

A photograph of three skiers on a snowy mountain slope. The skier on the left is wearing a grey jacket and red pants, the middle skier is wearing a red and white striped jacket and black pants, and the skier on the right is wearing a white jacket and red pants. They are all wearing helmets and goggles. The background shows snow-capped mountains under a blue sky with some clouds.

02.13

ht

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

Ski Hyogo

Film 2013

Weekend at Ark

## Contents

- 3 ● Message from the Editor
- 4 ● Message from the PR
- 5 ● Travel Japan! Arima: Time to relax
- 10 ● Miso Green: Bokashi Composting
- 12 ● The Mochi Diaries: Ichigo Daifuku
- 13 ● J-Word Play
- 16 ● Love & Relationships: Dick-notized
- 17 ● J-Word Play: The answer
- 18 ● Kannon: Sohonzou Nakayama-dera
- 20 ● Kicchiri Kitchen: Sautéed Oysters
- 24 ● ESS: Hamburger Helper

## Features

- 8 ● Film 2013
- 14 ● Ski Hyogo
- 21 ● Weekend at ARK

## Hyogo Times Staff

Editor: Imogen Custance  
 Online: Dana Warren  
 Designer: Karen Cornish  
 PR: Patricia Jordan  
 Cover: Charlotte Griffiths

### Contributors:

Imogen Custance, Emily Lemmon,  
 Charlotte Griffiths, Lauren McRae,  
 Uluwehi Mills, Dwayne Cobourne,  
 Daniel (Tako) Taccone, Geoff Parker,  
 Jen and Jon Burroughs.

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:  
[publications@hyogo.ajet.net](mailto:publications@hyogo.ajet.net)

## Message from the Editor

### Vegetable soup of deliciousness and hot

sauce – what's been powering me through the cold recently. I do love it when you can just buy a giant hakusai, sundry mushrooms, carrots and whatever else takes your fancy, bung them in a pot and survive off it for a week. The Asian soup base I'd spotted a while back at Gyomu (supermarket) has made this an even tastier endeavour than it was before Christmas and the sriracha sauce purchased whilst in the States makes it all positively sublime as far as I'm concerned. (The later attempt with death sauce mixed in to the actual soup to save time, since I'm THAT lazy, was a no-go. Spiciness good, but the flavour just wasn't up to par. This does of course make sense since the sriracha is Thai, but there you go. I need to use up the death sauce to start attempting to free up space in my fridge. I'm not sure that anyone really needs 4 types of hot sauce on the go at one time ><).

Getting back from work, heating up some soup, a healthy dollop of the hot sauce on top and off to hide under the kotatsu is basically my weekday life at the moment. If I actually want to do anything of an evening, I pretty much have to leave my house as soon as I get there, the lure of the kotatsu is too strong otherwise. This is why I spend 2 hours drinking coffee at Mister Donuts every Wednesday before my Japanese class. Guess it works for the study time too – a win-win situation. Now if only I could do the same with the gym on other days...

**Nope, the kotatsu's more appealing...**

On the plus side though, wanting to leave your house as little as possible means that I've actually been pretty good at avoiding combinis as per Ulu's article last month. Going to the supermarket and stocking up on the aforementioned vegetables, pasta, tins of things and the occasional block of tofu has probably saved me a lot of money, and possibly fingers as I don't have to cycle around in the snow quite so much. If my kitchen wasn't as cold as a polar bear's nose I might even be happy to spend more of my time cooking. Alas, currently at least, cut vegetables and put in pot it about all I'm prepared to put up with.

Well enough rambling about food and the cold (yep, been in Japan that long) and what do we have in the Times for you this month? Lots and lots and lots! Fancy appreciating the fact that it's cold and heading out for some winter sports? Charlotte gives you the low down on the best places to go in Hyogo. Want to rustle up a winter treat in the kitchen (it's a quick one, so even I'm going to give this a go)? Pick up some oysters and take note of Lauren's fantastic recipe. (And I start with mentions of the weather and food – oh dear ><). What else, what else? Successful implementation of ideas from the Skills Development Conference, volunteering at animal shelters, a new corner on the wonders of mochi, and more!

Have a good month all!

Imi



Hello x 2!

## Message from the PR

**“It’s a winter wonderland,”**

as one of my students said on the first snow day of the year. It may be cold, but it really is beautiful outside! There are so many things we can do in the winter that we can’t do any other time of year. This year I’m trying to explore all winter has to offer and actually enjoy the season.

As a second year ALT from California, my life in Japan this winter is a lot easier than it was last year. Last year was my first time ever living in snow, so much of my winter was spent trying to get warm and make it through until spring. I often found myself wanting to just stay home and watch movies or something under my warm kotatsu. Why would I go outside in the cold when I could stay inside next to my heater? That worked for me last year, but as a very

social, active person I am much happier if I’m out doing something. Now that I have all my winter clothes, heaters, have learned how to drive in the snow, etc., I’m able to get out more and not stress out about the winter cold as much.

I’ve found that there are actually a lot of winter activities I really enjoy. I decided that since I live so close to the slopes I really want to learn how to snowboard. I’ve had fun ice skating in an outdoor rink in my area and then going to a café to warm up with a hot matcha latte. Even just going out and making snowmen and having snowball fights with my students during breaks is great. It’s really refreshing to go out and get some air even if it is super cold.

Are you also looking to get out and stay active this winter? If so you should come on the Hyogo AJET Ski/Snowboard trip on February 16th in Tajima! All are welcome to sign up even if you’ve never snowboarded or skied before! There are also many other events and festivals happening all over Hyogo and the rest of Japan. No matter what you’re interested in, I encourage you to get out and enjoy the winter wonderland while it’s here!

*Patricia Jordan*

Travel  
Japan!

## Arima Onsen.....



## Arima: Time to Relax

### Arima is a beautiful and

quaint little mountainside town located behind Mt. Rokko. Only being a stone's throw from Osaka and Kobe, it is a hidden oasis for Japanese people wanting to get away for a quiet, relaxing weekend. It's an insolated place tucked away in the luminous landscape of the great outdoors and is a must see destination for all Hyogoians.

One can wander through the narrow streets of Arima among the old wooden buildings, getting lost in the narrow alleyways and exploring relics of old Japan. Stop and try some of the delicious street food that you encounter like the famous Arima crackers. While walking around, you will stumble upon manhole covers spewing steam from the ground, the smell of sulfur filling the air – but don't

be fearful, for that is the smell of relaxation. Because of the small size of the town, it is entirely accessible by foot, making it convenient for those that don't have a car or people who are bad with public transportation. If you get lost you will eventually know to turn around because streets will become narrower and narrower, until they disappear completely.

Arima's most famous attractions are the hot springs that are one of the three oldest hot springs in Japan, with a recorded history going back to the year 631 AD. Its famous waters come in two distinct types. The **Gold Spring**, (*Kinsen* 金泉) is yellow-brown thanks to iron and salt, and it is supposed to be good for muscle pains and skin ailments. This water is actually potable and it is said to positively affect

the digestive organs when drunk. The **Silver Spring**, (*Ginsen* 銀泉) which is colorless, contains radium and carbonate and it said to cure various muscle and joint ailments. There are two main public bathhouses in town where one can enjoy the onsen experience. If this is not for you, try one of the many ryokans which also offer hot springs. The admission fees for the different onsen vary from ¥500–150.

On the main street of the town is a bustling area full of delightful restaurants and souvenir shops. Visit the toy museum, which is filled with countless handmade toys from around the world, and children trying to get their hands on them. Just across the street is the always hot, and always crowded but free, foot bath which is great for

soaking ones tired feet after walking about during the day. You can also check out the Hot Spring Museum, visit one of the many shrines and temples, or wander a few minutes to the waterfall close to the center of town.

Another fascinating part of Arima is all the people making things in their little shops on the street. Windows crowded with people gazing in, watching the artists create their masterpieces, unaffected, are the norm. Paint brush shops, Arima cracker shops and wood carving shops are just a few you might see in this town.

Whether you come for the beautiful leaves of fall, the snowy landscape of winter, the cherry blossoms of the spring, or the green foliage of summer, it is always a good time to visit this little mountain town.

### Getting there

#### By train

From Sannomiya or Shin-Kobe Station, take the subway to Tanigami Station (10–15 minutes, 4–5 departures per hour). Then, take the Shintetsu Arima-Sanda Line to Arima-guchi and transfer to the Arima Line to Arima Onsen Station (20 minutes, 4 departures per hour). The entire journey takes 30–40 minutes and costs ¥720 from Shin-Kobe and ¥900 from Sannomiya Station.

#### By direct bus from Kobe

Hankyu and Shinki Bus operate local buses from Sannomiya Station (50 minutes) via Shin-Kobe Station (35 minutes) to Arima Onsen. The one way trip costs ¥680 and buses depart once or twice an hour. Alternatively, NishiNihon JR Bus operates about seven

highway buses per day from Shin-Kobe Station (50 minutes) via Sannomiya Station (30 minutes) to Arima Onsen. The one way trip costs ¥750, while a round trip ticket is available for ¥1,400.

(Directions from Japan-Guide.com)

*Jon Burroughs*

## Film 2013

### It seems that we survived the

end of the world. Screenwriters everywhere let out a collective sigh of relief; not only do they keep their audiences, but one of their favourite plot lines too. So what can we expect from the film industry in 2013?

A fair bit of nostalgia by the looks of things; *Jurassic Park*, *The Little Mermaid*, *Top Gun*, and *Star Wars* episodes II and III are all to be rereleased in 3D and Imax. And let's not forget the inescapable sequels; Bruce Willis teams up with his son in *A Good Day to Die Hard* (rising above the puns), then there's *GI Joe: Retaliation*, *Scary Movie 5*, *Iron Man 3*, *Fast and Furious 6*, *The Hangover Part III*, *Kick-Ass 2*, *Despicable Me 2*, *Grown Ups 2*, *The Smurfs 2*, *RED 2*... the list goes on. Now I'm not saying I won't go and see any of these, but the continuous rehashing of tired plot lines and overuse of great characters to squeeze out a profit (without taxing the screenwriters) is getting me down. I long for old Hollywood glamour. Weeks of anticipation for a film to come to town, big names like Bergman, Bogart and Hepburn...actors with presence and personality.

Fortunately for this grumpy gal, 2013 celebrates many classic film anniversaries and the institutional Warner Brother's Studio's 90th Anniversary. Join me as I dig into the archives for some golden oldies and celebrate just how good cinema can be...

### 50th Anniversary

#### It's A Mad, Mad, Mad, Mad, World (1963)

*The dying words of a man, overheard by a group of motorists, sparks a crazed cross country race to the money he buried in California.*

With this action-packed, frenetic film, Stanley Kramer proved he could handle comedy in a big way. 2001's small-scale remake *Rat Race* has nothing on this three hour epic of organized chaos an army of comedians brings to this humorous portrayal of greed. Although for some the 105-strong cast could be a little OTT, the never-ending goofy slapstick and onscreen mayhem make this a mad-cap romp to remember.

### 40th Anniversary

#### Disney's Robin Hood (1973)

*King Richard's off fighting in the Crusades and his evil little brother taxes the population of Nottingham into prison. Robin to the rescue!*

The oft reworked tale of Robin Hood got a new lease of life when Disney transformed Nottingham's most notorious into woodland animals. Despite a limited budget requiring the artists to recycle some sequences from earlier Disney films, the reinvention of Robin and his paramour as a pair of feisty foxes is a family classic.

### 30th Anniversary

#### Monty Python's The Meaning Of Life (1983)

*A cheerfully offensive documentation of the meaning of life, split into seven skits about its stages; from the Miracle of Birth to the great frontier of Death itself.*

*The Meaning of Life* sees the comedic troupe of *Life of Brian* and *Holy Grail* fame return to their roots with this sketch-style musical comedy. The cast deliver wonderfully

eccentric British humour that will either have you crying with laughter or scowling at the nonsense. Although the ultimate aim of the film might be trying to define the meaning of human existence, digressions into topics such as war, sex and Christianity allow the Pythons ample opportunity for a few musical numbers you probably shouldn't sing on the train. Offensive and disgusting and just like Marmite you'll either love or hate *The Meaning of Life*.

### 25th Anniversary

#### Beetlejuice (1988)

*Having failed to scare off the obnoxious family moving into their home, the newly wed and dead Maitlands (Alec Baldwin and Geena Davis) are forced to hire bio-exorcist Beetlejuice to prevent their home becoming a paranormal theme park.*

*Beetlejuice* is the liveliest depiction of the afterlife since *Ghostbusters*. Keaton's vindictive, cantankerous prankster brings anarchy to the lives of the innocent and beguiled Maitlands, whose fateful honeymoon sees them

plunged into Tim Burton's surrealist envisioning of the hereafter. In perfect contrast to Winona Ryder's gothic, macabre Lydia, Keaton's exuberant poltergeist performance is almost pantomime – you just love to hate him.

Twisting the traditional haunted house tale for his ends, this sardonic comedy is a testament to Burton's vivid imagination, and justifiably remains a favourite for Burton fans today.

### 10th Anniversary

#### Sleepless in Seattle (1993)

*Recently bereaved Sam shares his emotional turmoil on the radio and is inundated with propositions from women across America. His son Jonah decides to take up the cause and contacts Annie, a journalist, 2,700 miles away.*

As *Sleepless'* lovers (Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan) aren't even introduced until the final scene, this is not quite the usual rom-com plot. It is, however, one which may strike a chord. Distanced from friends and family

as most of us are, we can relate to issues of geographical separation and time difference, but where Hanks and Ryan have radio, we have Skype. (Arguably their tale wouldn't have had quite the same tear-jerking impact had they previously met via video chat, but it makes us appreciate the wonder of the internet.) Hanks' portrayal of Sam has a gravity and sweetness which, complemented by Ryan's vulnerable Annie, will convince any cynic. Inspired by *An Affair to Remember*, director Nora Ephron plays on how Hollywood inspires and distorts romance.

Charlotte Griffiths

### Editor's Note

*Disney and Lucasfilm have since decided to postpone the 3D release of the Star Wars movies.*



# A Beginner's Guide to Bokashi Composting

## Composting can be a drag.

As earth-friendly as it sounds, it's not simple, where throwing your food into a garbage can is. You need to work at it – make a neat garbage pile in your yard, rake it all the time to aerate and prevent stinky and dangerous mold growth, and deal with vermin who see your heap as an all-you-can-eat buffet. **And**, you have to be incredibly selective about what you throw in there. No meat or fish, no dairy products. And, please, with our tiny Japanese living quarters, who can fathom it being practical? Those fancy electronic composters look amazing, but they are insanely expensive, and certainly doing no good for your carbon footprint. And then what are we supposed to do with the soil? When I first moved to Japan, as much as I wanted to commit myself to a zero-waste lifestyle, all of these problems seemed unsolvable, so I resigned myself to freezing my food garbage and tossing it with the burnable trash on trash day – something my family in Hawaii has done for a long time to prevent bugs and odors. But it was still such a waste! And my tiny freezer quickly

became an unfriendly environment for ice cream storage.

This was until I discovered **Bokashi**. It is absolutely magical. It is compact, virtually odor-free, **detracts** vermin from coming near your home, it's clean, cheap and practically effortless. And it makes plants grow like crazy. I hardly believed such a miraculous product could exist.

## What it is

Bokashi was developed here in Japan and has blown up in the States and elsewhere over the last couple of years. It utilizes a "secret blend" of aerobic and anaerobic bacteria mixed with wheat germ to ferment food in a process the Western world calls "pickling." This pickling smell is not attractive to pests, yet will not terrorize your apartment if maintained correctly. The fermentation happens in small buckets that are fitted with airlocks and spigots, so that the gases and fluids that occur from the fermentation process can be released simply and cleanly.

## What it can compost

Bokashi is unique from other composting methods for many reasons, but the biggest difference is that with Bokashi, some of traditional composting's taboo items can be broken down safely.

**Do Bokashi:** Fruits and veggies of all sorts; eggshells; small amounts of meat, cheese, newspaper and oil; meat bones cut into small pieces; hair (human or not); nail clippings; paper towels, napkins, and tissues; coffee grounds and filters; tea bags cut open; small pieces of untreated wood, like toothpicks

**Don't Bokashi:** animal or human waste; large amounts of fatty or liquidy foods; food that has blue, green or black mold growing on it; all other types of paper; whole, wet tea bags

## How it works

**1** Get your Bokashi bucket (though I recommend getting 2) and a bag of inoculated grain (usually found under or beside the buckets – it's

pretty obvious which ones they are. See photo). Put the grain in a non-airtight storage container, like a plastic jar, so you don't kill the aerobic bacteria. Also recommended is a plastic storage box with a lid for creating soil – this is called the "soil factory." Keep it outside or on your balcony. All of these items are available at every **Home Center Daiki, Co-op Days** department store, and likely elsewhere.

- 2** Pour a small amount of grain onto the floor of the bucket.
- 3** Throw in your food scraps.
- 4** Sprinkle a little grain over your fresh food scraps; though throw in a little extra over thick scraps like citrus peels. A heaped tablespoon is usually enough for about 3 cups of scraps.
- 5** Close the lid tightly.
- 6** Repeat steps 3-5 with all of your food scraps.
- 7** At least twice a week, open the spigot and drain the "compost tea" liquid. It can be a bit smelly, so you can throw it out if you like, but it makes for a potent plant fertilizer, so get some window plants and throw it on 'em!
- 8** Once your bucket is completely full and packed tightly with waste, keep it closed for at least 2 weeks and continue draining the tea. If you have a second bucket, use it to start over at step 1.

**9** After 2 weeks, throw the Bokashi from the first bucket into the soil factory, mixing it with a few handfuls of dirt and dried leaves, and leave it alone. Pillbugs and beetles will find their way in there to help out. In a couple of months, you will have beautiful, nutrient rich soil!

## To be really zero-waste about it...

You can even make your OWN Bokashi inoculant!! The recipe is allegedly a trade secret, but word has spread. **Here's** a recipe using newspaper, and **here's** one using bran or sawdust. It's not that hard, especially if you already make your own yogurt!

## Advice

- ☉ Keeping the Bokashi mix dry is extremely important. If you want to throw in anything like tea or pumpkin innards, it's good to give them time to dry out. A wet environment encourages the growth of black, blue, and green mold, which will ruin your Bokashi and make it stink to high heaven. Dry out your foods well ahead of time, and make sure to empty the compost tea frequently.
- ☉ White mold isn't a problem – it doesn't help or hurt the process, but black, green or blue mold is a red flag; if you find it, toss your Bokashi batch and start over.
- ☉ A small window spice garden is really great for reducing plastic

waste from wrappers and for improving air quality, but if you're not into gardening but don't want to waste the soil, consider giving it to a neighbor! It's a great chance to get to know people in your neighborhood.

- ☉ On the other hand, if you are into gardening, and a simple window box won't suffice, try applying for a plot in one of your city's neighborhood gardens. The annual fee is usually ¥10,000 or less, and many have tool sheds (and some even have showers!) for you to use at your disposal. **Click here** for a list of all of the contacts for community gardens in Hyogo.

## Win a Bokashi Bucket Contest

In last month's column, I encouraged readers to **try going combin-free for a week, and email me about your experience**. Results were... less than enthusiastic. However, I think that after reading this month's article, Bokashi may have sparked your interest, so the contest is being extended! **Email me** by February 28th with your combin-free story, and you will be entered in a chance to win a Bokashi setup kit: 1 Bokashi bucket and a bag of inoculated grain. Good luck and happy composting!

Ukwehi Mills  
miso.green.ht@gmail.com



## Chapter 1: Ichigo Daifuku 苺大福

**Come with us now on a journey through time and space... and mochi!**

I bid you welcome to Chapter 1 of 'The Mochi Diaries' and invite you to join me as I indulge in my infatuation with exploring the world of the sticky delicious Japanese sweets known as mochi!!! ☆\*:..o. o(≧▽≦)o ..\*:☆

But Daniel, you ask, what exactly are these sweet squishy balls of happiness???

Well, to tell it to you short and sweet, mochi (餅) are a popular type of Japanese rice cake that can be eaten as either a sweet or savoury dish.

Myself being a gentleman who has made mochi following the traditional process, I can attest to the fact that this is by no means a task for the fainthearted, requiring the stamina and upper body strength to work up a mochi sized hunger in any man. I imagine many of you may have also been fortunate enough to participate in a *mochitsukui no hi* (持ち搦きの日 mochi pounding day) over the New Year's period alongside members of your local community.

So how is it all done? In a nutshell *mochigome* (餅米; boiled sticky rice) is placed into a concave stone container and beaten with a large wooden mallet until it forms a sticky

white ball of dough. From here there are a plethora of paths our mochi can take. If heading down the traditional route, it will be moulded into balls, before receiving the ever common filing of *anko* (餡こ; sweet red bean paste).

Anyhow, enough about the process and more about today's review! Without further due I present to you *ichigo daifuku* (苺大福)!

Now I live near a large train station, the type that sports a large gourmet food hall in the depths of its basement. Every now and then I like to take a walk through these labyrinths lined with pricey bento, simply to steal a peak at what fancy seasonal produce is on offer. However the stalls that I always find myself gawking at are the *mochiya* (餅屋), frequently receiving odd looks from the staff as I drool over the intricately crafted mochi through the glass. Recently I decided to indulge in a couple of these deliciously squishy ¥210 a piece delicacies, and befitting the season, *ichigo daifuku* was the obvious choice!

The origin of these particular sweets is a little hazy with dozens of stores across Japan claiming to have been the creators of this winter/spring time treat. All that can be agreed upon is that

they emerged on the market some time during the 1980s and become an instant hit. How could it not have been, blending all the deliciousness of fresh ripe strawberries and the soft sweet delicacy of mochi? It's certainly a win in my books.

Let's take a step back, and deconstruct the *ichigo daifuku*. These days they come in a wide variety of flavours with popular varieties swapping out the *anko* surrounding the strawberry with chocolate or cream to appeal to the modern Japanese palate. The one I present to you today is the traditional *koshian* (流し餡; bean paste) and held together by an outer layer of fresh chewy mochi.

So how does it taste?? In a word **AMAZING!** The selling point on this mochi for me is definitely the superbness of its texture. Somehow the slight crunch of the strawberry perfectly complements the pillowy firmness of the surrounding mochi, while the *anko* in between forms the perfect creamy bridge between what one would think to be clashing textures.

*It was love at first bite! 4½ out of 5*

Daniel (Tako) Taccone



Thanks to Geoff Parker for  
this months J-Word Play!

*J-word play*

洒落

ものすごいスピードで走るバスは何ですか？

(ものすごいスピードではいるバスはなんですか？)

Answer: See page 17



# Ski Hyogo

## Japan's skiing has been kept

a secret from the international market for years by the locals and Antipodeans in the know, and for good reason. The powder here is renowned for being particularly light and is eloquently named 'champagne powder'. As soon as I got back from a week of powder in Hakuba over New Year I started researching my next excursion to the snow; some would call it an addiction, I'm okay with that. When I got my JET placement I was almost disappointed not to be in the depths of Hokkaido, skiing to school every day. I say 'almost' because here in Hyogo we have it even better: our location is so good that a long weekend in Hokkaido (see Jetstar or Peach for flights) or up in Nagano (Willers' White Express bus ¥11,300 return from Osaka) is very doable. Even better though is that we can do day trips; Hyogo has 15 of its very own snow oases. There is no better feeling than waking

up on a crisp Saturday morning and being able to go for a spur of the moment ski. Trust me, I had this luxury when I lived in Italy and it never gets old.

So whether you're a powder hound, piste bunny or total novice, it's time to drag yourself out from under the kotatsu, hop on a bus and hit the slopes local style. Hot sake is the new vin-chaud, and you simply cannot beat onsen *après-ski*.

## Hyogo's hottest cold spots...

### Sky Valley

**Beginner:** 10%  
**Intermediate:** 70%  
**Advanced:** 20%  
**Avg snow depth Feb:** 185cm  
**Lifts:** 5

One of Hyogo's bigger mountains, Sky Valley has 8 runs with the longest just over 3 kilometres. If you like to show off in the park, Sky's has enough to keep

you amused for the day with rails, boxes, kickers, a half-pipe and sometimes a quarter-pipe. There's something for every level at Sky Valley, and although it lacks proper pistes for the very advanced, if the snow's good then there's lots of potential to make tracks between the trees. Adorable woodland animals make the piste map easy to navigate, but be careful, the mascot may look deceptively friendly!

**Lift pass:** ¥3,500/day  
**Skis/board + boots + skiwear:** ¥6,000/day  
**Skis/board + boots:** ¥4,000/day  
**Access:** Shinkai Bus tour

Return transport from Sannomiya (departing 7:20am) plus day lift pass from ¥5,000 to ¥6,800 see [website](#) for dates and prices.

### Mount Rokko

Looking out over Kobe bay Mount Rokko is worth a visit at any time of year for the view

alone, but come winter you can also enjoy playing in the snow. This small but conveniently located beginners' slope is the perfect place for newbies to find their snow legs, or if you've had a day or two on the slopes before, then head to Rokko for a fun day of sledging and snow men.

**Entry:** ¥2,000 (rentals extra)

Take the Hankyu to Rokko station then the funicular up the mountain.

### Hyōnosen

Fancy testing the slopes of the tallest mountain in Hyogo? About 3 hours North West of Kobe lies the 1509m Mount Hyōno. Best accessed by car (or a 50 minute bus from Yoka station), this small resort boasts a snow park and some excellent discounts (Tuesday is just ¥2,500 for the ladies). Hang on to your lift pass for discounts at the onsen down the mountain too – the perfect way to relax those post mogul muscles.

### Hachi Kita/Kogen

**Beginners:** 30%  
**Intermediate:** 40%  
**Advanced:** 30%  
**Average snow depth in Feb:** 183cm  
**Lifts:** 13

Hyogo's best known and most snow-sure mountain. Avoid the lower slopes which get choked up with learners, and the snow park which fills up early with posers decked out in the new season colours. Up the mountain you avoid the queues and benefit from a variety of slopes, semi off-piste and tree runs. Hachi offers two ski areas on the same pass, but the link run between Kita and Kogen is intermediate level so beginners should plan to stick to one side.

The Hachi Kita/Kogen area gets busy on weekends, so use the mid-term exams and a day of nenkyu to go make some fresh tracks when everyone else has to work.

**Full rental sets:** ¥5,000–¥6,000  
**Access:** Shinkai Heart tour

Return bus leaving from Namba, Osaka at 6.45am (other stops en route through Hyogo) to Hachi-kogen.

### Basic lift pass

**Weekends:** ¥7,500  
**Weekdays:** ¥5,000  
**Specials (14th, 15th, 20th Feb):** ¥4,500

### Extended lift pass

**Weekends:** ¥9,200  
**Weekdays:** ¥6,500  
**Specials (14th, 15th, 20th Feb):** ¥5,900

I won't wax lyrical about the wonders of skiing (or snowboarding if you must); that first squeak of snow when you put your skis on, the frozen sparkle in the air on a sunny sub-zero day, the indescribable and somehow inoffensive smell of the boot locker (just me?) but to experience all this and more grab a buddy (all about ski safety) and head to one of these convenient resorts for some frosty frolicking.

The champagne's waiting!

Charlotte Griffiths



## Dick-notized

### Like seriously! OK!

I know you don't get it, because neither do I! You were always the friends who hung out and hunted down the great sales at Bloomingdales, Collectibles or SOGO while shopping together; drank cocktails together and bashed on guys; talked each other down off the ledge when you were at your lowest points; tried to figure out where the hell the good guys were; went on double dates together; were there for each other after every bad date and creepy guy encounter; comforted each other when needed, and then one day you realized that you were standing outside Lord and Taylor's waiting on the doors to open for a massive 50% off sale and your BFF wasn't there to stand guard with you. Your dear friend who has been your rock since forever has a new boyfriend. And naturally, you are happy for them. After all, you have spent many moons wishing for this moment. But then something doesn't smell right [and it's not the guy standing behind you at the Singles Date-athon], your BFF has started to act all superior on you! And then you think to yourself, 'Is it me? Am I just being a mean, jealous bitch?', or maybe....just maybe, someone got **dick-notized**.

According the Oxford Dick-tionary of Rainbow Terminologies, **Dick-notization** is a state where someone who has not gotten any good dick in a long while finally finds a guy, and now thinks that it's the world. He/she starts acting superior and has no control over their thoughts and behavior. In this state, everything is 'US' and 'WE' and 'JOHN and I'. A person who is dick-notized starts to pity their friends [who once were their rock], make comments like 'Why is Dwayne still single? OMG' and try to set you up with some dead-beat guy who previously neither of you would have given a first look, let alone a second. **Dick-notization** results in two things:- (1) – YOU feeling bitter, hurt and confused; (2) YOUR FRIEND being jaded, out of control and over-sexed!

But all this started out slowly. There were signs, but you didn't see them! It started one day when your friend met a guy and decided to go on a date. But, as usual, you thought this was just one of those "dates" that will end badly with your friend rushing back to your apartment to cry his/her eyes out in despair. You would have no other choice but to devour a gallon of Haagen Daazs ice-cream, vodka and whip cream [if you feel

a little S&M-ish... just kiddin'] and you would talk for hours... But this date was different. Your friend didn't rush back to your apartment, but instead called you the next day and sounded giddy, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, as never before. But you just thought nothing of it. Weeks later, your friend is still seeing this guy [that you haven't met yet]. Your Friday and Saturday night rituals have been cancelled or rescheduled and those are the nights she/he is 'busy with John'. But you still thought nothing. Then at a lovely Sunday brunch [where usually, you two would have gone and hit the jumbo shrimps at the buffet hard] your friend turns up with 'John'. He/she introduces you to 'John'. As with any friend's boyfriend, they want to make a good impression because they know that your 'blessing' on their relationship is important for its survival. So 'John' tries to be as nice as possible. But one thing is sure, with years of experience trying to find 'Mr. Right', you have developed impeccable ass-hole and dick spotting skills. So, after 5 rounds at the buffet and 5 light cocktails [not too much vodka... it's Sunday.. LOL] you soon realize that 'John' is a 'Dick'! Your friend has been so dick-notized that now he/she

can't see how bad John' is for them.

A **Dick-notized** friend is hard to **un-dick-notize**. Firstly, he/she is so jaded by all the sex and 'fun' they are having that they don't see how much they have been short-changed. He/she is probably thinking that you are a bitch and jealous, of course, and that anything that comes out of your mouth if full of guile and bitterness. Secondly, he/she spends so much time with 'John' that he/she starts to sound like the ass-hole you want him/her to leave. So, when all is said and done, can you **un-dick-notize** a friend back to reality? Can you

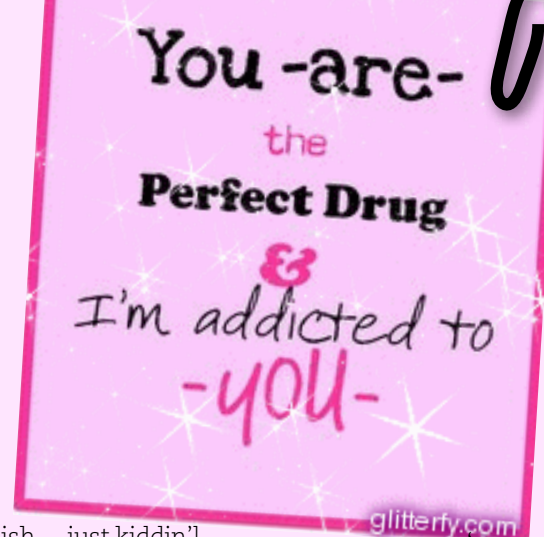
be the rock that you were before and reach down to your friend and show them how jaded they are? Can you rescue your friend from the hands of the ass-hole he/she fell for? Or, has so much damage been done that an **un-dicking** is impossible?

As a friend, there is only so much you can do (and no more) to undo a **Dick-notization**. If you try to 'open their eyes' they might run for the hills and never come down and then you would have lost a friend. So, what to do? You can stand by your friend and show him/her love, because you know that one day his/her eyes are going to open and when those eyes

are wide open and he/she finally sees the ass-hole for what he is, your friend is going need you to help him/her pick up the pieces. After all, that's what friends are for. We stick with each other even when one falls off the horse and gets jaded by some dick.

**Dick:** That evil thing that causes a love-hate pull between you and it; it knows how to hit the 'spot' and sometimes it hits it so well it results in a side effect called **Dick-notization**. [Oxford Dic-tionary of Rainbow Terminologies, 2011].

Dwayne Coburne



Thanks to Geoff Parker for  
this months J-Word Play!

## J-word play answer

Answer: 都バス (とバス) (metro bus)

Our question asks, "What kind of bus runs at an incredibly fast speed?" and our answer is a pretty straightforward pun. 「都バス」 also doubles as the Japanese verb with the same pronunciation 「飛ばす」 which means to run or drive fast. That leaves all of us in the more inaka (train-less) parts of Hyogo wishing for a bus that runs as on time (or as frequently) as a metro bus.

洒落



## Sohonzan Nakayama-dera 大本山 中山寺

The easternmost of the pilgrimage temples located in Hyogo-ken is Nakayama-dera, number 24 on the official route. Nakayama-dera is located in the city of Takarazuka, and boasts a beautiful *ume* grove around back, in which about a thousand plum trees will be in bloom from late February through early March.

Nakayama-dera's claim to fame is babies. It's a popular temple in the area for prayers regarding safe delivery, and there are special amulets on sale here with respect to this – you can even buy a belt to wear over a pregnant belly to bless the child inside with health and safety. From the 1300s, many emperors have been known to pray here for the safe delivery of their heirs; even nowadays, if the Imperial wife becomes pregnant, the chief abbot himself brings her a blessed belt from this temple. It's the first temple I saw that

was fully equipped with sun-shaded escalators to help all the pregnant ladies get around.

The original Nakayama-dera temple is said to have been built by Prince Shotoku, 6th century, in the mountains up above the current location, but it was burned down during civil wars, and the present setup was built by Katagiri Katsumoto, ordered by Toyotomi Hideyori (son of that infamous Hideyoshi).

There are many sub-temples clustered around, most of them relating to the needs of children and parents, including helping babies to stop crying at night, fertility, entrance exams, and pregnancy loss. There are also sub-temples for each of the twelve zodiac animals.

The principal image at this temple is another Juichimen Kannon, or the eleven-headed type we saw

at Banshu Kiyomizu-dera. This one is open to public view monthly, on the 18th. The statue was modeled on Queen Srimala, an Indian patron of Buddhism, so it has foreign-looking features and a more elaborate headdress than other Kannon images you might have seen. The image is in between two other Juichimen Kannon images, together having 33 heads, and it's said that if you cannot complete the full pilgrimage, praying earnestly before these three statues will give the spiritual effect of completing the pilgrimage.

The beautiful, clean, modern feel of the place is tempered somewhat by the presence of a kofun just up under the hill to one side of the central courtyard. Kofun are ancient burial mounds, often megalithic in size. You can walk down a short tunnel and take a look at the stone tomb for yourself.



Nakayama-dera also has a fun hiking path up to its *okunoin*, or most sacred space. The trip takes about an hour and is not particularly tough (though I might not recommend it for pregnant women). There is a sacred spring at the okunoin at which you are welcome to fill your water bottle. White Swan Rock (白鳥石) is also located near the okunoin, said to be the rock on which a white swan alighted after flying out of the kofun lower down the mountain. The white swan is the kami (in this case a deified spirit) associated with letting go of grudges.

Upcoming special events include *setsubun*, on which day they will hold special *hoshi-matsuri* (star festival) performances at 1 and 3pm to kick off the new year and start of spring. The first Sunday of March will be the *ume matsuri* (梅まつり) as the plum blossoms should be in full bloom.

Getting to Nakayama-dera is easiest by train. From Hankyuu Nakayama station, it's a 1 minute walk north. From JR Nakayamadera station, it's about 15 minutes. The walk is pretty well signed, but if you are confused, ask at any combini, or anyone you pass on the street for that matter.

Happy travels!

Emily Lemmon

### Links

More information about how to get to Nakayama-dera (Japanese, but map/diagram provided)

Nakayama-dera main page (Japanese)

More information about Nakayama-dera (English)

Information about Setsubun (Japanese)





## 焼き牡蠣のねぎみそ

## Sautéed oysters with miso and spring onions

### Ingredients

Serves 3-4 as a main dish with rice and sides

- ◎ 12 oysters (about 300 grams)
- ◎ 1 bunch of spring onions
- ◎ 3 tablespoons red miso paste (akamiso)
- ◎ 1 tablespoon white miso paste (shiromiso)
- ◎ 2 tablespoons mirin
- ◎ 2 tablespoons sake
- ◎ a little flour, sesame oil and extra sake

### Step one

Oysters are sold in bags with liquid. Rinse the oysters well with salted water, drain and remove excess water.

### Step two

Dust the oysters lightly with flour.

### Step three

Cut the spring onion into 4cm long pieces.

### Step four

In a bowl put the miso pastes, mirin and sake. Mix well.

### Step five

Put 1 tablespoon of sesame oil in a heated frying pan.

### Step six

Sauté the oysters both sides until golden in colour, add 3 tablespoons of sake, cover and cook for a few minutes, then remove the oysters from the pan.

### Step seven

Re-heat the frying pan and put in 1 tablespoon of sesame oil to fry the spring onion.

### Step eight

Add the oysters back into the pan with the spring onion and then add the miso paste mixture.

### Step nine

Mix well and serve.

Lauren McRae

The oyster season has started again, so what better time to try this easy & delicious dish.

## Weekend at ARK!





## Weekend at ARK!

**ARK stands for Animal Rescue Kansai.** It is an NPO based in Osaka, but with a Tokyo branch as well. As an animal lover, I was attracted to their work and wanted to contribute to their efforts. Japan isn't a place known for being overzealous about animal rights and such, so this is one of the few organizations here taking on a huge endeavor. The animals at **ARK** mostly consist of cats and dogs, but they have been known to care for chickens, rabbits, pigs, geese, and other small manageable animals. Please visit the links at the end of this article for more information on the organization itself as the rest of this piece is about my experience volunteering there.

Early in October, I invited a fellow animal aficionado to volunteer for a weekend at **ARK**. I was happy to find that becoming a volunteer was a simple endeavor (especially since I'm not fluent in Japanese). All it took was an email expressing our interest, introducing ourselves, and stating how many days we wished to volunteer. They replied quickly, confirmed our plans and even offered to let us stay the night, free of charge, at a nearby residence they own. Now, if you don't have a car, public transportation puts you within a 10 minute walk up the trail to the center. But since I was only two hours away, I preferred to drive and be able to take our

luggage in the car with ease. The apartment offered to us was at a separate location from the center, but in any case the staff had offered us a ride if we didn't have a car.

We set our own times and arrived Saturday after lunch. After signing a waiver, we were given a tour of the large premises. I was very impressed with what I saw. The dogs and cats were in spacious, clean kennels and were all clean themselves. They had harnesses and collars suited to their body types and cute name cards so even a newbie like me could easily identify certain important attributes about them. The staff there were very patient and efficient in explaining what we would be doing throughout the day and were supervising us, but not hovering. There is a range of activities a volunteer can do, but the simplest and most needed help is to walk the dogs and socialize with the cats in their comfy cat houses.

Unfortunately (and annoyingly so), I am allergic to cats, so hanging out with them in a confined space was out of the question, but my friend loves them so that's where she was half the time. According to her, most of the cats were eager to climb into her lap and pile on top of her just for a chance to get a good scratch behind the ears. And, crazy as cats are, there would



be about five of them bundled together napping in a one-cat bed even if there was an empty one right next it. So crazy, but so adorable!

My experience with the dogs was great as well. I didn't choose any on my own which I was glad of since, being the flawed human that I am, I probably would've picked on preference. Thus I walked small dogs, large dogs; old ones, young ones; calm and very excited doggies. Each walk was a unique experience and allowed me to bond with them on different levels. I especially felt sympathetic towards the 'earthquake' dogs. As you might have guessed, this is in reference to the Tohoku earthquake where countless animals suffered together with their humans. These animals are either displaced or being boarded at **ARK** while their owners get their lives in order. It's a generous offer **ARK** made to these survivors and I can only imagine how appreciative the owners must be having one less thing to worry about.

As I mentioned, **ARK** does have other animals, and during a break I was excited to meet two mini rabbits named Peter and Nova. They were sweet little things but obviously skittish around people as they can't have the four hours of interaction a day they are supposed to get. As a bunny owner, I can't imagine how

anyone could abandon these helpless guys, but I was glad to see them with food and shelter – even if such a noisy environment isn't ideal for such nervous creatures. I regularly check up on the animals I met via their '**ARK Tails**' blog and since October, I have read that both of them were adopted together and are living the life with a family in Tokyo!

Hearing updates like these really makes me appreciate and want to promote **ARK** so they can continue the great work they do. Animals appreciate every loving gesture and **ARK** will appreciate the help even more. Of course you can donate monetarily, and they even accept animal supplies as donations if you wish to help that way (they have lists of specific things they need on their website).

With a relatively easy access and a central location, think about volunteering! It'll be something different and I guarantee you'll be smiling all day. Most importantly, you'll be making a difference!

**Link:** [Animal Refuge Kansai](#)

*Jen*

*Jen is a high school ALT in Tamba City, Hyogo Prefecture. When she's not changing her hair or nail color, she's off exploring the sights of Japan and beyond.*



## Hamburger Helper: ready in 15 minutes or less

Before the winter break, one of my JTEs approached me with an opportunity to do something really exciting with my 2nd year students (JHS, 13/14 year olds). It's an opportunity that I honestly never expected. With the constant pressure the teachers always seem to be under to follow the textbooks as closely as they can, and to finish them by the end of the year, all the while preparing students for this test or that, what time could possibly be spent on something like this? What use could possibly be served by doing a project like this? What exactly is it that I'm talking about?

Poetry.

Yes. Poetry. Okay, so it may not sound terribly exciting to you, but I'm a poetry junkie. I live, breath, eat, and drink words and sounds. It's my schtick. I can't get enough (I actually shipped a decent

chunk of my library along with me when I moved here back in July/August because I don't feel right if I don't have a full bookshelf somewhere at home). Doing a poetry project with students was more than enough to make me giddy.

So my JTE approached me, fully aware of my background with the stuff, and asked me to help set up the students with a writing assignment for winter break. The goal was to get them to write a poem about a season. But there was a catch.

I was only given about 15 minutes of class time to prep the kids for their assignment.

**What?**

**Fifteen minutes?** I can easily talk for several hours about the stuff. **Fifteen minutes?!** My JTEs always seem to know the perfect way to drop a bomb on really exciting classwork.

Luckily, the mid-year seminar

in Akashi was still somewhat fresh in my mind, and I was itching to try out some of the things that had managed to lodge themselves in my head and see how they would translate to a JHS setting. I also felt like I had something to prove after hearing a lot of "my kids can't do this" remarks (I don't know about your kids, but my kids can certainly do this!).

After I stopped panicking about the pittance of a time frame I was given, I got to work on breaking it down. I decided to focus as much time as possible to showing examples, and to guide them through the process.

The first step was to write my own poem to use as the main example of what I wanted the students to do. I limited myself to grammar structures that they'd been working on and focusing on the more recent stuff in their heads; a sort of know-your-enemy tactic. Though once I had my poem

written, my JTE came at me with a mean right hook asking me to do something deplorable; to write the poem down on special paper and draw pretty pictures around it (bombs away). **Goddammit. Why? I don't wanna!** But what could I do – it was for the kids. Screw it. If I was going down, I was going down all the way. I drew a cute pink flower floating around in outer space and a sun shouting at a sleeping earth (my example poem was about spring, in case you were wondering).

Now, I feel that I should mention that this is where my JTE's expectations stopped. I was only asked to create an example for the kids to look at. I think the original idea was just to tell them their assignment, give them the example to look at, and expect them to suddenly produce poetry in a foreign language. No. Poetry is hard enough as is. If the kids were to succeed, they would need more.

Next, I created a simple guide to try and present poetry as not-terrifying and not-overwhelming. I adopted the idea of the hamburger paragraph to create a hamburger poem, though no actual hamburger imagery

was in fact used. "Step 1: do this. Step 2: do this. Congratulations! You just wrote a poem". That sort of thing.

Of course, I had to make sure it actually worked so I made several more examples using my step-by-step guide. I had an example of a mind map drawn out to get ideas and words from (which I also gave copies of to the students), used their target grammar, and put a few poems together. It seemed to work pretty consistently, and the results weren't anything scary either: Short and simple little poems. So from there I set off to class later in the week and prepped them. I went over the sheets, read the examples, took a bit of enjoyment in the slight looks of terror on their faces, and then hoped for the best.

And so the results?

Blew me away. First day of school after break, my JTE plopped down a stack of poems and I got to sit at my desk reading through all of them, amazed. Each and every one of them was different. There were long ones, there were short ones. Some had really complex thoughts, some were very straight forward and simple, and none of them were a recount of what they

did over winter vacation – *phew*. There were even several lines that I wish I had written myself! Overall, the poems were well beyond anything I had expected and definitely beyond the simple poem I had outlined for them in my step-by-step.

Sure, the poems could be much cleaner: the grammar could be corrected, spelling errors could be fixed, redundancies shot and killed, unnecessary things thrown off a cliff, etc. There's always room for improvement. Had I more time to work with the kids in class on it or see rough drafts, those could all be fixed, but none of that takes away from the fact that they did it. They succeeded. They got to use their English to create something real. Armed to the teeth with examples and a guide, they were able to do it.

Geoff Parker

geoffrey.parker22@gmail.com





*Have a great month!*