

# awa life

Japanese Culture  
& Reading Corner:  
子どもの日

Living in Japan  
as a Vegan

Farewell  
Messages

May 2020  
# 355



Awa Shoku: Little  
Fishies, Lotta Good  
Eats

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マンション

Life in Corona Times



TOPIA

## Awa Life is a Monthly Publication of the Tokushima Prefectural International Exchange Association

We hope all of you are able to enjoy the nice temperatures, of course while practicing social distancing at the same time. This is surely easier in Tokushima than in big cities. As readers of Awa Life know, our last two pages are always full of event information. However, we can no longer ignore the fact that most of those events have been cancelled due to the current situation. Hence, we have decided for the first time in Awa Life's history not to post any events, but rather to post the voices from people all around the world about how the current situation is affecting their lives and how they are dealing with it. We hope that through this we all can get some inspiration on how to handle this difficult situation.

For all of those who like writing, please feel free to submit an article to us at any point in time about basically anything. There are a few limitations though, such as you can't write about religion, politics, commercial activities or businesses or anything that we deem inappropriate. But, other than that, we would be more than happy to receive articles about anything and everything including but not limited to concerts, lectures, other events, culture, sports, community group information or anything cool that's happening in your local community.

We highly appreciate all of your articles and we love reading them. So if that writing bug of yours is buzzing about, grab a pen or a computer and write and send away! Please send all submissions to our email:

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Your editors,  
Sydney and Nico

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## *Living in Japan as a Vegan*

By: Alessa Peters

Maybe you've heard the word 'vegan' being increasingly used in recent years – by news media, food and lifestyle blogs or at restaurants. But what does it mean? The word itself is a shortened version of the word 'vegetarian'. Vegetarians are people who do not eat meat or fish. Vegans are people who avoid all animal products – not only meat and fish, but also eggs, dairy products (including butter and cheese), and usually honey. This also applies to clothing – vegans try to avoid buying items made from leather or wool.

People who choose to become vegan come from all backgrounds - they do not do so for religious reasons, but for ethical and environmental ones. In modern society, our consumer choices have a direct impact on the world around us – vegans and vegetarians are aware of this and try to minimize the harm we all cause to animals and the environment. Of course, a plant-based diet can also have health benefits. There is an old stereotype that vegans are weak, but in fact there are quite a number of vegan and vegetarian professional athletes all over the world. In recent years, the number of vegans and vegetarians in Germany and many other Western countries has increased considerably, as has the number of products on the market, making a plant-based diet more accessible to everyone.

So, what about Japan? Truth be told, the concept

of veganism is still relatively unknown here. Nevertheless, everybody knows shojin ryori, the traditional, vegetarian cuisine of Buddhist monks. So, eating a plant-based diet is not something new to Japan at all. However, there are some difficulties I encounter living in Japan as a vegan. In bigger cities, especially Tokyo, it's not much of a problem. There are plenty of vegan restaurants and cafes in Tokyo, and you can even buy a large number of vegan snacks at stores. Here in Tokushima, I struggle to find places to eat out as there are only a few. In my daily life, I prepare my meals at home and take them with me to my place of work, so it's not a problem at all. One thing that is very different from German supermarkets is the fact that in Japan, no products are labelled 'vegan' or 'vegetarian'. In Germany I can usually see with one glance if a pre-packaged product I want to buy is vegan or not. In Japan, I have to carefully read the ingredients list. On a positive note, however, this has greatly improved my Japanese.

I'd like to also introduce you to what I eat – as I'm sure that's a burning question you have if you've read this far. The way I structure my meals is by choosing a base – either white rice, brown rice, udon, soba or potatoes (I'm German, after all) – and then think about what to eat with it such as vegetables, beans, lentils, or tofu for extra protein. Adding flavor is no problem, there are plenty of spices to choose from at the supermarket as well as konbu dashi, soy sauce or mirin as a base for Japanese flavors. Teriyaki sauce and "sosu"

(most, but not all, brands are vegan – check the allergen label!) are also an easy way to add flavor. Vegetables may be more expensive here in Japan than in Germany, but they are always high-quality, and as a food-lover eating well is important to me. In contrast, the tofu here is a lot cheaper than in Germany.

All in all, there are certain foods that I miss here such as cereal or hummus, but I also enjoy preparing Japanese vegetables such as satsuma imo, daikon or shiitake. I often get asked if living in Japan as a vegan is hard, and even though it's certainly harder than in Germany, I find it not so difficult in my daily life. Only when I travel outside of big cities do I wish that there were more options, but people are usually accommodating once I explain my 'dietary restrictions'. I only wish that in the future, the Japanese would see it as less of an 'eccentric foreigner thing' and more of a cross-cultural way of living.

Last, but not least, here is an easy recipe that I prepared for my lunch box recently.



### **Brown Fried Rice with Veggies and Peanut-Soy-Sauce**

Ingredients: brown rice, firm or fried tofu, carrots, champignons, leek, frozen green peas. Alternatively, you can of course use any leftover vegetables or whatever you like.

For the sauce: sesame oil, konbu dashi, soy sauce, mirin, garlic, peanut butter.

Preparation: Prepare the brown rice according to the instructions on the package.

Dice the carrots and tofu, and cut the champignons and leek. Heat the sesame oil in a pan and put in the vegetables. Add flavors for the sauce (I use minced garlic from the tube, but of course fresh is good too). Let simmer until tender. Add frozen green peas. Add the cooked brown rice and stir for another few minutes. Serve in a bowl or store in the fridge in your lunchbox for the next day.

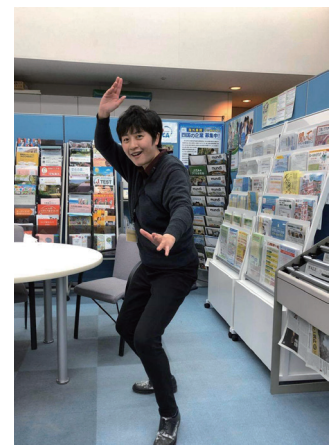
## **Farewell Messages - "T-O-P-I-A" that I Learned at TOPIA!**

By: Satoko Saito

I am very surprised that my time at TOPIA has passed so fast. When I learned of my new position, all I knew about TOPIA was just that it's a place for international exchange and supporting foreigners, but now I can strongly say that this place was a must in my life. For my farewell message, I will introduce five things ("T-O-P-I-A") that I learned from my experiences.

First is "Teamwork." Multicultural, multilingual and multi-skilled members are united as one team at TOPIA. They are, of course, good at communication in different languages, are knowledgeable about various cultures, and are well experienced in supporting people from other countries. They depend on each other and always work to the best of their abilities. I really loved to talk and work with them. I was so lucky to experience and learn different ways of thinking, values, and viewpoints from them. I also learned the importance of "the *Omotenashi* spirit". Even if

it takes a long time to deal with just one problem, my co-workers have always been supportive of foreigners. In addition, I was happy to help with events that promote international exchange. Each event might have been just a small chance to learn about different cultures, but they were "Pieces for world peace." I believe sharing time with people who have various cultural backgrounds will broaden our minds and will help us become kinder to each other. In this way, as a teacher, I got a lot of "Inspiration" to support my students with new approaches, help them get interested in both Japanese and other cultures, and encourage them to see the real world. Finally,



## *“T-O-P-I-A” that I Learned at TOPIA!*

thanks to the opportunity to join Arasowaren, I learned how to dance Awa Odori for the first time and made lots of friends from all over the world.

Through this entire experience, I was able to look at myself objectively, which was a great chance for me to think about education from a broad

perspective, encouraging me try new things with confidence. I am glad that the people at TOPIA saw me not as a token teacher, but as a true member who worked together with them to promote multicultural understanding. Thank you so much for all your support.

## *Farewell Messages*

By: Toru Yasuda

In April of 2016 I was transferred from the Tokushima Prefectural Government to TOPIA. With the recent staff changes, I will now be transferred back to the Tokushima Prefectural Government. Over these roughly 4 years, thanks to the support of the TOPIA staff, related organizations, and foreign residents, we have been able to attempt new endeavors each year. I would like to begin by thanking everyone from the bottom of my heart.

Thinking back, I have nothing but fond memories of TOPIA. For example, in 2017 the “Arasowaren Special Dance Team” for foreigners living in Tokushima was formed. This was made possible with the help of the prefectural CIR at that time, Daralyn, Fujii-sensei, who was dispatched to TOPIA from the Prefectural Board of Education, Takeda-kun, at that time from STNet, and the famous *ren* “Nonki-ren”, which gave us guidance during our dance practices. Thanks to everyone’s efforts, we were able to provide a place for foreigners who love the Awa Odori to dance other than just during the Summer Awa Odori. Arasowaren has continued for 3 years, and thanks to the efforts of Saito-sensei, who was dispatched to TOPIA from the Prefectural Board of Education, approximately 30 foreigners were able to dance in the opening program of the Autumn Awa Odori, the “Sekai Awa Odori Summit”, which made for a very exciting time. Hearing how this experience had made the dancers grow to like Tokushima even more, and seeing everyone’s smiling faces, made me truly happy we had formed this team.

Another memory of mine is the 2018 “Large Scale

Natural Disaster Training Drill for Foreigners”, held in preparation for the Nankai Trough Earthquake. We partnered with many organizations and borrowed the Beer Garden next to TOPIA. There, we established a mock evacuation shelter and allowed foreigners living in Tokushima the chance to experience life at an evacuation shelter, as well as things such as the construction of a simple toilet. Thanks to the support of Clement Plaza, we were also able to provide an emergency rations tasting experience. Japan is a country that can’t avoid damage caused by earthquakes. However, through this drill our foreign residents were able to understand that the Tokushima prefectural government and many other organizations are there to support them in times of disaster. I hope that foreigners can live in Tokushima with peace of mind, and that the number of foreigners will only continue to increase.

I still, of course, have many memories, and the faces of everyone at TOPIA, the Tokushima CIRs, and all of our foreign residents clearly appear in my mind. I ask for everyone’s continued support of TOPIA.

Finally, from the bottom of my heart, I hope for everyone’s health, happiness, and endeavors, as well as TOPIA’s endeavors and growth.



**\*Notice\*** In order to prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19), from April 12th (Sunday), the Japanese classes held at TOPIA will be cancelled for the time being. Once the date to resume classes has been determined, we will post an update on our website. (You may also contact us by phone to check.) Additionally, with the safety of the children in mind, the childcare service offered on Wednesdays will be cancelled as well for the time being.

## Japanese Culture and Reading Corner: 子どもの日

By: Shoko Nomizu

5月5日は、「子どもの日」で日本の祝日です。子ども一人ひとりを大切にして子ども達が幸せになるようにする日、そして、おかあさんに感謝する日です。

この日は、昔から「端午の節句」とも言います。中国から伝わりました。男の子がいる家では、男の子の健康を願って、鯉のぼりや5月人形を飾ります。また、新聞紙でかぶとを作ったり、かしわ餅や、ちまきを食べたりします。日本のいろいろな場所では、子ども達が楽しめるイベントがたくさん開かれます。

子ども達の健康で幸せな成長を願うのは、世界どこでも一緒ですね。



## Vocabulary List

しゆくじつ  
祝日 (public holiday)

かんしゃ  
感謝する (to show appreciation)

けんこう  
健康 (health, wellbeing)

ねが  
願う (to pray)

かざ  
飾る (to decorate)

しんぶんし  
新聞紙 (sheet of newspaper)

しあわ  
幸せ (happiness)

せいちょう  
成長 (growth)

せかい  
世界 (world)

いっしょ  
一緒 (together)

## Gairaigo Galore



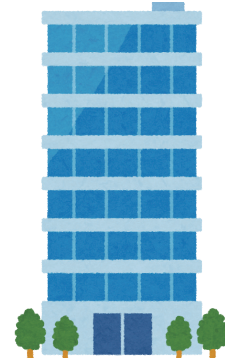
マンション (Mansion)

By: Sydney Bartig

When learners of Japanese hear the word マンション for the first time, they are often surprised that the Japanese meaning of word doesn't quite match up to their expectations. Of course, for most English speakers, their idea of a mansion is a large, elegant, and expensive building owned by someone wealthy. However, the Japanese word is quite different in meaning. A Japanese マンション is actually an apartment building, where many different families and people live.

However, you may have also noticed that Japan has another word for apartment buildings, アパート. So, what exactly is the difference between these two words? While they are both 'apartment buildings', アパート are smaller and tend to be no more than three floors tall. マンション, however, typically have three floors or more and are the larger of the two. (Here you can also see the similarities with a western-style mansion as, although certainly different, both are large-scale buildings.) The materials they are made from also differ. マンション tend to be made with materials such as steel frames and reinforced concrete. On the other hand, アパート tend to be made from wood or light gauge steel.

Hopefully this information can be useful to you if you ever find yourself needing to house-hunt in Japan!



## Awa Shoku: Little Fishies, Lotta Good Eats

By: Lance Kita

“What the... are those tiny fishes all over my food?!?” Many ALTs in the prefecture have been surprised during school lunch by a sprinkling of baby fish over blanched vegetables, rice, or even their miso soup. This is whitebait (shirasu しらす), and in Tokushima is mainly baby sardines smaller than 1 centimeter in length. Although the idea of eating whole fish (head, eyes, bones, and all) seems to be horrific to some, it's considered a delicacy to others and Tokushima

is blessed with the right ocean conditions to harvest it.



From soup to rice, shirasu adds umami to an entire Japanese meal.

Tokushima has a lot of rivers, and most of them flow east into the Kii Strait at the entrance of Osaka Bay and the Seto Inland Sea. The nutrients washed out into the relatively sheltered waterway create a bloom of phytoplankton, which attracts the spawned sardines that are carried in from the Pacific Ocean. The season for catching whitebait starts in May and continues through late fall, with a pair of boats dragging a large, scoop-like net between them, with a high speed “jacker” ジャッカー boat scouting ahead for the schools of fish.

The key to maintaining freshness is a race against time. The jacker rushes the catch back to port, where the silvery, glistening masses are immediately blanched in saltwater, turning the baby fish white. This is called kama-age shirasu 釜揚げしらす (literally “fresh out of the pot”). To extend its shelf life, the blanched kama-age are then dried in the sun on flat trays to produce chirimen ちりめん, which is the most common form found in supermarkets. The dried, crinkled, silver-gray chirimen drying on the trays resembles an expensive crinkled fabric of the same name (chirimen 縮緬), hence the name.

Because the whole fish is eaten, shirasu are a rich source of calcium and many minerals. The fresh or kama-age have a light salty fragrance reminiscent of sea foam, and soft almost fluffy texture. The dried chirimen is chewier, and the flavor is concentrated into a wonderful umami.

Some of the fishing ports will have eateries offering the raw shirasu (nama-shirasu 生しらす) served over rice as a donburi 丼 with grated ginger, green onions, sudachi, and soy sauce. Wadajima Port 和田島 (Komatsushima City) has

recently become popular for this dish, and you can also find namashirasu-don in Anan City and Naruto City. Because of the fleeting freshness, quantities may be limited, and it is only available during the harvest season.

Luckily, we can find both kama-age and chirimen in local supermarkets. I really love the soft kama-age, and will often eat it with grated radish (daikon-oroshi 大根おろし), a squeeze of sudachi and a splash of soy sauce. It can also be served in clear soup with wakame seaweed or miso soup. Like the raw version, kama-age also makes a great donburi. It also goes really well with eggs, whether scrambled over rice or in a rolled omelet. Whitebait is considered a gourmet food in New Zealand and is often eaten in omelets or as a seafood fritter.

The dried chirimen adds a lot of umami to a variety of dishes. Sprinkle it over blanched mustard greens or spinach (this dish is called ohitashi お浸し). Add it to a dish of marinated cucumbers and wakame seaweed (namasu なま酢). You can make your own fresh furikake ふりかけ with chirimen, sesame seeds, chopped crunchy umeboshi 梅干し (salted pickled plums), and nori seaweed to sprinkle over hot rice. They can also be stir-fried with shishito peppers 獅子唐 or cabbage. Italians eat whitebait (called bianchetti) on pizzas, as fritters, or as an appetizer.

If you have been squeamish about these baby fishes, try making a pasta agile e olio by sautéing sliced garlic in olive oil, add a dried chili, and a handful of chirimen. Toss in the pasta with a scoop of pasta boiling water.



Try using shirasu in a simple pasta with a scoop of pasta boiling water, garlic and oil pasta.

You'll be amazed at the depth of flavor that these baby sardines add to the dish. Another idea is pizza toast. Spread tomato sauce or mayonnaise on lightly toasted bread. Sprinkle either kama-age or chirimen followed by a handful of shredded cheese. Drizzle with olive oil and toast again until the cheese is melted.

I hope you will give shirasu another chance. They are nutritious, delicious, readily available, and quite versatile. Let these little fishies add some big sea flavor to your dishes. Enjoy!

## あいさつ

Today, let's study simple greetings and phrases in Japanese.

- 1) おはようございます \* おはよう (Good Morning)  
\* 「おはようございます」 is more polite than 「おはよう」.



- 2) こんにちは (Hello, Good Afternoon)



- 3)こんばんは (Good Evening)



- 4) さようなら \* しつれいします \* じゃ、また (Good-Bye)  
\* 「しつれいします」 is more polite than 「さようなら」. Use it when speaking to your superiors.  
Use 「じゃ、また」 with people you are close to, or those who are younger than you.



- 5) ありがとうございます \* ありがとう (Thank you)  
\* 「ありがとうございます」 is more polite than 「ありがとう」.  
Conversation: When B-san has done something such as help A-san, or has given them a present.  
A さん: 「ありがとうございます」  
B さん: 「どういたしまして」



- 6) すみません (Sorry, Excuse Me)

Used when ① calling out to someone, or when ② apologizing.

- ① (例: レストランで) 「すみません。お水をください。」  
(Example: At a restaurant) "Excuse me, could I get some water?"  
② (例: 約束の時間におそくなって) 「おそくなって、すみません。」  
(Example: When you are late to meet someone) "I'm sorry for being late."  
\* 「ごめんなさい」 is used for people you are close to, or children.  
「もうしわけありません」 is very formal.



【How should you respond?】

1. トピアのスタッフに話しかけたいとき: ( )

When calling out to a TOPIA staff member

2. 知らない人に親切にもらったとき: ( )

When a stranger does something kind for you

(Answers: 1. 「すみません」 2. 「ありがとうございます」)

## Life in Corona Times

### Life as a Teacher



By: Gyunyu

As the coronavirus spread across China, all schools closed their doors. I watched as health care workers came running to help areas affected by the coronavirus and wondered what I, a teacher, could do. As the number of people coming to Shanghai rapidly increased, it became necessary to strengthen protective measures at large stations. As a result, they started asking young people to volunteer. Seeing these notices, I decided to volunteer.

From February 5th, I started working as a volunteer at the Shanghai South Railway Station. Our main duties consisted of collecting information from those who arrived at the station, as well as instructing people to follow quarantine orders (for example, those coming from Wuhan or Hubei Province had to be quarantined at a designed hotel for 2 weeks, while those coming from some other areas could do so at home for 2 weeks).

While working, we had to wear heavy, protective gear that covered our whole body. We would put on our protective gear along with 2 layers of masks, a set of gloves, and goggles. Our shifts would then last for 6 hours. Health care workers have to work while wearing even heavier protective gear which I imagine must be very difficult. I hope that soon this disease will completely disappear, and that the health care workers can return home and rest with peace of mind.

One day, a man arrived at the station asking to be quarantined. The staff led the man to a temporary quarantine room, and health care workers quickly

arrived to test him. However, this man showed no symptoms, his temperature was normal, and he had not recently visited Wuhan. According to the police investigation, he was from Hubei Province where there were many cases of infection. As many areas of Hubei Province were on lockdown, he had not been able to return home or return to his work. The police, feeling sympathetic towards the man, arranged for a place for him to stay. (This was a unique case...)

During this time, I often saw people, alongside their children, coming to Shanghai for work. Hoping for better opportunities, many people parted with their families and hometown and came to the city.

Those who have finished with their volunteer work must self-isolate in their homes for 2 weeks.

Here in China, the corona situation has improved, but elementary and middle schools remain closed. Every day I wake up, and after washing my face, I turn on my computer. This is the start of my day as a teacher. I create presentations for my classes, do live lessons on the internet, and check the homework of students who are using the internet. Classes are completely online, and while it may seem convenient at first, there are many aspects of online learning that are not very efficient.

I truly hope that schools will be able to resume soon.



### Life as a Student



By: Amanda White

I'm not what you would think of as a stereotypical student, and COVID-19 has, in a way, made my situation easier to manage. By day, I'm a full time employee at a local government agency. By night, I take four hour long classes all in the hope that in two years time I'll graduate. Oddly enough, I'm in my last semester and those

four hour long classes are online.

It started with an email from the president of my university extending Spring Break, this was mostly to give professors time to make the transition from in person meetings to an online format. This also includes office hours as well. From previous experiences with online classes in high school and undergrad, I was apprehensive to say the

least. Yet here I am four weeks in, enjoying it.

Not confined to a rigid desk with a table top not large enough to hold my aging laptop, I sit at my kitchen table with not only said laptop but all of my textbooks, articles, and stationary. I even keep a snack just off camera. Class is given via video conferencing sites so I can still see and interact with my classmates and professors on a normal basis. I feel closer to my classmates as I get to see into their home lives and they mine. I've met wives and children and many, many pets I otherwise would not get the chance to.

### Life as a Photographer

By: Ina Bohnsack

Since March 25th, 2020 we have been living with lockdown restrictions in Germany. We can go out for grocery shopping, go to the doctor, go for a walk or play sports in nature. We can go alone, or with a maximum of 1 other person. Many people have lost their jobs or are only working a portion of their normal hours.

I am an artist and mainly work as a photographer at concerts, festivals, events and weddings. This means that I lost all of my work overnight. At the beginning I was totally helpless and desperate because it seemed like I lost everything I had built up over the last 14 years. The first few days I was paralyzed and could not think clearly. One rejection after another ended up in my mailbox and I just had to accept everything.

After about a week, I noticed how creative



Photo: Jennifer Rumbach

Classes flow smoothly as the usual troubles with connecting to projectors or televisions, the glare of the lights, standing up to see the PowerPoint, are all removed. All of these are negated as the professor's or another student's screen can be shared with a few clicks. I can see everyone's face as opposed to just the side or the back of their heads. Even the chat feature is handy as, without embarrassing anyone, I can tell someone to mute their microphones or share a link to an article. Because my class is now online, the professor has invited the author of one of our textbooks to speak to us in the upcoming weeks. In all, I'm making the best of the opportunity.

everyone suddenly became. Musicians streamed concerts live from their balconies via Instagram. Photographers started shooting self-portraits while in quarantine. Fashion designers converted to the production of masks. Suddenly I had 1,000 ideas

and have been trying to implement many of them since then. I create photo books for my customers, sell picture prints, and soon I will sell my own magazine that I have been working on. Crises make you creative, but you always have to keep in mind that many professional groups, especially in the art field, have lost their main source of income. I inform myself every day about the newly infected and hope hour after hour that the curve continues to flatten and that we can soon live in one world again ... With open borders, with possibilities, and maybe with a little more charity that we obtained through this crisis. Every crisis always brings something good with it and I'm happy to see the creativity of people around the world. Let's hold on to this, because we are all in this together.

## Counselling Service at TOPIA ・ トピアの相談窓口

TOPIA provides consultation on everyday life, education, labor, medical institutions, and disaster prevention; and information on sightseeing spots to overseas residents and visitors. When necessary, we will refer you to the appropriate organization that can assist with your needs. Counselling is available in English, Chinese, Vietnamese, and Japanese. Please note that although every effort will be made, we may not be able to deal with all cases.

Everyday, 10:00 - 18:00 (closed during the New Year's holidays)

Tel: 088-656-3312 or 088-656-3313 (allows for three-way conversations with an interpreter)