



HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY



CONTENTS

MESSAGES

from the Editor 3

from the PR.....4

REGULAR FEATURES

Maigo in Hyogo.....4

English Sensei Spirit 5

Travel Japan: Takamatsu 6

Getting to know Random JETs 8

I Heart T-Points: Casshern 12

Eats: Pizza King 16

Recipe: Ichigo Daifuku
& Margarita Chicken 18

FEATURES

Nippon no Seikatsu Meccha Omoroi..... 10

Spring Vacation...What To Do? 12

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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 20th of each month to:
publications@hyogo.ajet.net

http://hyogoajet.net/wiki/Hyogo_Times

We're also on Facebook!

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

BY MATTHEW STOTT



Another school year swiftly draws to a close, and for many of us the Spring holidays will mark the beginning of the end of our sojourn in Japan. The final stretch. A long night bus to Yokohama for the Returning JETs' conference, there to schmooze and to network and to press the flesh, then it's time to begin saying farewell to all the old familiar haunts and faces. And to Facebook all those photos you've been meaning to get around to, lest you find yourself still doing it six months after you've returned home. Two of the things I'll miss the most are the onsen and the cheap beer, and I'll miss even more the places where you can combine the two, such as Spa World. Cards. And beer. Inside an onsen. Oh, Japan!

For those who have decided to kick on, it's time to take stock of the year that has just gone by. What will you do differently with the new contingent of *ichinensei*, now that you have hindsight and bitter experience to guide you? Are you really going to sit the kids boy-girl boy-girl again? Are you honestly considering continuing your policy of handing out the worksheets before you've explained the task? Are you seriously going to continue giving patient, carefully-crafted and enunciated instructions to a class only to have them translated into Japanese, whether you asked for such translations or not? Whatever mistakes you—I mean, we—I mean, I may have made in the past, Term One gives us a chance to start afresh. (That is, of course, assuming you have

time enough to plan a few lessons after having to move to a new desk again.) I heartily recommend *Planet Eigo*, which has never failed me in the past as a source of lesson ideas, but why not also look through the back catalogue of the Hyogo Times, especially the section marked "English Sensei Spirit." One of the main reasons I've tried to maintain this section—and one of the reasons why I personally consider it the most important element of our publication—is that English Sensei Spirit articles are written by those who actually teach in Japanese classrooms. I hope you find it useful; indeed I hope you find it so useful that you're inspired to share with us a few teaching ideas of your own!

Anyway, the time for planning for Term 1 is still some way off. For now, there are plum blossoms to gawk at, and ume-shu to sip in their shade. Nothing says Spring like reclining on your back, the warm sun glinting overhead through the leaves, and a horrible cramping sensation in your stomach that can only be the wages of having wolfed down the bento and several cups of ume-shu. (Why do I never learn?)

—Matt Stott

Heya,

On behalf of AJET, I have two brief announcements:

1 The AJET elections are on, and voting closes on the 26th. The members of the National AJET Council are the voice of JETs throughout the whole of Japan, and because of this it is important to get your vote in for the person whom you wish to represent your block. Go to ajet.net for more information, and to register your vote visit ajet.net/elections.

2 The AJET Peer Support Group is recruiting! PSG, at 050-5534-5566, is a listening and referral service which operates on the principles of confidentiality and anonymity. They are open to all JET Programme participants every night of the year, from 8:00 pm to 7:00 am—a period when other services such as the Tokyo English Life Line (TELL) are not in service, and when Prefectural Advisors (PAs) are often unavailable.

PSG volunteers are all current JET Programme participants. Whether you've had a bad day at work, need to see a doctor at 3:00 am or just want to speak English with someone, the volunteers at PSG are available to listen.

For more information, the PSG National Coordinator can be contacted anytime at psg@ajet.net.

Cheers!
—Goran

MAIGO IN HYOGO



Talk about your dead giveaways. Know where in Hyogo this is? Of course you do. But humour me anyway and post it in the Facebook discussion pages.

Last month's Maigo in Hyogo: Costco, as guessed correctly by Sean Fitz.

ESS Emergencies!

Four ideas for when you've run out of ideas . . .

BY MATTHEW STOTT, CHIP BOLES AND EMMA NICOLETTI

Pass the Ball

All you need for this activity is a soft or light ball—or, failing that, a scrunched-up piece of paper. Have the students stand with you in a circle. Make a statement such as “My name's Matt, and I like hiking,” then toss the ball to a student, who repeats the “My name's x, and I like y-ing” formula and tosses the ball to a different student, and so on until everyone has had a turn.

Eventually, a student will toss the ball to you again. This time, repeat back to her what she had just said—e.g. “Your name's Haruka and you like singing.”—then toss her the ball. She does likewise with the person from whom she'd previously received the ball, and so on back through the order to the first student, who repeats your initial statement and returns the ball to you.

This getting-to-know-you activity also works well as a warm-up, or you could use it to welcome the new ESS members next term. It can be adapted to any theme or grammar point you wish.

Timetable

Give each student a small (A5) sheet of paper and a marker. Tell them to draw a timeline across the middle of the sheet, and to mark on the timeline two important dates (i.e. years) in their lives, without telling anyone else the significance of the dates. Then, working in pairs, they ask each other questions to try to find

out what the dates represent. Demonstrate the activity beforehand by drawing your own timeline on the board and getting the students to ask you questions about the dates important to you.

Note: You can either make this activity more “game-like” by restricting the students to yes-no questions only, or you can make it more conversational by putting on the whiteboard language that will encourage the students to use English, such as “Did you . . .”, “Were you . . .”, “Why . . .” and so on.

(I learned “Pass the Ball” and “Timetable” from instructors at Language Resources Kobe, where I am currently taking the CELTA course.)

Chip's Drawing Game

By Chip Boles. Aptly enough, it's a drawing game . . .

Make up a crazy sentence and write it down at the top of a sheet of paper

1. Pass it to the person on your right/left.
2. Read the sentence on their paper and draw a picture of it.
3. Fold down the paper so the sentence isn't visible.
4. Pass it again.
5. Write a sentence for the picture. Repeat 2-6. Long sheets work best.

The Memory Game

By Emma Nicoletti

Make an alphabetical list of animals with about three animals per letter (for example, ant, alligator, ape). Divide the

students into groups of 4 to 8. Give each group an animal list and ask each student to choose an animal that starts with the same letter as their first name (for example, Kana might choose kangaroo). Write the following sentence on the board: “My name is (student's name) and I like (chosen animal).” Ask students to memorise this sentence with their information. Have the students play janken to decide the order in which they will speak. The first student says: “My name is Kana and I like kangaroos.” The second student says: “Her name is Kana and she like kangaroos. My name is Yuka and I like yaks.” The third student, starting from the first student, says: “Her name is Kana and she like kangaroos. Her name is Yuka and she like yaks. My name is Mai and I like monkeys.” The game continues with each new student starting from the first student and adding their own information.

Helpful hints:

- To make the game more difficult, make bigger groups.
- Include pictures on the alphabetical animal list, and help students to pronounce the words as you check on them.
- Demonstrate how to play with your JTE. I usually get the JTE pretend to be the first and third students, while I pretend to be the second and fourth students.

Have the groups race each other. Ask the first student from the fastest group to introduce their group to the class. ●

Takamatsu

Kagawa-Ken, Shikoku

BY LAUREN MCRAE

Takamatsu is situated at the top north-east corner of Shikoku in Kagawa prefecture. It is accessible from the main island (Honshu) by the Seto bridge, which starts near Okayama and connects to Sakaide near Takamatsu, and the Akashi Kaikyo bridge, which links Akashi on the main island with Naruto on Shikoku via Awaji.

The must-see sights of Takamatsu are the garden,

the look-out at Yashima and Shikokumura.

Ritsurin koen is the beautiful garden in Takamatsu. It was created in the 1600s and has ponds, lookouts, tearooms and bridges. The garden is open from sunrise to sunset. It is easiest to catch a bus to the garden from the station but you can also take the train.

Yashima is a 292 metre high volcanic plateau which has amazing views of the countryside, city and the Inland sea. You can take a bus,

cable car, hike or drive up the mountain. Once at the top you'll see Yashima-ji (number 84 on the 88 temple circuit), an aquarium, souvenir stores and some *ryokan*. We planned our trip up Yashima to see the sunset and the night view.

Shikoku-mura is a park situated at the bottom of Yashima, featuring many old buildings and traditional houses from all over Shikoku and the neighbouring islands. It is a large park, so you should allow 1-2 hours to walk around, especially if you want to visit

the art museum. Shikoku-mura has a traditional vine suspension bridge and a kabuki stage from Shodo Island among many other historical buildings. The art museum was designed by Tadao Ando. There is an additional fee to enter the art gallery, but it is cheaper if you buy a combination ticket.

We stayed at the Pearl Hotel Takamatsu in a very small double room that was clean, close to the station and a very reasonable ¥ 6000. There are other business hotels near the station similar in price, but the

hotels near the shopping area are a little more expensive.

A trip to Kagawa prefecture is not complete without experiencing *sanuki udon*. Before visiting Takamatsu I thought udon was just udon, but after trying *sanuki udon* I realized there is a difference! *Sanuki udon* is delicious; it has a different texture and taste and is definitely a must-try in Kagawa prefecture. Prices range from about ¥450 - ¥1000 for *sanuki udon*, and for ¥2500 you can eat *kazoku* (family) udon: a huge wooden bucket of udon with enough to share between four people!

Two days and one night in Takamatsu is enough to see its main attractions, but the city itself is a good starting point to access other places of interest in Shikoku. Some places you might like to consider visiting include the famous Dogo Onsen (hot spring) in Ehime prefecture, and Iya Valley, with its vine suspension bridges, in Tokushima prefecture. And Kochi prefecture is full of beautiful beaches made for camping and surfing. ●

GETTING THERE :

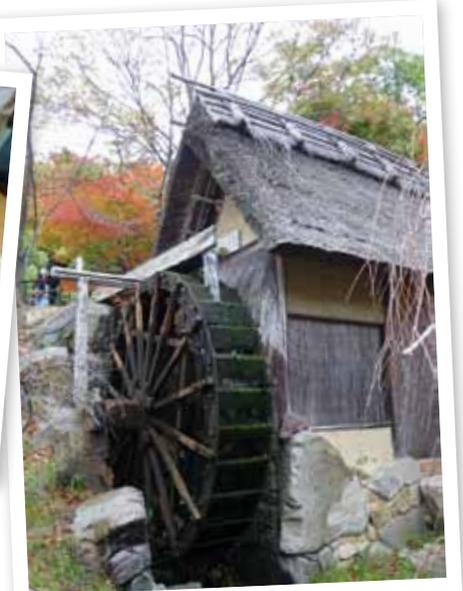
- From Himeji, take a JR train to Takamatsu via Okayama, it takes about 3hrs and will go over the Seto bridge.
- There is a bus (Hankyu "Sanuki Express") which leaves from Osaka going to Takamatsu. It takes about 4 hours.
- Or there are ferries that leave from Kobe Port that take 2 - 4 hours, depending on the speed.

RESERVATION :

Pearl Hotel (087-822-3382): a small double is ¥6000. Toyoko Inn (www.toyoko-inn.com/eng): single rooms are ¥5800 and a double/twin is ¥7800.

PRICES:

The total one way cost via train is ¥3500; one way by bus from Kobe is about ¥5000 and by ferry from Kobe it can range from ¥2500 up to ¥6500 depending on the speed of the ferry. Business hotels range from ¥6000 to ¥8000. Entrance to Ritsurin Koen is ¥350. Entrance to Shikokumura is ¥800, or ¥1200 if you buy the combination ticket for the park and museum.



GETTING TO KNOW RANDOM JETS



THE BASICS

Name: Matt Pockat

Please call me: Whatever you want, really.

School and Location in Hyogo: Yabu Chugakko, Yabu-Shi, up in Tajima. You southern types might call it Northern Hyogo.

How we know you: If you live in Tajima or have been up from the south for a party in Tajima, you've very likely been drunk at my house.

Birthday: April 19th, 1984.

Born and raised: On a goat farm outside of Ripon, Wisconsin. Birthplace of the Republican Party, much to my endless joy.

Family: Dad is a company vice-president who spends his free time riding a tractor, mom's the full-time farmer and art weirdo, middle brother is an engineer who already owns a house and my youngest brother has like 8 computers...which is significant?

University and Degree: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Urban Education.

Other jobs you've had: Barista, gardener for rich folks, Milwaukee Parks worker (tree cutting, tree planting, pesticide spraying, sign-fixing, invasive species destroying, old people appeasing, huge truck driving), Marketing Intern, thrift shop worker and Panera dish-bitch. But my first job, of course, was farm kid.

Travels: Not much. Candela, Mexico; Northern Ireland and Glasgow, Scotland. It was rainy. Oh, and I just did Thailand.

Hobbies: Soccer, ultimate Frisbee, swimming/snorkeling/scuba, pool, writing, studying Japanese and *shodo*. Also, mountain-road-wandering. Does that count?
Staying another year? Yeah. My life back home was sweet, but I get paid way better here, and the food is healthier.

FAVORITES

Food: Cheese (Wisconsin's stereotype is largely true), Persian/Arabian/Turkish, *donburi*, ramen, gumbo, chili, neo-hippie vegetarian/vegan fare (Preferably cooked by a hungover dude with a beard and an expensive fixed-gear and served by a dreadlocked chick in skinny-jeans who smells like Nagchampa and cigarettes and both have tattoos everywhere; you know it's legit then), drunk-ass local greasy pizza from back home (doubled as a drug front, what fun!), anything with dark gravy involved, fruit and veggies off the vine/stem/thingy.

Sports: Soccer, American football (Green Bay Packers fan, and no, I don't hate Favre. He's too beautiful), volleyball.

Music: That boot up the terrorist's ass song by Toby Keith, on forever-loop. And the remix.

Shop: Thrift stores and the interwebs.

TV Show: *The Daily Show with John Stewart/Colbert Report, Farscape, NFL, Trailer Park Boys.*

Movie: *The Royal Tenenbaums, Princess Bride, Quentin Tarantino junk.*

RANDOM TRIVIA

Proudest Achievement: Either getting here or getting my Scuba Certificate. When I was in 3rd grade I used to tear chunks of flesh from people who tried to get me into the deep end of the pool. Now I hang out at 18 meters. A mite bit nervously, I'll admit.

Best life experience: Snorkeling in the Florida Keys. I swam alongside a huge-ass sea turtle for like five minutes. Changed my whole perspective on shit, man.

Motto to live by: Not everything is

serious business.

I remember when... I got busted for skinny dipping with 15 people from my social action group when I lived in Milwaukee last year. We had gone to the lakefront after a meeting, had some drinks and lost our clothes. No tickets, though! Just confused cops and a stern lecture. I came home wearing the wrong underwear, though.

What are you drinking? Whiskey and coke. However, I'm dying for some microbrews from back home, and a good Bloody Mary.

Who would you like to meet? My dead Grandpa Tom, again.

Why should we elect you President of the World? You probably shouldn't. But, you wouldn't be seeing anti-abortion billboards anymore. And your gay cousin could get married. And there'd be a lot of dead corporate execs, lesser-tyrants, FOX News doods and snake-oil religious salesmen. It's that old, boring song; you've heard it before.

Best thing about Japan so far? From the food to the forests, rivers, and oceans and clean cities, there's just this atmosphere of like...everything being orderly, calm and composed, neatly trimmed and fitting together (or it gets pounded down.) Which is likely why we're always asked when we're going home, cuz we keep disturbing it.

If it was my last day on earth I would... Give all my crap away, and buy everybody drinks. Jumping out of planes wastes valuable carousing time.

Interesting Fact about me: I've had a piece of bamboo stuck in my arm since the 5th or 6th grade from a bamboo sword duel with my middle brother. Turns out bamboo shatters spectacularly.

TEACHING:

Top tip for teaching: I'm a junior high ALT. We are parrots for the most part. The teachers have a time-table and it revolves around Ken's interest in damn grasslands, gracious, nature-minded Japanese Kumi teaching her stupid, clownish American boyfriend Paul (those

two are always together, man, what the hell else do you think is going on? Wonder if it ain't propaganda meant for Japan's young females regarding the oncoming population crisis by some extremely liberal educators who aren't overwhelmingly terrified of the idea of tainting Japan's pristine genetic pool. "Hook up with cheerful, goofy foreigner (who are, coincidentally, if from an English speaking country, 99% blonde!) Deal with foreigner's dire ignorance in charming and graceful manner. Save Japan despite corrupting the blood, omfg") and taking seven months to get to the word "Who." I did write some "advice" but I decided it was worthless and I needed to trim this down by 250 characters.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... Mess with them.

Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? What for?

Funniest Story involving a student: I used to live in the population of 4,000 stretched along 25 kilometers of half mile-wide-at-most mountain valley town of Sekinomiya, where the ALT house is literally ten feet from the school itself. Anyway, the students have a school garden next to aforementioned house that they regularly maintain, and one day I had a friend over and I hopped in the shower. The Volleyball team 3rd year girls were in the garden that day, and they decided to see if they could watch me shower. The windows in the shower are that blurred glass that you can only see like, a vague form through, but I turned around and there was a girl watching me and saying "I can see him! I can see him!" My friend informed me that they had an extended discussion of how good the shower smelled and how much they like me. Swell. The person living there now, Erica Reynolds, hopefully doesn't have the same experience with the boys. That place has zero privacy.

THE BASICS

Name: Jonathan Shalfi

Please call me: Shalfi

School and Location in Hyogo: Harima-Minami SHS in Harima-cho, and a night school in Akashi

How we know you: I wrote that haiku three months ago!

Birthday: September 17, 1986

Born and raised: Tenafly, NJ, right outside NYC

Family: Mom, Dad, older Sister

University and Degree: Columbia U, Civil Engineering

Other jobs that you have had: Construction engineer (go figure)

Travels: I've been to *both* artificial islands in my town

Hobbies: Hiking, trains and exploring Motomachi

Staying another year? You bet

FAVORITES

Food: American style brunch. Can anyone tell me where to get some around here?

Sports: Soft-tennis (that's a joke)

Music: Daft Punk and Maroon 5

Shop: Loft. Come on!!!

TV Show: *The Sopranos*

Movie: *American Psycho*

RANDOM TRIVIA

Most Proud Achievement: Deciding to do the JET program

Best life experience: The Fukusaki Autumn Festival last year. I have never felt so included by strangers.

Motto to live by: Do what you can, when you can

I remember when... my elementary

school first got the internet. It was dial-up AOL, and we'd sneak onto chat rooms when the teacher wasn't looking

What are you drinking? Water
Who would you like to meet? Hayao Miyazaki

Why should we elect you President of the World? I would make the environment my top priority
Best thing about Japan so far? The awesome ATMs that can turn the page in your passbook

If it was my last day on earth I would... write letters to everyone I know
Interesting Fact about me: I was caught by the RIAA for downloading music in college

TEACHING:

My top tip for teaching: If it's not fun for you, it's not fun for the students. Plan activities that *you'll* enjoy doing.

When the class is TOO QUIET I... know the lesson isn't working. But sometimes it's the class that's the problem. As long as the the majority of my students like a lesson I'm fine with a bad class here or there

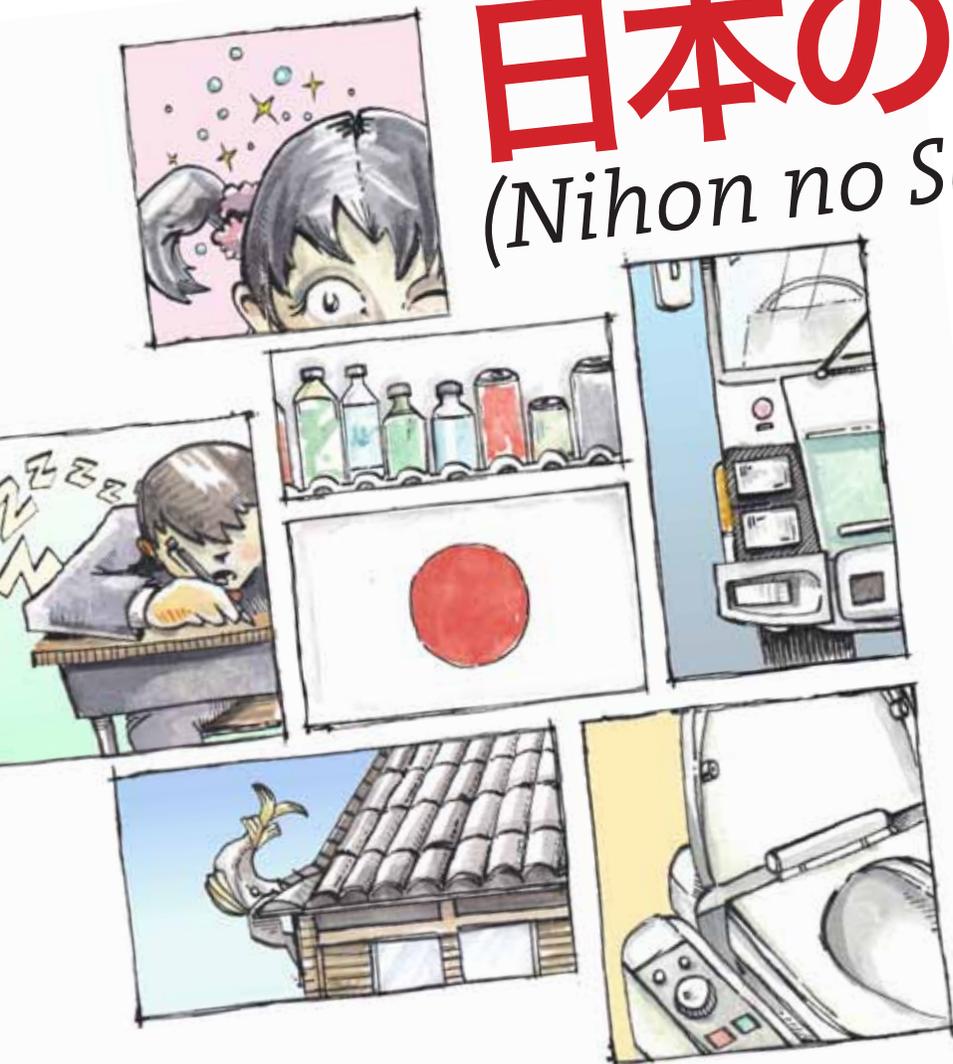
Bribery for students.. YAY or NAY? YAY. Kit-kats are my students' favorite.

And not only does candy work on students, you can also use it to get on the good side of your fellow staff

Funniest Story involving a student: The cutest little girl mispronounced something so it sounded like the f-word and no one knew. I couldn't stop cracking up.



日本の生活 めっちゃおもろい (Nihon no Seikatsu Meccha Omoroi)



- TOILETS ARE THE BEST!!! They are warm and shoot water at your ass hole. The toilet also dries it for you and it has a tap at the top, so after you piss or crap you flush the toilet and wash your hands.
- Japanese stairs are mega steep!!
- Trains are way better than Australia's. You can nearly explore the whole of Japan by train.
- *Kansaiben* is way more interesting than normal Japanese.

SCHOOL LIFE

- The first day of school from the holidays only lasts 2 hours because [there is] only assembly.
- Not all schools are traditional. E.g. Seiryu S.H.S. students don't have to wear slippers—only in the gym.
- Public/school toilets are kinda in the open.
- If you're an exchange student you will be stared at, talked about but rarely approached.
- Japanese students are so immature. E.g. boys and girls don't mix AT ALL!! If you do, you will be accused of liking them.
- STUDENTS SLEEP DURING CLASS. Record: 22 people sleeping out of 40 people.
- Japanese people are good at

- shoving 60 people in a, maybe, 5 metre bus.
- They have an American football club in Japan . . .
- Boys are very perverted!! They teach you bad words the first day you arrive.
- Students stay in one class and teachers come to them, with some exceptions.
- Before sports class they run . . . and your hands fall off. Well, they get frozen until they die and come back to life.
- Only heads that are up in class are the teacher's and Australian students'.
- Teachers don't seem to care if students sleep. I mean they see them sleeping but don't do anything.
- People compete to see who can draw the best during class.
- Some girls faint when they hear the name "Yamapi."
- Girls act cute but sometimes just seem hyper.
- The only time you see boys and girls together is when they are a couple.
- Buses are the reverse of Australia's. Enter in the middle, pay ¥200 when leaving from the front.
- At Seiryu SHS, you can almost bring anything to school, except weapons of course.

- English in Japan is surprisingly hard.
 - Most girls are short. When I mean short, I mean shorter than me because I'm not tall.
- ### SOCIETY AND CULTURE
- プリクラ is only taken by girls or couples. I don't care . . .
 - Japanese TV is also kick-ass. The へえ〜 show is the best. It has interesting facts, and celebrities have a button and can press up to 20 times, and the number of "へえ〜" depends on how interesting the fact is.
 - Shop people are ULTRA POLITE! *Blink blink*

- Shop peoples' "ありがとう" sound SOOO funny!!
- Not many people like anime in Japan.
- Not all houses are conventional. Some don't use slippers.
- Japanese people don't stick their butts out when taking photos.
- Some students get home later than 8pm.
- Apparently I look like a Japanese singer . . . *silence*
- Japanese aren't THAT bad at karaoke.
- No matter how many people say you will miss your family, you always want to stay for longer. ●

BY MATT LIM
ILLUSTRATION BY RYAN PARKER (IDRAWGOODART.COM)

[Editor's introduction:] You may be aware of the sister-state relationship that exists between Hyogo and Western Australia: it explains why so many JETs in our prefecture hail from that barren corner of the planet. Another outcome of the partnership has been a flourishing student-exchange programme. Every year, somewhere in Hyogo, planeloads of Australian secondary school students get to sample life within the austere walls of a Japanese high school. In 2006, one such student spent some time at Seiryu High School in Tarumi. Here's what he saw . . .

FIRST IMPRESSIONS

- Nearly everything in Japan talks.
- It is very, very crowded and you can't find a park anywhere.
- You can't go anywhere without being 50 to 75m from a vending machine.
- The traffic lights are very strange. When cars turn, pedestrians have right of way.

Standard Japanese vs. かんさいべん

なぜ/どうして Why	なんでやねん Nandeyanen
とても Very	めっちゃ Meccha
おもしろい Interesting	おもろい Omoroi
わからない Don't understand	わからへん Wakaraheng
知らない Don't know	しらん Shiran
さようなら Bye Bye	ほな Hona
何をしていますか What are you doing now?	何しとん Nanishidong
おこっていません I'm not angry	きれてないすよ Kiretenaissuyo

SPRING VACATION

... what to do?

BY MATTHEW STOTT



Exams are over, the students have gone home (only to return daily in their uniforms for club activities, bless 'em), and you've packed up your desk ready to move a few rows down. The weather's getting warmer, and the last thing you want to do with your free time is to spend it drooling and asleep on your desk in the teacher's room. So here are some alternatives.

“What is more mortifying than to feel that you have missed the plum for want of courage to shake the tree?”

(Logan Pearsall Smith)

If you can't wait for the cherry blossoms and simply must yield to the urge to ogle flowers, don't forget that plum blossom season is just around the corner. One of Hyogo's prime locations for perving on plum petals has to be Ayabeyama Plum Grove Park in Tatsuno, boasting 20,000 plum trees, public toilets with a distinctively Japanese lack of privacy, and an alcoholic beverage—*amazake*—that looks a lot like the deposit a baby leaves on your shoulder when it has wind. The park's open until March 22, and is 30 minutes by bus from JR Aboshi station.

Other great plum-viewing locations within shouting distance of Hyogo include Osaka Castle Park, and Expo Park (Banpaku-koen) in Suita.

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth.*

(Robert Frost)

Partaken too excessively in the pleasures of the table over winter? Spring is a great time to hike off those extra kilos, and those of you living near Kobe have no excuse. The Rokko mountains are a hiker's paradise,

covered in trails from Suma and Suzurandai in the west to Ashiya and Arima in the east, and maps can easily be found in most bookstores. My personal favourite is “Totoyamichi”, a famous route once used by fisherman to carry their wares from the Seto Sea to Arima, via Ashiya Rock Garden and Mt. Rokko. But for those preferring a less taxing mountain hike, I recommend Sumaura-koen and the Suma Alps, which are also great for plum-blossom viewing.

Those of you living farther west might consider the coastal trails of the Setonaikai National Park: Akomisaki in Ako City, and Kanegasaki in Aioi.

I would much rather have men ask why I have no statue than why I have one. (Cato)

Spend too much time in the brisk mountain air amidst Rokko's breathtaking peaks and dales, and you might almost forget where you are. Give yourself a good-old-fashioned dose of Japanese weirdness by taking the JR to Shin-nagata Station, where you will meet one *Tetsujin 28-go*, an 18-metre tall, 50-tonne Kobe local, pumping its fist in the air as if the wind changed at a Def Leppard concert. “Iron Man Number 28” is made of steel and was built using earthquake-restoration funds. Why is an absolute bloody mystery. But do go and pay your respects.

“There must be quite a few things that a hot bath won't cure, but I don't know many of them.” (Sylvia Plath)

You may, on the other hand, just want to chill. Oddly enough, the best place I can think of for doing that is Spa World, the mother of all *supaa sento* on the south side of Osaka's Tsutentaku Tower, and about 5 minutes walk from Shin-Imamiya Station on the Loop Line. (You know the abandoned Festival Gate amusement park / shopping mall? It's behind that.) The complex contains a hotel, a gym, a restaurant floor, a pool and water park, and two onsens—one European-themed and one Asian-themed. Helpful hint: the Asian one's OK; the European spa kicks ass! If your idea of heaven is scrubbing yourself down with

salt, soaking in a bath of royal jelly, sitting in a hot-tub beside an aquarium, taking a sauna in a ski lodge, then drinking beer and playing cards *inside* an onsen, then Spa World is the place for you. Normal admission is between 2400 and 3000 yen, depending on the time of day, the day of the year, and how long you plan to stay. *However*, they currently have a Winter Campaign lasting until March 31st: 1000yen for all-day entry. ●

Image sources:
Tetsujin 28-go: <http://www.jamaipnase.com/wp-content/uploads/2009/07/tetsujin-28-go.jpg>





Casshern

BY J J CAPPA

THE FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH IS FOR OUR WOMEN READERS: *Casshern* is a tragic romance about a talented government scientist who devotes all of his time to finding a cure for his ailing wife, only to realize that it is impossible to save her. Only her death finally awakens him to the awful truth of his wife's situation; in his obsession, he wasted whatever final valuable moments they

might have had together in his laboratory, experimenting in vain.

THIS PARAGRAPH IS FOR OUR MALE READERS: *Casshern* is science fiction thrill-ride about fascist government-funded mad science that goes horribly wrong. Zombie Frankensteins rise from a pool of science juice and hacked up body parts with one mission; build some robots and destroy all

humans. Things blow up, women and children are shot, senior citizens are euthanized the hard way, and there are ninja swords.

Now that you are pumped up (or weeping) let's talk basics. *Casshern* (キャシャーン) is a 2004 science fiction film directed by Kiriya Kazuaki. It is loosely based on an anime series from the seventies called *Neo-Human Casshern*, and therefore the plot is standard fare for an anime-turned-film. In other words, pay attention or you will get lost in the numerous twists and "shocking" revelations sprinkled

throughout the film. However, nearly every storyline is eloquently wrapped up by the conclusion, a rarity in Japanese entertainment.

There are a number of interesting themes presented in *Casshern* and I suppose it would be a disservice to the director not to briefly mention them. The film takes place in a grim alternate future in which an "Eastern Federation" is slowly defeating "Europa" in a long and overly brutal conflict, leaving in its wake an environment ravaged by nuclear and chemical

warfare. Not to be confused with good guys, this Eastern Federation is portrayed using imagery reminiscent of the Axis Powers. After watching the opening credits alone, you will be well aware that *Casshern* is an environmentalist, antiwar film that will likely touch on Japanese uneasiness with its own role in World War II and will definitely decry the use of nuclear arms.

And then there are the "Neo Humans" of *Casshern*, aberrations born of mad science, genocide and a lightning bolt thrown by a giant god-statue from the heavens. They are not treated with humanity (most are murdered in cold blood shortly after their "birth") and therefore the Neo Humans do not consider themselves true people (the word *ningen* is used in the film). I am reminded of the mantra from Dr. Seuss' *Horton Hears a Who*: "A person's a person, no matter how small." However, this twisted version of the Dr. Seuss' classic is not about acceptance and understanding. Instead, the Whos steal a robot factory and try to eradicate the human race that shunned them.

Special effects make *Casshern* a true sight to behold. In order to make the movie look as good as it does, Kiriya chose to film on a digital backlot, which involves using a green screen instead of traditional sets or on-location shooting; the backgrounds and other goodies are digitally added later. In 2004 this was a relatively new technique. Therefore, *Casshern* does not look nearly as crisp as later films. Nonetheless, Kiriya created a world far grander and artistic than, for example, the stylized

representation of Greece found in *300*. Contemporary audiences surely experienced a great amount of wonder as the camera explored the war-torn cities and beautiful landscapes in *Casshern*.

In addition, Kiriya manipulates the freedom provided by green screen technology in a way that other digital backlot films have not. For example, in *Casshern* characters are occasionally transported in spirit to tranquil places untainted by war and nuclear weaponry. In one such instance, the main character Tetsuya is no longer a superhuman named Casshern, his girlfriend Luna is no longer dying; in an instant, for an instant, they are given respite from the unforgiving world around them to embrace in peace. These scenes are not flashbacks or dreams; Kiriya uses the digital backlot to open up other planes of existence.

The problem with *Casshern* is that as soon as the villains embark on their mission to "kill all humans because they were mean to us" the thought provoking themes get muddled in a series of gunshots, murders, explosions, robot warfare and ninja fight scenes. Wait, I'm sorry. Did I just call that a problem? If you want to see an antiwar film, go watch *Grave of the Fireflies*. Would you prefer an antinuclear movie? The original *Godzilla* should do. Are you an environmentalist? Give *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* a try. Do you want to see some **totally awesome** special effects and the aforementioned robot-ninja-zombie-explosion-murderfest? Then look no further; director Kiriya Kazuaki delivers in *Casshern*.

Thanks for watching! ●



Pizza King

Your king, of pizza.

BY JOSEPH SCHOTT

Hello Hyogo JETs. I'd like to introduce you to my favorite place to go for pizza, but it isn't in Hyogo, it's just inside Okayama. Why would you go all the way out to Okayama just for pizza you say? Well read on to find out.

The short answer is that Pizza King really is the King of pizza. Holy writ, heavenly mandate, I don't know how it started but the simple fact is that a higher power has invested this pizza with divine right, and the borders of its kingdom extend well across Hyogo. The restaurant is located in a small town

called Wake a few steps down from Kamigori, across the river from the train station. The architecture and decoration are very well done, making it feel like someone cut a piece of Kobe and dropped it in the middle of the countryside. The owner and head chef is originally from Iran, and has a few books of photography of the surrounding area's architecture and historical sites that you can look at while you wait for your food. There are several hookahs up on shelves, and after dinner they will usually bring you some traditional sweets and tea.

But why is the pizza so delicious? Well, apart from the investment of divine energy from above, there are lots of reasons; they employ quality ingredients, have a lot of variety on the menu, and most importantly, cook their pizza in a wood fire oven. This is superior to other pizza baking methods for two simple reasons. On a metal baking sheet, the moisture evaporating from underneath the dough cannot escape and leaves the bottom of the pizza soggy and gross, like a preschooler who drank too much juice before getting on the bus. The stone used in wood fired ovens however, is porous and allows that moisture to escape, making the pizza crispy and delicious. Everyone wins. The second reason is that while a metal baking sheet can get really hot, it's thin and

never actually holds very much total heat. Cold dough plonking down on a metal baking sheet will cause the temperature to drop, and as the baking sheet struggles to gradually reheat, like an errant vassal trying to find its way back into the king's good graces, the dough will begin its cooking adventure at a low temperature. The different dough components will cook out of order and the whole thing will come out wrong. Stone has such a high heat capacity that it doesn't even notice the pizza, and so everything cooks fast and right.

Once you eat this pizza, you might even agree to bringing back the old custom of *droit de seigneur*. My recommendation is try the pizzas with basil sauce. There's nothing better than bits of crisped basil covering your pizza from end to end. Anyway you look at it, it's a nice way to spend a Sunday. Head out to Wake, go for a hike in the mountains and when you're feeling good and hungry come down and request of our liege a bite to eat. You'll be glad you did. ●

Prices: 1,500 – 2,100 yen for a pie. Consider this an act of generosity befitting our feudal lord, and just be glad you don't have to tithe anymore, you dirty peasant.

Location: Five minute walk from JR Wake Station, directions below.

Website: <http://www.momoto.net/food/pizaking/index>.





Kechina Kitchen: Keeping Costs Low in the Kitchen Ichigo Daifuku

BY EMMA NICOLETTI

I love soft nougat. I could eat a kilo of it every day and not get tired of it. However, it's not the sickly sweetness that makes this a morish treat for me, rather it's soft nougat's gooey texture. I love the experience of biting into it: each bite treating the mouth to just the right amount of cushiony chewing before yielding into flowing sweetness. Yum!

As you may or may not have noticed, Japan comes minus affordable nougat. Supporting my habit would involve frequenting my local プロミズ branch for credit daily. So, resilient as a junkie after a successful police bust, I have searched for a worthy nougat substitute, and herein have found *ichigo daifuku* (苺大福).

If you haven't tried *ichigo daifuku*, I thoroughly recommend you pop down to

your local conbini and pick some up. Or even better, if you want to impress all your Japanese friends, follow this simple recipe and make it yourself. It's perfect for picnics under blooming plum trees.

Ichigo Daifuku 苺大福 (Makes 2)

100 g *shiratamako* (白玉粉)
90g water
1 teaspoon of sugar
4 small strawberries
Enough *anko* (sweet red bean paste) to cover the strawberries (あんこ)*
2 tablespoons of *katakuriko* (片栗粉)**

* I've never tried making *anko* paste, I just buy the pre-made *anko* from the supermarket. It comes in a bag. There are two types of *anko*: *tsubu an* (which is roughly processed and not as sweet), and *koshi an* (which is very processed and very sweet).

Both are delicious.

** *Shiratamako* and *katakuriko* are both kinds of white flour. *Shiratamako* looks like opaque rock salt, and *katakuriko* looks like corn starch.

1. Mix the *shiratamako*, water and sugar in a bowl. Mix until the *shiratamako* becomes smooth.
2. Heat the mixture in microwave for 1 minute, stir and then heat again for about 30 sec. If you heat it on the stove, mix it continually. IMPORTANT: the mixture is ready when it turns from white to translucent and becomes sticky. You may need to cook for longer or shorter times depending on your microwave.
3. Let the mixture cool
4. Put the *katakuriko* on a board and set to one side
5. Cover each the strawberry in *anko* paste
6. DO NOT WASH YOUR HANDS. If you wash your hands then the *katakuriko* will not stick to them and the *shiratamako* mixture will stick to your hands instead.
7. Cover your hands in *katakuriko*
8. Pick up a ¼ of the *shiratamako* mixture and place an *anko*-covered strawberry in the middle.
9. Keep adding *katakuriko* to your hands as necessary, and wrap the *shiratamako* mixture around the strawberry
10. Repeat stages 7-9 for each strawberry ●

Margarita Glazed Chicken

BY TRAVIS LOVE

This is one of my personal comfort foods. It's quick, it's easy, and it works in Japan. If you can't get the fixings for a margarita, or don't want to use your precious tequila, this also works great with a dry or semidry white wine. Alcohol works great in recipes like this because it dissolves the stuff stuck to the bottom of the pan better than water-based liquids do, and as it cooks, all those lovely flavors become much more prominent. It's called deglazing the pan, and it makes sauces so much better. On with the show!

Ingredients:

- 2 boneless chicken breasts, skinned and cut into bite-sized chunks.
- 1/2 c flour, give or take
- Dash each salt, turmeric, and basil
- 1 margarita, no salt.*
- 1 red bell pepper/capsicum/paprika, cored and sliced into thin strips, or 6-8 Shiitake mushrooms, rinsed and sliced.
- Pinch salt
- 2 Tablespoons oil (I use olive, but anything works.)
- 1 margarita, with salt on the rim of the glass.

Instructions:

1. Mix the flour, salt, turmeric, and basil in a small bowl. Add a touch of cayenne pepper if you like. Coat the chicken chunks in the flour. Set aside.
2. Heat a frying pan over

medium-high heat. Add your oil and swish it around.

3. Add the chicken. Brown the chicken for 3-4 minutes. (In this time, rinse some spinach / ほうれんそう and cut the leaves off for a nice little side salad.)
4. Flip the chicken and add the pepper / shrooms. (Go chop up some carrots and baby tomatoes for that salad.) After 4 minutes or so, add the saltless margarita.
5. Drink the other margarita. Let things go for a bit longer. Add some of the leftover flour from coating the chicken. This will thicken the sauce. Stir occasionally. When the sauce is pretty thick, and things look and smell

delicious, dip a spoon in and taste the sauce. Add a pinch or two of salt if necessary. (That's a dash, guys.)

6. Remove from heat. Serve over pasta, rice, or soba, with a little salad on the side.

Serves 2-4, and holds well for lunch the next day.

* A margarita generally consists of 2 parts tequila, 1 part Grand Marnier/Cointreau, and 1 part lemon or lime juice. Recipes vary by location and preference, but this is my standard. Use 1 tablespoon or 30 ml for 1 part, and everything will be fine. ●

Travis accepts questions and recipe requests. Email dr.t.love@gmail.com

