



YOKA

SPRING 2020

二 Table of Contents

Writing Pieces	Pg.	Art Galleries
	三	Photography Alicia Lim
Tough Times for the World Dilini Fernando	六	
	一一	Photography: Nabe Beach Jenifer Vosper
Eve's Honest Onsen Opn: Kurokawa Eve Gillison	一二	
	一六	Photography Bilal Khan
Jenny's Jokes Jenifer Vosper	一七	
	二〇	Photography: Genyama Park Jenifer Vosper
Beat a Drum Greg Corbertt	二一	
	二四	Corona is Only Ephemeral Yuan Luo
Eating Out in the Kuma-gun Jessica Langshaw	二五	
	三一	Photography: Sunrise Sakura Jessica Langshaw
Easy Cooking: Cup Noodle Chahan Alicia Lim	三三	
The Unofficial Kumamoto JET ALT Survey Lewis Marks	三八	

***Page numbering system does not follow the traditional Japanese-Kanji numbering system.
For example, 22 would normally be 二十二, but here it is written as 二二.



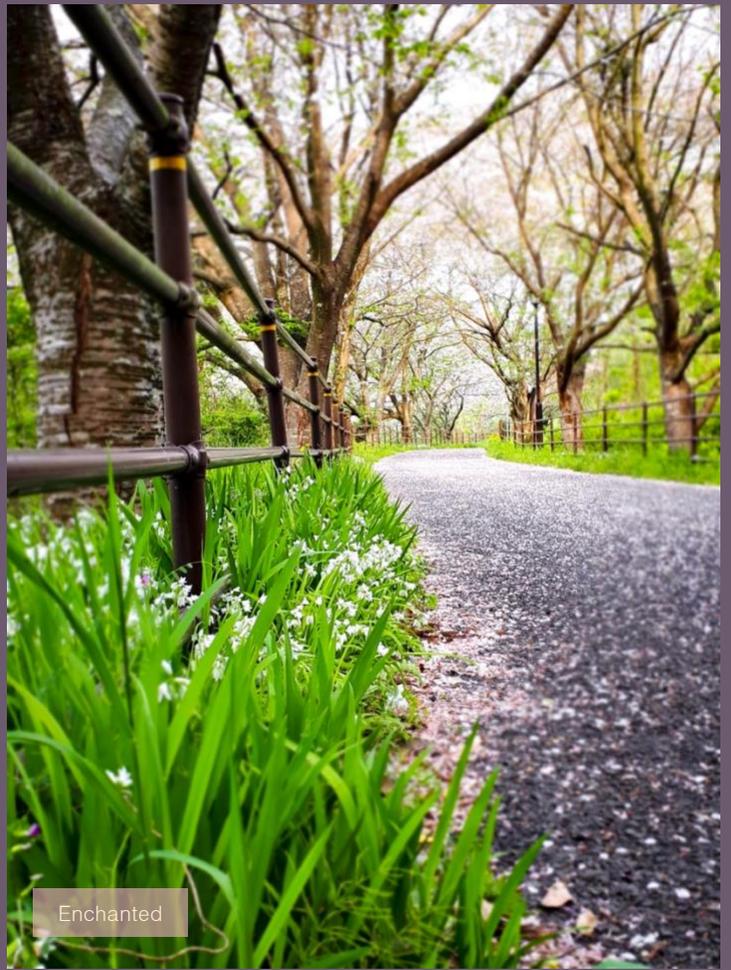
Alicia Lim

Minamata, Kumamoto





Fluff



Enchanted



On the way home...



View from my apartment pt. 3 or 4 ...



Someone's Picnic Gear

Lim



Tough Times for the World

22 April 2020

By: Dilini Fernando

Well, what a strange world we live in today, let alone living overseas at such a time! I could not have predicted the current state of the world impacted by COVID-19. It has undoubtedly been the toughest period yet of my Japan adventure, with school classes and most events and group activities cancelled for two months. With travel bans imposed worldwide, home does feel that much further away. And then of course there's the eagerly anticipated, multi-billion-dollar Tokyo 2020 Olympics postponed... yikes!

Of course, all of this is nothing compared to the plight of so many around the world mourning loss, falling ill, working tirelessly in hospitals and research labs, and those facing unemployment or other hardships.

I am so grateful to have set myself up in stable position over the past 9 months in Amakusa, and am trying my best to stay positive and well.

My love of Japan is certainly being tested, but like any great relationship, the good times still far outweigh the challenges! I hope you are all keeping healthy, active, and physically distancing as best you can too, and that the world can overcome and bounce back soon.

My friends and family back home in Australia were curious about the country situation in Japan, so I shared this personal reflection with them –



Since Japan's first case in January, cases slowly increased over 3 months without a major outbreak. Throughout March, school and crowded events were cancelled, but daily life otherwise continued only with a greater emphasis on good hygiene practices (such as wearing masks, hand-washing, alcohol washes in public places) and *jishuku* (self-restraint) from parties and crowds. The fact that we hadn't spiked for almost 3 months perplexed medical experts everywhere – was it because of Japan's good hygiene practices, low testing rates, contact tracing, closing schools and events early in anticipation of the Olympics, or perhaps Japan's tendency for less physical contact like handshakes and hugs?



Masks handmade by my Japanese friend... may as well make it fashion, right?

Unfortunately, April has seen a more realistic increase in cases nationwide, leading the government to announce a 'State of Emergency.' This essentially enables the government to request restrictions on movement of individuals and businesses in these areas. So essentially, Japan is currently relying on the goodwill of its people to cooperate with advice.

As for my little remote corner of Amakusa, for now we are still well, thankfully. We re-opened school in April (opening ceremonies and all!) for a hopeful but short-lived four days, before reclosure due to an increase in prefectural cases. Needless to say, it has been a roller-coaster of uncertainty, but I think it is definitely wise to continue to hold off on school reopening until things stabilise. Unfortunately, most schools in Japan don't seem to be set up for online teaching like in Australia and other countries that have already shifted to this teaching model. I think this whole experience will catalyse a change in education and technology in many countries including Japan, to invest in resources for future online teaching in the face of emergencies like this.

Anyway when school eventually re-opens, I understand the following measures will be implemented:

1. All students must check and record their temperature every morning and stay home if over 37.5 or showing other cold symptoms.
2. Frequent handwashing and gargling after every lesson.
3. Everyone must wear masks.
4. Windows are fully opened throughout the day to ventilate classrooms.
5. Students must sit with desks apart, facing the front.
6. All lesson activities must not involve facing each other (a definite challenge when trying to teach English!)
7. Teachers also received information about preventing discrimination and bullying of students returning from overseas or having had the virus. Good to see this being addressed, given the social stigma that is likely to emerge worldwide.

In all this, I must say there have certainly been good moments to lighten the dark times. Amakusa truly feels like a home away from home in these times, as I feel a real sense of community amongst teachers, JETs, and the wider Amakusa community. It's times like this that unite human beings across all cultural differences, encouraging each other to stay positive and motivated to continue life and work despite the setbacks. In a sense, I think Japanese people live with a natural-disaster-prepared mentality, which helps them fight on through the tough times.

And of course, as the weather warms up for spring, I have been delighted with the most beautiful *sakura* (cherry blossoms) sights of my life! Stay safe everyone.





*A peaceful moment with nature –
sakura blooming, birds chirping, petals floating in the breeze... like a real-life anime!*

Jenifer Vosper

Nabe Beach, Tamana



What did the sea say to the shore?

A- Nothing it just waved.



Why don't clams give to charity?

A- Because they're shellfish!



You are very spe-shell to me...

Disclaimer: the majority of this article was written before the cluster at “Peaceful You You You” was discovered. Onsen are places where large amounts of people may gather, so please exercise caution and refrain from visiting any onsen for the time being. With that being said, don’t forget to print out this article and stick it on your fridge in preparation for the post-corona times.

Eve’s Honest Onsen Opinions

Kurokawa Edition

By: Eve Gilison

Well, friends, the sakura have bloomed, Winter is over, and onsen season is upon us. *What?* I hear you say. *Onsen season – now? Have you seen the bugs? Felt the heat?* Ah, I see that a common misconception has taken root in your mind, my fellow ALTs. Allow me to briefly outline why spring is the best season for onsen:

- a) In winter, did you dash from the changing room to the *rotenburo* as quickly as possible? Did you dread having to expose your delicate, fleshy body to that harsh winter air? I know I did. But now, fear not! In spring, the stroll from the changing room is just that – a pleasant stroll.
- b) There is no greater pleasure in life than sitting completely naked under the blossoming trees. You can’t (and shouldn’t) do that at your average hanami. But at an onsen? Have at it!
- c) In winter, we warmed our extremities temporarily in that safe-haven, the onsen, only to go outside and get cold again. In spring, on the other hand, we emerge from the baths and into the gentle, vernal air. There is nothing more refreshing, dearest ALTs, than a cool spring breeze after a long, warm soak.

Wow! You say. *I’ll grab my towels right away!*

Wonderful! I’m glad we’re thinking on the same level now.

But wait… you pause. *There are so many onsen. Which ones do I go to?*

Worry not, my onsen compatriots! This is the day I have been training for. Over the past four years, I have combed meticulously through the onsen of Kyushu. I searched high and low, sometimes going to as many as three onsen in a single day, all to bring you these cold, hard facts. So, without further ado, here are my definitive Kurokawa onsen rankings:

Kurokawa:

**Fantastic Ryokans,
Lovely Teal Hues to the Water,
Nearby sightseeing in Aso and Kuju**

5

Ikoï Ryokan

Hours: 8:30 – 21:00

Price: 500 yen (adults)/ 300 yen (children)

This *onsen-ryokan* is centrally located in Kurokawa, which means it's usually quite crowded. The way the light comes through the trees is very atmospheric, and the gardens are well kept. The steamed eggs for sale outside are a plus. Their baths are divided into *konyoku* (mixed gender), male-only baths, and female-only baths. It's beautiful, but the crowds and the small baths left me feeling lukewarm.



4

Iyashi no Sato Kiyashiki

Hours: 8:30 – 21:00

Price: 500 yen (adults)/ 300 yen (children)

This *onsen-ryokan* is slightly off the beaten path, but is worth the visit. One of the selling points here is the *tachiyu* bath (or an onsen that is deep enough for you to stand in it and be emerged to your neck). Their baths rotate from male to female depending on the day. Both the female bath and the male bath open up to an enormous *konyoku* style *rotenburo*, which makes this the perfect onsen for large mixed groups of men and women. Where this onsen truly shines, however, are the private baths for overnight guests. If you have a chance to stay here, you won't find a more beautiful mountain view than from their *kashidashi* baths.



**The bath pictured above is for hotel guests only.

3

Kurokawa Onsen Shinmei-kan

Hours: 8:30 – 21:00

Price: 500 yen (everyone)

The facilities here are lacking. You have to pay to use the lockers. The changing rooms for some baths are tiny, and for other baths the changing room consists of nothing but a stack of baskets. However, this onsen gets extra points for being so incredibly rad. At this onsen, you can bath in either a *rotenburo* or... a cave bath. Yes, you too can meditate nude in a cave by a river. The dream is real, friends. The baths are separated into *konyoku* and female-only baths, but each has a *rotenburo* and a cave bath. I found the *rotenburo* to be close to air temperature, but the cave baths are winding, labyrinthine, and very hot.



2

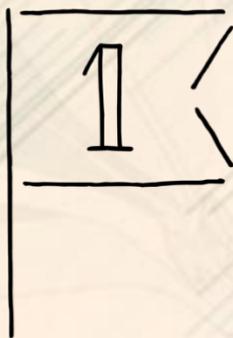
Ryokan Sanga

Hours: 8:30 – 21:00

Price: 500 yen (adults), 300 yen (children)

Ryokan Sanga is located about two kilometers away from the main stretch of Kurokawa. Probably due to the location, this onsen was completely empty when I visited. The baths come in female-only and *konyoku* varieties, but both are surrounded by beautiful, natural greenery. This onsen will make you feel like you're a woodland nymph resting in the last forest clearing left untouched by mankind. The teal color of the water is shared by some other Kurokawa onsen, but it's deeper and more distinctive here. The green of the surrounding foliage reflects in the water, which brings out the green hues in the teal, as well. This is one of the hotter baths that I went to, so if you find yourself overheating, be sure to make use of the cold water faucet close to the entrance of the bath.

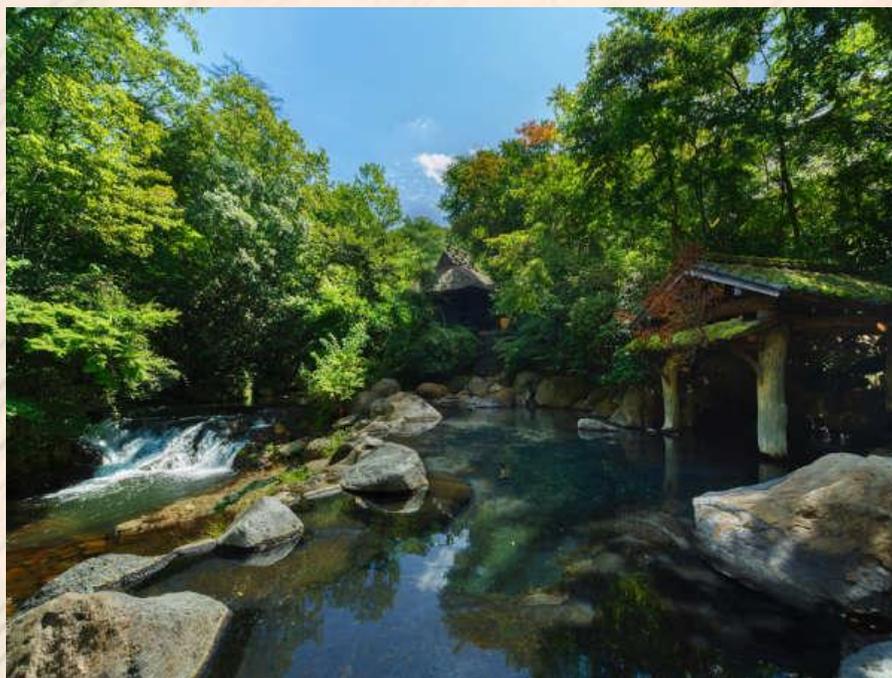




Kurokawa Onsen Yamamizuki

Hours: 8:30 – 21:00

Price: 600 yen



There's not enough I can say to compliment this onsen. The water is, in my opinion, the perfect temperature. The showers, the indoor baths, and the outdoor baths are all beautifully designed, modern, and clean. The *rotenburo*, perched right along the river, is beautiful in any season. Even if you disagree with my rankings, there is no iteration of a "Best Kurokawa Onsen" list that does not include Yamamizuki. There can be no "Best Kurokawa Onsen" list without Yamamizuki. And, if you're able to dredge up such a list from the darkest corners of the deep web, just know that the author of that list – whoever they are, whatever hellish pit they reside in – is wrong.



Well, treasured colleagues, that will do it for this edition of "Eve's Honest Onsen Opinions". I hope you've amassed enough bath bombs and scented candles to last you until your next onsen visit. If you believe I've made a critical mistake by overlooking a certain onsen, feel free to email me about it at evagillison@gmail.com. I'd be more than happy to give your onsen recommendations a try.



スズくん&トラきち



スズくん



トラきち

BILIA KHAN

Jenny's Jokes: Oyaji Gags

Let's start with a classic!

アルミ缶の上にあるみかん。
(あるみかんのうえにあるみかん)
The orange on the aluminium can.

Wow! Great! The same sounds mean different things!

How about something simple next...

栄養がええよ。(えいようがええよ)
Nutrition is good.

Truthful and humorous to say!

Or what about:

このスイカ、安い
(このすいか、やすいか)
Is the watermelon cheap?

Maybe you can save this one for summer.

Another summer one to crack out in

Amakusa could be:

イルカはいるか

And if you ever meet a Japanese person who is less keen on Japanese food, and prefers Western food perhaps you can say:

和食きらい? わーショック! (わしょくきらい? わーしょっく)
You don't like Japanese food? Shock!

Note from the Author:

In these trying times we could all use a laugh, and one of my favourite forms of humour in Japan is the おやじギャグ, or Oyaji Gag. Think "Dad Jokes" and you're at about the right level. I wanted to share some of my favourites with you to brighten your day! Try these out with your teachers and students, and amaze them with your comedic abilities. I'll put the jokes in hiragana too, so they're easy to read for everyone.

These have come from various places, friends, colleagues, and the internet, and I don't claim to have invented any of them.

~Jenifer Vosper

This one is just really fun to say.

庭にはワニは似合わない。(にわにはわにはにあわない)

The crocodile does not suit the garden.

I feel like you could use this in Florida.

Let's try a 2-4-1 situation. Depending on how you say these changes the meaning a lot! Be careful!

うーん、こまったぞ。

Hmmm, that's puzzling...

うんこ、まったぞ。

I've been waiting to poop!

Heeheehee, everyone loves a good poop joke right?

Why don't you try tweaking a common Japanese word with your friends to see if you can make them laugh? For us wine-moms out there, this is a good one:

こんばんは

こんばんウイン

(konban-wine)

There are also jokes that come with a punchline, instead of just being ever so punny.

パンダの好きな餌は？ (ぱんだのすきなえさは?)

~パンだ。

What's a panda's favourite food?

~Bread!

A good one for enkais I think:

マイケルジャクソンの好きな色は何ですか？ (まいけるじゃくそのすきないろはなんですか?)

~青！ (あお)

What's Michael Jackson's favourite colour?

~Ao! (You have to do the Michael Jackson voice to really make this work!)

I also like the combination jokes, where English and Japanese get mixed up. Sometimes I use these in class to make the students laugh while they still have to use some English.

What language do large pink birds speak?

~フラミンゴ語 (ふらみんご)

Flamingo!

What is the flattest prefecture?

~山梨県 (やまなしけん)

Yamanashi Ken

Why are you getting a dog?

~Because I わんわん。

I'll end on my personal favourite joke.

Where in the world has the best teeth?

~歯はいい (ははいい)

Hawaii!

Strawberry Picture by Valeria Magallan

Jenifer Vosper

Sakura at Genyama Park, Tamana



Beat a Drum

Playing Five Drums in Minamata

By: Greg Corbett

For the past three years, I've been learning to play the 'itsutsu daiko' (五ツ太鼓, or five drum taiko) in Minamata with a local taiko group, 'Sairyu' (彩流). The group itself is actually pretty progressive, with a focus on playing songs that are choreographed to backing music. There are some Japanese festival tunes such as 'Soiya', rock-style instrumentals like 'Raijin', and even contemporary chart toppers from the likes of Bruno Mars. The taiko 'waza' (techniques) that are put to music are firmly rooted in tradition, making for an interesting mix of old and new.

The 'itsutsu daiko' originated in Miyanojo, Kagoshima Prefecture and has a 100-year history. As the name suggests, they consist of five drums – one large 'hira-daiko' drum at the bottom, three smaller 'shime-daiko' drums at the top, and a 'kane' (bell) in the top right corner, all held together by a wooden frame.



There is space to strategically wedge a spare drumstick in the tangle of ropes that tie the drums to the frame, just in case your drumming enthusiasm sees a drumstick go flying into the crowd! You can also hit the rim of the large drum, and there are ‘take’ (bamboo) strips on the top and lower right of the frame, which make a loud ‘thwack’ when you hit them.

The three shime-daiko range from lower to higher tones from left to right (as viewed from the front), which means that there are a wide variety of different sounds that you can make. Playing five drums is anything but monotonous! This makes playing the itsutsu daiko feel somewhat melodic, leaving it somewhere between playing a regular single taiko drum and playing a xylophone, with melody and rhythm combining.

Of course, remembering the ‘melody’ is only half the job, with much drumstick waving and twirling to remember into the bargain. There are also two main feet positions to think about. With a lot of moving around and thumping on a variety of different drums, itsutsu daiko is really a workout for the mind and body.

Sairyu plays at a range of local festivals, both large and small. Playing in front of a crowd is an interesting experience. Your brain is super alert, which oddly makes it easy for you to go a complete blank and forget part of the song, or to walk off

stage after a performance ends and not really remember what the heck just happened. At the same time, the strangest things can leave an indelible impression. It might be a familiar face that you spot in the crowd, the sound of one of your group member’s voice or a drumstick going clattering to the ground. A few days after one performance, I remembered that a bug had strolled out into the middle of one shime-daiko, and I had managed to get to the end of the song without squashing it. I think what I like most about the itsutsu daiko is that it’s very meditative. It allows you to focus on what you are doing now, stay in the moment and get lost in the music. During a performance, with everyone drumming together and twirling around in elaborate costumes, it’s a great feeling.



Onstage at the Kumamoto International Friendship Festival

Perhaps the best thing about playing in 'Sairyu' is the teacher being comfortable setting us stretch goals. It usually goes like this: 'We are playing song x at a festival two months from now. Let's try to learn the song by then'.

Almost every time, there is only about two weeks to go and I am still scrambling to puzzle out the song. I'm writing out notes, drumming my fingers quietly on a notepad during my lunch break, and asking the teacher a bunch of questions. Then, (usually about the day before the performance) I somehow get the hang of it and feel confident enough to get up there and give it a go. This kind of goal setting has definitely allowed me to

improve much faster than I otherwise would have. Of course, there are always bits that can be improved upon for next time, and there's no time to sit back and relax – there is always another song to learn and another stretch goal on the horizon!



The three 'shime-daiko.'



Backstage at the Kumamoto International Friendship Festival



Corona Is Only Ephemeral

Artist: Yuan Luo

Jessica Langshaw's Guide to Eating out in the Kuma-gun



Resting at the bottom of Kumamoto Prefecture sits the Kuma-gun. It's filled with roaring rivers, amazing mountain-scapes and some pretty decent food.

Navigating the culinary landscape can be difficult for visitors, Japanese speaking or not, leaving you guys overwhelmed and running to the nearest Gusto, McDonald's or Joyfull. So why not get some recs from the people who know best- the residents of the area.

I've asked around, ALTs and Japanese locals alike, to find out their favourite pig-out spots in the Kuma-gun.



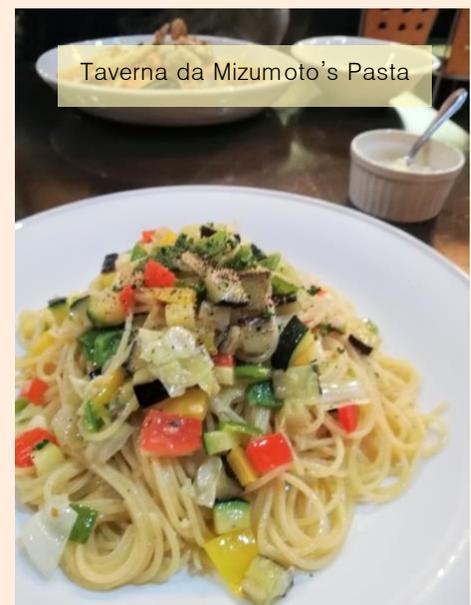
Restaurants

Taverna da Mizumoto

Arguably one of the best Italian restaurants in the area.

This place is a little on the expensive side but worth it for the food. It's usually just the chef working there and he's so lovely and accommodating. He's struggled with language to help me order something vegetarian and was happy to make adjustments!

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/XCxTPWpqqf5mZKWx5>





Restaurants

Maruichi Soba

丸一蕎麦屋(丸一そば屋)

This Hitoyoshi-based restaurant is famous for its handmade, fresh soba. One of our locals wrote:

‘It’s really delicious because it’s handmade and fresh. If I’m showing friends around I always bring them to 丸一蕎麦屋 and 上村鰻屋 which are both really good, but I don’t go very often on my own because I’m not willing to queue or go really early just to get seats.’

So heads up, it’s probably a good idea to try and reserve a seat!

Location:

<https://g.page/maru1sobaya?share>

まぐろ屋回転寿司

This sushi place can be found in Nishiki, near the Uniqlo at Aeon Mall. I haven’t visited myself so I’ll leave it to someone who has:

‘I love sushi and everyone in the restaurant is always so friendly. I find the sushi very fresh for its price range (which is fairly affordable for sushi) and one particular sushi chef always gives me extra sushi based on what he recommends for the day!’

Location:

<https://g.page/maguroya0129?share>

Kishin

This place is an izakaya set up in Asagiri which I’m ashamed to say as a two-year-resident of Asagiri, I haven’t visited! One of the locals recommends the Yellowtail Shabu Shabu!

Location:

<https://goo.gl/maps/tuNYBcJ6SXh767zi7>

Tenroku

I have visited this Asagiri-based izakaya. They have vegetarian options if you’re able to ask! For non-veggies, this place is well known for yakitori and dashimaki-tamago.

Location:

<https://goo.gl/maps/Q42kc3D5mZXf6nEy8>

So you've had your restaurant fix but what about lunch time I hear you cry from your lockdown. I've got you covered with some top-notch cafes. I'm definitely more of a cafe girl, so I can personally back up most of the cafes listed below as well worth a visit.



525 Café

You wouldn't expect to find this cafe in the tiny town of Asagiri. The interior design is beautiful and well-tailored for Insta-lovers. Surprisingly, it isn't just looks. The food at this cafe is delicious too.

Make sure you have a look at their desserts counter!



Waffle Dish

Location:

<https://goo.gl/maps/gwtPPTuDbUgs6Fwh6>

Cafe Rosy+

This cafe is based in Taragi town and, like 525, is a really good-looking cafe.

One visitor said:

'I also really like CafeRosy in Taragi because they have great coffee and a lunch special that changes every month and a great atmosphere.'



Location:

<https://goo.gl/maps/5aeGDj7eDLydDiYW8>

La Porta

Sitting right near Asagiri Station, La Porta is a great coffee spot. The prices are good and you're made to feel welcome. A visiting friend of mine even ended up on their Instagram, playing the piano!

<https://www.instagram.com/laporta161115/>

Location: <https://g.page/laporta-320?share>

Farmer's Café Sakuri

This place is one of my favourites, along with some of the other ALTs. They use fresh produce and are well known for their amazing pizzas, cooked in a real pizza oven WITH FRESH BASIL. Just look at that picture–BUT you should go to the cafe and see for yourself!

The cafe looks out onto rice paddies and mountains and the driftwood door handles and round windows remind me of a hobbit hole!

Another happy customer said; 'The owners are really friendly as well and make the experience very chilled'

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/KApZ9wJvri8mYQrH9>



Ajisato Drive-in

This is one that I haven't visited myself, but it always catches my eye and from the reviews, is worth the visit.

'ドライブイン味里 ajisato in Kuma village is an amazing cafe with a really cool interior, great food and good coffee. The owners are really friendly and the cafe is right on the river and has a beautiful view. The food is so, so delicious!'

The river that they're speaking of is the Kuma River, the pride of the Kuma-gun and a must see for anyone visiting. Bonus– the food at this cafe is said to be affordable too!

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/VSHoTi3pvnRzJb9P7>



Kura Cafe

This cafe competes with 525 Cafe for Insta-worthiness. It sits above Hitoyoshi City, overlooking the river, the closest thing to a city that the area has and the bowl of mountains that surrounds it. It's a little expensive but the food is beautiful and tastes great, plus they have vegetarian options. They have a pottery shop on site too, as well as a fresh herb garden.

I'd recommend visiting in good weather and eating outside in the garden!

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/wc3Ln3R8vGozi1Xi8>



The beautiful outdoors at Kura Café!

If, somehow, you're still hungry for more I'd recommend just heading over to the Aeon Mall in Nishiki. Some of the surrounding restaurants have been mentioned, but there are quite a few to choose from.

It seems like the perfect place to try delicious, local Japanese food. From homemade soba to tempura, sukiyaki and udon, I'm sure you'll find something! If you do head down, let me know how it is on the veggie-option front!

Honourable Mentions

K's Copain– 'The food is artistic and delicious, you will have a good time there.'

Ichifusa– 'Korean–style menu, the bibimbap is delicious' (they also make it veggie!)

上村鰻屋 <https://goo.gl/maps/m219H97KYt8C5UNN6>

まるとく食堂– Yakiniku place with high quality meat. They also serve awesome bibimbap (which they can make into a vegetarian dish!)

Location: <https://goog.gl/maps/ZUjihexGLNghL959>

Inahoya– My wonderful *eikaiwa* student said: 'The chef is my friend and his scran's very good! They make me happy.' I'm so proud that she used 'scran'– A+

じゃらんじゃらん – The curry is delicious, taste that cannot be made at home!

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/3FhWzcd6nrJgwic8>

Ramen Ronpuu– 'has a great menu of ramen, good drinks, and all for fairly cheap prices. Plenty of space for parties, lively atmosphere, very clean and friendly'

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/dwx4zxs3Usa8bDVA8>



まるとく食堂's Bibimbap



Buono Buono's Pasta

大使館カフェレスト– 'great pizza, pasta and cake'

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/DnT2y9m7GtYPuBoT7>

Buono Buono– A great Italian restaurant in Hitoyoshi city, next to a lovely little bakery. You may have to wait for a table on weekends, but you can put your name down and go bread shopping!

Location: <https://goo.gl/maps/dVxVc8CUUVwnZwx9>

What's Missing in the Kuma–gun?

While there is a lot to chew on down in the Kuma–gun, there's always room for improvement. I asked the guys what they felt was missing on the food scene. While some couldn't think of anything, maybe just more of what they already have, sushi and ramen etc; there was a call for a wider variety of culinary cultures.

We seemed all set for Italian restaurants but left wanting Mexican, Indian, Chinese, and even a UK food experience!

*The bulk of the good food in Kuma–gun is Japanese/ Korean (which is understandable)
but I do wish there was more variety.*

When the corona chaos calms down, come down and soothe your body in onsen, your soul in nature and your stomach in awesome food. Any more recommendations? Let us know!



Sunrise Sakura, Asagiri Town

Jessica Langshaw





Easy Cooking: Cup Noodle Chahan

カップヌードルチャーハン

with Alicia Lim

One day after taiko practice, I found myself face to face with a bowl of チャーハン (chahan), or fried rice. Steam rose gently from the bowl, carrying along with it a delicious smell. A delicious, and yet very familiar smell...

Curiously peering into the bowl for a more thorough inspection, I found that there were small bits of noodle dispersed evenly throughout the rice. Faintly yellow noodles that were flat on one end and had that distinctive squiggle...

...could it be?

I raised my head back up to stare at my teacher, mouth agape.

“Is this...Are these...?”

“Yup! It’s cup ramen! This is cup noodle chahan. I saw it on TV a while back* and I’ve been making it ever since. It’s quick and easy – even you could try it out at home! I know you don’t like to cook, so this will be perfect for you!”

He said, ever so cheerfully.

Perhaps a bit too cheerfully.

After a couple moments of suspiciously eyeing and then prodding the chahan with a spoon, there was nothing left for me to do but to take the plunge – or, in this case, take a bite.

So, I did.



The bowl that started it all!

Imagine my vast surprise when it tasted exactly like cup noodles. For some of you, this might not be entirely desirable (after all, cup noodles are cup noodles. chahan is chahan. why bother mixing the two?), but for me, it was the perfect pairing. Rice and cup noodles. Simply delightful. Never in my wildest dreams could I have imagined



The sad state of my fridge.

such a dish. I scarfed down the rest of the bowl, dropped by Rocky to buy an assortment of cup noodles, and biked as fast as I could back home so that I could try this out for myself.

Now, a couple months later, I've only tried this recipe with Tom Yum flavored cup noodles, but according to my teacher (as well as Hikakin – there's a whole bunch of YouTube videos of people making カップヌードルチャーハン, if you're interested), the cup noodle flavor that works the best with this recipe is salt, or しお (written as Sio on the packaging). You can also use instant ramen that comes in bags, in which case the recommended flavor from my teacher is tonkotsu (豚骨/とんこつ). But the true magic of this recipe is its convenience and versatility. Any and all kinds of instant noodles can be used – feel free to use your favorite flavor or whatever you have lying around the kitchen! It makes for a quick snack or meal if you ever find yourself with leftover rice and an overabundance of instant noodles.

Here is the recipe!

* カップヌードルチャーハン seems to have first appeared on Japanese TV on the show 「スッキリ」 on Jan 29, 2020

Recipe: Cup Noodle Chahan

Time including prep; 5-10mins



Ingredients

Necessary:

- One cup of cup noodles / One bag of instant noodles
- 2 to 3 bowls of rice, cooked (This is largely personal preference. The less rice you use, the more flavoring the end result will have, since all the seasoning comes from the soup of the instant noodles.)
- Hot/boiling water

Optional:

- Some oil
- 1 to 3 eggs
- Frozen/fresh vegetables (corn, edamame, broccoli, etc.)
- Ham
- Sliced pork

Anything else you'd like to put in your chahan~

Directions:

1. Crush the noodles into relatively small chunks. If you're using cup noodles, you can take the noodles out of the Styrofoam cup and put them in a plastic bag. Zip up the bag, and proceed to crush the noodles until there are no big chunks left. If using instant noodles that come in a bag, crush them in the bag as is (you can remove the sauce/flavoring packets first).
2. Once the noodles are sufficiently crushed, place them back in the original Styrofoam cup (for the cup noodles), or any cup you have (for the bag noodles. Add the seasoning in the packets to the noodles now).

3. Pour the hot/boiling water into the cup, making sure that the water just barely covers the top of the noodles. **Important:** This will be much less water than you would normally use for cup noodles. **Important:** This will be much less water than you would normally use for cup noodles.



← Cup noodles in their cup



Instant bag → noodles in a cup

4. While the noodles are cooking, heat up some oil on a pan, and scramble and stir fry the eggs and other ingredients you want to add to your chahan. If you don't have anything on hand, skip this step...



← Topping Options

Eggs cooked → and frozen ingredients sufficiently heated



5. ...And add your rice to the pan. Heat up the rice so that it's nice and hot while waiting for the noodles to be done. If you have other ingredients, you can mix them into the rice at this step.



It looks pretty awful here, but it gets better, I promise (don't forget the paste/oil).



6. Once the noodles are softened (but not totally cooked, since they'll cook a bit more from the heat of the pan), pour them onto the rice, making sure to include as much of the soup/liquid mixture that's in the cup. At this point, you can also add any sauces or oils that are meant to be added after the noodles are cooked, if the cup noodles came with any (these are usually attached to the top of the cup noodles, above the lid).

7. Mix well!

Deluxe Version →

8. Serve!

9. Be proud of what you have made and ENJOY!



Just Noodles and Rice ↑



(Alternatively, for an even more energy-conserving version, you could try doing steps 1-2, microwaving your rice, and then just mixing the noodles into the rice in a bowl if you don't want to use a pan. I've never tried this, but it seems possible...)

Unofficial Kumamoto JET ALT Survey

By: Lewis Marks

Hi there! My name's Lewis, a friendly 2nd year ALT based in Kikuchi. Early this year I decided to create a survey in order to gain a clearer picture of our situations as ALTs. Normally I'm not one to do something like this, but I wanted to contribute to the JET community in my own way. These days, you're much more likely to catch me playing guitar and writing poems.

On Feb 19th the survey to all JET ALTs in Kumamoto prefecture in order to gain a clearer picture of our situations as ALTs. The survey was sent via direct e-mail to current Kumamoto

JET ALTs, it was also posted on the KumAJET FB page.

The survey included questions about the individual, their time in Japan, job, workplace relationships and relationships outside of the workplace.

In order to reflect upon the results, I have analysed and graphed the information for your viewing. In total, I collected 66 completed surveys.

You can find the link to both the graphs and the analysis below.

Graphs: <https://cutt.ly/Wym1jrP>

Analysis: <https://cutt.ly/5ym1hwG>



Photo of Kumamon and Kikuchi Castle's mascot Koro-kun



**Next Issue:
Summer 2020**