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VOLUME 19 NO. 3

STARS AND STRIPES

Community Publication

OKINAWA

JANUARY 29 – FEBRUARY 11, 2026

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INSIDE INFO



**SETSUBUN CELEBRATES
'CHANGE OF SEASONS'**

PAGE 6



Military children tell us your story!

Hey, all you kids in the military community need to read this. Seriously! So, please put down your iPad, iPhone or other digital device for the next couple of minutes. You'll survive, and I promise no one will take them.

Now that I have your attention, I want to give you a little job. No, wait! Don't stop reading! I'm not going to ask you to clean your room! I'm simply going to give you the opportunity to be heard by tens of thousands of people. Seriously! You see, April is the Month of the Military Child, and for the 15th straight year, the Stars and Stripes community publications are dedicating it to you, the children of our men and women in uniform.

Send your story to Militarychild@stripes.com

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BE MY VALENTINE!

Holiday guide

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MOMC: We're here for you!

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Each Stripes Okinawa, Stripes Japan, Stripes Korea and Stripes Guam issue in April will contain your stories, poems, drawings and photos about what life is like as a military child.

For those children who are part of the military community overseas but not technically a military child, we want to hear from you, too! You and your Department of Defense civilian parents are also a key part of the military community.

So, what's life like as a military kid? Tell us. And after you share with us, your submission will be posted on one of our four community sites – Japan.stripes.com, Okinawa.stripes.com, Korea.stripes.com and Guam.stripes.com – depending on where you live. It could appear in at least one weekly paper.

We are giving you a platform to say what you want. Of course, to have your say, you must write, type or draw it. You can be funny or serious. You can write a paragraph or a longer story (250-word maximum, please). Whatever you do, be yourself. Stand up and be heard!

We get thousands of submissions a year, so for stories to run in the paper, they must be submitted by April 15. But no matter when they are submitted, they will be posted on the website. As we approach another April, our team is ready for the onslaught. In fact, we're already receiving submissions.

Like every year, we've been in touch with teachers across the Pacific who are using this as a class project, so be ready for that. For those of you who haven't participated in our annual salute, we hope to hear from you this year.

Stars and Stripes is very proud to serve the military community, and it's an honor to spotlight its resourceful group of children.

We can't wait to hear from you!

Chris Carlson,
Publishing and Media Design Manager
Stars and Stripes



Stories must
be submitted
by April 15
to appear in
Stripes Okinawa!



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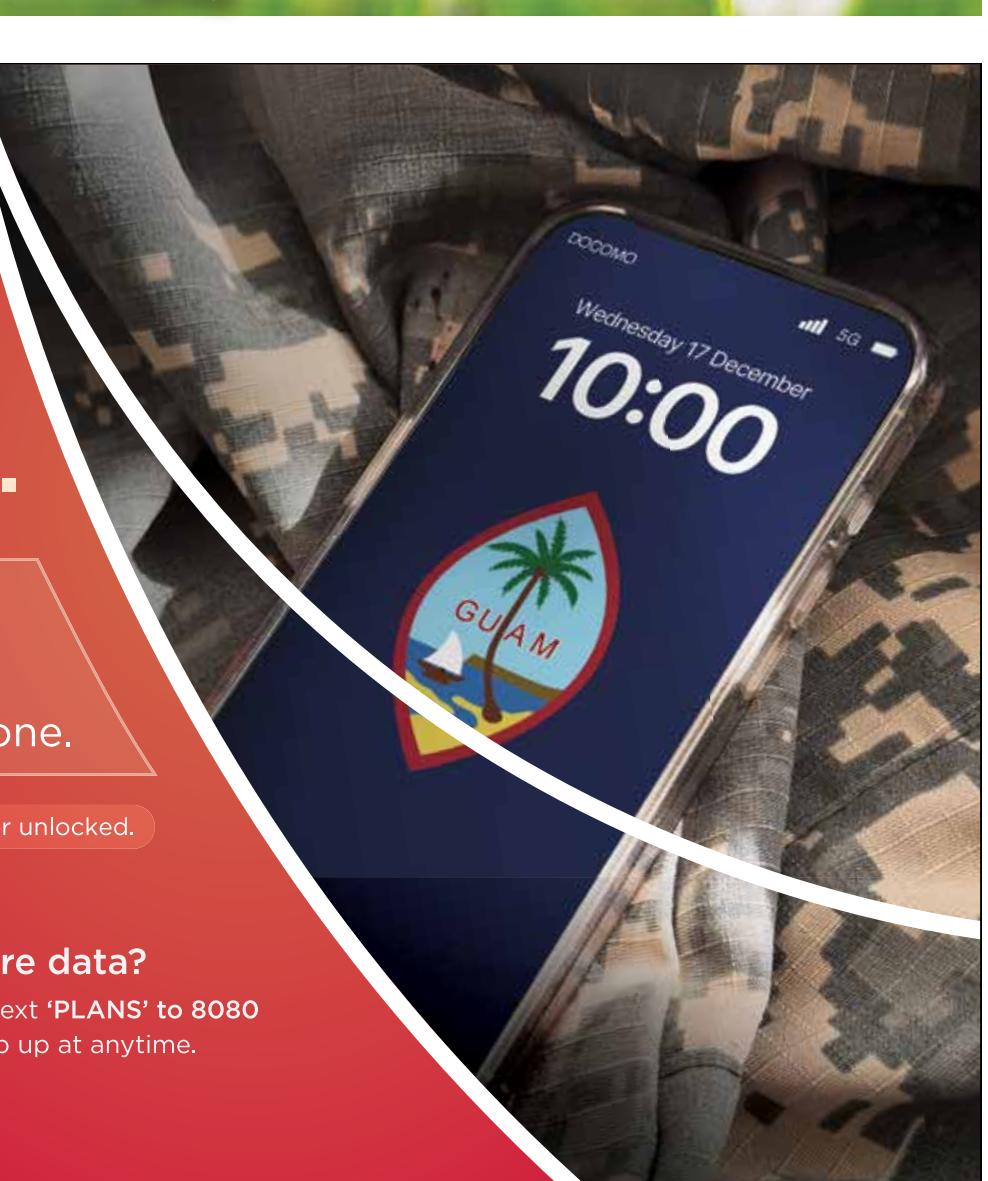


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File photos

TOFUGU.COM

VALENTINE'S DAY

How a fake American holiday became an even faker Japanese one

BY KOICHI,
TOFUGU.COM

Christmas is over. Now it's time to take a look at another holiday that's isn't quite the same in Japan: Valentine's Day.

As with all Western holidays that have made their way over to Japan, almost all of the changes and "traditions" have been created by commercial organizations, looking to build swimming pools of 500 yen coins. In fact, only during one week before Valentine's Day, chocolate companies make half of their annual sales. That's a lot of money, and a lot of chocolate.

Then again, in America (and other places too), we give a lot of chocolate as well. So, what makes Japan different?

ONLY GIRLS GIVE CHOCOLATE

Back in the 1950's, a company advertised Valentine's Day chocolates to non-Japanese living in Japan at the time. Then, Japanese companies wanted to get on board too, and started advertising Valentine's Day chocolates as well. During this period there was quite a bit of "Westernization" where people wanted to adopt more Western / American traditions. Because of this, Valentine's Day in Japan did fairly well.

But there was one problem...

It seems that at some point someone messed up a translation and ended up telling the Japanese people that Valentine's Day was an opportunity for women to express their love to men. Because of this, even to this day it's mostly women giving chocolates to men (don't worry, men get their turn too, eventually).

WHO IS RECEIVING THE CHOCOLATE?

It gets more complicated, though. Because it's not nice to make people feel left out on Valentine's day (especially in, say, the office), there are different kinds of chocolates girls give out now, depending on who they're giving it to.



File photos

BY HASHI,
TOFUGU.COM

If you're a dude and you think you're safe from Valentine's Day. Hold up, you're not out of the woods quite yet; well, at least if you're in Japan.

For most of us in the West, Valentine's Day ends on February 15, but in Japan it's not quite over until March 15. March 14 – exactly one month after Valentine's Day – is White Day in Japan.

Valentine's Day in Japan

Unlike Western traditions where gift exchanges between loved ones are mutual,



site sex, even if your relationship is strictly platonic. Friends and co-workers exchange gifts on both days.

And on both days, chocolate is the gift of choice, but there's a bit more nuance to it

GIRI-CHOCOLATE

Giri-Chocolate means "obligatory chocolate." This kind of chocolate refers to the chocolate you have to give to people (who aren't really people you love). These could be people like bosses, coworkers, male friends, etc. Even sadder still, there's also something called "Cho-Giri-Chocolate" (Ultra-obligatory-chocolate), which is given to unpopular people you really don't want to give chocolates to.

In order to tell these chocolates apart from other (less obligatory) chocolates, these chocolates tend to be pretty run-of-the-mill, and not super expensive. Things don't start getting crazy until we get to Honmei-Chocolates.

HONMEI-CHOCOLATE

Honmei-Chocolate means "favorite chocolate." This kind of chocolate is the kind of chocolate you give to the one you want to express your love to. These chocolates tend to be more expensive or possibly even home made. Basically, it has to be obvious that these are honmei and not giri, so they have to be on a completely different level (Way to go chocolate companies! Ka-ching! ワイイイイイイイイイイイイイイ).

TOMO-CHOCOLATE

Tomo-choco just means "friend chocolates," and refers to chocolates you give to your female friends (as a female). Simple as that.

GETTING THE GUYS TO GIVE

Guys don't give anything on Valentine's Day in Japan, but they do have their own day one month later where they're expected to return the favor. That day is known as "White Day" (or, if you're old enough to remember, "Marshmallow Day"), and it also sounds pretty expensive.

Everyone enjoys their Valentine's Day... and to all you girls out there: I'm waiting for my cho-giri-choco from you.

TOFUGU

Japan's answer to Valentine's Day

Japanese Valentine's Day is all about men getting presents. Sorry ladies, but you're out of luck on Valentine's Day if you want to celebrate it Japanese-style. Women have to wait for White Day before they can get any gifts.

What is White Day?

If Valentine's Day in Japan is all about the guys, White Day is all about the ladies. White Day is a chance for all the men who received gifts on Valentine's Day to return the favor to the ladies in their lives.

White Day and Valentine's Day have a lot of similarities. Both aren't necessarily romantic holidays – you can give gifts to anybody of the opposite sex, even if your relationship is strictly platonic. Friends and co-workers exchange gifts on both days.

And on both days, chocolate is the gift of choice, but there's a bit more nuance to it

than buying a box of See's and being done with it. You can buy different types of chocolate for the different people in your life: your friends get different chocolates than your co-workers who get different chocolates than your significant other.

The origins of White Day

Cynically enough, White Day is strictly a celebration manufactured by the candy industry (unlike true holidays rooted in years of tradition, like Pocky Day). In 1978, the National Confectionery Industry Association tried to boost sales, and decided that a new holiday was the best way to do it.

Originally it was called Marshmallow Day and was all about marshmallows, not chocolate. People liked the idea of the new holiday, but weren't too keen on the marshmallows. The preferred candy changed from marshmallows to chocolate, but the color scheme stayed the same – hence the name "White Day," and why white chocolate remains a popular White Day gift, even today.

White Day outside of Japan

White Day is definitely a uniquely

Japanese invention, but it's spread to some other Asian countries, including South Korea and China.

South Korea even has yet another Valentine's-Day-related holiday: the aptly named day for single people, Black Day. People in Korea celebrate being single by burying their sorrows with a noodle dish with black bean sauce called jajangmyeon.

(No doubt, Black Day is just a ploy by the powerful Korean noodle industry.)

So for those of you in Japan, I hope you have a happy White Day; those of us elsewhere in the world will just have to buy our own chocolate.



Jajangmyeon



You're the chopsticks to my sushi!

STORY AND PHOTOS BY ALLIE WHALEN,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Do you love sushi? Or Valentine's Day? How about Sushi Valentines?! We are currently living in the land of sushi and Japan goes crazy for Valentine's Day. It's hard not to go overboard when you see all of the cute stuff in the store! The kids and I love choosing just the right Valentines for friends, but this year all of my searches kept coming up short. We never found quite the right thing so I decided to get on Canva and create my own. Naturally I thought of you all and I knew I wanted to make a blog post out of it in case you love giving cute, homemade Valentines, too!

- As long as you have access to a printer and you can save the image, then you can make this Valentines card for all of your special people. You can keep it simple or make it fancy. You can even have your kids throw them together the night before the school party (I know I'm not alone here!)



Craft easy, kawaii Japan-themed Valentines

Here are the basic supplies you'll need

- Thick Craft Paper or Cardstock
- Chopsticks
- Valentine's Stickers
- Washi Tape
- Take Out Food Containers (Optional)

These sushi-themed Valentines are good for

- Kids
- School parties
- Friends
- Family
- Neighbors
- Surprising your forever-Valentine!



- I love that these Valentines make it easy to surprise your loved ones with a homemade card! (Who doesn't like getting a special homemade Valentine?!) If you want to add to your Valentine's Day celebration you could also grab a platter of sushi from your favorite take out place and then attach this card to it. If you really want to bring things full circle, check out the Michelin Guide to pairing sushi with wine. Grabbing a bottle of Chablis or Riesling to go with the sushi would make for a perfect evening at home.



Instagram

Blog

Print
the image! ▶



This Valentine is also great if your kids go to a candy-free school or if you want to avoid extra candy. But if you want to use cute washi tape and attach this Valentine to a box of chocolates I don't think anyone will be upset about it! If you're scrambling to figure out Valentines this year, I'm sure you even have some disposable chopsticks laying around the house. I think my favorite thing about this is how easy it is to customize it for whatever you have! You can really make it your own from the color of paper to the type of chopsticks you use.



- If you choose to use these sushi-themed Valentines this year please tag me on Instagram so I can see how you personalize them!

Allie Whalen is a culinary artist and amateur photographer with a love for the outdoors. She shares her experiences online where she writes about simple and holistic ways to take care of yourself and the world around you. She is a military spouse based in beautiful Okinawa near Camp Hansen. Allie and her family enjoy the rugged, tranquil life on the northern parts of the island. You can find Allie's blog at <https://www.alliemwhalen.com>, where she chronicles her adventures in learning and living by the sea.

Speakin' Japanese



File photo

Talking romance on Valentine's Day

Valentine's Day is considered to be a great chance for women to confess their love in Japan. They give chocolates (often homemade) to men on the day to express their love. But don't for a second think that all the women who are presenting you a chocolate are in love with you! You need to know there is a custom of women giving "giri-choko" (obligation chocolate) to their male friends, supervisors or colleagues to show their friendship. Men are supposed to give return gifts (usually candy) to the women who gifted them chocolates on White Day (Mar. 14). Enjoy the day and try to avoid thinking every woman who gives you chocolate loves you.

"Watashino chokoreeto wo uketotte kudasai." = Please accept my chocolate. ("watashino" = my, "chokoreeto" = chocolate, "uketotte" = accept, "kudasai" = please)

"Kokorowo komete tsukuri mashita." = I made it with the greatest of care. ("kokorowo komete" = with the greatest of care, "tsukuri mashita" = made)

"Sukidesu." = I love (like) you.

"Aishitemasu." = I love you.

"Watashimo desu." = I do, too.

"Shokuji ni ikimasenka?" = Let's go out for dinner, shall we? ("shokuji" = meal/dinner)

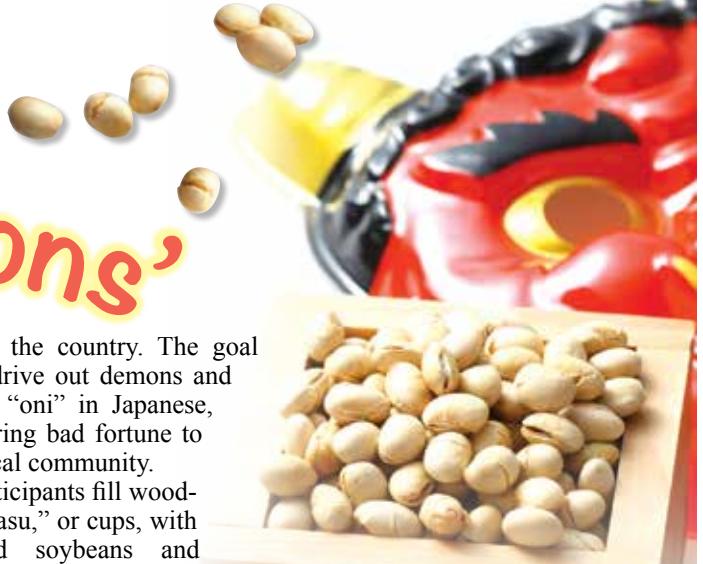
– Shoji Kudaka and Takahiro Takiguchi,
Stripes Okinawa

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Setsubun celebrates 'change of seasons'



For those of you venturing out in town on Feb. 3, be sure to watch out for flying beans and fleeing ogres. The Japanese

celebrate Setsubun, which literally means "change of seasons," on this day to kick off the preparation for the upcoming planting season.

The ceremonies across the nation recognize "rissun," or birth of spring. The purification ritual "mame-maki," or bean throwing, will be performed at homes, office buildings, schools and shrines

across the country. The goal is to drive out demons and ogres, "oni" in Japanese, that bring bad fortune to the local community.

Participants fill wooden "masu," or cups, with roasted soybeans and then proceed to throw the beans in and around their homes while shouting "Oni wa soto! Fuku wa uchi!" or "Out with demons! In with happiness!"

This ritual is performed to bring in good fortune and drive out the evil spirits that have been lurking during the dark and cold winter months. It is also customary for the devout to pick and eat the number of beans which corresponds to their age.

What started out as a cleansing ritual for superstitious country farmers hundreds of years ago, has grown into a national pastime. People can attend ceremonies at thousands of Shinto shrines throughout Japan on Feb. 3. Well-known politicians, sumo wrestlers and actors are often invited to the festivals at some of the major shrines to throw out beans for good luck for all those present.

Mame-maki originally began as a palace event on New Year's Eve to get rid of demons and welcome in the new year.

Since the Edo period (1603 - 1867), the rite of throwing roasted soybeans inside private homes has been performed on Setsubun.

A popular myth states that if a person silently consumes an entire

sushi roll on Setsubun while facing that year's lucky direction (yes, there is a lucky direction), their dreams will come true. Commonly called "Ehoumaki," the sushi roll is eaten to symbolize good fortune being rolled into one. The roll is not cut in order to symbolize good relations not being cut off during the upcoming year.

For those of you who are not so sure about eating a very long piece of sushi, you can buy relatively short ones at local convenience stores or supermarket Feb. 3. Please remember that this year's lucky direction is south-southeast.

Grab a compass if you need one. If you would like to purchase some roasted soybeans for your house, you can easily find them in Japanese grocery markets. It usually comes with paper ogre mask, which may be good to keep as a memory of Japan. Why don't you use the tradition as an excuse to bring some beans to the office, in case your boss or supervisor happens to be an ogre and needs casting out?





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Stripes Sports Trivia

Which all-time great is the NBA All-Star Game MVP trophy named after?

Answer

Kobe Bryant



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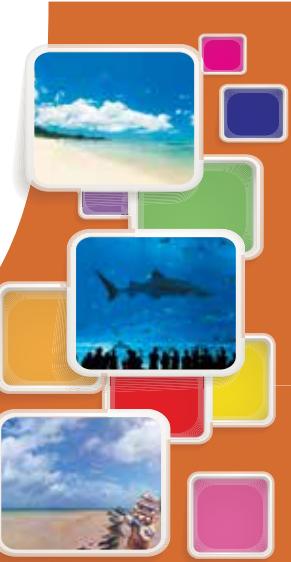
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Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

1	2	3	4		5	6	7	8	9		10	11	12	13
14					15						16			
17				18							19			
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59				60		61								
62			63			64								
65				66						67				

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6	Utah airport initials	35	Strikes	52	Prima donna
		37	Set free	53	Tree of life locale
7	"Black Bag" actress	41	Downwind	54	Newbie
46	Ancient Italian	42	Canopy support	55	Child's challenge
47	Bird feeder fill	43	Ancient Greek ship	57	Say it ___ so
49	Turbaned Punjabi	10	Lucille Ball, e.g.	58	Barely gets by
51	In bad shape	44	Charlie ___ of "Charlie's Angels"	61	Director Van Sant
52	Band tour toter	11	Self-absorbed	50	Extra sense
55	What comes to mind	12	Tissue additive		
60	Breathing aid	13	More or ___		
62	Let off steam	18	Marinara alternative		
63	Pull strings?	22	Jason's ship		
64	Sea eagle	24	Dish in a lab		
65	A chip, maybe	26	Hula or hoop follower		
66	That and that	27	Playground quarry		
67	Places for props	28	Young person		
		31	Kind of oil		
		32	Bejeweled headwear		
		33	"Cosmos" creator		

Answers to Previous Crossword:

A	C	R	E		H	A	S	T	E	A	F	A	R
A	H	E	M		E	T	H	E	R	B	A	N	E
R	A	D	I	O	F	L	Y	E	R	S	I	T	E
P	R	O	R	A	T	A	T	O	W	E	R	D	
A	S	Y	N	C	H	R	O	N	Y				
A	B	A	T	E	T	E	O	C	T	A	L		
M	O	L	E	S	K	I	C	L	E				
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A	L	E	C	I	N	T	E	N					
M	A	C	E	S	C	N	E	R					
E	Y	E	D	T	H	A	T	S					

SUDOKU

Difficulty: Medium

5	1			7				
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8						4		
		3						
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7		9			8			

Edited by Margie E. Burke

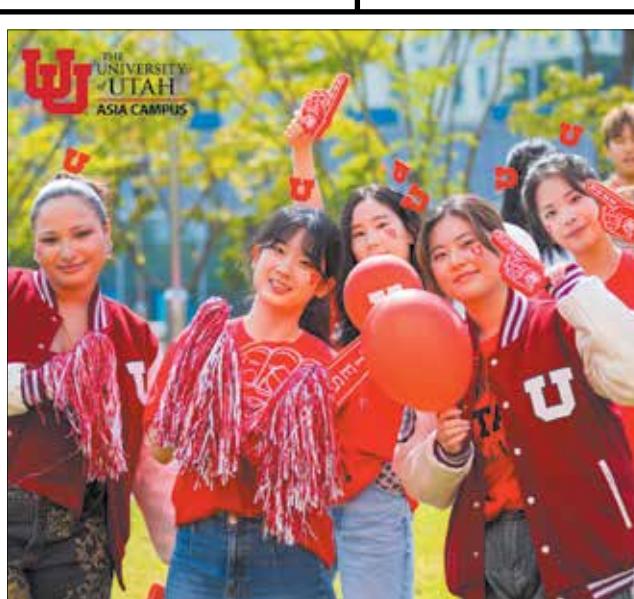
HOW TO SOLVE:

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:

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

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Bueno Chicken Futenma offers savory takeout rotisserie chicken

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
ICHIRO KATAYANAGI,
STRIPES OKINAWA

If you are in the mood to take out something garlicky, I highly recommend a rotisserie chicken at Bueno Chicken Futenma, a 10-minute walk from Hospital Gate on Camp Foster. Its chicken is one of the most popular Okinawa soul foods, and the shop is a household name in Okinawa.

In 1975, an Okinawan couple opened the restaurant. They learned how to make a rotisserie chicken from a shop while living in Argentina. The name of the restaurant, Bueno Chicken, was named for Buenos Aires, the capital of Argentina. Also, “bueno” in Spanish means “good.”

The long-established restaurant is loved by not only local people for special occasions but also tourists.

Nearby in Urasoe City, is another Bueno Chicken, but it was opened by an ex-employee of the Futenma shop. The restaurants are independent and the brand is not a chain. However, that hasn’t



stopped tourists from trying both to compare the differences!

The reason for its popularity is simple:

The chicken is delicious! According to Bueno Chicken Futenma’s website, they have three secrets for why their chicken is incredible. First, they marinate their chicken overnight in a special marinade made with garlic and other herbs. Second, they only use young raw chicken from Okinawa, so it’s tender and delectable. Third, the slow rotisserie cooking process ensures the excess fat

dissolves and leaves a soft, moist chicken.

Like other tourists, Bueno Chicken was on my list to visit during my recent trip to Okinawa. I was shocked to find the shop had sold out of rotisserie chickens on my first attempt one evening. Their regular business hours are until 6 p.m. or earlier if they sell out before then. Dang it! I made up my mind to visit

there again the next morning.

I returned at 11 a.m. and was fortunate to get my hands on half a chicken. The shop staff said they usually sell out by 5 p.m., so the earlier visit, the better. The menu is very simple, they offer a whole rotisserie chicken, half chicken and an empanada (chicken pie).

Also, the restaurant does not have parking, so customers

mostly do take out. Dining in is possible, but the store only has two tables that seat up to four people each.

Opening the takeout box at the hotel, I smelled good garlic and herbs. My order came with six pieces of rotisserie chicken. I warmed it up in the microwave then dug in. Each bite was tender, juicy and the smell of garlic and spices stimulated my appetite. The chicken was not oily, so it was easy to indulge. I wanted to eat it with bread or rice on the side, but I was satisfied with the chicken alone. No carbs needed!

One important thing is that they do not offer either a fork or chopsticks, so you need to prepare either one in advance if you do not have them with you. Otherwise, you may result in eating it with amenity toothbrushes like I did.

Besides that minor detail, it was a delightful meal and afterward I understood why something



so delicious would sell out daily. Don’t miss out on the flavorful rotisserie chicken in Okinawa!

katayanagi.ichiro@stripes.com

Things to know

ADDRESS: 1-28-13 Futenma, Ginowan

CITY:

HOURS: 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. (It will close once sold out.), closed on Wednesdays

PHONE: 098-893-4527



ADDRESS



WEBSITE



INSTAGRAM

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