



STARS  AND  STRIPES[®]

A Taste of Okinawa

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

8-page pullout

Wasabi

13 curious things you never knew about Japan's most famous condiment!

LIVE JAPAN

Love it or hate it, wasabi is one of the more well-known condiments served with Japanese cooking, most commonly served with sushi.

Mixed with soy sauce, or served directly on top of sushi, a little dash of wasabi gives a real spicy kick to raw fish but without leaving an aftertaste. According to historical records, Japanese people have been adding wasabi to a variety of dishes for over a thousand years, and today it can be found in most restaurants.

It might seem like a dull green condiment, but actually there are a lot of things that even Japanese people don't even know about wasabi!



1 Eating wasabi? You're likely eating the stem, not the root!

When you think of a wasabi plant, the image of a chunk of the dull green plant probably comes to mind. Contrary to what you might imagine, however, the part that's ultimately grated up into the spicy green mass that's eaten with sushi is the lower portion of the plant's stem, and not the root!

▶ Raw wasabi at the market. Note that the roots have not been removed from the stem, and the leaves are relatively intact.



2 Wasabi is actually something of a cabbage?

A lot of people tend to think that the wasabi plant is like a Japanese version of horseradish, but actually it is an herbaceous plant (Brassicaceae) which is related to cabbage, as well as mustard and radish. However, calling it Japanese cabbage doesn't have quite the same ring to it!



3 Using wasabi to prevent food poisoning

Japanese people didn't start using wasabi on their food to add a bit of spice to it; actually, they discovered that it had medicinal properties. Eating raw fish or poorly cooked meat could lead to food poisoning because of the bugs which were on the food. However, it was believed that adding wasabi to their food helped against illnesses. This was with good reason as it has been discovered that wasabi contains a chemical called allyl isothiocyanate, now used as an insecticide, and it also has anti-bacterial properties too.



4 It is pretty hard to grow wasabi

As wasabi is served so generously in Japan, you can easily imagine that Japan is covered in fields of wasabi plants alongside rice plants. However, the wasabi plant needs particular conditions to thrive. In the mountainous terrain of Japan, its natural habitat is in river valleys, protected from direct sunlight and with its roots reaching into running underground water. Also, it will only grow around 1300 - 2500 meters above sea level while it won't thrive if the air temperature is below 8°C or above 20°C. It isn't a plant you can just grow in your back garden, and you would have to be pretty determined to want to grow it commercially.



5 Real wasabi is expensive

Wasabi is challenging to grow, which means that actually, there isn't a lot of wasabi plants on the market for sale. Just like any product where there is a limited supply and high demand, real wasabi is pretty expensive to buy. On top of this, Japan has been very successful at exporting its cuisine abroad, so in recent years demand for wasabi plants has really ramped up. Outside of Japan, in 2014, a kilo could cost \$160, but year on year, the price has increased by up to 10% so that today some restaurants are willing to pay \$300 or more for stock. Even in the country, prices for fresh wasabi can be somewhat steep as well.



6 Wasabi is cheap in supermarkets though!

As wasabi is in limited supply and expensive, you are probably wondering why you can easily buy a tube of wasabi for a low price in supermarkets. However, alternative ingredients have been utilized to replicate the taste of wasabi, without using any actual wasabi. If you want to eat real wasabi you have to check out a specialty shop.



7 The wasabi imitation game

Unfortunately, imitation wasabi isn't limited to the supermarket. Although the number of Japanese restaurants around the world is increasing, and demand for authentic wasabi is also growing, it's said that only around 5-10% of restaurants outside of Japan actually serve wasabi made from the actual plant. Many restaurants create an imitation of wasabi with horseradish, mustard, flavoring, etc., along with powdered wasabi. On the one hand, it means it isn't likely the wasabi you are eating is real, while on the other if a restaurant says they use real wasabi, then you should really savor it!



8 Not just for sushi

Outside of Japan you will commonly see wasabi just with sushi and sashimi, but in Japan you can find it being used in a lot of other dishes. It is a versatile condiment which can be seen added to soba noodles, to dipping sauces served with yakiniku, wasabi rice bowls, unagi (eel) chazuke, and more. When in Japan be prepared for some wasabi surprises!

▶ Wasabi is also a popular condiment for beef and other meats in Japan.



9 True wasabi's flavor disappears quickly

If you are lucky enough to get your hands on a real wasabi plant and plan to make some real wasabi paste, then you had better be careful, once you have made it if you leave it uncovered then it would lose its flavor after about 15 minutes. As your wasabi plant is quite precious, and eating real wasabi paste is a treat, you should try only to grate what you need when you need it. This goes for eating at a restaurant serving real wasabi too. If it is real then you need to eat it within 15 minutes or so – don't let it go to waste!



10 Real wasabi lasts quite a long time

In contrast to the short life of grated wasabi, the actual wasabi stem can keep its flavor for months if properly stored. So, although you should only grate as much as you need when you need it, your wasabi stem, under proper conditions, can last for months and be enjoyed again and again.



11 The Food-Borne supremacy

Wasabi has a long history of being used to prevent food poisoning, and just like Jason Bourne, wasabi has been shown capable of wiping out many bad things. Its antibacterial properties have been shown to be highly effective against E. coli and other bacteria, which cause food poisoning. Regular consumption of wasabi is perfect for your body's defenses, and lately, a few pharmaceutical companies have even started using this ingredient in antibacterial creams.



12 The wasabi plant isn't just about the stem

Talking about real wasabi might leave you thinking that the only useful part of the plant is the stem, but if you have a plant, then you should use all of it, including the leaves. These can be eaten pickled (in a dish called "wasabi zuke") or cooked and added to any meal for a little kick, or they can be eaten raw. When you visit Japan, definitely give it a go!

▶ Pickled wasabi - wasabi zuke - is a traditional food in Shizuoka, made by chopping up and salting wasabi roots and stems before pickling the mix in sake lees and seasoning with salt and sugar.



13 Eat a wasabi plant for its nutrition!?

By itself, wasabi is a bit pricey, so it isn't convenient to be eating large amounts every day, but even a little bit will give your body some tremendous nutritional boosts. Besides its antibacterial properties and isothiocyanates, it also anti-inflammatory and antimicrobial properties. The leaves and stems have a lot of calcium and vitamin C too. Besides, in addition to being really good against food poisoning, it is also thought to be useful against allergies, inflammation, and cancer.



Courtesy photos



Wasabi Tofu Milk Gelato

The treat gets green and spicy

BY RIEKO SUZUKI,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

When 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.



Photo courtesy of Metropolis magazine

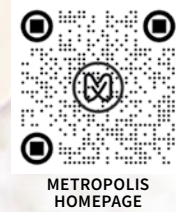
Servings: 6 scoops
Cooking time: 2 hours total; cooking 20 minutes

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



Dry it yourself

BY MONICA HAND,
METROPOLIS MAGAZINE

Eaves hung with heart-shaped persimmons is a classic fall scene in the Japanese countryside. Like maple leaves, the persimmon's bright orange is stark against the earthy tones of country houses surrounded by rice fields. As colorful fall leaves then give way to a muted winter, the persimmons too lose their color until finally they're ready to eat.



The end product of that month-long drying process is called hoshigaki, and it's regarded as a honeyed delicacy throughout Japan. The deep brown skin is grooved with soft wrinkles. Coated in the thin white powder of crystalized sugar, the skin has a chewy texture and strikingly sweet taste. Inside oozes a thick, golden pulp. Its rich sweetness yet subtle flavor make it a memorable treat. Here's how to make your own this year, with a few modern cheats along the way.



The drying tradition

Drying fruit in Japan has long been a way to preserve and elongate a harvest's yield. Hoshigaki in particular developed in the Heian period (794 CE to 1185 CE) as a way to not only prolong the persimmon's shelf life, but also to elevate the overall flavor and edibility of the more astringent strands. Hachiya, for example, is too bitter to be eaten raw until it is at a near mushlike stage of ripeness, making it difficult for growers to sell. But the drying process alters the flavor by making the bitter tannins insoluble, allowing for a pleasant sweetness that is much more marketable.

The traditional drying process, however, is long and meticulous. Typically starting in late October or November, it comes in two parts: first the preparation stage, and then the massaging.

The first stage is comparatively shorter than the latter, but involves a few more steps. To start, thoroughly wash and dry the persimmon before cutting away the leaves, leaving about an inch or more of the stem behind. From the stem, tie a string or chord with enough excess left over for hanging, about one to two feet. More than one persimmon can be tied to the same string so long as they do not touch. Then, briefly immerse the entire persimmon into a pot of boiling water to purify the exposed fruit. Finally, hang the creation from the eaves of a house or apartment so it can get lots of sunlight. Then leave the persimmons alone for six to seven days.

Once their skins begin to harden, it's time for the five-week-long massaging stage to start. Massaging is crucial for achieving the perfect texture and for assisting in the preservation and sugar crystallization processes. Depending on your personal schedule, you can massage persimmons every other day or every few days. During this period, it's essential to carefully wipe away any mold without disturbing the developing white sugar crystals. Considering all this, drying persimmon takes around six weeks.

Tastes, uses and benefits

Though often savored simply by itself or alongside a cup of green tea, there are also various traditional confectionery and New Year's dishes that exploit its natural sweetness. In the winter months, it's also common to see the dried fruit featured in seasonal salads, charcuterie selections, or marinades and sauces.

While younger generations tend to say hoshigaki is too sweet by itself, older folks often claim that natural sweetness provides a healthy form of energy. The fiber rich hoshigaki aids digestion, and is also nutrient-dense. Though the fruit loses most of its natural vitamin C during the drying process, it's still a good source of potassium and vitamin A.

Dry it yourself

Due to the laborious drying process, hoshigaki can be pricey if bought from a store or market. The hoshigaki is often a seasonal homemade gift given to friends and neighbors. These days, however, persimmons aren't strung up to dry outside in larger towns or metropolitan areas due to fear of contamination from air pollutants. Instead, the drying process is brought indoors, and the persimmons are hung in a dry place such as a window with direct sunlight.

Following the traditional process can be a relaxing fall hobby. Just like regular drying, astringent persimmons like hachiyas are preferable since they can't be easily enjoyed unless dried.

To get started, simply peel and slice the persimmon into flat, thin strips. Purify them in a pot of boiling water for a few seconds before placing in a single layer across a baking sheet, then transfer this to a dry area with direct sunlight. Since there is more surface area of the thin persimmon strips, the drying process is sped up to just about a week.

Enjoy the seasonal taste as is, or add it to a favorite recipe!



File photos

Maple and pecan dried persimmon balls

Transform your dried persimmons into a delightful autumn treat with these tasty maple and pecan dried persimmon balls. They're simple to make and last in the fridge for about one week. Substitute pecans for any nut of your choice and add optional extra nuts for a crunchy coating.

INGREDIENTS

- 8 dried persimmons
- 1 cup whole pecans (Or nuts of your choice. Use extra nuts for the coating if you like extra crunch)
- 3 tbsp fresh orange juice
- 2 tbsp maple syrup
- 1 tbsp unsalted butter
- 1/2 tsp cinnamon
- 1/4 tsp ginger powder
- 1 pinch of fine sea salt For Sugar Coating
- 2 tbsp maple sugar or light brown sugar
- pinch of fine sea salt

METHOD

- 1.** Place a small saucepan over medium heat and add the butter, pecans, and a pinch of salt. Stir regularly to ensure even toasting and prevent the nuts from burning on one side.
- 2.** Continue to roast the pecans for approximately 5 minutes, or until they are lightly toasted and fragrant. Remove the saucepan from the heat and allow the pecans to cool.
- 3.** While the pecans are cooling, juice one orange. Transfer the roasted pecans to a blender or food processor and finely blend. Chop the dried persimmons into smaller pieces and add the chopped persimmons and remaining ingredients to the blender, blend until the mixture forms a smooth and thick paste.
- 4.** To make the sugar coating, combine 2 tablespoons of maple sugar with a pinch of salt. Spread this mixture thinly onto a flat surface. Shape the persimmon and pecan batter into approximately 1.5-inch diameter balls, then roll each ball in the maple sugar coating until evenly coated. Transfer each coated ball to a cooling or serving plate. Optional - roll the maple sugar-coated balls in another batch of blended nuts for a crunchy coating.
- 5.** Place the persimmon balls in the refrigerator and allow them to cool for about 1 hour before serving. This will allow the flavors to meld together, and the balls will firm up to the perfect consistency. Enjoy!



METROPOLIS
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METROPOLIS
EVENTS



Paella

Paella day

STORY AND PHOTOS BY SHOJI KUDAKA,
STRIPES OKINAWA

On a day in mid-October, I tried cooking paella, a Spanish dish for the first time. Several months back, I had tried ajillo and it went pretty well. So, I decided to give Spanish cuisine another go, hoping for a short gastronomical getaway from the ordinary.

I was aware of paella’s popularity in the world, but was definitely surprised just how many recipes were available online. Many of the recipe photos featured colorful ingredients and fresh clams, shrimp and other delicious seafood, but I didn’t want to spend a lot of time prepping for my meal. Fortunately, I found this recipe using frozen mixed seafood— perfect for a lazy chef like me!

I easily found every ingredient I needed down to the saffron at my local grocery store. The cooking itself took about an hour without any problems. The recipe required a pan with a lid, but since I didn’t have a lid, I made one out of aluminum foil.

As soon as the ingredients started to hit the pan, the aroma had me looking forward to a great meal. Once the time is up, I was ready to take the lid off and dig in straight out of the pan.

I had seen paella served up in a huge pan and people share the food. This style probably serves to make the dish sociable. But in my case, I just couldn’t wait to try the food.

The taste easily exceeded my expectation. The cooked rice did a great job of absorbing the seafood’s savor. And it is well balanced with the taste of lemon and parsley. Slices of bell peppers added a nice accent of textures.

In fact, it turned out to be one of the best dishes that I cooked on my own and it took me less than 10 minutes to finish the panful of food!

Later, I learned that I’d just missed World Paella Day on Sept. 20. This day, according to the World Paella Day Cup organization, is dedicated to “the most universal plate of Spanish gastronomy.” The organization hosts cooking competition events in search of the best paella chef in the world.

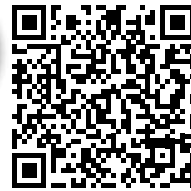
Though the recipe I tried was simpler in comparison to what the Paella Cup contestants bring to the table, my paella day was just as special.

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Ingredients

- Uncooked rice (180 cc) ■ Onion (1/2 piece) ■ Lemon slices
- Frozen mixed seafood (150 g) ■ Garlic (2 pieces)
- Bell peppers (sliced, as much as you please)
- Parsley or Italian parsley (as much as you please)
- Olive oil (30 ml) ■ White wine of sake (30 ml)
- Salt and pepper (as much as you please) ■ Water (300 cc)
- Tomato sauce (50 cc) ■ Saffron (as much as you please)

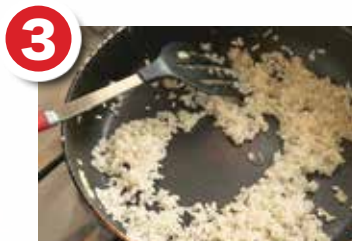
How to make!



1 Pour olive oil into a pan and fry chopped garlic first, to be followed by chopped onion, and frozen mixed seafood.



2 Once the seafood is cooked, take it out and put it on a separate plate. The juice extracted from the seafood will be used in the next step.



3 Fry uncooked rice in the frying pan. Once the rice becomes transparent, put in white wine (or sake), salt, pepper, water, and tomato sauce. Mix them gently.



4 Cover the frying pan with aluminum foil and cook it over medium heat. Once vapor comes out, change it to low heat and cook for 10 minutes.



5 Take the cover off and put the seafood and sliced bell peppers on top of the rice. Cover the frying pan with the aluminum foil again and cook it over low heat for another 10 minutes.



6 Once the rice is cooked, turn heat off and leave the cooked rice covered for a few minutes.

7 Top with sliced lemon and parsley. Buen provecho or いただきます (Bon appetite)!

Based on recipe from Cookpad.



Introducing oden

Japan's scrumptious winter soul food



LIVE JAPAN

Oden is something you want to eat during the cold winter. You can readily eat oden at a Japanese restaurant or a pub.

It is a meal of boiling things like chopped radish and eggs, or tasty chikuwa fish cakes in a soy sauce or kombu soup stock for a long time to gain flavor. The ingredients inside oden are called "odentane."

History

Oden originated back to dengaku, that is the meal of cutting tofu into rectangles and eating with miso on top. The popular way of putting "o" at the beginning of every word the court

Photos courtesy of Live Japan

ladies used inside the Imperial Court in the Heian period and dengaku were mixed together and it became the name "oden."

Differences in areas

Mainly in eastern Japan people use the concentrated taste of soy sauce to cook oden so the color of the soup looks darker and in western Japan, people use the light taste of soy sauce

to cook oden so the color of the soup looks paler. In Kyushu or Okinawa, a richer taste is popular and the soup has the flavor of chicken or flying fish. In Kyoto, a delicate taste is popular and the soup has the flavor of shaved dried mackerel and kelp.

Convenience store oden

Convenience stores sell oden from autumn until spring. Lawson, one of the biggest convenience stores, uses a base soup of katsuobushi (dried bonito flakes) from Yaizu and kelp from Hokkaido. For the Chubu region they add a flavor of muroaji-bushi (horse mackerel flakes). And for the Kyushu region, they add a flavor of beef, chicken and flying fish. There are different kinds of flavors depending on the area.

A unique canned oden

You can even buy oden from some vending machines. The ingredients inside are almost the same as regular oden, but the odentane are not anything fragile like tofu. It can be preserved for a long time and can be used as emergency food in case of a disaster.

Cooking oden Isekai Izakaya Nobu-style

LIVE JAPAN

Welcome to the first of a series of articles spotlighting select Japanese recipes from the new anime series, Isekai Izakaya Nobu! Whether you're a fan already or have just stumbled upon the show, one thing is for sure: the dishes of gourmet anime Isekai Izakaya ~Koto Aitheria no Izakaya Nobu~ look absolutely amazing! Japanese star chef Ryuta Kijima created simple recipes based on the food served at Izakaya Nobu itself, for you to cook in your own kitchen at home. (Even if you're not a giant anime fan, you're still bound to enjoy these authentic Japanese foods!)

Today, we're savoring the main dish of the first episode "Potatoes in Oden." As the name suggests, oden is the star of Nobu's menu this time! It's a one-pot dish that is an iconic Japanese winter food recipe and features plenty of ingredients: eggs, daikon, potatoes, and more delights!

During the cold months, Japanese convenience stores sell oden as bowls of different sizes or as individual ingredients, making it a much-beloved snack or meal all throughout Japan. Now, let's start cooking!



Isekai Izakaya Nobu - Behind the scenes of studio sunrise and discovering how anime comes to life



Photo courtesy of Live Japan

Side: Japanese oden-style potato salad

At Isekai Izakaya Nobu, potatoes are a rather big topic in the first episode. That's why Chef Kijima has come up with a special oden-style potato salad! Quickly made, this yummy side dish adds a fun, Japanese kick to your meal!

Yield

Makes 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 Oden potatoes (*2)
- 1/4 Onion
- Fukujinzuke (as much as you like) (*3)
- 1 tablespoon French dressing
- 2 tablespoons Mayonnaise
- Coarsely-ground black pepper (a pinch)

Preparation

- 1) Thinly slice the onion vertically, wash with water, dry, and add French dressing. Let it marinate for 5 minutes.
- 2) Add hot potatoes to the onion and crush them with a fork. Let it cool for a bit.
- 3) Add mayonnaise and fukujinzuke. Mix well.
- 4) Itadakimasu!

*2 Chef Kijima uses oden-boiled potatoes. Buy or make them the same way as the daikon described above.

*3 Fukujinzuke are pickled vegetables, a popular Japanese condiment. If you cannot find them in the Asian supermarket of your choice, you can make them yourself. Cut vegetables of your choice (commonly used: daikon, cucumber, eggplant, Lotus root, and so on. Feel free to add "less exotic" veggies such as carrots, white turnip, and ginger.) Boil them in a sauce made of sugar, soy sauce, mirin, sake, and rice vinegar and then cool in the refrigerator.

With these quick and easy recipes, you can bring both the taste and atmosphere of Izakaya Nobu to your own kitchen. And don't hesitate to enjoy Chef Kijima's creative creations with a frosty beer!

Japanese oden daikon steak

Often seen in many food anime, daikon radish has recently found its way into Western supermarkets - but how to cook with daikon remains somewhat elusive! We think you'll agree that when soaked in a hearty oden broth and then fried or grilled, this curious veggie turns into a delectable dish!

Yield

Makes 2 servings

Ingredients

- 2 Oden daikon pieces (*1)
- 2 Green onions
- 1 tablespoon Salad oil
- 10g Butter
- Sauce: 2 teaspoons soy sauce, 2 teaspoons cooking sake, 1 teaspoon mirin

Preparation

- 1) Chop the green onion finely.
- 2) Use a paper towel to soak up extra soup from your daikon pieces. Put them in an oiled, cold frying pan before turning up the heat.
- 3) Flip the daikon once they're golden brown, put a lid on the pan and fry for another 5 minutes on low heat. Then arrange them on a plate.
- 4) Making the sauce: mix all ingredients for the sauce in the hot pan. Once little bubbles form, add the butter and mix well.
- 5) Pour the sauce over your daikon steak with a spoon. Top with green onions.
- 6) Itadakimasu!

*1 Chef Kijima uses daikon that has already been boiled in an oden soup. If you're in Japan, you can easily buy the daikon readily made at a convenience store or buy oden soup and make it yourself. If you're not in Japan, simply make oden soup yourself by using dashi soup stock and seasoning it with soy sauce, sake, and sugar. Bring it to a boil, then put the daikon in and let it simmer for about 15 minutes. Important: the longer the daikon sits in the soup, the better it tastes! If you have time, turn off the heat and let the daikon swim in the soup for an hour or more.



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- Photo and recipe by © 蝉川夏哉・宝島社/古都アイテールア市参事会

- Recipe by © 蝉川夏哉・宝島社/古都アイテールア市参事会



Gen a real gem on Okinawa

Offering authentic Japanese and Okinawan cuisine at a reasonable price, Gen was recognized in Stripes' Best of the Pacific 2013 as the best restaurant to experience the local culture on Okinawa. Owner and Head Chef Naoki Tsukayama highly recommends the "Fish Garlic Butter Combo," a popular dish among American customers. Tsukayama and his staff make you feel at home, so stop by and enjoy a delicious meal. Gen is located across from Camp Foster's fire station. Just look for shi-shi dogs on a traditional Okinawan tile roof outside Foster's Fire Station Gate.

RESTAURANT INFO



RESTAURANT & SUSHI BAR GEN



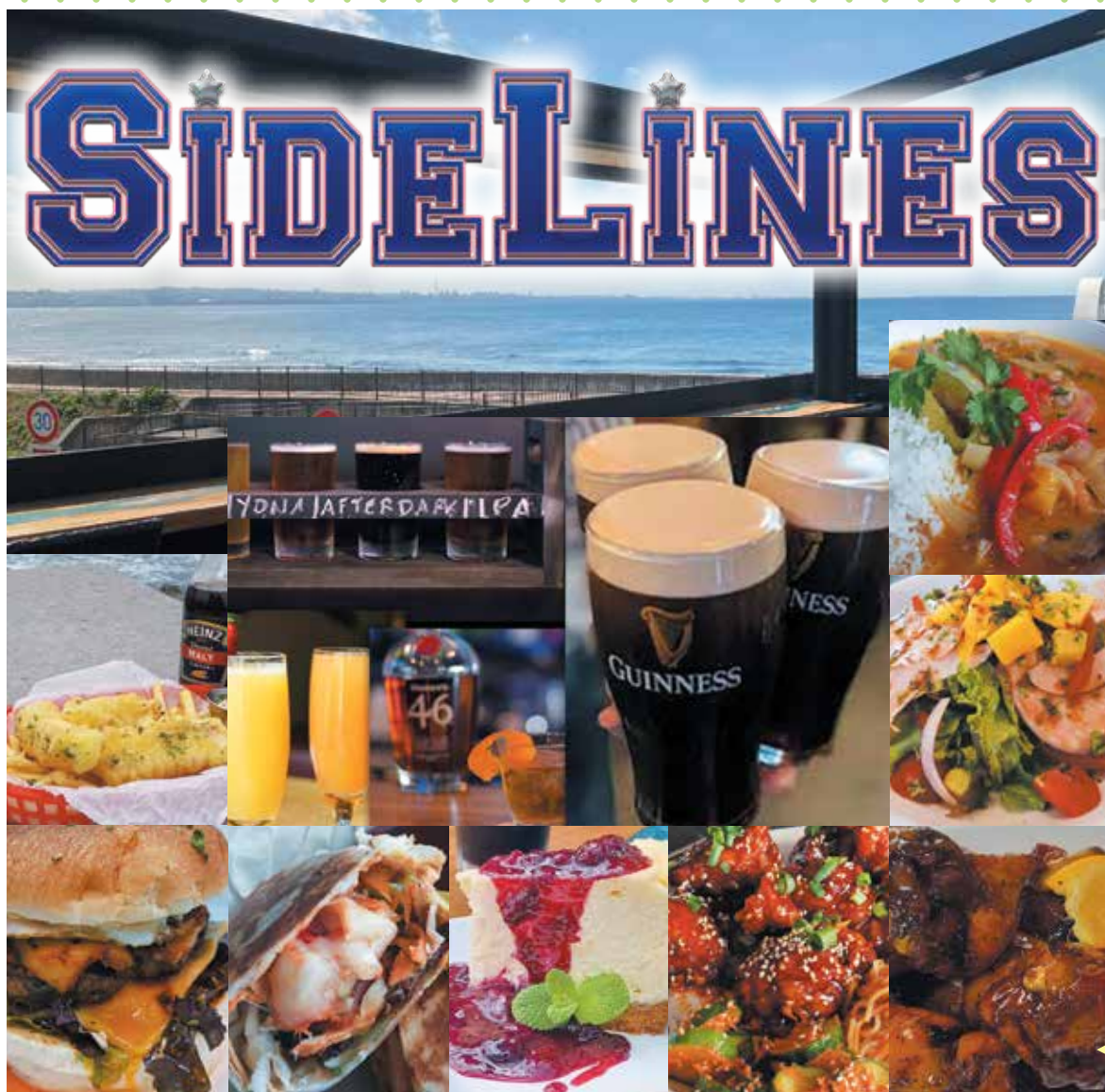
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A Taste of Okinawa



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RESTAURANT INFO

Four Seasons Urasoe
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Please make a reservation for your party.

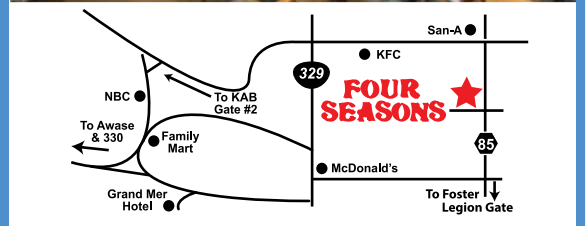


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A Taste of Okinawa



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!

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