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Local Cuisine around Japan: Vol. 16

Kobe's local cuisine

The City of Kobe has a population of around 1.54 million people, making it one of 12 cities in Japan with a population of greater than 1 million. Within the city is the Port of Kobe, which became a pioneer among Japan's ports when a foreign settlement was established there after the opening of the port in 1868. Through the many people from around the world living in the foreign settlement, the city became heavily influenced by western culture. Bread, western confectionery and cakes, coffee, and black tea are all elements of food culture which spread throughout Japan from Kobe. At the same time, Kobe Beef has spread from the Port of Kobe to the rest of the world.



On the other hand, while Kobe is a large city, it also has a different side – as the home of a bustling agricultural and marine industry. One third of the land area of the Kobe city region is farmland. Across the Kita and Nishi Wards there lies a bountiful natural agricultural zone, and to the south lies the Seto inland sea, which has some of the fastest-flowing tidal currents in Japan, resulting in highly nutrient-rich fishing grounds. Here is an introduction to some of the agricultural and marine products which are born from this rich and fertile natural environment.

○Agricultural products

Making the most of the advantages of having a city centre so close to local farmlands, fruits and vegetables, rice and more are able to reach consumers while at their freshest and most delicious. Recently, products such as strawberries and figs are exported internationally to the highest quality retailers.

○Kobe wine

Fermented with 100% grapes from the Kobe region.

The Seto inland sea gives Kobe a climate which is similar to that of the Mediterranean, with little rain and lots of sunshine, making it an ideal region for growing grapes with high sugar content. Wine and brandy has been fermented in Kobe since the first grapes began to be cultivated in the city, around 40 years ago.

○Ikanago no Kugini (marinated and boiled sand eel)

Ikanago no Kugini is a special local dish which is said to be only made in Kobe. The tiny Ikanago fish can only be caught for a short period of time between the end of February and the beginning of March each year. This delicacy is being introduced around to the world as 'Kobe Fish'.



In order to lead a revitalization of the city through 'Kobe cuisine', the Gastropolis Kobe project started in 2015 to build an international gourmet city which we are proud of.

You can learn more about Gastropolis Kobe at our website www.gastropoliskobe.org

Kobe welcomes you, so next time please come and experience Kobe cuisine for yourself!

Delegation of Assembly Members from Ehime prefecture visited Melbourne and Sydney

From 8 to 12 January, a delegation of Assembly Members from Ehime prefecture visited Melbourne and Sydney. They dropped by our office after promoting Japanese sake brewed in Ehime in Melbourne and just before visiting companies in Sydney to discuss the promotion of Japanese food.

Our Director, Mr Kamibo, gave an outline of Australia, existing exchanges between Australia and Japan, and

examples of legacies created by the 2000 Sydney Olympic Games. After that, they talked about Japanese restaurants in Sydney and possibilities for further international exchanges such as sister-school relationships.

Ehime prefecture is ramping up its efforts to promote their local specialties since their exhibition at the Iron Chef All Stars event held at the Sydney Opera House last August. They are also conducting a unique project to promote international exchanges and tourism through cycling.

We will continue to support their promotions in Australia.



Oita Prefectural Government came to our office

On January 25, officials from Oita Prefectural Government came to our office and we exchanged opinions on tourism promotion in Australia. In Oita prefecture, visitors from abroad have been increasing steadily, with tourists mainly coming from East Asia in recent years, but officials would like to increase visitors from a variety of different countries and regions. As Oita will be one of the venues for the 2019 Rugby World Cup (RWC), hosting matches for the Wallabies and All Blacks, they hope to be able to attract many tourists through this major sporting event. While in Sydney, they also visited a number of different travel agencies. We introduced a number of local events in Sydney where CLAIR has exhibited to promote inbound tourism to Japan. We will continue to support Oita's efforts both in Australia and New Zealand.



Japan Foreign Traders Association delegation in Sydney

On 25 January, CLAIR Sydney attended a lunch meeting with a delegation from Japan Foreign Traders Association, held at JETRO Sydney.

Their visit is aimed at developing business relationships with Australian/NZ companies and organisations as well as finding investment opportunities in Australia and New Zealand.

During the meeting, the delegation made a presentation on the economic situation and future prospects in the Kansai area. The attendees from Australia also talked about their respective organisation's efforts and tasks in Australia.

CLAIR Sydney introduced the JET Programme and suggested to the delegation that they employ JET alumni to better expand their business globally.

JETAA WA

From JETAAWA, Akemashite omedetou gozaimasu! Kotoshi mo yoroshiku onegaishimasu.

We have been busy as ever in late 2017 and early 2018, promoting Japan and the JET Programme while engaging with the Japan-related community here in Western Australia.

At the end of October we held our welcome-back dinner for the latest JET returnees – in previous years we have scheduled this in January, since traditionally JETs have spent some time travelling



around Japan and Asia after finishing their contracts in August, but in recent years we see more people coming straight home to pursue work and study. This year it was great to see a good crowd of both new and not-so-new members gather for the event at the Ellington Jazz Club, which has become a favourite venue of ours over the last couple of years.

Shortly after the returnees' event we held our annual Hanami picnic. We aim to enjoy this under the lovely purple jacaranda flower blossoms, but have almost never managed to time it right – always too early or too late. This year was no exception! Although the trees weren't quite blossoming, the experience of badly-timed blossom viewing still makes me quite nostalgic for Japan. We were also joined by Taiko-On, the very successful Perth drumming group led by former JET Simon Vanyai, and the Kijimuna sanshin group who are a popular and well-known presence in the Japanese community here. We were also very pleased to welcome Consul-General Hirayama and his wife to the event; Hanami is a chance for us to invite a wide range of people to

gather and enjoy one of the more relaxing aspects of Japanese culture.

Later in November we were invited to attend the World of Food Festival, where representatives and associates from all the consulates in Perth gather to showcase traditional foods from their respective cultures. JETAAWA once again provided the kakigori – it was a cooler day so we didn't sell quite as much as usual, but it was certainly popular with children from the Japanese school. Shortly after this, many of our committee were privileged to attend a reception on the Japanese ice breaker Shirase, who visit Fremantle harbour every year. This may be a key reason for the size and enthusiasm of the JETAAWA committee membership.

2017 wound up with the JETAAWA bonenkai, an opportunity to relax together as a group and reflect on the year as well as think about the next one. This year it was a bittersweet occasion, as we said goodbye to Ms Satomi Suzuki from the Perth consulate – she has been a great supporter of us during her brief time in the city. At the same time we were very happy to meet Atsushi Matsuo, her replacement and our new contact, who has already made an enthusiastic impression.

Finally, we started 2018 with our Annual General Meeting – a little earlier than usual, but again well-attended. With a 2018 committee of 37, I'm looking forward to another enjoyable year of activity, friendship and fun. We'll shortly be scheduling our annual committee retreat to plan the coming months, as well as looking forward to the fifth Perth Japan Festival on March 10th. The City of Perth is looking better than ever with the completion of Elizabeth Quay and, soon, Yagan Square; we're hoping that we may even see more of our JETAA compatriots here later in the year.



Our new intern



My official name is Marie Salisbury however I am titled Marie Hirano by my Japanese Passport. I have completed 2 years of a Bachelor of Education at the University of Sydney with 3 years remaining. During this time, I am driven to further my understanding of the Government policies between these two countries. What strikes me is how closely allied the two countries are, in terms of their governments, tourism industries and popular culture.

My background knowledge, thanks to my upbringing, is heavily steeped in both traditional and contemporary Japanese culture. My mother is from the region of Nagoya and often has speciality cuisine staples shipped over from this region. I hope my pride and knowledge in this specific area of Japan is somewhat beneficial in this intern programme.

Here in Sydney I enjoy the stereotypical Australian lifestyle such as surfing waves with locals and barbeques. Whilst doing so I love Japanese tea ceremonies, hot springs and purikura. I have never viewed Japan as a country to compare Australia with. This is because the purpose of my annual return is to visit relatives. I am constantly alternating between the two countries. Although the minute details to Japanese culture such as the presentation of wax food samples and their hospitality, I have never found it alien like, more so home. However, as I have begun university and part time work life, I have met many Japanese workers and exchange students who constantly heart-to-heart their take on such differences.

I would like to exert my understanding of Japanese subtlety along with its post modernism, into use at CLAIR. I feel that this experience will enrich my understanding of the more practical aspects to work. Foremost understanding that at a workplace we must be professional and what that essentially means is something I have come to understand through the short period as an intern. Completing tasks such as researching certain prefectural events held in my city and interpreting the Daily newspaper in Japanese. These tasks I am free to do in my spare time but have never considered doing. I am grateful for receiving such inspiration in this professional environment.

From the Director

28- Health Insurance System - A Year of Local Governments in Japan

February is the peak of the cold and flu season in Japan and this year has seen the highest number of patients, approximately three million per week, present to hospitals and clinics for treatment.

The Japanese central government introduced health insurance in 1922 and established universal health insurance coverage in 1961. It encompasses two major insurance programs, namely, the Employees' Health

Insurance program for employees and their families and the National Health Insurance program for non-employees, such as independent business people and retirees.

Although the Employees' Health Insurance program is managed by company-specific Health Insurance Societies consisting of employees, the National Health Insurance Program is operated mainly by municipal governments. People aged 75 years and above subscribe to a late-stage medical care system for the elderly which is jointly operated by the municipal and prefectural government.

Patients under the National Health Insurance program only need to pay a co-payment fee of 30% of their medical fees at reception, granting them access to all kinds of medical treatment. This provides patients with great access to medical treatment but also causes the inflation of national medical expenditure. Consequently, most municipalities, especially those with less than a thousand National Health Insurance program subscribers, bear huge deficits and operational challenges due to the cost of managing the National Health Insurance program.

To solve this problem, National Health Insurance reform is underway with the prefectures taking over the management of the program from the municipal governments this April. Although resident health and welfare has always been the responsibility of the municipal government, due to Japan's aging society and shrinking population it is becoming increasingly difficult for local governments to perform these duties.