



# HELLO OKAYA

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This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Exchange Association (OIEA), with the aim of providing local foreign residents with information necessary for daily life, as well as insight into aspects of Japanese culture. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback or any questions you may have

## Japanese Food

OIEA has just concluded its three-part series “Let’s try Japanese grocery shopping and cooking” last month. This event was aimed at busy foreigners working here in Japan to teach them how to whip up simple Japanese dishes.

This project is the first of its kind this year and attracted a number of people from China, Indonesia and the UK who are residents of Okaya City. With the help of interpreters, a Japanese instructor from OIEA went to a local supermarket to do groceries with all the participants and introduced Japanese ingredients and shopping tips (like picking the right curry pack when cooking Japanese curry). After buying the ingredients, they proceeded to the kitchen/cooking classroom at ILF Plaza and the instructor taught them how to cook the menu for the particular session, after which, everybody got the chance to make their own dish. Of course, after cooking, they got to sample each other’s culinary masterpiece.

The sessions introduced basic Japanese ingredients like spring onions, onions, potatoes, and carrots. Healthy foods like tofu was also introduced alongside seasonings like Japanese soy sauce, miso and broth powder. Participants

were also taught how to make simple dishes using instant flavor-mix and curry roux while explaining the nutritional value of such foods.



The first session of the three-part series introduced Japanese curry. For foreigners living in Japan, who are not used to making Japanese dishes, buying Japanese ingredients is indeed a difficult thing. But come to think of it, eating the proper food is also important. You might think that changing your eating habits when you come to Japan is a hassle, but if you consider that having a not-so balanced diet may cause a lot of health problems like metabolic syndrome (obesity), osteoporosis (brittle bones due to lack of calcium), wouldn’t you think otherwise? Like a child reared to different tastes when he is young, if his parents don’t let him try different flavors of things, he will not get accustomed to it when he grows up. Foreigners who are not used to the different tastes of Japanese food are missing out on the flavors that Japan offers in different seasons. I highly recommend that you try to get used to it and start cooking those tasty vegetables the Japanese way.

## ☆Japanese traditions ~One point Japanese culture~

### Secret savings (hesokuri)

Originally, this meant money saved by “spinning” (*kuru*) the “reel” (*heso*) and it referred to the free spending money that housewives, who under the feudal society’s patriarchal system could not touch the family finances, barely earned with side jobs. At present, it means a small amount of money secretly saved by frugal means, and, perhaps because the word *heso* of *hesokuri* also means one’s “navel” as well as “reel,” it is regarded as a word with a comical nuance rather than with a tragic feeling.



### Business card (meishi)

On a meishi, one’s full name, company name, job title, company address, phone number and so on are printed. Business relationships in Japan begin with the exchange of business cards. Besides their convenience when one wants to make contact, they are indispensable for confirming the other party’s company, position and rank. Recently, there is even computer software to create databases from the information on meishi, and personal information, such as hobbies, can be added. In the past, most meishi came in a standard design, but recently, to enhance individual appeal, meishi with all sorts of elaborate designs on quality paper, in color and layout have come to be used.



### Year-end party (bonenkai)

Bonenkai means a party occurring in December to drink sake and forget that year’s hard labor and unpleasantness. Originally, it took place as a gathering for family, relatives and friends, but now groups from the workplace and groups of people, sharing the same taste or interest in amusement, go as units to bars and restaurants and sometimes even to karaoke to celebrate together the coming of the new year.

In addition, just after the new year, a party called the NEW YEAR PARTY takes place. Both are regular parties with no special ceremonies.



## Let's try Japanese grocery shopping and cooking!

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### 1. Japanese curry rice



#### Ingredients (good for 10 servings)

250g of curry roux (1 box of Vermont curry), 500g of beef, 4 middle-sized onion, 1 middle-sized carrot, 4 middle-sized potatoes, 3 tablespoons of oil, 1400ml of water, 1 apple, soy sauce

- Heat the oil in a heavy pan. Sauté bite-sized chunks of meat and vegetables.
- Add water, bring to a boil, skimming off any foam and impurities that floats to the surface, lower the heat and simmer.
- Turn off the heat once, add curry roux and simmer the curry on low heat.

#### ◆Tips◆

A “secret ingredient” (depending on the cook) is usually added in the curry. Today grated apple is added. Honey, milk, chocolate are commonly used as secret ingredients.

**If you have left-over curry the next day...**

Instead of rice, use pasta to make Curry pasta

Dilute curry with water and soy sauce, add udon noodles and make Udon curry



### 2. Tofu dishes

#### ① Hiyayakko (cold tofu)

##### Ingredients

tofu, soy sauce, bonito fish flake, green onion, ginger

- Wash tofu and drain off the water.
- Cut tofu into desired size and place tofu in a serving dish.
- Cut green onion (condiment) into small pieces and grate ginger.
- Drain off the water from the tofu before serving, put green onion and soy sauce on top.

#### ② Miso soup with tofu

##### Ingredients

tofu, fried tofu, green onion, stock, miso

- Rinse the fried tofu with boiling water to remove excess oil.
- Cut into half, lengthwise, then cut into long thin strips.
- Add eight (8) cups of water and the broth into the pot.
- Let it simmer, then add tofu, fried tofu, green onion and miso.



#### ③ Ma-bo tofu (spicy tofu in Chinese style)

##### Ingredients

tofu, green onion, ma-bo tofu mix

- Put 1 box of ma-bo tofu mix and 360 cc of water into the frying pan.
- Simmer ma-bo tofu mix and add 2 cakes of cubed tofu.
- Dissolve the cornstarch with 60 cc of water and pour into the frying pan.

#### ◆Tips◆

Make it more flavorful by adding more minced meat and green onion!

#### ④ Onigiri (rice ball)

##### Ingredients

rice, yukari, soy sauce, bonito fish flake, seaweed

- Mix yukari and rice.
- Add soy sauce to bonito fish flake and form onigiri.
- Wrap seaweed around onigiri.



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## 3. Japanese Tempura

### (and the best possible combination of vegetables to fry in batter)

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#### ① Vegetable Tempura

##### Ingredients

Sweet potato, pumpkin, shiitake mushroom, green pepper, eggplant, chikuwa(fish sausage), shrimp, manjyu (bun with sweet bean filling) (Tempura manjyu is eaten as snack)

- Mix tempura powder and cold water (1:1).
- Heat oil to 180°C.
- Fry any vegetables you like.

※Reminder※

- ★ Add cold water to tempura powder to make crispy tempura.
- ★ Drain off the water from the vegetable.
- ★ Remove all small clumps of tempura batter that floats.

#### ② Vegetable Kakiage (mixed tempura)

##### Ingredients

carrot, onion, little fish, sakura-ebi (small pink shrimp), green onion



Kakiage is made by deep-frying the different ingredients mixed together in batter.

You have two choices for sauce.

#### ① Tentsuyu or Tempura dipping sauce (good for 10 servings)

##### Ingredients

400ml of broth  
100ml of strong flavored soy sauce (koiguchi shoyu)  
100ml of hon mirin (Japanese sweet cooking wine)

- Mix everything and bring to a boil.
- Add grated radish and ginger as condiments if desired.

#### ② Tendon sauce (a little stronger than Tentsuyu) (good for 10 servings)

##### Ingredients

200ml of broth  
100 ml of soy sauce  
100 ml of mirin  
1 table spoon of sugar

- Mix everything and bring to a boil.
- Let tempura soak in this sauce and place tempura on top of the rice.

#### ◆Tips◆

##### Kawari koromo

Spice up your tempura by adding curry powder, green seaweed, soy sauce and sugar, harusame noodles (for crispier coating) and vegetables wrapped in shiso leaf to your tempura batter.

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# ” Hi! I am Mervin Salazar, the new Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) of Okaya City”

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Hajimemashite (Nice to meet you)!

My name is Mervin and I am the new CIR of Okaya City. I started working at OIEA in August 1<sup>st</sup> this year. I was born in the Philippines and I first came to Japan ten years ago. From August 2005, I served as prefectural CIR at Matsumoto City. For three years, I visited schools to teach things about my country and participated in international festivals to promote multicultural and international understanding. I also planned events to promote international exchange in the prefecture. The first event I planned was getting Japanese and foreign citizens together to sing Christmas carols at old people's home and other welfare institutions. Seeing the smiles we brought to a lot of senior citizens' faces was such an unforgettable experience. I also organized a singing competition with a twist. People sang songs in a language that was not their mother tongue to encourage appreciation of international music. We had people from Japan, China, Philippines, USA, Australia and Canada who sang songs in Japanese, English, Spanish and French. There was a big turnout of Japanese and foreign nationals in the audience that made the music event a big success.

A number of my planned events were music-related because I have a strong interest in singing. Learning songs is a way for me to learn the Japanese language. I like that I can study and enjoy at the same time and get to spend time with friends when I go to karaoke. Incidentally, my friends and I were able to join the TV singing contest program “NHK Nodō Jiman” last December. It was such a great experience.

For my future events here in Okaya City, I am thinking of doing international exchange activities through music. I would also like to visit places around the city and widen my international exchange circle by meeting a lot of people. I can be requested by the citizens to teach about cultural differences between my country and Japan, as one of my responsibilities is to teach courses about international relations.

Feel free to contact OIEA for more information on how your city CIR can assist you in promoting international exchange in Okaya City.

★ **Possible course topics:**

Philippine history, geography, society, educational system, social problems (poverty, “brain-drain” etc.), daily living conditions. Other topics can be discussed.

★ **I can also introduce food from my country through cooking classes.**

We can make desserts or home-style dishes

★ **I also plan international exchange-related events, and assist with similar events around the city.**

We at OIEA will try to do our best to foster international exchange in Okaya City.

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