

**AJET**

# **CONNECT**

News & Events, Arts & Culture, Lifestyle, Community

**NOVEMBER  
2015**

**INSIDE TOKYO GAME SHOW 2015**

**THANKSGIVING RECIPES WORTH GATHERING AROUND FOR**

**THE 1,300-YEAR-OLD ART OF UKAI FISHING**

**CAN YOU KANDOU? YOSAKOI DANCE IN JAPAN**

**BEATING CULTURE SHOCK**



**The Japanese Lifestyle & Culture  
Magazine Written by the International  
Community in Japan**

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*This edition, and all past editions of AJET Connect, can be found online at [AJET.net](http://AJET.net) [here](#). Read Connect online and follow us on [ISSUU](#).*

# LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Hello! Welcome to the November issue of Connect!

I hope all the readers are feeling well and doing great things.

Crisp are the days, as well as the steps you take through the fallen leaves; it seems as though the holidays are coming! I hope you're as excited as I am! What do you have planned?

This month we have a first-hand account of what treasure chests the Tokyo Game Show had to offer this year, written by one of our own Entertainment Editors!; A Yosakoi experience that now runs parallel to one CIR's experience in Japan; the wonders of trekking Yakushima; and another wonderful recipe, with a Canadian flair.

For those of you who don't know: in June we had a change of team. Since then, the successors, and continuing team members, have been working awesomely in providing the best and most relevant content for you. For this I am very grateful (as are you, I'm sure!), and would like to remind them that their work is outstanding and that it is a pleasure working with each and every one of them.

Use our social media outlets to let us know what you think of our content and features, or just to show us some love!

Have a wonderful month, share the love, and be good to yourselves.

Rajeev Rahela  
Head Editor  
2nd-year Gifu ALT



**PHOTO SUBMISSIONS**

**INTERESTED IN SUBMITTING A COVER PHOTO FOR THE NEXT ISSUE? CLICK [HERE](#) FOR MORE INFORMATION AND TO SUBMIT YOUR PHOTOS!**



# NEWS & EVENTS

## NEWS EDITOR

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**Margaret Pickard**

*I'm too cold to function, and it's only October.*

## EVENTS EDITOR

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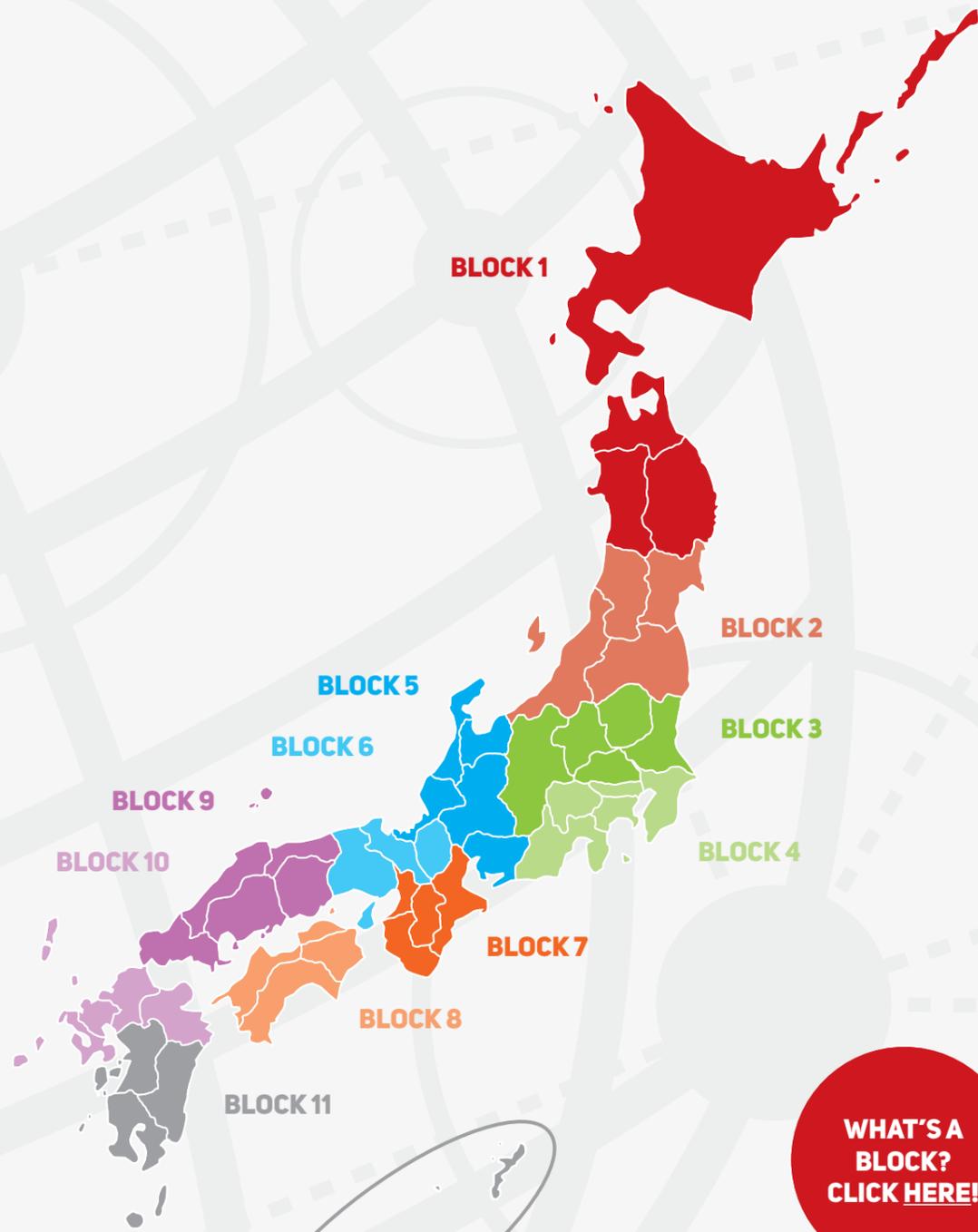
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# EVENTS CALENDAR

## OCTOBER - NOVEMBER



**SAPPORO WHITE ILLUMINATION**  
 20 November 2015 (until Christmas Day)  
 Odori Park, Sapporo, Hokkaido  
[Website](#)

**HIROSAKI CASTLE KOUYOU MATSURI**  
 Until 08 November 2015  
 Hirosaki Castle gardens, Hirosaki City, Aomori  
[Website](#)

**IWATE MACHI GEIJUTSU SAI**  
 08 November, 14 November until 29 November 2015  
 Iwatemachi Bunka Sports Center, Iwatemachi, Iwate  
[Website](#)

**AKITA DANCE COLLECTION**  
 14 November 2015  
 Akita City Cultural Center Main Hall, Akita  
[Website](#)



**MEZAMI HARVEST FESTIVAL**  
 31 October to 3 November 2015  
 1898 Matsubara, Iidemachi, Nishiokitama-gun, Yamagata  
[Website](#)

**JOETSU SOBA FESTIVAL**  
 15 November 2015  
 58-1 Fujimaki, Joetsu, Niigata  
[Website](#)



**KASAMA-NO KIKU MATSURI**  
 Until 23 November 2015  
 Kasama Inari-jinja Shrine, Kasama, Ibaraki  
[Website](#)

**2015 HARVEST FESTIVAL COCO FARM & WINERY 14-15 NOVEMBER 2015**  
 611 Tajima-cho, Ashikagashi, Tochigi 326-0061  
[Website](#)

**KAJIKI BRIDGE RED LEAVES ILLUMINATION**  
 Until 15 November 2015  
 Ikaho, Ikaho-machi, Shibukawa-shi, Gunma  
[Website](#)

**KARUIZAWA MOMIJI FESTIVAL 2015**  
 Until 03 November 2015  
 739 Karuizawa, Karuizawa-machi, Nagano  
[Website](#)

WHAT'S A BLOCK?  
 CLICK [HERE!](#)





**2015 MEIJI SHRINE AUTUMN FESTIVAL**

01-03 November 2015  
Meiji Shrine, Tokyo  
[Website](#)

**NUEVA VISION FLAMENCO**

29 November 2015  
6-72, Sumiyoshi-cho, Naka-ku, Yokohama, Kanagawa 231-0013  
[Website](#)

**2015 FUJI KAWAGUCHI-KO AUTUMN LEAVES FESTIVAL**

Until 23 November 2015  
Kawaguchi-ko, Yamanashi  
[Website](#)

**DAIDOGEI WORLD CUP**

31 October 2015 to 03 November 2015  
Aiwa Build 6F 1-8-6 Tokiwa-cho Aoi-ku Shizuoka city  
[Website](#)

**KANAZAWA MARATHON**

15 November 2015  
Ongakudo Koryu Hall, Ishikawa  
[Website](#)

**ECHIZEN KANI FESTIVAL**

14-15 November 2015  
71-335-1, Kuriya, Echizen-cho Nyu-gun, Fukui 916-0422  
[Website](#)

**SAKASHITA KABUKI PERFORMANCE**

08 November 2015  
820-1, Sakashita, Nakatsugawa City, Gifu  
[Website](#)

**THE 5TH NATIONWIDE UDON SUMMIT 2015**

07-08 November 2015  
19-5, Minatomachi, Gamagoori-shi, Aichi 443-0034  
[Website](#)

**SAKE MATSURI IN OTESUJI ST. 2015**

14 November 2015  
Nishiotemachi 318, Fushimi-ku, Kyoto-shi, Kyoto  
[Website](#)

**GEAR: SENSATIONAL, NON-VERBAL PERFORMANCE**

Check website for availability in November  
56 Benkeiishicho, Nakagyo-ku, Kyoto City  
[Website](#)

**SASAYAMA CASTLE MATSURI**

22 November 2015  
Sasayama City, Hyogo  
[Website](#)

**BALLOON FESTIVAL**

21-23 November 2015  
Suzuka River, Suzuka City, Mie  
[Website](#)

**OSAKA FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS**

29 November 2015 (until 17 January 2016)  
Midosuji, Osaka City, Osaka  
[Website](#)

**WAKAYAMA CITY MARATHON**

29 November 2015  
Wakayama Marina, Wakayama City, Wakayama  
[Website](#)

**RITSURIN AUTUMN ILLUMINATION**

Starts 22 November 2015  
1-20-16, Ritsurincho, Takamatsu-shi, Kagawa 760-0073  
[Website](#)

**TOBEYAKI MATSURI: AUTUMN SALE EVENT**

01 November 2015  
335 Ominami, Tobecho, Iyogun, Ehime  
[Website](#)

**THE FIRST OKAYAMA MARATHON**

08 November 2015  
Okayama Prefectural Multipurpose Grounds Gymnasium  
[Website](#)

**TIBETAN GOMA FIRE RITUALS**

23 November 2015  
Daisho-in Temple, Miyajima, Hiroshima  
[Website](#)



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**GRAND SUMO TOURNAMENT**

08-22 November 2015  
Fukuoka Kokusai Center,  
Fukuoka City, Fukuoka  
[Website](#)

**RITSUMEIKAN ASIA PACIFIC  
UNIVERSITY WORLD PRESS  
PHOTO EXHIBITION**

Until 04 November 2015  
1-1 Jumonjibaru, Oita  
[Website](#)

**GOKANOSHO KOUYOU  
FESTIVAL**

Until 20 November 2015  
Around the Gokanosho area  
in Izumimachi, Yatsushiro  
City, Kumamoto  
[Website](#)

**YOKAGURA DANCES**

Starts 14 November 2015  
(check website for all dates  
in November)  
Takachiho Shrine, Takachiho  
Town, Miyazaki  
[Website](#)

**OHARA MATSURI**

02-03 November 2015  
Tenmonkan, Kagoshima City  
[Website](#)

**KADENA AWAMORI FESTIVAL**

13 November 2015  
Kadena Rotary Plaza,  
Okinawa  
[Website](#)

# IN THE NEWS OCTOBER

**SEPTEMBER 19**

Prime Minister Abe achieves the first big step in expanding the role of Japan's armed forces as the national security legislation is passed through the Lower House amid scuffles and protests. Abe and the governing Liberal Democratic Party hope to revise Article 9 of Japan's pacifistic constitution, which limits Japan's armed forces to acting only in self-defense, and allows Japanese troops to fight abroad for the first time in 70 years. Tens of thousands of people took to the streets of Tokyo in protest and opposition. Lawmakers used every tactic, including physically ripping papers away from LDP leaders, in an attempt to block the bill's passage.

*(Source) (Source)***SEPTEMBER 30**

Prime Minister Abe pledges \$1.6 billion in new assistance for refugees from Syria and Iraq, but rejects the proposal of Japan loosening its notoriously strict asylum policy. Abe suggests Japan must first solve its most urgent demographic problems, specifically its falling birth rate and labor shortage, before the country can begin to accept escapees from the conflicts in the Middle East. In 2014, Japan accepted just 11 people out of 5,000 applications requesting asylum.

*(Source)***SEPTEMBER 30**

Relations between Tokyo and Beijing chill as China confirms the arrests of two Japanese nationals on charges of espionage. It's reported that both men, in their 50's and from the private sector, have been in Chinese custody for several months. Japanese officials vehemently denied China's accusations, adding

that Japan does not spy on any country. The arrests threaten to damage ties between the two countries, which have recently warmed following meetings between Prime Minister Abe and President Xi.

*(Source)***OCTOBER 5**

After 5 years of negotiations, 11 countries (including Japan and the US) reach an agreement on the specifics of the Trans-Pacific partnership, or TPP. The free trade deal, the biggest struck in the past 20 years, will reduce trade barriers between the 11 Pacific Rim countries involved, whose output covers 40 per cent of the global economy. The TPP deal will now face a vote in each country involved as lawmakers decide if the merits of the agreement warrant its ratification.

*(Source) (Source)***OCTOBER 15**

A second nuclear reactor is reactivated in Kyushu, in line with Prime Minister Abe's goal of having 20 to 22 percent of the country's total electricity supply provided by nuclear power by 2030. Following the 2011 Fukushima disaster, the country's reactors were shut down for an indeterminate amount of time. The end of the nuclear hiatus came two months ago when a reactor at the same Kyushu plant resumed operation. Japan is split over the use of nuclear energy, with protests against the use of the nuclear power fueled by the anger of those from Sendai still unable to return home.

*(Source)* *Sterling Diesel*

# GONOHE MUSIC FESTIVAL 2015

MICHAEL WARREN (AOMORI), DAVID HERLICH (AOMORI)

The third annual Gonohe Music Festival took place on Sunday, October 18th. The festival brings together sounds and flavors from around the world at the scenic Kowataritai Park in southeastern Aomori, and is organized by two former Gonohe ALTs, Michael Warren and David Herlich, who now live in Tokyo and New York, respectively.

In addition to highlighting both traditional and innovative music from around the prefecture, the festival has also brought national artists to Aomori for the first time. This year featured an opening performance by the 40-strong Gonohe Elementary School Taiko Club, as well as the 9-piece dub group Reggaeation Independance. Get a feel for the festival in this 15-second clip.

The festival also supports local businesses and the economy, with more than a dozen vendors from around the prefecture serving a truly international array of foods. Along with various art workshops, the festival strives to promote the Aomori art community as a whole.

## A MESSAGE FROM THE ORGANIZERS

Putting the festival together is always so much fun, but it is also a lot of work. We're always looking for help, from support staff at the park, to vendors, artists, and even sponsors. If you are interested in supporting the festival, or know someone who is, we'd love to hear from you, and are open to all sorts of creative and unorthodox ideas. Please write to us at [info@gonohemusicfestival.com](mailto:info@gonohemusicfestival.com), or follow us on social media:

[Facebook](#)

[Instagram](#)

[Twitter](#)

 [Jennifer Sanchez](#)



# THE YASUKUNI CONTROVERSY

LIAM NOLAN (KUMAMOTO)

The exterior of Tokyo's Yasukuni Shrine appears like a typical Japanese shrine, but, inside the walls, the image of a stern Indian man dressed in judicial robes stares out from a well-maintained cenotaph. This man, Judge Radhabinod Pal, was the single dissenting judge in the International Military Tribunal for the Far East, which convicted wartime leaders in Japan of war crimes (1). The convicted men – including Hideki Tojo – who Judge Pal sought to exonerate were involved in numerous atrocities during Japan's imperial expansions in the 20th century. Not the least of these atrocities, and

still a major issue in China today, was the Nanking Massacre, which scholars estimate at having taken 200,000 to 300,000 lives (2).

In addition to Judge Pal's cenotaph, the Yasukuni Shrine houses one of the few museums in Japan dedicated to World War II, but the shrine honours 14 Class A ("crimes against peace") war criminals, and this is where the controversy lies (3). On Tuesday, October 20th, 2015, Katsunobu Kato, currently a major player in Japan's policies on North Korean abductions, and 70 other lawmakers visited the shrine

(4). Though he has previously participated in visits to the shrine and affirmed his support for it, Prime Minister Abe did not visit the shrine (4). Still, though relations between China and Japan have been warming recently, China has critiqued the Abe government's continued support for, and visits to, the shrine that honours war criminals convicted of crimes against their people.

Even within Japan, the response to the Abe government's continued patronage of the shrine is the subject of some controversy. In 1978, after the names of these

war criminals were added to the list of those among the honoured, Emperor Showa (Hirohito) ceased visiting the shrine, and his son, Emperor Akihito, has maintained the royal family's refusal to visit the shrine because of the war criminals honoured there (5). Even Ambassador Kazuhiko Togo, whose grandfather Shigenori Togo is one of the Class A war criminals honoured at Yasukuni, has suggested a moratorium on official visits to Yasukuni (5). Other groups, like the Fukuoka chapter of the War-Bereaved Families Association, have previously asked the government to separate the 14 Class A war criminals from the rest of the dead (3).

This issue of how to honour and respect the dead, even when those dead convicted of war crimes, has been a major issue since World War II. In 1985, Ronald Reagan's plans

to visit and honour those buried in the Bitburg Military Cemetery, many of whom were Nazis, drew the ire of Jewish communities around the world because, though he eventually relented and went to Bergen-Belsen, Reagan did not initially plan to visit any concentration camp (6). This issue opened a debate about the relationship Germany's history should have to its present, particularly in the complex context of the Cold War and a Germany divided.

As talks between South Korea, Japan, and China's high-ranking leaders loom, Japan's relationship with its difficult past threatens to undermine the warming of relations in the region. As Article 9 and its provisions against the military approaches obsolescence, and pressure mounts on Japan from other countries to sincerely acknowledge and

make amends for its wartime atrocities, it seems that the Abe government must make a choice about whether to allow its conception of its past to dictate its future.

## SOURCES

- (1) [The New York Times](#)
- (2) [Nanjing Massacre](#)
- (3) [The New York Times](#)
- (4) [The Japan Times](#)
- (5) [The Japan Times](#)
- (6) [The Bitburg Controversy](#)

 Wikicommons



# ARTS & CULTURE

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### Rayna Healy

*It's getting pretty cold which is why I've decided to stay warm by running around and planning my Japanese Style wedding in November.*

### Joyce Wan

*If you're reading this, it's too late. I've already vanished under my kotatsu. Viva hibernation.*

## FASHION EDITORS

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### Elena Galindo

*Sometimes I like to imagine that in one of my past lives I was a sequin on a Valentino gown.*

### Erica Grainger

*I'm falling in love with Autumn fashion.  
Rustic reds with golden and caramel shades return, yay!*

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### Timothy Saar

*Fall is the best season and if you think otherwise you are wrong. Sorry, I don't make the rules.*

### Sabrina Zirakzadeh

*Between games, NaNoWriMo, and the annual winter entertainment onslaught, I will never be seen again.*

 Rebecca Guttentag

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# '300 THOUSAND PEOPLE' JOINED YOUR PARTY! TOKYO GAME SHOW 2015

TIMOTHY SAAR (GIFU)

Connect's take on Tokyo Game Show 2015 is bursting at the seams with info. Beginning with an exclusive chat with a former JET showcasing his game, continuing with our breakdown of the show floors themselves, and ending with a Persona concert open only to a limited audience—you won't find coverage like this anywhere else.

The Tokyo Game Show, held annually at the Makuhari Messe International Convention Complex in Chiba, Japan, is a chance for independent developers and industry giants alike to show off all things shiny and new in gaming. This year in particular, the expo put intense focus on independent developers, international gaming, virtual reality, and live concerts so as to empower art and fun to bridge culture gaps and break down language barriers.

Despite Microsoft declining to attend, this year's Tokyo Game Show boasted the second highest attendance ever, at 268,446 people over the four days from September 17th to 20th. This year, the event had showcases in 11 event areas, including

business, merchandise, and bustling general public areas.

## A FORMER ALT'S SENSE OF WONDER

On Friday the 18th, before TGS opened to the public, indie game developers from around the world congregated for the eighth annual Sense of Wonder Night (SOWN) 2015, an event celebrating the best in independent games this year. Out of one hundred applicants, ten finalists from eight different countries were chosen to show their projects at the Sense of Wonder Night award show.

## GAME DESIGN IS TEACHING ALEX MATHEW

In attendance was former JET Alex Mathew, helping to showcase *Walden, a game*, which he is working on at the University of Southern California Game Innovation Lab under developer Tracy Fullerton.

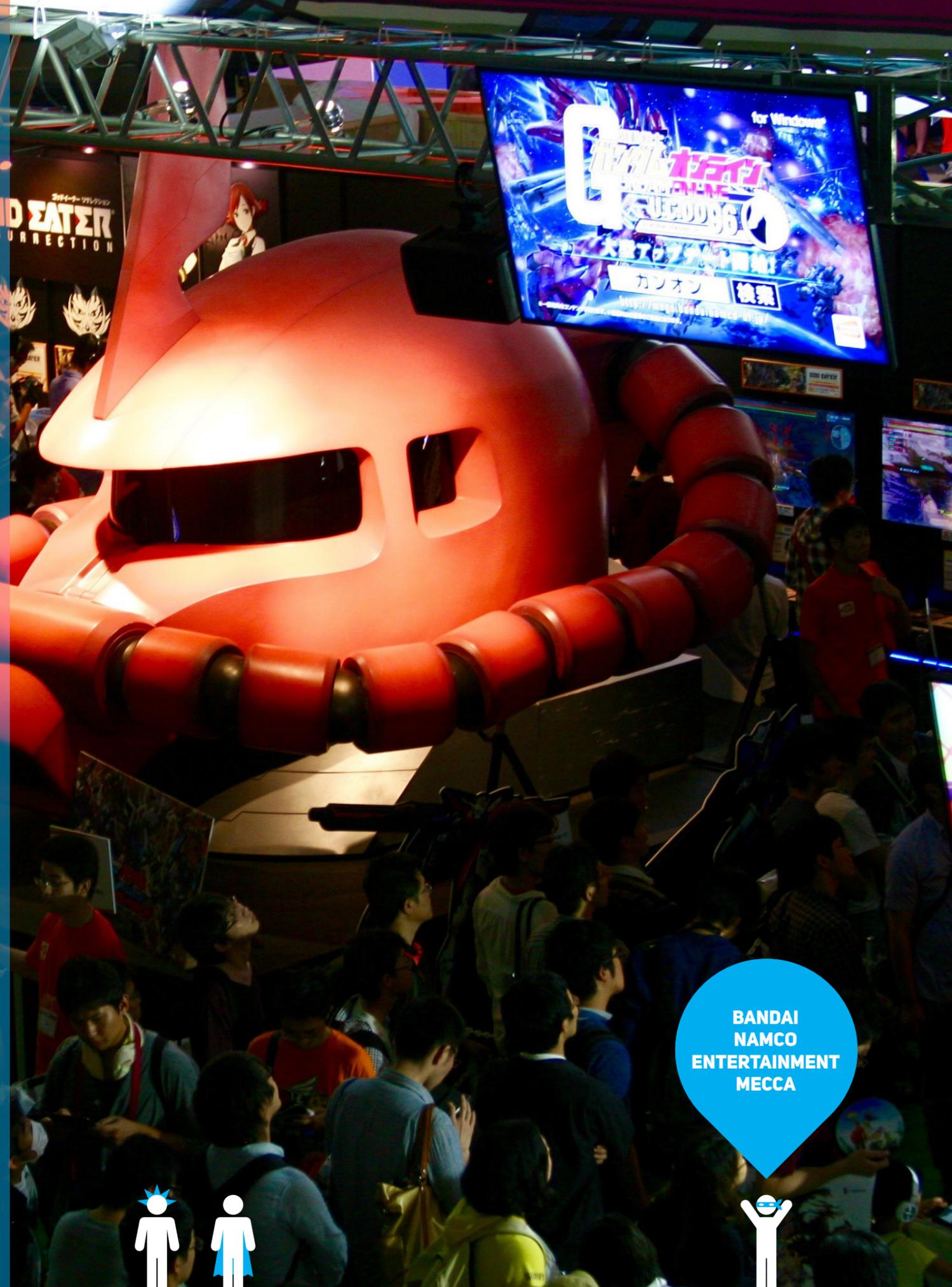
Three years ago, Alex was an assistant language teacher (ALT) in the small town of Goshoura, Amakusa, in Kumamoto Prefecture. He emphasized that he was

the only ALT there, and felt somewhat isolated.

While teaching English in Goshoura, Alex seized the opportunity to further his true passion by leading game design classes in town.

"Game design is teaching," said Alex in an interview with Connect, emphasizing that both teaching and game design fundamentally involve the "basics of communication." He went on to describe how his experience being an ALT in Amakusa influenced his game designing, specifically in the use of exploration, "breathing space, and negative space."

Though *Walden* did not take home any awards that night, the first-person exploration game elicited a unique reaction from the audience: silent contemplation. Though it was up against the high-octane action of crowd-favorite *Tough Coded* (Argentina - Best Experimental Award, Best Presentation Award), the bizarre and captivating art of *Plug and Play* (Switzerland - Best Arts Award, Audience Award), the arcade-like innovation of *ReelBlade* (Singapore -



BANDAI  
NAMCO  
ENTERTAINMENT  
MECCA





WE  
AWAIT YOU  
ALMIGHTY  
REMAKE!



Best Technological Game Award), and the unique and brain-teasing movement of Mushroom 11 (United States - Best Game Design Award), *Walden* is none of those things—it is meant to be experienced slowly and thoughtfully, according to Alex and Tracy.

“Stick to your guns when making emotional games,” declared Tracy. Rather than being disappointed by not taking home an award, Tracy and Alex are more dedicated than ever to their simulation of the self-reliant living experience American philosopher Henry David Thoreau performed in 1845—a unique subject for a game, and one that suffered in the award show due to the difficulties of interpreting the winding monologues into Japanese during the time limit.

However, the challenge of interpreting various languages was lessened by every participant’s genuine love of video games. Even at Friday evening’s International Party + Indie Night, the subject of video games and collaboration provided a natural spark for developers and guests to have lively conversations with each other to the tunes of DJ SEXY-SYNTHESIZER and the breakdancing Real Akiba Boys.

#### THE SHOWROOM FLOOR: LIVE PERFORMANCES AND A SURPRISE GUEST

Saturday marked the beginning of the two public days, and video game and tech fans alike showed up in earnest. The showroom

floors were awash with people, breathing room was at a minimum, and hour-long waits to play games (at minimum) became the norm. There were attendees in creative cosplay, and image models in various armor, fur, and near-underwear levels of undress. One particularly brazen group had attendees scan QR codes on their chests in exchange for novelty bags.

Titanic displays competed for attention. EA’s *Star Wars Battlefront* boasted a sprawling two-screen setup with live battles of two teams fighting it out on the snow planet of Hoth, with fog and flashing lights in the color of the winning team. Cygames’s *Granblue Fantasy* for mobile

**THE VIRTUAL REALITY EFFECT IS DISCONCERTING AND IMPRESSIVE, AS TURNING THE PLAYER’S HEAD IN ANY DIRECTION ELICITED A SMOOTH RESPONSE WHERE ONE COULD LOOK DIRECTLY BEHIND AT THE OTHER “CONCERT-GOERS.”**

placed a monstrous pirate ship in front of an even larger screen, where attendees could board and demo the game. Capcom’s four new *Monster Hunter* titles along with *Ace Attorney 6* (bringing with it the exciting announcement of an anime coming in April 2016) immersed players in recreations of their 3DS in-game locals. Bandai Namco placed a watchful Zaku head in their booth, and Sony cobbled together various eye-catching displays, such as life-sized representations of *Bloodborne: The Old Hunters*’s playful messengers and the apple-chasing protagonist of *Gravity Daze* (*Gravity Rush* in North America) falling from the sky above

players. And though *The Last Guardian* still isn’t playable, Sony graced attendees with a looming projection of Trico (the protagonist’s giant, furry, feathered friend) that interacted with frantically waving fans via a PlayStation Camera.

For many, the real display began only after placing virtual reality glasses and headphones on. Sony dedicated a scaffolded second floor to their PlayStation VR project (formerly Project Morpheus), consisting of games serving as tech demos. This included an experience wherein the participant watches Vocaloid performer Hatsune Miku surrounded by a virtual crowd at a concert.

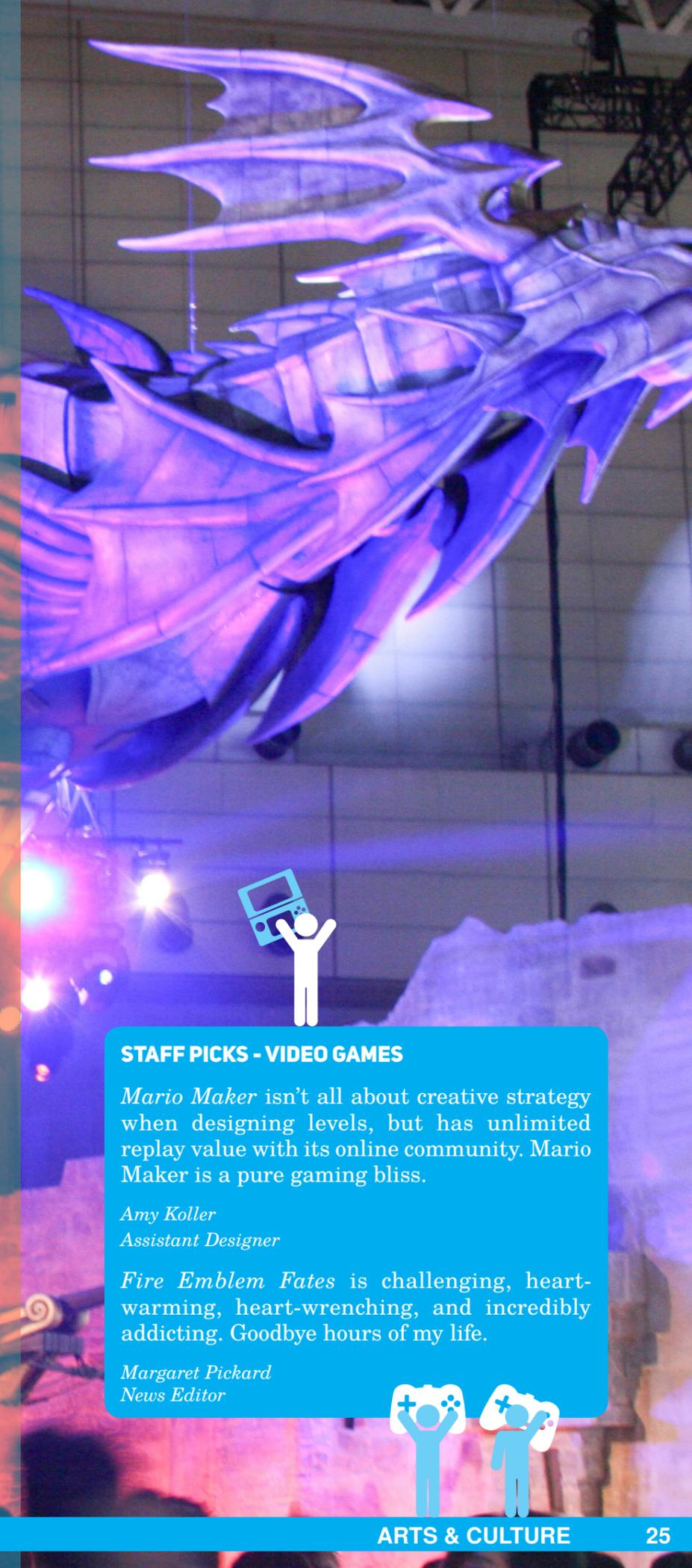
The virtual reality effect is disconcerting and impressive, as turning the player’s head in any direction elicited a smooth response where one could look directly behind at the other “concert-goers,” and Hatsune Miku appears very close to the player’s face at a few points.

Concerts weren’t limited to virtual space; Atlus hosted a *Persona* Special Stage in anticipation for their upcoming *Persona 5* for the PS4. The closed event featured *Persona* artists Kawamura Yumi, Lotus Juice, Hirata Shihoko, and DJ Waka. Voice actor Tomomi Isomura and freelance writer Mafia Kajita of the *Persona*

Stalker Club conducted a talk show which included a surprise guest in Fukuyama Jun (*Assassination Classroom*, *Code Geass*, *Bleach*, *Black Butler*), voice of the main character in this new instalment.

The international atmosphere, the helpful staff, and the pure dedication to gaming made this year’s Tokyo Game Show one to remember. The recent focus on independent developers and the fantastical displays of the larger companies gave gaming a serious platform while still keeping its spirit of fun and creativity. Tasteless booths were the small exception, with the larger companies like Sony and Capcom explicitly focusing on the game’s feel and art for their booths. With only one of the three console giants showing, it’s difficult to come to any conclusions regarding this coming year as a whole. However, in an industry often criticized for being stagnant, new series and technologies from the indie panels to PlayStation VR are a life-giving breath of air. Gaming continues to bring passionate players and developers, from around the world, together.

Rebecca Guttentag, Timothy Saar



#### STAFF PICKS - VIDEO GAMES

*Mario Maker* isn’t all about creative strategy when designing levels, but has unlimited replay value with its online community. *Mario Maker* is a pure gaming bliss.

Amy Koller  
Assistant Designer

*Fire Emblem Fates* is challenging, heart-warming, heart-wrenching, and incredibly addicting. Goodbye hours of my life.

Margaret Pickard  
News Editor



# COSPLAY FANDOM, FASHION, & FANTASY MEET

LAURA BAKER (MARYLAND)

Cosplay—a portmanteau of the words “costume” and “role-play”—refers to the act of constructing costumes and dressing up as characters from any form of media, typically comics, video games, or anime. Though the act itself caught on at American science fiction conventions back in the 70s and 80s, Japan is both where the term was coined and where it truly thrives. Today, cosplay is quickly becoming a global phenomenon.

Much of the cosplay community sticks to creating their costumes by hand or making alterations to ready-made costumes. Nothing is off limits for cosplayers, who have done everything including sewing laborious amounts of fabric, molding intricate props out of clay or wood, and even learning to use stilts to achieve a likeness to their favorite characters. Cosplays are worn to the numerous conventions, or “cons,” that celebrate the television, comic, and/or anime mediums from which they derive.

## COSTUMING WITH A COMPETITIVE EDGE

Fashion, art, and theater form the amalgam that is cosplay competitions. The theatrics, or “role-play,” comes in during the competitions,

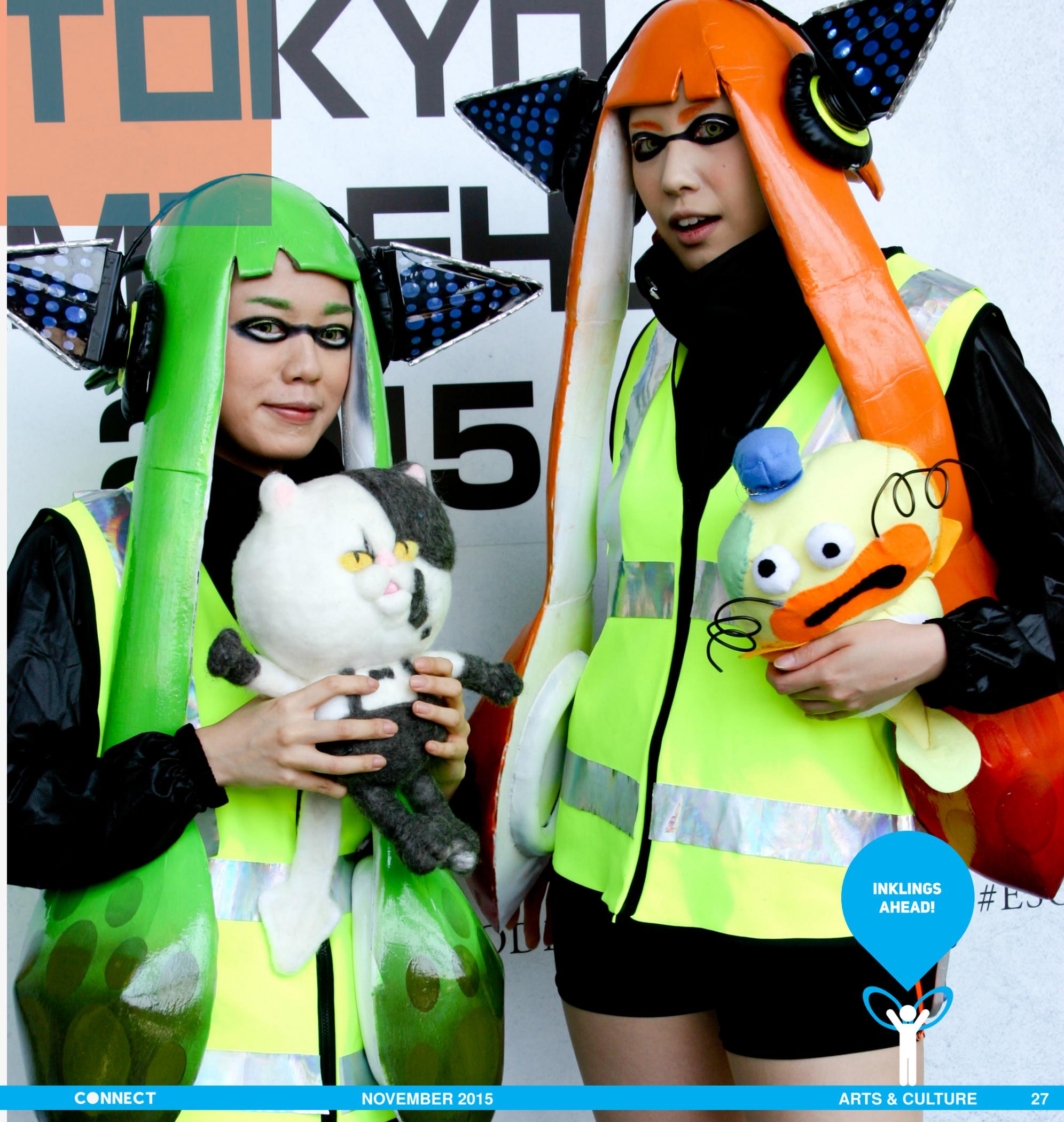
where cosplayers are judged not only on their costume’s construction and accuracy, but also on how well they can perform a skit in character. The Olympics of these competitions is the World Cosplay Summit, held annually in Nagoya. With over 20 countries sending representatives to compete, the World Cosplay Summit is a testament to cosplay’s global growth and appeal.

## LABOR OF LOVE

So why do people cosplay? For some, cosplay is a way to pay tribute to a favorite series or character. Some use it as a way to come out of their shells and connect with a community of like-minded people. Some do it because they love to create, and some have even turned the hobby into a full-time job. No matter what their motives, all cosplayers can agree that it is truly a labor of love.

*Laura Baker is a recently graduated digital artist/ aspiring JET who currently resides in Maryland. She loves all forms of art, including cosplay, and has attended way more cosplay conventions than she cares to admit, both in and out of cosplay. Check out here [Tumblr here](#).*

📷 Timothy Saar



INKLINGS  
AHEAD!



# 365 PERFORMANCES

RAYNA HEALY (SHIMANE)

In Unnan, nestled high in the mountains of Shimane Prefecture, agriculture is the name of the game. Like many rural towns, it loses young people to the bright lights and big cities of Japan. For those not interested in the agricultural industry, there just aren't many amenities to attract and retain young people. Masahito, the owner of a local drama club, noticed one of the resources that Unnan lacked, and felt compelled to create it: drama.

He started the 365 Project with his drama club. Together, they have been putting on a live performance every day since January 1, 2015. As the name suggests, they intend to put on a performance for 365 consecutive days. Inspiration for the project stemmed from the idea that the citizens of Unnan who love theatre are

at a disadvantage. In big cities like Tokyo or Osaka, it's easy to find a variety of live performances whenever the mood strikes to attend one. But in the countryside, performances can be few and far between. Masahito wanted live theatre to be just as accessible in Unnan as it is in big cities. Visitors or citizens who've finished dinner and are looking for some off-screen entertainment can decide to go to the community center and see a show. With this hope in mind, 365 Performances was born.

To offer something for everyone, a variety of performances were chosen and rehearsed by actors, high schoolers, and community members. The show I attended was written and performed by the high school drama teacher, with his

students cheering him on from the audience. After just one performance, it was clear what a community effort this project had become. The project both creates more opportunities to view art in the community, and lifts up its own members to explore their creativity by giving them a stage to perform on.

The 365 Project is a call to action for theatre lovers both on the stage and off it. It's a love letter to theatre, signed by both the actors and the audience who have worked hard to make it successful. With any luck and continued support from the community, the project will make it to its final show on December 31st, 2015.

 [365 Performances](#)

# FACES IN FASHION TAKAFUMI TSURUTA

ELENA GALINDO (SHIZUOKA)

## FAST FACTS

Age: 34

Occupation: Designer

Label: Tenbo

Tenbo is a brand that is self-described as "a brand of People design" with accessibility at its core. Tenbo pieces certainly do have wide appeal, as they flatter both men and women, and can easily be dressed up to exalt the quirk factor, or paired off with more subtle, wearable pieces for casual looks. Fun, eclectic shapes combined with quirky prints and patterns are the Tenbo staple, making for clothing that never bores.

## CLAIM TO FAME

An alumnus of Bunka Fashion College, Japan's top school of fashion, Tsuruta is not new to the world of fashion. Though his brand only recently debuted at the 2014 Mercedes-Benz Tokyo Fashion Week, it did not fail to gather attention—and for all the right reasons. Tsuruta's designs aim to be accessible for all people, an aspect which he showcases by choosing people with various disabilities to model for his runway shows. In an industry often criticized for its lack of inclusivity, Tenbo serves as an ambassador brand to make any and all persons feel fashionably welcome.

 [Erica Grainger](#)



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# FUN TIMES & DASTARDLY VILLAINS FACING OFF WITH CULTURE SHOCK

GAREN ARONIAN (GIFU)

It has been roughly two months since I arrived in Japan. It definitely doesn't feel like two months—surely it was just yesterday I was in Canada eating maple syrup for every meal and riding my moose to work. As time passes and I get accustomed to life in Japan, I am slowly getting used to a cozy routine. Lurking ahead of the coming cold season, however, is the menacing villain Culture Shock, aka Count C.S.. This won't be the first time we face off, this villain and I. This is the third country I've moved to, and he likes to make his appearance on the stage two months into the play. If you haven't met him before, I'll let you know about some of the old tricks up his sleeve, and how I've been preparing to face off against this dastardly villain.

So what is this thing we call culture shock? It's a collection of feelings like irritation, frustration, sadness, and anxiety that you start feeling after being exposed to a new culture for an extended period of time. When you first arrive, you are having a blast and don't realize that everything around you works quite differently, because you might not know

just how differently people think and behave. Sure, we are all taught about cultural differences in sociology classes and so on, but to experience it is different.

Japan has its own host of cultural differences that foreigners often find challenging. For example, at my first *undokai* I wanted to help the teachers, but was told only to watch. I asked if I could help, only to be thanked and told that they were fine. I decided to give a hand anyway because it looked like they needed it. After the event, I was approached by a teacher who told me she was grateful and surprised because no ALT had done this. This likely results from the difference in communication styles: the direct approach, or low context, of some Western cultures, versus the indirect approach, or high context, of the Japanese culture (check out the work of anthropologist [Edward T. Hall](#) if you are interested in reading more).

This is part of the *tatemae* (public persona) and *honne* (true persona) dichotomy in Japan that I find hard to acclimate to. I have connected so well with my colleagues in more informal settings like

*enkais*, but find it hard to find those joyful people again in the teachers' room the next day. With my low language ability, I find people avoiding conversations with me just so they won't have to use their English, even though I am struggling to use the little Japanese I know. I actually saw a teacher sitting next to me peek at me in the middle of his catnap, then quickly close his eyes when I turned

**WE ALL REACT TO LIFE'S CHALLENGES IN DIFFERENT WAYS, BUT EVERY TIME YOU IMMERSE YOURSELF IN A NEW CULTURE, SOME UNEXPECTED CHANGES WITHIN YOU ARE BOUND TO HAPPEN.**

toward him. Even though I stay jovial and work hard to get past these barriers, I do keep an eye out on the frustration events like these may cause.

So how do you know you are experiencing culture shock? Watch out for the symptoms: lack of self-confidence, isolating yourself, a strong need to only associate with expats, excessive or disproportional anger bursts, high levels of apathy, loss of interest in your life, etc. Check out the [General Information Handbook for JETS](#), or look up more information online if you think you might be going through culture shock. For many, the honeymoon stage will be winding down at this point, and the monotony setting in. You may notice cultural differences more and more as daily tasks become routine, freeing up your mind to focus on other things.

I have lived in four different countries, and have gotten

a little better at handling culture shock with every move. Some of you might be in the same boat, many might be stepping outside of their country for the first time, and a few of you might even be lucky enough to never experience culture shock. We all react to life's challenges in different ways, but every time you immerse yourself in a new culture, some unexpected changes within you are bound to happen. What's special about the JET program is that it's a short stay that is so full of potential. What goals do you want to achieve before your time is up? Armed with the knowledge of how Count C.S. works and how you can defeat him, I hope you will relegate him to a minor role during your stay here so you can keep the fun times rolling, achieve your goals, and enjoy every last minute of your stay in this wonderful place. "Have at you, you scallywag!"

 Garen Aronian

## FIGHT BACK

Besides reading up on the topic, there are a couple of other things I'm doing to stave off culture shock this time around:

- creating a nice social network here with ALTs;
- signing up for calligraphy and Japanese classes to learn more about Japanese culture, make local friends, and reduce language barriers;
- getting serious at work by going above and beyond my daily duties. I have had more teachers warm up to me as a result, and some shower me with snacks, which is always welcome;
- showing interest in anything my colleagues do. So far, this has resulted in a fishing trip in Toyama which was an amazing experience;
- trying to eat healthy (but I love ramen too much) and exercise regularly;
- keeping in touch with friends and family back home through Skype and messenger apps;
- reading up on Japanese culture (I recommend *The Japanese Mind* by Roger J. Davies and Osamu Ikeno);
- asking my Japanese friends about cultural issues that confuse me (try the app HelloTalk);
- constantly challenging the generalizations that my mind makes automatically.

**DID YOU KNOW? NATIONAL AJET OFFERS NUMEROUS RESOURCES THAT CAN HELP WITH CULTURE SHOCK. CHECK THEM OUT [HERE](#).**



# LIFESTYLE

## FOOD EDITORS

connect.food@ajet.net

### Alexandra Brueckner

*I love fall. The apples. The leaves.  
The homemade pumpkin spice lattes that have replaced my blood.*

### Mira Richard-Fioramore

*It's fall season so I bought a bunch of spaghetti & butternut squash to cook!  
Found 'em on Rakuten!*

## TRAVEL EDITORS

connect.travel@ajet.net

### Leah Gray

*I'm enjoying this lovely fall weather while it lasts!*

### Pia Peterson

*It's not too cold for biking, hiking, and camping...yet!*

 Illaura Rossiter

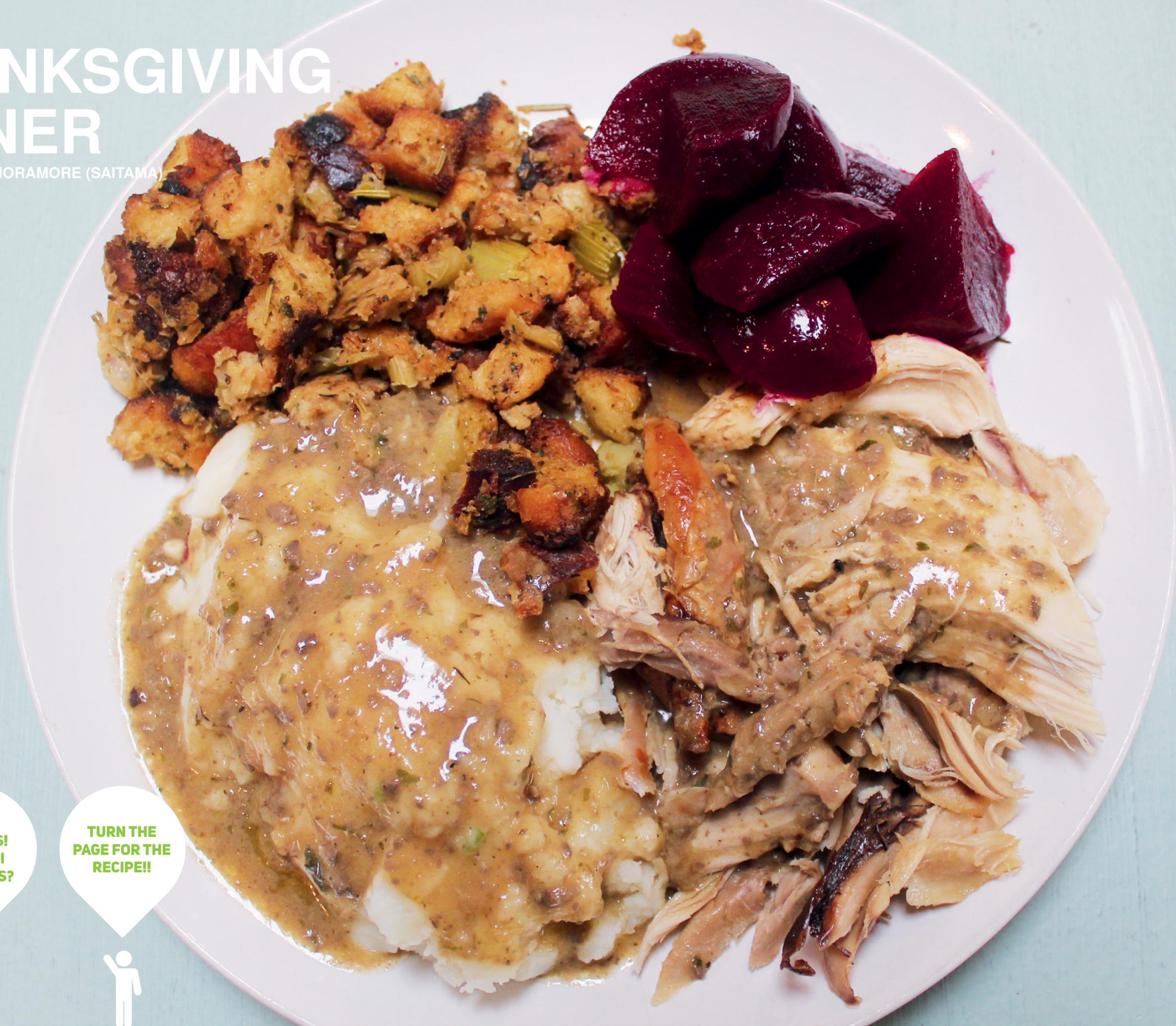
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# THANKSGIVING DINNER

MIRA RICHARD-FIORAMORE (SAITAMA)



MY  
HEAVENS!  
HOW DO I  
MAKE THIS?

TURN THE  
PAGE FOR THE  
RECIPE!!



Canadians usually eat roast turkey for Thanksgiving (second Monday of October) and Christmas Eve (December 24th), alongside various other traditional dishes, and Americans usually eat turkey for Thanksgiving in November. We buy frozen turkeys from the supermarket, and depending on how much your turkey weighs, the defrosting time may vary. It usually states on the turkey package how long you should defrost your turkey.

For this recipe, I bought a 13 pound turkey and defrosted it inside my fridge for 2 days. After it had defrosted, I left it to come to room temperature by leaving it outside the fridge in the kitchen for 2 hours. The cooking time also varies depending on your turkey's weight. As a general rule, a turkey should be cooked in the oven for 15 minutes per pound. As my turkey was 13 pounds, I cooked it for 3:35 hours. Usually, you cook your turkey with its breast up and thighs on the grill, but this causes the breast to become dry and not be as juicy as they could be. Therefore, I make it a rule to cook the turkey with its breast on the grill so that all the juices will sink into the white meat and make the turkey tender and moist.

### TURKEY

- 5kg turkey\*
- 1 onion
- 3 garlic cloves
- 1 carrot
- 2 celery sticks
- 10g fresh parsley
- 2 tbsp lemon juice
- 125ml butter (melted)
- 1 tbsp rosemary
- 1 tbsp thyme
- salt and pepper (as needed)

*\*Turkeys are available at Costco and on [The Meat Guy website](#).*

The first step will be to pre-heat the oven to 400°F (200°C). Remove the turkey from the packaging and inside the cavity there should be a bag with the neck, heart, gizzard and livers. Take the bag out and rinse the turkey under cold water thoroughly. Pat dry with a paper towel. If your turkey comes with a plastic string holding the legs together, do not cut it off as this will come in handy while cooking. If not, you will need to have kitchen string so as to tie up the legs.

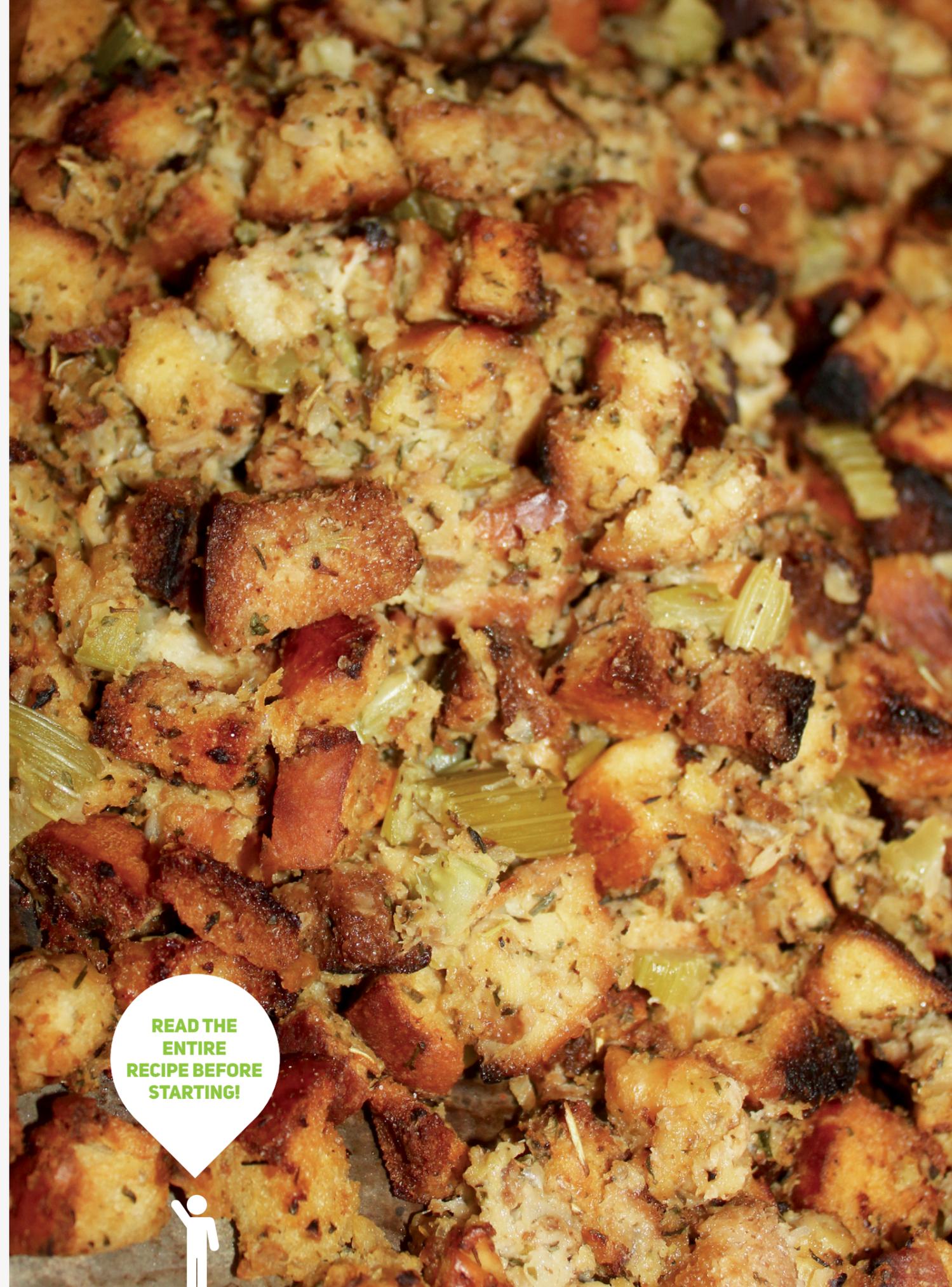
On a cutting board, slice up the onion, garlic, carrot, celery, and parsley. Place the vegetables in a bowl, add the lemon juice and lightly mix. Make sure the vegetables are properly covered by the lemon juice before stuffing them inside the turkey. You're probably going to have to stuff the turkey hole with a ball of aluminum foil so that the vegetables do not fall out.

After stuffing the cavity, spread the melted butter over the turkey using a basting brush. Sprinkle the salt and pepper, rosemary and thyme over the turkey, making sure it's coated really well. Place the turkey in the 400°F (200°C) pre-heated oven for 30 minutes, then lower the temperature to 350 degrees (180°C) for 2 hours, and finally bake it for 1 hour at 250°F (120°C). If you would like the skin on the turkey breast brown, you can flip the bird around for 5 minutes at the end and raise the oven temperature to 500°F (260°C). After the turkey has browned, take it out of the oven and let it rest on a cutting board to complete the cooking process. Drain the juice out of the roasting pan and keep it for the gravy.

### GRAVY SAUCE

- 1 turkey neck
- Giblets
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tsp salt and pepper
- 2L water
- 1 carrot
- 2 celery sticks
- 1 onion
- 3 garlic cloves
- turkey juice after baked
- 4 tbsp flour
- 3 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp parsley
- salt and pepper (as needed)

While the turkey is in the oven, start making the gravy with the giblets and the neck. In a large pot, melt the butter and add the neck, browning it on all sides. While that is cooking, on a chopping board mince the carrot, celery, onion, and garlic. Into the pot add the giblets, minced vegetables, water, salt and pepper. Let the stock boil down on medium heat until there is about 3 cups left.



**READ THE  
ENTIRE  
RECIPE BEFORE  
STARTING!**





Sieve the vegetables and the meat out of the stock. Carefully pull the meat out of the neck and place it in a food processor along with the giblets. Blend it to a smooth texture. Set it aside with the stock. Dispose of the sieved vegetables.

In a large pan, add the flour, butter, parsley, salt and pepper and whisk well together. Add your puréed meat and continue whisking. Add the turkey juice that you previously set aside and continue whisking. Finally, add the stock half a cup at a time while continuously whisking. Once the stock has completely dissolved, simmer on medium heat for a final 30 minutes.

#### STUFFING

- 0.5 kg bread
- 125ml butter
- 3 celery sticks
- 2 onions
- 1 tbsp marjoram
- 2 tbsp parsley
- 1 tbsp rosemary
- 1 tbsp thyme
- 1 tbsp salt
- 1 tbsp pepper
- 750 ml chicken bouillon

While the stock for the gravy is boiling down, on a cutting board slice the bread into mini cubes. Place the bread onto an oven tray and toast in the oven for 20 minutes (same oven which the turkey is currently in). While the bread is toasting, mince the

celery and onion. Add the butter to a pan and fry the minced ingredients until soft. When the bread cubes are toasted, take them out and transfer them into a large ovenproof dish. Add the fried onions and celery to the bread and mix thoroughly. Add the marjoram, parsley, rosemary, thyme, salt and pepper, and chicken bouillon into the bread mixture and make sure everything is coated nicely so that the bread can properly absorb the chicken stock. Place the dish into the oven for about 1 hour. The bread should be ready at around the same time the turkey is.

#### ASSEMBLING

By following this order for the three recipes you should have everything ready at the same time. When it comes to serving, start by carving up your turkey on a cutting board and place pieces onto a plate. Next, add your stuffing and anything else you may have prepared. In the picture (above), I have prepared mash potatoes and pickled beets. The final step will be to pour the giblet gravy over everything!

 Mira Richard-Fioramore

LOOKING AT  
THIS RECIPE  
MAKES ME  
FULL...



# TOKYO'S KITCHEN TOWN

ALEXANDRA BRUECKNER (AOMORI)

The longer I live in Japan, the more convinced I become that there isn't anything you can't find in Tokyo. Akihabara has its electronics. Harajuku has its fashion. Shibuya has its shopping. And for the kitchen—and food-obsessed—there's Kappabashi-dori (合羽橋鶏), our version of culinary heaven. Whatever obscure tool you're looking for to complete your kitchen, Kappabashi-dori probably has it (and if you can't find it, you just might not be looking hard enough!).

Kappabashi-dori is located near Ueno and Asakusa. To find it, you just need to look for the giant chef's head (seriously) adorning its entrance. Its long street is filled with shops that are almost intimidating in their scale. Shopping there can feel a little like falling down the kitchen rabbit hole.

Shops proffer everything from electric-neon signs to spices in bulk, to pots and pans in every size imaginable, to plastic food

replicas restaurants display in their windows. Some of the shops, like those selling chopstick stands and cookie cutters, look like a hoarder's dream. If Ariel from *The Little Mermaid* had been an aspiring cook, her grotto probably would have looked something like Kappabashi-dori.

Kappabashi-dori has become an offbeat tourist destination in Tokyo, but first and foremost, it caters to all cooks, and not just the hardcore kind, either. Even if you're someone who barely dabbles in cooking, Kappabashi-dori probably has something that can make cooking in your kitchen just a little more convenient.

Some of the things that you can find in Kappabashi-dori's shops are the type of tools that just make everyday foods a bit better, whether it's a milk frother to boost your morning coffee, or a pizza stone to achieve a good crust on your 'za. For those who consider themselves serious chefs,

Kappabashi-dori houses more specialized gizmos and gadgets like crème brûlée torches, cannoli molds, and madeleine pans.

While it's true that most of those things can be found on Amazon easily enough, Kappabashi-dori's prices are usually lower than those you would find online. Additionally, shopping there means that you'll actually be able to physically lay an eye on that fancy copper pot or wok before dropping some hard-earned yen on it.

In any case, whether you're a seasoned chef looking to step up your culinary game or just someone who wants a good doughnut pan to satisfy your sweet tooth, Kappabashi-dori is worth a visit.

 Alexandra Brueckner

#### TO GET TO KAPPABASHI-DORI

Take the Ginza Line to Tawaramachi station and come out of exit #3. Walk along Asakusa-dori towards Ueno. At the second traffic light, you'll be able to see the giant chef's head that marks the start of the shopping street.



# SOY SAUCE RECIPE & STORY CONTEST

MIRA RICHARD-FIORAMORE (SAITAMA)

*Connect Magazine's own Mira Richard-Fioramore was chosen as one of only five contestants to show her skills in a national cooking competition. Here's her story—and her recipe for you to make yourself!*

The Japan Soy Sauce Association held its 7th Soy Sauce Recipe & Story Contest this year in Tokyo. The contest accepted entries for two categories: 'Washoku' (Japanese-style recipes) and 'Your Country's Cuisine.' Both categories required the use of soy sauce in the recipe. This year for the first time the contest was open only to foreign citizens living in Japan, whereas in previous years, the contest was only for Japanese citizens. To enter, one had to fill out the application form with the name of your dish, the recipe, along with a story that described how the dish came about, all before May 31st, 2015. A panel of judges would read through all the applications and choose 5 participants for the 'Washoku' category and 5 participants for the 'Your Country's Cuisine' category. If chosen, you were expected to cook the recipe, without any assistance, on August 1st at the Hattori Nutrition College in Shibuya, Tokyo, all expenses paid, and be judged by four famous chefs. This year, the judges were

Mr. Yukio Hattori, president of Hattori Nutrition College, who has appeared on the TV series 'Iron Chef'; Ms. Remi Hirano, a cooking expert and the inventor of a frying pan called remipan; Ms. Akiko Watanabe, a cooking expert; and Mr. Imura, the executive chef at the Royal Park Hotel.

The contestants were given one hour to prep their food and one hour to cook four portions of their dish, all under the supervision of the judges. They were also filmed by an NHK crew. The contestants were judged on the way they cooked, held their knives, chopping skills, presentation, confidence, and taste. After the dishes were completed, they were photographed

before being sent to the judges for tasting. The judges then evaluated the dishes without providing any feedback. The contestants would have to wait a week before receiving an e-mail that would inform them on which prize they had won.

After receiving the e-mail, the contestants were invited back to the Soy Sauce Day Gathering ceremony at the Royal Park Hotel on October 1st where prizes would be awarded. More than 300 attendees showed up, all of whom were connected to soy sauce companies. The first part of the ceremony consisted of the Soy Sauce Information Center awarding prizes to different Japanese

soy sauce companies, highlighting which company had the best tasting soy sauce in all of Japan. In addition, the participants of the Soy Sauce Cooking Contest also received their prizes.

The second part of the day was held in the banquet room where the executive chef, Mr. Imura, prepared delicious French and Japanese dishes for the guests. It was a buffet style where guests were free to eat whatever they pleased. The gold and silver prized winners' dishes were also prepared by Mr. Imura so that the guests could enjoy the food they had made. The buffet consisted of roast beef, roast duck, terrine, ceviche, lobster and spinach in a cream sauce, sashimi, sushi, escargots, soups, cheese, and various desserts including soy sauce ice cream.

I entered the competition for fun, not expecting to get chosen. I decided to make a version of a maple salmon

because it's a pretty popular souvenir to get from Canada. I used soy sauce and garlic in my maple syrup marinade and added vegetables that I thought would go well with the sweetness of the marinade. I find that using maple syrup instead of mirin or sugar gives the marinade a nice 'Canadian' flavour. I also crusted the salmon with panko and almond meal because I found that adding almond meal to the panko gave it a sweeter taste.

To my surprise, I was actually chosen as one of the top 5 contestants for the 'Your Country's Cuisine' category and had the chance to show off my cooking skills in front of the judges. The judges enjoyed my dish and were pleased to know that you can use the marinade for more

than just salmon! I received the silver prize and was really happy that my dish had been made by the hands of a famous chef!

I'm not sure whether the contest will be held for foreigners or Japanese citizens next year, but make sure to check out their [website](#) around March-April 2016 to find out whether they're hosting it again! Even if you don't get the gold or silver prize, every entry that gets chosen wins something. If you think you have a winning recipe for a foreign or Japanese dish that uses soy sauce, make sure to sign up for the contest!



OUR  
VERY OWN  
MIRA!

BRONZE  
GLASS  
PLAQUE &  
¥30,000

SILVER  
GLASS  
PLAQUE &  
¥50,000

GOLD  
GLASS  
PLAQUE &  
¥100,000

EVERY  
CONTESTANT  
RECEIVES A DVD  
OF THE EVENT,  
PICTURES,  
AND RECIPE  
PAMPHLETS.



## MAPLE SOY SAUCE CRUSTED SALMON FILET

Serves 4

### DIRECTIONS

1. Preheat the oven to 200°C.
2. Slice the stems off the enoki mushrooms and spinach. Slice the bok choy in half.
3. In a bowl, mix the soy sauce, maple syrup, garlic powder, garlic, salt and pepper together. Add the salmon and marinate for 30 minutes.
4. In a small bowl, mix the panko and almond meal together.
5. In an oven proof dish, place the enoki mushrooms on the bottom and place the salmon on top. With your hands, put 1/4 of the panko mix on each salmon filet. Pour 1/2 of the sweet sauce over the panko and around the salmon. Cook for 18 minutes.
6. Bring a pot of water to the boil. Add the spinach and bok choy and cook until wilted. Drain.
7. In a pan, transfer the wilted spinach and add a couple of tablespoons of the marinade. Cook for a minute. This will give them a nice sweet taste.
8. Mix the corn starch and water together. In a separate pan, start frying the bok choy. Add half of the remaining marinade with the corn starch. Fry until the bok choy starts to get crispy.

9. Take the salmon out of the oven.
10. On a plate add the spinach and place the salmon on top with the enoki mushrooms. Place the bok choy on the other side. Pour the remaining marinade over the salmon and grilled bok choy.

### INGREDIENTS

- 1/2 cup soy sauce
- 1 1/2 cup maple syrup
- 3/4 tsp garlic powder
- 6 garlic cloves
- 1 1/2 tsp salt & pepper
- 1/2 cup panko
- 1/2 cup almond meal\*
- 4 skinless salmon filet
- 2 spinach bags
- 2 enoki mushroom bags
- 4 large bok choy
- 1 tsp corn starch
- 1 tsp water

\*Almond meal is called アーモンドプードル in Japanese.

# UKAI

DEREK MACATANTAN (KYOTO)

Living in Japan, opportunities to experience many of Japan's traditions and customs are all around us. Many of them, which have roots spanning over a thousand years, are still being practiced to this day. One tradition that you may not know about can be experienced during Japan's festive summer period, and has a history of over 1,300 years. This tradition is called *Ukai* (鵜飼) and it is currently being practiced in only thirteen locations throughout the country. Arashiyama and Uji, both in Kyoto Prefecture, are two such locations. Every year I enjoy watching *ukai* in Arashiyama, just off of the area's famous Togetsukyo Bridge. Tickets are 1,700 yen, and no reservations are required. Although most displays of *ukai* are now done for show, it is a mystical experience that can send you back in time to Japan's long past when birds caught fish that fed whole villages.

*Ukai* is a type of fishing that is done at night, and uses the help of trained cormorant birds and fire to catch fish. Cormorants are a type of seabird that resembles a seagull, with the main differences being that its neck is slightly longer than a seagull's, and its body is usually wholly black or dark brown. The birds are specially trained to catch *ayu*, or sweetfish, and deliver them to the fisherman uneaten. This is achieved by having a rope tied around the bird's throat, which allows it

to catch and eat only small fish. When larger fish, such as *ayu*, are caught, the bird is unable to swallow it and the fishermen remove the fish that will eventually be brought back to the harbor. When it's time for *ukai*, the birds are set out into the quiet river while the fishermen control them from a small wooden boat. Stretching out over the front of the boat hang large bundles of wood that are lit on fire, creating a mesmerizing blaze of flames and embers that dance in the

to experience the fishermen's art. The boat is steered out into the river with nothing more than a long wooden stick as a volunteer guide dishes out interesting facts about the fishing process, adding in jokes and personal experiences along the way. Most guides are quite knowledgeable about the history of the river and how many other rivers it branches off into. When everyone has made it off the shore and onto the river, the boats are then tied together from

**TODAY'S PRACTICE OF UKAI PROVIDES A SMALL WINDOW INTO JAPAN'S PAST, AND FURTHER STRENGTHENS THE IMAGE OF THE COUNTRY'S ABILITY TO KEEP ALIVE ITS ANCIENT TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS. THE MESMERIZING RHYTHM ON THE BOAT AND THE DANCING FLAMES WORK THEIR MAGIC TO TRANSPORT YOU BACK IN TIME, AND FOR A MOMENT YOU WILL BE ABLE TO FORGET THE JAPAN THAT YOU EXPERIENCE ON A DAILY BASIS.**

reflection of the dark water. The fire is used not only to light the way for the birds and fishermen, but also to attract fish to the boat. The fishermen keep the birds on task by rhythmically beating the side of the boat and yelling words of encouragement such as "Sore! Sore! Ganbare!" which translates to, "That's it! That's it! Keep at it!"

Those who venture out to view *ukai* can expect to get an up-close and personal experience of this ancient tradition. Spectators board long boats covered with tatami mats, providing a comfortable vessel in which

front to back, creating a long chain. The spectators wait in silence for the fishermen to approach. A few moments later, the silence is broken as a faint beating rhythm can be heard in the distance. Small flickering flames of orange appear, which grow bigger and bigger as the boats approach the spectators. The faint rhythm becomes louder and stronger, the fire brighter and fiercer, and soon enough the fishermen and birds begin to pass by each boat. As the fishermen offer their words of encouragement, the birds swim vigilantly along the sides of the boats, occasionally



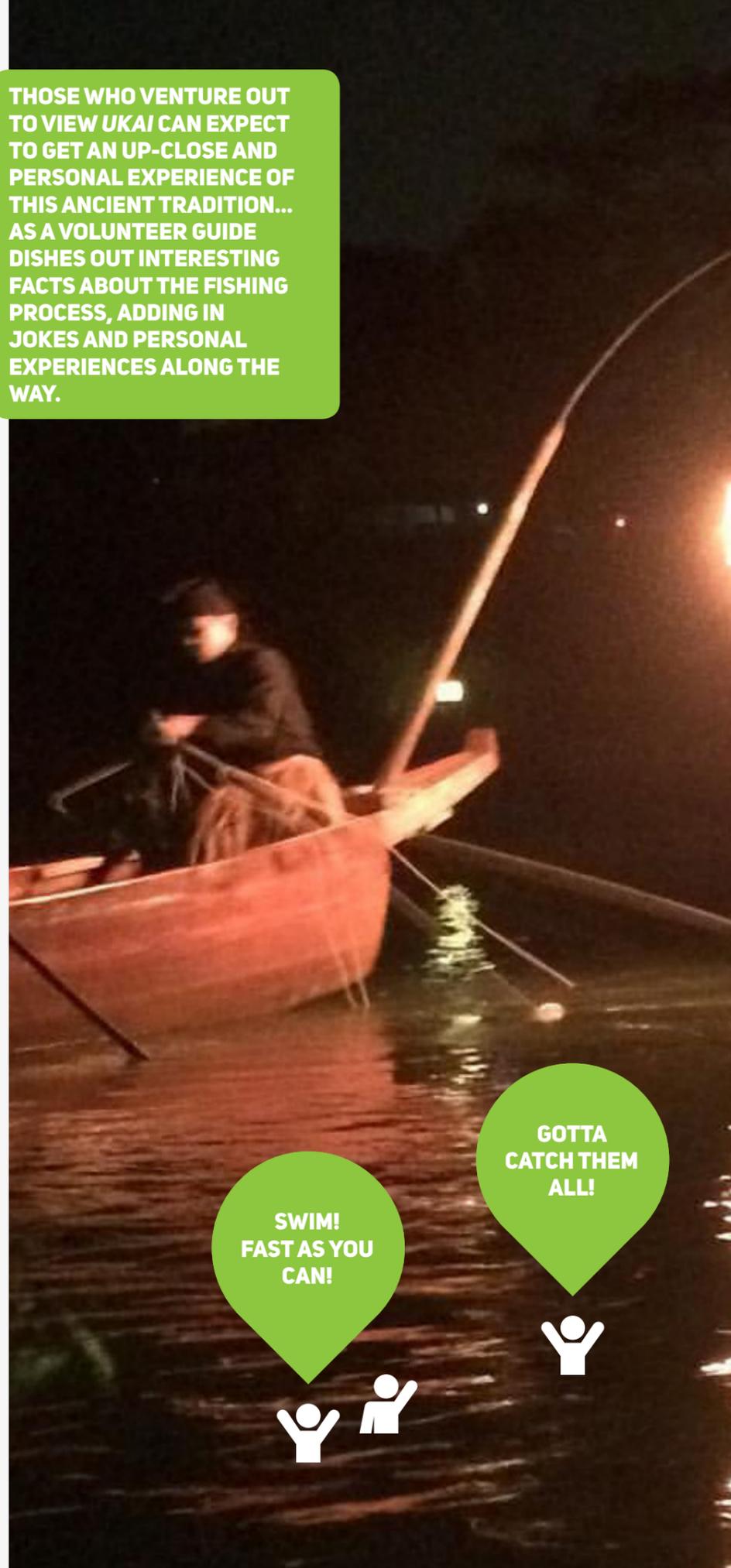
Mira Richard-Fioramore

diving down into the water in hopes of bringing a fish up to the surface. The spectators show their appreciation of the birds' hard work as they applaud and cheer them whenever a fish is caught. So that everyone is able to get a good view, it is normal for the fishermen to make a few passes on both sides of the spectators' boats. During the final pass, the fishermen bow in thanks, as one last round of applause is given for both the fishermen and the birds' efforts. The spectators are transported back to the shore of the river with one final word of thanks from their guide. The entire experience lasts for about an hour.

Today's practice of *ukai* provides a small window into Japan's past, and further strengthens the image of the country's ability to keep alive its ancient traditions and customs. The mesmerizing rhythm on the boat and the dancing flames work their magic to transport you back in time, and for a moment you will be able to forget the Japan that you experience on a daily basis. It is traditions like these that keep me in a constant state of discovery and exploration in my life in Japan. There are several temples, castles, and shrines that may seem all too familiar to many people, but there is nothing quite like the experience of hopping in a boat to watch this ancient form of fishing. *Ukai* is only performed during the summer, so don't miss the opportunity to experience it for yourself!

 Derek Macatantan

**THOSE WHO VENTURE OUT TO VIEW UKAI CAN EXPECT TO GET AN UP-CLOSE AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF THIS ANCIENT TRADITION... AS A VOLUNTEER GUIDE DISHES OUT INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT THE FISHING PROCESS, ADDING IN JOKES AND PERSONAL EXPERIENCES ALONG THE WAY.**



**SWIM!  
FAST AS YOU  
CAN!**



**GOTTA  
CATCH THEM  
ALL!**



# TOHOKU ROAD TRIP TWO GIRLS TACKLE THE LONG ROAD TO THE INTERIOR

Lisa Wynne (Yamagata)

In this issue of Connect, we follow two pals in a rusty (but trusty) WagonR as they take a five-day, 1350km jaunt around unfrequented Tohoku, delighting in remote onsen, negotiating steep mountain passes, and enjoying moments of tranquility.

We set off on the 112, a graceful road in the mountainous heart of Yamagata prefecture, on a sunny day in August. Sailing along the road, we *ooh* and *aah* at the familiar, but vivid, scenery of the Dewa Sanzan cluster of holy mountains; we keep our eyes peeled for the cloud-covered Gassan. The stretches of road between tunnels take us through a host of microclimates, from blue sky to soaking squall. As we leave the mountains behind, we also leave the offending weather. Throwing on our sunglasses, we keep an eye out for the giant *torii* gate that heralds the entrance to Hagurosan. Hitching our WagonR at the tourist office, we meander *Jijisugi*—the Grandfather Cedar Tree—to the five-level pagoda. The beautiful wooden obelisk stands serenely, watching the centuries go by, unfazed by us, the noisy insects, or the encroaching night-time floodlights and chattering

shutter sounds.

The next morning we head north from Buddhas carved into the coast near Mount Chōkai. We soon cross our first prefectural line into Akita, where we discover delicious soba in the Samurai-era townscape of Kakunodate, the aquamarine waters of Dakigaeri Gorge, and Lake Tazawa. We skim stones, the pastel dusk broken by the ripples, and gaze hypnotized at the lake waters lapping.

A few hills away, we spend the night in the only AirBnB listing in the region (*real beds!*). The next morning takes us around and up the mountain to Nyuto Onsen, a remote network of hot spring inns scattered atop a pungent sulfuric peak. Dodging the mixed baths occupied by older Japanese gentlemen, we enjoy a ramshackle *rotenburo* at Maguroku Ryokan, and the more clearly segregated baths at Kuroyu next door.

Back down by the shores of Lake Tazawa, we have a dramatically twisting, climbing, and careening mountain road through the Towada-Hachimantai National Park to Lake Towada. I blast the *Princess Mononoke Symphonic Suite*

as we drive through thick forest and misty peaks. We reach the second lake by mid-afternoon and rediscover civilization in a bustling hamlet on a spit of land. Paddling and skimming stones, we watch the clouds move away from us across the sky.

Soon our lakeshore drive brings us to the mouth of the Oirase Stream Gorge, straddling the Akita-Aomori border. Walking through the lush greenery of the stream path is a refreshing diversion, and the riverside air is fresh and cool. Back in the car, the valley leads us on our way to our next stopover with a JET pal in Towada town. We enjoy the banter and share tales of *inaka-city* JET-life.

The following day brings more rain, prompting us to give in to the elements and purchase shoddy plastic coats from Daiso. It lashes down on us, all the way north along the axe-handle of the Shimokita Peninsula, to its lush, mountainous head. We arrive at Osorezan, the tempest reaching a suitably end-of-the-world pitch for this barren, sulfurous scar across the landscape. The temple was founded there as the landscape is said to reflect

the meeting point of hell and paradise, represented by the sulfur-spewing, steaming rock of the caldera volcano amidst the verdant, peak-ringed lakeshore. The driving rain gives the whole experience a hellish flavor, as we observe how classically Irish it is carrying on one's tourist agenda regardless of weather. The saving grace here lies tucked away in two sheds in the main courtyard of the temple. Behind their steamy sliding doors lie small, but scorching hot, baths fed fresh from the turbulent geology outside. "Smug" doesn't do justice to our post-onsen glow as we hurry back to the car.

Intending to cut across the peninsula's axe-head, we take a rollercoaster of a road through mountains, vales, and low hanging clouds and branches. When we come to a junction, (and a GPS signal), we realize how little ground we have covered. So we decide to ditch the nauseating road for the sea air along the coast. We arrive in Oma, Honshu's northernmost point's end monument. There's no sign of Hokkaido behind the clouds, but we are lucky to discover the town's festival is in full swing. The fresh sea air, the wild dance, color, and spectacle, and the greasy/delicious festival food really hits the spot after a day of tedious driving and more tedious weather. Sadly, the weather has the last laugh, forcing the postponement of the festival's fireworks. We spend the night in Mutsu town in the kind hospitality of a Tatami Timeshare JET. Glad to sleep on a real bed, I brace myself for the next

day's mammoth drive.

We max the revs of my faithful WagonR and make good time on the expressway south, our main delay coming from the queue for hot dogs at a service station somewhere in Iwate Prefecture. Our only venture for the day is the World Heritage Site at Hiraizumi, with a centerpiece of the most ornate, most gilded and most grand little structure I have seen in Japan. Housed in its own buildings, with no photography, Chuson-ji is a treat for eyes. Particularly annoyed that I had forgotten my *Goshoin* book, I miss many glorious temple stamps in Hiraizumi alone. The road onwards takes us through Miyagi Prefecture and, eventually, the junction for Yamagata comes in sight.

 Lisa Wynne

DO YOU  
EVEN KNOW  
WHERE WE'RE  
GOING?!



NO...  
SORRY!



# COMMUNITY

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*Don't underestimate a team's ability based on their reputation. It's the preparation and recent progress that matters.*

### Becca Simas

*Fall running weather is my favorite running weather!*

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### Cameron Joe

*November means nights out in Tokyo, dancing yosakoi in the streets of the inaka, and airing out my kotatsu blankets for the encroaching winter!*

 Illaura Rossiter

## COMMUNITY

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# TREKKING YAKUSHIMA THE 10 COMMANDMENTS

LESLEY STONEBRIDGE (KAGOSHIMA) BECCA SIMAS (KAGOSHIMA)

Yakushima is a tranquil and beautiful island in southern Japan containing a UNESCO World Heritage Site and Biosphere Reserve nestled deep within its ancient cedar forests. If you're a fan of Miyazaki's *Princess Mononoke*, you'll understand just how magical a place Yakushima is. Japanese macaques, sika deer, and fleeting *kodama* roam freely and abundantly among the misty mountains. As tired hikers trek over tangled roots and trudge up steep trails, the seemingly magical appearance of these creatures lifts the spirits and encourages travellers to carry on their journeys to Jomon Sugi – a giant cedar tree said to be the oldest in Japan - and beyond. There is plenty to do and see on the island (especially if you rent a car), but if you want to truly experience the heart of Yakushima, grab some hiking gear and set out on an adventure trekking through the misty mountains ruled by gods and demons.

1. Invest in a proper trail map, especially if you plan to do overnight hikes. Time estimates and trail markings on the English maps seem slightly skewed and misrepresented. Make note of the *kanji* on the trails you wish to embark on. Once you are high up in the mountains, some of the English trail markers disappear.
2. Bring a tent. Although cumbersome, and even if you plan on staying in one of the mountain huts, you can never be too sure of your circumstance by nightfall and it can serve as much needed refuge from a downpour come bed time.
3. No matter what the forecast says, plan for rain, and lots of it. Pack lots of plastic bags and a poncho. Include a pair of flip flops because your boots will get soaked.
4. Wear proper hiking shoes. The trails are well marked, but are challenging to maneuver with many roots and slippery rocks lining the path. You will need lots of traction, but hiking poles are not necessary.
5. There is no reception for cell phones on most of the trails, so notify friends and family of your whereabouts before setting out and enjoy the feeling of no instant communication. Put your phone on airplane mode and take pictures of the many twisted and gnarled trees.
6. Rent a car! Even if you know when the bus comes and goes from the trailhead, you can never be too sure how long your hike will be. Many of the trailheads are high up in the mountains and the bus comes once a day to do a drop off in the morning and

pick up in the evening. Grab a copy of the bus schedule in English from the ferry terminal once you arrive.

7. Invest in a small propane burner and camping pot to make a hot meal at the end of the day. This can do wonders to the spirits after a 15km hike in the rain, and filling your belly with a proper cooked meal is essential for maintaining energy for the long hikes ahead. You don't want to be stuck in the forest with your tummy grumbling. There are no vending machines or *konbinis* 6,348 feet high in the mountains! You'll also want the burner to purify water. Although the landscape is teeming with pristine streams where you can fill up your bottle, drinking it straight is not always safe. Who knows if a monkey, deer, or human pooped nearby!
8. Bring the essentials, but nothing more. Your back will thank you. Some notable essentials include toilet paper, earplugs (for noisy snorers in the cabins), a thermos for water, and a plethora of plastic bags. Also bring snacks that will provide a quick energy boost: peanut butter, nuts, Pocari Sweat powder, energy bars, etc.

9. Bring a deck of cards or Bananagrams to enjoy your evening under the stars, in your tent, or in a mountain hut. It's a great way to unwind and potentially make some new friends!

10. Give yourself plenty of time for each leg of your journey. Taking pictures, basking in a beam of sunlight beside an inquisitive deer, and reveling in nature's wonders takes time, so plan for an extra few hours each day to do just that.

You can plan for a day hike to Jomon-Sugi (this will take a long 10 hours), or extend your hiking adventure over several days, stopping at mountain huts for the night. You can do a guided tour (many companies offer these online), or venture off on your own. Whatever you decide to do, just make sure you are prepared for anything! Prepare to unplug, log off, disconnect, and sign on to 100% pure, natural, wildlife on a thrilling hiking adventure across Yakushima!

*Lesley Stonebridge is a Canadian JET living in Kagoshima city. Her passions include swimming, hiking in the Rocky Mountains, and scuba diving. She is passionate about athleticism, conservation and teaching.*

 Lesley Stonebridge

RAIN?

IT  
ALWAYS  
RAINS.



# KANDOU AND CONNECTIONS JOINING A YOSAKOI TEAM

ROCHELLE ZHENG (CHIBA)



*Author's note: Yosakoi is a type of Japanese dance that originated in Kochi Prefecture. The defining characteristic is dancing with naruko clappers, as the dance style, music, and costumes may vary by region or even from team to team.*

People often ask why I started doing yosakoi, and I'll be honest: I was bored. It was halfway through my second year on JET, I had just gotten out of a relationship, and was craving something new and exciting to challenge myself with. It was around that time that I read an article in the CIR Newsletter written by a fellow CIR about her experience on a yosakoi team and how great it was. A friend had once shown me a video telling me he thought I'd like it, so it was something I had considered briefly in the past but just as promptly forgot about.

"That's right, I wanted to try that," I thought, and turned to Google. There were two teams not far from me, so I contacted them to ask if I could observe practice. The first team was called Chiyoren Hokutenkai. I stepped into the entranceway of the gymnasium where practice was held, feeling a bit apprehensive, only to be greeted warmly by the first person I saw. They asked if I was here to observe and escorted me to a chair inside the gym.

I remember some of my first impressions being, "Wow, this is a lot of people," and, "Hey, it looks like there are a lot of young people—cool!" before I was approached by a cheerful college student

who proceeded to tell me all about the team and even show me some videos of past performances. As I watched the practice, I was impressed and pleased by the number of people who took the time to speak to me during breaks, and I admired the fast-paced and energetic dancing.

But nothing could have prepared me for the final run-through I witnessed at the end of practice. My ears were ringing from the power of their voices and the floor of the gym was literally shaking from the force of over 50 people dancing in coordinated movements. It was my first taste of the *kandou* (emotional impact) that I so often hear about when it comes to yosakoi, and I was floored.

I decided that yosakoi was something I had to try, and I was fairly certain I wanted it to be with this team. The next week, after having visited the other team just to be sure, I went back, announced that I would like to join, and the rest is history.

Honestly, when I first joined I had no idea that it would become such a big part of my remaining time in Japan. Before I knew it I was spending almost every weekend in the summer performing in various festivals and competitions. When I try to think about what exactly it is that draws me in so persistently, as cliché as it sounds, I realize that it must be the people. True, as somebody who has been dancing and performing for as long as I can remember, it was wonderful

to get back into dancing with choreography and the thrill of performing in front of an audience in dramatic makeup and costumes. But joining this team has been a chance for me to both develop new relationships and grow as an individual.

Before starting yosakoi, I didn't interact with many Japanese people outside of my coworkers - not because I didn't want to, but because as a shy person in a big city I found it hard to meet people and make friends I didn't already have a connection with (such as other JETs and expats). Not only have I greatly expanded my range of Japanese acquaintances, but since our team members range from age 8 to over 70, this has also been a great way for me to get to know people in many different stages of life.

More than that, though, for the first time that I can remember, I feel like I have truly been accepted as a member of a team, a person whose presence is just as important as anyone else's, despite being from a different country. I've been part of many different groups and teams throughout the years, and even though this current team is by far the largest one I've joined, I've never felt quite the same connection and shared feeling of camaraderie of a team striving for the same goals than this one. One of my teammates once described Chiyoren Hokutenkai as a big second family for everybody - a place for people to be accepted - and I think it is an apt description. I guess there's nothing quite like

spending hours upon hours practicing together for events all over the prefecture, and even the country, waiting with collective nervous anticipation for judging results at competitions. We experience the same joy and excitement of performing, bringing together almost a hundred people of different ages, backgrounds, and even nationalities.

One particular experience I won't ever forget is our performance at the Nippon Domannaka Matsuri in Nagoya last year. Nagoya is where I studied abroad during my junior year of

college and the first place I lived in Japan, so coming back was a flood of nostalgia. Even my host mom came to see one of our performances, despite not having contacted each other in almost a year. Later that day, we found out that we had placed 1st out of all the teams in our block and had advanced to the finals. We were one of the 12 teams chosen out of a total of over 200! It was an unexpected surprise (for me, at least), and the emotions I felt that evening—dancing in front of hundreds of people, bathed in the bright lights of a giant outdoor stage, in the city where I first learned to love

Japan—became a memory that will stay with me for a long, long time.

My second year on the team has come with some challenges, as I was asked to become the head of a new international committee for the team. Since we didn't have any committees the year I joined, suddenly being in charge of one, and a brand-new one at that, hasn't always been easy. But in contrast to my first year, I've gained a sense of accomplishment that's different from what I would get from just dancing, plus a closer connection to my fellow committee members,

so I'm grateful for the experience. Altogether we're from four different countries and our ages range from 15-26, so it's been great to see everybody work together on our different projects and help spread the word about yosakoi to more than just Japanese people. As a committee chair, I also participate in executive meetings and have so far been able to learn so much more about the inner workings of the team as a whole.

I don't know where I'll be after this current JET year ends, or how long I'll still be able to continue dancing as a member of Chiyoren

Hokutenkai, but I do know it has already become a very significant part of my overall JET Program experience, and I am extremely thankful for all that has happened up until now. For people looking for something unique and Japanese to experience while in the country, I most definitely recommend giving yosakoi a try! New encounters, regular exercise, and sheer excitement—what more could you ask for?

*Rochelle Zheng is a fourth-year CIR in Chiba City (Chiba Prefecture) and a former member of the AJET National Council and Chiba AJET Council. In addition to yosakoi, she enjoys swing and salsa dance, movies, and cats. She is an active poster and admin on the [CIR Homepage](#) and encourages all CIRs who haven't already to come join the community!*

 Jonathan Garnaas-Holmes



# CONTRIBUTING TO CONNECT



Connect is a magazine for the community in Japan, by the community in Japan. Everyone is welcome to write, no matter your experience or style! If you have an idea you want to see in these pages, reach out to our Head Editor, or any of our awesome section editors. We'll work with you to make it the best it can be and share it with our audience of thousands. Not every article needs to be an essay! We feature interviews, infographics, top-ten lists, recipes, photo spreads, travelogues, and more.

Contact the Head Editor of Connect, Rajeev Rahela, at [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net) with your submissions, comments, and questions.

## ARTICLES

Write about something you're doing. Write about something you love. Tell us a story.

## SPOTLIGHT

Tell us about someone in your community who's doing something neat and noteworthy. Cooks, collectors, calligraphers—we want to hear about the inspiring people around you.

## COMMENTS

Let us know what you think. Click the comment button at the end of any article, or interact with us on Facebook, Twitter, and [issuu.com](http://issuu.com).

## PHOTOS

All of Connect's photos are provided by the community, from the cover to the articles and everything in between. If you're an aspiring photographer and want your work published, please get in contact with the lead designer, Patrick Finn, at [patrick.finn@ajet.net](mailto:patrick.finn@ajet.net).

## HAIKU

Each month Connect will feature haiku from our readers. Haiku are simple, clean, and can be about anything you like! If you're an aspiring wordsmith with the soul of Basho, send all of your haiku along with your name and prefecture to [connect.editor@ajet.net](mailto:connect.editor@ajet.net).

## COMICS

You asked for it, and now Connect features comics. Whether you're a desk doodler or a published artist, we want to see your panels and strips about life in Japan.



## CONNECT WITH US

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