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TRAIL TREKKING, GOATS AND MORE YAESE

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PAGE 2

flower power

Cherry blossoms blooming across Okinawa

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A new year is upon us, and it's time once again to turn your attention to the yearly tradition unlike any other – Best of the Pacific voting season!

For the past 24 years, our annual Best of the Pacific magazine has been the authority on the best places YOU need to go to in the Pacific. How do we know? Because you told us so!

You've made your voices heard over the years, and in turn, informed fellow members of the military community like yourselves of the Pacific's best attractions, restaurants, festivals, Sunday brunch, getaways and more. Whether you're in Guam, South Korea, Japan or Okinawa, you can place your vote for all your favorites.

Know where you can get a great phone plan with friendly service? Or is there an off-base dentist you tell all your friends about? We want to know, and we definitely want to know why you like it so much.

Voting is quick, easy and you just might get your name in the magazine! Take a few minutes and vote for all your favorites online. And if you do, you may qualify to win up to \$300.

Thanks to your input, every year we're able to make Stars and Stripes community products to help you enjoy your stay in the Pacific. That's what we're all about. As we are fond of saying, our papers, websites and magazines "are about you, for you, and in some cases, by you."

The votes keep rolling in year after year and it's all thanks to you! We had a great turnout in 2024, and we expect nothing short of a record number of votes in 2025. Vote and share so even more of you can experience the best the Pacific has to offer!

– Stars and Stripes staff



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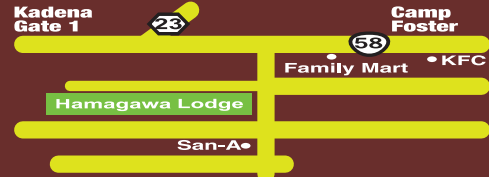
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A replica of old town Naha at the turn of the 20th Century.



NAHA CITY MUSEUM OF HISTORY

Royalty and merchants in the little city that could

STORY AND PHOTOS BY BONSON LAM,
JAPAN TRAVEL

Naha is one of Japan's oldest trading ports and cities, predating and rivaling even that of Tokyo and Yokohama in its heyday.

Despite this, much of its history is not visible on the streets of Naha today, making a visit to the Naha City Museum of History a valuable discovery of how everything has changed, and giving us lessons for the future.

A melting pot of people

In the 1270's Marco Polo sailing between Naha and Fuzhou, spoke of Japan as the land of gold. A little over two centuries later Christopher Columbus sets sail for this fabled land, only to land in the Americas. It was no wonder that when Portuguese landed in Tanegashima Island between Naha and Kagoshima, they did everything to stop William Adams, a English ship pilot from setting a foothold with the Japanese authorities like the Shogun. While the Portuguese did not step onshore in Naha, traders from Naha met the Portuguese in Malacca.

In 1393 the Thirty-six Families of Fukien came to Naha to facilitate commerce between these two ports. These families formed the first Chinatown, bringing pork and noodles to the Okinawan diet. These days, there is little to distinguish the Chinatown from the rest of Naha, though their contribution was memorialised in the Fuku-shuen Garden.

In 1816 HMS Alceste and Lyre surveyed the islands of Okinawa, and a dying sailor became the first Englishmen to be buried here. Such was the caring response they received, the grave was marked "Here lies buried, aged twenty-one years, William



Left hand drive Jeeps during the American occupation.

Hares, Seaman, of His Britannia Majesty's ship Alceste. This monument was erected by the King and the inhabitants of this most hospitable Island". In 2024, there were 19,857 British nationals in Japan.

In 1853 Commodore Perry landed at Naha, and despite being an accidental nominee for the job (he wanted to be posted to the Mediterranean, such was the irony when comparing to Marco Polo), later signed a compact with the Ryukyu Islands. It was only after this in 1854, did he visit Yokohama, signalling the beginning of Japan's transformation as a modern industrial nation. In 2024, there were 64,842 American nationals in Japan.

merchants and sailors would have tasted the sweet potato on their trade missions to Siam and Luzon, it was not until 1606 when it was grown in Government plantations, having made the journey from Fuzhou and transforming the nutritional wealth of this small city. Around the same time, the sugar cane was also introduced, creating a cash crop which was exported to Kagoshima.

While the Okinawan merchants were not as well known in the western world as the sailors from the Venetian city states, they were both trading at the same time in the Twelfth and Thirteenth centuries. Much of this traded centred around the ports of Fuzhou and Quanzhou, the latter previously known as Zayton زونتي, a hub of trade in goods and ideas between Chinese, Venetian, Persian, and Okinawan merchants on the maritime Silk Road.

Okinawan merchants would also trade spices, animals, and porcelain with Portuguese and Arab merchants in Malacca. The Arabs once described the Okinawans as fair but daring men, dressed in a cloak, and carry long swords like Turkish scimitars, a curved knife that is sometimes associated with pirates.

Other influences from Java, Malaya and the Indian subcontinent also came to Okinawa via the Port of Naha, including a textile dyeing technique known in Malay as ikat. In Okinawa it was called kasuri, which comes from the Japanese word for rubbing. Okinawan skills brought this to the highest degree of perfection. The Okinawan adaptation for turbans are called hachimaki, which was used to denote rank. The king at Shuri Castle would wear one studded with gems, one of which you can see at this museum, with a hairpin made of gold, while lower classes would have hairpins made of copper or wood.

A melting pot of trade and commerce

Like many pre-historic civilisations, Naha's economy was originally reliant on agriculture, but its poor soils made the island vulnerable to famine.

Around 1100, Polynesian seafarers brought back the sweet potato, a native of Ecuador, which was called Kumara to the Pacific, and later traded with various south-east Asian kingdoms before making its way to Fuzhou. This 5000-kilometer journey from South America by outriggers and celestial navigation is today celebrated at the Oceanic Culture Museum to the north of Naha.

While it was possible that Okinawan



The rich maritime history of this island.



Royal Crown with 288 beads and an ornamental hairpin used for special events like New Year.



Trains with a Naha destination board in Kyushu.



Board the train to Naha via Nishi Kagoshima.

→ There was also a time when the global recession hit the city hard, when overproduction has sent the supply up while demand dropped. Merchants and factory owners were in strife. We weren't talking about fast fashion factory of the modern era, but reform of the feudal system had forced displaced samurai and labourers together. The new government was sweating not knowing what to do. Those events led to a diversification of industry to tourism, taking mainland Japanese to Okinawa to study an exotic and ancient culture. There was a time when Okinawan design was destined for the scrap heap, but Yanagi Soetsu from the Folk Crafts Museum came to study Bingata and Bashofu in 1939, helping to revive the value of Okinawan design and textiles.

Ships, Trains and Planes

The trading ships in the medieval times made Okinawa rich, much like the Venetian states, but the humble people at Naha kept it under wraps, there was not much in ostentation, particularly as they know that their island port was in the shadow of bigger powers nearby. In their journey to Siam, Malaya and the East Indies, a fleet of ships would depart Naha after the typhoon season and island hop their way using favourable winds.

As Japan opened up during the Meiji Restoration in the 19th Century, modern technology left Naha behind. Instead railways and steamships took people and goods from Tokyo via Kagoshima. Who would have thought that Naha was on the

destination board at Tokyo Station, but replicas from that time are on display at the museum.

These days, planes connect Naha with the rest of Japan, and as far as Singapore and Thailand, continuing Naha's historical connections with South East Asia.

Who is this museum suited for?

1. As part of your orientation to Naha, this compact museum is a quick way (30 to 60 mins, closed Thursday) to induct yourself to the background of

this multi-layered city.

2. Discover what Naha was like, as much of the city was razed during the war, this is a unique chance to see pre War Naha, and even the Naha in the last century generally.
3. Great to take the Okinawa diaspora. Emigration had a bigger impact on Okinawa than any other prefecture in Japan, one which is celebrated in the World Uchinanchu Festival.

Who is it not for?

1. Those wanting special effects, Imax or Team Lab like multi-sensory or interactive experience. This is strictly a display behind glass cases kind of museum with more mental and physical interaction, much like going to your old school library from the 1980s.
2. They needing a guided tour, so this is a place for contemplation and discovery at your own pace.

The island trade with Awamori.



Things to know

ADDRESS: 4th floor, Palette Kumoji, 1-1-1 Kumoji, Naha City, Okinawa Prefecture, 900-0015
GETTING THERE: Take the monorail and get off at Kencho-mae station, and it is a 1-minute walk. By bus, get off at the Palette Kumoji-mae, Okinawa Honten-mae, or Kencho Kitaguchi stop, and then it is a 1-minute walk from any of these stops.
TEL: 098-869-5266
HOURS: Open from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m., closed Thursdays.



ACCESS GUIDE



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Hit the road for Okinawa's beautiful cherry blossoms

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Early Risers on Okinawa

When January's cherry blossom season rolls around in Okinawa, it's time to hit the road! Many festivals draw in crowds of people to celebrate the arrival of the blossoms on the island. With the pandemic in the rearview mirror, the pink and blush hues of Japan's favorite flower will guide you to a new season.

Okinawa offers several locations for great blossom viewing, but those in Yambaru, the hilly areas in the northern part of the main island, draw special attention for a few reasons.

First, Yambaru is home to the earliest blooms on the island. The "cherry blossom front," which refers to the frontline of cherry blossom blooming, travels north to south. On the mainland, the front goes in the opposite direction due to a difference in the type of cherry blossoms. On Okinawa, locations like Mt. Yaedake (Mt. Yae), Nakijin Castle Ruins, and Nangusuku Koen (park), are some of the prime spots to catch the first blossoms of the season in the country.

Second, the mountains and forests of Yambaru are in themselves great attractions for a quick getaway. When they are adorned with the pink color of the cherry blossoms, the dynamic nature of the north becomes even

If you have seen cherry blossoms on mainland Japan in late March or early April, you may wonder why these flowers bloom in January on Okinawa.

The gap between cherry blossom seasons between Okinawa and mainland Japan can be traced back to a difference in types of cherry blossoms and how the flowers "wake up."

"Cherry blossoms form floral stems during summer and go dormant without growing further before the new year starts," Yoshitaka Kamiya, a member of the Okinawa Regional Headquarters of the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA), said in an interview with Okinawa Times. "To break their sleep, cherry blossoms need to be exposed to low temperatures. To wake up Somei-Yoshino, the temperature needs to be

around 40s, while 60s are good for Hikan-zakura."

Somei-Yoshino is a type of cherry blossom commonly seen in mainland Japan. On the other hand, Hikan-zakura, is found in Okinawa. Somei-Yoshino's petals in pale pink draw a clear contrast with the vibrant colors of Hikan-zakura.

"Once awake, cherry blossoms bloom as the temperature rises. Because it takes a temperature around 40s (to break its sleep), Somei Yoshino is not fit to grow in Okinawa," said Kamiya.

The JMA staff also noted that while Somei Yoshino waits for the temperature to rise before blooming, Hikan-zakura can grow and reach full bloom with little change of temperature in Okinawa.

— Shoji Kudaka, Stripes Okinawa

more attractive. At Mt. Yaedake, which kicks off the season Jan. 18, visitors can enjoy the view as they drive up a 2.5-mile-long cherry blossom tree-lined road. In total, there are about 7,000 cherry blossom trees on the second-tallest mountain on the island.

About 25 minutes from Mt. Yaedake, 700 cherry blossom trees add vibrant colors to Nakijin Castle Ruins. This

World Heritage Site is thought to have been built around the 13th century and was used as a stronghold for a kingdom that ruled the northern part of the island.

Nangusuku Koen (park) is known for its grand scale presentation with 20,000 cherry blossom trees. The 170-acre park includes castle ruins known as "Nangusuku," a playground, an area for hiking, and a promenade

that runs

On Jan free zone The traffi

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To go is to take on Route 84, which to Mount the road.

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MORE THAN MEETS THE EYE

'Dead bodies are buried under cherry blossoms'

Ah, the beauty of the flowers. The parties with friends under picturesque trees. The wonderful feeling that comes with knowing spring has arrived. There's nothing quite like cherry blossom season in Japan.

But there is a dark side to everything. A side where things aren't always so rosy – or, in this case, cherry. We all know about the warm and sunny side of cherry blossoms in Japan. But what about that other side?

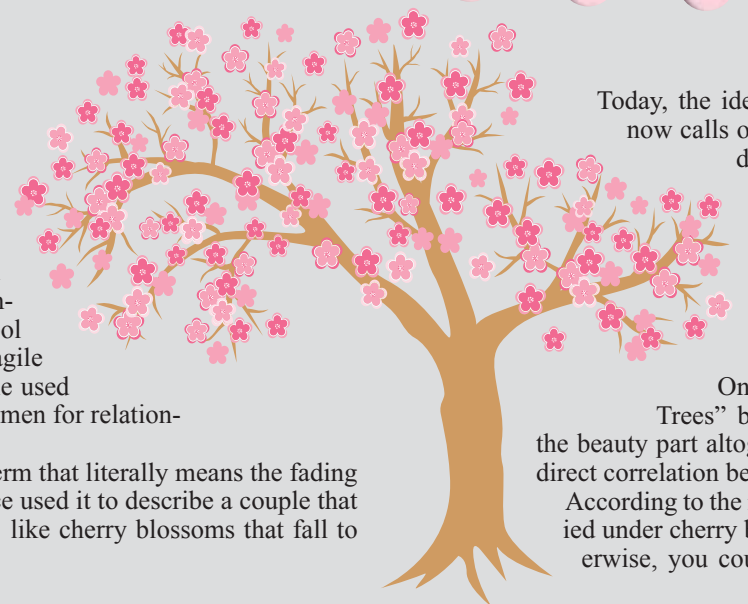
Given the long-term local love affair with these delicate flowers, you may wonder how there could possibly be any negative association with them at all. Well, for starters, that hasn't always been the case.

The "Manyoshu" was written in the seventh to the eighth century and is the oldest existing collection of Japanese poetry. It only has 40 poems on cherry blossoms, compared to 118 in praise of the then more popular plum blossom. It's believed that cherry blossoms didn't catch on until

about the 10th century. Before then, as well as after, Japanese haven't always been so happy to see them.

In fact, before the Edo Period (1603-1867), many people here considered cherry blossoms to be a symbol of bad luck. Because they are very fragile and last for only 10 days or so, people used to think cherry blossoms were a bad omen for relationships – especially marriage.

"Sakurazame" is an old Japanese term that literally means the fading away of a cherry blossom. People once used it to describe a couple that breaks up soon after getting together, like cherry blossoms that fall to the ground soon after they bloom.



Today, the idea ha now calls on ch during

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One fa Trees" by M the beauty part altogethe direct correlation betwe According to the nove ied under cherry bloss otherwise, you couldn't



Cherry blossoms

through a forest and near a river. On Jan. 25-26, a parade will take place and a traffic jam will be set at the neighboring area of the park. Traffic can be slow on these days, so be prepared. Visitors who go to Yambaru from the middle and west part of the island, it will most likely take a couple of hours by car. Directions are not so complicated, but you may need some explanation for first-timers. To get to Yaedake and Nakijin Castle, the easiest way is to take the highway, exit at No. 10 (Kyoda), go north on Route 58, and make a left to head northwest on Route 84. It cuts through Motobu Peninsula. An entrance to Yaedake can be seen on the left-hand side of

to Nakijin Castle, take a right onto Route 115 following the coastline of the peninsula. Nangusuku Koen (park) is not far from Exit No. 10. Go north on Route 58 and make a right turn onto Route 84 at the first light after passing by an A&W. Turn left at the signal near the Orion Beer factory and make a right at the first signal to go onto a road that runs along a river.

In January in Okinawa, the average temperature is expected to be the lowest of the year. However, cherry blossoms give a lot of reasons for people on the island to chill.

okijii@stripes.com

has changed completely. Tradition says cherry blossoms to bring good luck at a wedding ceremony. “Sakura” or cherry blossom tea, is often served at weddings for this reason. Novels as well as poems have often drawn public attention to the cherry blossom – especially for a part of melancholic contrast between its beauty and short lifespan. A famous novel, “Under the Cherry Blossoms” by Motojiri Kajii (1901-1932), skips over in its introduction and draws a line between death and cherry blossoms. In its opening, “Dead bodies are buried under the cherry blossoms! You have to believe it. Other people possibly explain the beauty of

the cherry blossom. I have been restless, lately, because I couldn’t believe in this beauty. But now I finally understand: Dead bodies are buried under the cherry trees! You have to believe it.”

In fact, Chidorigafuchi National Cemetery, home to the ash remains of around 360,000 unidentified war dead from World War II, is just a stone’s throw away from Tokyo’s most popular cherry blossom viewing area, Chidorigafuchi Park. And you may have noticed that cherry blossom trees are a common sight at gravesites and cemeteries as well as shrines and temples.

So I wouldn’t recommend digging around any cherry blossom trees to see what lies six feet under – even if you have had your fill of blossom viewing party beverages.

Whether true or tall tales, such trivia might make for some interesting small talk while viewing cherry blossom with your friends and family. No matter what you talk about, the sheer beauty of Japan’s cherry blossoms will likely take your breath away in the end.

– Stripes Okinawa



1 Motobu Yaedake Sakura Matsuri

DATE: Jan. 18 – Feb. 2
GPS COORDINATES: N 26.647802, E 127.916458
ADMISSION: Free
 *There will be live entertainment on Jan. 18 – 19.

2 Nakijin Gusuku (Castle Ruins) Sakura Matsuri

DATE: Jan. 25 – Feb. 2
ADMISSION: 600 yen for adults, 450 yen for high school and middle school students, free admission for elementary school students and below
TIME: 8 a.m. – 9 p.m. (last admission at 8:30 p.m.)
 *Cherry blossoms will be lit up between 6 and 9 p.m.
 *During the festival, visitors will have a chance to see Shigema Jyokaku, a southern part of the castle ruins which are usually off-limits.
 *It is recommended to use additional parking spaces that will be prepared on a temporary basis. A shuttle bus will take visitors to the castle ruins.
 *On Saturdays and Sundays, only parking space No. 3 and 4 will be available for use.
GPS COORDINATES: N 26.691370, E 127.929012

3 Nango Sakura Matsuri

DATE: Jan. 25 – 26
LOCATION: Nangusuku Koen (park)
GPS COORDINATES: N 26.589219, E 127.994307
 *A parade will take place on streets around the park.

4 Yaese Cherry Blossom Festival

DATE: Jan. 20 – Feb. 2
GPS COORDINATES: N 26.131409, E 127.721109
 *Cherry blossoms will be lit up between 6 – 9 p.m.

Speakin' Japanese

Sakura shout-out

A symbol of spring in Japan, cherry blossoms or “sakura” are enjoyed throughout Japan. The cherry blossom front moves from south to north, arriving on the Kanto Plain around the end of March and reaching Misawa by the end of April (In Okinawa, the front begins moving from north to south starting in late January).

Under the gorgeous pale pinkish colors of branches, locals often sit down and enjoy their hanami party with sake, beer and all sorts of delicious food. So, as cherry blossoms get ready to bloom, make some plans to enjoy them with your Japanese friends. Here’s some Japanese words and phrases that will help you enjoy the cherry blossoms.

“Sakura wa itsu sakimasu ka?”
 = When do cherry blossoms start blooming?
 (“itsu” = when, “sakimasu” = bloom)

“Sakura no meisho wa doko desuka?”
 = Where are some cherry blossom attractions?
 (“meisho” = attractions, “doko” = where)

“Sakura ga mankai desu.”
 = Cherry blossoms are in full bloom.
 (“mankai” = in full bloom)

“Kirei desu!”
 = They are beautiful!
 (“kirei” = beautiful)

“Ii nioi desu.”
 = They smell good.
 (“ii nioi” = good smell)

“Watashi wa sakura ga daisuki desu”
 = I love cherry blossoms.
 (“watashi” = I, “daisuki desu” = love)

“Sakura no shashin wo ippai tori mashita.”
 = I took a lot of photos of cherry blossoms.
 (“shashin” = photo, “ippai” = a lot of, “tori” = take/shoot)

“Hanami ni iki masen ka?”
 = Let’s go look at cherry blossoms, shall we?
 (“hanami” = cherry blossom viewing/party, “iki masen ka?” = let’s go)

“Yozakura kenbutsu ni ikimasu.”
 = I will go to see cherry blossoms at night.
 (“yozakura” = cherry blossoms at night, “kenbutsu” = view, “ikimasu” = will go)

“Hanami wo shimasen ka?”
 = Let’s have a hanami party, shall we?
 (“hanami” = cherry blossom party/viewing, “shimasen ka” = let’s do)

“Moo ippai ikaga desuka?”
 = How about another refill of sake?
 (“moo ippai” = another refill (of sake), “ikaga desuka?” = how about)

“Hanabira ga matte imasu.”
 = Petals are fluttering in the air.
 (“hanabira” = petals, “matte” = flutter in the air)

“Totemo kimochi ga ii desu.”
 = It is very refreshing.
 (“totemo” = very, “kimochi ga ii” = refreshing)

– Takahiro Takiguchi, Stripes Okinawa

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



Gushichan Castle Ruins

*Parking space is available for free.
N 26.121393, E 127.749998



LOCATION



Yaese

Trail trekking, goats and more



VIEW VIDEO

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

On a sunny late-autumn day, I headed to Horohoro no Mori in Yaese Town on Okinawa's southern coast. Horohoro no Mori's name describes it as a forest of Cinnamomum, fragrant trees you'll find plenty of here.

Traveling from the mid-section of the island to Horohoro no Mori was about a 1-hour drive. Seeking an adventure among the greenery and flowers along the southern coast, it wasn't a problem to make the drive.

Since I wasn't sure about the parking situation near the forest trail, I decided to park at a nearby roadside station and take a 5-minute walk to the entrance. By the time I reached my parking spot, it was lunchtime, so I decided to head in for a bite prior to my trek.

Yaese Town is known for its heejaa, or goats in Okinawan dialect. Goat meat is a delicacy served on the island for celebrations and is valued due to its rich nutrition in protein and iron.

Goat meat does have a strong scent and a distinct flavor, so for many it is a cut of meat you either love or hate. In my case, I normally avoid it, but visiting Yaese Town without having heejaa is like visiting Kobe on the mainland and not trying wagyu beef. So, I decided to give it a try.

For lunch I stopped at the Minami no Eki Yaese road station. Here there are a variety of shops and

restaurants selling souvenirs, snacks and light meals. During my visit, I was able to try goat meat pizza from a restaurant that is unfortunately no longer open.

The pizza was an interesting take on the local delicacy and the goat meat was juicy and tender. Though you will not find pizza at the road station, you'll find other local bites like goat meat sashimi and goat soup for sale at the grocery store. Make sure to swing by and pick up a taste of Yaese while you're there!

After my meal, my next stop was at fragrant Cinnamomum forest. At the entrance, a map illustrated the winding 600-meter route I had ahead. The first portion of the hike included many steep ups and downs, but the wooden steps made this part easier to manage.

Dimly lit by sunlight breaking through the thick foliage, the trail felt cool and relaxing. At times, I came to open areas without any tall trees. There, grasses on the ground were shining bright in the sunlight, making it feel like being in a natural garden.

Some portions of the route were blocked by trees growing sideways. I had to either duck or take a detour to get around. The more obstacles the trail threw at me, the more I began to feel like a video game character. It was challenging, but the scenery wasn't bad.

Deep in the forest, I encountered taro trees with unusually large leaves, banyan trees and akou



Hanandaa (limestone bridge)

LOCATION N 26.120663, E 127.744036



Gushichan-hama (beach)

*Parking space available for free.
N 26.118876, E 127.747665



LOCATION





LOCATION

(Ficus superba) tangled with rocks like creatures in motion. At some spots, bloodberries were shining in vibrant red, like hidden treasures. Later, I learned that the forest is home to about 100 kinds of fauna and flora.

After hiking for about 420 meters, the route split into two— one way leading toward the coast and the other toward a tenboudai observatory. I chose the observatory route because it sounded more interesting to me at the time. This path led me to a hill with huge rocks sitting on top like a gate. Passing through the natural gate, I was expecting to have a nice view of the ocean, but what I found instead was a downslope that took me out of the forest.

If I had wanted to cut my trekking short, this would have been the right choice, but I was intent on getting the full experience, so I crossed back to the intersection and took the other route to continue my journey.

The last portion of the promenade was mostly a downslope running toward the coast. Through gaps of flowers and leaves, I could see the ocean shining under the strong sunlight. Sometimes I had to go on a dark slope, but the wooden steps were there to help. About 10 minutes later, I hit a road that ran parallel to the coast. At the intersection, there was a concrete structure, which I learned later was the remains of a disposal site of the Imperial Japanese Armed Forces.

Going left on the coastal road for several minutes, I arrived at Gushichan-hama Beach, known for its many reef lagoons and large rocks dotting the coastline. Although its sandy shore may not be wide, the beach still dazzles tourists and locals with its unique landscape. I had heard that some enjoy

bouldering there by climbing on those huge rocks.

The beach was empty during my visit, and the fatigue from the 1-hour trek was starting to set in, so I didn't add bouldering to my itinerary. Instead, I let the mesmerizing beauty of this area make the fatigue and time melt away briefly.

Before ending my day, I made sure to make a couple of stops at some of the other attractions in the area, including a limestone bridge and castle ruins. Hanandaa is near the entrance of Horohoro no Mori. The limestone bridge is about 29 meters long, 10 meters wide and about 10 meters high.

About 5 minutes by car from the road station, Gushichan castle ruins sit on a hill overlooking the Gushichan-hama beach. The castle, which is believed to have been built in the mid-14th century, doesn't have any major remains left to be seen today, but the view from here is worth it. This spot also has monuments to commemorate the victims of the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, attesting to the history of the location as a battleground.

Another point of interest, the "Tomori no Ishibori Ufujishi (Tomori's stone lion)," is also about a 5-minute drive away from the roadside station. This is the location of a famous historical photo of American GIs taking cover behind the stone lion back in 1945.

Yaese Town has many activities, local foods to try and historically-significant spots perfect for everyone in your group. Although it may take a little longer of a drive than usual from many of the military installations on Okinawa, this area definitely makes for a great day trip. Get ready for your own adventure!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com



Yaese Town



Horohoro no Mori (forest)

N 26.118886, E 127.744157



Minami no Eki Yaese (Roadside station)

Hours: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.

*Parking space is available for free.



N 26.121901, E 127.742794 LOCATION



LOCATION



Tomori Stone Lion

*Parking space is available for free.

N 26.133643, E 127.724238



The 20th Churaumi Flower Festival

In the year's theme, "Jewel Box in Bloom," about 300,000 brightly colored flowers and three-dimensional flowerbeds grace the Ocean Expo Park. Come and enjoy a stroll through the colorful landscape!

DATE: Jan. 18, 2025 (Sat) to Mar. 31, 2025 (Mon)
TIME: 8:00-18:00 (Jan. & Feb.); 8:00-19:30 (Mar.)
PLACE: Ocean Expo Park (Okinawa Churaumi Aquarium area - Central Gate, Central Fountain Plaza - Tropical Dream Center area)
ADMISSION: Free (except regularly charged areas)

Tulip Fair

DATE:
Jan. 18 (Sat) – Feb. 2 (Sun), 2025

TIME:
8:30 - 17:30
(last entry 17:00)

PLACE:
Tropical Dream Center

ADMISSION:
Regular entry fee only
The center will be closed on Jan. 30 (Thu) and Feb. 10 (Mon).

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How to play Pachinko

Try your hand at favorite salaryman pastime

JAPAN TRAVEL

Too many visitors to Japan have never played the game of pachinko, even though the country—whether you're in Tokyo or Hokkaido—is packed with pachinko shops. With flashing lights, swirling sounds and hundreds of tiny metal balls, Pachinko, or Japanese pinball, is a must-try for any tourist looking for the "Japan experience."

Trust us, you've never seen anything like it, and this article features two powerhouses of Japanese culture wrapped into one: an anime-themed pachinko machine. After learning the ins and outs of this anime-themed "DD Hokuto no Ken", or in English, "DD Fist of the North Star" pachinko machine, you should be more than ready to engage in your first dazzling pachinko endeavor.

About DD Fist of the North Star

"DD Fist of the North Star" is a current Japanese comic or "manga" series based on the popular 1980s manga series of nearly the same name, "Fist of the North Star." Both versions were adapted into anime series. DD Fist of the North Star's storyline is set in an alternative world in the year 199X, where a nuclear war from the original story arc never occurred. With this extra cute version of the series adapted to a pachinko setting, you'll be in for a frenetic experience.

Basics of Pachinko

The game, which is sort of like pinball mixed with slots, gained popularity in the 1940s, and now Japan is home to more than 12,500 pachinko parlors, according to a BBC article. To start, a player inserts cash into the machine to get small metal balls, which the player then launches into the machine with a lever. Some balls fall out of bounds, while some land into bonus areas, usually resulting in a chance to win more balls.

Every time you walk into a pachinko parlor, the sights and sounds are sort of like a mini Las Vegas. Typically the player cashes out and gets a prize, which can later be traded for other goods as well at the counter in a pachinko parlor.

Each pachinko machine has different nuances.

1. Put money in the machine (cash only) on the left side.
2. Press the 'Play' button (marked '玉貸').
3. Turn the round lever, which will let metal balls shoot out. Continuously hold it, so balls keep shooting out.
4. Aim the balls for the upper left area of the pachinko board.

Special Features of the DD Fist of the North Star machine

The featured game has a jackpot payout rate of 1/319, meaning it's a high-risk, high-reward game. But, go big or go home, right? It's important to pay attention to bonus, special time and the jackpot aspects of the game. During regular play, you do not want to turn the dial all the way. A moderate turn will help you aim for the upper left area. But, during a bonus time, turn the dial with full strength to push the balls all the way to the right.

Slot Jackpot / Special Time

Watch to see if three matching symbols appear on the slot machine. This is the jackpot, and getting it puts the machine into payout mode. During "Special Time" the probability of doing well increases.

Balls drop into bonus pockets, causing flashing lights and other effects. Different colors and flashing lights in the game can show a higher degree to which you can expect a chance to get a bonus. For example, a rainbow spectrum color signals the highest probability of chance for this game. Additional "big chance predictions" are: a group of characters on the screen, letters or backgrounds have a pattern (instead of solid), and other color shifts. Please see the YouTube video for more information.

Now, you're ready to experience gaming in Japan with the DD Fist of the North Star pachinko machine. For the real Japanese experience, come to Japan to play pachinko!



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Stripes Sports Trivia

Wide and right. When paired, the two words can inflict the kind of pain Bartman and Buckner used to represent. For Buffalo Bills fans, the pain of losing four straight Super Bowls in the early 1990s is a tough one to get over. But, in Super Bowl 25, the Bills came ever-so-close, missing a game-winning field goal with eight seconds to play. Who missed the infamous kick for the Bills?

Answer

Scott Norwood

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NEW TO THE PACIFIC?

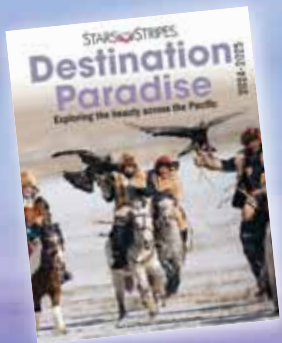
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STARS AND STRIPES



DID YOU KNOW?

It is a no-no in Japan to pick up food with your chopsticks when it was already held by someone else's chopsticks. There are many dos and don'ts in Japan, and this one in particular seems innocent, but not so much to Japanese. This reminds Japanese people of an old tradition – one that involves a dead relative, bones and a crematorium. Google it!

Kanji of the week

深

Fuka/shin (deep)

Language Lesson

I'll get there a little late.

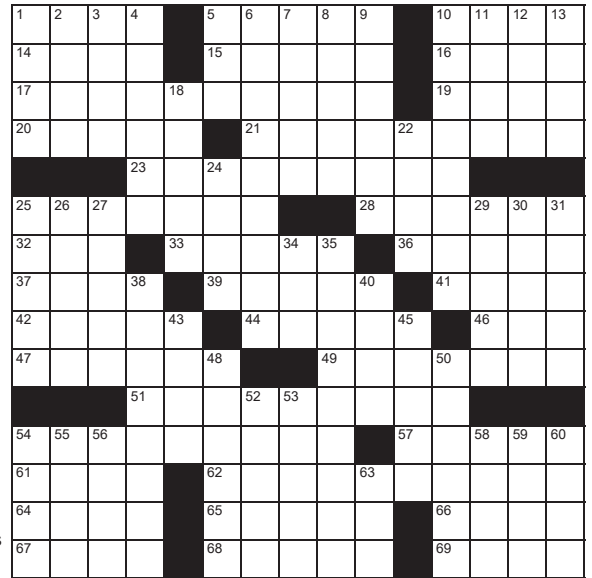
Chotto okuremasu.

Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Like Hubbard's cupboard
- 5 World record?
- 10 Loud door sound
- 14 System for servers
- 15 Shipping container
- 16 Roman robe
- 17 Breathing apparatus
- 19 Screen symbol
- 20 Jacket fabric
- 21 Family-tree study
- 23 Library section
- 25 Sneaky coward
- 28 Catch in a sting
- 32 Stately tree
- 33 Potting mixtures
- 36 Chopin piece
- 37 H.S. lab class
- 39 Track events
- 41 Till fill
- 42 Revs
- 44 Digs for pigs
- 46 Top anagram
- 47 Request
- 49 Token
- 51 Valued highly
- 54 Notre Dame, for one
- 57 Shopping aids
- 61 Workers' protection org.
- 62 Glassmaking color
- 64 Subsequently
- 65 Edit
- 66 Songstress Home
- 67 Ogled
- 68 Labor's partner
- 69 Washstand vessel



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- 3 Skyrocket
- 4 Master hand
- 5 Puzzler's dir.
- 6 Shakespeare works
- 7 "See ya!"
- 8 Perform penance
- 9 Peaceful
- 10 Thin-heeled shoe
- 11 Off one's rocker
- 12 Highly excited
- 13 Countless
- 18 "Any ___?"
- 22 Skin blemishes
- 24 Gift-tag word
- 25 Actress Winger
- 26 Fake name
- 27 Artist's garment
- 29 Kind of sentence
- 30 Skilled
- 31 Linguine sauce
- 34 Permit
- 35 Pick-me-up
- 38 Ring finger's place
- 40 Psychic
- 43 Kind of loser
- 45 Refine metal
- 48 Railroad porter
- 50 Fit to be tried?
- 52 Mealtime lure
- 53 Cavalry sword
- 54 Shelter for doves
- 55 White as a ghost
- 56 What you used to be
- 58 Great deal
- 59 It may be carried
- 60 Barely burn
- 63 Mormons, for short

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

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

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

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

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File photo

Japan's business card etiquette

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES OKINAWA

In Japan, "meishi," or business cards, are an ever-important tool for Japanese salarymen.

Like in the U.S., the cards are traded during business engagements and more.

But, unlike in the U.S., there is proper etiquette when it comes to exchanging what is often considered your "face" in Japan.

Any business relationship in Japan is initiated with meishi and a bow. But it goes beyond meetings and work settings. Japanese business cards are exchanged virtually in anywhere. Today, exchanging cards is considered a personal greeting gesture, and how to exchange the cards properly is one of the most fundamental social manners.

Rather than accepting a card and putting it in a wallet or purse for safe keeping, the Japanese like to study the card. They'll take a careful look at it, then sit down, placing your card on the table, while continually looking at it and you until the end of meeting.

While this behavior might seem rude, or as if a person was being examined, in Japan, it's seen as a sign of sincerity and eagerness toward new business relationship. The person is trying to remember your face with the details on your card.

Japanese carry their business cards at all times. Whether on the job or not, this allows them to deploy the cards in all situations.

When running into an old friend on the street, cards are usually exchanged as people chat and catch up.

Well-arranged, updated business cards help in maintaining a good relationship with various business partners. So, for

1 If you are exchanging business cards with higher-ranking, older or more experienced business partner, be sure to give your business card first in order to show your respect and humbleness.

2 Give your card with your right hand, and receive the counterpart's with your left hand. Give your business card at your right hand a little lower than the left hand that receives the counterpart's to show your humbleness.

3 Say clearly your full name, your job title and organization while giving your business card.

4 When you receive a business card, hold it at the edge, avoiding putting your fingers on names or a company logo on the card.

5 Say "yoroshiku onegai shimasu" (It is nice to meet you) and bow when you have exchanged your business cards.

salarymen, updating their collection of business cards by adding, removing or refiling cards is a must.

Kayoko Shimoda, a graphic designer of Stars and Stripes remembers her experience at a commercial design firm in her younger days. When her senior left the firm, he gave his business card holder to Shimoda, so that she could continue the



6 Don't write anything on the business card.



7 Don't exchange business cards over a table.

Stand up and move to the side of the table toward the business partner and exchange the cards while standing.



8 Keep the business card on the table throughout the meeting.

9 Don't hand out a worn or dirty business card.



10 Don't take out business card directly from pocket. A business card holder is ideal.

Photos by Jun Sakahira, Stripes Okinawa



"When in Japan, do as the Japanese do"

Scan the QR code to watch a video on exchanging business cards in Japan.

ties while in Japan, make sure to know the proper etiquette, and never get rid of those ever-important meishi.

takiguchi.takahiro@stripes.com

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A Taste of Okinawa

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

4-page pullout



Gen a real gem on Okinawa

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

RESTAURANT INFO



RESTAURANT & SUSHI BAR GEN



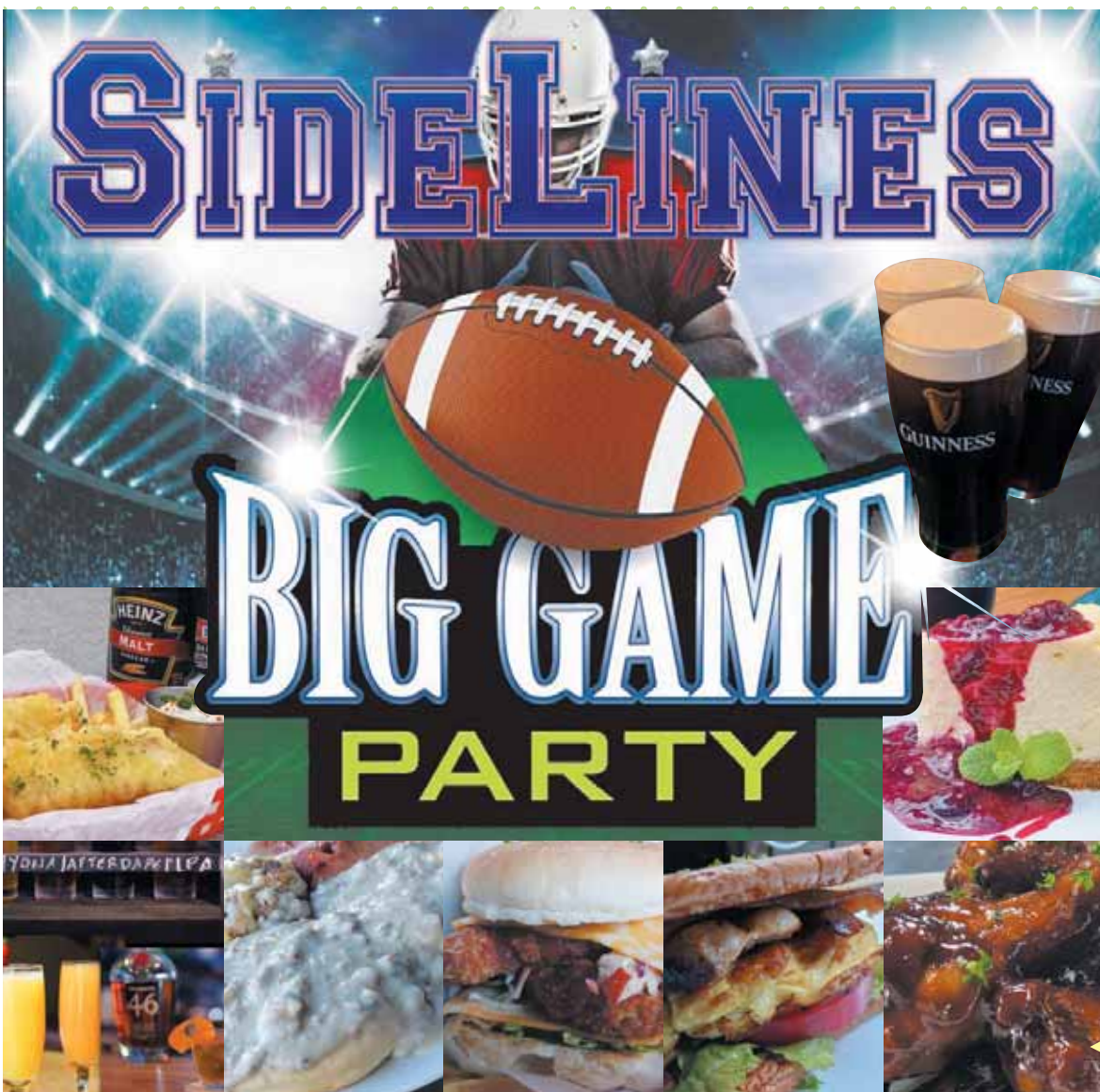
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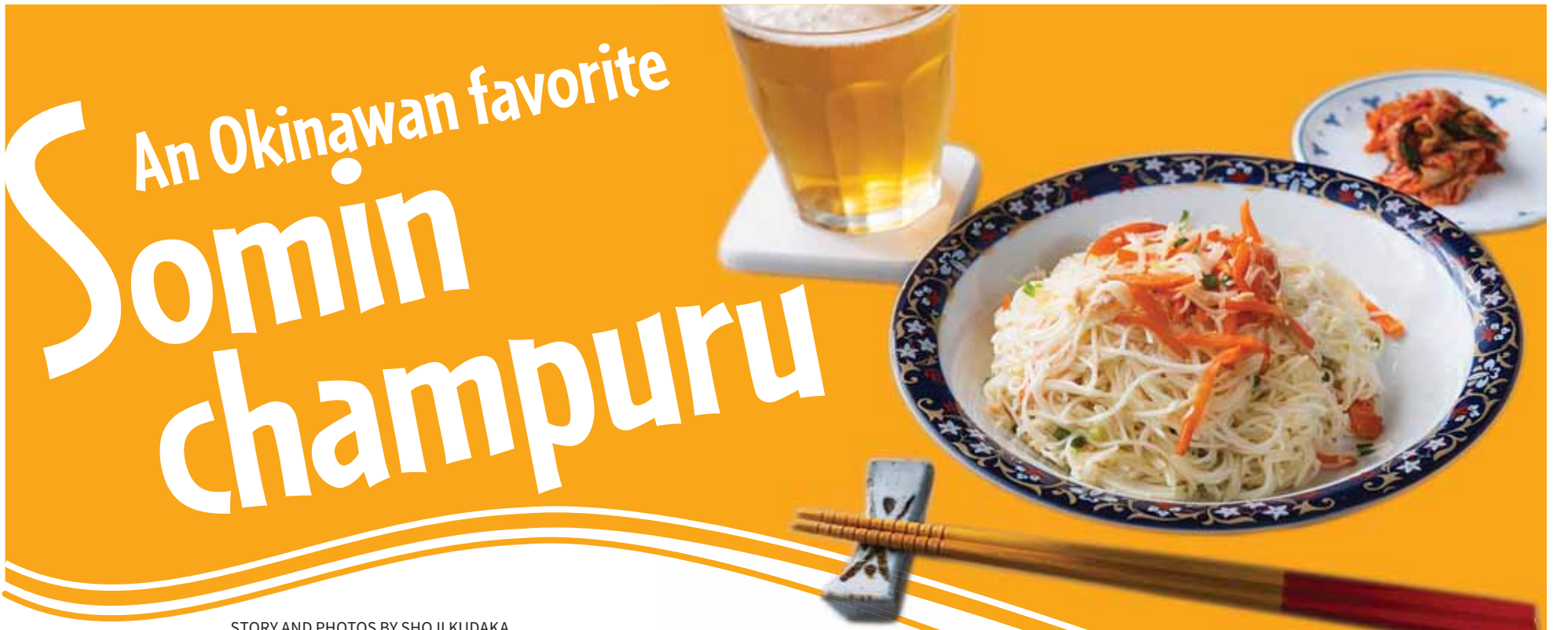
A Taste of Okinawa



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Est. 2012, Sidelines is a family-owned, upscale sports-themed restaurant. Our menu offers many great home-made options including Classic American items, Vegan dishes, kid's choices and delicious weekly Specials. Try our fresh Fish & Chips or delicious Homemade Cheesecake, both undoubtedly the best in Okinawa! We also have weekly Theme Nights and regularly show Live Sporting Events. Come to our Big Game Party on Feb 10th! With 20 TV's, our Big Screen Projector and unbeatable table service you'll experience the best Super Monday atmosphere in Japan! Be sure to join us soon and become part of the Sidelines' Family!

RESTAURANT INFO



An Okinawan favorite Somin champuru

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

In mainland Japan and Okinawa, you'll find plenty of noodle dishes to curb your hunger. Besides the standard ramen, soba, and udon, somen might not be at the top of the chart for noodle enthusiasts. But it is delicious and worth seeking out to try for yourself.

Somen, or somin in Okinawan dialect, comes in different varieties, but an Okinawan favorite is to have the noodles stir-fried in somin champuru. For many Okinawans, it is a go-to when they need to quickly prepare a lunch. At izakaya bars on the island, you can count on it as a good appetizer.

Against the backdrop of Okinawa's popularity as a tourist destination, somin champuru has been recognized across the country. Now many restaurants and bars on mainland Japan serve up this taste of Okinawa.

I am sure somin champuru would make a great side dish for a glass of beer, whether you are in an izakaya on Okinawa or in Tokyo. Better yet, you can cook some up at home for a hearty and tasty meal.

This is probably one of the easiest Okinawan dishes to prepare, but it also can be customized and cooked with different ingredients to change it up. However, a simple recipe like the one below only requires a few vegetables like carrots, long green onions, seasonings, noodles and about 10 minutes to prepare. Why not try this easy and tasty Okinawan favorite?

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

'Somin champuru' or 'somin tashiyaa'

Somin champuru is sometimes called somin tashiyaa. Serai, a Japanese magazine dedicated to culture, food, and travel, claims that the name "somin tashiyaa" is more appropriate. According to the magazine, the word "champuru" is thought to have its roots in the word "campur," which means "mix up" in the Indonesian language. "Champuru," in general, refers to stir fry cooked with seasonal vegetables and tofu, not somen, explains the magazine.

This idea seems legit as it is backed by official entities such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Okinawa Dietetic Association. However, as a regular Okinawan, I find the name "somin champuru" far more common than "somin tashiyaa" (In fact, I had never heard of the word "tashiyaa" until I wrote this article). You likely find the word "ソーミンチャンプルー (somin champuru)" not "ソーミンタシヤー (somin tashiyaa)" on local izakaya menu books.

Sea Chicken

Although somin champuru can be cooked in various ways, many of them would have some ingredients in common. One example is canned tuna. Commonly called "Sea Chicken," this is another big-time Okinawan favorite. According to Okinawa Times, a local newspaper, Okinawans consume more than 16 million cans of Hagoromo Foods' "シーチキン (Sea Chicken)" per year, which is about four times the average number in the country. Hagoromo Foods is a major producer of canned tuna, with more than 50 percent of the market share. Due to the island's humid climate and the influence of the U.S. military, the paper explains, canned

tuna from overseas countries was commonly marketed in Okinawa. "シーチキン" became an instant hit when it was introduced to the island in the early 1980s. It also became a popular gift for islanders visiting their relatives during the Obon period.



Somen noodles



Canned tuna

INGREDIENTS

Serves 2-3 people

- Somen noodles (200g)
- Canned tuna (30 to 40g, about half a can. Those soaked in oil are preferred)
- Salt (2.5 cc)
- Oil (a) (5 cc)
- Oil (b) (15 cc)
- Broth of bonito flakes (30 cc)
- Carrot (a third of one carrot)
- Long green onion (as much as you want)
- Soy sauce (a little)

DIRECTIONS



1 Boil somen noodles in hot water. Put them in a sieve 40 seconds later.



2 Cool them down by soaking them in cold water. Rinse the noodles with water and remove the slimy texture.



3 Put noodles in a sieve and remove water before mixing them with canned tuna, salt, and oil (5 cc) in a bowl.



4 Heat oil (b, 15 cc) in a frying pan and quickly fry the shredded carrot. Add in the noodles of step 3.



5 Evenly pour the broth of bonito flakes and quickly fry the noodles. Stir them and prevent them from being tangled with each other.



6 Evenly spread soy sauce and quickly mix it with the noodles.



7 Sprinkle sliced green onion on top and enjoy! いただきます (Itadakimasu)!

Check out the video





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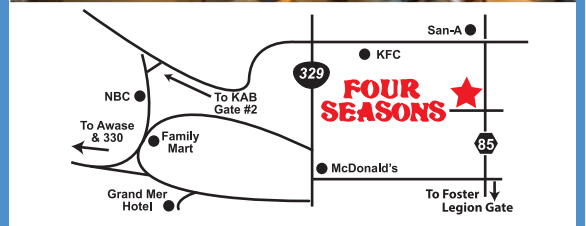
Four Seasons Teppanyaki Steak House in Awase and Urasoe will not only dazzle you, but also tingle your taste buds! Watch as our talented chefs slice, dice and cook up your entrees right at your table. It's more than a meal, It's a special event! Our restaurant is the perfect place to relax, unwind and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

RESTAURANT INFO

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



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



<p>Lunch Hours: 11:00- </p> <p>Lunch Steak Set ¥1,595-</p>	<p>Dinner Hours: 17:00- </p> <p>Dinner Steak Set ¥2,090-</p>
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A Taste of Okinawa



Stone-oven-baked pizza, pasta, spare ribs and more

Have you heard of Pizzeria MARINO, renowned for our delicious cuisine in Okinawa? At Pizzeria MARINO, you can savor a wide variety of dishes, including stone-oven-baked pizzas, pasta, cheese fondue, and spare ribs. Our freshly baked pizzas are a must-try, offering a unique and irresistible flavor that you won't find anywhere else. Treat yourself to one of our set menus and choose your favorite pizza and pasta combination for an unforgettable dining experience. At Pizzeria MARINO, we're here to give you a taste of home that will leave your tastes begging for more. We can't wait to serve you!

<p>Gushikawa Main City Branch</p>	<p>Naha Main Place Branch</p>	<p>Urasoe West Coast Parco City Branch</p>
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RESTAURANT INFO