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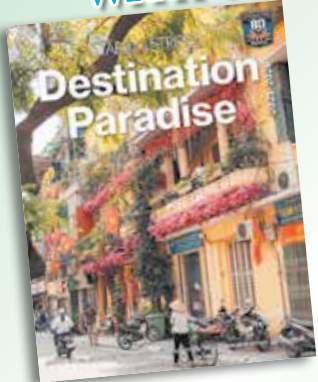
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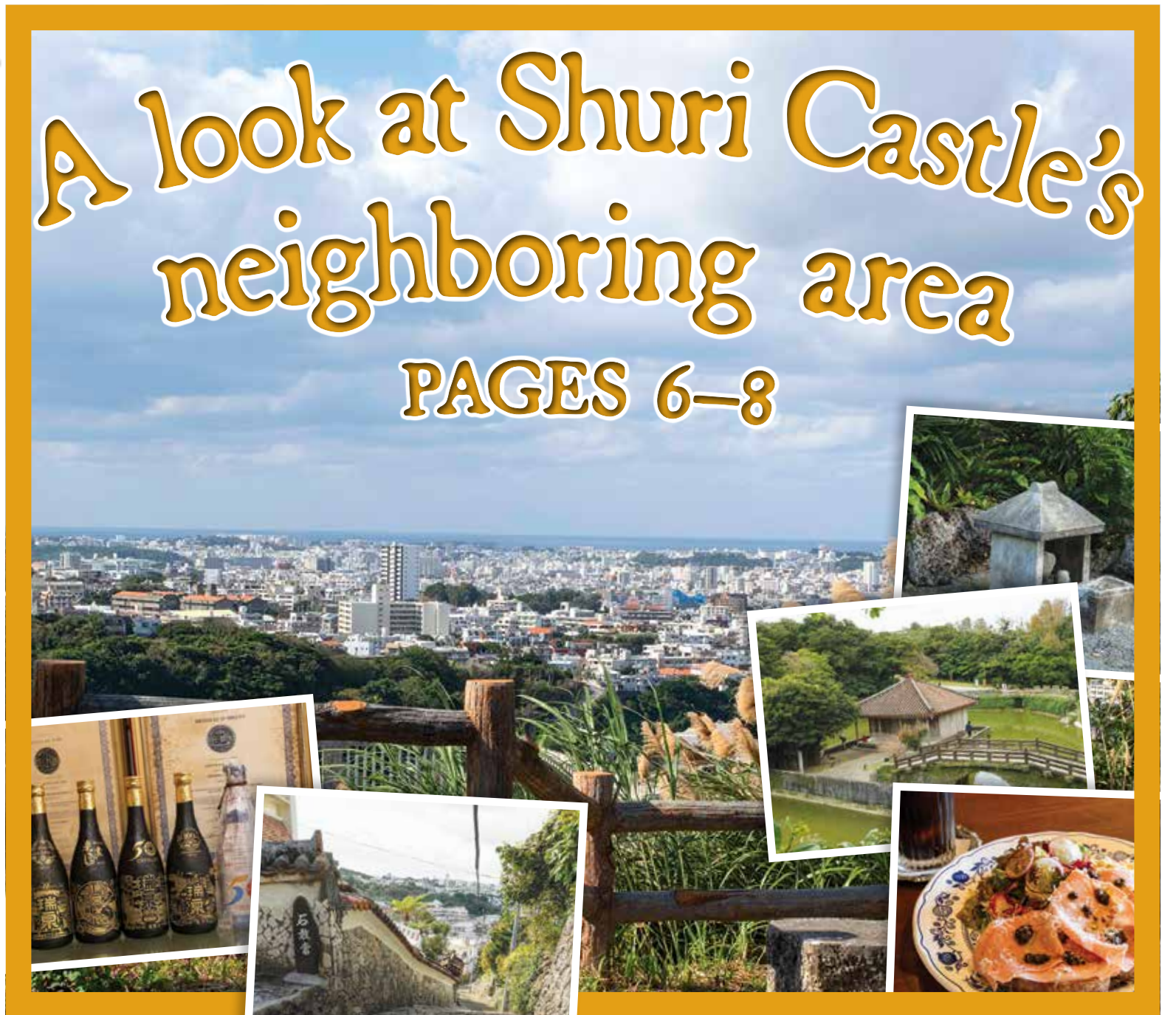


Stars and Stripes is asking readers to write about their own piece of paradise. Yes, that means you! Our annual Destination Paradise magazine highlights must-see travel spots across the Pacific – and your bit of paradise could be included in our 2026-27 edition that hits the streets on Pacific bases in September. Submit your story and photos to paradise@stripes.com by **July 15**. We'll make you famous! **Check out our previous Destination Paradise magazines**



A look at Shuri Castle's neighboring area

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INSIDE INFO



WINDSURFING ON SENAGA ISLAND'S CALM WATERS
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Special 4-page pullout inside!

Airmen help Japanese man bleeding on beach

BY BRIAN MCELHINEY,
 STARS AND STRIPES
 Published: May 28, 2026

Five U.S. airmen attending a leadership course at Kadena Air Base received Air Force Achievement Medals after aiding an injured Japanese man on a beach off central Okinawa.

The airmen were sightseeing on Ikei Island on March 22 when they encountered a 79-year-old man who had fallen, struck his head and lost consciousness, according to the service members and locals officials.

The group — Tech. Sgts. Scott Hartnett, Nathan Blizzard, Kylie Eberle and Jeremy Guancia, along with Master Sgt. Clare Gill — were

on Okinawa for the five-week Noncommissioned Officer Academy.

They later received achievement medals and coins from Senior Master Sgt. Colton Fink, acting commandant of the academy.

Hartnett said his Air Force tactical combat casualty care training helped him react quickly.

"I knew that I had that training, so I knew that I would be the responsible one," he told Stars and Stripes by phone on May 11.

Hartnett, a heavy aircraft integrated avionics craftsman for the 730th Air Mobility Squadron at Yokota Air Base in western Tokyo, said the group had just arrived at Ikei Beach around noon when he heard what sounded like a crack

"All the training I've done in my 13 years in the Air Force came into play. [It's] why we practice and we do things, so when it's an emergency, it's not your first time experiencing something."

— Tech. Sgt. Kylie Eberle

SEE AIRMEN ON PAGE 2

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Tech. Sgts. Scott Hartnett, Nathan Blizzard, Kylie Eberle and Jeremy Guancia, along with Master Sgt. Clare Gill, gather on Ikei Island. Photo courtesy of U.S. Air Force

AIRMEN: It ‘was very scary’

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

against concrete.

Turning around, he saw the man unconscious and bleeding heavily from the head.

Blizzard, an aircraft structural maintenance section chief with the 36th Maintenance Squadron at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, saw blood was pooling around the man’s head.

“It was actively growing, which was very scary,” he said by phone on May 14.

While Hartnett retrieved a first aid kit, Blizzard used his shirt to help stop the bleeding.

EXCLUSIVE NEWS FROM:
STARS AND STRIPES
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Gill, a section chief for Yokota’s 374th Medical Support Squadron, and Blizzard stabilized the man’s neck while Eberle, a unit deployment manager with the 51st Medical Support Squadron at Osan Air Base, South Korea, elevated his legs as he drifted in and out of consciousness.

Guancia, of the 35th Surgical Operations Squadron at Misawa Air Base in northern Japan, used a phone translator and hand gestures to ask a nearby woman to contact emergency services.

The man was taken to a central Okinawa hospital with non-life-threatening injuries, an

Uruma city fire department spokesman said by phone on May 19. Some Japanese government officials must speak to the press only on condition of anonymity.

Eberle said the incident reinforced the value of years of emergency response training.

“All the training I’ve done in my 13 years in the Air Force came into play,” she said by phone May 19. “[It’s] why we practice and we do things, so when it’s an emergency, it’s not your first time experiencing something.”

Stars and Stripes reporter Keishi Kojima contributed to this report.

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Windsurfing on Senaga Island's calm waters

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Looking for something to make the most of the beautiful warm weather, I sought out a new sport I'd never tried before, windsurfing.

After some digging online, I found Blahav151, a windsurf shop on Senaga Island near Naha Airport.

With a circumference of about 1.5 kilometers, Senaga Island is tiny, but it's still a popular destination for tourists. According to Umikaji Terrace, a shopping complex on the island, it draws about 3.3 million visitors a year.

The waters around the island are relatively shallow, suitable for beginner windsurfers like me. At Blahav151, instructor Kai Shimabukuro welcomed me with a smile and congratulated me for what he said was the right choice.

Thanks to the airport's runway, Shimabukuro explained, the beach is protected from high waves, making it an ideal location to learn to windsurf.

Before I could take to the water, Shimabukuro briefed me on the basics and four technical steps to mastering the activity.

First step would be to climb onto the board's center from the side and stand parallel with feet spread to the left and right.

Next, the sail is pulled using the rope attached to it, then hold the sail's vertical pole with either hand depending on the direction in which the surfer is trying to sail. Left to go left and right to go right.

After that, the surfer must turn their body to face the direction of progression and scoot feet to stand behind the sail while holding the sail's horizontal pole with the right hand.

In the fourth step, the surfer should turn their face diagonally forward in relation to the direction of progression. I would turn my face left if I were headed to the left of my position at the beginning.

Got it? Good! I did too, but I felt a little anxious.

With a mind, and body, full of jitters, I reluctantly followed the instructor as he carried my board and sail to the shoreline. Once I reached the water, the shallowness soothed my anxiety some. I also noticed there weren't many rocks around, so I didn't have to worry too much about potential injuries.

We waded into the water about 20 to 30 meters from the shore. It was time to test my memory and understanding of the four simple steps Shimabukuro taught me.

I climbed on the board without any issues, a good first sign.

Step two, drawing the rope, also not a challenge.

Step three, however, was not so easy. I turned and reached for the horizontal bar, lost my balance and fell into the water. Back to step one.

There were several failed attempts to move past step two, so Shimabukuro suggested I keep the vertical pole upright.

Stabilized finally, the next challenge was to position my

feet correctly. They were either too far from the sail or too close to the side of the board. Too add to that, I had to guess without looking down or else I'd lose my balance. It was an awkward feeling, and I was shakier than I was supposed to be given how peaceful the waters were.

Nonetheless, after 10 minutes, I gradually learned to stay on the board longer than before. Soon, my sail began to catch the breeze, and my board slowly floated forward with me still on it. I felt myself finally start to relax, cruising along and enjoying the view.

Commercial planes took off from the airport and flew over us in the sky, but the water was unmoved by the movement above. Fortunately, the tourists on the shore lined up to take photos of the planes, were too busy to pay attention to the clumsy windsurfing beginner.

I was finally having fun and comfortable enough on the board to try a U-turn before the end of the one-hour course. Following Shimabukuro's advice, I put the sail down while holding its rope. Then I drew the top of the sail close to the rear end of the board. This worked like a rudder, helping the board curl away from its direction of progression.

Pulling up and down the sail was quite the arm workout. After making a few successful U-turns, I was exhausted, and I was thankful that it was time for the session to end.

Though the shop doesn't offer lessons in English, Shimabukuro said he does get American customers and foreign tourists wanting to try windsurfing. Reservations are required and lessons are not private, so each instructor can have up to five students. Kids must be 12 years old and above to participate.

Shimabukuro said winter is the best season for windsurfing as that is when the winds pick up in Okinawa. For a novice like me, however, I'll stick to the calm, warm breeze.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

BLAHAV151



GPS COORDINATES: N 26.17654, E 127.64418

HOURS: 9 a.m. – 6:30 p.m. Closed on Tue.

PRICES: One hour course, including a 15-minute brief, costs 4,950 yen (approx. \$31)

EMAIL: umiashibi@blahav151.com

*Showers and lockers are available for free at the shop.

*Free parking space available at (N 26.17549, E 127.644023)



**Windsurfing
Video!**



Kodakara Iwa (Child Blessing Rock)

This landmark standing at the southern shore of the island is a replication of a rock that used to be worshipped by locals during the pre-war days.

According to a description posted on the site, a local legend has it that throwing a stone into either of the holes lined up vertically on the rock would reward one with having a baby: the top for a boy, the bottom for a girl.

After it was destroyed during the Battle of

Okinawa in 1945, it was brought back to life in 2015, according to a report by the local newspaper Ryukyu Shimpo.

Following the tradition, I approached the rock with the idea of throwing a stone at it. On this day, however, there were many tourists taking photos around it. So, I just stayed behind them, looking at the two holes filled with pebbles and stones.

GPS COORDINATES: N 26.173740, E 127.641902

*To visit Kodakara Iwa and the locations described below, I parked my car at a free parking space nearby (N 26.174904, E 127.645662), and took a walk. There are free parking slots by Umikaji Terrace as well, but they are often taken.



Umikaji Terrace

Umikaji Terrace
GPS COORDINATES: N 26.176667, E 127.640437
 *The Cuban sandwich shop mentioned in the article (Pirates Okinawa) is currently closed.



WEBSITE



After visiting the Child Blessing Rock, I swung by Umikaji Terrace, a dining and shopping complex sitting on the side of a hill overlooking the west coast of the island. Surrounded by white walls and corridors, this location has a Mediterranean vibe.

In my case, a visit to this location brought me back to the days I spent in South Florida about 20 years ago. Lucky for me, I found Pirates Okinawa, which was serving up various Cuban Sandwiches.

I picked a pork sandwich for 1,800 yen (approx. \$12.16), which came with fried potatoes and orange juice.

Having a thick sandwich with lots of cheese, pork and pickles was satisfying. Spicing it up with Tabasco made it even better.

Senagajima Sunset Park (Observatory)

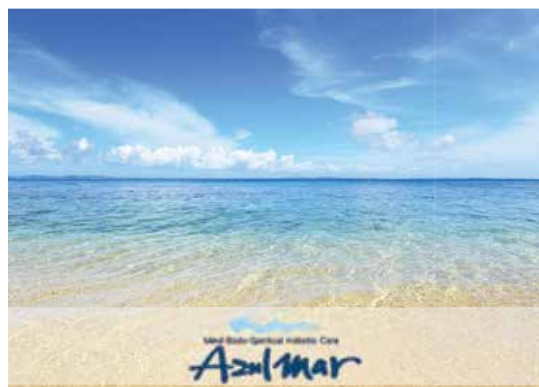


GPS COORDINATES: N 26.174607, E 127.642660
 * Free parking spaces available.

To close my time on the island, I stopped by this park sitting on the top of the island.

While I enjoyed a nice view of Senaga Beach and the west coast from the height of 33 meters, I thought back about the time I spent at sea,

If I had stayed a couple of hours longer, I could have caught the sunset, but I saved it for another time and made my way home.



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A look at Shuri Castle's ne

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Among the many places to visit in Okinawa, the iconic red Shuri Castle stands out. The castle in Shuri is a Ryukyuan gusuku serving as the center of the Ryukyu Kingdom from 1429-1879. Though it was almost completely destroyed during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945, it was reconstructed and became an attraction for tourists and locals alike. Unfortunately, tragedy would strike again in 2019, when a fire

would damage the castle. Since then, there's been a tremendous effort to bring this UNESCO World Heritage site back to its former glory.

The reconstruction is to be completed in the fall of 2026, with a ceremony scheduled Nov. 22 to commemorate the comeback.

Most of the castle remains open to the public and the area surrounding it is home to many fun attractions, so here's a look at things to see and do.

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

Map around Shuri Castle

1 Don't skip a trip to Zuisen Distillery

A good place to stop in if you're an awamori liquor fan is Zuisen Distillery, only a 7-minute walk from the castle's Shurei Gate.

Awamori is a traditional Okinawan liquor with a history of over 500 years. The liquor makes for a great souvenir readily available at local markets and convenience stores, and a go-to at local bars.

During the time of the Ryukyu Kingdom, however, awamori was a special spirit distilled only by dedicated craftsmen in Akata, Sakiyama and Torihori, three areas neighboring the castle.

While many awamori distilleries today operate elsewhere, Zuisen is one of the few Awamori makers that remain in such a historical district.

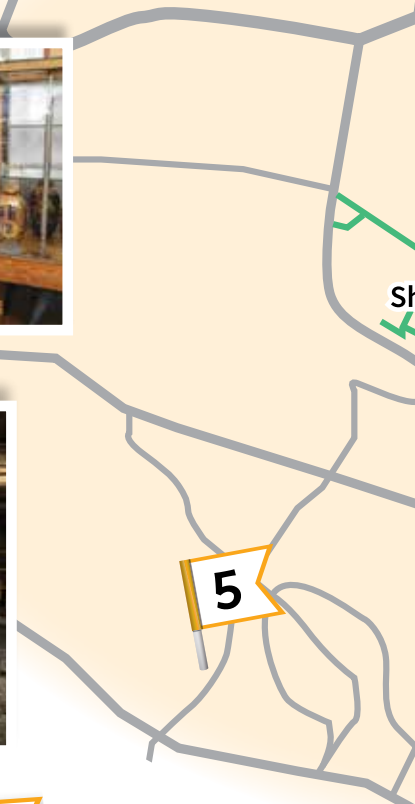
Take a free tour and get a look at the large distilling and fermentation equipment on site, as well as watch a video on the history of awamori. In addition, and most importantly, visitors are given samples of Zuisen's awamori offerings.

Much different from other liquors, awamori is distilled in a unique way using black koji mold called *Aspergillus Awamori* and Thai rice (jasmine rice), creating a distinct flavor you'll either love or hate, according to distillery employee Riko Kobayashi.

"Some people do find it a little too strong to their liking," Kobayashi said. "Many of our visitors try their first Awamori at our distillery."

There are also soft liquors available for those who would like to go easy on themselves.

While touring the distillery, visitors can also browse the old signs and bottles demonstrating its history used through the years.



2 Amagoi Utaki and Sakiyama Utaki

A 5-minute walk from the distillery sits Amagoi Utaki, a famous place of worship during the Ryukyu Kingdom. The stone shrine's interesting horseshoe shape encircling an incense burner is eye-catching. Here, the king would pray for rain during severe droughts. According to the Shuri Castle website, this structure faces the direction of Tamagusuku Castle, a place of worship for the god of rain, located in the southern part of the island.



Sitting on a hill with a height of 132.9 m (436 feet), this location commands a superb view of the southern part of the Shuri area. Enjoy the view from the observatory.

Amagoi Utaki used to be considered one of the eight best views in the Shuri area along with spots such as Ryutan Pond and Tennyo Bridge.

Also located in the neighborhood is Sakiyama Utaki, another place of worship featuring a gate with a red door. According to Shuri Castle's website, an administrator of Naminoue Shrine used to live there during the Ryukyu Kingdom. At the site, you will also find Sakiyama Heeja, a well where water was collected for presentation to the king on New Year's Day.



Things to know

GPS COORDINATES: 26.21531, 127.72057

HOURS: 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. Mon.-Sat.

*Reservation required for a tour.

For more info, check out the distillery's website.



WEBSITE

4 enogastronomia g

Around Shuri Castle, visitors can find restaurants and café options for a quick bite. Among them, enogastronomia giulietta waterfront stands out.

This chic eatery opened in 2024 and I received a warm welcome. Beside the cozy interior are six tables for diners. The menu is large offering Italian delights.

During my visit, the lunch options included a salad with herbs, and a meat dish. I went with the truffle, zarella, mortadella, e salsa di tartufo, an open sandwich with imported Italian mozzarella, mortadella ham, and a slice of truffle for 1,500 yen (approx. \$9.81). I coupled it with a glass of wine.

When the food was brought to my table, I was impressed by its beautiful presentation, especially the way the truffle was dotted with black truffle sauce. I reminded myself of how much so that I even hesitated for a second before taking a bite.

With one bite, however, the scent and depth of the truffle filled my senses. This is a bit embarrassing as crostino was my first time trying truffle.

The sauce, the soft ham and tender bread made the meal I could hardly stop eating. I learned later that the chef, Teruaki Koike, trained in Italy and is now in Okinawa to create the perfect morsel that will give you an experience an excellent one. I am a changed person.

To take a break in Ryukyu to enjoy Italian food during your vacation, so make sure to look out for this lightful meal!



neighboring area



Guilietta

...s have many restau-
...coffee or a nice meal.
...with its red parasol out

...ntly gave it a try. In-
...s to sit and enjoy the

...l pasta, sauteed chick-
...the crostone con mozz-
...-faced sandwich with
...and truffle sauce for
...an iced coffee for 500

I was impressed with
...the pink-colored ham
...led me of modern art,
...before digging in.
...licate sweet flavor of
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...d created a delectable
...or that guilietta's own-
...nd imported his skills
...made my first truffle
...foodie.

...was like taking a sec-
...e red parasol for a de-



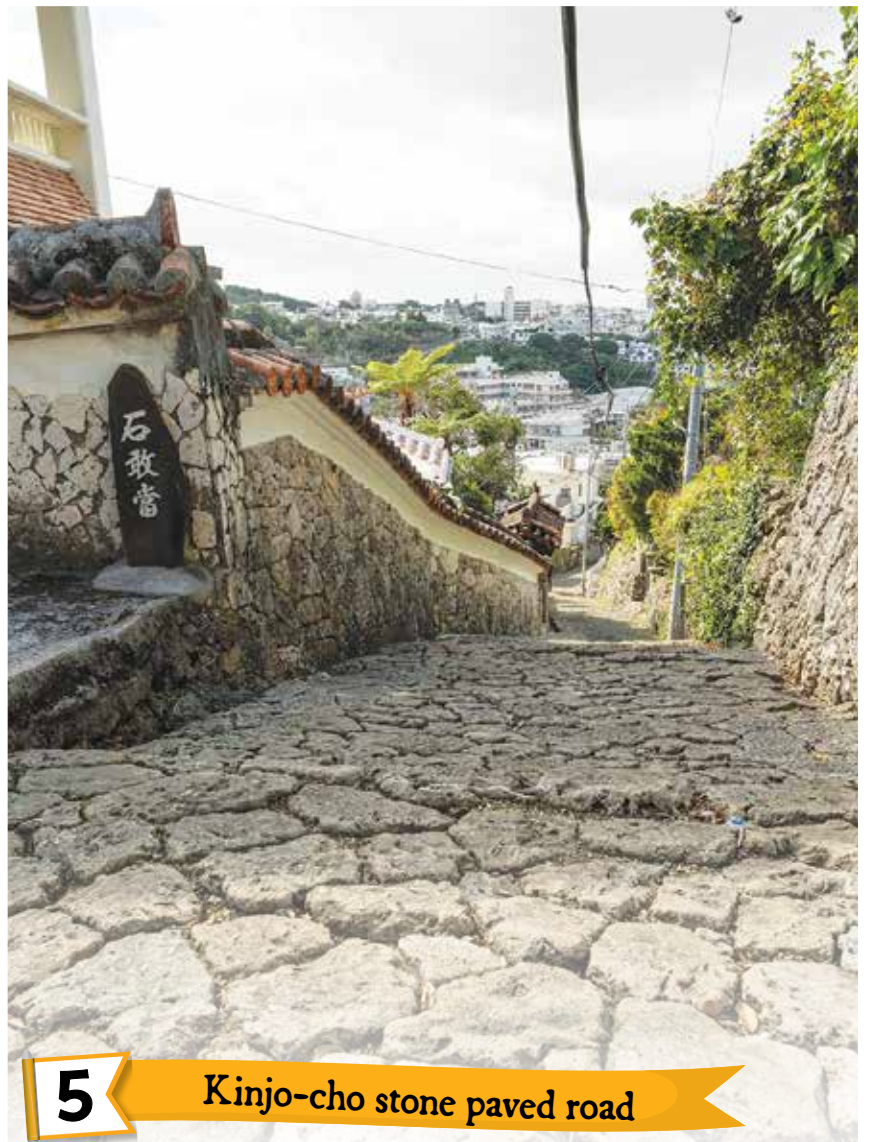
Things to know

GPS COORDINATES: 26.22053, 127.71694
HOURS: 11:30 a.m. -2 p.m. (lunch), 6 – 9 p.m. (Dinner),
Tues. – Sat.

Closed on Sun. and Mon. and holidays
*Prices and menu items are subject to change.



INSTAGRAM



5 Kinjo-cho stone paved road

After visiting these Ryukyu places of worship, take a 10-minute walk to Kinjo-cho Ishidatami Michi (stone-paved road), which runs on a downslope on the southwest side of Shuri Castle.

Running about 300 meters, it was originally a part of a road to mobilize military forces to defend what is now known as Naha Military Port.

Today, this limestone-paved road is often highlighted by the local media as an iconic landscape of good old Okinawa. It is also fun to see many plants and trees such as papaya and bougainvillea adorning the street.

Don't miss the five special Akagi trees (*bischovia javanica*), each standing at about 20 meters tall and believed to be 200 years old. Here you'll also find Uchikana-gusuku-utaki, another important Ryukyuan worship site.

Things to know

Kinjo-cho stone paved road
GPS COORDINATES: N 26.217130, E
127.716753 (North-end)

Akagi trees
GPS COORDINATES: N 26.215875, E
127.716014



Akagi Trees



SEE SHURI ON PAGE 8

SHURI: Step into Ryukyu

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7



Ryutan Pond



6 Ryutan Pond (Ryutanike)

Northwest of Shuri Castle, Ryutanike (Ryutan Pond) is a good place to stop for a relaxing break. The pond is shaped like a dragon's head and was created during King Sho Hashi's reign (1422 to 1439) as a sort of reflecting pool for Shuri Castle.

During the Ryukyu Kingdom, envoys from China would visit and boat races on the water would entertain visitors.

Although the pond was once only accessible to royals, today it is a beloved location for tourists, locals and Muscovy ducks.



Things to know

GPS COORDINATES: 26.220153, 127.716692 (west end)

8 The 32nd Army Underground Headquarters Shelter

This bunker used to be a stronghold of Japan's Imperial Army during the Battle of Okinawa in 1945. A total of five tunnels are connected inside, running for about one kilometer under Shuri Castle. These tunnels housed an armory, communication facility, kitchen, break room and a residential area.

Among its five entrances, Gate No. 1 is located near the south end of Ryutanike. Although access to the inner part of the tunnels is currently blocked by a fence, a description and a map of the tunnels are posted nearby, highlighting some of the history in the region during World War II (Parts of the bunker are expected to be open to the public sometime in 2026 or early 2027).

Things to know

GPS COORDINATES: 26.218414, 127.717677

*For regular-sized cars, Shuri Castle's parking lot costs 500 yen for the first hour, 250 yen per 30 minutes after that. The maximum fee is capped at 1,000 yen. There are many coin-parking around the area as well. Prepare a designated driver if you are planning on sampling Awamori at Zuisen.

7 Enkanchi and Benzaitendo

Southeast of Ryutanike, another pond, Enkanchi, was constructed in 1502 as a reservoir for a water source in Shuri Castle, according to the castle's website.

Enkanchi and Ryutanike are connected by a water channel running under a stone bridge called Ryuen-kyo (Ryuen Bridge). If you cross the bridge and walk along the path, you'll eventually reach a small islet where the small temple Benzaitendo stands. This temple dating back to the early-16th Century was for storing Buddhist scripture. It was reconstructed in 1621 and a statue of Benzaiten, a god of water from India, was added. Admire the stunning view of the temple above Tennyo-bashi bridge after you cross it back to the shore of Enkanchi.

Things to know

GPS COORDINATES: 26.21842, 127.71858



Ryuenkyo



Tennyo-bashi



The 32nd Army Underground Headquarters Shelter



Enkanchi and Benzaitendo

BEACH TIME

Many activities, great lodging at Okuma

BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

On Okinawa there are many beaches perfect for a fun day, but Okuma Beach managed by Kadena FSS is one you won't want to miss.

You'll find this piece of paradise on the northern part of the island a bit further up from Nago City. From Camp Foster, this beach resort is about a two-hour drive away.

I recently took my first visit to the area. Fortunately, my coworker Saori joined me and helped me make the drive.

As soon as we reached Okuma Beach, my heart soared. The area's resort vibe reminded me of Miami Beach, but without the fancy shops and bars lining the coast.

At the gate, I was asked to show my ID. If this were at Kadena Marina, another beach area that Kadena FSS manages, you would be able to go through the gate without being stopped. Okuma, however, is more of a private beach in a secluded spot where access is controlled. Although the two locations offer some similar recreation programs, Okuma Beach looked to me a perfect place for a vacation while Kadena Marina feels better suited for a short break.

We drove past the gate and onto Okuma Boulevard toward the parking lot on the south beach side.

This large recreational space has multiple beaches, including one in the north and another in the west. This beach on the southern coast looked to be the most popular.

From the parking lot, I could see paddleboarders and jet-skiers enjoying the last stretch of the spring break season.

Since this was our first visit to Okuma Beach, Katsuyo Taira, a Kadena FSS employee, took us on a tour of the facilities via golfcart. We got a look at the Okuma Beach's golf courses, beach houses, and campgrounds. As we rode past, I imagined myself having fun on the links, spending the night with my family in a cozy cabin or grilling some steaks on a camping trip in this lovely spot.

Beyond the lodging, camping and golfing, Okuma Beach is known for amazing water activities perfect for a family getaway. Try your hand at jet-skiing, kayaking, and stand-up paddleboarding. As for me, I did some snorkeling.

To look at the creatures below the surface, we hopped on a boat for a quick five-minute ride out and soon I was in the water ready to explore. I visited in mid-April,

so the water was a bit chilly, but the colorful tropical fish made me forget about the temperature. The expansive water and high waves were relaxing, and the schools of fish were undeterred by an unfamiliar face.

For lunch, we headed back to shore and rode the golfcart to the Surfside Grill & Bar, which serves up a vast menu of hamburgers, seafood, steaks, and pizzas. I tried a brick-oven pizza with plenty of cheese, sausage, mushrooms, and olives, which I found quite tasty as well.

After our enjoyable meal, Taira took us to "Observation Hill," a spot on the northwest end of Okuma for great ocean views. Then, to close out our visit, we went to the Golf Shack for some putt-putt golf.

We didn't have time to play a full set at Habu Links Golf Course, so the mini-golf course would have to do. Despite the smaller course, the Golf Shack's holes had various obstacles and intricate designs which were challenging and fun. I also had a great time chatting with other players on the course.

Our day ended in the afternoon a few hours before sunset. There were still many vacationers enjoying the beach when I made my reluctant exit. Okuma has much to offer and now I know that one day might not be enough to enjoy it all. As I drove off, I knew I'd be coming back soon.

Plan your visit to this beautiful beach area soon. You and your family are sure to enjoy it as much as I did!

kudaka.shoji@stripes.com

Watch Video!



Okuma Beach

- **GPS Coordinates:** N 26.737533, E 128.159075
- **Fee**
- **Coral Connection Snorkel Excursion**
\$30 per person (\$70 minimum. Departure time is 10 a.m. and 3 p.m.)
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More info



Jet ski



Hillside Campground



Habu Links Golf course



Putt-putt golf



Turtle's Nest



Surfside Grill & Bar





Nishihara

Finding Okinawa's remaining Sony Bouya figures

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
AUSTIN HOWTON,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Sony Bouya stands still and watchful reminding drivers to slow down. His design, outfit and origin trace back to the late 1960s, when Okinawa was experiencing rapid growth in automobile use and rising concern over pedestrian safety.

Sony Bouya was the brainchild of Mr. Yuisuke Niikawa, founder of the sole Sony affiliated retailer in Okinawa at the time, Denkado, and based on a weekly manga produced by Sony at the time. Shinkawa commissioned at least ten (some sources say 30) of the statues with the words “traffic safety” for a PSA and “Sony” to gently reinforce brand visibility. These figures, dressed in jeans and a Sony collared long-sleeve shirt, were meant to offer a friendly, but serious, visual cue to drivers.

Today, only five Sony Bouyas remain scattered across Okinawa. The Sony Bouya figures are beloved and

iconic in these communities. Figures are regularly repainted and occasionally dressed for the holidays or community events, reflecting the enduring affection Okinawans have for the roadside guardians.

Residents and bloggers have helped document these statues for those inquisitive enough to go looking. Here's where you can find all five surviving statues with map links so you can visit them yourself:

1. Nodake, Ginowan City

Off busy Route 330, near Futema Gate 3, attached to the parking lot of Okito Kotsu Group, the Ginowan Sony Bouya watches over the traffic of the Nodake District. This Sony bouya appears well-preserved and often draws attention from the curious passersby. He wears a red collar with a yellow shirt, casual blue jeans and shoes.



LOCATION



Ginowan

4. Nashiro, Itoman City

The Sony Bouya in Nashiro, near Meiji Beach of Itoman City, faces the ocean and is now in the renovated parking lot of Ryukyu Hotel & Resort. He is difficult to spot in the Google Street View here because the location looks different after the parking lot renovation, but if you look really hard you can make him out.



LOCATION

2. Jahana, Motobu

In the northern town of Motobu, this statue stands in a quieter neighborhood in Jahana. Shaded by trees and surrounded by flowers, it's perhaps the most serene location of the five. It is also the only location where Sony Bouya has a companion. A girl figure, slightly shorter, stands at his side. Sony Bouya and his companion are smartly decorated differently multiple times throughout the year in accordance with the season and holidays. A bento shop is across the street from this Sony Bouya, so you can eat and take pictures with the statue.



LOCATION

5. Agena, Uruma

Near Agena Central Park in Uruma City, this solid yellow-shirted Sony Bouya is positioned in front of the Ankeina Bullring sign. Its location is also close to Agena Castle Ruins and Camp McTureous' main housing gate.



LOCATION

These five remaining Sony Bouya figures are a nostalgic window into Okinawa's belief in civic responsibility. The next time you find yourself driving across the island, keep your eyes peeled near crosswalks and side streets, you might just spot a silent Sony Bouya, still keeping watch after all these years.

3. Kaneku, Nishihara

Across the street from Okinawa Kaiho Bank Nishihara Branch in Nishihara Town, you'll find a Sony Bouya next to a coin laundry. He is also decorated by locals for holidays and has an expressive face, looking like he shakes his head at traffic with his arched eyebrow.



LOCATION

Austin Howton is a U.S. Air Force Contracting Officer and licensed attorney that has been stationed at Kadena since November of 2023. He enjoys reading, travelling, and exploring the intersections of law, government and global affairs.



Uruma

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Stripes Sports Trivia

In 2019, this golfer successfully defended his title at The PGA Championship, a year after doing the same thing at The U.S. Open.

Answer

Brooks Koepka

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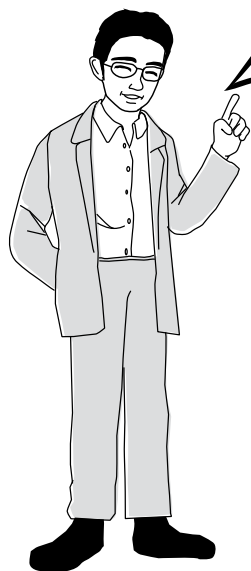
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DID YOU KNOW?

Okinawans are thought to have adopted some words from the Philippines. One example is the verb "patai" which means "fall after being exhausted" in Okinawan dialect and "kill" in Tagalog. Likewise, some say that the word "gelem" or "ge-lemnu", which means "fool" in Okinawa, has its root in Tagalog.

Kanji of the week



Uma/ba [Horse]

Language Lesson

Morning – Afternoon - Evening

Asa – Hiru - Yoru

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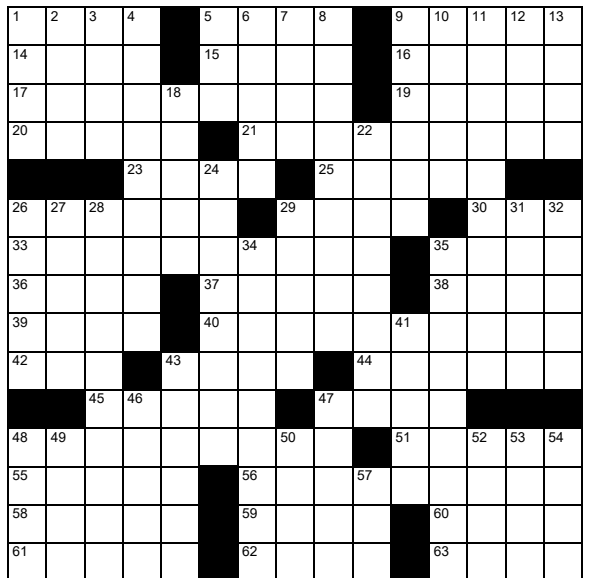


Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Scottish miss
- 5 James who played Sonny Corleone
- 9 Woodworking files
- 14 Like a mechanic's rag
- 15 Pakistani language
- 16 French farewell
- 17 Philanderer
- 19 Part of NOW
- 20 Courage
- 21 Voicemail precursor
- 23 Like pie?
- 25 Stand for a portrait
- 26 Bold and outspoken
- 29 Crime-fighting turtles, briefly
- 30 One of the Gershwins
- 33 Company stationery
- 35 Point on a bus map
- 36 Neat anagram
- 37 Eagle's nest
- 38 Havana's home
- 39 Psychic
- 40 Checkout device
- 42 Royal flush card
- 43 ___ the hatchet
- 44 Oscar winner Borgnine
- 45 Certain believer
- 47 Guitar part
- 48 Francis, in Florence
- 51 Polite
- 55 Dentist's direction
- 56 Exhibiting angst
- 58 Misbehave
- 59 Genesis son
- 60 Narrow aperture
- 61 Winter runners?
- 62 It's tied at the altar



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63 Julia's "Ocean's Eleven" role

DOWN

- 1 Homebuyer's need
- 2 ___-de-camp
- 3 Talk like a lush
- 4 "Looney Tunes" lisper
- 5 Word before card or stick
- 6 Wide assortment
- 7 Mideast's Gulf of ___
- 8 Mother's helper
- 9 Least refined
- 10 Put on a pedestal
- 11 Likeness
- 12 Hammerhead part
- 13 Performed an aria
- 18 Make fun
- 22 Vagabond
- 24 Erie Canal city
- 26 Dynamite time?

27 She was Roxie in "Chicago"

- 28 Wedding party members
- 29 Absorbent fabric
- 31 Court wear
- 32 In different places
- 34 Despondent
- 35 Barest
- 41 At attention

43 Pull-up pullers

- 46 Follow as a result
- 47 Folded paper
- 48 Gridiron great Tarkenton
- 49 Puerto ___
- 50 Reunion group
- 52 Low-lying area
- 53 Fertility goddess
- 54 Allows
- 57 Small insect

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Easy

Edited by Margie E. Burke

HOW TO SOLVE:

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

Answer to Previous Sudoku:

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

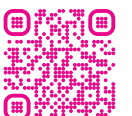
2	4							9
			4	1				
	5							3 7
3			8	7	1			
				5				6
7	6		2					
		6	1			7		9
			7	8			2	
5	2			9				8

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Spice it up with Okinawan fiery condiment Kōrēgusu

STORY AND PHOTO BY SHOJI KUDAKA, STRIPES OKINAWA

Spice up your life



If you have been to an Okinawan soba restaurant, you might have noticed a small bottle of sauce with chili peppers-soaked in Okinawan Awamori spirits.

Or, if you're already a soba joogoo (enthusiast), then you know this is must for spicing up your soba noodles.

The spicy, tangy condiment is often described as being Okinawa's version of Tabasco sauce, but you'll have to try it for yourself to find out.

History of Kōrēgusu

According to the Ryukyu Ryouri Hozon Kyokai (association for Ryukyu Cuisine preservation), the name Kōrēgusu originally refers to the chili pepper.

In mainland Japan, the pepper is called togarashi, translating to "hot pepper from Tang" since this was an import from China. In Okinawan dialect, the pepper is called Kōrēgusu, derived from the word Korai Kosho, which means Goryeo pepper.

Ryukyu-koku Yurai-ki, a document which was completed in the early 18th century to chronicle the old history of Ryukyu, indicates that the spice was imported to Okinawa via Satsuma Domain (then Kagoshima Prefecture).

Although it is unclear how the current Kōrēgusu condiment came to be, Okinawan beer brand Orion Beer suggests that the recipe might be inspired by "Chili Pepper Water," a Hawaiian hot sauce, which immigrants from Okinawa learned to use in the then Aloha State.

Today, Kōrēgusu is an essential part of Okinawan cuisine as it is used to spice up not only soba, but stir-fries, curry rice, pizza and so much more.

One important thing to remember is that too much Kōrēgusu puts you at risk of testing positive on a breathalyzer due to the high alcohol percentage of the awamori.

If I'm driving, I know not to use the delicious condiment when I go to a soba restaurant, although I do enjoy my soba noodles as spicy as possible.

The good news is Kōrēgusu is available at many local supermarkets, so it's not difficult to buy a bottle and try it at home. There are many infusions to try like Fuchiba mugwort, shiku-wasa citrus or even super spicy ones with ghost peppers.

Next time you find yourself out for soba, give the Kōrēgusu a try. You just might find a new favorite condiment to add a little taste of Okinawa to your dishes!

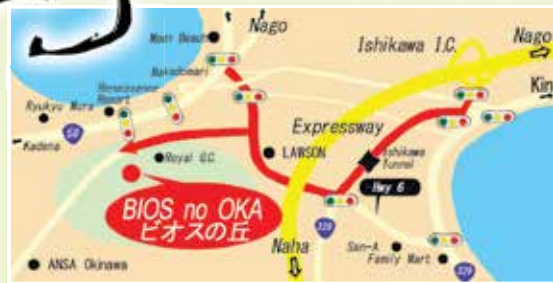
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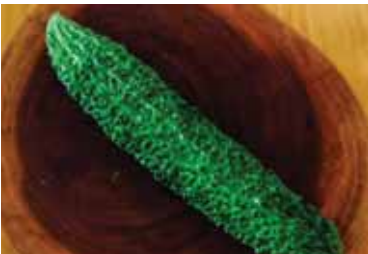
GOYA

3 easy Japanese bitter melon recipes for summer



STORY AND PHOTOS BY ELEONORA BADELLINO, BYFOOD

It's time to take a close look at an iconic Japanese summer vegetable, goya (bitter melon) which is known for its special flavor and texture. Here, you'll learn how to tame goya's bitter flavor and prepare it in three simple Japanese bitter melon recipes.



Have you ever heard of goya (Japanese bitter melon)?

Grown mainly in southern Japan, (Okinawa prefecture accounts for more than 30% of the goya harvest), goya is also known by the name "bitter gourd" or "bitter melon" and is considered an extremely nutritious ingredient.

What is bitter melon good for?

Rich in vitamin C, which is effective in cooling body temperature, goya has been recognized as a healthy vegetable to prevent summer heat fatigue, and over time, its use has become more popular and diverse. With color and shape similar to a cucumber, and a thick skin full of bumps, what makes Japanese goya truly unique is the bitter taste that can be experienced from the first bite.

But why is it so bitter? Is bitter melon poisonous?

Goya's bitterness makes it the kind of vegetable that you either love or hate, and while many people are addicted to it, others can't really appreciate Japanese bitter melon. The reason behind its flavor is momordicin, a compound located in the thick skin of goya, known for its ability to lower blood sugar levels in the body. So, we should all appreciate its taste, but with a little caution. According to a 2015 study by the World Journal of Emergency Medicine, doctors have reported the suspicion of toxicity in the red seeds located in the pulp, which must be removed before cooking. Besides that, bitter melon has long been used in traditional Chinese medicine due to its detoxifying and purifying qualities. In particular, it works on kidney stones and the liver.

How to reduce goya's bitter taste

If you feel that the bitterness of goya is too strong, here are some tips that can help you attenuate it and make it more palatable in the Japanese bitter melon recipes below. First of all, when buying goya, always select the dark green ones, as they are said to be less bitter. Before cooking, cut them into wedges and sprinkle the surface with salt. Let them rest for 30 minutes and rinse under flowing water, rubbing them with your hands to remove the remaining salt. Salt helps draw out moisture from the goya slices, thus reducing those phenolic components characterized by the bitter taste. A quick and easy mod for an assured result!



Goya chanpuru

Goya is a vegetable that adapts to different preparations. It can be found in stews, miso soup, tempura... but the most popular bitter gourd Japanese recipe is undoubtedly goya chanpuru. The term "chanpuru" comes from the Okinawan dialect, and can be translated as "something that is stirred." Goya chanpuru is a stir fry dish that involves the use of various ingredients including goya, tofu, animal protein, eggs, and other vegetables.

Ingredients

- 200g thinly sliced pork belly
- 1 pack of tofu
- 2 eggs
- 1 bitter gourd
- 2 tbsp salad oil
- 2 tbsp sesame oil
- 2 tbsp soy sauce
- Salt & pepper

- 1 Wrap tofu in kitchen paper and let it rest for 15 mins. In this way, we will draw out the excess water and the tofu will become more dry and dense.
- 2 Cut bitter gourd in half lengthwise, remove seeds and guts with a spoon, and cut into 4mm pieces. Place in a bowl, add salt, and mix. Let it rest for 30 mins and then wash with water until all the salt is gone.
- 3 Cut the pork into bite-sized pieces and sprinkle with salt and pepper.
- 4 Crack the egg into a separate bowl and mix.
- 5 Heat the salad oil in a frying pan, add the tofu, and cook over medium heat, turning the tofu over and over until the surface begins to brown. Take the tofu and put it aside.
- 6 Heat sesame oil in the same frying pan, add Japanese bitter melon, and fry over medium heat until soft. Add the pork and stir-fry until the meat turns golden brown, then add the tofu.
- 7 Pour in the egg and fry it until the egg is half-cooked. Mix everything together, add two tbsp of soy sauce, and place in a bowl to serve.



Meat-filled goya



I had the opportunity to taste this dish at a local izakaya during my first summer here in Japan, and I fell in love with the flavor of this Japanese bitter melon recipe. The sweet teriyaki sauce made of mirin, sugar, sake, and soy spice is perfect in combination with the bitterness of goya!

It is also possible to make a vegan version by substituting the pork with vegan minced meat.

Ingredients

- 180g minced pork
- 1/2 tsp grated garlic
- 1 tbsp sesame oil
- 1 bitter gourd
- 1 tbsp sake
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp mirin
- 1/2 tbsp of sugar
- 2 tbsp potato starch
- Salad oil

- 1 Cut bitter gourd into 8 equal pieces. Remove the seeds and pulp with a spoon. Place in a bowl, add salt, and stir. Let stand for 30 minutes and then wash with water until all the salt is gone. When dry, cover evenly with potato starch, making sure the inside is also coated.
- 2 Mix meat with garlic, 1/2 teaspoon potato starch, and sesame oil until the mixture gets sticky. Divide into 8 equal portions and fill the bitter melon.
- 3 In a frying pan, heat 1 teaspoon of oil. Grill the filled goya until browned on both sides, turning halfway through cooking. Add 4 tablespoons of water, cover, and steam for another 3 to 4 minutes.
- 4 When the meat is cooked, turn the heat down, add the seasoning (sake, mirin, soy sauce, and sugar) and cook until the sauce becomes sticky.
- 5 When ready, serve on a plate and eat while still hot.

Goya tea

For a concentrated version of the beneficial nutrients of goya, you can also enjoy it in tea form.

It is said that the bitter component of goya, with its excellent anti-inflammatory properties, along with its high amount of vitamin C, capable of strengthening the immunity of the skin, make it a drink that helps promote a healthy and young body.

Bitter gourd tea can be easily prepared at home.

Do not expect to drink super strong tea. You will find that its bitterness is milder and is characterized by a slight sweetness and richness similar to hojicha.

Although bitter melon is famous for its bitterness, even if you have a sweet tooth, I highly recommend giving it a try! In addition to its health benefits, it's a unique ingredient that your taste buds will have a hard time forgetting.

- 1 Cut the bitter gourd in half lengthwise and remove the insides with a spoon. Do not throw away the seeds, but simply separate them from the insides. Cut the goya in half again, and slice it into pieces that are 1mm wide.
- 2 Spread the bitter gourd and seeds on a plate and place them in a sunny, well-ventilated place for 1-2 days until dry.
- 3 Once ready, toast them with the seeds in a toaster oven until they turn a light brown color, and you're done. Remember to store them in a sealable container to prevent them from absorbing moisture (I suggest keeping them in the refrigerator).



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RESTAURANT INFO