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FRESH FISH OF THE DAY

Spectacular seafood, more at Yomitan fish market

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PETER LIN,
JAPAN TRAVEL

Uminchu Shokudo is a cafeteria style seafood restaurant located in the Yomitan Village Fishermen's Cooperative Store. Located in Yomitan near Toya Port, this seaside store sells a huge variety of fresh seafood including sashimi, made to order tempura, and fresh whole fish. Upstairs, there is a cafeteria style restaurant (Uminchu Shokudo) that serves excellent seafood dishes including rice bowls with various seafood toppings and seafood soups. The food is simple but delicious and the atmosphere very authentic.

Orders are placed through a ticket machine and then the tickets given to the cooks who prepare the meal. Everything is made fresh. A restaurant favorite is the fried tuna rice bowl. Another unusual but satisfying dish is the squid ink soup, a black colored soup with tender pieces of squid. The seafood kaisen-don is a colorful dish with a generous amount of umibudo, tuna, ikura, shrimp, and other fresh sashimi. There are English translations of the items on the menu as well as in the store in general. The more popular dishes can be purchased on the first floor



The Yomitan Village Fishermen's Cooperative Store is next to the port.



Abundant seafood in the fish market.



Seafood kaisen-don, a beautiful mixture of seafood on rice.

to go. Tempura can also be ordered to go or taken upstairs to eat in the cafeteria with the other dishes. Prices are very reasonable with no dish costing more than 2000 yen. The seating is either at tables inside the

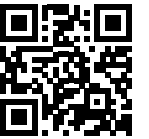
restaurant or outside on the patio. Sitting on the patio with the sun and ocean breeze eating fresh seafood is a wonderful experience. Uminchu Shokudo is open from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. daily. It is closest

to the Toya Fishing Port. There is a parking lot in the port for visitors. Toya Port offers many activities including fishing boat tours and a whale shark snorkeling and diving expedition tour. Stop by at this restaurant on your way to the Yachimun pottery stores in Yomitan or the Cape Zanpa lighthouse.

Uminchu Shokudo

Uminchu Shokudo is located in the Yomitan Village Fishermen's Cooperative Store building at the Toya fishing port.

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Yomitan, Nakagami
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TEL: +81 98-957-
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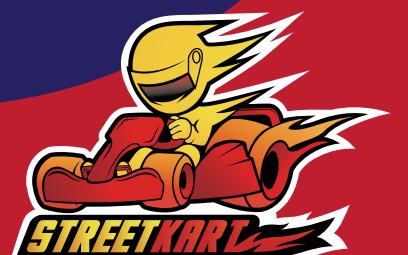
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Dance Hall Bar Thank You isn't all Reggae, with a calming yet innovative cuisine. Photos courtesy of Japan Travel



The old store signs have unchanged for decades.

BY BONSON LAM, JAPAN TRAVEL



Okinawa's signature dish, the Goya Champulur.



A part of Sakaemachi that looks a touch like Mexico by day.



One of the many tiny eateries, you can't help but chat with your neighbours.



Sakaemachi

after dark

Four hours on a stool, four friends



Mango Beer and dozens of craft beer.

of world peace. Is she the one who holds the hopes and dreams of the nation in her hands, as she prays for her father and mother, her future sons and daughters? Since ancient times, it was thought that females protect males with their spiritual powers, and thus only females were allowed to enter Sefa Utaki.

It reminded me of ancient Greece, where people lived in fear. Philosophers were revered as they thought they knew the way. The Greek word for wisdom was Sophos, love was Philo, and so philosophy was the love of wisdom. To name your daughter Sophie, was very aspirational, as it was hoped that she would light up her generation with wisdom.

Most restaurant reviews are about the food, but today I want to focus on the culture and the setting. You may remember long ago, Nescafe used to sell coffee on the conversations it engendered, not the coffee itself. Perhaps it was the

Awamori, or the communal dining, or the festive and musical atmosphere in these hole in the wall eateries, that engendered such deep and nostalgic conversations. I can't guarantee that you will have such a special time as me, but it was a great journey into what it was like to be a human, not just what it meant to be Okinawan, for a few hours.

Prayer is a reflection of Gods work in our lives. It is true at Osaka International Church and just as true in the bars of Sakaemachi, as my new found friend mentioned over an amazing Goya Sour cocktail. "Prayer is praise, songs are praise." So Okinawan songs take on another dimension, whether sung at a Goat kitchen or in the arms of a love lost chanteuse past her prime.

Act 3 - Future Fusion

While Sakaemachi is known for its historic ways, there are plenty of up and coming bars and eateries as well. So off we go, to another hole in the wall bar where the drinking is easy and the decor is light. I am seated next to Superman (well at least that is what his shirt says) but you don't need any supernatural talents to pick a good drink at the aptly name Dance Hall Sakeba Thank you.

I was treated to a Goya sour, kind of like a pisco sour without the egg white foam but with a slight citrus note was both a surprise and a delight. Come back another time, and you might see Shingo the resident DJ crafting the best reggae, Yaman! you might say, but the perfectly manicured wait staff with pristine caps and denim aprons say more green mango cocktails than brown sugar.

Four hours later, my bar hopping at Sakaemachi can easily take you to the red line, where you miss the last train at 1138pm. Thankfully taxis to downtown Naha are reasonable, though for Chatan and beyond you may as well stay the night.

Sakaemachi is a miniature Showa period town filled with alleyways and hundreds of pubs and hole in the wall eateries, where liveliness and darkness coexist, making it a curious discovery day and night, like an odyssey in multiple acts.

Act 1 - Day Time

At midday it looks lifeless, abandoned, unkempt, like being in your teenager's bedroom the morning after. Shelves bent with the weight of time, and posters that look dog eared around the edges.

One of the charms of visiting Sakaemachi, is that it is like going to your childhood. To a time when ma and pa stores ruled, with simple old toys that are all play and no pretence.

In the rabbit warren that is the Sakaemachi markets, there are over 130 shops and eateries that is largely a hold out against twenty-first-century progress. One that still feels like as it was, in the mid-twentieth century. One that doesn't abide by the political correctness of this current era, they call it as it is. Fancy some Chirrichi, or Goats blood soup? If that was lost in translation, they even dot the eatery with a cute picture of a furry goat, like something straight out of a children's bedtime story.

Part of the reason why the signs look unkempt, may be because the shopkeepers are venerating the past generations that opened these stores. It is like if they were to come back at Obon, they can find their way back and reunite with the land of the living.

This market square, or rabbit warren, has been sustaining life for centuries. Nearby is the Asatogawa, a fresh water stream which flowed into Naha Port from Shuri which meant that coral was not formed in the port. Possibly this is why the market is founded here, close to market gardens for vegetables that were thirsty for water.

Actually, these markets were rebuilt, phoenix like, in 1955, and these days are a mixture of bars, restaurants and shops, most of them the size of a single car garage. While the majority serve Okinawan cuisine, there are also a scattering serving cuisine from nearby countries.

Act 2 - Night Time

At night the lights are finally turned on, as if the teenager is finally awake, the make up is put on, and ready to party.

People may think that all-nighters are all about getting drunk. It isn't, it is the lubricant that engenders connection, with laughter and tears that bonds humanity from ocean to ocean. It may be half a century since the return of Okinawa to Japan but I am still bowled over by the people I met here, in humble gestures like naming their daughter with the symbols



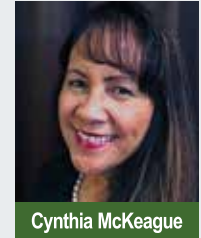
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DISCOVERING WONDERS OF CHINEN



Nirai Kanai Overlook

La 21

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Midori no Yakata Sefa

GPS COORDINATES: 26.17218 127.82631
HOURS: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. (Mar – Oct, ticket sale ends at 5:15 p.m., last admission at 5:30 p.m.) ; 9 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. (Nov – Feb, ticket sale ends at 4:45 p.m., last admission at 5 p.m.)



Ganju-eki Nanjo

GPS COORDINATES: 26.16919 127.82701
HOURS: 9 a.m. – 6 p.m.



Nirai Kanai Bridge Overlook

GPS COORDINATES: 26.167363, 127.815044



**UNESCO World Heritage
 Gusuku Sites and Related Properties
 of the Kingdom of Ryukyu**

STORY AND PHOTOS BY
 DAVID KRIGBAUM,
 WWW.WAYFARERDAVES.COM

According to legend, the goddess Amamikyo first came to the island of Okinawa in what's now Nanjo City on Okinawa's southeastern Chinen peninsula. With her came the beginning of Ryukyu's culture and native religion. Her children were the first kings and high priestess and it was also in this area where wheat and rice were first cultivated. The legends and the native religion seeded Utaki, sacred places, throughout the island and none are more sacred than Sefa-Utaki.

High on a promontory overlooking Kudaka, the island of the gods, high priestesses presided over sacred rituals for 15 generations between 1470 and 1875. Spiritually connected to Shuri-jo Castle and therefore the legitimacy of Ryukyu's rulers, kings came as part of their agariumai pilgrimage to sacred places and the oaraori was conducted to anoint a new high priestess, a princess imbued with divine power. Though during the 19th and early 20th centuries Japan attempted to stamp out all native beliefs, that did not support their own divine origin story, Okinawa's beliefs survived. Today, Sefa-Utaki is protected and is part of the UNESCO Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu World Heritage Site, a collection of nine Ryukyu Kingdom-related sites important to Okinawa's unique culture and history.

When I visited, I parked at the nearby Nanjo Sightseeing Information Center now known as Ganju-eki Nanjo, which has free parking, a Sefa-Utaki artifact display and an English-speaking staff. When I told the staff I was visiting the site they let me watch an English-subtitled video about what makes Sefa-Utaki special and shows the religious ceremonies held there. I recommend doing this as it helps visitors appreciate what they are about to see as more than just a mysterious ruin in the jungle. Tickets for Sefa-Utaki can also be purchased at the vending machine next door in front of the Nanjo City Local Products Center (souvenir shop).

For fans of the new Okinawa-based anime The Aquatope on White Sand, this area is also a "sacred site" itself as this is the information center where Karin works and the "Kamee Diner" location is across the street, though there is no diner in real life. Stand ups of the characters are inside both the information center and souvenir shop, which has an entire Aquatope corner.

It's a short uphill walk for from the information center to the Sefa-Utaki visitor center. The visitor center also has small movie viewing room, but I imagine during busier times it can be crowded.

Sefa-Utaki is made up of six ibi, sanctuaries, nestled in hillsides all in close proximity to each other. Well-manicured jungle paths lead to the publicly available ibi, which feel like

they were created by nature and attended by man but not bent to his whims. Each ibi serves a special purpose and shares a name with a room in Shuri-jo, reinforcing the connection between them. An information display at each explains clearly in Japanese and English what it was used for.

The most famous and photographed is the triangular crevice where there are sangui altars and two stalactites drip their holy water into jugs. The opening cannot be entered but visitors can get a close look and that was good enough for me. Cultural value aside, Sefa-Utaki as a whole is a beautiful place and could stand on that merit alone. The jungle scenery and rock formations are serene and there's a calming quiet that whistles through the leaves. It adds to the feeling of being somewhere special.

A visit to Sefa-Utaki, even for slow moving photographers, isn't going to take over an hour and being on the Chinen coast means you're surrounded by ocean views, castle ruins and more sacred places, sometimes all three at once. The information center has English-language maps and pamphlets that can help fill out a day as well as ideas on where to eat. There are many cafes, diners and restaurants within a 15-minute drive of Sefa-Utaki. During my visit I was short on time so had Okinawa soba made with local ingredients at the restaurant on the local products center's second floor.

The last time I was in the area, I stopped at La 21 for lunch, which is close but higher up in the hills and past the magnificent Nirai Kanai Bridge Overlook. I recommend stopping at the overlook before or after eating for one of the best views in Chinen. It's on top of a tunnel and has a road on both sides that lead to it. Exit the tunnel (if coming from the tourism center) and get ready to loop around almost immediately to the side road, barriers won't let you get too far though. People just park right there, next to the other vehicles already lined up on the narrow road, and walk to the overlook. Everyone I've talked to says this is normal and not to be afraid of the barbed wire fence from the JGSDF facility you are now parked beside.

La 21 has indoor and outdoor dining, which is perfect when restrictions make dining in difficult. The staff speaks English and La 21's lunch meal was delicious— salad, Japanese pickled vegetables, and baked donut sandwiches. They have four sandwich options, I chose a raw salmon, avocado and cream cheese sandwich as well as a grilled chicken breast sandwich. The lightly sweet donut worked well with the toppings.



Aquatope



Sefa-utaki



Sangui



Sangui



La21



La21



Nanjo Information Center

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Mikasa Matsuyama in downtown Naha.

Traditional homestyle Okinawan food served by local grandmothers.

Homestyle Okinawan

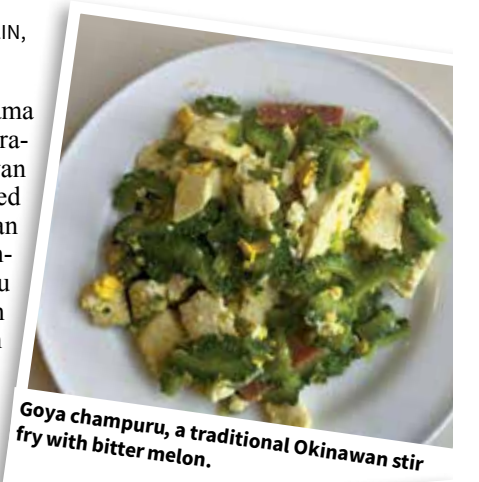
Sample traditional fare in downtown Naha

STORY AND PHOTOS BY PETER LIN, JAPAN TRAVEL

Mikasa Matsuyama is a delicious traditional Okinawan homestyle restaurant located in downtown Naha. Okinawan homestyle food includes dishes such as goya champuru (stir fried bitter melon with spam, egg and tofu), spam with eggs, yaki udon, stir fried pork (yakimiku) or ginger beef on rice. Mikasa Matsuyama serves all these dishes in a variety of forms, with a menu that is quite large and will likely accommodate all tastes. The restaurant is well known to locals and has been in operation since 1966.

The signature Champon (Mikasa style) is a stir-fried ground beef, onion and eggs dish over rice. The dish is classic comfort food and very filling as well as satisfying. Another version is the Fu Champuru, a stir fried dish with vegetables, spam and wheat gluten instead of tofu. Other dishes include noodle dishes such as stir fried udon or somen, tonkatsu on rice, Okinawan soki soba, or suki-yaki beef. Everything is inexpensive and cooked to order. Stir fried dishes come with a large portion of rice. Some may have a side dish of pasta salad or a shredded cabbage salad with dressing. As dishes are large, it may be a good idea to order several dishes to share in order to try the different specialties. Drinks include beer and soft drinks. The staff are gracious and efficient, and the feeling is not unlike that of eating in a local grandmother's house.

Mikasa Matsuyama is located in downtown Naha and easily within walking distance to the Prefectural Office Yui Rail stop. The restaurant is open from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. daily but closed on Thursdays. Stop here for a hearty



lunch or dinner during a day out in downtown Naha. The food and experience is distinctly Okinawan and is a nice break from the more typical Japanese fare.



JapanTravel.com

Getting there

Mikasa Matsuyama is in downtown Naha. It is in walking distance from the Prefectural Office Stop on the Yui Monorail.

■ ADDRESS: 1 Chome-12-20, Matsuyama, Naha, Okinawa Prefecture 900-0032
 ■ TEL: +81988687469



WEBSITE (JAPANESE)

Stripes Sports Trivia

Barry Bonds, the MLB career and single season homerun record holder, was much younger and thinner when he played for the Pittsburgh Pirates. The 5-tool player was great, but well before he became otherworldly and for the Giants, he was drafted out of high school in 1982. He decided to go to college before being drafted by the Pirates four years later. Who drafted Bonds in 1982?

Answer

San Francisco Giants

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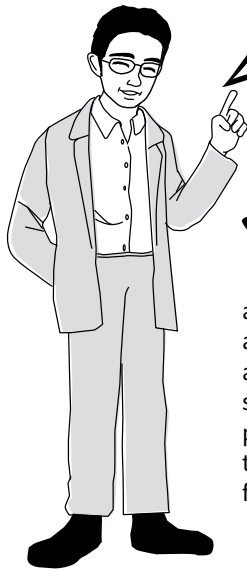
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DID YOU KNOW?



The Japanese national anthem, "Kimigayo" (literally, the reign of your majesty), is known as the oldest and shortest among the world's national anthems. The lyrics have only 32 characters, and it is sung in only 11 measures (about 50 seconds). The lyrics are based on a tanka poem written 900 years ago, which wishes that the emperor's reign would be continued forever.

Kanji of the week

椿

tsubaki/chin (camellia)

Language Lesson

Let's talk.

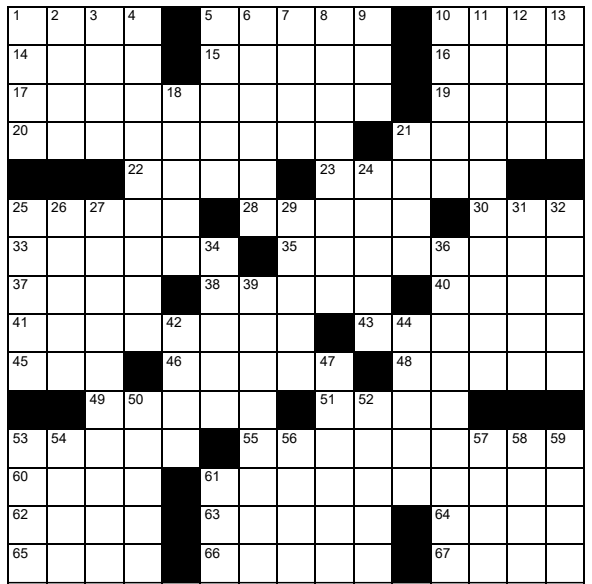
Hanashi mashoo.

Crossword

by Margie E. Burke

ACROSS

- 1 Pet lovers' org.
- 5 Photographer's request
- 10 Whole lot
- 14 Grad student's grilling
- 15 Moulin Rouge city
- 16 Fed. watchdog
- 17 Setting for the 2005 film, "Waiting"
- 19 Costner flick "___ Range"
- 20 Hay fever medicine
- 21 Finger-wagger's word
- 22 Parks on a bus
- 23 Home follower
- 25 Prickly bush
- 28 Hercules type
- 30 Boring routine
- 33 Golf spots
- 35 Battlefield worry
- 37 Comics canine
- 38 Dry, in a way
- 40 Skiing mecca
- 41 Cockpit reading
- 43 Folded food
- 45 1950 film noir classic
- 46 Greyhound, e.g.
- 48 Melancholy verse
- 49 Bake in a shallow dish
- 51 N.Y. summer times
- 53 Bit of info
- 55 Know-how
- 60 Knock about
- 61 Shasta's home
- 62 Passionate about
- 63 Subway entrance
- 64 Takes out
- 65 Use a spyglass
- 66 Cut, as ties
- 67 Big name in applesauce



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DOWN

- 1 Put out
- 2 Type of school
- 3 Carry's partner
- 4 Superheroes often have them
- 5 Cowboy gear
- 6 Grammy-winning Carey
- 7 Persia, today
- 8 Football official
- 9 Not an exact fig.
- 10 Hullabaloo
- 11 Casual canvas shoe
- 12 "Pardon me"
- 13 Glazier's sheet
- 18 Love to pieces
- 21 E-mail command
- 24 Dance that "takes two"
- 25 Vast
- 26 10:1, e.g.
- 27 Type of commerce
- 29 Fail to say
- 31 Clear a cribbage board

- 32 Quick to get ticked
- 34 State under oath
- 36 Turbulent situation
- 39 Bring back, say
- 42 Stiffly formal
- 44 Urban area, for short
- 47 Stack again
- 50 Comic's specialty
- 52 Yield
- 53 Plumbing problem
- 54 Crackerjack
- 56 Caesar's 44
- 57 Skinny
- 58 Strain, as flour
- 59 Toward sunrise
- 61 HTML go-with

Answers to Previous Crossword:

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

SUDOKU

Edited by Margie E. Burke

Difficulty: Medium

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

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:

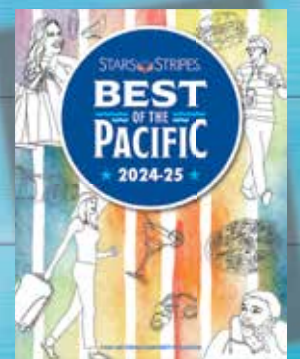
3	9	7	6	5	4	1	8	2
1	6	4	2	8	9	3	7	5
5	8	2	3	7	1	9	4	6
9	7	1	8	6	5	2	3	4
6	4	5	9	3	2	7	1	8
8	2	3	4	1	7	5	6	9
7	1	8	5	2	6	4	9	3
2	3	9	7	4	8	6	5	1
4	5	6	1	9	3	8	2	7

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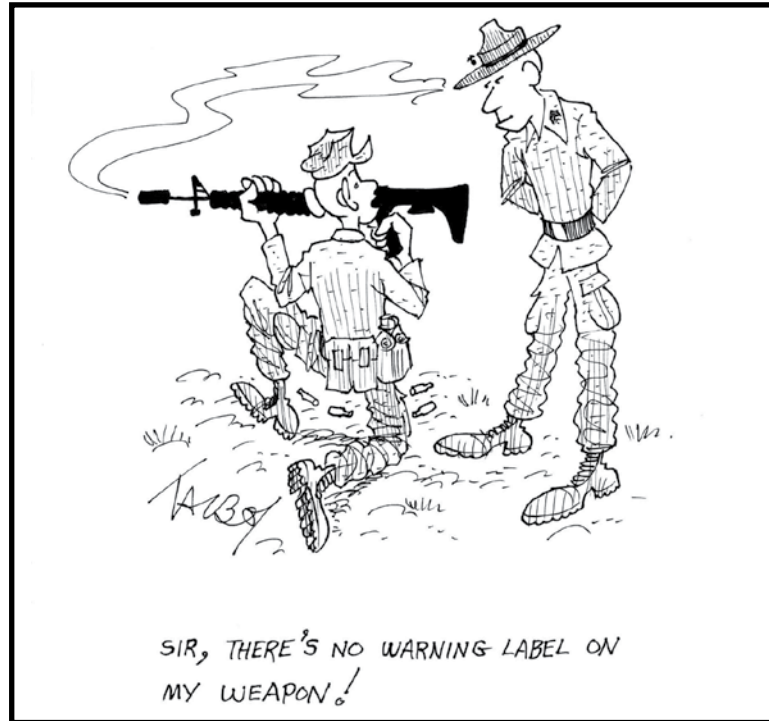
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STARS AND STRIPES

COMICS CORNER



- Daryl Talbot

USO Okinawa staff spotlight

- **NAME:** Michael H. Oliwek
- **POSITION/TITLE:**
Center Operations Coordinator
- **TIME WORKED AT USO:**
September 2023
- **CENTER/OFFICE LOCATION:**
MCAS Futenma



provides me with fulfillment and happiness and that translates over to my personal life.

Q. What is your favorite memory of working at the USO?

A. I cannot pick a favorite memory, however my most impactful USO memory is from November 2023.

Our team was celebrating the 248th birthday of the United States Marine Corps with a homemade lunch and cake cutting ceremony. While enjoying lunch, a young Marine remarked the beef stew reminded him of his mother's stew. At that moment, hearing those words, it connected with me that I was part of an incredible mission.

Hearing this young Marine's words and listening to the memory of his mother's cooking, and the smile on his face, were all pivotal in reassuring me that I had made the right choice.

I have continued to add my own spin on our programs with the assistance of our USO Futenma Family in hopes that we continue to provide moments like this for everyone.

- USO Okinawa

About Mike:

Michael, "Mike," is the Center Operations Coordinator at USO Futenma and enjoys the exciting and fast paced tempo working at USO Futenma provides.

He joined the military in June of 1994, retiring from the United States Marine Corps in 2014. Post his military career, Mike pursued a teaching degree while working as a consultant/liason for a Japanese company and completing multiple projects throughout Japan.

During his off time, Mike began volunteering at the USO, quickly discovering a great sense of fulfillment. Ready to change careers and join the USO mission of strengthening the wellbeing of America's military members and their families, he joined the USO Futenma team.

Since joining the team, he's been able to bring one of favorite hobbies to USO Futenma programming—grilling! Through his love for all things grill and smoker related, he's had the

pleasure to contribute to the already established foundation of support USO Futenma brings to their camp community and loves being able to share his hobby with the center and patrons!

Q. Why do you love working at the USO?

A. I love working at the USO because every day we are here to support America's service members and their families, and this provides with me a great sense of meaning.

We have active duty and civilian volunteers and I love that our center and mission is part of their daily lives. The ability to impact their life in a positive and enjoyable way





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