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

PDDN

Paragliding

Pilgrimage to Kitty-chan land

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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

At the end of February, the earthquake-proofing of the main building of my school began. For the week before the move, the staff room was littered with cardboard boxes and teachers debating just how much of the crap in their desks they needed. Everyone had to take everything out of their desks and lockers, pack it into boxes, label said boxes, and unpack it all again in the temporary building. The number of teachers leaving all this until the last minute was great. 'But I'm scared I'll pack something that I'll need in class' bemoaned one of my JTEs. I tend to think that's what lesson planning's for, but each to their own I guess.

As I'm in my final leg on the JET program and slowly realizing the mammoth task that is upping sticks after 5 years, it somewhat kicked me up the proverbial behind. Going through my own desk and the 'ALT locker' had me pulling out text books I've never used before and lesson plans from my predecessor's predecessor('s predecessor...'). I should probably start a similar clear-out of my humble abode, and commence some kind of cleaning regime to get it ready for whoever's coming next. I figured that if I started now, and did a little at a time, the giant mountain could, chunk by chunk, be knocked down to a more reasonable size.

Having patted myself on the back for such forward thinking, I grabbed a glass of wine and watched some TV. Apparently I'm not that great at putting plans into action (at least not when it involves cleaning windows in the cold...)

But now it's March! That means the official (I'm ignoring you Setsubun – whoever thought that Spring started in February in Hyogo at least is a muppet) start of **Spring**. Before we know it we'll be carousing under the cherry blossoms, beer in hand. As the school year winds down, tearful farewells, joyful notifications of entrance exam results and the realization that I will never go into the main school building again (they're moving back in November) come to the fore. It's also quite strange to think that I may only have one class this month, and even that one's up in the air (last minute post-exam timetable decisions – always a joy).

So having stopped and calculated how many classes you have this month, on to the rest of the **Hyogo Times**! We have another packed issue full of daring deeds and tasty treats. Jump off a mountain in Aogaki! Brush up on your Korean cinema! Head off to see the ever-charming Hello Kitty and more! We're a good bunch in Hyogo, and we get up to some interesting things. It's only fair to share what we find. And remember if you stumble across a hidden gem, either in country or out, have a go at writing about it and send it my way. Submissions, as always, by the 15th.

Imi



## Message from the PR

**We have finally made it** through the coldest part of the year! There are a few things that I look forward to in the coming months. The sun is finally rising earlier, it's not so painful cycling to school and people tend to become less grumpy.

This being my 2nd year, I was totally prepared for the cold. For some, these few months were long, miserable and ridiculously chilly. I felt exactly like this last year. However, this year I tried to keep myself busy by studying Japanese, making plans with friends to actually force myself out of the house and going on weekend trips to the slopes up north. By keeping occupied, time flies and it will be spring sooner than you know

it. Another option could be enjoying the special days that are not celebrated back home.

An event that happens during this transition month is “ひなまつり” or the “Doll Festival”. Around this time, you will see cute Japanese dolls in stores. I was told by a Japanese friend of mine that they put out oriental dolls representing people from the Heian period from February. They then take it all down before the 3rd of March because they believe that leaving the dolls past March 4th will result in a late marriage for any daughters in the household. It is definitely interesting to see all the different displays.



I hope that everyone stays warm as the cold season draws to a close. If you are still grumpy and gloomy, just think of the near future. If you're in your first year, you're in for a surprise when the cherry blossoms bloom next month.

*Matt Lim*

## Useful information

### JETLINE

03-5213-1729

Call the JETLINE and talk to a CLAIR Programme Coordinator about anything you like. We are former JETs, and can answer most questions regarding the programme, and will try to help with any issues or questions you have regarding the workplace, or life in Japan. Hours are Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm Japan Standard Time.

### TELL (Tokyo English Life Line)

03-5774-0992

Call the Life Line for free, anonymous, and confidential telephone counseling from 9am to 11pm, 365 days a year. Trained volunteers can offer counseling and support, as well as information on a broad range of English-speaking services in Japan.

# Singapore.....



## Off to the city

**Now judge me if you will**, but there were always two flights out of KIX (Kansai Airport) that excited me – the 00:30 departure to Bangkok (daily), and the 23:30 to Singapore (not every day, but it goes on the ever-important Friday night). Flights that I can catch without having to leave school early. Excellent. The catch – not exactly cheap. The Bangkok flight is with Thai Airways, and Singapore is Singapore Airlines.

However, there are occasional bubbles of not completely extortionate fees, and when Singapore popped up for just over ¥50,000 I jumped on it like it was free cheese. No worrying about overweight hand luggage leaving you with extra fees, or wanting to kill yourself because you're so cramped in with other people. Sometimes **not** flying budget is really rather lovely (and on our salaries, I think most of us can probably afford it sometimes). The other good thing about Singapore Airlines is that there's also an overnight flight back, leaving Singapore at 0125. In terms of actual time spent on the ground in Singapore – it wins. Singapore Airlines' reputation as being one of the best airlines in the world is not misplaced. As the flight leaves so

late, they don't provide an evening meal service so you can get straight to sleep, but they also carry snacks if you do want something. That's forward thinking.

They also have Singapore Slings. And wine. And beer. You can start your holiday with a right little party there on the plane (just quietly – don't want to disturb others).

### Arriving before dawn...

So what to do upon arrival? Well, it's an overnight flight that arrives before the crack of dawn. "God help me!" you may cry, but it actually works out pretty well. If there's one thing in Singapore that you 'have' to see as a tourist, it's the Merlion. Why? Because it's expected, but it's really not that interesting. The arriving before dawn is the important thing to note here – the Merlion Park faces east; sunrise ahoy! And whatever you may think of the Merlion itself, the view from the park of the Marina Bay Sands and sundry associated architecture as the sun comes up is spectacular. The Merlion doesn't start shooting water until after the sun's up either, so you can see it begin to spout too. Getting to the

Merlion Park/central Singapore is a breeze on the MRT, so even if you have luggage with you it's not really a problem (though a rucksack will obviously be easier than a suitcase)

Just hope it's not raining...

After the sun is up, it's really still too early to do much except wander around a bit, which you probably don't want to do with a bag, so head to your hostel/hotel. It's almost certain that you won't be able to check in, but most places will let you leave your bag and come back later. I've been to Singapore a few times, and last time stayed at the **River City Inn** where they even let me have a shower when I came and dropped my bag. Very nice of them.

### The Garden City

First port of call post-freshen up and bag dumping, perhaps grab something to eat? A very ubiquitous breakfast/snack is kaya (coconut 'jam') toast and coffee. It's not the healthiest thing on the planet, but pretty tasty, and as with a lot of the food in Singapore, cheap. You can get traditional kaya toast and coffee for not very much from Ya Kun Kaya.



As a chain, they're not difficult to find. The lemon roasted melon tea (with additional tapioca pearls) from Gong Cha (another chain) is a refreshing option if you're not hungry yet. They have a lot of other options too, but I fantasize about that tea even now...

Doing things leisurely at this time in the morning really is the aim of the game. **The Singapore Botanical Gardens** open at 5am and are a must as far as I'm concerned. For meandering around, enjoying the warmth (better earlier in the day before it gets too hot and the afternoon rain hits) and appreciating a **huge** area of green in the centre of a city, you can't beat it. Add to this the fact that it's free in a city that's not exactly known for being cheap, and it's a sure winner. It's probably the best botanical garden/park that I've been to. There's a huge variety of plants and different areas to explore (including the poison garden, which is by tour only, and otherwise locked – makes sense!). Within the garden there's also a world-renowned orchid garden. Whilst you do have to pay to get in here, the beautiful flower displays and sheer range of what you can see are well worth it. I could have easily spent the entire day taking photos of the various offerings from every angle under the sun.

Still on the plant front, the recently opened (July 2012) **Gardens by the Bay** are also a sight to behold and I don't doubt will soon be an integral part of most Singapore trips. One of the great things about the **Gardens by**

**the Bay** are the giant greenhouses. You have to pay to get in, and it isn't that cheap, but they have two things going for them over and above the botanical gardens; you're inside if the rainstorms are being a bit more inconvenient than you might like, and they're temperature-controlled if the heat's slowly but surely killing you. The lit up 'Supertree Grove' is a stunning way to end the day here.

I personally love visiting cities in the main so that I can just wander around them and see what there is to see, and Singapore's a great place for that. As a huge melting pot of cultures and businesses there's a massive range of things that you can just stumble across. The old colonial districts sit right next to towering banking institutions which in turn make way for colourful terraced house fronts. And everywhere you look there's new building going on. Anyone even faintly interested in architecture would have a field day in Singapore. For a city with so many people crammed into such a small place, the fact that there are so many relatively wide roads and **trees** everywhere is fantastic. It's something I really miss in Japanese cities – trees on the streets. Singapore more than earns its 'Garden City' moniker. Go and see the Pinnacle@Duxton development if you don't believe me. A residential complex with garden bridges linking different buildings together way up in the sky. Then you also have the Chinese and Indian influences with traditional, intricate temples popping up in the middle of otherwise innocuous

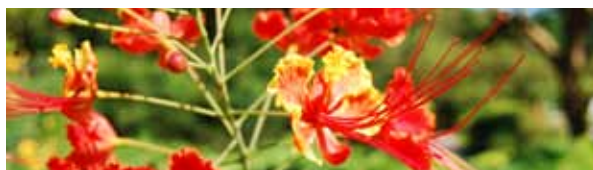
neighbourhoods. It's just a fun place to go hither and thither.

### Dining Dilemmas

And as you walk and build up an appetite (and a sweat – carry water with you), you encounter my favourite thing and biggest problem with Singapore; the food. As with any trip, you only have so much time to sample the local cuisine, fall in love with it and lament the fact that you soon won't be able to get it anymore. Singapore makes this more difficult because **everything** is available, and if you go to the hawker centres (like a mall food court, with lots of different stalls selling food and drink; communal seating shared by all) it can be exceedingly cheap too. For example, at the Little India hawker centre I got masala dosa for something like SGD3 (about ¥230). I spent the next day and a half dreaming about getting another one. Why is this a problem? Because you also have Malay, Chinese, Indonesian, Vietnamese, the list goes on, to sample. One of the nicest hawker centres, both in terms of the building and quality of the food, is Lau Pa Sat, in the financial district. I could have just eaten there for the entire trip and been more than satisfied. The Maxwell Food Centre near Chinatown is also housed in a glorious old building and serves wonders.

But it wasn't only cheap fair that went down my gullet. Being British and therefore slightly giddy with misplaced colonial aspirations, I thought it would be jolly





### ...continued

good fun to have High Tea at Raffles. Good choice. You dress up smart-ish (no flip flops, shorts for guys, etc.) and go for tea. There's a buffet of proper food (since it's a high tea, not afternoon tea) including some curry things (as it would have been in the days of yore), salad and whatnot, but there are also delicious desserts, fruit and cakes. And tea of course. It wasn't quite as posh as taking afternoon tea in London (oh Claridges, you were a wonder of cream and confection) but silly and decadent to the perfect degree nonetheless.

### Rain, rain, go away

Not having an umbrella the day we went for tea was not such a good idea though. I've mentioned the rain a few times, and it is something you have to bear in mind. Singapore's very much in the tropics, and it will rain pretty much every day, though with any luck, only for a short while each afternoon. Our timing on getting to Raffles was about 10 minutes off being perfect in this respect. The heavens opened just before we had to cross the road from the safety of a shopping centre to the hotel. We got completely soaked crossing a road that was perhaps 20 meters across. When it rains, it RAINS. Have an umbrella or good waterproof coat with you at all times – the rain pounces.

### And when the sun sets

It was also raining when visiting the *Night Safari*. Another of Singapore's 'not-exactly-cheap'

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attractions, it is something that I wouldn't hesitate to recommend. The majority of people head to the Night Safari and jump on the tram safari that takes you around the complex, accompanied by a guide who provides a commentary on the various animals you see. The commentary was okay, but annoying at times, in an overly exaggerated 'does this person secretly hate their job' kind of way. Seeing the animals, however, was great fun. Better though, was the decision to do some of the walking trails after the tram tour (the rain had stopped). Wandering through the giant flying squirrel enclosure with them soaring overhead was quite an experience.

Continuing with the 'must do' Singapore activities, we come to Singapore chilli crab. Now I'd wanted to try this dish for a while and I'm not going to lie, I was disappointed. It was expensive, and whilst good, messy to eat and not quite as good as I'd been hoping. I think this might have been to do with the location of the restaurant we went to. The location was fantastic, down on Boat Quay with lovely views across to the colonial district; financial buildings towering over everything, but it was most definitely a touristy area and a bit of a trap. I think it was perhaps such a failure because of a lack of prior research. Ask people where you're staying and see what they say. I believe there's a particular area that's meant to be good, though a little harder to reach as it's a bit outside of the city centre. I also hear the black pepper crab is better than

the chilli. I will have to consider this if in the area again.

In and around Boat Quay, and more particularly Clarke Quay, is, in general, quite an expensive place to venture, but I don't doubt you could have one hell of a party. There are various deals to be had so you don't actually have to pay the eye-watering prices they're asking for drinks. These deals seemed, as you would expect, to be more prevalent on weekdays. In the centre of the complex (which is covered and felt slightly like a theme park. It was odd) there was a place producing its own beer, and there's apparently another one on the other side of the river. Not bad if you want a bit of variety from Tiger. The airline themed place was also pretty tasty and produced a rather delicious raspberry daiquiri that I would happily consume in the future.

A very good thing about the Quay is its proximity to Chinatown, which also happens to be one of the main areas for cheaper accommodation in Singapore (the other main one being Little India). I say cheaper because even a bed in a 20-bed dorm room isn't cheap. I've stayed in two hostels in Singapore, the previously mentioned *River City Inn* in Chinatown, and *Checkers Inn* in Little India. Both were fantastic; impeccably clean, well designed and I would be happy to stay at either again. I would possibly err towards the Chinatown one, especially on a first visit, as it's a little closer to the centre of town and you can reach

more places without the need to jump on a train. (Though being closer to the masala dosa... that's a hard choice).

### And of course the shopping

Since Singapore is on the hot and steamy side, mornings spent wandering followed by afternoons hiding in the shade and/or air-con might seem like a plan. This is incredibly easy to do if you are a shopper. Head to Orchard Road and you will find a plethora of shops to keep anyone happy. I'm not the biggest fan of shopping, but even I could see that most tastes would be catered for. Still, the prices seemed to be on a par with those in Japan (at least in the shops I frequent), so you wouldn't necessarily be making any savings. Personally, I tend to head to supermarkets when I'm away. Picking up cooking/marinating/stewing sauces from the local cuisine(s) to experiment with back in Japan is another way to make the holiday last that bit longer. Supermarkets are also a great place to pick up more authentic, and cheaper, omiyage.

I've also heard great things about the *Asian Civilisations Museum*, which was unfortunately closed the only time I was free.

### Getting around

Travel around Singapore in general is very, very easy, but if you arrive early in the morning, make sure you

have some smaller Singapore dollars on you. The ticket machines on the MRT don't take large notes, and there might not be anyone around at the station to change anything up. I was caught by this recently, but if you head up to the departures area at the airport to find an early morning coffee, you'll be sorted. Oh, and remember there's no eating or drinking on the MRT system, including at stations, so don't ask for a take-away coffee/other change providing beverage. Alternatively, get some money changed before leaving Japan, specifying that you need some small denominations.

So the MRT; dead easy and cheap (SGD2.20/¥170 from the airport into town). Buses are also a great and easy way to see different parts of the city. Buses come in two varieties, those with and without air-con. There's a price difference, so it's up to you, but perhaps err towards those with, and if not, sit downstairs where it's cooler. Everything is signposted in English (along with Chinese, Malay and occasionally Tamil; the same is true of the MRT). Google maps and directions worked wonders for getting public transport directions too, and since most (if not all) hostels have free wireless, it's not a problem to figure out how much a trip will cost/how long it will take.

### Other

There are other (cheaper) ways to get to Singapore too! Jetstar also flies there direct (the departure times aren't as good in my opinion,

but they can be a LOT cheaper) so that's a definite option. Another thing to consider is Singapore's proximity to Kuala Lumpur and Malaysia in general. Malaysia costs a lot less than Singapore, so if you're looking to spend a reasonable time away, consider having a few days in Singapore, but spend the majority of your time over the border. This is actually what I did a while ago, taking the overnight train to Kuala Lumpur. This might not be a practical option for taller people as the beds are on the short side, but night buses also operate. A cheap Air Asia flight back to Singapore linked up nicely with the evening flight to Osaka. Needing to spend time at Singapore's Changi Airport is not the worst thing in the world if you decide to do this. It's probably the best airport I have ever been to for people who get bored easily. There are outside areas, a butterfly garden, free cinema and more. The duty free shops are all extortionate, but that's not unusual so not really a minus.

### In conclusion

It's further than Korea for a weekend trip, but worth it if you're looking for somewhere a bit warmer for a spring trip.

Imogen Custance





## Planning an indoor spring garden

### Outside of my apartment

building sits our soil factory box. It's half-filled with incredible planting soil – the result of a year and a half of *bokashi composting* by the two of us. It's actually quite astonishing to see over a year's food scraps broken down to such a minimal volume!

But the reason that I know that there is exactly a year and a half's worth is that I have never used any of it... it's just been sitting in that plastic box. That food waste is currently no better off than it would be had I sent it to the city incinerator. It is analogous with the pile of IKEA mirror tiles I've been planning to hang in my kitchen to keep grease off of the walls, and the meters of fabric from the unfinished sewing projects of the past year. I start many DIY projects because I take extreme pride in saying that I created something that I like and use daily, and I like it when a great portion of what I own comes with a good story. Yet I fail to finish about half of these projects – if not due to

some unforeseen obstacle like missing a vital tool, it's because life just tends to get ahead of me. I intend to conquer my *Closet Abyss of Unfinished Projects* this spring; I want to assure my eventual successor that they will have an apartment setup that they love, because of all the love that I put into it. And... I suppose we'd enjoy living in a finished apartment for a while as well.

One of these projects is to put that soil to use by starting a garden this spring. We hope to grow most of our own food one day, but I could use the practice keeping things alive first. I had hoped to snag us an allotment at our city's community garden, but the dream was dashed when I was told that all the plots were occupied (a trend I don't doubt is common, but you should *check* with your community garden anyway!). And while we could probably get away with a renegade garden at our sparsely managed teacher housing, I wouldn't want to ruffle anyone's feathers.

So, that leaves our most attainable option as having a garden at our apartment, but... eh... not on the balcony. Of course, outdoors *is* probably the ideal location for plants, but there is one major obstacle – I am terrified of insects. Well... insects with more than six legs. I dare not name them, but they're all over my building by April. In our sultry Japanese summers, the shade of a cool, soil-filled pot on the balcony is the ideal resting place for a tired, terrifying predator. I received a few uninvited visitors last spring, and after enlisting the help of the nearest male on hand, I took additional effort to bug-proof my apartment. It's pretty ironclad now that I've gotten rid of the balcony plants.

It would therefore appear that having an *indoor garden* seems like my best bet. Indoor gardens improve air quality, regulate humidity and eliminate stale odors. Personally, though, aside from the few bonsai trees we have around, I find little appeal in keeping plants

that aren't particularly useful... I want plants that I can eat and slather everywhere. Below is my list: most of these plants are pretty ubiquitous, so there should be no problem finding them in local garden centers (or on *Amazon*).

### Botanicals

#### Lavender

Aside from looking and smelling good, makes an *excellent insect repellent*. To add to the potency of your potted flowers, you can also harvest some to make lavender essential oil to spray in and around your apartment for additional protection. I also recommend throwing the occasional sprig in the pot when steaming vegetables.

**Ideal Container:** a large-ish pot (4L or more)

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight

**Special notes:** lavender originates from arid climates, so it's best not to keep soil damp all the time. Pro tips *here*.

#### Aloe Vera

Well known for being soothing and wonderful on damaged skin, but the gel can even be used for hairstyling. Furthermore, I never want to feel the desire to buy prepackaged aloe yogurt again.

**Ideal Container:** start your little guy off in a small pot, and increase the size as the plant gets bigger. Also, they prefer clay pots to plastic.

**Ideal Lighting:** lots of light makes for a happy aloe, but they also do okay in areas that get partial sun.

**Special notes:** don't use bokashi on these guys; they are a succulent, and need dry, barren soil to survive. Also, seeds aren't really available commercially; grow aloe from cuttings of other plants, or buy a starter plant.

### Herbs

#### Mint

A delicious, energizing caffeine-free tea, and is a staple flavoring in holiday candies and Southeast Asian cuisine. However, if you're not a huge fan of the flavor, it serves as another well-touted *insect repellent*. Use the extract to spray around your building to help keep critters at bay.

**Ideal Container:** 4L pot

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight

**Special notes:** do *not* plant mint with anything else; mint can become invasive and harmful to other plants and should be alone in its own pot.

#### Basil

Pesto that isn't effing ¥800 for a single-serving jar – need I say more?

**Ideal Container:** 4L pot, but they do OK in slightly smaller pots as well.

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight

**Special notes:** trim leaves and use them often! They should replace themselves pretty frequently.

### Food

#### Carrots

Notoriously easy to grow indoors – or, that's the impression that I get from *these* kits that I see everywhere. You can't expect them to get big, but oh, the pride you can take in making a tiny vegetable soup that you grew yourself!

**Ideal Container:** the deeper, the better. Try milk cartons.

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight

**Special notes:** dwarf varieties do better indoors.

#### Daikon

On the other hand can grow rather large indoors, under the right circumstances.

**Ideal Container:** similar to carrots, they'll only grow as large as their containers. Deep is good.

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight.

**Special notes:** Daikon are very watery and like to drink a lot, so stay on top of watering.

#### Green onion

Growing doesn't even require seeds – you can plant what you've already purchased from a grocery store, and keep a constant supply.

**Ideal Container:** anything will do; jars, shallow planter boxes, etc. But if you want to grow onion bulbs, you'll need a 5 gallon pot.

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight



...continued

**Special notes:** you can actually re-grow them without soil (in a jar of water), but not indefinitely.

**Salad greens, spinach, and swiss chard**

These do surprisingly well indoors, even in the winter.

**Ideal Container:** pretty much anything! Planter boxes, small pots, large pots... whatever you have.

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight

**Special notes:** they really don't seem to need much care; you can throw your seeds in a pot, water it, and expect something to grow.

**Tomatoes**

They need a lot of light, but the smaller varieties tend to do well indoors. If you're *crafty*, you could even make a double surfaced planter, growing your herbs on top and tomatoes on bottom.

**Ideal Container:** 20L pots are ideal, but they can grow okay in 4L containers.

**Ideal Lighting:** full sunlight

**Special notes:** tomatoes prefer plastic or ceramic pots to terra cotta; unfinished clay pots release moisture too quickly for these thirsty fellas.

**Pasteurizing your soil**

Unless you're buying soil from a store, it's a good idea to pasteurize it before planting. Doing so is *pretty easy* in the kitchen with an oven or microwave, and it'll help ensure that no stray insect eggs find their way to hatching indoors. Don't overcook it, though! You don't want to kill good enzymes.

**Equipment**

So that I can avoid a higher electric bill, I've made an effort to select plants that require light that I can provide them, but if you're anxious to have something that requires lots of light, *grow lights* are always an option. On the other hand, if you aren't on poor terms with insects like me and want to keep your plants outdoors, more power to you!

I do, however, plan to implement a *wick watering system* for all of these guys (except the aloe and lavender). Wick watering allows plants to get the water that they need despite my laziness.

**Gardening Apps**

While these plants are pretty basic in terms of care, I doubt I'll succeed if left to my own devices. Thankfully, I live with a man who is always longing to keep his hands in the dirt, but I'd like to do my own work independently, and let him have his own plant fun. For this reason, I am calling technology to my aid. So far, the best free apps I've tried (sorry Appleseeds, I'm an Android girl) are called *Botanica*, *Ledsen*, *Garden Manager* and *Green:Drop*. None of them are perfect, so if I (or you) find a better one, I'll be sure to put it in the comments.

Is starting with nine plants too ambitious? I sure hope not. Spring starts on the 21st, so if those among you with more experience have any advice or suggestions, send 'em my way.

Uluwehi Mills  
miso.green.ht@gmail.com



関西風お好み焼き  
Kansai Style Okonomiyaki

**Ingredients**

- ◎ 1 small cabbage
- ◎ 200 – 300g thin sliced pork (*butabaraniku*) and/or seafood
- ◎ 1 cup flour
- ◎ ¾ cup water
- ◎ 2 eggs
- ◎ 1 teaspoon instant fish stock (*dashi*)
- ◎ oil
- ◎ okonomiyaki sauce
- ◎ dried bonito (*katsuobushi*)
- ◎ dried seaweed (*aonori*)
- ◎ mayonnaise

**Step one**

Slice cabbage finely

**Step two**

Cut pork into 5-6cm lengths

**Step three**

Put flour, water, dashi and eggs in a bowl and mix well

**Step four**

Put the sliced cabbage into the mixture and mix well

**Step five**

Cook the pork/seafood on a hot plate

**Step six**

Place a circle shape of the mixture onto the hot plate

**Step seven**

Put the pork/seafood on top of the mixture

**Step eight**

Turn it over and cook for about seven minutes, then turn again and cook for about another five minutes

**Step nine**

Before serving add sauce, bonito, seaweed and mayonnaise as you like

**Note**

If you don't have a hot plate, then a frying pan also works!

Lauren McRae

Delicious  
winter  
comfort food  
which is  
sooo easy  
to make!



### Everyone loves a good

acronym and in February I coined a new one. Admittedly PDDN is not as catchy as ATM, LBD, LOL or any of the other TLAs (Three Letter Acronyms) which have so sneakily invaded our everyday speech; no longer being used ironically but as words in their own right – who's guilty of "lolling"? Don't worry, I won't rant about text speak destroying the English language at this point in time, I think the change is fascinating even if I do wince when, OMG someone manages to use multiple abbrevs and TLAs in one totes LOL-tastic sentence... too obvi? Soz.

I digress.

Back to my new acronym: **PDDN**, or for the more traditional, **Pay Day Date Night**.

Friday is nearly everyone's favourite day of the week; it has all the potential of the weekend whilst the looming

threat of Monday morning is still a thing of the distant future. Whilst some might plump for Saturday's lie in making it the best day, I think it is safe to say that payday wins best day of the month, hands down. So when these two marvellous 24 hour windows of our lives coincide it is an excuse, nay an obligation to celebrate. February was one such month. On Friday the 15th, after a very boring week of entrance exams I arranged to meet a friend after school to celebrate the happy occasion; halfway through a bottle of wine the tradition, phrase and subsequent acronym, **Pay Day Date Night** (PDDN) was born.

We began the evening at Osaka's National Museum of Art. On Fridays the museum keeps its doors open till 7pm and, once you've admired the impressive structure hiding

the entrance way, you can descend into the galleries and while away the time until dinner. We perused the "What We See" exhibition (runs until 24th March, ¥850), a collection of ten video installations by international artists, including two from Japan. This special exhibition uses the moving image to explore the boundaries between fiction and reality in an increasingly globalised and image focused society. I don't claim to know anything about art, but it was an interesting experience, my personal highlight being Finnish video artist Eija-Liisa Ahtila's "The Annunciation".

Suitably cultured-out, we left the museum and decided to look for a restaurant on our way back to Yodoyabashi subway station instead of returning to old haunts near Umeda. It was the best decision we could have made. Tucked

back from the main street we discovered a veritable treasure trove of European cuisine. We were turned away from two restaurants which were full (always a good sign) but, determined not to be put off by the lack of pictures on the menu, we arrived at Santa Lucia. Situated in a cutesy corner building, you step through the front door and almost fall into the huge pizza oven. The proprietor is a silver haired Italian fox who amicably shouts at the chefs in a mind-bending melange of Japanese and Italian. Although the restaurant was busy, our Italian stallion was only too pleased to seat us when I tried a few words of my rusty Italian (he also speaks Japanese and English). The staircase to the first floor is so narrow and steep it's practically a ladder, and the upstairs dining area is barely more than a corridor above the kitchen, but this just added to the atmosphere created by low lighting, candles, Italian mosaics, embroidered napkins from Naples, the staff whispering that the foreign girl could speak Italian (it seems all the staff do to some extent) and bottles of Italian wine covering every available

surface. A nice balance of couples and small groups meant the room was cheerful, but not overloud.

And the food? As restaurant critics Cherie and I probably don't make the best duo as we both opted for the same dish, but we spied on everyone else's food enough to make up for it. As we waited we were presented with a sampler plate of beautifully salted foccaccia to stop us ogling at the tantalising antipasti on the table next to us. The pizzas also looked excellent, with just the right cheese to topping ratio and a thin crust with bubbling edges; I will definitely be trying one next time. Our own linguine frutti di mare was divine. It came served on long oval dishes, beautifully presented with cherry tomatoes adding a splash of colour to the simple and classic garlicky pasta and shellfish combination. Boldly, I will say that it is the most authentic Italian pasta dish I've had since I lived in Turin. The meal was made perfect accompanied by a pleasant and perfectly chilled bottle of Gavi and followed by a tiramisu (rumoured to originate from brothels where it was served to fortify clients) which was

made with very good, if slightly too much, coffee.

I write this salivating and already excited for the next PDDN which, fortunately for me, is March. Make sure you celebrate your doubly delicious Friday 15th. I'm tempted to return to **Santa Lucia** (booking on Friday is recommended) or to meander around the Nishi-ku area and try something new. Two PDDN's in two months; the perfect start to spring.

Charlotte Griffiths  
(Pictures Cherie Pham)

### Santa Lucia

Eight minutes from Yodoyabashi subway station

Pizzas start at ¥1,575, pasta ¥1,375)



## Korean Film

February was cold and depressing, even more so for the Valentine's haters amongst us. Fortunately heading into March we can see the light at the end of the proverbial tunnel, spring is stirring its sleepy head, soon to be followed by summer, and what do the warmer months mean? Why, putting away the kotatsu and heading off on your travels of course!

Proximity to KIX and its marvelous budget airlines make South Korea a great mini-break destination; so bag some bargain transport and whilst you count down the days till your departure why not try these Korean films to get you in the mood.

### The Host

Director: Joon-Ho Bong (2006)

The rights for Bong Joon-Ho's internationally acclaimed **Monster Movie** have been snapped up by Hollywood, but originals are always better. With action, melodrama and slapstick this film keeps you on the edge of your seat; shocked laughter interspersed with squeaks of fear.

We open in 2000 with an American army doctor ordering his Korean subordinate to pour toxic chemicals down a sink. Two years later two fishermen encounter an aggressive mutant in Seoul's Han River. The scene is set for 2004, when a giant amphibious monster hogs 110 minutes of camera time rampaging around Seoul.

In a spectacularly chaotic riverside scene we first see the bus-sized mutant emerge from the river to terrorize Seoulites perambulating peacefully by the waterside. Amongst this chaos, we meet Park Gang-du, the anti-leading man, whose uselessness sees him let go of his daughter's hand, allowing the monster to swallow her up and dive back into the murky river.

After a mourning scene that you know you shouldn't laugh at but can't quite help, Gang-du receives a call from his presumed-dead daughter: the monster has her in its lair, a snack for later. Appealing to the authorities for help only to be taken for a mental patient and suffer an invasive brain exam, deadbeat Gang-du has no alternative but to lead the hunt for the monster himself. The dysfunctional Park family finally begins to work as a unit when they come together for the rescue mission. They must fight not only the monster, but also overcome family issues over Gang-du's inadequacy, whilst the bureaucratic Korean government and American military's cover-up plans hamper them at every turn in a shrewd reflection of post-9/11 and SARS institutional alarm.

Bong's genre twists reinforce his tongue in cheek take on 50s and 60s horror films. It is effortlessly comic and wonderfully extreme, and, as Tarantino said when listing his top 20 films "Only director Joon-Ho Bong could make a monster movie as creepy and loveable as *'The Host'*."

### Poetry

Director: Lee Chang-Dong (2010)

Without a hint of melodrama the opening scene encapsulates the film; the corpse of a young girl floats down a beautifully framed river, the film's title (in Korean and English) superimposed on her body. Lee Chang-Dong immediately introduces the discomfiting parallel between beauty and death which will drive this powerful and heart-rending film.

Coming out of a 16 year retirement, Korean treasure Yun Jung-Hee gives the performance of a lifetime; we watch 66 year old Mija be transformed as the film's situations strip the layers of her personality back.

Initially the flighty, ageing beauty living in her own world is not a sympathetic character. Two developments change this dramatically; joining a poetry class and the discovery of her grandson Wook's disturbing connection to the young suicide of the film's opening.

In the third grade Mija was told she had the heart of a poet, but she has not once written a poem. Following a diagnosis

of Alzheimer's, Mija joins a poetry class in a bid to find a way to describe beauty before language fails her. To do this she follows her poetry teacher's advice to take notes on the world around her, to see it in order to feel. Whilst desperately struggling to experience life fully in order to write a single poem, the discovery of her grandson's involvement in the girl's suicide exposes Mija to the horror and corruption of the world around her. Rather than blinding her to beauty though, the unnerving realisation seems to drive her quest for purity and poetry, and it is this struggle to come to terms with everything she learns that drives the movie.

Lee develops his plot and themes slowly, allowing the audience as much time as Mija to consider both the beautiful and the traumatic aspects of life and human nature. He neither seeks to present answers, nor to exploit the strong emotional currents of the film, but puzzles over the mysteries of human behaviour for a remarkably subtle character study.

Dealing with beauty, truth and mortality, the film's elliptical style rightfully won Lee best screenplay honours at Cannes.

Charlotte Griffiths



## Paragliding in 'Sky Sports Town', Aogaki!

### Have you ever stared at a bird

gliding about in the sky and imagined what that would be like? Have you ever taken it a step further and tried to make it happen? Well, here's your chance!

I work part-time in Aogaki, a town near the middle of Hyogo Prefecture, north of Kobe. It is known here as Sky Sports Town. On clear days, I look out my window and I can see paragliders skillfully wafting about over nearby mountains. At first this was merely a spectacle for me, but soon after I wanted to join them. I asked my coworkers and discovered their headquarters, Tak Paragliding, was nearby.

Imagine the look on their faces when after work one day, an office-clad foreigner comes in inquiring about paragliding. Confused by the whole scenario before them, they asked if I wanted to go right then and

there! Laughing, I explained that I worked nearby and had seen them, so I wanted to come back with my boyfriend. Delighted, Mr. Tak gave me all the information I needed. In his younger days, he traveled the world as a competitor. It was some time ago, but even now he retains good conversational English – a helpful thing when the time came to understand the procedures involved in this extreme sport. Afterwards, he regaled me with stories about his time as a professional competitor. It turned out that he was once the world record holder for the longest distance flown while hang gliding (which he did on Mt. Everest!). Semi-retired and back in his hometown, providing tandem rides and instructing new paragliders has turned into a family business.

I waited for another clear day and called Mr. Tak to see if the day also met his approval. He enthusiastically said yes, so I changed my clothes and off we went. Anything comfortable can be worn, but a sturdy pair of shoes is required (for a safe landing). Together with some trainees, we met at HQ, packed up a van full of gear and equipment, and headed up the mountain. We stopped near the top and took a short walk to a clearing already mounted with a wooden platform. As they set up, my boyfriend and I snapped some pictures of our surroundings. It was a beautiful day with clear visibility all around. I was permitted to bring my own camera along for the ride, but Mr. Tak also has one that he fits onto an extension pole to get nice shots of the gliders up in the air.

Finally suited up, I volunteered to go first. Would a sane person jump off the side of a mountain? Only when they're strapped to a professional and a parachute! And what a thrill it was to do! With that final leap off the edge, I became that bird soaring over the land. I thought I would be cold up there, but the adrenaline had my blood pumping. As one could expect, the scenery was gorgeous. The once towering mountains had become mounds under my feet. I was my own cloud casting a shadow on the town below. The wind would alternate from being motionless, making me feel suspended in the air, to gusting and giving me the giggles as our chute would catch in a spin. Having jumped after me, I eventually saw my boyfriend. We looked over at each other and waved like two kids on swings at a playground; except our swings were in the sky.

We floated around for about twenty minutes before landing with a thump in a smiley face delineated field. Still giddy, Mr. Tak and I waited for the others to land before heading back to HQ.

The price for this excursion was ¥11,000 total. The service and professionalism were exceptional. I never once felt like I was in danger, and knowing that I was contributing to the legacy of this man's family and town, I was happy to pay it. I travel to Aogaki by car, but a train can be taken all the way to the next town over, Tamba, and then a local bus can take you the rest of the way (about 35 minutes). More information can be found over on their [website](#) (not in English, but some access maps and other things are easy to figure out),

so make your way to Aogaki and leap into the sky! You won't regret it!

*Jennifer Garcia*



Four years after his death in 1685, a vendor near Shogoin Taisha began selling a sweet that was shaped like a koto in his memory. As a baked cookie with ingredients composing of only pounded rice, cinnamon and sugar, it has a very long shelf life of around 3 months. This meant that by the turn of the 20th century Yatsushashi had become popular as an omiyage gift from Kyoto.

Upon opening the box I was presented with a box being half filled with a container half filled with lightly brown coloured triangular sweets, the other half being pale green. These

To this day, in my opinion  
yatsushashi represent the  
perfect mochi culinary  
experience, biting into one  
is infatuating enough to take  
you to a whole new world of  
wagashi heaven, if you ever  
find yourself around Kyoto  
keep an eye out for them!!

Daniel (Tako) Taccone

## HIS-tary

During high school, I wasn't too fond of History, but the older I get, the more I find myself approaching 'HIS-tory' with a new perspective. 'HIS-tory' is that guy who is 'right for now', but you just can't get a relationship with him to work – strangely. He comes in every-so-often when you are at your lowest point, helps you 'get over an ex', wines and dines you and puts another notch in your self-esteem. Rest assured, 'HIS-tory' knows exactly what he is doing!

So, what's the deal with 'HIS-tory'? Does he have a radar that lets him know when you are lonely and vulnerable? Is he like a predator that just lies in the dark and waits for us to be 'available' and easily devour-able? Or he is just an angel who is sent to help us through a rough patch in our lives and leaves when we are 'ready' to move on and re-integrate with society. Or is he a combination of all of the above (if that's at all possible)? Break-ups are awful experiences in our lives and it messes with our self esteem, our self perception, and faith in people. On some level, I am glad 'HIS-tory' has that '6th sense' and visits us from time to time,

So, hurry up with that post-mortem of your ex, drink that cocktail, eat an entire cheesecake, go shopping, go clubbing; and wait patiently for 'HIS-tory' to ride in on his big white horse to save you once again because you know you like it. But remember, 'HIS-tory' has to go back to his wife in the suburbs so never fall for him. LOLLOLOLOL...

Dwayne Cobourne





## Kiyomizudera 清水寺

### As you prepare for the

advent of spring, our quest for pilgrimage temples takes us further afield. Our next explorations will be into Kyoto, Osaka, and beyond. There are five pilgrimage temples clustered right in the city of Kyoto, and we'll get to the other four later on. We shall begin with one of the biggest, most recognizable temples on the circuit today: Kyoto's Kiyomizudera.

The main Kannon image enshrined in this cultural heritage icon is a wooden 千手十一面観音, a Kannon with eleven faces and a thousand arms, carved during the Heian era (794 – 1192). Every 33 years, ribbons are connected to the image so that pilgrims can touch the other end and be connected in that way, but otherwise the image is truly secret. There are no photographs

and not even the priests look upon it. There is a likeness of the enshrined image, called an お前立ち (maedachi) from which we can see that the image is unique: one pair of Kannon's arms are raised above her head, holding a small Buddha. No other Kannon images have this feature.

The Hondo was built in 1633, though the style of it is older than that. The cross-beaming that supports the platform jutting from the Hondo was built without the use of nails to hold it together. Many tourists cluster here and wait their turn to take photos, but most skip entering the Hondo itself, which is allowed, and which is very peaceful and quiet, especially compared to the hustle and bustle of this famous place. The secret Kannon image is inside an

ornate zushi, surrounded by guardian deities.

The office where you get your pilgrimage stamp is just past the Hondo on the left, as is the path to the Jishu Shrine. This shrine, built in 1633, is dedicated to the kami of love and marriage. A notice board at the front of the shrine names those who have married and returned to the shrine to give thanks. In front of the main shrine are a pair of stones about ten meters apart, called the "Fortune Tellers of Love." If someone is able to walk straight from one to the other with their eyes closed, that person's love will be realized.

Beyond these two is the Okunoin, also from 1633. It looks a lot like the Hondo, with its own platform structure facing out over the city. The Okunoin is said to be in the

location where the original hermitage that developed into this massive temple was first located. Enshrined in the Okunoin is a thousand-armed Kannon with attendants.

Behind the Okunoin is a little pond with a small stone statue called Nurete Kannon, or "wet-hands Kannon." If you pour water from the sacred spring (or "pure spring" from which comes the temple's name) over this Kannon, you will purify yourself, body, heart, and mind. Below the path, you will see a tri-part waterfall, most likely with a line of people waiting to take a sip. Pilgrims drink the water in hopes of taking in some of that purifying, healing energy from this natural spring that has been flowing for over a thousand years.

Before all of this, however, you will see the entrance to the Zuigu-do (just before the Hondo). For a ¥100 donation, you can take part in the "Womb Pilgrimage" here. This will lead you underground into a tunnel that is indeed pitch-dark. Eventually you will come upon a stone with Sanskrit writing that symbolizes Zuigu Bosatsu, a bodhisattva said to grant all requests. By having faith and entering into the darkness, your prayers will be answered. Coming out of the dark, you are reborn.

There are many other buildings, including gates, other enshrined images, and picturesque pagodas at this temple. For information about some of the other architectural features at Kiyomizudera, check out [Sacred Japan](#).

Emily Lemmon





## Pilgrimage to Kitty-chan Land

### So why does anyone come

to Japan? To be reborn into the manga world? To experience how high tech it is (then realise they still use fax machines)? To dress up in a kimono and call yourself a geisha?

None of the above.

They come to meet Hello Kitty of course! OK so I'm now officially out of the Kawaii Kloset. I was definitely not in there alone, so all you Sanrio lovers come out and show your red bow-wearing selves.

It wasn't hard to track down Hello Kitty aka Kitty Chan. She lives in an obscure part of Tokyo with all her other furry friends, all of which I grew up with; it was like being raised alongside animals with strangely large heads, quite possibly due to myxomatosis.

The lead up to the all indoor land was almost as traumatically exciting as the place itself. The building is this huge, pastel coloured castle that emerges from the dull landscape of Tama New Town. Totally out of place, it looked like it should be on top of a cloud in a Kiki Lala scene. The grand, rainbow-arch entrance sits at the end of a foot bridge with uninterested traffic

flowing beneath; acting as a moat for the wondrous fortress of Kitty Chan.

It's not a secret that in Japan, kawaii has no age limit; I'm not the oldest one in the staffroom to own a Hello Kitty lunch bag, or stamp set, or post-its, or *calendar* (ok so I might be the only one with a calendar) but in a true non-ageist way, I was welcomed with warm, open, Dear Daniel arms into Sanrio Puroland.

You'd expect Puro Village would look like something Tinkerbell spewed up but it's far(ish) from it. It's actually a dimly lit indoor forest with a huge tree dominating the centre, a very natural setting, well, as natural as plastic foliage can get. No pink anywhere, yet.

When the Sugar Bunnies' clock struck twelve, we, along with a crowd of elementary school children in matching pink hats, headed to the Gourmet Bazaar, one of the three restaurants in the park (and the only one open on this pleasant Friday day), for lunch. It was set out like a food hall serving almost everything in Sanrio souvenirs. The clear choice was a Kitty Chan bento box with a My Melody mini-mug full of ice cream. Twenty minutes was spent being truly

Asian – taking photos of the food. Aesthetics were definitely the best part of that meal; let's just say Hello Kitty's face does not taste good (like that's much of a surprise).

Raring as ever after only being semi satisfied by what may as well have been cat food; it was time to explore the land. It would have been rude not to show your face at Miss Kitty's house. She's a somewhat international sensation and boy does she know it. Parked outside her all pink home was herself reincarnated as a convertible. Her multibillion yen enterprise sure has not kept her grounded. Almost everything found in her oh-so-humble abode is in the shape of her face, including her tub. When we finally got a peek at the Queen of the castle, the cutest Japanese toddler I have ever seen was busy being entranced by her. Mesmerized by the cupcake dress and fur, she didn't want to release from their hug.

Kitty gave us a cheeky snap and we were off again.

By 2pm a group had formed around the Wisdom Tree: Show time. Lights, camera (sumimasen – no flash), action!

A parade of all the Sanrio characters imaginable flooded the floors and of course Kitty Chan had to make her show stopping entrance via the roof. Lots of singing and dancing was highlighted by the mecha kawaii school kids all trying so hard to remember the dance routine rehearsed only minutes before. The over enthused dancers and poor, stuffy characters were outshone by the skills of the 'oh-my-god-how-young' acrobats. What a way to steal the *Believe* show. That, followed by twenty minutes of milking the 'Bye Bye' was the show in all.

Exhausted from watching the show, a well-deserved browse of the shops was in order. An over whelming amount of merchandise towers over you in the store. It's safe to put out there that Hello Kitty has really whored herself out. Yes, I'm her biggest fan, but she is on everything. There is nothing those Sanrio lot can't turn her into – she's even been transformed into a nikuman!

You only need half a day in Sanrio Puroland to supply you with your kawaii fix for a lifetime. It's a place to get dragged round by your crazed girlfriend or enjoyed with

a bunch of Kitty Klones like yourself, or for you closet fans, I'd advise you to borrow a toddler to hide your shame. For me, it was Mecca.

### Ticket Prices

#### Adult

Welcome Ticket: ¥3,000  
Passport Ticket: ¥4,400  
Advanced Passport: ¥4,000

#### Youth (12 – 17)

Welcome Ticket: ¥2,700  
Passport Ticket: ¥3,700  
Advanced Passport: ¥4,000

#### Junior (4 – 11)

Welcome Ticket: ¥2,000  
Passport Ticket: ¥3,000  
Advanced Passport: ¥3,300

### Opening Times

Varies weekly, check *website* for details. Generally around 10:00 – 17:00

### For more info

Visit the *website*. (In English)

Cherie Pham





## Rive Gauche: Vietnamese Cuisine

**Growing up in England with** two Asian parents, both of whom previously lived in Vietnam, meant inevitably I was to be exposed to the eastern delights of Vietnamese home cooking. The half a year I have spent in Japan has been filled with sushi dates, ramen meet ups and sober soba get-togethers but alas my Pho-dar was acting up and it was time to submerge myself into a bowl of the soupy stuff.

Pho (フオ) is a type of Vietnamese rice noodle served in a clear broth, usually with meats or veggies and topped with coriander, bean sprouts and a good wedge of lemon. It's a recipe my grandmother passed onto my mother and to all my aunts; it's a meal that summarises my childhood. So finding the perfect pho would be like visiting home.

**Rive Gauche** is the southern bank of the river Seine in Paris and also the namesake of a very sophisticated looking Vietnamese restaurant in the basement of a white, stone building. The building itself stands out architecturally in the Yodoyobashi business district. Entering the restaurant felt like being transported into Europe; the winding stone steps lead to a heavy wooden door; behind the door was a very elegant-looking hangout for suave

Japanese trendsetters. I figured the name was a reflection of the French-Vietnamese connection but the host simply said "the boss likes France".

We were seated beside a window with faux vine leaves hanging outside of it; the décor was minimal but chic, vintage posters of French airlines with Vietnamese models decorated the walls. The bar was sat on a slight platform with the handsome, barman peering through hung glasses and liquor bottles. The setting was comfortable with the right amount of space between tables for one not to be tempted to eavesdrop on other diners' conversations.

I was on a mates' date and we were not afraid to share so we dismissed the set menu and selected a pick 'n' mix off the à la carte. We started with the fresh prawn rolls with plum dipping sauce (バイン・クオン ¥720), a signature Vietnamese dish. The pink prawns wrapped in a mixture of mint leaves, coriander, lettuce and vermicelli were unsurprisingly crisp and fragrant. Getting this simple starter was key to the success of the night, may the night continue.

The modestly named 'Seafood Salad' (ゴイ ハーイ・サーン ¥1,050) came next. A huge China bowl arrived covered with a temporary lid made of deep fried rice paper.



### Details

**Menu:** Japanese  
**English:** Some English speaking waiters  
**Vegetarians:** Suitable  
**Website:** *Japanese* – some photos!  
**Address:** 3-3-3 Fushimimachi, Chuo-ku, Osaka (050-5798-3457)



### Opening times:

**Lunch:** 11:30 ~ 14:00 ¥1000~  
**Cafe:** 14:00 ~ 17:30 ¥1000~  
**Dinner:** 17:30 ~ 23:00 (L.O.22:30)  
¥1000 – 3000

### Nearest subway:

Yodoyabashi  
(Osaka subway line)

Breaking through the rice paper gave the same satisfaction as cracking a crème brûlée. Tossing the salad revealed the contents; squid tentacles, prawns holding round scallops all among lettuce and a zingy, light dressing. This was complimented with the crisp, weightless taste of Vietnamese white wine (¥550 by the glass).

The next addition to the free-for-all was described as Vietnamese okonomiyaki (バイン・カオ ¥1,260). It looks like a folded omelette without the eggs. The pancake is made up of rice flour, water and coconut milk and the filling was fresh herbs beansprouts and pork. Accompanied by handy pictured instructions, this was a completely fool-proof dish! It came with a nuoc cham sauce: Vietnam in bottle. It's fishy, has a slight chili heat, and is a little sweet. There's no other comparable condiment. Step one was to cut the pancake, step two: wrap in lettuce leaf, step 3: pour nuoc cham all over it, step 4: remember the food you've been missing. It's a great sharing dish; something you can literally get your hands into.

In the true fashion of saving the best 'til last, we ordered beef pho (フオボー ¥980) to complete the date. A medium-sized bowl held the contents of my childhood; my heart sank a little as pho

is usually served in generous helpings in near-basin sized crockery. But by this point I could realistically only finish half the bowl, a perfect amount. The soup had been made well, the flavours from the hours of simmering stock came through in a meaty liquid form, the newly added chili and lemon spiced up the warm pho. The beef was served rare and rightly so, the thin slices cooked as you bathed each piece. I wasn't quite hit with nostalgia but the aromas, tastes and textures of all the dishes served impressed this half Vietnamese diner.

Vietnamese food is best served with no frills, it's simple cooking with no room for pretentious add-ons, saying this, I enjoyed Rive Gauche as a welcoming, sophisticated backdrop for the fresh tastes of south-east Asia that I so dearly missed.

*Cherie Pham*





*Nearly time for shorts!*