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A Taste of Okinawa

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

8-page pullout



Simple recipe for delicious passionfruit jam

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

On a rainy day in late May, I visited Agarihama Ichiba, a local farmer’s market in Yonabaru Town. In search for some seasonal produce for a summer recipe to try, I had tomatoes, goya (bitter melon), or gumbos in mind. However, a shelf at the market filled with round, dark red fruit soon caught my eye.

It had been a while since I’d had the flavor-packed passionfruit. Though I still didn’t know what the recipe would be, I couldn’t help but grab not one, but two bags of the tropical fruit for about 600 yen (approx. \$4.50) each.

In all, I had about 10 passionfruit to use for this summer recipe. However, before I could get to figuring that out, I quickly cut into one to taste the brightly-colored, seedy flesh with a spoon. I think the best way to consume fruit is raw, so I definitely needed to sample the main ingredient first.

The juicy fruit’s flavor was so exquisite, I could have eaten all of them just like this, but I continued my search for a good recipe idea to try. Eventually, my spoon stopped and my eyes widened when I stumbled across a picture of bread topped with passionfruit jam online.

Just looking at the yellow jam dotted with black seeds shining on a loaf of bread almost made me drool. I knew I had to have this.

Soon, I had a pot bubbling with the yellow passionfruit flesh and sugar not knowing how this would turn out. The sweet and sour scent in the kitchen was intoxicating and a quick taste of the jam in progress was all I needed to know I was on the right track.

The jam had a strong punch of taste accentuating the fruit’s signature sweet and sour taste. The

black seeds added a nice texture, which I could hardly stop chomping on. It took me just about 20 minutes in total to cook the jam and the results went way beyond my expectation.

When it was ready, my parents and I nearly spoiled our appetites because we could not stop enjoying the jam on baguette slices. But it was dinnertime, so we decided to save the rest for breakfast.

The passionfruit jam was so good, we even kept talking about it over dinner! And we looked forward to the tasty meal we’d have the next morning.

In Japan, you’ll find passionfruit in Okinawa, Kagoshima, and Ogasawara Islands, which are known to produce this tropical fruit. While it is in season on Okinawa from February through July according to Japan Agriculture Co-operatives (JA), Kagoshima’s season is from May through August, according to the prefectural government. The Ogasawara Village Tourism Bureau said the islands there harvest the fruit from April through early July.

Passionfruit is not necessarily commonly available at local grocery stores unless you live in the areas mentioned above. Chances are you’ll need to go to a dedicated fruit shop such as Sembikiya and Ichifuji Fruits to get one. So, if you ever see them at a store, make sure you grab some and cook a batch of jam for your next brunch. I’m sure you and your family will love it, too!

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INGREDIENTS

- Passion fruit (8 pieces)
- Sugar (90 – 120 cc)

*This info is based on a recipe by Cookpad.

In Japan, you’ll find passionfruit in Okinawa, Kagoshima, and Ogasawara Islands.

DIRECTIONS



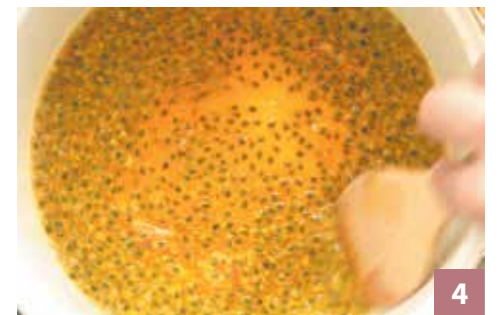
1 Slice passionfruit in half.



2 Scoop up the seedy flesh and put it in a pot (I removed cotton-like texture to make the jam smooth).



3 Add sugar and heat the mixture over medium heat. Continuously stir the mixture so that it will not burn.



4 If you prefer not to have seeds in the jam, take them out by scooping them up with a tea strainer.



5 Simmer it for about 5 minutes. Remove the foam from time to time.



6 Put the jam in a jar. *Sterilize the jar in boiling water beforehand.

Try it with baguette bread for a tropical breakfast. いただきます!



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RESTAURANT INFO



Shaved ice a tasty Japanese summer treat

BY TAKAHIRO TAKIGUCHI,
STRIPES OKINAWA

Summer in Japan gets scorching and steamy. Mid-summer Temperatures often reach 95 F or higher depending on the region. Along with beer, watermelon and soomen (cold udon noodle), kakigoori (shaved ice) is a popular cold food that cools us down during summer.

For many Japanese, the memories of a banner with the red kanji letter of koori (ice) in white and a blue background are fond ones. These banners are seen outside shops offering kakigoori and often meant a sweet, snow-like treat to help us cool down as kids.

Besides at local sweets stores, kakigoori can be found at matsuri and bon odori festivals or fireworks events, along with other festive foods.

“Kakigoori is one of the most popular traditional cold sweets throughout history,” says Ryusuke Koike, managing director of Japan Kakigoori Association. “This cold food goes back to more than 1,000 years and has been enjoyed as festive food for special occasions.”

Kakigoori is not only available during the summer, but it is a year-around cold dessert, according to Koike.

“Since a lot of kakigoori joints make their syrups and sauces using fruits in season, they offer different types of throughout the year,” Koike said.

In fact, there are countless types of syrups and sauces. While many places offer the standard strawberry, cherry, lemon, green tea, melon and colorless syrup, others offer unique syrups made from vegetables, sake, wine, or even vinegar, miso or soy sauce.

Japanese kakigoori may remind many of a snow cone, but there are few significant differences between the two iced sweets.”

“Japanese kakigoori has a really fine, smooth fluffy ice consistency, just like fresh fallen snow,” Koike said. “While Americans make snow cones with extreme hard ice, we would never do that to keep it soft and fluffy.”

Besides the difference of ice, snow cones usually come with artificial flavors, while kakigoori uses more natural syrups and ingredients, such as sweet beans, matcha and brown sugar.

But, despite a key difference in the flavoring, the main part of kakigoori is actually the ice, according to Koike.

“Most of kakigoori joints pay more attention on the quality of ice, rather than varieties of syrups, since quality and condition of ice determines the taste of kakigoori,” Koike said.

For Japanese kakigoori, extreme cold ice is not good. For a fluffy snow-like soft texture, the ice temperature needs to be kept around 14 F.

“Since ice in freezer is usually around -4 F, we need to take out the ice and warm it up before we shave it,” Koike said.

Clean and transparent ice is ideal, as it can make smooth, fluffy kakigoori. Water that takes a long time to freeze can make clean ice.

“Natural ice is considered the best,” Koike said. Why not make kakigoori yourself?

You can make a transparent ice yourself. Wrap an ice tray with a towel before putting it into a freezer. This will make the ice take longer to freeze which should ensure the ice is transparent, according to Koike.

Then, you can shave it by using a hand-spinning ice shaver, which can be found at various stores for around \$30-40.

The hand-cranked ice shaver is a popular kitchen item in Japan. It is fun making kakigoori by spinning a block of ice over a blade by turning the lever by hands. Syrups for kakigoori are available at most of supermarkets or grocery stores.

Did you know?

Kakigoori is a popular cold treat in ball parks. Yokohama Stadium offers Mikan Goori (ice orange) while Jingu Stadium (Tokyo) offers Pine Goori (pineapple ice) during ball games. Koshien Stadium (near Osaka) offers simple “Kachiwari” (literally shaved ice).

According to Japan Kakigoori Association, there are some tips to making tasty kakigoori at home: Use mineral water instead of tap water when you make ice. Serve it in a glass bowl to make the colors stand out, and be sure not to put on too many toppings as it can spoil the fluffy texture.

Now that you know, get out and enjoy the hot Japan summer with some cool kakigoori!

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Make your own

BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

It doesn't get much better than eating shaved ice during the summer. But making the cold sweets at home offers a different sense of joy.

Kakigoori-ki (shave ice machine) is a common item for families with children in this country. Just like many flavors are introduced at shops every year, shaved iced machines are also evolving to show great variety. But there is a trend commonly seen in many of them: nostalgia.

“Kyro-chan” is a shaved ice machine

that looks like a cubby bear doll.

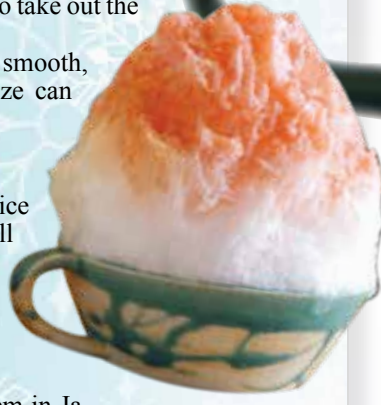
Originally released in 1976, this cute looking machine became a hit back then. When the handle on the top is turned, the cubby's eyes move left and right. The name Kyro-chan refers to this which was very appealing to kids.

Although it was discontinued for a while, Kyro-chan was brought back in the same design.

“Ice Robo III Hatsuyuki” is another popular shaved ice machine with a retro



Left: Ichigo, Above: Mango



Okinawa

BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

When summer rolls around and the temperature rises, the shaved ice scene also heats up on Okinawa.

Local stores become busy shaving ice blocks to give customers a quick break from heat. Shaved ice's popularity is something common across the country, but on this subtropical island, however, the cold desserts also reflect a unique food culture.

Tamaya is a shaved ice store a ten-minute drive from Gate 3 of Kadena Air Base. It is a place where many locals come looking for “zenzai” shaved ice.

Normally, the word “zenzai” refers

Zenzai





1926~

gimmick,

for a while,

2016 with

other pop-

ro look. At

1976~

first glance, the yellow, red and green machine almost looks like a character out of an old Nintendo game. But, on the inside, this machine has an advanced system that can automatically make shaved ice, even allowing to adjust sizes.

“Dendo

Honkaku

Fuwafuwa

2000~

Kakigori-Ki” (electric-powered machine for totally fluffy shaved ice) goes further back in time to dig up people’s memory of shaved ice.

It is said that Kakigori-ki became commonly available in the Showa era (1926 – 1989). This machine has wheels and a logo

that can remind Japanese of when they ate shaved ice at stores in their neighborhood back in the day.

Thanks to an updated system, this retro-looking machine can shave ice to fluffy flakes, something only stores could provide back then.

These shaved ice machines are closely associated with people’s happy memories of having the cold sweets as a child. The sense of fun and nostalgia is so strong that you could feel it even if you didn’t live in Japan in those days.

Did you know?

In Japan, kakigoori has been enjoyed for more than 1000 years. Makuranososhi, an essay by Seisho Nagon, has a description of people enjoying kakigoori in the 11th century.

awwa’s cool scene

to sweet red bean soup in Japan. But on Okinawa, it commonly means shaved ice topped with red kidney beans and white rice cake balls. Many local stores serve up this unique dessert, with banners and flags with the word “zenzai” often seen along streets.

Tamaya is one of the stores where people can see the zenzai boom - where the cold sweets are evolving into something special.

At first glance, the store’s shaved ice looks like cotton candy because of its exceptional size and fluffy texture. The heap of shaved ice is almost three times the size of a plastic cup, presenting a look of a small snow mountain.

“Many customers are surprised with the size,” said the store owner. “It is my motto to satisfy customers as much as possible for a reasonable price (450 yen for zenzai) even though it takes more time and effort.”

His dedication to zenzai goes deep. Once digging in, customers find out

the sweet taste of the beans and syrup from top to bottom. The texture and taste don’t stop entertaining customers’ taste buds from the beginning to the end.

There are a couple of clues the shop owner shared with me as to how to make tasty shaved ice. First, ice blocks should not be shaved immediately after being taken out of a freezer. Giving it 10 minutes or so before shaving is a key to making fluffy flakes. Plus, stacking shaved ice should not be done all at once, but in a couple of parts. This way, syrup can be poured in each part at a time.

Sounds easy? Maybe not.

Making a big, fluffy and tasty zenzai shaved ice like Tamaya’s takes experience, skills and dedication.

“I had an experience of carving ice before launching the shop,” the owner said. “Some knowledge I learned through the experience and my expertise as a professional cook helped me a lot.”

Plus, the beans used for his zenzai are specific ones bought at a certain store in Naha. They need to be cooked carefully so that they have enough sweetness.

The owner’s dedication to zenzai translates to other varieties offered at the store. Flavors such as strawberry, dragon fruit (seasonal) and mango are available there. Although zenzai is a hard sell for Americans, fruit-flavored shaved ice is popular among them, according to the owner.

“When it comes to fruit-flavored shaved ice, Americans eat more than Japanese do,” said the owner. “Ichigo milk (strawberry milk) is the most popular.”

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Ichigo Milk

Did you know?

Colorful artificial syrups for kakigoori are sold in most of grocery stores throughout the nation. Although they are sold with different names, including lemon (yellow), strawberry (red), melon (green) and Blue Hawaii (blue), their tastes are all the same.



Uji Matcha



Kuro mitsu kinako

My faves

Okinawan rice toppings

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPE OKINAWA

If you've spent some time perusing the aisles of the convenience stores or local supermarkets in Japan, chances are you've come across packets or bottles of toppings specifically for rice.

These garnishes are called "gohan no otomo," which literally translates to "rice escort." Some of the common gohan no otomo sold in stores include umeboshi (Japanese plums), shake (salmon), and mentaiko (spicy cod roe).

At the store, you may see these are near or labeled as ingredients for onigiri rice balls. They are also a way to change up the flavors and colors to your gohan (rice).

Okinawa also has its own take on gohan no otomo. You'll find some with spicy flavors, or others with a sweet taste. Though the usual Japanese garnishes are widely available and quite popular on the island, the Okinawa varieties dazzle locals and visitors alike.

Why not jump on the bandwagon and try some?

■ ABURA MISO/ANDANSUU

You may know miso from your experience with Japanese dishes such as miso-shiru (miso soup) and saba-no-misoni (mackerel simmered in miso). For Okinawans, miso can be a gohan no otomo as well. "Abura-miso" is a kind of miso that is fried with oil, sugar, pork, fish, or some other foods. Its sweet but spicy flavor appeals to locals across all ages. Several brands are available at local stores for this Okinawan signature food. Or, if you like to cook, it is possible to make andasuu at home.

■ TABERU RAYU

This chili oil-based gohan no otomo featuring pieces of sliced garlic and onion, gained popularity in 2010. Taberu rayu translates to "chili oil for eating" and it was originally sold in Penguin Shokudo, a small Ishigaki Island store. Today, thanks to its tasty flavor and word-of-mouth, major Japanese food companies such as Momoya and S&B offer their own versions all over the country.

■ MIMIGA-KIMCHI

In Okinawa where nearly all pork parts are consumed, "mimiga," or pork ear skin, is a popular snack food to go with alcohol. The word "mimiga" literally means "ear skin." Once it is pickled as kimchi, though, the snack food is also good as a "gohan no otomo." The chewy but soft texture of the skin and the sour but spicy taste of the kimchi will have you craving another bowl of rice.

■ MOZUKU-NO-TSUKUDANI

Seaweed, sugar, soy sauce, kanten (Japanese gelatin) and more make up this gohan no otomo. Even if you are a kind of person who would not eat seaweed, mozuku is worth a try because it is rich in nutrition. Plus, when it is served as a tukudani (food boiled in soy sauce), its sweet taste pairs well with rice.

■ PAPAIIYA-NO-TSUKEMONO (pickled papaya)

Okinawans are no strangers to tsukemono (pickles). One of the more common



pickled items locally is papaya, and once it's mixed with sugar and soy sauce, you'll love the sweet and salty flavor. On the island, papaya is treated as both a fruit and a vegetable. Before it ripens, papaya is called "Ao (blue) papaya" and is commonly used for stir-fry. Likewise, it is the premature papaya that is used for the pickles.

OTHER TOPPINGS

As rice is my favorite food, my list of "gohan-no-otomo" doesn't end in Okinawa. Here are my top-five garnishes for rice from other areas.

■ TAKANA (leaf mustard)

This is my go-to gohan no otomo recently. It has the right amount of spiciness to go with rice. In Japan, takana is mostly farmed in Kyushu areas such as Fukuoka and Kumamoto prefectures. Among several products which are currently available at local supermarkets, my first pick would be the ones mixed with spicy mentaiko (spicy cod roe). The mixture of different spiciness and textures will have you hooked.

■ MENTAIKO

This is a very popular ingredient for onigiri, so you'll be able to find it at any supermarket. This gohan no otomo is recognized as a signature product of Fukuoka Prefecture. Though mentaiko may not be spicy enough for some spicy food enthusiasts, it is actually intended for the enjoyment of its slight spiciness, the saltiness and savory flavor from the liquor, another ingredient used in its production.

■ SANMA NO KABAYAKI

This used to be my go-to gohan no otomo on Sunday afternoon in my childhood when I had to prepare a meal on my own. With sweet sauce, even a fish hater like me used to be able to eat fish with no problems.

■ NATTOU

This can be a challenging food if you come from other countries and many Japanese people also don't enjoy the fermented soybeans with a very sticky texture and not-so-pleasant aroma. Despite its appearance and scent, however, nattou is one of the healthiest foods you can eat. Eating it regularly might lead to you actually reach a point where the stickiness and the unique smell no longer bother you. Nattou usually comes with pouched sauce or mustard. Those condiments can make the process easier.

■ KIMCHI

Of course, Kimchi belongs to Korea. But many Okinawans and Japanese love the food as well.

If you live on the island, you have seen many brands of Kimchi at local supermarkets. Some are imported from South Korea while others were made in Japan or Okinawa. I have a soft spot for the word "genuine," so those from South Korea taste better to me.

Green Tea Furikake

Tea to top your rice with

BY RIEKO SUZUKI,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

The season for the year's first batches of green tea is upon us, and there are many ways to enjoy it. But did you know you can turn used green tea leaves into rice toppings? Furikake made with used tea leaves and other healthy ingredients lets you enjoy the wonderful fragrance of green tea, and goes well with rice, salad, tofu, or grilled meat and fish.

Servings: 4-5
Cooking time: 15 min.

INGREDIENTS

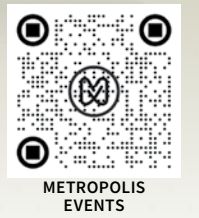
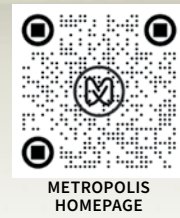
- 4 tbsp used tea leaves
- 1 tbsp white sesame seeds
- 1 sachet (3g) dried bonito shavings (katsuobushi)
- 2 tbsp boiled, dried baby sardines (chirimenjako)
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 2 tsp sake
- 1 tsp salt

DIRECTIONS

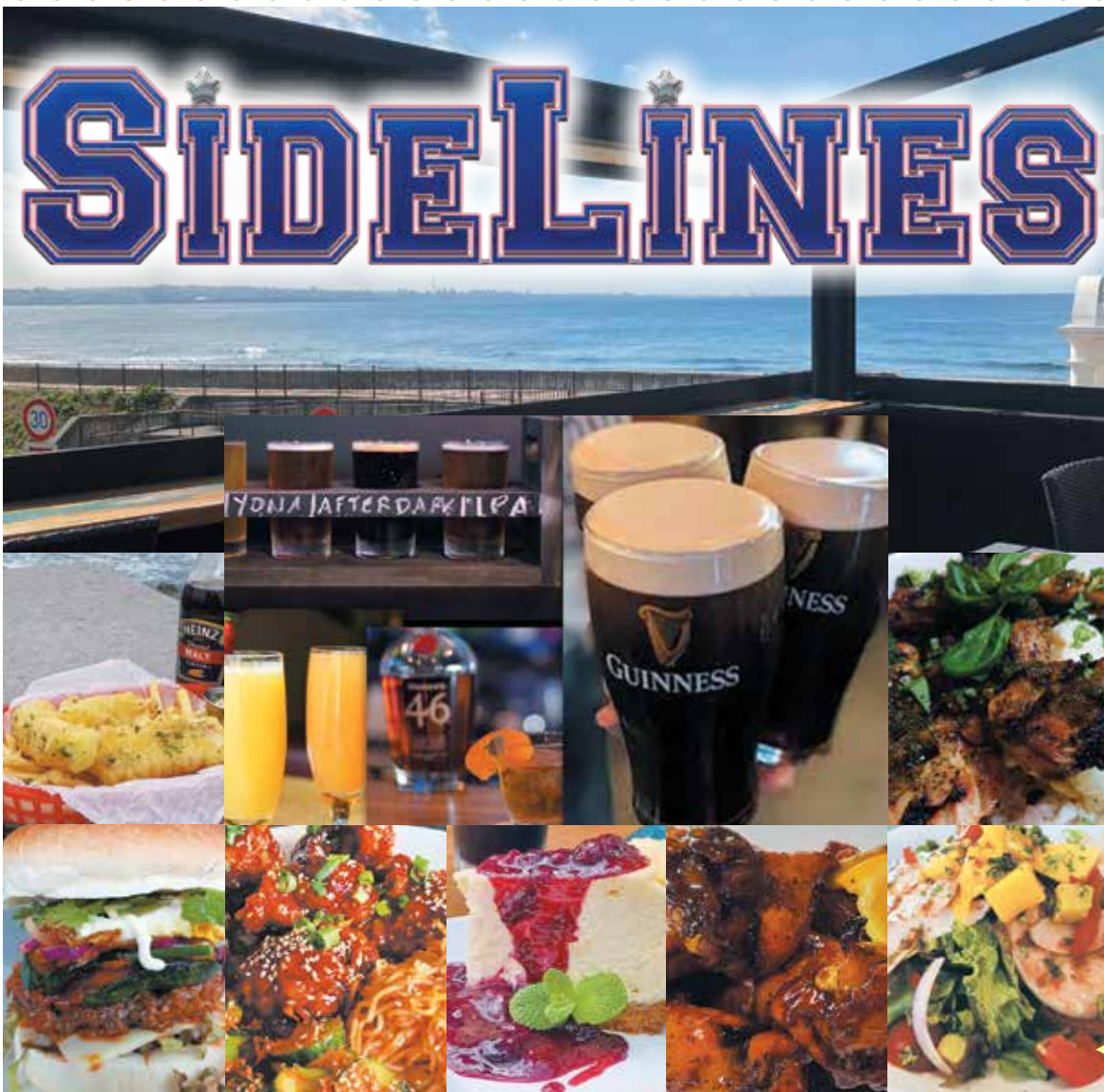
- 1** In frying pan, fry used tea leaves without oil on very low heat.
- 2** Add sesame seeds, bonito, and sardines to pan, and keep frying on low until the ingredients dry completely.
- 3** Add soy sauce and sake to the mix. Stir gently but quickly to blend ingredients well. Continue frying to evaporate the moisture.
- 4** Turn off heat and add salt.
- 5** Store in dry, cool place with sealed container and consume within a week.



Courtesy photo



A Taste of Okinawa



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Please make a reservation for your party.



Lunch

Hours: 11:00-



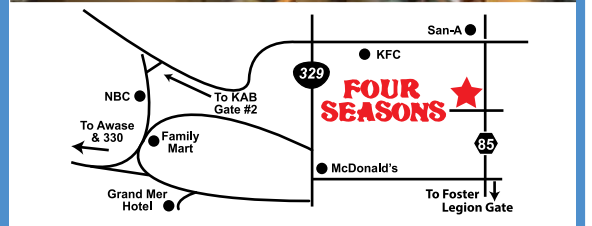
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Hours: 17:00-



Dinner Steak Set ¥2,090-

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