

# □ The Secrets of Long Life

A long, healthy life is no accident. It begins with good **genes**, but it also depends on good habits. If you have a healthy lifestyle, experts say, you may live up to 10 years longer. So what is the secret of a long life?

I visited places in the world where many people live to be 100 years old—including Sardinia in Italy and Okinawa in Japan. Sardinians and Okinawans live longer, suffer from fewer illnesses, and enjoy long, healthy lives.

## SARDINIANS

First I went to Sardinia, where many people, especially men, live longer than in other parts of the world. Generally, women live longer than men. In fact, in America, there are four times as many 100-year-old women as men. However, in Sardinia an equal number of men and women reach 100.

The reason is possibly that the men have a stress-free life working in the hills, and the women look after the house and the family money. “I do the work,” says Tonino, holding his wife Giovanna around the waist. “My wife does the worrying.”



▲ Tonino's family's diet is another factor. They eat lots of home-grown fruits and vegetables such as zucchini, eggplant, tomatoes, and fava beans that may reduce the risk of heart disease and colon cancer. Also on the table: homemade cheese and wine that Tonino still makes from his homegrown grapes.



## OKINAWANS

Since I last visited Ushi five years ago, she's taken a new job, tried to **run away** from home, and started wearing **perfume**. Normal for a young woman, perhaps, but Ushi is 103. When I ask about the perfume, she **jokes** that she has a new boyfriend, then puts a hand over her mouth and gives a long heart-warming laugh.

“Okinawans have one-fifth the heart disease, one-fourth the breast and prostate cancer, and one-third less mental health problems than Americans,” says Craig Willcox of the Okinawa Centenarian Study. What's the key to their success? “Ikigai certainly helps,” Willcox says. The word translates to “reason for living,” and it may help to prevent stress and diseases such as high blood pressure.

Okinawans have a low-calorie diet. “A full plate of Okinawan vegetables, tofu, miso soup, and a little fish or meat contains fewer calories than a small hamburger,” says Makoto Suzuki of the Okinawa Centenarian Study. “And it will have many more healthy nutrients.”



▲ When she's not watching sumo wrestling on TV, Yasu Itoman, 100, gets her own exercise by growing onions, tomatoes, carrots, and other herbs and vegetables in her garden. Her homegrown vegetables give her natural antioxidants that may help **prevent** cancer.