



STARS  AND  STRIPES<sup>®</sup>

# A Taste of Okinawa

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

**4-page pullout**

# My faves Japanese and Okinawan ice cream treats

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,  
STRIPES OKINAWA

**G**rowing up in Okinawa, ice cream bars and popsicles were my go-to sweets during hot summer days.

While a double scoop or a soft serve was a special treat, a cold sweet on a stick offered a regular comfort food I could easily turn to whenever I needed a quick and (cheap) sugar rush.

All I had to do was to make a quick run to the drug store just 100 feet away from my home with a 100-yen coin in hand. Another bonus was the possibility of winning another ice cream. Some popsicle brands stamp some sticks with the word “あたり” (bingo). If you’re lucky and your popsicle stick has the stamp, you win another popsicle.

It wasn’t only the icy treats’ sugar flavors that made me happy, but also the fun of knowing that I could win another. I was always anxious to get to the popsicle stick to see if it was a winner. (This “get one, win one” rule is still carried on by some brands today.)

More than four decades later, ice cream bars and popsicles continue to be very popular in Okinawa. At supermarket stores and convenience stores, I still see the same brands that I bought at that local drugstore. Of course, many new brands have also been introduced to offer more variety.

Listed below are some of the ice cream bars and popsicles that I like. Most of them have been around for a long time and might make Okinawans nostalgic.

Why not give them a try and satisfy your craving for cool sweets and test your luck?

## ■ 1. Homerun bar

According to Nihon Ice Cream Kyokai (Japan Ice Cream Association), this was the first ice cream bar to introduce the “あたり (bingo)” rule by mixing bars with printed words such as “grand slam,” “homerun” and “hit.”

Since its launch back in 1960, its popularity still holds today. This bar comes in different flavors like vanilla, chocolate, chocolate chip, strawberry, soda, and orange.

## ■ 2. GariGarikun

This is arguably the most famous popsicle brand in Japan now. The brand name means “Mr. GariGari” or “GariGari boy,” which reminds consumers of the crunching sound when they eat a popsicle. It is also the name of its mascot, a cartoon boy with a big whopping mouth.

According to GariGairkun Archive, this character is an elementary school kid from Fukaya City in Saitama prefecture. He can turn into “ShariShari kun,” which probably refers to melting ice.

Since it went on sale in 1980, this has been loved by many kids and adults alike. GariGarikun comes in various flavors, including “energy drink,” “cola,” “grapefruit,” “melon soda,” etc. But my favorite is the most basic blue ramune soda flavor.



1. HOMERUN BAR



2. GARIGARIKUN



3. BIG SUIKA BAR



4. YAMBARU KUINA



5. AMERICAN CRUNCH



6. WHITE



7. BLUE SEAL POLAR BEAR



8. SODA 7



9 ANPANMAN ICE BAR

## ■ 3. Big Suika Bar

“Suika” means watermelon in Japanese. As its name suggests, this popsicle looks exactly like a slice of the sweet summer melon. Its top portion is a red triangle, like real flesh, which includes watermelon juice, while the bottom portion is colored green, simulating the skin. To give complete the look, chocolate chips replicate the seeds.

Much like GariGarikun, this unique popsicle has its own mascot. “Suikabaman” is a hippopotamus superhero with a watermelon mask. “Kaba” means “hippopotamus.”

## ■ 4. Yambaru Kuina chocolate flavor

This is a local popsicle you can buy in Okinawa. If you’re expecting a popsicle in the shape of the indigenous bird, don’t be disappointed. Though it’s shaped like a regular popsicle, the simple flavor of Yambaru Kuina’s chocolate offering is nice. More importantly, some portion of the sale goes to the preservation of yambaru birds. Delicious ice cream and environmental preservation make this bar a win-win.

## ■ 5. American Crunch

American Crunch has been around Okinawan a long time. The treat features vanilla ice cream coated with crunch biscuits and chocolate. The crispy texture of the biscuits and smooth ice cream go well together. There is a version with chocolate ice cream inside as well. This ice cream keeps the winning “あたり” tradition alive, so make sure to check your popsicle stick after devouring.

## ■ 6. White

This was my favorite when I was a kid, and it still is. White’s sweet milky taste never failed to make me feel happy when I was in need of a pick-me-up. This is a textbook example of “shinpuru daga akinai,” or simple it may seem, it never gets outdated. Almost 40 years after I first tried this, I still keep coming back to this milky flavor.

## ■ 7. Blue Seal Polar Bear

Another all-time Okinawan favorite, this ice cream bar wrapped in silver paper is related to the childhood memory of many locals on the island. The ensemble of vanilla ice cream and cocoa cookies can be addictive. Beware when you try one.

## ■ 8. Soda 7

To me, this is the quintessential Okinawan popsicle. Much like White, this is a very simple and ordinary popsicle with a soda flavor. Priced at about 50 yen (approx. \$0.36 cents), Soda 7 saved me so many times when I had only 10-yen coins in my pocket.

## ■ 9 Anpanman Ice Bar

Anpanman is a popular Japanese cartoon superhero with a face made from red beans. So, you may be surprised to hear that the Anpanman Ice Bar is exclusive to Okinawa.

Since it went on sale in 1990, this milk-flavored popsicle with chocolate sauce hidden inside has been making many kids on the island smile just like the cartoon Anpanman did with his bread face.

# Wasabi Tofu Milk Gelato

## The treat gets green and spicy



STORY AND PHOTO BY RIEKO SUZUKI,  
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

**W**hen it comes to Japanese ice cream flavors, green tea reigns supreme. But why not try the sweet stuff with another wafu green ingredient? This sweet milk gelato with a refreshing wasabi aftertaste will make you fall in love with this “unusual” treat. Note that tube wasabi is all right — but freshly grated will lend itself to the best result.



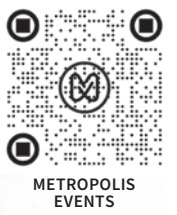
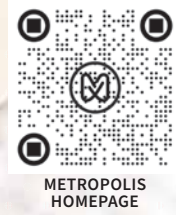
**Servings:** 6 scoops  
**Cooking time:** 2 hours total; cooking 20 minutes

### INGREDIENTS

- 150cc milk
- 80cc heavy cream
- 100g silken (kinu) tofu
- 60cc sweetened condensed milk
- 1 teaspoon wasabi

### DIRECTIONS

- 1** Whip heavy cream to form soft peaks.
- 2** Blend milk, silken tofu, sweetened condensed milk, and wasabi to smoothen purée.
- 3** Add half of the whipped heavy cream and mix well. After, add the rest of the cream and mix to smooth. Shift to the container and freeze for one hour.
- 4** Take ice cream container out of the freezer. Whip well to make it fluffy. Freeze again for another hour.
- 5** Repeat Step 4 a few times, until the ice cream freezes completely but remains fluffy.



# A Taste of Okinawa



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RESTAURANT INFO

# A Taste of Okinawa

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