INSIDE INFO

16 SHOCKING THINGS ABOUT JAPANESE BATHROOMS
PAGES 8-9

GET AWAY TO OKINAWA’S IHEYA ISLAND
PAGE 14

COOK UP CHILI-EBI LIKE AN IRON CHEF
PAGE 15

SPOUSES ADD OKINAWA TO KIDS BOOK SERIES
PAGE 16

MY FAVES
SPICE UP YOUR LIFE WITH JAPANESE CURRY IN A POUCH!
PAGE 17

LET'S TAKE A VIRTUAL VACATION
PAGES 12-13

10 MAJOR CITIES IN JAPAN
Which one should top your bucket list? PAGES 10-11

VOLUME 14 NO. 44 MAY 13 − MAY 26, 2021
SUBMIT STORIES TO: OKINAWA@STRIPES.COM • STRIPESOKINAWA.COM • FACEBOOK.COM/STRIPESPACIFIC

FREE
I am Jason and I am a military child. I move around a lot, because my dad is in the service. Being a military child has its ups and downs.

Being a military child, you have the opportunity to move and live in different places. My family lived in Italy for 5 years, I loved my house there because of my huge backyard, and the trampoline I had. I also lived in Germany but not for very long because I was little and I don't remember anything.

As a family you often live far away from your family. It's hard leaving my grandparents and my grandmother and my cousin. I at least get to visit them, but the last time I saw them was 3 years ago. I miss them so much. Can you imagine not seeing your family for 5 years?

Military children who live on base get to have many friends. Having friends on base is nice because you get to meet friends and share the same experience. Living on base is pretty sad because you have many people looking for you and you must show proof of ID in order to get on base if you’re 16-18 years old.

As you can see, military life has its ups and downs. Even though you don’t get to see some of your family members. You get the opportunity to live in many different places, and you make lots of friends that understand you.

— Jason Relich

Have you ever seen your friends leave to a different state? They are most likely a military child. Moving a lot of times allows me to meet multiple people just like me. You can also travel to so many places or even live in those places. You would also have many options of different foods at every single place you are at.

Having friends that are military children is great because if they move across the globe to the U.S.A, you could still keep contact with them by using an iPhone, or any device. If you know their mom or dad’s American phone number. Also, Most of my dad’s friends either work in the military or support the military. It is the same for my mom.

You can go to many places as a military child. I’ve been to multiple places on Earth like Hawaii, and I have visited a lot of different states and countries.

There are also a lot of foods and appetizers I have eaten, from different places on the globe. I have eaten many cultural foods like Pork Adobo which is pig. I have even eaten crickets as a snack in the Philippines.

In conclusion, being a military child gives a lot of different opportunities to meet new people and it allows you to travel places new but being a military child includes its own ups and downs.

— Sergio Vega
PIZZA HUT LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1000-2100
DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE
Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and multiple drinks.

Atsugi 1030-2000
DELIVERY IS AVAILABLE
Offering: Pizza, Personal Pan Pizza, Wings
Pasta, Breadsticks, Dessert, and multiple drinks.

*We extended Pizza Hut Delivery hours on Friday and Saturday until 2200.

TACO BELL LOCATIONS:

Yokosuka 1000-2100
DRIVE-UP WINDOW AVAILABLE
Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.

*We extended Yokosuka Taco Bells Drive thru hours on Friday and Saturday until 2200.

Atsugi 1000-2000
Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.

Sasebo 1030-2000
Offering: Tacos, Burritos, Quesadillas, Salads, Desserts
Tostadas, and Many other TB Promotional items.
**Celebrating Month of the Military Child**

**Amelia Earhart Intermediate School**

Being a military child, Can be a little wild,
Our parents run errands, All around the world,
In our bed breathing in a steady pace,
We think of this planet, This military place.

**M**
My name is Logan Henderson. Being a military child is fun, because you can meet new friends and go to new places or get gifts from your dad. But when my dad goes on deployment, it makes me sad, because I won’t be seeing him for a week or two. One time he went on deployment for like 6 months. I was very sad. My dad lets me go to different places and sometimes his friends give me stuff. It’s fun and sad being a military child because you meet new people and become friends with them. My dad hopes me tomorrow game is a lot. So, that’s my life being a military child.

**H**
Hello! My name is Malia Edaso, I live in Okinawa, and this is my second time doing this, so I will add more details about what’s going on now. My dad is retired military so I was a military child until I was 6. I am now 9 and I’m turning 10 soon.

Now that I’m just connected to the military, I can stay here longer than other military children, but since almost all my friends are military children, they have to leave the island. A lot of my friends have already left Okinawa or moved away.

Anyway, since I stay here in Okinawa longer than other military children, unlike them, I get to explore more places, like the zoo, aquarium, gardens, beaches, and more tourist places.

**E**
I am not a military child. Being a DoDEA child is interesting. I was born in Okinawa, Japan. Because my dad works for the DoD, I get to go to the American school on base. I used to go to a Japanese school when I was very young and I did many things there. I visited them recently and it was interesting to see because everything pretty much looked the same.

There are a lot of times when I have to do a lot of work, I have some friends and they go to school, I don’t get to travel a lot. My sister hates traveling, and I have to go. I haven’t visited anyone else for about a year.

There are a lot of interesting ways to do things. My family is in Tokyo and Arizona and I get to see them sometimes. I don’t really know them that much.

**C**
I am Nathaniel Kim, a student and a 6th grader. Also, I have noted my opinion using pros and cons about being a military child.

First the Pros: You can move overseas and live in different countries, experiencing different types of people with their languages. You have advantages compared to local kids like free dentist checks and free surgery if there’s a problem. I can learn different languages when I move. I have got friends all over the world with different cultures and languages.

Second, the Cons: I cannot stay in contact with friends since we move to different places. Also, I must adapt to hot, cold, humid, and many different types of weather in many places where to move. I think the education level for military kids is a little low, but I am thankful for teachers who work hard to teach us kids.

In conclusion, life as a military child can be hard or easy. Yet I think a military child is neither specifically hard or easy. I think it’s both, I am thankful for the military supporting me and my family and being a military child. Most likely, I take being a military child as being a privilege.

- Nathaniel Kim

Being a military child is cool, because I get to try new stuff and see new stuff. But moving countries and states was hard for me, missing my old friends but making new ones. For all of you who moved to Okinawa, it must be hard moving away. Instead being a military child is cool. And hope you like being a military child.

- Jamar Graham

Being a military child means moving every 2-3 years for me, and that I only get to see my Dad after 5:00. I don’t really like being a military child sometimes, for small reasons. But, I know my Dad is in the military to help people out, so I don’t complain. I’ve had to move away from friends for my Dad because he is in the military. But I’ve lived in three different places. Washington, California, and Okinawa.

- Noa Kirk

I am Simon Wolfe. Being a military child is boring and not fun. You have to move a lot, because I like my friends and don’t want to move.

I was born in Phoenix. I lived in Arizona for 8 years. It was really hard moving away from all my friends. My Arizona friends are sad. Then I moved to mainland Japan. Then I moved to Okinawa. I like being with my friends and only staying there with my friends and going to the same school. Some of my friends move away from me sometimes.

One day, my dad had to go somewhere and he missed my birthday. I’m happy that my dad or my mom has not been deployed. Staying in different schools is fun but also scary and sad, and sometimes you will cry. My first day at kindergarten, I cried but then I got to first, second, third, fourth grade and soon I will be in fifth grade. Being a soldier is hard for some people.

Sometimes it is good to meet new people and make new friends. Maybe you can visit your old friends again. Maybe they just might visit you one day. My best friend is probably going to visit, and my grandma and grandpa might visit soon.

My uncle is 18 and the best uncle ever. He always play video games with me like Fortnite, Roblox, Rocket League, and all sorts of games like it in Arizona and I am in Okinawa. You should always be with friends and families.

- Alex Robles

I, I am Alina, and I am here to talk about things that are good and bad about being a Military Child. Things that are good about being a military child is that it’s hard to move away from friends, like my best friend Layna. She’s moving back to Nebraska, she’s my best friend ever. At least I get to spend one more year with her. Things that are good about being a military child are you get to live in a bunch of different places. Right now, I live in Okinawa Japan. It’s really fun.

- Sidnee Allman

As you see the title, I’ll tell you the life of being a therapist child. Oh, I should tell you my name. My name is Sophia Wolfe. Fact about me: I was born early and was not gonna be named Sophia. I also learned how to walk at 6 MONTHS OLD and learned how to talk at 9 MONTHS OLD. So, it started when I moved here. My mom got a job, and we moved in April. I was in kindergarten and my brother was in fourth grade. My mom gets to stay home for a week because we just moved here. My mom’s first day was good. She got no clients, because it was her first day. Also, I can’t say the name because it’s their privacy helped her around. Then her boss got a promotion and moved to Foster as a supervisor.

- Alina Wolfe

I, I am Alex Robles, and I am here to talk about things that are bad about being a Military Child. One thing that is bad about being a military child is that it’s hard to move away from friends, like my best friend Layna. She’s moving back to Nebraska, she’s my best friend ever. At least I get to spend one more year with her. Some things that are good about being a military child are you get to live in a bunch of different places. Right now, I live in Okinawa Japan. It’s really fun.

- Alina Wolfe

Being a military child has its pros and cons. A few upsides are that I can make friends in different places, explore new places, and learn new languages. The downsides are that I have to move every 2-3 years, have to go to mainland Japan. Then I moved to Okinawa. I like being with my friends and only staying there with my friends and going to the same school. Some of my friends move away from me sometimes.

One day, my dad had to go somewhere and he missed my birthday. I’m happy that my dad or my mom has not been deployed. Staying in different schools is fun but also scary and sad, and sometimes you will cry. My first day at kindergarten, I cried but then I got to first, second, third, fourth grade and soon I will be in fifth grade. Being a soldier is hard for some people.

Sometimes it is good to meet new people and make new friends. Maybe you can visit your old friends again. Maybe they just might visit you one day. My best friend is probably going to visit, and my grandma and grandpa might visit soon.

My uncle is 18 and the best uncle ever. He always play video games with me like Fortnite, Roblox, Rocket League, and all sorts of games like it in Arizona and I am in Okinawa. You should always be with friends and families.

- Alex Robles

I, I am Alina, and I am here to talk about things that are good and bad about being a Military Child. Things that are good about being a military child is that it’s hard to move away from friends, like my best friend Layna. She’s moving back to Nebraska, she’s my best friend ever. At least I get to spend one more year with her. Some things that are good about being a military child are you get to live in a bunch of different places. Right now, I live in Okinawa Japan. It’s really fun.

- Sidnee Allman

I, I am Alex Robles, and I am here to talk about things that are bad about being a Military Child. One thing that is bad about being a military child is that it’s hard to move away from friends, like my best friend Layna. She’s moving back to Nebraska, she’s my best friend ever. At least I get to spend one more year with her. Some things that are good about being a military child are you get to live in a bunch of different places. Right now, I live in Okinawa Japan. It’s really fun.
M y mom is leaving all the time. And we’re without her for what seems like 24 hours.

My feelings of sadness just continue to climb. But I silently shed my tears. Through the time when she is gone, we try our best to never endlessly longer for her hugs and comforting words. But I never stray from that calling sad song. Although I know I’ll probably see her again.

The thought of “what if I won’t?” kept haunting my mind. My mind will never be on track. But when she comes home, I’m as happy as can be. She’s gone for so long. I’m never willing to stop.

For when she’s here I’m full of glee.

— Magdelin Brooker

A military child being a military child.

Wow! Me too.

At least it will be, I am a military child.

It’ll be true.

— Lillian Corey

B eing a Dodea child is hard. You have to face the hardships of your friends moving away.

Once you get to know your friends move being a Military Child is tough, you make a friend somewhere that you lived your whole life, but once you of your parents join the military you can’t stay in one spot forever anymore. You’ll be jumping from country to country and state to state. You’ll have friends from every single country in the world from Japan to North America. My hometown is Richmond NC (North Carolina). I made quite a few friends there. One of my friends there is I’ve known my whole life moving away was a pain, but I got to Japan things changed. I was in a classroom with very kind people. My partner of the first quarter was there. After a while we became good friends. I thought maybe this isn’t so bad being here people seem pretty chill and cool. This is my personal experience of being a military child.

— Connor E. Brook

I’m Robert Brookes second child of gunnery sergeant Robert J. Brookes. If you are a military child you know that you get to move to other states and places but if you aren’t you can read it here. Being a military child is hard but you have to adapt with your friends and family that you have to move. So the places you will go you will be a military child you can find in Okinawa and it is ok. If you come to Okinawa you should go to Homizoni, blue seal, usainco, four seasons. If you are a military child you have to be so much fun. This is also hard to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Rice. It was also hard meeting new people, but the first person I met was Laya. She was really kind. These are some reasons I love being a military child. It feels weird but great at the same time. I think it could help my future by encouraging me to be brave.

Second, as a Military Child, I meet new people and friends. When I came to Okinawa I made a lot of new friends. It is really exciting to explore new places and your parents might go on deployment for a few months. Oh, the places you will go when you’re a military child you can end up in Japan Okinawa and it is ok. If you come to Okinawa you should go to Homizoni, blue seal, usainco, four seasons. If you are a military child you have to be so much fun. This is also hard to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Rice. It was also hard meeting new people, but the first person I met was Laya. She was really kind. These are some reasons I love being a military child. It feels weird but great at the same time. I think it could help my future by encouraging me to be brave.

— Sara Vu

I was in the classroom with very kind people. My partner of the first quarter was there. After a while we became good friends. I thought maybe this isn’t so bad being here people seem pretty chill and cool. This is my personal experience of being a military child.

— Connor E. Brook

I’m Robert Brookes second child of gunnery sergeant Robert J. Brookes. If you are a military child you know that you get to move to other states and places but if you aren’t you can read it here. Being a military child is hard but you have to adapt with your friends and family that you have to move. So the places you will go you will be a military child you can find in Okinawa and it is ok. If you come to Okinawa you should go to Homizoni, blue seal, usainco, four seasons. If you are a military child you have to be so much fun. This is also hard to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Rice. It was also hard meeting new people, but the first person I met was Laya. She was really kind. These are some reasons I love being a military child. It feels weird but great at the same time. I think it could help my future by encouraging me to be brave.

Second, as a Military Child, I meet new people and friends. When I came to Okinawa I made a lot of new friends. It is really exciting to explore new places and your parents might go on deployment for a few months. Oh, the places you will go when you’re a military child you can end up in Japan Okinawa and it is ok. If you come to Okinawa you should go to Homizoni, blue seal, usainco, four seasons. If you are a military child you have to be so much fun. This is also hard to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Rice. It was also hard meeting new people, but the first person I met was Laya. She was really kind. These are some reasons I love being a military child. It feels weird but great at the same time. I think it could help my future by encouraging me to be brave.

— Connor E. Brook

I was in the classroom with very kind people. My partner of the first quarter was there. After a while we became good friends. I thought maybe this isn’t so bad being here people seem pretty chill and cool. This is my personal experience of being a military child.

— Connor E. Brook

There was a spot in Germany. We used to be super excited.

When I was 7 years old, my parents told me and my brothers that we are moving to Japan! At first I was happy to go to Japan because one of my mom’s relatives was Japanese! So in a way it means I’m 25% Japanese! But when my mom and dad told me we couldn’t take our dogs with us, I was super sad. But when we got there we were scared to make new friends and I thought that there were only Japanese schools. There are many reasons why I love being a Military Child!

First, as a Military Child I have moved to many different places like San Diego, North Carolina, and even one time to Washington DC! I was very little when I lived in San Diego, I was still a car seat! When my family moved to North Carolina, I think I was 4,5, 6, and 7. When I was (my family) want to go to Washington DC! I was still 7. Another reason like being a Military Child is making new friends and getting to remember the old ones. As a Military Child we are strong and can overcome any challenge. In conclusion, these are all of the reasons I love being a Military Child! I feel very safe as a Military Child. I think that being a Military Child will help in the future by making me get used to change.

— Nida Morales

T he most amazing thing about being a Military Child is moving to different places and seeing different things and trying new foods! When I was 7 years old, my parents told me and my brothers that we are moving to Japan! At first I was happy to go to Japan because one of my mom’s relatives was Japanese! So in a way it means I’m 25% Japanese! But when my mom and dad told me we couldn’t take our dogs with us, I was super sad. But when we got there we were scared to make new friends and I thought that there were only Japanese schools. There are many reasons why I love being a Military Child!

First, as a Military Child I have moved to many different places like San Diego, North Carolina, and even one time to Washington DC! I was very little when I lived in San Diego, I was still a car seat! When my family moved to North Carolina, I think I was 4,5, 6, and 7. When I was (my family) want to go to Washington DC! I was still 7. Another reason like being a Military Child is making new friends and getting to remember the old ones. As a Military Child we are strong and can overcome any challenge. In conclusion, these are all of the reasons I love being a Military Child! I feel very safe as a Military Child. I think that being a Military Child will help in the future by making me get used to change.

— Nida Morales

T he most amazing thing about being a Military Child is meeting new friends. I was living in California. It was May, and sadly it was time for my family and I to move to Okinawa, I had never heard about Okinawa, Japan. So I was a bit nervous. I had to move away from my great friends Annabelle and Vivian. When I was on the plane, flying to a new brand new place, that was Okinawa, I felt happy to meet new friends and discover a brand new country. Three months later, I was ready to start third grade. When I arrived in the classroom, my new teacher Mrs. Belcher welcomed me into the classroom, I felt comfortable. When I sat at my desk, I met a girl named Braelyn. That’s when I knew everything was going to be great. There are many reasons why I love being a Military Child.

First, I will talk about what it feels like traveling as a Military Child.

To begin with, I have lived in California, North Carolina and Okinawa. This was about me moving to North Carolina from California. So I learned that it’s okay to move to new places. Next, I will tell you friends. I left my best friends at my school in preschool, but I forgot her name. I met girls named Lilly, Layla, Amelia, Shali, and many more friends. Another detail is the overcome challenges we face. It was also hard to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Rice. It was also hard meeting new people, but the first person I met was Laya. She was really kind. These are some reasons I love being a military child. It feels weird but great at the same time. I think it could help my future by encouraging me to be brave.

Second, as a Military Child, I meet new people and friends. When I came to Okinawa I made a lot of new friends. It is really exciting to explore new places and your parents might go on deployment for a few months. Oh, the places you will go when you’re a military child you can end up in Japan Okinawa and it is ok. If you come to Okinawa you should go to Homizoni, blue seal, usainco, four seasons. If you are a military child you have to be so much fun. This is also hard to meet my new teacher, Mrs. Rice. It was also hard meeting new people, but the first person I met was Laya. She was really kind. These are some reasons I love being a military child. It feels weird but great at the same time. I think it could help my future by encouraging me to be brave.

— Hudson Coia

One of my favorite memories is meeting...
Ms. Bailey & Ms. Barti
Virtual class 1st grade

\[\text{CELEBRATING MONTH OF THE MILITARY CHILD}\]

Check out more military children stories at: militarychild.stripes.com

\[\text{Ms. Bailey & Ms. Barti Virtual class 1st grade}\]

\[\text{Check out more military children stories at: militarychild.stripes.com}\]
Ms. Perez-Lumbreras
Kindergarten

STEARLEY HEIGHTS
ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Check out more military children stories at:
militarychild.stripes.com
many foreigners who visit Japan are confused, intrigued and sometimes baffled by Japanese culture and some of the aspects of life that are unique to Japan. Whether it be the amount of anime, manga and cosplay displayed in Akihabara, the unique and traditional Japanese cuisine and themed restaurants or all of the bowing that takes place amongst Japanese people, Japan has an atmosphere unlike any other country.

So it is no surprise that even Japan’s bathrooms are one of a kind sites that sometimes amaze and perplex visitors. We asked some foreigners living in or visiting Japan what confused, impressed and astonished them about Japanese bathrooms.

1. Automatic doors

If you are a germaphobe than you are going to love handling your business in a modern Japanese bathroom. Many of the newest and high-tech bathrooms have many features that allow people to enter and exit the bathroom without having touched anything (at least with their hands).

Many newer public bathrooms don’t have a swinging door that you must push to enter. Instead, most newer bathrooms have a long corridor that leads to the sectioned off bathroom or have automatic sliding doors like you would find at a supermarket. This allows people to enter and exit the bathroom without pushing or pulling open doors.

2. Automatic seats

Many new toilets have sensors on the toilet which raise and lower when someone approaches. Not having to lift or lower the toilet seat is not only great for avoiding the spread of germs but also convenient for those who forget to lower the toilet seat when leaving.

Ryan, 33, a businessman from Chicago, was shocked when he first witnessed the seat rising. “I was at my hotel and I just entered my bathroom to put my toiletries away when suddenly the seat made a buzzing noise and started rising. It freaked me out because I wasn’t expecting it. But now I like it. I feel like I am in a sci-fi movie,” he said.

3. Auto-flush

When you are finished using the toilet and stand up, a sensor triggers an automatic flush function. Often people forget to flush so this takes care of that problem. Michelle, 29, from Toronto admitted, “I dread opening stalls in Canada to find floaters in the toilet. But in Japan, whenever I went into a stall it would start flushing automatically and then flush again when I left.”

As the flush lever or button is most-likely the dirtiest surface you are likely to touch in a bathroom because no one has washed their hands until after leaving the stall, automatic flushing makes sense. Instead of a lever, having a sensor allows you to flush the toilet without contaminating your hands.

4. Hand washing and drying

Modern bathrooms also come with a sink that has both water and soap dispensers that react to sensors. There is no need to touch a tap or push a soap lever to properly wash your hands.

Something curious, however, is that many public bathrooms in Japan lack a hand dryer or towels. You’ll want to bring a handkerchief or hand towel with you in case, so you’re not drying yourself on your shirt!

5. Surprisingly clean

“Having lived here for 3 years now I’ve probably peed in every train station public restroom, and many more outside of stations. Shockingly, they’ve all been clean and the busy restrooms well maintained.” - Carol (58, USA)

In my experience, both in my home country and when traveling abroad, most public bathrooms I have visited are dirty, dilapidated, foul-smelling; or germ-infested places.

Compared to such baths, the ones I have visited in Japan are surprisingly clean. Many visitors who come to Japan notice that bathrooms at most airports, train stations, hotels, department stores and public restrooms are generally in good working condition and clean.

Most Japanese people seem to be much more careful and cautious about using public spaces. The streets, trains and public spaces in Japan tend to have less garbage, graffiti and filth. Japanese people tend to take their garbage home with them and try to avoid making a mess.

6. Cleaning staff in the bathroom

Most public places have cleaning staff that regularly handle the cleaning and upkeep of the bathrooms. Sweeping, mopping, wiping down toilets and counters, replacing toilet paper and throwing away leftover trash, many bathrooms tend not to get to the point where the smells or sights are overwhelming.

However many foreigners are surprised to see female cleaners cleaning both male and female bathrooms while people are using them.

Mickey, 37, an American teacher living in Chiba mentioned, “Female cleaning staff don’t really care if you’re taking a pee,” and John, 43, a tourist visiting from Australia, felt really uncomfortable as a female cleaning staff was waiting outside his stall for him to finish. “I felt so self-conscious and in the end could’t do it and left the stall without relieving myself.”

7. Musical bidet

Probably the most popular feature of the washlet is the nozzle that extends and squirts water when the bidet button is activated. “Electric toilets that play the sound of a babbling stream and birdsong whilst a robot arm sprays your bum with warm water. Beats western bogs by miles,” chimed in Simon, 54, a traveller from Belgium. And many others agreed with him. “I’m impressed by the singing toilets that make flushing sounds and wash you,” said Megan, 24 from Canada who came to Japan as an exchange student in university.

The nozzle of the bidet is self-cleaning and also pulsates to ensure an effective wash. There are different pressure levels for those who want a lighter or stronger flow of water making the waste elimination process unique and customizable for each user.

8. Warm seat

A common issue with toilets in the winter are the seats get cold and are shocking to the bare skin. Japanese toilets have heated seats to ensure sitting on one will be comfortable and warm.

“Seat warmers are great! At first, it was weird but after living in Hokkaido, I love them,” said Lina, 38, an American ALT currently living in Northern Japan.
9. Toilet Music

Japanese people, particularly females, are embarrassed by the sounds that accompany relieving yourself so toilet designers created a button when pressed broadcasts either water flushing sounds or music to camouflage the bodily sounds that are emitted. But for some foreigners who rather than using this function to hide their sounds, they are quite entertained by the idea of musical toilets.

Adrianna, 40, from Canada, enjoyed the apparatus. “I like the number of music choices I have to go pee!”

Many toilets automatically start a flushing sound or water noise when you sit while others have a specific privacy button that needs to be pressed to activate the feature. Depending on the model, toilets emit flushing sounds, birds chirping, ocean waves and even songs.

10. Privacy

A lot of foreigners from North America were impressed and happy about the level of privacy each stall had to offer. Tyler, 31, from the US really noticed the difference with toilets in Japan compared to back home.

He explained, “I like how long the doors go. And that there aren’t giant cracks where the door meets the hinges. A real sense of privacy that I never got in an American public restroom.”

Carol, 58, a fellow American also agreed. “I love the doors go all the way to the floor and no gaps anywhere.”

11. Deodorizer & dryer

David, 35, a hotel manager from Lake Louise, Canada, was fascinated with the washlet toilets. “The high tech toilet with the remote control bidet built in and the perfume gun are incredible.”

To fight the odors that might exude from the toilet before flushing, modern Japanese toilets also have a deodorizer button that releases an air-freshener scent into the toilet bowl. And a built in dryer also creates air flow to waft away bad odors. The dryer is also useful for drying excess water from the skin which also replaces or decreased the need of a lot of toilet paper. Both efficient and eco-friendly, the toilets aim to save water and paper waste.

12. Toilet tank sink

Many toilets in Japan have a sink attached to the toilet tank that releases clean water to wash hands. This water then goes into the toilet bowl. An efficient and innovative way to save water. Rather than people having to flush the toilet and wash their hands at a separate sink, this option lets you wash your hands with fresh water before it enters the toilet bowl.

Xavier, 47, a long time expat American in Japan admired “the efficiency of the bathrooms with sinks built into the toilet.”

Amanda, 29, a tourist from Seattle, who often visits Japan said, “I was impressed with the privacy of the stalls, the small and big flush modes and the sinks on the tanks. I live in the US and would love to have a toilet with those last two features.”

Marie, 55 from Australia also noticed some interesting things about bathrooms in Japan. “I’d never seen the toilets with the hand washing basin on top. Also, I don’t know if it’s a Japan thing, but the women’s toilets are almost always further away; for example, in shopping malls and cinemas.”

The washlet - toilet technology

Japanese toilets are at the forefront of technological advancement with a variety of features and gadgets that no other toilets had until the company TOTO introduced its washlet style toilet in 1997. Guinness Book of World Records also recognized the washlet as the most sophisticated toilet in the world.

With a list of amazing features, it is no wonder that foreigners who have never used a washlet style toilet leave quite impressed and satisfied.

13. Flushing modes

One thing that might be unique to Japanese toilets are the two types of flushing modes they have. Labelled in Kanji as 一 and 二, which means big and small, users can choose which level of flush they require.

Equivalent to the English differentiation between one and two, 一 is for doing a number two or defecation while 二 refers to a number one or urination.

Carol, 58 from the US admitted, “I have to say though, sometimes I’m confused about which button to flush. Once I learned the kanji it got a whole lot better!”

14. Squatters are still around

“The old school squat toilets felt out of place.” - Nathan, 61, US

On the opposite end of the spectrum, many foreigners who come to Japan come to realize how technologically modern the country has become while still maintaining its traditional aspects as well. Along with robots at airports and hotels giving directions and advice and automatic doors and vending machines everywhere, sometimes it is a shock when visitors walk into an older Japanese-style bathroom with squat toilets.

“When I first got to Hokkaido my house only had a toilet with an uncovered drop port-o-potties,” said Sarah, 34 an American English teacher living in Japan.

The traditional squat toilet that are built into the floor require squatting rather than sitting to use. These relics are still surprisingly widely used and available in train stations, parks, schools and older buildings. Also, many modern buildings usually have one squat style toilet stall along with modern western-style sitting toilets for those who prefer the traditional style toilet.

However, Carol, 58, from the US now prefers squat toilets to western-style ones. “Squat toilets are awesome since I never sit on public toilet seats anyway because of germs. I really like the public restrooms here!”

15. Going paperless

Both traditional and modern Japanese bathrooms might or might not have toilet paper and hand towels for drying after washing hands. If you are in a fancy department store or hotel, you should have a washlet toilet with built-in dryer, toilet paper, automatic hand dryers and paper towels.

But some public bathrooms in older parts of Japan do not provide toilet paper or hand towels. This might be done to save money and reduce paper waste but can be quite shocking to visitors who have already begun eliminating wastes before they realize there is no toilet paper available.

Katie, 23 from California was quite surprised when she was in a Japanese bathroom. “No soap in like half of the bathrooms. No towels or drying systems either. I learned quickly to carry a small hand towel,” she added.

Most Japanese people carry tissue packets to use as toilet paper and hand towels or handkerchiefs for drying hands after washing.

So it might be a good idea to have tissue and towels with you just in case.

16. Emergency button

“The emergency button was nice but made me ask what constitutes an emergency,” asked David, 35, from Canada, when noticing it when he visited a Japanese bathroom.

One thing that confuses foreigners is the extra button that sometimes gets mistaken for a flush button. Many public bathrooms have an emergency button that can be pressed or pulled in emergency situations. Sometimes pushing it sends out a large alarm while other times it sends a signal to security or staff to check on the stall.

I have accidentally pushed it thinking it was the flush button. A loud beeping sound persisted and I didn’t know how to switch it off. So I quickly finished and ran away.

The button is quite useful, especially in a country where the aging population is increasing. Whether it be used for health reasons or safety reasons, having a quick and convenient way to call for help is definitely a feature of the Japanese toilet that most people can appreciate.

Out and about in Japan, when nature calls it is good to know that you will have a bathroom that will most likely be clean, in good working condition and convenient with any current edge technological devices and features that will add an even more interesting experience to an already adventurous trip to Japan. Make sure to experience all that Japan has to offer both culturally and technologically. Also make sure to snap a picture of the modern toilet to show your friends back home.
O
nce you’ve decided to explore Japan, how do you choose which major cities in Japan to see? The truth is, there is no one-size-fits-all answer; it really depends on the preferences of each individual traveler. Do you enjoy a high tech urban atmosphere with crowds of people or quiet solitude among nature? Would you rather shop for the hottest trends or visit historical spots? Swim among tropical fish or feed the elusive, if you are lucky, you just may encounter one of the kimono-adorned beauties taking a stroll!

Keep reading to find the perfect selection of major cities in Japan for your next travel adventure!

1 Sapporo

Quick Facts
- **Prefecture:** Hokkaido
- **Recommended to Travelers Who Like:** the winter season and fresh seafood, produce, and dairy products.
- **Points of Interest:** Sapporo Snow Festival, Sapporo Beer Museum, Shirio Koibito Park (cookie factory), Sapporo Factory (shopping and entertainment complex), seafood markets.
- **Famous Foods:** kaisen-don (a seafood rice bowl), soup curry, Genghis Khan (barbecued mutton), miso ramen, soft serve ice cream

Of the major cities in Japan, Sapporo, in Hokkaido Prefecture, is Japan’s northernmost major city and the nation’s fifth-largest overall. The chilly climate makes it the ideal destination for people who enjoy the winter season.

The city is the site of the famous Sapporo Snow Festival, an event held each February showcasing an array of marvelous ice and snow sculptures that is visited by about 2 million people each year!

Athletic types can visit the Sapporo Winter Sports Museum, which showcases the legacy of the 1972 Winter Olympics, or they can hit the slopes, skiing or snowboarding in one of the ski resorts near Sapporo. And of course, not to be missed is Sapporo’s delectable seafood cuisine, revered throughout Japan!

2 Tokyo

Quick Facts
- **Prefecture:** Tokyo
- **Recommended to Travelers Who Like:** big city thrills, the latest technology, trend spots.
- **Points of Interest:** Tokyo Tower, Tokyo Skytree, Shibuya Crossing, Sensoji Temple, Meiji Shrine, Ryogoku Kokugikan (the National Sumo Hall), Okutama and Kawaii Culture Spots
- **Famous Foods:** monjayaki (pan-fried batter and various ingredients), ningyo-yaki (baked cake in the shape of a doll), kintaro-ame (a traditional candy)

Tokyo inarguably is Japan’s most well-known city. The Tokyo Metropolis is made up of 23 Special Wards, home to upwards of 35 million people. It is also known for having the world’s busiest pedestrian crossing, known as Shibuya Scramble Crossing, and what many would say is the busiest train station in the world in Shinjuku.

Tokyo also is the center of otaku culture in Akihabara with a plethora of games, anime, and electronics shops; while the Harajuku and Shibuya districts are known for their contributions to fashion and kawaii (cute) culture.

However, traditional culture is still very much alive in Tokyo, with a number of shrines and temples throughout the city as in its historical Asakusa area, festivals held throughout the year; and also the world’s largest sumo stadium.

3 Yokohama

Quick Facts
- **Prefecture:** Kanagawa
- **Recommended to Travelers Who Like:** cities by the sea.
- **Points of Interest:** Yokohama Red Brick Warehouse, Yokohama Landmark Tower, Marine Tower, Yokohama Chinatown, Yokohama Port, Nipponmatsu Memorial Park, Yokohama Museum of Art, Cosmo Clock 21 (Ferris wheel), Cup Noodles Museum, Minato Mirai 21 shopping center.
- **Famous Foods:** gyunabe (beef hot pot), sanma-men (Yokohama-style ramen), Spaghetti Napolitan, chuuka-ryori (Chinese cuisine)

Yokohama lies south of Tokyo, on the scenic western coast of Tokyo Bay. It is known for being Japan’s first port that officially opened to foreign trade in 1859. It’s not a stretch to say that international influences have shaped Yokohama’s character, from the city’s signature brick architecture to the famous Yokohama Chinatown that was formed by Chinese immigrants who settled in the 1860s.

Kanagawa is the city with the second largest population in Japan. Visitors to Yokohama can take in a scenic harbor view via waterbus or atop the iconic Ferris wheel, as well as enjoy various museums and shopping opportunities.

4 Nagoya

Quick Facts
- **Prefecture:** Aichi
- **Recommended to Travelers Who Like:** transport and technology.
- **Points of Interest:** Nagoya Castle, JR Central Towers, Toyota Automobile Museum, Toyota Commemorative Museum of Industry and Technology, SCMaglev and Railway Park, Asahi Beer Factory, Nagoya City Science Museum, Osu Kannon Temple, World Cosplay Summit
- **Famous Foods:** miso-katsu (miso sauce pork cutlet), tebasaki (chicken wings), kishimen (a flat noodle dish), tenmusu (rice ball with shrimp tempura)

Nagoya has long been the center of Japan’s automotive and aviation manufacturing, as well as a technological hub with a growing robotics industry. Visitors can explore Nagoya’s tech-centric side by visiting the Nagoya City Science Museum, the SCMaglev and Railway Park, or either of the two Toyota museums.

In recent years, Nagoya has gained international fame for being the location of the World Cosplay Summit, where cosplayers from 20 nations worldwide compete in the World Cosplay Championship and participate in one of Japan’s most impressive cosplay parades.

5 Kyoto

Quick Facts
- **Prefecture:** Kyoto
- **Recommended to Travelers Who Like:** traditional culture.
- **Points of Interest:** Fushimi Inari Shrine, Kiyomizu-dera Temple, Kinkakuji (Golden Pavilion), Ryoan-ji Temple, Gion (geisha district), Kyoto National Museum
- **Famous Foods:** kaiseki ryori (multi-course Japanese haute cuisine), yuba (tofu skin), shojin ryori (Buddhist vegetarian cuisine), yatsushashi (a cinnamon mocha confectionary filled with red bean paste or sweet rice flour)

Kyoto was the official capital of Japan for over 1,000 years and remains one of the foremost destinations to experience traditional Japanese culture. The city has around 2,000 temples and shrines, including the “Golden Pavilion,” Ryoanji known for its zen rock garden, and Fushimi Inari Taisha, the shrine with a tunnel of 5,000 vermilion torii gates.

One of the most talked-about areas of Kyoto is the “geisha district” of Gion. While geiko (the Kyoto term for geisha) rarely appear in public, it is also known for being elusive, if you are lucky, you just may encounter one of the kimonos-adorned beauties taking a stroll!

Art and history lovers will also not want to miss the Kyoto National Museum, which houses over 240 designated National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties.
Quick Facts

- **Prefecture**: Nara
- **Points of Interest**: The Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara, Todaiji Temple and Daibutsu (Big Buddha statue), Kasuga Taisha Shinto Shrine, Nara Park, Yoshino cherry blossom spot, Nara National Museum, Nara Park
- **Famous Foods**: narazuke (Nara pickles), persimmon cuisine, Nara chamomi (rice cooked in Japanese tea), yomogi (mugwort) mochi

Nara, Japan’s very first capital, is another treasure trove of traditional culture as well as a place of natural beauty. It is the location of the UNESCO World Heritage Site “Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara,” which is made up of six temples and ruins, along with the Kansai Plain Industrial Forest. However, one of the things that Nara is most known for is its abundance of wild deer that roam the city freely. This is rooted in the ancient Shinto belief that deer are messengers of the gods.

Visitors have the chance to get acquainted with the local creatures by visiting Nara Park, home to hundreds of deer, who are known to bow to those feeding them. And if you want to see the unique culture of the city, there’s no better place to visit than a shop called Nakatanidou, located in Nara as well.

Osaka is known for its abundance of wild deer that roam the city freely. This is rooted in the ancient Shinto belief that deer are messengers of the gods.

Quick Facts

- **Prefecture**: Osaka
- **Points of Interest**: Dotonbori (nightlife district), Osaka Castle, Osaka Aquarium Kaiyukan, Universal Studios Japan, Kuchu Teien Observatory, Sumiyoshi Taisha Shrine
- **Famous Foods**: takoyaki, okonomiyaki, yakiniku, kitsune (deep fried tofu) udon, taiko manju (a baked sweet filled with azuki bean paste that is shaped like a taiko drum)

Osaka is the largest city in the Kansai region and one of the largest in Japan, but what it’s really known for is its lively and colorful character, from its distinct dialect to its cuisine that has become popular throughout Japan. Osaka is a great place to experience a unique urban atmosphere, with entertainment for both adults and kids.

Osaka has one of the world’s largest public aquariums and is home to Universal Studios Japan. And no trip to Osaka would be complete without a visit to the entertainment district of Dotonbori, with its iconic neon signboards, countless restaurants, and amusement facilities.

Osaka also has places to enjoy traditional Japanese culture and history, such as Osaka Castle, Sumiyoshi Taisha Shrine, and even Bunraku puppet shows.

Quick Facts

- **Prefecture**: Hyogo
- **Points of Interest**: Kobe Harborland, Meriken Park, Nada district sake breweries, Arima Onsen, Mount Rokko, Kobe Earthquake Memorial Museum
- **Famous Foods**: Kobe beef, akashiyaki, (egg batter octopus dumplings), takomeshi (octopus rice), sake

Kobe is a port city roughly 30 km west of Osaka. Just like Yokohama, it was one of the earliest cities that opened to foreign trade after Japan’s policy of seclusion officially ended. The name “Kobe” has become synonymous worldwide with the area’s high-quality Kobe beef. In fact, basketball superstar Bryant is said to have been named after the specialty!

The city also borders the Mount Rokko mountain range, which is a popular hiking spot and is next to one of Japan’s oldest hot springs, Arima Onsen. Another draw is the sake breweries in the Nada district, known for being among the best in Japan. Kobe was also one of the sites hit by the Great Hanshin Earthquake in 1995. The city has since become entirely rebuilt and the event is commemorated in the Kobe Earthquake Memorial Museum.

Quick Facts

- **Prefecture**: Okinawa
- **Points of Interest**: Churaumi Aquarium, Sefa-Utaki, Taketomi Island, Kouri Island, Miyako Island, Ishigaki Island, Yonaguni Island, Okinawa Prefecture, Okinawa Peace Memorial, Tamatorizaki Observatory, various beaches
- **Famous Foods**: goya chanpuru (a dish with bitter melon, egg, tofu, and pork), umibudo (sea grapes), Okinawa soba (wheat noodles in soup), shikuwasa citrus fruit

Okinawa is Japan’s southernmost prefecture, made up of 160 islands. It is known for its subtropical climate that is home to many rare species of plants and animals. White sand beaches and clear, blue waters of countless tropical islands. It is synonymous worldwide with the area’s high-quality Kobe beef. In fact, basketball superstar Bryant is said to have been named after the specialty!

The last destination on our list is not actually a city! Because of its unique geography, it made sense to include Okinawa Prefecture as a whole. Okinawa is Japan’s southernmost prefecture, made up of 160 islands. It is known for its subtropical climate that is home to many rare species of plants and animals. White sand beaches and clear, blue waters of countless tropical islands.

Which Japan Destination Will You Choose?

So have you decided which city in Japan you would like to visit? Modern Tokyo? History-rich Kyoto? All of them? Whichever place you visit, you can be assured to find treasures in just about every corner of Japan!
For many of us, the coronavirus pandemic meant canceled flights and postponing our travel plans in 2020. How we think about travel and how travel will be impacted in the future remains a mystery. We may be stuck at home, but that doesn’t mean we can’t dream of where we’ll go next. There is still so much of the world we have left to see, so join us as we revisit our favorite locations in the Pacific and highlight the must-see spots. Take a plunge in one of Okinawa’s pristine beaches, dance the night away in Seoul’s Gangnam District, or hunt for some deals in one of Bangkok’s famous floating markets — all from the comfort (and safety) of our homes. Join us, take notes, and don’t pack your bags, we’re going on a Virtual Vacation!

**Hanoi**

War and conflict might be what many think of when they think of Vietnam. But the country is a thriving location with history, culture and delicious food you’ll love exploring. In this video, we’ll take you to beautiful and busy Hanoi where we’ll visit the Hanoi Cathedral and Opera House, Hoan Kiem Lake and more. We’ll save you a bowl of pho!

**Guam**

For this virtual journey, we head to “Where America’s day begins” — tropical, beautiful Guam! This a snorkeler’s paradise and one with easy access from anywhere in the Pacific. We’ll head to Chamorro Village for some good eats and local shopping, then to the Latte Stone Park for a trip back to ancient Guam. We’ll also try some delicious Chamorro foods like kelaguen and finadene sauce. A stop in Guam also requires a visit to Two Lovers Point for a beautiful view of the crystal turquoise waters and some beautiful photos. Whether you’re stationed outside of Guam or will soon PCS to the island, you won’t want to miss what we have in store for you in this online tour.

**Osaka**

Get ready to head to another hotspot in Japan – Osaka! We’ll visit Dotonbori, Osaka Castle and more in this video getaway. Hop on a boat ride to take in a good look at the city lights, try their signature octopus street food, takoyaki, and get a great view from above at the Umeda Sky Building. If you’re stationed in Japan and Osaka has been on your list, you won’t want to miss this virtual vacation!

**Bali**

Take a trip to tropical and exotic dream destination Bali! Here we’ll make virtual stops at one of the country’s oldest temples for an amazing view and a taste of local traditional dance. Then, we’ll swing from the palm trees above the Jatiluwih rice terraces for some adventure and great views. Later, we’ll pick up some tasty satay chicken and mee goreng fried noodles. Let’s go!
**Seoul**

There is a ton to see and we only have a short time to do it, so let's head out! We’ll take you to Insadong, a busy district with traditional tea houses and art galleries, then to Myeongdong, one of the most famous shopping areas in Seoul. We’ll also make a stop in Gangnam and Hongdae for a look at the nightlife and hotspots where young Koreans go to trendy cafes and bars. Seoul is a hop and a skip from most places in the Pacific, so it will be a great spot to consider when travel is open again.

**Okinawa**

Let’s get ready to hit the beach and visit Japan’s subtropical island, Okinawa. This island will make you feel worlds away from the mainland with its crystal blue waters and sandy white beaches. But, don’t worry about packing a bathing suit or sunscreen because this journey is virtual! We’ll skip the lines and the crowds and head straight into Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium, then dive in at the Maeda Point’s beautiful blue grotto and more!

**Manila**

Hop on as we head to the capital city of the Philippines. Here, old meets new with the Spanish-influenced architecture and towering skyscrapers. We’ll take a look at Old Manila, the city-center, where Fort Santiago and Manila Cathedral offer you a close-up look at the city’s history and future. In this feature, we’ll also stop in and look at former U.S. military installation, Clark Air Base, which is now having a second life of its own, as a public park and airport.

**Bangkok**

Let’s take a virtual journey to the busy streets and colorful markets of Bangkok. We’ll try delicious Tom Yum Kung, mango sticky rice and Thai milk tea as we stroll through Wat Pho for a look at the reclining golden Buddha and for an adventure in the labyrinth-like Khao San Road area. We’ll also take a detour to Thailand’s ancient capital, Ayutthaya, for a peek at the Wat Mahathat in the banyan tree roots.

**Tokyo**

Is a visit to one of the busiest and brightest cities in the world your dream? Tour Tokyo with us as we hit some of the must-see spots this unbelievable Pacific destination has to offer. Maneuver through crowded Shibuya Crossing, visit old Tokyo in Asakusa District and get lost in the neon lights and manga of Akihabara— all without leaving your home!
Get away to Okinawa’s Iheya Island

Since making Okinawa my home in 2007, I have visited more than 20 islands within the archipelago. Iheya Island is most definitely in my top three. I enjoyed it so much from the first visit that it became my summer routine to grab my snorkeling gear and hop on the ferry to Iheya.

The island, population 1,200, is about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port. The fare is around $47, about the same as the fare to the Kerama Islands, about $46 by ferry from Motobu Port. The fare is about 80 minutes by ferry to Iheya Island, about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port, Okinawa, offers a low-key island ambience without an abundance of tourists.

Food:

Several diners and a few small grocery stores are available on the island but be mindful not to clear the shelves as supplies are limited. A food bank is available if supplies run low.

---

EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
STARS and STRIPES
www.stripes.com

Iheya Island, about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port, Okinawa, offers a low-key island ambience without an abundance of tourists.

**DIRECTIONS:** Iheya is an 80-minute ferry ride from Motobu Port. The roundtrip fare is 4,720 yen for ages 12 and older; 2,360 yen for ages 6 to 11. No public parking is available at Motobu Port. Private parking near the port is 700 yen per day.

**COSTS:** About 4,000 yen a day for car rental; about 8,000 yen per night for hotel with two meals per person.

Iheya Island is most definitely in my top three. I enjoyed it so much from the first visit that it became my summer routine to grab my snorkeling gear and hop on the ferry to Iheya Island, about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port, Okinawa, offers a low-key island ambience without an abundance of tourists.

**FOOD:** Several diners and a few small grocery stores are available on the island but be mindful not to clear the shelves as supplies are limited.

---

Iheya Island, about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port, Okinawa, offers a low-key island ambience without an abundance of tourists.

**DIRECTIONS:** Iheya is an 80-minute ferry ride from Motobu Port. The roundtrip fare is 4,720 yen for ages 12 and older; 2,360 yen for ages 6 to 11. No public parking is available at Motobu Port. Private parking near the port is 700 yen per day.

**COSTS:** About 4,000 yen a day for car rental; about 8,000 yen per night for hotel with two meals per person.

Iheya Island is about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port, Okinawa, offers a low-key island ambience without an abundance of tourists.

**FOOD:** Several diners and a few small grocery stores are available on the island but be mindful not to clear the shelves as supplies are limited.

---

Iheya Island is about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port, Okinawa, offers a low-key island ambience without an abundance of tourists.

**DIRECTIONS:** Iheya is an 80-minute ferry ride from Motobu Port. The roundtrip fare is 4,720 yen for ages 12 and older; 2,360 yen for ages 6 to 11. No public parking is available at Motobu Port. Private parking near the port is 700 yen per day.

**COSTS:** About 4,000 yen a day for car rental; about 8,000 yen per night for hotel with two meals per person.

Iheya Island is about 80 minutes by ferry from Motobu Port, Okinawa, offers a low-key island ambience without an abundance of tourists.

**FOOD:** Several diners and a few small grocery stores are available on the island but be mindful not to clear the shelves as supplies are limited.
Cook up Chili-Ebi like an Iron Chef

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Chili-Ebi is a sweet and spicy shrimp dish you’ll find at many Chinese restaurants in Japan. The popularity of this dish is often credited to Chen Kenichi, one of the cast members of “Ryōri no Tetsujin,” the Japanese version of the “Iron Chef.”

However, it is actually the Kenichi’s father, Chen Kenmin, who is the mastermind behind the sweet and spicy shrimp recipe. Chen Kenmin was born in 1919 in a deep part of Szechuan Province and at age 10, he began his career as a cook, according to the website of Shisen Hanten. This restaurant chain based in Tokyo was founded by Chen Kenmin in 1958 and passed down to Chen Kenichi.

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

led Chen Kenmin to his now-famous Ebi-Chili recipe, TV-Asahi reported.

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

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

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

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

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

---

**INGREDIENTS**

**Ingredients to adjust flavor**

- Cooking sake (15cc)
- Sugar (1.67cc)
- Salt (a little)
- Chinese soup stock (a little)
- Pepper (a little)
- Water (200cc)
- Starched mixed with water (200cc)

**Condiments to wash shrimp**

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

**Condiments to pre-season shrimp**

- A little bit of salt, pepper, starch

**Condiments for chili sauce**

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

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Preparation of shrimp before cooking

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

2. Pre-seasoning of Shrimp

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

3. Preparation for Chili Sauce

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

4. Time to cook

   1. Pour oil (15cc) in a frying pan on a stove over high heat.
   2. Add the pre-seasoned shrimps and heat them for 20 to 30 seconds. Flip them in the pan to do the same to the other side. (The idea is to create a barrier around each shrimp to seal its flavor inside.) Set the shrimp aside. Photo 4-2
   3. Pour oil (30cc) into the same frying pan.
   4. Add grated ginger (10cc), grated garlic (7.5cc), ketchup (22.5cc), dou ban jiang/chili bean sauce (7.5cc) and fry them. (It is recommended to gather them in one portion of the pan to fry them together at first before spreading and mixing them on other portions of the pan.) Photo 4-13
   5. Turn the stove off once bubbles start to appear on the surface. Let the ingredients cook with the remaining heat.
   6. With the stove still off, add water (200cc) to the pan. Photo 4-13
   7. Add cooking sake (15cc), sugar (1.67cc), a pinch of salt, Chinese stock, and pepper. Mix them together. (Check the flavor and adjust as needed.)
   8. Add the shrimp into the pan and return to heat.
   9. Add the sliced green onion (30g).
   10. Make sure that the sauce boils once. This takes about 30 seconds.
   11. Turn the stove off.
   12. Add starch mixed with water (30cc), Chinese soup stock (a little).
   13. Mix and stir them together to prevent them from having solid portions. Photo 4-13
   14. Once the sauce gains thickness, turn the stove back on.
   15. Make sure the sauce and shrimp are cooked thoroughly.
   16. Add chili oil (5cc), if you want to add more spice.
   17. Finish up the recipe by stirring in vinegar (1.67cc).
   18. Serve the dish with a side of steamed rice, over rice, or alone.
   19. Enjoy and いただきます!(Itadakimasu)!
YOKOTA AIR BASE – Marines storm a beach, fighter jets line up on an airfield and troops parachute from an aircraft in the latest installments of a book series for children living in military communities.

Yokosuka, Japan-based Navy wives Sarah Murphy and Amy Dobbins published their first children’s book, “Good Morning Yokosuka,” last summer. The 16-page illustrated book – for early readers or for parents to read aloud to youngsters – features a guided-missile destroyer underway as Mount Fuji rises against a sunset on the cover. It gives readers a snapshot of life for children at the home of the 7th Fleet.

Murphy and Dobbins, both mothers of young kids, dropped by the library in April at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo to show off the latest installments in what has become a series: “Good Morning Okinawa” and “Good Morning Guam.”

The new books show places familiar to kids on the islands, such as parks and beaches. Spouses add Guam, Okinawa to children’s book series

The new books do not replace existing retail stores managed by GSA in Japan. For more information, please contact your local Customer Service Director Cynthia McKeague at cynthia.mckeague@gsa.gov.

By Seth Robson, Stars and Stripes
Published: April 9, 2021

The new books show places familiar to kids on the islands, such as parks and beaches.

YOKOTA AIR BASE – Marines storm a beach, fighter jets line up on an airfield and troops parachute from an aircraft in the latest installments of a book series for children living in military communities.

Yokosuka, Japan-based Navy wives Sarah Murphy and Amy Dobbins published their first children’s book, “Good Morning Yokosuka,” last summer. The 16-page illustrated book – for early readers or for parents to read aloud to youngsters – features a guided-missile destroyer underway as Mount Fuji rises against a sunset on the cover. It gives readers a snapshot of life for children at the home of the 7th Fleet.

Murphy and Dobbins, both mothers of young kids, dropped by the library in April at the home of U.S. Forces Japan in western Tokyo to show off the latest installments in what has become a series: “Good Morning Okinawa” and “Good Morning Guam.”

The new books show places familiar to kids on the islands, such as parks and beaches.

The Okinawa book includes scenes of Marines training with an amphibious vehicle, an AH-1 Cobra helicopter and an MV-22 Osprey aircraft as well as Air Force F-15 Eagle fighters.

The Guam book features a scene of Navy explosive ordnance disposal troops parachuting from a cargo plane and speeding in an inflatable boat while a submarine surfaces off the island.

It tells kids about the “boom” that Guam residents are used to hearing as troops detonate some of the World War II-era munitions found on the island. Dobbins’ husband, Lt. Commander Jonathan Dobbins, disposes of explosive ordnance for the Navy. Murphy’s husband, Cdr. Micah Murphy, leads Afloat Training Group Western Pacific.

Illustrations for a fourth book, “Good Morning San Diego,” are being prepared by Seattle-based artist John Molinero, who provided art for the other books, the pair said.

They began collaborating on their first book during coronavirus restrictions that left them with plenty of time to plan, Dobbins said.

“All we were allowed to do was sit outside and talk,” she added.

The books help children to learn: “This is where we live. This is what it looks like. These are the places we visit,” Murphy said.

The Okinawa book includes scenes of Marines training with an amphibious vehicle, an AH-1 Cobra helicopter and an MV-22 Osprey aircraft as well as Air Force F-15 Eagle fighters.

The Guam book features a scene of Navy explosive ordnance disposal troops parachuting from a cargo plane and speeding in an inflatable boat while a submarine surfaces off the island.

It tells kids about the “boom” that Guam residents are used to hearing as troops detonate some of the World War II-era munitions found on the island. Dobbins’ husband, Lt. Commander Jonathan Dobbins, disposes of explosive ordnance for the Navy. Murphy’s husband, Cdr. Micah Murphy, leads Afloat Training Group Western Pacific.

Illustrations for a fourth book, “Good Morning San Diego,” are being prepared by Seattle-based artist John Molinero, who provided art for the other books, the pair said.

They began collaborating on their first book during coronavirus restrictions that left them with plenty of time to plan, Dobbins said.

“All we were allowed to do was sit outside and talk,” she added.

The books help children to learn: “This is where we live. This is what it looks like. These are the places we visit,” Murphy said.

The titles are available at Yokosuka’s Navy Exchange, some on-base gift shops on Okinawa and online at goodmorningmilitarybooks.com.

Robson.seth@stripes.com
Twitter: @SethRobson1

Stripes Okinawa is A Stars and Stripes Community Publication. This newspaper is authorized for publication by the Department of Defense for members of the military services overseas. However, the contents of Stripes Okinawa are unofficial, and are not to be considered as the official views of, or endorsed by, the U.S. government, including the Department of Defense or the U.S. Pacific Command. As a DOD newspaper, Stripes Okinawa may be distributed through official channels and use appropriated funds for distribution to remote and isolated locations where overseas DOD personnel are located. The appearance of advertising in this publication, including inserts or supplements, does not constitute endorsement of those products by the Department of Defense or Stars and Stripes. Products or services advertised in this publication shall be made available for purchase, use, or patronage without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, marital status, physical handicap, political affiliation, or any other nonmerit factor of the purchaser, user, or patron.
In Japan, pouched ready-made curries are a popular item at grocery stores for busy people with little time to prepare a hot home-cooked meal. Today, sales of these pouches are steaming since COVID-19 is drawing more to stay in and seek out convenient comfort foods that aren’t difficult to make.

Even if you are not a fan of curry, perhaps the convenience of these pouched versions is something that may entice you to give them a try.

Most of the packages stocked at the grocery stores and convenience store aisles require just heating the pouch in hot water for a few minutes or simply popping them into the microwave. Smother over fresh steamed rice or even the microwaveable rice packs also available down the aisle and, in less than 10 minutes - voila! — curry rice!

Commonly known as “retort curry,” pouches are what are called “pouched curry sauce” on their labels. Pouched curry sauce was invented in Japan in 1968, according to food company Otsuka Foods. About half a century later, this convenient food has evolved tremendously. Although it started under the concept “a curry sauce which can be heated up in the water and which doesn’t fail anybody,” pouches now seek to even please foodies and curious minds. Some of them replicate the flavors of famous restaurants, while others feature signature foods of local cities.

Pouched curries remind me of my college days, as this comfort food was a decent meal at an affordable price. Though I no longer rely on pouched versions, they still take me back to the old days.

Below are five great options you can find at most supermarkets and convenience stores around Japan. Give these a try next time you’re looking for a nice homestyle meal made in the fraction of the time and a fraction of the price of what you’ll get at a restaurant.

5. Ginza Curry

Bearing the name of the upscale shopping area of Tokyo, this product is intended to bring back the taste of a British-style curry sauce first served up in 1930. Based on demiglace sauce, this one has a well-seasoned flavor and rich aroma.

4. Marugoto Yasa Nasuto Kanjuku Tomato no Kare

As its name suggests, this curry sauce is meant to bring back the taste of tomato and various kinds of vegetables. Among a variety of vegetable, the eggplant slices in this pouch add a nice touch to the mixture. And, with only 155 calories per pack, this will be a good choice if you are looking for something healthy.

3. Kukure Curry

Other curries may come and go, but this one has stood the test of time since its launch in 1971. The unique name comes from the word “cookless.” Known for mild flavor, this is a good choice even kids will enjoy.

2. Bon Curry

This was the very first pouched curry sauce that was launched in 1968. Its name, which is a mixture of the French word “bon (good)” and “curry,” is still considered a standard for pouched curry. Since its launch, Bon Curry has evolved into seven product lines, which amount to 15 kinds of curry sauce, including “Bon Curry Neo” and “Bon Curry Gold.” However, the standard “Bon Curry” is still my favorite from this brand.

1. Lee

If you’re looking to spice up your life, pick up the Lee brand curry. Normally pouched curry offers a few options such as sweet, medium, and spicy, but Lee offers versions in “10x spicier” and “20x spicier” than normal curry sauce. Though Lee doesn’t package “normal spicy” curry, their Spice Chicken Curry is seven times spicier, making it the least spicy of this brand’s offerings.

*All the curry sauces listed above costs around 100 to 250 yen ($1 to $2.50) per pack. Prices can change depending upon each supermarket and convenience store.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com
Try a traditional Japanese comfort food with updated twist

It wasn’t until toward the end of the Muromachi period (1336 to 1573) that tea, or ocha, would solidify its place in Japanese food culture. According to major Japanese food company Nagatanien, as tea became widely available, consumers began to try tea poured over rice and as the dish became popular, it would adopt the name “ochazuke” or “chazuke” (rice with tea).

It’s a simple dish. And it is that simplicity which allowed it to quickly become a comfort food that became a staple in Japanese food culture. “ochazuke” or “chazuke” (rice over rice and as the dish became summers began to try tea poured with tea). “ochazuke” or “chazuke” (rice over rice).

According to major Japanese food company Nagatanien, as tea became popular, it would adopt the name “ochazuke” or “chazuke” (rice with tea) as a way to quickly become a comfort food.”

I happened upon NODO on a search for a good cup of tea, and I wasn’t disappointed with its fancy interior with its wood-finished furniture, sleek tables and soft leather sofas, was just as polished, yet cozy, as its Instagram account photos indicated. I was pleased with its neat presentation, similar to dishes served during a traditional tea ceremony, or Kaiseki Ryori.

Kaz, an assistant manager of NODO, delivered my tray and indicated I should pour a little bit of the dashi in the accompanying tea pot in the empty bowl and enjoy the taste with the chicken first. After I tried the savory meat, he suggested adding a little bit of rice and some of the vegetables for a richer taste.

I was pleased with its neat presentation, similar to dishes served during a traditional tea ceremony, or Kaiseki Ryori.

I recommend that you enjoy this as a mini ochazuke each time,” kaz said. There were many ingredients to cater to the flavor of my mini ochazuke every time, including dashi-flavored okara (soy pulp), butter-sauteed renkon (lotus root) and ninjin (carrot), pickled nozawana (turnip greens), daikon pickled with wasabi, and umeboshi (pickled plum).

“Umami (savory taste)” was the word kaz often used to describe the dish. True to his explanation, the soup stock had a mild but rich savory taste, which was extracted from chicken farmed in Itoman City, kelp harvested in Rausu, and flying fish caught in Nagasaki, according to Nikkei newspaper’s report.

I enjoyed my meal at NODO and had no clue ochazuke had its roots in suihan (rice with hot water), which were consumed since the time of the Heian period (794 – 1185 or 1192). Plus, while ochazuke is mostly consumed with tea in the Kansai area, having it with hot water or soup stock is commonly seen in other areas, according to Nikkei newspaper’s Nikkei Style website.

I was pleased with its neat presentation, similar to dishes served during a traditional tea ceremony, or Kaiseki Ryori.

“Umami (savory taste)” was the word kaz often used to describe the dish. True to his explanation, the soup stock had a mild but rich savory taste, which was extracted from chicken farmed in Itoman City, kelp harvested in Rausu, and flying fish caught in Nagasaki, according to the café’s website.

Every time I mixed rice and ingredients with the soup stock, the dish created many variations of colors, textures and umami. The sesame sauce served on the side added a nice kick when added to the soup stock. Of all the combinations, the takana and umeboshi were my favorite.

Soon, my ochazuke was all gone, but it was time for dessert. I ended this lunch on a high note with a refreshing cup of hot green tea and a small slice of creamy okara (soy pulp) cheesecake. The cake’s restrained sweetness was a delight.

As I sat and reflected on the delicious meal I had just devoured, I wondered: “Is it okay to call a dish ochazuke if I pour soup stock not tea over the rice?”

Nagatanien notes that the method of eating tea and rice together has its roots in suihan (rice with water) or yuzuke (rice with hot water), which were consumed since the time of the Heian period (794 – 1185 or 1192). Plus, while ochazuke is mostly consumed with tea in the Kansai area, having it with hot water or soup stock is commonly seen in other areas, according to Nikkei newspaper’s Nikkei Style website.

I enjoyed my meal at NODO and had no clue ochazuke had its roots in suihan (rice with hot water) or yuzuke (rice with hot water), which were consumed since the time of the Heian period (794 – 1185 or 1192). Plus, while ochazuke is mostly consumed with tea in the Kansai area, having it with hot water or soup stock is commonly seen in other areas, according to Nikkei newspaper’s Nikkei Style website.

I enjoyed my meal at NODO and had no clue ochazuke had its roots in suihan (rice with hot water) or yuzuke (rice with hot water), which were consumed since the time of the Heian period (794 – 1185 or 1192).
The rainy season in Japan is cheerily referred to as “tsuyu,” or plum rain, as it coincides with the seasonal ripening of this luscious fruit. Constant gray skies and gloomy showers can only mean one thing. The rainy season starts to fall on Okinawa in late May followed by mainland Japan and Kyushu Island in early June.
During COVID-19 crisis, we are here for you.

Due to COVID-19, our offices in Japan will be temporarily closed throughout 2021. However, H&R Block tax pros can get your U.S. taxes done virtually. Get experience you can count on and your maximum refund, guaranteed:

Send a pic of your docs.

Touch base via video, phone or chat.

Your tax pro will take it from there – just review and approve your completed return online.

Need tax help? Got tax questions? Please contact us at japana@hrblock.com
A Taste of Okinawa

The 3 ‘R’s to good eating – Restaurants, Reviews & Recipes

4-page pullout
Popular Japanese snacks

T his has been a trying year in many ways, but one bright spot has been all the specialty tastes that have been released for our favorite Japanese snacks and treats! We underwent a taste test of them all to give you an idea of what they taste like!

1. **Chicago Pizza Flavor Cheetos**

We know that Cheetos are originally an American snack, but Japan has made them their own. They regularly release special, Japan-specific flavors that you can’t find anywhere else. Currently, you can find Chicago Pizza, Prosciutto and Cream Cheese, and Spicy Chicken Wings Cheetos sitting on the shelves of the supermarket.

Over the past few years, Chicago-style pizza has been seeing more and more popularity in Japan, so it’s not surprising that snack manufacturers picked it up too! The Chicago Pizza flavor has a pleasantly mild cheesy flavor and a cheesy, slightly spicy aroma to it. The overpowering taste however comes from the pizza base — tomato. There is also a definite hint of pepperoni. Certainly makes a yummy snack. We have our eye on the Spicy Chicken Wings variety to try next time!

2. **Demon Slayer Kororo**

Kororo gummies are made with real fruit juice and are said to have a very unique texture. According to Japan Crate, they are very divisive, with people either loving them or not for the texture alone! Right now, Demon Slayer (Kimetsu no Yaiba) is one of the biggest hits of 2020, and so we thought it was only right to try the limited edition Demon Slayer Hinokami Cola flavor.

Immediately upon touching the candy, it’s easy to see how the texture baffles people. It is soft on the outside but seems to have a firm inside. Then when you bite into it, it’s actually soft, with a sort of waxy layer on the outside. The taste itself is a nice and tasty cola flavor, but what makes these unique is definitely the texture — if you try it, you’ll understand!

3. **Doritos (Taco flavor)**

Like the Cheetos, Doritos are another American snack that made our list. Doritos came to Japan in 1987, over 20 years after the U.S., but they quickly made the chip their own, producing some exciting flavors that we’re surprised haven’t become a thing abroad too. 2020 has given us Wasabi, Avocado and Cheese, and Taco flavors to enjoy.

We tried the Taco flavor and we have to say, we come across people all the time who are looking for good Mexican food in Japan — we should simply refer them to these chips! They are both delicious and authentically “taco” tasting. It might not be quite actual Mexican food, but these Doritos are pretty good all the same. If you’re after another American snack that made them their own, they’re definitely all the rage right now.

4. **Giant Pocky**

Pocky is a ubiquitous Japanese snack, first introduced in 1966. People like them as they are both sweet and savory and not too much of either. Like other snacks, their flavors are numerous, such as the unique Almond Crush, Creamy Vanilla, and Heart-Shaped Strawberry. Did you know that you can also buy GIANT Pocky? It’s like a regular Pocky, only much bigger — double the taste but double the joy! They come in Sweet Potato, Chocolate, and Strawberry flavors. After giving these a taste, we can tell you that they taste just like regular Pocky, only significantly thicker. This makes them much more satisfying and you really get a decent helping of chocolate along with the pretzel.

5. **KitKat (Apple pie flavor)**

Despite originally being a British invention, KitKat is probably most famous in Japan, where their hundreds of special flavors serve as the perfect souvenir for those completing their Japan voyage. This year, they released an Apple Pie KitKat, which was the only one we could find. It smells like apple pie indeed, with strong undertones of cinnamon. We highly recommend these!

6. **Mystery Pringles**

Another American chip brand, Pringles are famous all over the world. Although partial to the sour cream and onion flavor, we couldn’t resist trying the latest taste released in Japan, the “Mystery Pringles.” The flavor is not specified on the tube, so we had no idea what to expect — which is half the fun! But we were praying we weren’t going to be eating “natto” flavored chips, we slowly took a chip. Appearance-wise they look to be covered in peppers. If you’re after another American chip brand, Pringles are worth a try.

7. **Oreo (Matcha roll cake flavor)**

If there is any flavor that simply screams “Japan,” it is matcha, or green tea. Therefore it is no surprise that a special edition version of the classic Oreo has been released, featuring “matcha roll cake” on a thin crispy cookie. Made with real green tea powder, the taste is said to be authentic to the real Japanese matcha.

Upon tasting these cookies, we were surprised at just how strong the green tea taste is. They’re definitely much less sweet than regular Oreos, and both the biscuit and the cream are thinner. If you are a fan of matcha, you’ll definitely love these, even if you don’t usually go for Oreos.

8. **Pikachu PURE Gummies**

Gummy candy seems to be very popular in Japan. In any convenience store or supermarket, you can find many different tastes and brands. Of course, like everything else in Japan, they have limited edition seasonal varieties. These special Pokemon inspired Pikachu gummies caught our eye, because who doesn’t love Pikachu?

The candy inside is shaped like Pikachu and is covered in a tangy sugar coating. It tastes strongly like lemon, with a bit of sour kick to it. Basically these are regular lemon sour gummy candies that happen to be shaped like Pikachu, making them that much cooler than the average gummy. If you like Pokemon and lemon, definitely give these a go.

9. **Puku Puku Taiyaki (Watermelon, bubble berry chocolate & strawberry flavor)**

Puku Puku Taiyaki are retro, fish-shaped sweets with an outside biscuit similar to an ice cream cone and a crispy flavored inside. They are said to be a nice and light snack which aren’t too sweet.

We tried the Strawberry flavor and were pleasantly surprised by how nice it was! Really light while still being sweet. The wafer on the outside is crisp and simple but tasty. The strawberry-flavored inside almost dissolves the second it enters your mouth, giving true meaning to the phrase “melt in your mouth.” Together, they make an amazing combination!

10. **Chocolate Eggs by Furuta**

Furuta produces a range of chocolate eggs made with rich and creamy Hokkaido milk. Each egg has a small toy inside, similar to a Kinder Surprise. Japan Crate recommended the Animal Crossing and Pokemon editions to us, promising they are all the rage right now.

Inside the Animal Crossing box was a chocolate the size of an egg, with milk chocolate on the outside and white chocolate on the inside. The shell was nice and crisp, and the chocolate was sufficiently milky. One could see themselves getting addicted to these easily. The toy was an added bonus, in our case, a dog named Caramel. Definitely not for small kids as it is quite a choking hazard.

While some of these snacks are seasonally or promotionally limited, if you wish to try them for yourself, you can most likely find them at most supermarkets, convenience stores, and snack shops. Japan Crate also offers them all. Plus Pretzels have included the Apple Pie KitKat flavors, the Pikachu gummies, the Puku Puku Taiyaki, the Wasabi Doritos, and the Demon Slayer Kororo. We wonder what will be inside the next crate!
J
apanese food is absolutely amazing, but it’s also completely different in taste, presentation, and texture from dishes in many Western countries. From raw fish to stinky (if healthy) natto soybeans, there are many dishes in Japan that might discourage the less adventurous gourmands.

While liking or disliking a dish is a matter of personal taste, fortunately it’s also fairly easy to find Japanese dishes that will amaze even the most Western food-oriented palates—if you know what you are looking for. As an Italian expat who’s re-sided in Japan for years, I’ve had many friends and family who have visited Japan, some of whom were somewhat picky with what goes on their plate. Here are 8 food suggestions which, in my experience, delighted everyone!

1 Shabu-shabu / When you’re tired of ramen

Shabu-shabu is a dish that falls into the nabe category. Nabe are hot-pot dishes. This kind of food is a variety of ingredients boiled into a large ceramic pot. The water can be seasoned with different spices and dressings and the food is then dipped in a variety of sauces.

Shabu-shabu is plain water boiling vegetables such as cabbage and mushrooms, along with tofu. Prime cuts of beef or pork meat are thinly sliced and served. You then dip the meat in the water (it usually takes only a few seconds for it to be ready) and finally add a dressing of ponzu sauce (a citrus-based dressing), or sesame sauce, or spicy oil, or any combination of the three.

The name shabu-shabu derives from the swinging hand movement performed to cook the meat while holding it with chopsticks.

The flavor of shabu-shabu usually lays in the quality of the meat, and in most cases, meat in Japan is really good (albeit a little expensive at times). Also, this dish, unlike many other Japanese ones, will allow you to mix and match and choose what to add or what to avoid, to customize your perfect Japanese hot pot.

If you like soups, you will love this dish, but you will also enjoy it if you’re looking for a healthy, tasty, and complete meal.

2 Yakiniku / For when you crave some serious meat

Regardless of where you’re from or what dishes you’re used to eating, chances are that you are familiar with one or more different styles of grilled food.

Yakiniku literally means “grilled meat” but actually it could be also grilled veggies or fish, or all of the above. Originally Yakiniku is the Japanese version of Korean barbecue restaurants, and while that might sound exotic to some, what yakiniku boils down to is grilled food seasoned to taste. You get to choose what you eat, what cuts you want, and what seasoning you want to use.

If you prefer to add just salt, and/or pepper, you can, and if you are curious about other seasonings, you will have plenty to choose among.

Depending on the quality of the food you order prices will change, but by and large, the cost won’t be too high, especially considering that many yakiniku restaurants offer an “all-you-can-eat” (tабеhуoдaй) option, allowing customers to order as many dishes as they want to, within (usually) a 2-hour time, for a fixed price.

3 Yakitori / A quick and tasty dish for those who like a lot of choices in one dish

This is also another kind of grilled food, and like yakitori it has a slightly misleading name. Yakitori stands literally for “grilled chicken”, but in reality, these are skewers of all kinds of meat, veggies, fish, and shells. One thing that groups them all up is that they are grilled.

When you go to a yakitori restaurant or to almost any traditional Japanese restaurant (izakaya), you’ll likely find a number of yakitori options. Some may be quite curious (ranging from heart to liver and other organ meats – to dishes of chicken skin and tail), while other choices will be quite familiar sounding.

In fact, most kinds of yakitori are skewers with cuts of chicken breast or thigh, or beef flank, steak, and more. The seasoning once again depends on your order, and on your personal choices, so that you can be on familiar ground or explore more unique (to you) flavors.

4 Eel / When you just want a bite of savory ‘cooked sushi’

Japan is probably the king of eel preparation, but Japanese are not new to this dish. Eel is prepared in many different ways in the Mediterranean peninsula and it’s even a staple dish during Christmas and New Years time.

If you like eel, then you’ll be pleasantly surprised by how many delicious choices you’ll have here in Japan. But once again, if you want to stay on familiar grounds, then try a simple, yet fantastic eel over rice dish, where the fish is prepared grilled, or steamed and laid over rice. This typically takes the form of the “unagi-don” or eel bowl. The eel can be glazed or seasoned with a number of spices and sauces, making the experience always tasty, and never boring.

5 Karaage / Because who doesn’t like fried chicken

Who doesn’t like some nicely fried chicken? Japan has developed its own way of preparing fried chicken, and you’ll find karage almost anywhere you go.

What makes things even better is that while the word ‘kara-age’ technically refers to fried chicken, you can find different kind of food stuffs fried in a similar way. That includes squid. The Italian food lovers among you will surely know of “calamari fritti” (fried calamari – Italian style fried squid). A similar dish is also octopus karage.

Karaage in general is crunchy and flavorful and there are different kinds of batter that are used. It can have a soy cause seasoning, or pepper, or lemon, or even cheese. Karaage is one of the most common Japanese dishes but it’s also familiar in flavor and presentation to Italian fried food. You’ll love it.

6 Tempura / For those who want an exotic dish, but a familiar flavor

When it comes to Japanese food very few dishes are as traditional, tasty, and non-adventurous as tempura.

Tempura is often shrimp, fish, vegetables, or chicken dipped in a special batter, fried, and served with a variety of sauces (or simply salt). The combination of the preparation of the batter and the frying style makes for a crunchy and light texture that is also very flavorful.

While it’s true that tempura does not remind of Italian cuisine, it’s one of those dishes that is very easy to fall in love with regardless of one’s preferred flavors. You will easily find tempura in izakaya restaurants, or in tempura-specialized venues.

7 Nikuman / A bit of West and a bit of East in one bite

This particular kind of soul food has its origin in China. It’s a snack that can easily be found in convenience stores (combis) and supermarkets and it’s a steamed bread dumpling filled with pork or beef meat.

The Italians among you may associate it to a sandwich or to oozing ravioli, but you may be surprised to know that it’s a very different, but it’s rich and filled with familiar flavors, and even the least adventurous among you will likely find it delicious.

Just pay attention when you bite down. It’s got a scorching hot core!

8 Gyoza / For those looking for a quick flavor-packing snack

When people say “Italian dumplings” they are talking about ravioli, and when they say “Japanese dumplings” they mean gyoza. This extremely popular and accessible dish is a dumpling originated in China (but since very much modified into a Japanese staple) made with a lightly or deep-fried dough and a meat (usually pork) and spices filling.

You can choose gyoza with a variety of sauces. Now, if you’re expecting anything similar to an Italian dumpling, you’ll probably be disappointed, but like the other items on this list, not only are gyoza as Japanese as apple pie is American, but they are also tasty, and an easy new food if you’re not a risk taker.

Regardless of how delicious food in other countries can be (and Japan is rightfully famous for many of its specialties), sometimes it can be hard to try flavors that we are not used to or that are excessively different from our national cuisine. Fortunately, while many people think that Japan is a land of almost only fish and dishes that are too exotic, you will find that there are in fact many foods (not including the amazing desserts) that are as traditional as they are familiar.
Instant noodles are great for a quick meal on the run or in between grocery store raids, but they also make great bases for more intricate meals.

Nissin, a major instant noodle maker in Japan, has loads of recipes which use their staple products to upgrade your mealtime. The recipes on the Nissin website include fried rice, Takoyaki, chawanmushi, a steamed egg hotchpotch, and more—all using at least one Nissin product as an ingredient. I took advantage of another work-from-home day to try out the okonomiyaki recipe using Nissin’s UFO instant noodles.

Usually okonomiyaki uses batter, cabbage and ramen or udon noodles as a base. For the Nissin UFO version, I needed the noodles, flour, egg and water.

Cooking this okonomiyaki felt more like playing house rather than following a recipe since no special skills were necessary. Compared with the curry and spaghetti I’ve tried this year, this felt way too easy. So easy, in fact, that it made me question whether or not this recipe would work out.

However, I am happy to report that this UFO okonomiyaki exceeded my expectations!

The noodles were crisp on the surface of the okonomiyaki, but the chewiness added a unique texture, which made it a little different from the usual okonomiyaki you can get at a restaurant or festival.

Though it may be hard to argue that this okonomiyaki made with UFO noodles could match authentic ones served up at restaurants in Osaka or Hiroshima, the flavor of this different recipe was good. I enjoyed changing up the usual okomiyaki, and I think I may just try some more of Nissin’s takes on some of my other favorites.

Try Nissin’s noodle okonomiyaki and upgrade your noodles today!

---

**INGREDIENTS**

- UFO fried noodle pack (1 piece)
- 1 Egg
- 80 g sliced cabbage
- 60cc flour
- 120 ml water
- Oil for pan

**DIRECTIONS**

1. Open UFO package and set the sauce pack and aonori pack aside to use later. Then, place dried noodles and ingredients in a Ziploc bag. Crush the noodles with a rolling pin or wooden spoon until you have crumbs.
2. Mix the crumbs with flour, egg, cabbage, and water in a bowl.
3. Heat a lightly-oiled frying pan over high heat, then turn down to medium-to-low heat.
4. Pour the mixture into the pan and fry until lightly browned on the bottom. You can place a lid over the pan.
5. Flip the okonomiyaki and finish browning the other side.
6. Top the food with sauce, aonori (dried green laver), and red pickled ginger, depending on your taste.

*The pancake took about 10 minutes in total to cook through.

*You can also add other ingredients to this recipe like squid or pork and other vegetables.

---

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo with a Quesadilla Burger

Celebrate Cinco de Mayo all month long at Emery Lanes Bowling Complex on Kadena! Every month Striker Café inside Emery Lanes features a burger special, and this month it’s our delicious Quesadilla Burger! Enjoy a Southwest seasoned patty with Pepper Jack cheese, shredded lettuce, pico de gallo, jalapenos, homemade spicy red pepper and sour cream aioli in a tortilla, topped off with shredded cheddar cheese! Stop in for lunch, and don’t forget you can order online for expedited pickup. You can even put your vehicle details in the notes, and they will bring right to you! Striker Café is here for you.

Order online menu.com/StrikersCafeKadena

---

STRIPES OKINAWA
MAY 13 – MAY 26, 2021

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA