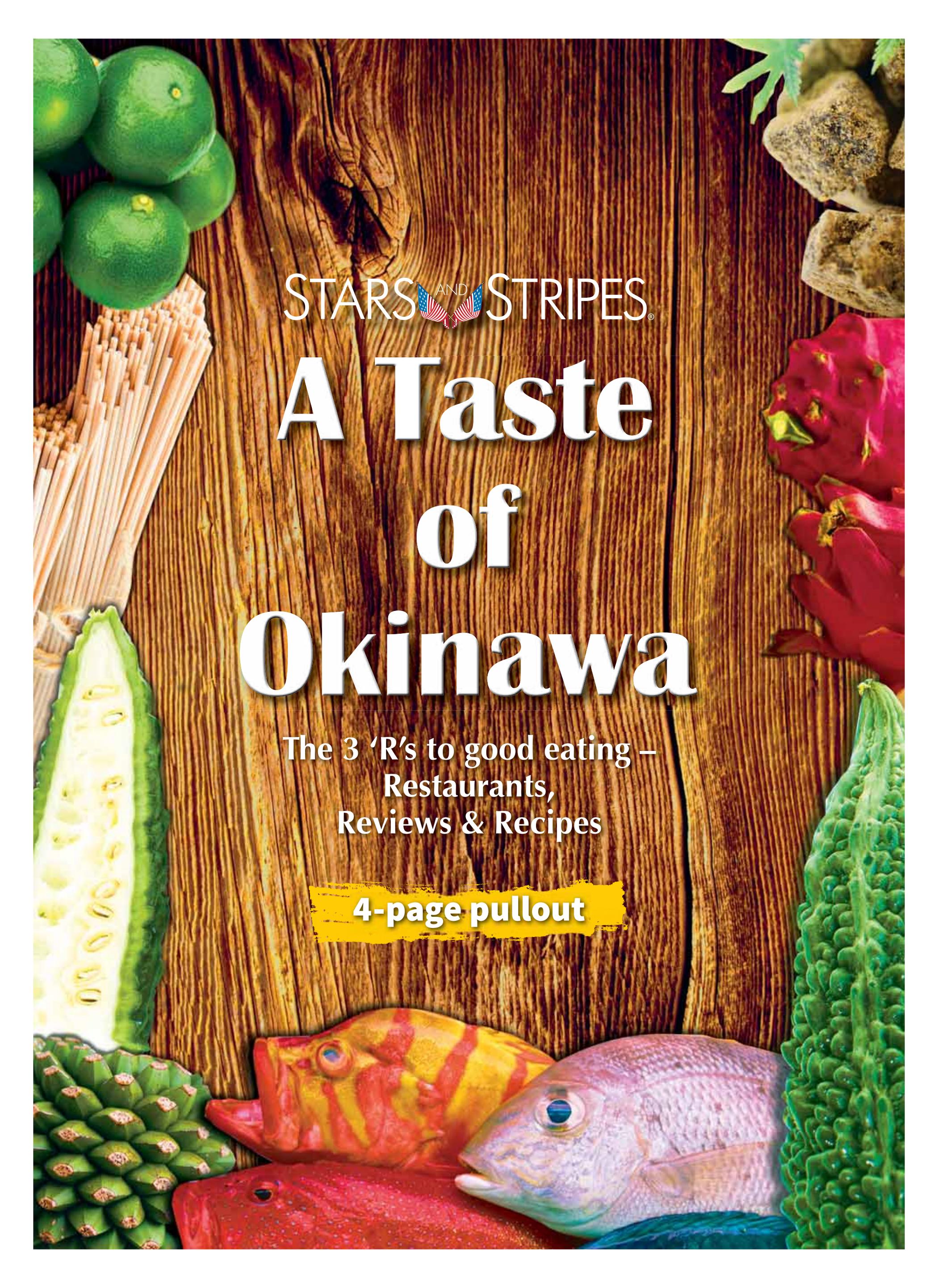


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The fluffiest mochi chiffon cake

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ELEONORA BADELLINO, BYFOOD

The pleasures of food are not always linked to extraordinary flavors, but rather to their texture. In Japan, I learned that food is not just about taste and smell, but also about consistency, and mochi is the perfect example.

This Japanese rice dough, at first bite, will not just drive you crazy for its taste, soft and delicate, but also for the pleasant chewiness, almost a bounce between the lips, unique in its kind.

Its use in Japanese confectionery (like daifuku and dango) is well known. We've previously covered modern mochi desserts like this mochi ice cream recipe and mochi donut recipe, but have you ever tasted it in a cake?



View Video!



byFood cooking class



What is a mochi cake?

If you've ever had mochi, you'll love this Japanese-inspired cake.

The main characteristic of mochi cake is the incredible softness and elasticity given by the use of mochiko which not only gives that marshmallow-like softness, but it also lends a natural sweetness (and it's gluten-free!). Unlike mochi, however, do not expect a sticky consistency but rather a delicate chewiness.

Japanese mochi cake recipe

The cake we are going to make today is inspired by one of the most popular cakes here in Japan: the chiffon cake or shifon keeki (シフォンケーキ), famous for its soft texture, delicate flavor and easy preparation (based on just three ingredients: flour, eggs, and sugar).

To give that mochi-mochi feeling, I used shirata-mako (glutinous rice flour) instead of wheat flour. To make shirata-mako, the glutinous rice flour (mochigome) is first soaked in water, ground into a dough, then dried and lightly ground until it forms small granules.

Shirata-mako is used in the preparation of many wagashi (和菓子 - traditional Japanese sweets) such as daifuku, mochi, and dango... But besides those, it is also suitable for the preparation of western desserts such as cakes, biscuits, and donuts.

To enrich its flavor, I decided to use hojicha powder, Japanese roasted green tea which, once harvested, is toasted in porcelain pots over hot coals, giving it a brownish color and a toasty, nutty flavor. Although it is perhaps one of the lesser-known versions of green tea, it is very popular in Japan and is consumed both hot and cold.

Here is the recipe for hojicha chocolate mochi cake.

How to make mochi cake

1 First, we'll prepare our tea, grinding the little pieces of hojicha to make them into a powder.



2 I used a Japanese tool called suribachi (すり鉢 - mortar), but you can use a blender. Once ready, set aside the powder.

3 Take the eggs and separate the yolks from the whites. Set the whites aside for now.

4 To the yolks, we add oil, milk, and half of the sugar (10 grams), and mix well.

5 Add the shirata-mako a little at a time and energetically stir continuously until it has dissolved (it will take a little time and patience).

6 Once it is ready, sift in the baking powder and mix it all together.



7 As for the egg whites, add the remaining half of the granulated sugar (not all at once, but a little at a time so as not to "disassemble" our meringue) and beat until it forms stiff peaks.

8 Add 1/3 of the meringue to our liquid shirata-mako mixture and mix from the bottom up so that the air is incorporated (this will make our cake soft and fluffy). We will repeat the same process until we have added all of our meringue.



9 Put the mixture in a cake tin (I used the traditional chiffon cake pan that forms a donut with a hole in the middle) and, before putting it in the oven, drop the cake tin on the work surface so as to eliminate air bubbles from the batter.



10 Bake at 170 degrees for 45 minutes.

11 When done, take the cake out of the oven and let it cool upside down.



12 While the cake is cooling, we can prepare the chocolate icing.

13 Break the chocolate into a microwave-safe bowl and heat for 10 seconds. Once the time is up, pull it out and mix your chocolate, which will be starting to melt. Continue the operation, heating in 10-second intervals until it has completely melted.



14 Once the cake has cooled, remove it from the cake tin and cover it with the chocolate.

15 To finish, I garnished the surface by sprinkling on some whole hojicha tea leaves.

Mochi cake ingredients

- 4 eggs
- 80g shirata-mako (2.8oz)
- 50g oil (1.7oz)
- 60g milk (I used soy milk) (2.1oz)
- 20g sugar (0.7oz)
- 2 tbsp hojicha (0.4oz)
- 120g dark chocolate (4.2oz)



Mochi cake variations

While the basic ingredients of this green tea cake remain the same (shirata-mako, eggs, flour, and sugar), you can try playing with different flavors. Instead of hojicha, use green tea powder, matcha, or change the taste completely by going for more citrusy flavors with grated yuzu peel, or more traditional with azuki beans.

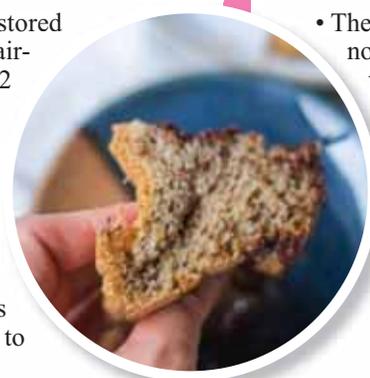
Same with the icing. I used dark chocolate, but you can opt for a white or milk chocolate glaze or a simple icing made with icing sugar and milk.

Let your imagination run wild.

How to store mochi cake

The cake can be stored in the fridge in an airtight container for 2 to 3 days.

With its pleasing softness, it's a cake that goes beyond standard cake textures, and in times when travel is complicated, it's a great way to bring the flavors (and textures) of Japan to our tables.



Did you know that...

- The use of glutinous rice flour is not only linked to Japanese culture. In Hawaii, for example, we also find the famous Hawaiian butter mochi, a cake characterized by the use of mochiko and coconut milk.
- One of the most famous versions of this recipe is the matcha mochi cake!



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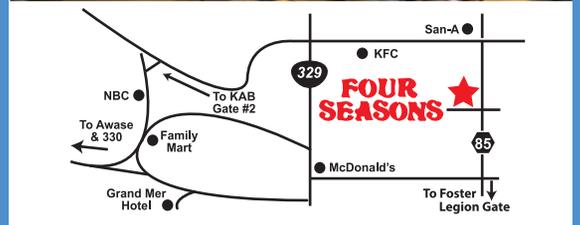
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Four Seasons Urasoe
2-4-5 Iso, Urasoe City
TEL: (098)877-0429 / Open Hours: 11:00-



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



<p>Lunch Hours: 11:00-</p> <p>Lunch Steak Set ¥1,980-</p>	<p>Dinner Hours: 17:00-</p> <p>Dinner Steak Set ¥2,640-</p>
Seafood & other menus are widely available. All sets come with soup, salad, bread or rice, tea or coffee.	

RESTAURANT INFO

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

A Taste of Okinawa



Tasty Thai cuisine will tingle your taste buds

Enjoy authentic Thai cuisine made with organic ingredients at Benjarong! From Spicy Grilled Beef Salad "Nam Tok" and Pad Thai with Shrimp, to Soft-Shell Crab Fried with Original Sauce and Fresh Spring Rolls, our tasty Thai food will tingle your taste buds! We use primarily Okinawan vegetables and organic ingredients whenever possible, focusing on health and local production. Vegetarian meals and herb-free options are also available. We welcome solo diners and families with children, and offer a lunch menu, kids' menu and takeout menu. We have 4 counter seats, 50 table seats, 4 terrace seats and 7 parking spots available.

Vegetarian food, English menu Available.

and Credit card accepted

3-17-12 Mashiki, Ginowan-shi,
Open all year round
Lunch 11:30-L.O. 14:30
Dinner 17:00-L.O. 21:30
Drink L.O. 22:00

Google Maps

TEL 098-988-8751

RESTAURANT INFO