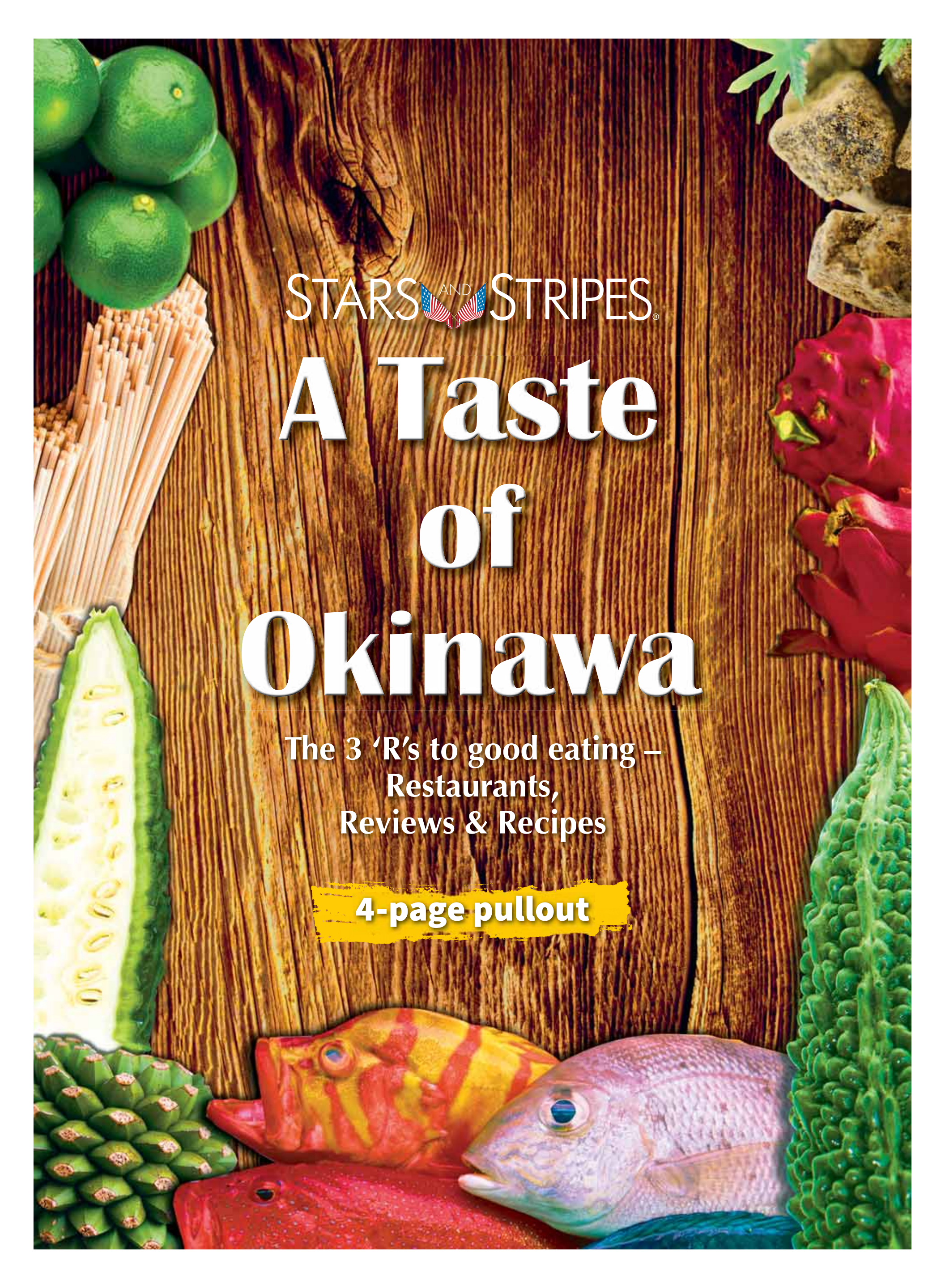




STARS  AND STRIPES[®]

A Taste of Okinawa

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

4-page pullout

TAKENOKO

ALL ABOUT JAPANESE BAMBOO SHOOTS

BY CATHERINE CORNELIUS,
BYFOOD

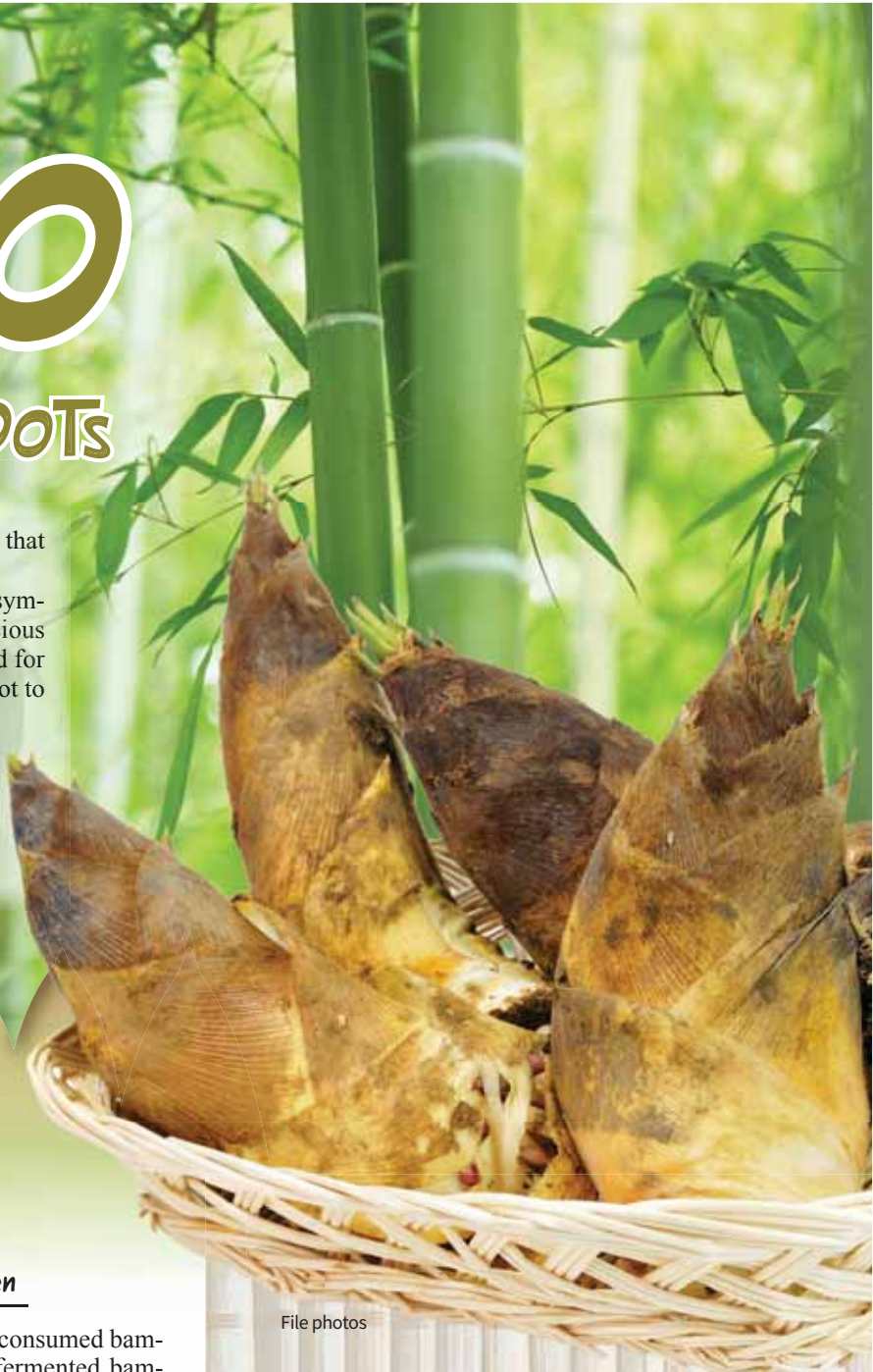
You're planning your dream trip to Japan when you see them — dozens of photos featuring one thing: lush bamboo groves towering high above the crowds. Dreamy and majestic, bamboo has mesmerized crowds of tourists for decades.

From travel guides to vlogs and photo ops to selfies, bamboo is a hot ticket item. Meanwhile, it's almost mundane to the locals. Furniture like chairs and tables and cutlery like chopsticks are

made from this vegetation, but did you know that bamboo even features in Japanese cuisine?

That's right, bamboo isn't just a beloved symbol of nature in Japan, it's also used as a delicious addition to a wide variety of dishes! Beloved for its health benefits and abundance, it's hard not to find bamboo in a meal when eating traditional Japanese cuisine. Bamboo in its edible form is called takenoko (bamboo shoot).

In this article, we'll introduce a bit of the culture behind bamboo and a few of the most popular takenoko recipes in Japan.



File photos

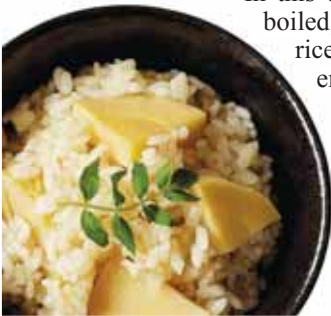
6 POPULAR JAPANESE BAMBOO SHOOT DISHES

Takenoko gohan

Bamboo shoot rice

Takenoko gohan, or bamboo shoot rice, is a variety of takikomi gohan (mixed rice dish). Takikomi gohan recipes are Japan's version of one-pot meals.

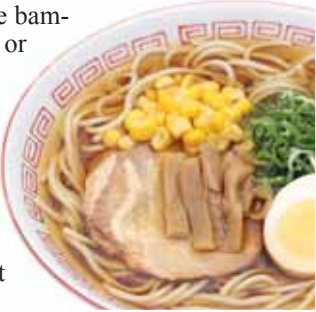
In this dish, bamboo shoots are boiled, sliced and placed in a rice cooker with rice and other ingredients. Common ingredients are aburaage fried tofu, dashi stock, soy sauce and mirin. Takenoko gohan can also be prepared in pots other than a rice cooker, like clay pots and dutch ovens.



Menma

Bamboo shoots in ramen

Arguably one of the most commonly consumed bamboo shoot recipes around, menma are fermented bamboo shoots. They are left to ferment for about a month after the bamboo shoot has been boiled or steamed to remove bitterness. You can find menma as a garnish on most bowls of ramen — they are crunchy and have a sweet, yet savory flavor that perfectly complements the richness of most ramen broths.



Tempura

The perfect crunchy addition to any tempura plate, takenoko tempura is prepared just like any other piece of tempura. Sliced, battered and then breaded in panko bread crumbs before being fried in golden oil.



Grilled bamboo shoots

Even simpler than the other preparation methods mentioned already, grilled bamboo shoots are exactly what they sound like! Bamboo shoots that have been grilled on the barbeque. Seasoning can be left up to the chef, with some opting for traditional options like soy sauce, and others opting for more Western flavors like consomme or butter.



Takenoko no nimono

Simmered bamboo shoots

One of the simplest preparation styles for bamboo shoots, takenoko no nimono are bamboo shoots that have been simmered in a savory broth. This broth is the secret sauce to many traditional Japanese foods: dashi stock, soy sauce, mirin, sake rice wine and some sugar to balance out the umami of the dashi and soy sauce. The bamboo shoots are chopped and then boiled in the dashi stock before adding other ingredients to simmer.



Sashimi

Takenoko sashimi is one of the simplest ways to prepare and eat Japanese bamboo shoots. After harvesting the shoots, the outer layer is removed, the shoot is sliced thinly and the inner flesh is boiled. The boiled takenoko slices are cooled in ice water and dried. Then, they are enjoyed with soy sauce and wasabi, just like actual fish sashimi!

WHAT IS TAKENOKO?

The Japanese word takenoko refers to bamboo shoots, but the literal English translation is much cuter! The literal translation breaks down like this: “take” means bamboo, “no” shows possession of the following noun, and “ko” means child, so when literally translated, takenoko means “Bamboo’s child.”

This is the stage of bamboo before it grows into the iconic, towering green stalk featured in postcards and film. Bamboo shoots grow underground so they must be dug to harvest. They are conical in shape, green on the outside and white on the inside, and after being harvested the shoot's green exterior turns brown while the inside remains white.

SYMBOLISM OF BAMBOO SHOOTS IN JAPAN

Given the number of bamboo groves in Japan, bamboo shoots are an easy ingredient to find, especially when they begin to sprout out of the ground in spring. Due to this, bamboo shoots are seen as a symbol of spring in Japan.

Activities like bamboo shoot harvesting are commonplace in rural Japan, with groups of people going into the mountains to dig for the shoots once April rolls around. This bamboo harvesting is called takenoko hori (bamboo shoot digging) in Japanese, and many bamboo grove owners and towns hold special bamboo shoot digging events for visitors.

Bamboo shoots grow quickly into bamboo stalks, and these stalks are difficult to break despite the bending heights they grow to. As such, the entire

plant is a symbol of vitality and growth in Japan. It also features heavily in the folktale The Tale of the Bamboo Cutter, which was made famous abroad thanks to the Ghibli film The Tale of the Princess Kaguya. In the story, the bamboo cutter and his wife are an elderly couple with no children. One day, the bamboo cutter happens upon a glowing bamboo shoot and cuts it open to reveal a small baby! The bamboo cutter takes her home to raise with his wife. Of course there are more elements to the story than this, but the adoption of the baby could be seen as the elderly couple momentarily regaining the vitality of their youth.

BAMBOO SHOOTS
NUTRITION

The vitality of bamboo and bamboo shoots may not just be symbolism found in folktales. According to healthline, bamboo shoots are low in calories while rich in fiber, copper and essential vitamins like vitamin E and B6. Due to their fiber content, they have been found to promote gut health and may reduce cholesterol levels and promote weight loss. One caveat of bamboo shoots is that they must always be prepared properly. Raw bamboo shoots are known to contain a compound that can cause food poisoning if consumed excessively. This compound has a bitter taste, so most individuals won't want to eat raw bamboo shoots anyway. By boiling or soaking bamboo shoots before preparing them, you can remove this bitterness.

byFood is a platform for food events in Tokyo, with over 80 experiences to choose from and a fantastic resource for learning about Japan's thriving food culture! What's more, byFood runs a charitable outreach program, the Food for Happiness Project, which donates 10 meals to children in Cambodia for each person who books a food event through our platform!



Arashiyama bamboo forest

Arashiyama is one of the most famous bamboo groves in Japan by far, with pathways that meander through a sprawling collection of towering bamboo. You've no doubt seen photos of the area while researching the top spots to visit in Japan. To get a better idea of what Arashiyama and the surrounding food culture of Kyoto is like, watch Shizuka as she strolls around the area!



View video



Bamboo noodle lunch in Beppu

Wanting to avoid the crowds of Kyoto and experience some quintessential Japanese summer vibes? Head on down to Beppu in Oita Prefecture to experience some nagashi soumen, or flowing noodles. These noodles flow downhill through a stalk of bamboo, and diners must be speedy enough to catch the noodles with their chopsticks.



Reservation

A Taste of Okinawa





Great food, fun
events at Sidelines

Established in 2012, Sidelines is a family-owned, up-scale sports bar & grill. Our menu offers delicious homemade classic American food, vegan dishes, kid's options and fantastic weekly specials. Try our fish & chips and creamy homemade cheesecake, both undoubtedly the best in Okinawa. Join us for Trivia Tuesday, Wednesday's Humpday Super-Specials, Thursday's Darts Tournament, Friday's Happy Hour, Weekend Bottomless Mimosas and for live sporting events on our 20 indoor & outdoor TVs! You'll enjoy unrivaled service, a full bar, ample outdoor seating and a fabulous ocean view! Visit us soon and join the Sidelines Family!

RESTAURANT INFO



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!



Gushikawa
Main City
Branch



Naha
Main Place
Branch



Urasoe
West Coast
Parco City
Branch



RESTAURANT INFO

A Taste of Okinawa

STEAK HOUSE

FOUR SEASONS

Credit card accepted
VISA JCB Mastercard

TEPPANYAKI SINCE 1972 www.the4seasons.jp

Four Seasons Urasoe

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

Please make a reservation for your party.

Enjoy great teppanyaki just five minutes from Camp Kinser!

Four Seasons Awase

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

Awase branch has 2 parking places.

Lunch
Hours: 11:00-

Lunch Steak Set ¥1,980-

Dinner
Hours: 17:00-

Dinner Steak Set ¥2,640-

Seafood & other menus are widely available. All sets come with soup, salad, bread or rice, tea or coffee.

Four Seasons Okinawa City

3-1-25 Sonda, Okinawa City / TEL (098)933-5731

Four Seasons Mihama

2-5-2 Chatan, Mihama Town / TEL (098)926-1329



Four Seasons will dazzle you in Awase & Urasoe

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