A Taste of Okinawa

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

8-page pullout
When it comes to food, some of the most unique culinary creations found in Japan are not limited to high-class restaurants, but can be found at the humble convenience store or supermarket. Often they no longer resemble the original inspiration in terms of appearance, but are distinguished by their rich and interesting flavor combinations as well. When most people think about “bread,” usually a vision of baguettes, rolls or sandwiches comes to mind. In Japan, these common varieties are joined by a unique genre known as souzai pan (“pan” being the word for bread in Japanese). Despite their being found practically everywhere in Japan, since souzai pan blend in with their common counterparts so well, most are not immediately recognized by foreign visitors. But if you know what you’re looking for, you’ll find just to what extent bread is as much a food as it is an artistic medium.

**Top 5 weird ways Japan took baked goods to another level**

1. **PIZZA BREAD**
   - Imagine a handy sized pizza just for 100 yen, but without the messy sauce or drippy cheese – that’s the concept behind pizza bread in Japan! It tastes almost perfectly like a pizza and since it’s wrapped in a pouch, it’s a highly portable snack for when you’re on the go. Occasionally, you may even see a delectable homemade version of this – pizza toast – at local cafes and eateries. Eaten cold or toasted hot, pizza bread can really hit the spot. Varieties can range from the standard tomato sauce with cheese to a more unique tuna and mayonnaise mix.

2. **YAKISOBA SANDWICH**
   - Stir-fried noodles in a hot dog bun! When traveling around Japan, you may notice people munching on these at lunchtime, particularly in parks or outside convenience stores. Although the taste of noodle sandwiches may be a little difficult to imagine, there’s definitely some magic happening between the savory yakisoba and light sweetness of the bread that makes them taste unexpectedly great! Not only will you find yakisoba sandwiches in Japan, but also Naporitan – a version containing spaghetti, tomato ketchup or sauce, plus onions, mushrooms and other vegetables.

3. **CURRY BREAD**
   - Visitors to Japan are often surprised by the extent to which Japanese love curry. It is possibly one of the all-time favorite foods for Japanese kids and a number of varieties have developed over the decades – including the curry donut. People outside of Japan would probably wonder why Japanese would take a spicy dish and place it inside a sugary pastry. That’s precisely where culinary creativity meets innovation: the curry filling tends to be on the milder side, while the deep-fried shells tend to be savory, resulting in a marvelous marriage of flavor and texture. Once you taste one you’ll love it too!

4. **MELON BREAD**
   - When you wander about a convenience store, supermarket or shopping street, you’ll undoubtedly come across a bread with an outer texture reminiscent of a pineapple, often coated with sugar granules. This is the almighty melon bread that’s very popular as a treat for kids and adults alike. Not only does it have a light honeydew melon flavor, but it has a somewhat crispy crust and tender inside. These days there are varieties made using maple syrup or whipped cream which are especially popular with kids. Particularly in the cooler months, shops may even serve these delectable rolls hot – a recommended indulgence indeed.

5. **CHOCOLATE CORNET BREAD**
   - Many dessert breads in Japan resemble their namesake, and the chocolate cornet is no different. A simple smooth, lightly sweet bread that’s filled with thick nutty chocolate custard, chocolate coronets are popular as a breakfast item or as a mid-afternoon sweet at work. These yummy treats are equally enjoyed for dessert or as an evening snack.
How to brew a fantastic cup of coffee

BY TESS BERCAN
BUSAN HAPS MAGAZINE

When you wake up in the morning, what’s the first thing on your mind? For many, the answer is simple. It’s coffee.

It’s a given that this intoxicating beverage is adored, but like the sought after yet elusive utopia of Atlantis, does the perfect brew actually exist? We checked out what a few professionals had to say on this topic, and came up with some suggestions.

Tips for Getting the Perfect Cup:
Clean Your Equipment
Often you want your equipment clean and fresh, free of all bacteria or other contaminants that add up with use.

Use quality water
The Black Bear’s Roastery guide also suggests that the water shouldn’t add anything extra to your coffee’s flavour. A lot of the times tap water can contain chlorine or other substances that affect the taste. Use the pour-over method of brewing
The pour-over is a hand brew method of pouring warm water over the coffee grounds. Grounds are placed in a filter that is held in a cone, such as the Kalita Wave or Chemex. In an interview with Real Simple Living – a website that provides solutions for everyday life – barista champion Katie Cargiulo explained that the pour-over is her favorite brew method. It offers a combination between an even saturation of grounds and removing of sediment, leaving a strong yet clean brew.

Bean freshness matters
In his brew guide, Garret Oden, coffee expert at Yellow House Coffee in Texas, reminds us that as soon as beans are ground and exposed to oxygen, the freshness declines quickly. To ensure prime quality in your sipping experience, buy coffee beans in smaller amounts and grind them day by day. This grind-as-you go routine keeps your coffee as true to quality taste as possible.

Use the pour-over method of brewing
The pour-over is a hand brew method of pouring warm water over the coffee grounds.

Eat here, take it out or free delivery!
Let Transit Café serve you some tasty drinks and food while you take in the surrounding beauty. Relax and unwind as the blue sky gradually changes into yellow and orange over the never-ending ocean landscape. Spend a momentary “transit” before heading to your next destination. Open every day. Takeout available 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Or stay home and we’ll deliver to you. Call 098-936-5076 for free home delivery on orders over $35.00 (yen or cash only). Must order day in advance. Delivery area limited to Chatan, Kadena, Yomitan, Okinawa City, and Kitanakagusuku. Check out our delivery menu at www.transitcafe-okinawa.com.
1. **NORITAMA**

The classic furikake rice seasoning choice

Marumiya is one of the biggest names when it comes to furikake, boasting its own extensive “furikake series.” The Noritama flavor combines nori (dried seaweed) with tamago (egg) and is the most popular long seller among colorful furikake products. Japanese people immediately recognize the characteristic taste of the subtly sweet egg granule and the aromatic shredded seaweed, recognizable from the very first bite ever taken.

The nori is a blend of seaweed from various production areas while the egg granule also features two different kinds of flavors – for what seems like a simple furikake, there is a lot of commitment inside the package.

Since its release in 1960, the Noritama furikake rice seasoning has been renewed a total of eight times, reducing the salt content and the seasoning according to changes in both the tastes and lifestyle of modern consumers.

It’s a famous best-seller that ranks high in popularity for decades! With a slow, careful evolution in accordance with the taste of the time, Noritama provides a classic, satisfying flavor to enhance your rice with.

![Noritama Furikake](image)

The shredded seaweed and yellow egg of this furikake looks colorful!

Both the popularity and the taste hasn’t changed in 50 years and counting.

2. **YUKARI**

Aromatic, carefully selected red shiso

The “Yukari” furikake of red shiso (beefsteak plant) is a staple seasoning on tables all around Japan. It is characterized by its vivid color and unmistakable aroma, and the more Yukari red shiso varieties the company behind this famous product develops, the more commitment to quality goes into the process.

Since Yukari’s release in 1970, there have been a variety of flavors on top of plain beefsteak plant: ume (Japanese apricot), sesame, seaweed, ginger, and so on. Especially “pen-type” furikake has gained a lot of attention, serving the sprinkles in a literal pen to be shaken out, easy to carry and fun to use.

Yukari is also a female name in Japan and carries the meaning of “fortune” and “destiny,” coming from the ancient belief that purple grass is something auspicious.

Red shiso furikake has a characteristic purple color and rich aroma.

3. **TARAKO OCHAZUKE**

The original flavor of rice with tea

Ochazuke is a traditional Japanese dish that features hot tea, broth, or water being poured over a bowl of rice topped with various ingredients.

In 1952, a company called Nagatanien developed an instant ochazuke, instantly successful as a simple and quick dish. The Tarako Ochazuke is based on a soy sauce infused with the umami flavor of scallops and bonito while also featuring little arare rice crackers made of rice and seaweed, the staple ingredients of ochazuke.

Of course, the tarako (spicy cod roe) flavor is wonderfully rich and brings a nice balance to the mix.

![Tarako Ochazuke](image)

Pour some hot water over the furikake rice bowl and enjoy a savory broth.

4. **POKÉMON FURIKAKE MINI PACK**

Great for lunch boxes, not only for kids!

These handy little bags are perfect for lunch boxes. One pack of Marumiya’s Pokémon Furikake Mini Pack is just right for one serving of rice.

It is an assortment of 20 individual bags that comes in four different flavors that are especially beloved by Japanese children: egg, salmon, bonito soy sauce with finely chopped bonito flakes, and vegetables.

Different Pokémon are printed on the little bags, so this flavorful rice topping is a highlight for fans of all ages! Extra calcium is added as well, giving you a nutritious boost!

![Pokemon Furikake Mini Pack](image)

Extra calcium is added as well, giving you a nutritious boost!

5. **MAZEKOMI WAKAME SAKE**

An authentically Japanese flavor with seaweed and salmon

Another classic dish is wakame gohan, blending seaweed seasoned rice with salmon.

Marumiya’s “Mazekomi Wakame” furikake series lets you enjoy this staple rice dish with a simple yet flavorful bag. The rich umami flavor is rich in the ingredients, characterized by being delicious even if the rice has cooled down.

The sake flavor has received an upgrade, adding even more salmon to the mix and thus making for a richer, saltier umami experience.

In general, the Mazekomi Wakame series comes in 24 varieties, including limited and premium flavors such as bamboo shoots or grilled eel.

![Mazekomi Wakame Sake](image)

This rice topping boasts the crispy and fresh flavor of seaweed.

6. **OTONA WASABI**

A flavor geared to adults

Nagatanien created a furikake palette of adults called “Otona on which flavors sharply decline for people older than 12 years.

This has led to a bag that provides a new variety by using freeze-dried seaweed and carefully chosen ingredients that appeal to adults. This very popular furikake series, which has earned a loyal following, comes in six flavors: seaweed, wasabi, and other traditional Japanese flavors.

That’s what differentiates them from ordinary furikake. Since its launch, this popular item has been a hit with people of all ages. As the food market changes, we continue to create new furikake flavors that appeal to different palates for every occasion.

![Otona Wasabi](image)

Extra calcium is added as well, giving you a nutritious boost!
Have you heard of Japan’s furikake? In Japanese, furikake means “to sprinkle over.” Furikake are seasonings of various dried ingredients such as egg, seaweed, or sesame, made to top a bowl of plain white rice. In Japan, it is common to enjoy rice just as it is while the West knows it as a side to go with something else, and this is why furikake is rather prominent in Japanese daily life. A simple bag of furikake rice seasoning adds a flavorful kick to every bowl, inspired by dishes and ingredients such as eggs and seaweed, sukiyaki, and cod roe! Try this fun way to enjoy rice for yourself with our 10 recommended furikake rice seasoning choices!

**No Furikake**

Towards an adult palate

As the Otona no Furikake series for the sophisticated no Furikake,” looking at data and recent renewal.

Furikake rice seasonings are popular in Japan. The base color of the Japanese furikake package is white. An authentic and natural flavor experience, completely relying on the taste and aroma of the ingredients alone.

Mutenka Furikake Mini

No colorings, no preservatives, good for the body

These furikake are free of any additives and the set of 20 bags comes in five different varieties: ume with bonito, bonito, egg, small fish, and nori seaweed. Mutenka Foods, the company behind this product, is a long-established manufacturer from Hiroshima, founded in 1901. It’s also a pioneer of furikake seasoning for a single serving, releasing “mini furikake” way ahead of the competition in 1975. Without any colorings, preservatives, or other additives, one of these bags promises an authentic and natural flavor experience, completely relying on the taste and aroma of the ingredients alone.

Especially the rich sesame fragrance positively stands out. Even toddlers can enjoy this product without worries.

**Sukiyaki**

Beef hot pot as a unique seasoning

Launched in 1963, Marumiya’s “Sukiyaki” furikake celebrates its 55th birthday in 2018. Sukiyaki is a beef hot pot and one of the Japanese dishes that is fairly well-known around the world.

When this Japanese rice seasoning launched, beef was fairly expensive, so this product was developed to let people enjoy the flavor easily and affordably at home. It was the very first meat furikake back then and the beef flakes were even patented. To commemorate its 55th anniversary, the original packaging is on sale as well.

The bags are adorned with cute illustrations of cows.

**Minion Furikake Mini Pack**

Gentle flavors for kids

There’s hardly anyone who is not familiar with the Minions of the Despicable Me movies. These Minions are the stars of the “Minion Furikake Mini Pack” by Marumiya, a collaboration that makes for a wonderful souvenir for the little ones at home.

Egg, salmon, bonito soy sauce with finely chopped bonito flakes, and vegetables are the four flavors of this mix, especially loved by children. All of them hold back on saltiness and instead focus on a gentle flavor after the most recent renewal.

The Minions are extremely popular in Japan.

**WHERE TO BUY JAPANESE FURIKAKE RICE SEASONINGS?**

You can find a selection of Japanese furikake rice seasonings at most supermarkets and even convenience stores.

Keio Store is a supermarket chain that is all about the daily life around Keio Electric Railway’s lines. As of right now, there are 33 individual stores including the affiliates Kitchen Court and Keio Store Express, all of them loved by the locals.

We hunted for the best furikake rice seasonings at the Sakuragaoka Store, right next to the station, and also recommend its other diverse product selection, ranging from fresh foods to alcohol and miscellaneous goods.

Keio Seiseki Sakuragaoka
Address: 1-11-1, Sekido, Tama-shi, Tokyo, 206-0011
NEAREST STATION: Seiseki-sakuragaoka Station (Keio Line), right next to the station
PHONE NUMBER: 042-337-2511
HOURS: 10:00 a.m. – 11:30 p.m. (2F is open until 9:00 p.m.)
Closed: January 1, irregularly twice a year

*This information is from the time of this article’s publication.
*Prices and options mentioned are subject to change.
Japan is of course a country that is famed for its cuisine. Across the globe, Japanese food is revered for its depth, flavor and its subtlety. Ask anyone from New York to Hong Kong about sushi or ramen and you will no doubt receive an enthusiastic response! However, for many first time visitors to the country, Japanese drinks remain something of a mystery. Today, we will look at some of the most famous and unique Japanese drinks that are just as interesting as the food and can be the perfect complement to your meal.

Japan is a country where both the traditional and the modern live in tandem. This is an aspect of the culture that can also be seen even when we look at what people drink in modern Japan. We start with perhaps the most important and famous Japanese drink of all, the humble green tea.

Green tea
Green tea first originated in China and legend states that the first green tea seeds were brought to Japan by two Buddhist monks, Saicho and Kukai, in the early 9th century. These seeds were then planted in Uji, near Kyoto, which then became the birthplace of Japanese green tea (specifically Uji matcha) in Japan.

Today, there are about 20 different variations of green tea that exist in Japan. The green tea flavor has also become a symbol of the country and can be found in everything from Kit Kats to soap! However, nothing truly symbolizes the importance of green tea to Japanese culture more than the traditional tea ceremony, chado (茶道) or “the way of tea.” This ritual with Zen Buddhist origins, which uses the matcha tea variation of green tea, has come to represent Japanese culture to the outside world and is all centered around the presentation and enjoyment of the humble beverage.

ROYAL MILK TEA

In keeping with the different teas of Japan, another unique drink that is very popular amongst Japanese people is Royal Milk Tea. This blend of “English” tea (a combination of Assam and Darjeeling leaves) is brewed and then a healthy measure of milk is added. This can then be sweetened with either milk or honey to taste. This is a drink that can be enjoyed either hot or cold and is a year-round favorite.

Bubble Tea
Originally an imported drink from Taiwan that is a fairly recent fixture to menus in the big cities of Japan, bubble tea has now become a massive hit, particularly amongst the younger generations. In its original incarnation, this tea is milk tea (not dissimilar to Royal Milk Tea) that can be made with black, oolong, or jasmine tea leaves and added tapioca balls. The tea is usually served sweet with added sugar.

Aloe Drinks
Okinawa is famous for many different tropical fruits and vegetables. Perhaps one of the best known is its aloe vera plant, which is cultivated year round. The plant contains over 200 active compounds and vitamins and is acknowledged by the people of Okinawa as one of their secrets to long life! Aloe vera juice and aloe yogurt drinks are now among the most popular drinks in Japan and are widely available.

Flavored Soy Milk
Soy milk, a natural byproduct of making tofu by grinding soybeans, has long been an alternative for dairy milk in Japan. It is a beverage that again holds a place of special importance in Japanese cuisine, and is used to make yuba or the skin from boiled soy milk. It is also used as the base for a special winter stew called tonyu nabe (soy milk hotpot). However, in recent years the popularity of soy milk as a stand alone beverage has soared with many flavored options such as banana, sakura, and of course matcha! There are even limited edition flavors such as pudding-flavored soy milk!

Yakult
Today a drink that is famous the world over, this probiotic, fermented milk beverage was first invented by the renowned Japanese scientist, Dr. Minoru Shirota in 1935. This small but mighty drink has been scientifically proven to help maintain a healthy stomach and increases the amount of good bacteria in your system. The drink is so popular in Japan that not only does it come in different flavors, but it is delivered from door-to-door and to offices each day and it even has a baseball team (the Yakult Swallows) named after it!

Popular Non-Alcoholic Japanese Drinks

Say cheers with these 18 popular Japanese drinks

BY JAMES KRICK, BYFOOD

A TASTE OF OKINAWA

BY JAMES KRICK, BYFOOD

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A summer favorite which is available at all matsuri (festivals) and is one of the most uniquely Japanese drinks on this list (despite first being introduced to Japan by a Scottish pharmacist during the Meiji era), Ramune is a carbonated soda that comes in a variety of different flavors and is served in its distinctly-shaped glass bottle for a refreshing summer treat. Sometimes referred to as “marble soda” abroad, to open this beverage you must push the marble that seals it into the narrow neck of the bottle.

Amazake
Amazake is the most unique drink on this list and has one of the longest histories. This sweet drink is made with fermented rice, and it can be alcoholic or non-alcoholic. Sometimes it is made with the sake kasu that’s left over from the Japanese sake brewing process, giving it a delicious tang. It can be served either hot or cold but is more traditionally enjoyed hot in winter to warm up winter revelers through on the chilly evenings. This drink is also a traditional New Year’s beverage that is offered at temples and shrines during hatsumode.

Coffee
While Japan may be seen by many as the nation of green tea, make no mistake Japan is also a coffee drinker’s paradise. The most popular drink in the world after water, coffee can be found absolutely everywhere in Japan, from convenience stores and vending machines to tiny shops run by coffee purists who sell some of the most expensive and rare coffees in the world. Visitors to Japan should not miss the opportunity to sample a cup of one of Japan’s drip coffees which is the preferred method of brewing across the country.

Japanese sake (Nihonshu)
The grandfather of Japanese alcoholic drinks, nihonshu, or sake as it is known outside Japan, is a rice wine that is made from rice, rice koji, and water. It is believed that sake is the oldest alcoholic drink in Japan and there is evidence of sake consumption dating back to the third century! This is a drink that can be served cold in summer and hot in winter and certainly should not be missed by any visitor to Japan. Sake has a huge number of different varieties and regional specialties. You can also find a great number of specialty sake bars that will give you the opportunity to try a wide variety.

Umeshu or Japanese plum wine, is a sweet, plum-flavored liqueur with a rich taste and a honey-colored look. This alcoholic favorite can be drunk straight but is also delicious when mixed with soda water or even with a splash of water.

Shochu
A staple of the izakaya, shochu is a clear alcoholic drink that can be distilled from a variety of ingredients such as sweet potatoes, barley, or rice. Regional variations of shochu can be drunk all over Japan and this is a very popular drink amongst salarymen and women during work parties.

Chuhai
The university and college students’ drink of choice, chuhai, is a combination of shochu and a sweet, flavored soda. The most popular variant of the chu-hai is lemon flavor but there are tons of different flavors available. Chuhai is readily available in all convenience stores but a tastier and more refined variation of the drink can be found in many izakaya and bars where fresh fruit is used to mix.

Japanese craft beer
Much like the growth of Japanese whisky, Japanese craft beer has also experienced a real boom in recent years. There are now many different craft beer pubs dotted around the country that offer some fantastic Japanese interpretations on beers such as IPAs and stouts but also some truly unique Japanese flavors such as beers brewed with sakura or yuzu!

Japanese whisky
In 2014, the world of whisky experienced a shock when, for the first time in history, a Scottish whisky was defeated and a Japanese whisky was named the best in the world. Japan takes its whisky very seriously indeed and this can be seen with the wide and varied selection of local brands available. For those who are very interested in the process, the major Japanese distilleries also offer guided tours and sampling!

All in all, Japan has a huge variety of different, unique and wonderful drinks to try. Many of these can be seasonal and completely unique to the region, meaning that for the visitor, there is an endless galaxy of flavors to experience! Expand your palate. Browse tastings in Japan and become an expert on Japanese sake, whisky, tea, and more!
Emery Lanes Strikers Café rolls out food special

Emery Lanes Bowling Complex is a hidden gem for food specials! Whether it is one of their unique burgers of the month, or their famous grilled cheese, you should stop by on your lunch break! But did you know, they also have Okinawan local favorite Soba noodles? Every Thursday Strikers Café features the local dish for the bargain price of $6.50. Soba noodles are unique to Okinawa! The thin noodle dish is served up hot with a delicious broth, pork and scallions. A great way to experience local treats right here on Kadena!

A Taste of Okinawa

Taste the Hawaiian vibe at Hale Noa Café

Owned by a chef in Hawaii, Hale Noa Café has been attracting a wide-range of foreign customers. With its Hawaiian vibe, Hale Noa serves up the some of the best of the 50th state's favorite foods. We choose the freshest ingredients for the best taste made from scratch. Enjoy Macadamia Nut Pancakes, Hawaiian Bowl, Fresh Poke Bowl and more! Hale Noa’s fluffy French Toast with berries and crème brûlée sauce is to die for! Afterwards, wash it all down with one of our healthy and homemade smoothies. Start your day with a superior breakfast at Hale Noa Café.