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hyogo times

.....*Inside*.....

**In honour of the Year of the Snake
A New Year's ResoLawson
Away from the hustle and bustle**



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All JETs in Hyogo are encouraged to send in articles, musings, poetry, prose and any ideas to improve the Hyogo Times for the betterment of the Hyogo JET community.

Submit by the 15th of each month to:
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Message from the Editor

Happy New Year, 明けましておめでとうございます and so on and so forth.

Welcome to the first **Hyogo Times** of 2013. First up, I guess we all have to accept that the Mayans messed up somewhere in their calculations. Clearly there can be no other explanation for the fact that the world is still turning and humanity has not turned into a tiny blip in history just yet. I'm quite glad that I decided not to spend all my savings and go out with a bang. Was I nervous around the 21st of December? Well, yes, but not about having lost my last chance to buy (and drink) a ¥100,000 bottle of champagne. Nerves abounded because I was flying to the States to meet the boyfriend's family en masse. I seem to be surviving so far...

So it's the New Year and that means New Year's Resolutions of course! I managed to not break my resolution last year and would quite like to do the same this time around. That means choosing resolutions very carefully. Anything too big, or too scary or too ambitious does not a good resolution make in my book. I was quite pleased with the one I had for 2012 – run at least 520km during the year. That's an average of 10km a week which isn't a huge amount given that I was due to be training for a half marathon. But what it did allow for was missing a few weeks because I was away on holiday, or ill, or it was really, REALLY cold. It was a realistic goal, with the 'at least' thrown in so I wouldn't just stop after the magic mile (okay kilometer) stone was reached. I'm pretty certain that I also managed the 'make a bento for work at least twice a week' thing, though that was less diligently observed in terms of noting things down (and the bento was occasionally more of a hurriedly thrown together tupperware of last night's curry).

All in all, it's made me a bit paranoid about resolutions for this year. I've gone with being meat-free at least 2 days a week, averaged over the year. Not terribly exciting I know, but hopefully building on the good year I had in 2012 on the 'being healthy because I'm getting all old' front. I'm also going to see how I manage on Ulu's 'No-combini for a week' challenge and maybe see about limiting overall spending at these wonders of Japanese 生活. I was going to do a saving ¥X per month thing too, but since I don't know if I'll be paid in yen come August/paid at all, I decided to scrap it.

I will, of course, continue to diligently gather together/poke and cajole people into submitting things to the **Hyogo Times** for the delight of our good readers. This month, we have the previously mentioned combini-challenge in **Miso Green** and a restaurant review that is already making me question the no-meat thing. Tips for surviving a Japanese homestay will hopefully prove useful to many and/or re-awaken memories of past experiences. The year of the snake had me pondering, and therefore writing down anecdotes about snakes for your enjoyment (?) and the next destination on the Kannon pilgrimage takes us to Banshu Kiyomizudera (NOT the one in Kyoto!). We have a New Year's message from Block 6 representative Peter Hein-Hartmann and New Year soup from the Kicchiri Kitchen, along with reviews of the movie and restaurant nature to round out the issue. Enjoy!

Imi

Hello x 2!

Message from the PR

As a great hobbit once said

"It's a dangerous business, going out your front door... you step onto the road, and if you don't keep your feet, there's no knowing where you might be swept off to." And as we come into the new year, let the sweeping continue.

I find that I am the type of person who is all too happy to be swept off somewhere. Chance meetings and random invitations can lead you to places you would have never expected or dreamed of. It has been my attitude since being in Japan (and maybe it should have been before that great change in my life) to just say yes. In a world of even more unknown things than usual, you are the author of your own limitations.

As foreigners in Japan, we have overcome one of those great, and for some people totally crippling, jumps into the unknown. Some of us will have walked determinedly, run and possibly tripped and fallen, but we all made it. Now it is up to us to embrace the rest of the journey. That is, the fun part.

At this time of the year it can be pretty easy to let life away from home get you down. A few months ago I suffered from the worst bout of home sickness I had had since arriving in Japan the year previously. I guess the main thing that caused it was many of the other JETs I had come to know, and become good friends with, had returned home and was feeling a little alone. Change?! Ah! But then

I made new friends, met new people, did new activities (Shikoku Rafting I love you).

If we do not stretch ourselves and embrace challenges, then our lives can become stagnant and boring with the monotony of daily life. Good luck to everyone in the New Year, and don't worry too much if you "don't keep your feet"!

Peter Hein Hartmann

Hang Loose

You probably recognize the face of Dante Basco from his role as *Rufio* in the 1991 Spielberg movie, *Hook*, and those who love *Avatar: The Last Airbender* will recognize his voice as that of *Prince Zuko*. But while Dante's had a successful career in Hollywood spanning several decades, his story is more the exception than the rule when it comes to Asian-Americans.

Hollywood is a movie engine to more of an audience than I realized growing up. It wasn't until I lived in Japan that I realized just how broad the reach of, and demand for, Hollywood movies really can be. In an industry like that, there's a lot of hot competition amongst actors and would-be actors; always more people that want to act than there are roles to fill.

And while that's true for everyone in town, it's especially true for actors of ethnic backgrounds other than white. This isn't really some racist conspiracy engineered by greedy white guys in an effort to only support other white guys – it's just that *that's* the movies that are written, the roles that are created. It's just business as it's done.

But that paucity of roles available for Asian-American actors does make it really hard to book jobs, and having no jobs under your belt doesn't exactly endear you to the next gig you're applying for.

This is just the classic problem for anyone trying to get a foot in the door – you can't get work without experience, but you can't get experience without working.

So what to do? If you want to be in the movie business, you gotta make movies. So Dante Basco, James Sereno, and Samira Amiransari have started a film company called *Kinetic Films* to do that very thing. Kinetic Films is an experimental company with a twofold mission. Firstly, they hope to create a self-sustainable company that can consistently put out Asian-American films, both to broaden the genre, and to show that there is a market for these things. The second is to develop the talents of the next generation of actors by giving them opportunities to develop their movie-making craft.

The first movie to come out of Kinetic Films debuts December 14th (15th in Japan), and is a comedy called *Hang Loose*, starring Kevin Wu (internet sensation of *kevjumba.com*) and Dante Basco. These are "micro-budget" films that in return don't need to earn back big bucks at the box office, so their asking price (US\$3~5) is extremely reasonable, and better still, when you buy the movie, you stream it online (which, be honest, is totally how JETs end up getting most of their movies anyway).



The company is self-sustainable when the movies make enough money to make more movies.

I just watched the extended (30 minute) preview of *Hang Loose*, and I gotta say, I'm really looking forward to watching the whole movie once it's available. I want to point out that low-budget in no way means low-quality. You may not be Asian, or American, or Asian-American, but if you're like me and you appreciate the initiative and are willing to support an idea like this, and if you keep saying you *would* pay for the movies, only they're just not, you know, available because you're "out of region," well, check it out.

Emily Lemmon

Links

Check out the podcast that I did with *Impetuous Windmills* interviewing Dante!

Get the movie *Hang Loose* here for \$3 (preorder) or \$5 (after release).

Watch the trailer [here](#).

More about *Hang Loose* and Kinetic Films.

Hints for Home-stay harmony

Three months into my

Japanese sojourn, a family connection led to my boarding a bus to Sakaide in Shikoku to stay with a Japanese family I had met just once before. I've hosted and been hosted a fair bit, but as with everything, Japan's a little different. Right from my arrival when we went straight for an 11am *udon* lunch, where an Oba-chan proceeded to video me slurping noodles, to the 89 photos uploaded on Facebook within ten minutes of my boarding the bus home, I knew this was no ordinary home-stay. Read on for five hard-learned hints to negotiate the niceties of your own home-stays.

1. Take good shoes.

You will walk, and you will walk a lot. [Perhaps not the 1368 step hike we did to a local shrine, but close enough.]

Hosts want to show off their area and local pride is infectious; by

the end of a two-day whistle stop tour you will find yourself enthusing about the place as if you have always lived there. Prepare for an intensive crash course in local history and agriculture – I recommend a quick Wikipedia on the way there so you can make suitably flattering and well informed comments. Finally, if you were told anything about the area on previous meetings, **remember it:** you will be tested. [I now know the four prefectures of Shikoku and their ancient names back to front after constant drilling – excellent pub quiz knowledge.]

2. Offer once...

...[or maybe twice] to pay.

It's just like the dance at the end of an awkward date: they take out their wallet, you follow suit, they wave you away, you insist, they insist harder and graciously you accept. **Put any independent/generous thoughts**

out of your mind now. You are the guest. [But be prepared to return the favour when they send a long lost relative to visit you in 10 years – this happened to us and she stayed 6 months!]

3. Go for it!

Whatever the suggestion, say yes. These are your guides, they know best. Try that unidentifiable fried food, learn to pray Shinto-style, climb all those steps, and yes, if they suggest you get naked together: do it! A traditional Japanese home is pretty cosy, with lots of people sharing a small bathroom – fine for day to day use, but all good hosts want to show their guests a good time... The seemingly innocent question, "Charlotte, have you been to an onsen yet?" quickly led to the suggestion that after our seven-course supper we should go to the local onsen *en famille* for a truly local experience; cue prudish British panic. Nudity doesn't

bother me, in fact I'm pretty blasé about it, and have happily been to public *hamam* baths in Morocco; but washing with people I have only just met and will have to sit opposite at breakfast is slightly different. Nevertheless, I gulped before nodding enthusiastically. And? Well, it was okay. I did come out looking like I'd had an allergic reaction (the curse of pale skin here is another story) but I could look my fellow bathers in the eye the next day and not even recall what they looked like starkers [possibly because there was just so much naked flesh it all rather blurred into one].

4. Can you drink?

A question asked rather a lot of foreigners in Japan. The awe inspired by a simple "yes" and demonstration of said 'talent' is enough to make any of our heads inflate just a little [Yes I can drink a pint and remain lucid: I am the man.]

However this curious question takes on a new purpose in the home-stay environment. Here, "can you drink?" actually means "drink now!" Learn from my mistake, and when asked "Can you drink sake/beer/wine/spirits?" Answer with care. The simple truth will result in a tray filled with each type of potent fluid for your delectation, whether you wanted it at midday or not.

5. Omiyage, omiyage, omiyage

The bane of many an ALT's pre-JET packing is now wonderfully easy: every area has its own omiyage, and they are prettily wrapped for you. Take your local delicacy with you, and take extras just in case you are taken for tea at Grandma's (excessive if she lives in the same building) or the family surprises you with a visit from that distant connection you share. After 10 years of no contact from

my own six-month Japanese guest, she suddenly came back into my life bearing many gifts – the emergency omiyage saved the day.

Following these five short suggestions will guarantee you a second invite (or a drink from me if not). However if you do forget your walking boots or omiyage don't panic, the Japanese are so incredibly hospitable that you will undoubtedly be presented with an array of slightly-too-small shoes. Please take up any invitations to visit long lost relatives or distant family connections; it is absolutely the best way to see Japan from a truly local perspective.

And if ever in doubt: smile and bow, but do not, under any circumstances, expect a restful weekend.

Charlotte Griffiths

In honour of the Year of the Snake.....

Anyone else want to share snake anecdotes as the year goes on? We could have a **snake corner**! They don't need to be quite as long and rambling as this, but would be good to have your stories. Submissions by the 15th!

I was going to write a nice entry about the snakes found in and around Japan given we've just entered 巳年(みどし; *midoshi*), okay, not if you're on the Chinese calendar proper, but we're not in China, so meh. Then I remembered that snakes freak me out a bit. I started looking at pictures and information, then decided to stop because I don't want scary dreams. I thought that I'd got a lot better recently, but I think all the adorable snake presents and 年賀状 (ねんがじょう; *nengajou*) have merely served to distract me. The real snakes are all cold and probably curled up in their little nests waiting for the winter to pass. Then they'll sniff the air in a few more months' time, realize it's THEIR year and come out to play again.

I'm looking forward to it. I really am. Can't you tell how excited I am about it all? Sigh.

I know exactly when my snake issues started. I was watching some kind of nature program on the BBC (god love you David Attenborough) and they were examining a dead snake. They had to kill it because there was

a human sized lump residing in its belly and they needed to check if it was indeed a person, or another unfortunate animal. It turned out to be a boar, but that didn't change the fact that *it could have been a person*. Swallowed whole. It's the mouth thing – all that stretching, that started me not liking them. The not liking them being poisonous came later, but I'm fairly certain the root cause of snake dislike is the elastic mouth factor. I don't have an issue with spiders in the slightest after all; the other 'occasionally going to kill you with a bite having hidden in your house' animal that people tend not to be fans of.

Also freaks me out how fast they can move despite the lack of feet.

And that they can swim – we come to 'Imogen snake freak out part 1'. I was 11, in a kayak on a very small pond (the Bomb Hole at Gilwell Park if anyone knows it – I know it's pretty unlikely ><) and an adder decided it wanted to go for a swim; right next to my boat. I don't care if it couldn't have got into the boat, I wasn't a very stable kayaker and I didn't want to get in the water

with it. It was very close to me, and that was most definitely where I didn't want it to be. I think that was the first time I ever had a panic attack (and I've had maybe 3 in my life – one of which was caused by claustrophobia in a clouding-up paintball mask, but there you go. Point being, I don't tend to get panicky about things that often). I paddled hell for leather away from the snake and got out of the kayak as soon as I could. The instructor was very bemused as no-one else had seen the little shit that was causing me such stress. Then I pointed him out as he made his way up the bank of the little island in the centre of the little pond. I wasn't crazy and just seeing things at least...

Subsequent snake instances have generally been related to them popping up when I don't expect it. Happily hiking along a road with my brother in Taiwan and BAM; snake next to my foot. Jumped a mile, actually squealed, and then realized that it was dead. It had been squished in the middle by a bike/car/very heavy person's foot so it hadn't looked dead when I'd glanced down and seen it mere centimeters away

continued...

from my appendage. I therefore feel justified in my reaction *shifty eyes*. I've had a fair few similar experiences out running in Japan too. There was one instance of live snake, but I spotted it in advance and gave it a very wide birth. I have jumped out of my skin at dead ones too, of course, and always pay a lot more attention to where I'm going just after an 'incident' in case the next one *isn't* dead.

Biking has not been immune to snakes either. The worst was nearly running over one, only to spot its two friends hovering nearby (okay, not hovering, that would be a whole new level of hell). I think I spent a good 2 minutes cycling along hyperventilating and swearing under my breath. Hiking with friends I was very, very glad that I wasn't in the lead and one of my companions was therefore the one who frightened away the mamushi that'd been laying across the path. Going up to school wasn't a fun one (another 'look down and lo, there's a snake!' moment) but luckily it was lunchtime rather than the morning, and students were all up in the main school. Ever since I've walked

closer to the centre of the school driveway.

To be fair on myself, and the snakes, I still think they're pretty cool, it's really only when I don't spot them in advance that I have issues. If I know there's one around I will even approach it, have a good look, and take a few pictures as lots other people would. This is all probably quite blasé for some, a normal human reaction being described, I would imagine. Slightly odder, perhaps, was my reaction to eating cobra curry then. I was genuinely hesitant to tuck in, and I think it was because I thought curried snake's friend was going to pop out and attack me in a rage. Or that the curried snake was somehow going to reform in my stomach and get me from the inside. It's strange how brains work sometimes. Safe to say, neither happened and the curry was pretty tasty (though the cobra on the chewy side).

I know there are lots of people who like snakes too. One of my students is quite a fan of our reptile friends and was telling me about one of the snakes you can find in Hyogo that



has two types of poison – one of its own and one it steals. Now it might not be news to some people, and it might be a common trait in other snakes too, but I thought it was pretty cool. It eats poisonous toads and siphons off the poison for later use. How clever is that? However much I dislike them for destorying my usually calm and collected persona, they can be pretty amazing animals. Did anyone else see the news about black mamba poison possibly making a better painkiller than morphine without the side effects? Snakes are great. They just need to be more diligent about announcing their presence politely, rather than springing it on you like the occassional,

'oh, you didn't know the lesson schedule had changed' that we all know and love.

I'm going to try and use this year as a good excuse to stop being silly about snakes. Who knows, I might even be able to stop thinking

I can only go hiking if wearing jeans (despite the fact its August and over 30 degrees) and boots. Here's to hoping, and good years all round, snake-filled or otherwise.

Imi

Paul Schuble's
I-word play

上がったたり下がったたりする野菜って何でしょう？

(あがったたりさがったたりするやさいってなんでしょう？)

Answer: See page 15



Two Door Cinema Club @Namba Hatch, Osaka

Two Door Cinema Club

are a three piece indie band that flew all the way from Northern Ireland to perform at Osaka's very own Namba Hatch. They consist of 2 parts grammar school nerd to 1 part cool kid; Alex Trimble (vocals, rhythm guitar, beats, synths and more) Sam Halliday (lead guitar and backing vocals), and Kevin Baird (bass and backing vocals). Listing Alex's qualifications alone allows us to imagine the full scope of their melodic genre.

If the Two Door sound waves have yet to reach you, think: catchy beats, elongated vowel sounds, jittering limbs, the urge to dance using a shoulder/head nod combination

and of course there are those mellower tunes that balance out any indie record. All in all they're an inoffensive, easy-going, honest band that can be enjoyed on any public transport, night out or a quiet night under the kotatsu.

With two albums under their young belts, the twenty-somethings ventured to Japan to showcase their proud new album *Beacon* (and to remind everyone of the joys of their debut, *Tourist History*).

The nerd:cool kid ratio of the band reflected on their audience; Japanese geek-chic hipsters sporting over-sized thick-framed glasses and cat-eared winter hats, plus those eager fans fashioning their newly bought band T-shirts. The rowdy nature expected of these indie scenesters was nowhere to be seen; instead a polite, patient crowd was stood before the stage.

As three silhouettes emerged, the near-silent audience soon vanished, taken over by an army of synchronized clapping, whooping and fist-pumping fans. A well placed crescendo of appreciation welcomed the stars of the show. The pyrotechnics kicked in,

vibrantly supporting the sound of the fairytale-like intro of the newly released *Sleep Alone*.

The boys were allowing their Northern Irish charm to lead the show, adding periodic hair-flicking and just the one, shy, "Arigotou". You can just imagine what the girls were like. Alex exuded a playful arrogance with questionable hand movements the audience were just eating up – oishii desu ne!

The sensibly rocked-out performance was fired up by the release of a dozen large, white balloons, volleyed by the crowd and band alike. This is Two Door Cinema Club summed up in one action; light-hearted, innocently young and prioritising the happiness of their audience.

Cue *What You Know* for a winning encore and we're outta here, balloon in hand.

Cherie Pham

cheriepham@hotmail.com

Ikkaku

After four months of gorging myself on sushi, devouring *ekonomiyaki*, and practically inhaling *takoyaki*, I found that I had slightly overindulged myself in my favourite Japanese dishes, both old and new. It was high time for a good meaty meal. Recommendations took me to the Brazilian place in Harbourland which quelled my appetite for a while, but excessive salting and the waiter who impersonated Donald Duck every time he carved a slice meant I wasn't desperate to go back. No, I wanted something simple and comforting, and not deep fried.

A few weeks later I was introduced to *Ikkaku* in Marugame, Shikoku; *That's too far for dinner!* I hear you cry. Well, yes it is. Luckily for me and any other poultry lovers out there, we have two branches of the small chain handily located in Osaka, one each in Umeda and Shinsaibashi.

In the Umeda branch you can rub shoulders with salary men gnawing on bones after a long day at work; it's a relaxed joint and completely unpretentious in both atmosphere and cuisine. The menu is almost minimalist in its simplicity, although the signature chicken dish has

its own separate "How to enjoy" instruction card, laminated for protection from chicken juices.

I must admit that I haven't explored the menu further than what was recommended to me upon my first visit (locals know best right?), but if a good hunk of succulent chicken is what you're looking for, this is the place. For less than ¥2,000 you can enjoy a beer, a chicken rice dish and a portion of chicken. The chicken is the main event with a simple choice between *oyadori* (adult chicken: tough meat) and *hinadori* (young chicken: soft meat). My guides explained that *oyadori* is an acquired taste, and you really don't want to miss out on crispy skin and the chicken juices dribbling down your chin so go for *oyadori* (at least on your first visit). Thus far I haven't been able to purchase a joint of chicken bigger than a drumstick in Japan, but at *Ikkaku* you get a whole leg, juicy thigh and all, still on the bone, and are actively encouraged to get stuck in with your hands (bibs provided for mucky pups).

The meat is mouthwateringly seasoned, the skin crisped to perfection, and best of all – it isn't deep fried, *Ikkaku* grill the

meat beautifully, keeping in all the juices without so much as a look at tempura batter. Oh the novelty! I challenge you not to drool. The rice dish complements the chicken very nicely and works well to soak up some of the juices, although the real aficionados use cabbage leaves as a scoop.

Perhaps not the best place for a first date (unless you have a penchant for paper bibs and greasy fingers) head to *Ikkaku* for a casual, good value meal with a big group of friends, the perfect winter warmer or hangover munchies.

Charlotte Griffiths

Ikkaku menu and access

Open: weekdays 17:00 – 23:00
weekends 11:00 – 23:00

Tel: Umeda 06-4798-0817
Shinsaibashi 06 6213 0817



I-word play
..the answer!

Paul Schuble's

I-word play answer

Answer: かぶ (turnip or stock)

Our December riddle asks "What vegetable goes up and down?" This one isn't so much tricky as demanding of your vocabulary skills. かぶ is the common pronunciation for both stock (as in the stock market, hence up and down) and the common turnip.

洒落

A New Year's ResoLawson

Part of the reason I decided

to start writing for the **Times** was to hold myself accountable for my beliefs. And I'm not ashamed to say that a huge obstacle lies between my proclaimed dedication to the art of sustainability and its practice: I'm a lazy bastard. Well, I guess I'm not that lazy. I fill my post-work time with physical activity nearly every day, I clean... *pretty* regularly, and I manage to complete tasks at work without issue, even if they take a while.

But all of this moving and working and, um, "cleaning," takes a good deal of time – time that I should be spending cooking, especially as a vegetarian. For us herbivores, striking the balance of a meal that is both nourishing and palatable requires research, finesse and innovation. In the Japanese culinary world where *dashi* and *umami* permeates everything (and bacon! Why is bacon in every damn pasta

dish?), we can rarely find complete satisfaction in commercial dining experiences. We generally just scrape by out of the house, and find more gastric satisfaction within it.

This quandary, with lack of time on one side and lack of satisfying quick options on the other, leaves me on a near-daily basis at the entrance of a **combin**i – the veritable gateway to ecological hell. Everything single-serve, everything shelf-stable, everything disposable, everything... plastic. Yet, I'm here every weekday morning, after hitting snooze 20 times and barely making my train, to pick up my bag of cashews and yogurt drink, a plastic-wrapped banana and cereal bar. The cashiers may not know my name, but they sure as hell know that I don't want a register bag.

But what is that register bag compared to the mountain of plastic that I've just acquired? Why can I **refuse** that bag but not the ones containing the food? Well, that's just the degree of my convenience addiction. Hello, my name is Ulu, and I am a convenience addict. All living things are. The human race would not have developed agriculture or industry without this addiction. It's the same reason why bears tend to move into cities instead of away from them, because dumpsters provide an easy, reliable food source.

But the invention of plastic, accompanied by the innovation of disposability, has hit our addictions' sweet spot and brought detrimental results to our environment. "Recyclable plastic" is a misnomer – used plastic can only be **downcycled** into lower grade, non-recyclable plastic, which ultimately ends up in landfills to live out its

eternity, or burned for our carcinogenic consumption. Or in the ocean! Have you been to the Tottori sand dunes in the winter when the cleanup volunteers don't come to gather all the junk that floats over from Korea? It's eye-opening. Bottom line: to deem oneself environmentally-conscious, one must avoid plastic. Always. So... I am living a lie.

This past Thanksgiving I hit on something that might help me. I hosted a Thanksgiving potluck for 45 people. Of those 45, I wasn't sure how many would be bringing food, so I had to cook as if we'd be short. Leading up to the party, I dedicated about twenty minutes each night to food prep (shredding cheese, chopping veggies, etc.), minimizing cooking time on the day of. At the end of the night, there was far, FAR too much food, and I brought home 40, near-full, serving platters of tofurkey, mac and cheese, and pineapple casserole, which provided me with every meal for the following week.

My new year's resolution is to live up to my role as a hippy and break up with the **combinis** (except for paying for utilities and online shopping... that was the best idea ever). The Thanksgiving cooking schedule agrees with my general laziness, and pre-packing in glass tupperware (I recommend **Snapware**®, available at Costco) means that I can get out in time for my train and avoid plastic. The key is to prepare nutritious meals that I won't grow tired of by Wednesday. That Paula Deen pineapple casserole is so amazing; if I ended up on death row, I'd only want a kilo of it on a plate as my final meal, but with its 7 lethal ingredients (sugar, Ritz crackers, white flour, and butter being the real culprits), it'd surely kill me before I ever made it that far.

Wanna try it with me? This month, I invite you to **challenge yourself to a combin**i-free week (But really, I don't just mean combinis! I mean avoiding all pre-packaged single servings). Write about your results (things you learned, advice, challenges, etc), and send them to me



at misogreenht@gmail.com or leave them in the comments to this article on the **website**. Do it by January 31st, and you will be entered in a chance to win a **bokashi starter kit** for composting in your apartment! And don't worry if you don't know how to use bokashi – it'll be discussed in February's issue. Good luck! I'll stay strong if you will

Uluwehi Mills

miso.green.ht@gmail.com

Kiyomizudera: 清水寺 (播州)

If you haven't been to your first temple of the new year yet, consider giving **Kiyomizudera** a try! And I don't even mean the one in Kyoto, though that is also part of our pilgrimage. Banshu Kiyomizu-dera, or "Kiyomizudera II" (as it is the second of that name on the pilgrimage) is temple 25 of the 33 on the route, and is located in Kato city, in Hyogo.

Like most of the temples you'll see, it boasts a better set of scenery in spring or autumn than it will in the winter time, with a healthy share of beautiful sakura for that spring blooming season, but that doesn't mean it doesn't have a certain charm that transcends these kinds of photo shoot opportunities. There is also a moon viewing pavilion and several paths lined with different kinds of flowers.

Kiyomizu-dera has 2 important statues of Kannon. In the daikodo, or main hall, there is the thousand-armed (**Senju**) statue. Further up the hill is the **Konponchudo**, where there is another statue of eleven-faced (**juichimen**) Kannon, connected with health and peace within the household. On the day of our visit, the **Konponchudo** was utterly quiet and perfect for contemplation. In this hall,

there is a wooden carving of Kannon that sits before the space where the sacred and secret (not open to view) image of Kannon is housed.

Between these two halls to the right of the stairway is the Jizodo, which was ringing with frog songs upon our visit, dispelling the usually somewhat somber feel of a place dedicated to Jizo as guide of "water-babies," or those who died unborn. The bell tower is off this same stair path but to the left, housing the bell of 'good fortune,' and you are permitted to ring it.

Somewhat behind and to the left of the **Konponchudo** is the sacred well that gives the temple its name, "Kiyomizu" (清水) meaning clear or pure water. The story goes that a hermit prayed for access to water, and a miraculous spring came up in this location. As clean water is a prerequisite for establishing any place for human visiting or habitation, the discovery of this spring is the reason for the temple's existence.

The hiking trail up to the temple is well marked, stocked with "free rental sticks" and provides a nice walk, giving you time for forest contemplation, if not just



a way to feel connected with past pilgrims who did the entire route on foot. It leads to a wide stairway just beneath the main hall and pilgrim office where you can get your pilgrim book stamped.

Many of the buildings on the temple site have been destroyed by fire or typhoon in the past and rebuilt at various times. The Niomon gate once stood near the walking trail entrance, and you can still see where it stood until it was destroyed by fire. The newer gate, with its fierce guardian statues, is now located next to the parking entrance.

Kiyomizu-dera is quiet and out of the way, but it is very well kept. Some of the funding for this comes from the fact that some of the surrounding space held by the temple has been leased as golf course space; you can see some the golf course from in front of the **Konponchudo**.

As it's located off in the mountains of rural Hyogo, this Kiyomizu-dera takes some planning to get to. By public transportation, you want to take the train to Aino Station (相野駅) on the Takarazuka Line, then get a Shinku bus on the Fukuchiyama (福知山) line, and alight at the Kiyomizu-dera stop after spending about 45 mins

on board the bus. You'll notice that Aino station feels a bit like the middle of nowhere, and its bus schedule behaves accordingly: as of now, there are two buses a day heading toward the mountain temple (one at 10:20, one at 12:50), and two heading back to the station (12:10 and 14:50). Check [here](#) for more bus info.

Access by car is a more flexible option, though if you're using a smart phone as navi, it always pays to write down directions ahead of time, too, just in case you end up losing service along the way into the rural mountains of Japan. Parking is free, and you can choose between the lower parking (to take the walking trail up the mountain) and the upper, near the Niomon gate.

Enjoy your travels!

Emily Lemmon

Links

[Temple grounds map \(Japanese\)](#)

[Personal blog entry on visit to Kiyomizu-dera](#)

[A few more photos that give a good feel of the place](#)

Ozouni Soup お雑煮

This is a simple Japanese soup which is served at New Year's celebrations.

Ingredients

(serves 4)

- ◉ one pack of kamaboko (steamed fish paste)
- ◉ ¼ bunch of mizuna (green leafy vegetable)
- ◉ a little daikon (Japanese radish)
- ◉ ½ carrot
- ◉ a little spring onion
- ◉ 4 mochi (rice cakes)
- ◉ zest from one yuzu (Japanese lemon/lime)
- ◉ 3½ cups of dashi (fish stock)
- ◉ ½ teaspoon salt
- ◉ 1 teaspoon thin soy sauce
- ◉ 1 tablespoon sake
- ◉ ½ tablespoon mirin

Dashi (fish stock)

- ◉ 17g kelp (2 pieces 15x10cm)
- ◉ 27g dried bonito
- ◉ 1.2 litres water

Step one

Cut the steamed fish paste into 1 cm thick slices.

Step two

Thinly cut the carrot and daikon into short slices.

Step three

Cut the mizuna into lengths of about 4 cm.

Step four

Boil dashi, add salt, soy sauce, sake and mirin.

Step five

Microwave the rice cakes for about 1 minute or until they are soft and have increased in size a little.

Step six

Add the rice cakes to the soup and boil for 2-3 minutes.

Step seven

Add the kamaboko and mizuna and boil for about a minute.

Step eight

When serving sprinkle a little of the spring onion and yuzu zest on top.

Dashi (fish stock)

Step one

Wipe the kelp with a damp cloth

Step two

Simmer the water and kelp for 20 minutes but don't let it boil.

Step three

Remove the kelp from the pot and add the dried bonito.

Step four

Line a colander with kitchen paper 6 strain the finished dashi.

Lauren McRae

Away from the hustle & bustle

Kobe Prefectural Museum of Art

The Kobe Prefectural Museum of Art

Art is a modern and contemporary art museum located in the heart of Kobe just minutes away from Sannomiya Station. It was built in 1995, and was part of the rebuilding project following the Great Hanshin Earthquake. It features over 8,000 works of art from Hyogo artist and artists around the world. The museum also features a special exhibit that changes every few months and is usually something different and interesting. Currently it is "The Contemporary Painting through the Curator's Eye."

I went on a rainy Saturday and it was so quiet that when I walked up I thought it closed because there was no one around. It was open, and downstairs in the lobby was a free jazz show that was crowded with people. I escaped upstairs and began to browse around the galleries. It was relaxing, and because there were only a few people around I could enjoy all the artwork uninterrupted. I floated around the gallery captivated by the miraculous work, minding the watching eye of the curators in each room.

The building alone is worth seeing and is a masterpiece of award winning architect, Tadao Ando, whose other works include The Tokyo Skytree, and the Awaji-Yumebutai, a place most

people remember as the location of the midyear conference on Awaji Island. The building faces the beautiful Kobe Harbor and makes for a nice entry point if you feel like walking along the water.

A day at the Kobe Prefectural Museum of Art is a great way to spend some time when you feel like getting away from the noise of the city and just want some time to think in your own brain for a bit. It helps relax the stressful nerves one acquires from teaching in Japan and will bring you back to your sane state of mind.

The Hyogo Prefectural Museum of Art is located in HAT Kobe district. It can be reached via a ten minute walk from Iwaya Station on the Hanshin Main Line (4 minutes, ¥140 from Sannomiya Station) or via a 15 minute walk from Nada Station on the JR Kobe Line (3 minutes, ¥120 from Sannomiya Station).

Hours: 10:00-18:00

Closed: Mondays & New Years Holidays (Dec 28 – Jan 4)

Admission: Adults ¥500. Special exhibits vary.

English: None

Jon Burroughs

Hyogo Times January Event Calendar

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat
30	31 New Years Eve	01 New Year's Day Happy New Year from everyone at Hyogo Times!	02 Arima Onsen Irizomeshiki (New Year's ceremony) Onsenji Temple	03	04	05
06	07	08	09 Toka Ebisu festival Nishinomiya Shrine Until Jan 11	10	11	12 Snow Festival 2013 Mt. Hyono Kokusai Ski Resort (509 Narao, Yabu-shi) Until Jan 14
13	14 Coming-of-Age Day	15 Ako Kotto-ichi (antique market) Oishi Jinja, Ako-shi	16	17	18	19 Awaji Yumebutai Orchid Show 2013 Kiseki no Hoshi Botanical Museum 10:00 – 18:00
20	21	22	23	24 Mt. Rokko Ice Festival Rokko Garden Terrace Jan 24: 15:00 – 21:00 Jan 25 – 29: 10:00 – 21:00	25	26 Tamba Sasayama Boar Festival Sasayama castle 10:00 – 15:00
27	28	29	30	31	01	02

For more indepth details about all the events, please visit our website: www.hyogoajet.net/hyogotimes