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Cover photo: Kim Durinick

espite the fact that it was late summer, the chalkboards were dated: 3月11日 (金) (March 11, Friday). All clocks were stopped, representing the time the tsunami hit. As we surveyed the schools' sports fields, which are now being used as dumps for boats, houses and numerous other items, a local fisherman turned to one of our tall, blonde group members and said, "You remind me of one of my ex-girlfriends." We couldn't help but laugh. After months of planning, we had finally made it to Tohoku (north-eastern Japan) as volunteers. Our shock at seeing the current conditions was overshadowed by our surprise at, not only the positive attitudes of locals, but how much fun it was to volunteer.

Our experience in Tohoku was a turning point. Japan transformed from a place we live into a place we call home. Volunteers in Tohoku are vital, as the region is far from full recovery, and international volunteers in particular play a special role. In addition to helping with regular volunteer duties, we acted as ambassadors of our countries and as representatives of our prefecture. Japanese volunteers and locals alike were not deterred by, but rather attracted to, our language and cultural barriers and embraced us like family. To read more about an international volunteer's experience in Tohoku, see page 12.

Unfortunately, as winter sets in and temperatures drop, opportunities to help will dwindle. If you're considering volunteering don't get put off by the cold-just delay it 'til spring. Your effort will be appreciated as much as ever.

Ganbaranba, Nippon! Let's keep working until the job is done.

Kim Durinick, Editor-in-chief





99 Islands Oyster FestivalPearl Sea, Sasebo,November, weekends/holidays

Good company. Good food. Good atmosphere. Come enjoy one of Sasebo's delicacies at one of its top tourist destinations. Everything you need for grilling is provided and you can buy oysters at the park, so all you have to do is show up! Be careful, though—despite the 250 grills and 1,400 seats, it can get crowded.

Korean Taiko Festival

Huis Ten Bosch, November 3-13

A three-part mixture of taiko, flutes and dancing make up this renowned performance, which truly exemplifies cultural exchange. Although this group has performed before in Fukuoka, this time they are closer than ever.

Hot Pot Festival

Hirado, October 21-December 31

This festival is based around the fish, Kue. Kue is a rare, expensive fish that is especially fatty and delicious in the winter. This festival will feature Kue in a variety of recipes, but the main attraction will be the Kue hot pot. Hot pot is the perfect winter food and fatty Kue makes it even better.

Winter Night Fantasia

Shimabara, December 1-January 7

A giant Christmas tree. A romantic archway. A zoo. All built with 24,000 Christmas lights. You can go just to view the lights or go on December 23rd and 24th to enjoy the Christmas events, as well.

Glover Garden Winter Festival Nagasaki, December 23-25

An event for the romantics. Glover Garden will stay open later than usual, be lit up with Christmas lights and feature various attractions, including a music event and the "candle event," in which you can light a candle and make a wish. If you've been scared off from the Nagasaki night view because of the rumor that Mt. Inasa leads to breakups, this is a chance for you and your loved one to safely enjoy the view from Glover Garden.

Church Concert Series Kamigoto, December 6-11

Hymns from the choir and classical songs from professional singers will resonate within the beautiful island churches. The show will be held at a different church each night, including two nationally designated cultural heritage sites. It's a great way to relax and soak up the Christmas spirit.

November Grand Sumo Tournament Fukuoka Convention Center, November 13-27

Attend this tournament to witness the brawn of Japanese sumo wrestlers, as well as competitors from Mongolia, Bulgaria, Russia, and the Czech Republic. Top competitors this year are 20-time tournament winner Yokozuna Hakuho and Kotoshogiku. English brochures explaining the history and rules of sumo are provided at the event!

www.sumo.or.jp

Merrii Kurisumasu. Christmas in Japan

Photo: Hugh McCafferty

Ashleigh Allen reveals some Japanese Christmas traditions that may surprise you

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ne thing I really admire about Japan is the extremely open and tolerant attitude toward religious freedom. Even if you are here for only a short time, it's hard to miss the traditional Shinto and Buddhist shrines sprinkled throughout city blocks, town neighborhoods, and even tucked away off country roads. Spend a bit of time in Nagasaki and you're bound to notice a few churches, many of which are important historical and cultural landmarks. You might be surprised however, to find Christmas lights and tree decorations as you stroll down the local arcade in December.

Even though less than 1% of the Japanese KFC sells an estimated 240,000 "Christmas party

population identifies as Christian.

Christmas has

become an extremely popular, secular and commercial holiday in Japan. As with most other transplanted Western cultural ideals, the Eastern image of Christmas comes from Western movies and TV shows. Many of these movies feature extraordinary scenes of great romance and miracles made possible by true love. So naturally, Christmas in Japan has become a time for confessions of love and exchanging expensive presents while spending quality time with that special someone. In fact, ask a Japanese girl out to dinner on Christmas Eve and consider yourself "taken".

barrels" every year

Popular restaurants and hotels are often booked far in advance during this holiday. This should come as no surprise considering the extremely romantic connotations of Christmas in Japan, but there is one place guaranteed to be packed on Christmas: the local KFC. That's right, KFC. Thanks to a highly effective marketing campaign that began about 40 years ago, the KFC "Christmas party barrel" has achieved the status of legends. Some people pre-order their Christmas meal as early as two months in advance. The barrel, a family pack including fried chicken, salad, and chocolate cake, is ¥3940. KFC sells an estimated 240,000 of these barrels each Christmas season, KFC and chicken has become so synonymous with Christmas that if you tell any Japanese grade school

> student that your family eats a traditional turkey or ham dinner for

Christmas, they probably won't believe you.

Another wildly popular Christmas item is the Christmas cake. These sponge cakes, which are mostly topped with strawberries and whipped cream, can be reserved at pastry shops and most grocery stores. On the 25th, any unsold cakes have their prices cut dramatically, as they are obviously old and unwanted. Ever heard the old Japanese notion on the similarity of Christmas cakes and women? Both are considered past their prime after 25. So guys, grab your ladies...I mean Christmas cakes...and reserve your fried chicken before it's too late. 😘

Christine Brown and Audrey Akcasu's guide to giving souvenirs in Japan a native, an expat, or a traveler in Japan, you have certainly experienced the world of souvenirs, better known as omiyage. You can find it at every airport, train station and tourist hotspot; there receivers are even entire stores dedicated to this of the gifts. uniquely Japanese tradition. Beautifully The traveler. wrapped boxes of confections, keitai (cell thinking of those phone) straps, and hand towels galore fill awaiting their return, has shops and kiosks. These establishments not entirely left home in their are always overflowing with Japanese consciousness, maintaining a connection tourists in mass consumer mode. to their home and loved ones. The act

So, where exactly did this tradition begin and why? The original meaning of the word omiyage translates to "coming down from the shrine." Offerings of food were left at the shrines for the Shinto gods and eventually, the food was eaten by members of the community.

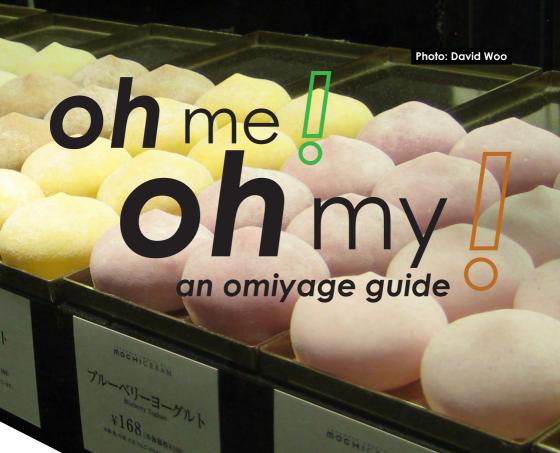
In the Edo era, as travel became more commonplace, representatives of households and communities visiting sacred sites were expected to bring back charms or products. It was believed that the positive elements of the traveler's experience would be passed along to the

A significant difference between the omiyage of the 1700s and that of present day is the gift itself. The kanji for omiyage, お土産, translate to "earth" and "product" respectively, referring to the special goods from each region. The gifts pilgrims would bring back ranged from local artwork to textiles, and pottery to swords - all famous goods from the place the traveler went. The

of giving creates a sense of sharing and equality between the two parties. This

aspect of omiyage has survived to this

idea of giving gifts representative of



one's
travel
destinations still
rings true; however,
due to the frequency of travel
and number of gifts expected, the
tradition of omiyage has transformed.
Now, travelers bring back snacks, not
swords. Tradition has been replaced by
practical mass production.

This shift is also a matter of simple economics. Omiyage is a booming business. Many factories that make

omiyage
are located in
rural areas of Japan
in an effort to bolster local
economies. As the populations
of small communities dwindle and

cities expand, it is one way to create jobs and retain citizens. Government agencies have even gotten in on the action. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries oversees quality control for processed products, while the Japan Patent Office helps producers comply with regional trademark policies. Whether omiyage is mass-produced or one-of-a-kind, it is the act of giving itself that has social and personal implications. Sharing one's experiences with family, friends and co-workers creates a sense of bonding. A study about omiyage in Japan shows that the top three motivational factors involved in purchasing and giving were: (1) a sense of reciprocal obligation, (2) to show appreciation, and (3) to express friendship or love. The study further states that older Japanese people tended to look at the process as a necessary social custom; many felt indifferent or even found it bothersome.

Another study found that travelers spent more time and effort choosing omiyage than they did personal items and that they spent only slightly less money on omiyage than they did on themselves and that the average Japanese shopper buys for more than 15 people on any given trip.

Statistics compiled by the US Travel and Tourism Administration in the 1990s show that

Japanese tourists comprise about 7% of foreign visitors annually, yet account for more than 14% of monies spent by foreign tourists. On average, they spend over \$1,000 (roughly \76,000) on shopping per trip, with about \$566 being spent on omiyage and about \$581 being spent on personal items.

Though some people view buying omiyage as a "chore," most say they like the custom; it is a way to say "thank you" to friends and colleagues. Whatever your stance, the next time you're shopping for omiyage, perhaps having a better understanding of the history, economic impact, and the true spirit of the custom will aid in creating an experience with an atmosphere of giving, gratitude and community. Furthermore, the next time you receive it, don't just look it at as a chocolate cookie, but as a token of appreciation and a useful conversation

starter. 😘



Some popular omiyage by prefecture

Tokyo Tokyo banana Nagasaki Castella bread Fukuoka Mentaiko (roe) **Oita** Tori tempura (chicken) **Saga** Ogiyokan (bean paste) Kagoshima Kurobuta (pork) Wakayama Umeboshi (sour plum) Kumamoto Spicy renkon (lotus root) **Kyoto** Nama-yatsuhashi (sweet bean confections) **Hokkaido** Shiroi koibito (white chocolate cookies) Miyazaki Mangos and huganatsu (summer oranges)

Kanji of the Month



Looking to start learning kanji, but don't know where to begin? Kick it off this month with $\mbox{$\rm I\hspace{-.07em}I}$, the most frequently used character in Japanese writing.

A character meaning "sum," I is found in countless words, including the word for Japan itself, I & (nihon, pronounced like "knee-hone"). Have you ever heard Japan referred to as "The Land of the Rising Sun?" The character & can take on the meaning "book" or "origin," so the expression comes from the combination of the two kanji I &, which together mean "the sun's origin."

Another meaning of 目 is "day." It is found in 昨日 (kinou, yesterday), 今日 (kyou, today), 明日 (ashita, tomorrow), and 毎日 (mainichi, everyday). Now, let's take it one step further and combine "sun" and "day." What do you suppose we get? 日曜日 (nichiyorubi)... Sunday! Kanji is like a puzzle; little by little the pieces will start to come together.

目 is everywhere. It's in the 日影 (hikage), or the shadows cast on these fall afternoons. It's in your 日記 (nikki, diary), in which you are writing about your experiences in 日本. However, don't be mistaken and think that it has manifested itself in your favorite weekend beverage, Asahi (朔日) whose name literally means "morning sun" or "sunrise". In this case, Asahi is just the name of the beer, and not something with which you're greeting the 朔日.

Good luck!

Harrah Conklin

Volunteering in Tohoku





here's only so much mental preparation one can do for volunteer work in a disaster area. Before heading from Nagasaki to *Tohoku* (north-eastern Japan) to spend a week with the Peace Boat volunteer organization, I kept my mind incredibly open. I didn't know what I would be doing; I didn't know the current situation and I didn't know how difficult the work would be. All I knew was that this would be a rewarding trip—and I wasn't let down.

Applying to be a volunteer involved paperwork, purchasing volunteer insurance and arranging travel to Tokyo. While this seems daunting, this is all feasible in just a few days and can be done even just two weeks before your departure. I traveled there with six others from Nagasaki prefecture, but our weeklong volunteer group numbered over 90 in total. Volunteers on Peace Boat meet in and leave from Tokyo; this is how I found myself sitting at Shinjuku Chuo Park (Shinjuku Central Park), waiting to take the night bus up to Tohoku.

Our volunteer location for the week was Ishinomaki City in Miyagi prefecture. A group of fishing and quarry towns collected into one administrative area, Ishinomaki was one of the cities hit hardest by the March 11 tsunami: approximately one in five of all people killed or missing in the earthquake and tsunami was from Ishinomaki. Peace Boat has centered its relief efforts on this city, bringing in fresh volunteers every week and coordinating with the city leaders to provide workers for projects in need.

The organization of our trip was quite impressive; the long-term volunteer coordinators managed team leaders, who each organized a group of four or five people. Every morning, volunteers had a meeting at 7:30 sharp. At the morning meetings we'd do warm-up taiso, sing the Anpanman theme song ("To lift group spirits!") and then find out our plan for the day. My group worked throughout the week on beach cleanup, removing everything from tiny garbage to logs and lumber from the coastline. Other groups worked on projects such as salvaging fishing gear and helping move boats that remain ashore or doing general city cleanup.

During the week, a major typhoon struck northern Japan and our plans were changed accordingly. Volunteers staying for a week are housed on the grounds of Ishinomaki Senshu University, in tents on the school's athletic fields. It was roughing it a bit, but a communal spirit grew quickly during meals and down time. Balancing the serious tone of the work and forming friendships with our fellow volunteers was tricky at times, but great connections were made because of this experience.

The tents weren't tenable to ride out a typhoon, so we moved to a building used by Peace Boat to house short-term volunteers (people coming to work for just two or three days). Before the tsunami, the building was a clothing factory, but it was badly damaged and flooded. Peace Boat cleaned it up and the owner allowed the group to use it. Because working outside also got too hairy, we worked indoors



I was really surprised at the cheerfulness of the people we met in Ishinomaki. Though they'd already been through earthquakes, a tsunami, and God knows what else, after the typhoon came, they were outside their houses and shops, cleaning up again, passing out free smiles to passers-by.

66 To see volunteers come from all across Japan and the world would inspire anyone.

Hannah Conklin

Qi Yang

After a group of 20 men worked tirelessly to pull a tuaboat out of a swamp, an over-joyed fisherman yelled, 'Great job, everyone!! Please come back and eat the seaweed I catch.' Only then did we find out that this man had lost all 30 of his boats in the tsunami and, after 6 months, this was his first that had been salvaged A moment like that justifies an entire week of work. That's something you never forget.

Kim Durinick

instead. On different days we helped at a cannery to clean up and sort salvageable from unsalvageable cans of fish recovered after the tsunami. We also made necklaces out of tsunami-damaged pieces of roof tiles, which are to be sold in Tokyo. All proceeds from these necklaces will go towards the rebuilding efforts. It may not have been the sweaty, backbreaking labor that beach cleanup was, but it was all about helping in any way possible.

After the typhoon we had a couple more days of working outdoors, including helping to clean up the city after the heavy rains. It's incredibly hard to prepare yourself for how damaged the city still is. On the first day of work we rode the bus from the Peace Boat camp down to the beach. Once we got into the waterfront districts, which are still badly damaged, a hush fell over our entire group. It remains a powerful sight, even over six months later.

Much work has been done in Ishinomaki City and in Tohoku in general; many places now look as they did before. Cleaning, relief and rebuilding efforts have taken hold, but it is still a wounded city. Disaster relief is a long process and it is easy to forget once a location is out of the spotlight. Some people are hesitant to go because of the cost, but our whole week, including food, housing, supplies and round-trip travel from Tokyo was a mere ¥1000. If you have thought about volunteering in Tohoku, put aside your worries about time or money. The area definitely still needs help and my experience was amazing.



The Philippines

Before embarking to the Philippines, don't forget your flip-flops, bug repellent, and sunscreen, as they are necessary for fun in the sun. Once there, experience the cheap, but chaotic rides in the iconic Jeepneys. Do you like the water? Test your courage swimming with the whale sharks of Donsol. Want to relax? Enjoy the white sandy beaches of Boracay. If you want to experience a good hike, take yourself to see the

Rice Terraces of Banaue, which locals have deemed "The Eighth Wonder of the World". Need to satisfy your shopping bug? Then shop at Mall of Asia. one of the largest shopping malls in the world. If you're hungry, quell those hunger pains with the local cuisine. Popular dishes

include adobo (specially marinated meat), sinigang (a tamarind based soup), and halo halo (an ice cream-like dessert). If you're feeling courageous, try some balut (duck embryo) from any of the street food carts! Don't fret if you can't speak Tagalog, as most people are bilingual. When leaving, don't forget to save 750 pesos for the departure tax; otherwise, your vacation might be extended unexpectedly!

Raymond Arcega

Brunei

Try some fun travel trivia (without consulting a map): What THREE nations make up the island of Borneo? Indonesia, Malaysia and.....you guessed it! Negara Brunei Darussalam!

Independent since 1984, Brunei's small population of roughly 400,000 sits pleasantly in the South China Sea. This is definitely not your average South East Asian country, as the capital city of



Bandar Seri Begawan (more commonly known as the BSB) is one of the cleanest cities I have ever visited. While traveling, definitely make a trip to the Omar Ali Saifuddien Mosque. The night view is stunning. Spending a few hours in Kampong Ayer water village is a nice way to spend the afternoon. From there, a quick water taxi will bring you across the river to a neighborhood completely afloat. Walk down the street from the Sultan's Palace over to the National



and sculpture.

Whether trekking through the Sarawak or lounging on the beaches of the Sabah region of Malaysia, Brunei is easily accessible by jet ferry or bus. Additionally there are five daily flights from Singapore. English-friendly and with a slow pace of life, Brunei is a cool place to drop by. If you're lucky, you might even see the Sultan himself enjoying an afternoon at a local café sipping lattes and reading the newspaper! Safe travels!

Matthew Wypycha

Notes for travelers:

 Alcohol is not sold anywhere in Brunei!

Vietnam

Vietnam is a vibrant country with captivating cities and breathtaking nature.

On October 2010, Hanoi, the oldest continuing capital city in South East Asia, celebrated its 1000th birthday. Hanoi is a nice mix of historical and modern, with a touch of European influence. Make sure to visit the Old Quarter's "36 Streets." Each street is named after the merchandise sold, for example, Shoe Street or Toy Street. Also check out the Temple of Literature, which contains a principle Confucian sanctuary and the first university of Vietnam

Hoi An was once a major trading port that attracted dealers from China, Japan, Holland, France and Portugal. It has incredibly well preserved architecture, but that's not all. This is the place to go if you'd like to obtain an entirely new wardrobe for a fraction of what it would cost you in your home country.

Halong Bay, meaning "Bay of the Descending Dragon," consists of 1,969 limestone monolithic islands, topped with jungle vegetation that jut out of the water. Some islands are hollow, containing enormous caves. Halong Bay is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and is without a doubt, one of the most incredible places I've ever seen. If you have time, I recommend taking an overnight cruise in the bay.

Christine Brown

Notes for travelers:

You must obtain a VISA or VISA approval letter before visiting:

www.myvietnamvisa.com

 American dollars are preferable to Vietnamese dong; they are accepted even by rural street vendors, and you'll usually get a better rate. If you use dong, be sure to save your exchange receipt, as it is required to exchange leftover dong into foreign currency.

Malaysia

Whether you're looking to shop, hike through rainforests or lay on pristine beaches, you can't go wrong in Malaysia. While you'll find anything you need in the cities of Kuala Lumpur and Penang, make sure to get off the peninsula to Borneo. There you can go snorkeling, see caves and wild animals, climb mountains and see strange fauna, like the Rafflesia, famous for its flowers which smell like rotting flesh.

If it's peace and quiet that you want, head to northern Malaysia, like the island Langkawi. A better option than staying at the big resorts is to get out and see the rest of the island, where you'll find even more beautiful, deserted beaches. Make sure to stop at roadside stands for tasty food and fresh fruit.

Speaking of food, Malaysia is the epicenter of deliciousness. With the diverse Malay, Thai, Indian and Chinese population, the variety of food available is outstanding and, whether dining at a fancy restaurant or a pushcart, you will not have a bad meal. Foodies should head to Penang, which is known as "the food capital of Malaysia."

Audrey Akcasu

Notes for travelers:

- It's hard to exchange Yen to Ringgit outside of airports.
- If you fly domestically (i.e. Air Asia), make sure to go to the Low Cost Carrier Terminal (LCCT), rather than international. Mistakes can be costly!
- At the airport, buy a "coupon" inside before getting a taxi. Airport buses are also another recommended option.



儿 口 7 ス って

What is **Turkish Rice**?

Misaki Fukuda introduces one of Nagasaki's most famous and unusual dishes

eaders living in Nagasaki will probably have heard about Turkish Rice (トルコライ ス) before. It's every dish that you may like, such as pilaf, spaghetti, salad, pork cutlet, fried prawns and hamburger prepared together on one plate. People in Nagasaki have been enjoying it for more than 50 years, but most still can't answer the question: why is it called Turkish Rice? As you can see, there isn't any kebab or other typical Turkish food on it. Moreover, most Turkish people don't eat pork because of their religion, Islam. Though there are many different views about the history of Turkish Rice, I found one very convincing story.

The first owner of Bordo, a Turkish Rice restaurant in Nagasaki, was working in Kobe as a chef at an officers' mess before he opened his own restaurant in Nagasaki. For the foreign officers, the Japanese cook was preparing a middle-eastern dish called pilay, which he called "Turkish Rice." Unfortunately, this meal seemed to have been too boring for the officers so in order to make a more exciting dish, the cook added spaghetti, pork cutlet, and more. He served this new Turkish Rice in Nagasaki and it spread back to the

officers' messes in Kobe and Osaka. Though some people claim to have witnessed the whole story, it still isn't well known among Japanese people. I think this is simply because Japanese people don't know what pilav is and Japanese food culture is not influenced by European cuisine.

Turkish Rice has been developed independently in each restaurant because it doesn't have a specific, prescribed recipe. In one restaurant for example, they have more than 80 kinds of Turkish Rice. The variations are uncountable; there can be four kinds of rice, three kinds of spaghetti, eight kinds of toppings, garnish, gratin, and vegetarian Turkish rice. Some of them are even served on a hot plate. It's so much fun to combine all these elements and find one mix that suits your taste perfectly. One unique style combines dry curry pilaf, spaghetti alla napoletana, corn salad, demiglace sauce on an omelet, with chicken cutlets and croquettes! Similar to this restaurant, many other Nagasaki restaurants have their very own ways of preparing Turkish Rice.

While you're in Nagasaki, wouldn't you like to try this interesting dish?

▍崎に住んでいる人ならトルコラ イスのことを聞いたことがある ▲ だろう。誰しもが大好きであろ うピラフやスパゲティ、サラダ、とんか つ、エビフライにハンバーガーといった 料理がひとつのお皿に乗っているのだ。長 崎の人々はこのトルコライスに50年もの 間親しんできた。だがなぜこの料理がトル コライスと呼ばれるのか知っているだろう か。お分かりのように皿の上にはケバブや 典型的なトルコ料理は一切乗っていない。 しかも多くのトルコ人はイスラム教である ことから豚肉は食しない。トルコライスの 起源について諸説あるが、今回はある有力 な説について紹介したいと思う。

トルコのピラフ:長崎にあるトルコライス レストラン「ボルドー」の初代オーナーは 長崎に自身のレストランを開く以前に神戸 の将校で料理人として働いていた。外国人 の将校のために、オーナーは東洋の料理 であるピラフをトルコライスという名前に して提供した。だがその将校にとって物 足りなかったという声を受け、スパゲテ ィやとんかつなどを追加することでより 魅力的なトルコライスを作り上げて いったのだ。その後彼は長崎でト ルコライスを提供し、またその 将校から大阪や神戸でもトル コライスが広まったのだ。 だが証言者がいるにもか かわらずこの話は日本人 の間ではあまり知られ ていない。それはきっ と単に日本人がピラフ について知らなかった ことや、日本の食文化 がヨーローッパの食文化 にそれほど影響されてい なかったことに起因するの

トルコライスにはこれといった決まったス タイルがなかったため、それぞれのレスト ランで進化を遂げてきた。例えばあるレス トランには80種類以上ものトルコライス がある。例えば、4種類のご飯に3種類の スパゲティ、8つのトッピングにドリアや グラタンを組み合わせることができる。 そしてベジタリアンのトルコライスまであ り、いくつかのメニューは鉄板の上に乗っ て出てくる。そのバリエーションは数え切 れないほどだ。あなたの気に入った組み合 わせを見つけるのはきっと楽しいだろう。 以下はその組み合わせの一例だ。ドライカ レーピラフ、トマトスパゲティ、コーンサ ラダ、デミグラスソースのかかったオムレ ツ、そしてチキンカツとコロッケが一つの Ⅲに乗っている。

このように多くのレストランが独自のトル コライスを作り出している。長崎に住んで いる間に、このおもしろい料理を味わって みてはどうだろう。



だろう。 🐧

vaçazasshi November/December 201

ホークカツがメイン トルコライズ

My two yen: Previews



lated for release in Japan this December is Sony's latest handheld gadget: the PlayStation Vita. So, what makes the Vita an improvement over its predecessor, the PlayStation Portable (PSP)?

For starters, the screen is a bit larger (130mm) and the whole panel will function as a touch screen. Additionally, the Vita will feature a second touch panel on the reverse side of the system, further increasing the possibilities in controls. The handheld willoffer the same button layout as the PSP, with the traditional directional pad plus two analog sticks. The Sixaxis motion-sensing technology utilized on PlayStation 3 controllers will also be included.

Why stop there? The handheld will feature front and rear cameras, complete with face detection, head detection and tracking abilities, bringing Augmented Reality (AR) into the mix.

There will be two versions of the Vita: one with 3G capabilities (provided in Japan by Docomo) and one without. Both versions will be Bluetooth and Wi-Fi compatible, which combined with the



built-in microphone, allows players to chat with friends.

Sony, famous for their proprietary formats (MD, UMD, etc), will be releasing their games on a new medium: the NVG, flash-based cards similar to those of the 3DS. In addition to games released on NVG, players will be able to download a variety of games from the online PlayStation Store, including ones from the original PlayStation. Social networking applications will also be available, including those for Facebook, Twitter and Skype, in addition to an Adobe Flash Player-compatible web browser.

So, what kinds of games can we expect? Sony announced titles we can drool over, including new versions of Ridge Racer, Uncharted, BlazBlue, Dynasty Warriors and Hot Shots Golf.

What's the icing on this delicious cake? The Vita is not region-locked, so even if your machine is Japanese, you can import American and European games. Can't wait? The Playstation Vita can be reserved at local video game retailers.

Raymond Arcega





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