

The huge kite landed gently on the river bank. I did my best to hold back my tears and the man said to me, "What's wrong Fat Cat? Was it scary?"

I shook my head from side to side. And then bursting with pride, the man said, "I get it! You were impressed, weren't you? I mean, it is the prettiest season now. Everywhere you look it's all a blaze of red!"

"Meow?"
"The autumn leaves..."

...what had caught my attention the most was the sight of the red maple leaves all around me. The sight made me inexplicably emotional. How could it be that the sight of usually fresh green leaves, turning all hues of orange and red could make me feel so sad and wistful?

As some of the leaves fell and floated down from the trees, it looked like it was snowing red snow.

Momiji (紅葉, もみじ) means **fall foliage**. Japanese maple season starts in late September and lasts for three months, with foliage changing to shades of lime green, soft yellow, brick red, and russet. Of the estimated 1,000 varieties of Japanese maple, the 'acer palmatum' variety is especially renowned for its bright-red foliage, slow-growing nature, and century-long lifespan, so maple symbolizes peace, longevity, and prosperity.

Maple trees have featured in Japanese art and poetry over the ages, even in ukiyo-e artist Hokusai's iconic works. They also symbolize the impermanence and fleeting nature of life, the beauty of change and the passage of time.

Japanese maple leaves have a delicate lacy shape, typically with 5 to 9 lobes resembling a hand. Cooler night temperatures and reduced daylight increases production of the pigment anthocyanin in them, causing their vibrant red coloration.

Momiji-gari is the centuries-old Japanese tradition of heading out to admire fall foliage, like ancient nobles who would travel to specific regions to enjoy the leafy splendor and is the fall equivalent of cherry blossom viewing.

Unlike cherry blossoms, fall foliage can be viewed over a longer period and at more locations. So, why not take the time to reflect on nature's beauty and resilience and try **momiji-gari**.

かなしきデブ猫ちゃん



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ONE POINT JAPANESE

「～けど」の使い方
(how to use "although", "but")

A: 市役所に 行かなければ ならないんだけど、どう 行けば いいの?

Shiyakusho ni ikanakereba naranainda kedo, dō ikeba īno?

(I have to go to city office, but how do I get there?)

B: ここから ちょっと 遠いけど、バスが あるよ。

Kokokara chotto tōi kedo, basu ga aru yo.

(It's a little far from here, but there's a bus you can take.)

A: 車で 送って いて もらえない?

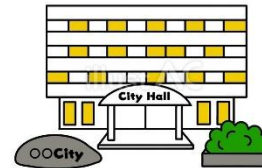
Kuruma de okutteitte moraenai?

(How about giving me a ride?)

B: ええ? 今日 は 忙しい んだけど。

Ē? Kyō wa isogashinda kedo.

(Huh? I'm busy today.)



A: 昨日 提出して もらった レポートの こと なんだけど。

Kinō tēshutsushitemoratta repōto no koto nanda kedo.

(About the report you submitted to me yesterday...)

B: 何 でしょうか。

Nandeshō ka.

(What's up?)

A: 具体例は もう少し 多いほうが いいけど、よく 書けていたよ。

Gutairē wa mō sukoshi ōihō ga ī kedo, yoku kakete ita yo.

(Although it'd be better to show a few more examples, it was good.)



A: 9月 から、日本語 教室に 通って います。

Kugatsu kara, nihongo kyōshitsu ni kayotte imasu.

(I've been going to a Japanese language class since September.)

B: それで 最近 日本語が 上手に なって きたんだね。日本語は どう?

Sorede saikin nihongo ga jōzu ni natte kitanda ne. Nihongo wa dō?

(That's why your Japanese has gotten better lately. How do you like it?)

A: 難しい けど、おもしろい です。

Muzukashī kedo, omoshiroi desu.

(It's tough, but it's a lot of fun.)



< by Niihama Nihongo no Kai >

NNK also provides Japanese lessons for foreigners living in Niihama.

Feel free to contact us at:

Niihama Kokusai Kōryū Kyōkai (Niihama International Center)

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What's New?

Niihama City

No.362 November 2025

Published by SGG Niihama



Taikommunication

James Whittle

By the time this article is published, another Matsuri will have come and gone. The Niihama Taiko Matsuri held every October 16th, 17th and 18th attracts more people than it repels, though it does repel some. Niihama is a company town and as such, there are people from all over Japan living here for their jobs. I'm always somewhat surprised to hear out of town Japanese residents talk about how they find the festival to be noisy and obnoxious. Of course, I'm just speaking generally. There are local people who don't care for it as well...and outsiders who have fallen for the festival, just like me.

Interestingly, within my community of English teachers, I don't think I've ever heard one American, Canadian, Brit, Australian, etc. ever express negative feelings about Matsuri. It seems that we as a group almost unanimously love to watch the Taiko, or even join in on occasion. It must be because of how unique it is compared to our own countries' festivals. As an American, we tend to express our passion and communal spirit through live music or sporting events like (American) football or baseball. But in terms of local culture, I can't think of anything quite as grand and passionate as Taiko.

I also love the endless amount of lore attached to Matsuri. It feels like I learn something new every year. The other day, a student told me about the history of the Tanoue area's signboard (where the names of Taiko sponsors are displayed). I pass by it sometimes and always noticed that compared to other area's signboards it is far more decorative and traditional looking, with Chochin lanterns hanging from wooden beams, where metal

scaffolding would normally be used. But I never knew why. Apparently, this custom established by a Shoya (village leader during the Edo period) in the area has been carried on in the traditional way since back then. For me, this is another piece of the endless Taiko puzzle.

It's funny, isn't it...how some of the non-local Japanese aren't as interested in the festival as people from completely different cultures? But I think most of us who come here from other cultures want to learn and grow in Japan, especially in our own little slices of Japan that we call home, be it Niihama, Yokohama or Hakodate. We want to be part of the community.

Now in Japan, there is a strong nationalist movement similar to ones we've seen in Europe and America. The wave of anti-immigration even reached the nearby city of Imabari, with demonstrations happening in the otherwise quiet streets. Politicians and social media influencers spread misinformation to exploit people's fear of multiculturalism. With my own eyes, I notice more non-Japanese people living in the area, as well as non-Japanese children in kindergartens I visit. So I can determine by seeing them and seeing my own face in the mirror that Japan is becoming multiethnic, at least compared to 15 years ago. But what politicians and influencers never seem to mention is how so many of us long to be A PART of Japanese culture, not against it.

I recognize my own privilege in this milieu. As a white man from an English speaking country, I'm often categorized affectionately in the group known as "ex-pats", while my counterparts from other places and different skin tones might be called "immigrants". This is not always the case, but it would be false to deny that there is an unofficial social caste system. So I want to use my privilege to stick up for people who are being demonized now. As you're reading this, Matsuri is over, but if you did go the festival, I hope you took a moment to notice the faces of onlookers, and even "kakifu", from different countries, smiling and enjoying their time, here to live and contribute to this community. CHO-SA-JA!

James Whittle has lived in the area for 17 years and is the owner of Jade Eikaiwa Niihama in Kikumoto-chō.

This newsletter is published by SGG, a volunteer group that helps foreigners living in and around Niihama. If you need any advice, information, or support, please contact SGG. SGG would welcome any suggestions, questions, or ideas for monthly articles.

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* This month's editors are N. Negoro & Y. Okame

Third Version of Tai-meshi (sea bream rice)

Slice of Grilled Bream with Western Style Seasoning

(Ehime Shimbun: August 1, 2025)

A third version of Tai-meshi has come to life in the Toyo area. Nine companies from Niihama and Saijo cities developed a new Tai-meshi, each using Ehime's prefectural specialty of sea bream.

According to the prefecture, the dish was originally developed by the long-standing restaurant Marubun (Saijo) and was awarded first prize on the Fuji TV program "Local Cuisine Grand Prix". The three requirements to be Toyo Tai-meshi are: must contain an un-flaked slice of grilled bream, use boiled rice and contain western-style seasoning to enhance the bream's taste, even if rice is in the form of risotto or the similar Japanese doria. At the moment, the prefecture has registered nine restaurants.

At the presentation ceremony, each restaurant advertised their respective products with slogans like "The rich taste of butter rice boiled using soup with fish trimmings" or "Bream caught in the Hiuchi-Nada Sea seasoned with prefectural mandarin orange sauce". Prefectural Governor Nakamura Tokihiro said after sampling the Tai-meshi, "Each team elaborated on different appearances and different tastes. We will make an extra effort to develop a new food culture."

Okubo Takayuki, chef of the restaurant Adam & Eve said hopefully, "I adapted my favorite mixed rice to western style cuisine. I envisage Toyo as towns and cities full of western-style restaurants." Manabe Kazunari, president of Marubun said, "With local production for local consumption in mind, we use soy sauce and rice produced in the prefecture. Several characteristic Tai-meshi have become available; please enjoy them in many restaurants."



Other Participating Restaurants:
(Saijo area)

Albatross, Ushiro-no-shomen-dare, Café Arles, Sake Dining
Tsuji-Marui, Café Dining Tsuji-Marui

(Niihama area)

Gasuya-no-Gohan, Rihga Royal Hotel Niihama, Wakamiya-
Shokudo

(Kamei Saki)

November Events

☆ The 20th Japanese Speech Contest for Japanese Language Learners

Date: Sunday, November 9th Time: 1:00 PM – 4:00 PM

Venue: Akagane Museum, Tamokuteki Hall

Organizer: Niihama Nihongo no Kai

For inquiries, please contact:

Niihama International Center ☎ 0897-65-1579

☆ Yuragi no Mori - Momiji Festival Concert

A concert featuring local amateur musicians

Date: November 9th Time: 9:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Admission: Free

Location: Yuragi no Mori Contact: 0897-64-2220

Come and enjoy a day of music surrounded by beautiful autumn colors!

☆ Mine Topia Besshi - Autumn Leaves at Their Peak

Tōnaru Zone: Peak viewing from early to mid-November

Hadeba Zone: Peak viewing from mid to late November

Enjoy the stunning contrast of vibrant autumn foliage along with the historical remains of the Besshi Copper Mine.

Online Information in English from Niihama City

☆ A Guide for Living in Niihama



☆ The Niihama Medical Institution Map



☆ Trash & Garbage Sorting Information



☆ What's New? in English



☆ Niihama Tourist Information

<https://niihama.info/>



☆ Help with legal matters, discrimination, insurance, etc.
Japan Life Guide

(Nationwide service) multilingual



☆ Yoriso Helpline for foreigners

[TEL:0120-279-338](tel:0120-279-338) 10:00 am~10:00 pm

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