

The human boy understood what I said. It can’t really be true I thought to myself... “I understand you Maru.” “How come?” “I have no idea. Maybe it’s because every day, I’m always trying to listen to various animal’s voices.”

Following the boy’s gesture, I glanced around the room. All around me were huge pictures of animals. “Are you an artist?” I asked. And the boy gave a small nod. “Yes, I’m a painter, but I’m working on woodblock carving now. I use chisels to carve animals and insects into wooden blocks. Then I paint a colored backdrop and finally transfer my woodblock image on top of it.”

I looked around the room again. The various animals were so vivid and vibrant and looked like they were just about to jump out of their frames. “Wow! They are all so cool.” I said.

“I like strong aggressive animals. I like animals that fight to eat, and fight to grow, and fight to survive. That’s why I carved this,” said the boy... “It’s an image of you, Maru.”

This month’s episode of Sad Fat Cat comes out of the second book in the series. Maru, exhausted after climbing Mt. Ishizuchi, collapses somewhere in Niihama. It happens to be the home of the famous Niihama artist, Yoshinari Ishimura.

Did you know that Mr. Ishimura did actually carve a woodblock print of Maru that was used in the picture-book? The book also has a picture of Maru with Mr. Ishimura in his atelier; painted by Karin Kano. It’s rare to see such a collaboration of art and literature.

Mr. Ishimura is currently holding an exhibition ‘IKIMONO DAISUKI’ at the Ehime Museum of Art which runs till September 23rd. The exhibition includes his original woodblock print of Maru and features an ‘atelier corner’ with paint-splattered furniture and equipment from his actual atelier. 500 of his works are on display. Mr. Ishimura is also at the museum most days so you can take pictures with him and get his autograph. A tram in Matsuyama is also wrapped in his artwork, so be sure to look out for it if you do visit Matsuyama.

I’ve been to the exhibition already and hope to go again. I haven’t seen the tram yet, so that’s another mission I have to accomplish. With summer coming to an end, autumn is on the way...how will you spend it? Enjoying art? Nature? Reading?

かなしきデブ猫ちゃん



Hardcover



With the ‘Sad Fat Cat’ woodblock print

Writer - Kazumasa Hayami, Illustrator - Karin Kano,
Excerpts used based on permission from Ehime Newspaper

ONE POINT JAPANESE

『やばい』のいろいろな 使い方
(How to use various kinds of “really”)

A : ^{えきまえ}ねえ、ねえ、^{駅前}に ^{できた} ^やケーキ屋さん、^い行ったこと ある？
Nē, nē, ekimae ni dekita kēki ya san, itta koto aru?
(Have you been to the cake shop in front of the station?)

B : あるよ。あそこの ケーキ、やばいくらい おいしいよ。
Aruyo. Asoko no kēki, yabai kurai oishī yo.
(Yes, I have. The cakes from that shop are really delicious.)

A : ^{へえー}、^{そんな}に おいしいんだ。
Hē, sonna ni oishīn da.
(Are they really that good?)

B : ^た食べたこと ^{ないの？} ^{一回}、^{行って} ^{みると} ^{いいよ}。
Tabeta koto nai no? Ikkai itte miru to īyo.
(You haven’t tried them? You should check it out.)

A : ^{ことし} ^{あつ}今年の ^{暑さ}、やばいよね。
Kotoshi no atsusa, yabai yo ne.
(This summer is really hot.)

B : ^{もう}、^{死に}そうだよ。ね。^夜 ^{エアコン} ^{つけてる？}
Mō, shinisō dayo ne. Yoru eakon tsuketeru?
(I’m almost dead. Do you use an air conditioner at night?)

A : うん、^{あさ}朝まで ^{つけっぱなし！} ^{そう} ^{しないと}、やばいよね。
Un, asa made tsukeppanashi! Sō shinai to yabai yo ne.
(Yes. I keep it on until morning. Otherwise, it’s too hot to sleep.)

B : そうだね。でも、^{でんきだい}電気代も やばいよね。
Sō da ne. Demo denki dai mo yabai yo ne.
(Right. But the electricity bill is scary.)

A : ^{きのう}、^{いしづちさん} ^{のぼ}石鎚山に ^{登ったよ}。景色が やばかった。
Kinō, Ishizuchi san ni nobotta yo. Keshiki ga yabakatta.
(I climbed Mt. Ishizuchi yesterday. The view was amazing.)

B : ふーん、^{そんなに} ^{きれいだったんだ}。
Fūn, sonna ni kirē dattan da.
(It was really that beautiful?)

< by Niihama Nihongo no Kai>

NNK also provides Japanese lessons for foreigners living in Niihama.
Feel free to contact us at:
Niihama Kokusai Koryu Kyokai (Niihama International Center)
Tel:0897-65-1579 E-mail:niihamashikokusai@gmail.com



What’s New?

Niihama City No.372 September 2026
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Where’s the Japanese Food ? Sophie Carrico

While Japanese food has become more available in America there are a few foods that just haven’t been replicated as well.

Not long after I arrived back home, I went to meet up with a friend who I hadn't seen since high school. We decided to catch up over a bowl of ramen. The ramen was fine, although in true American fashion, the chef had taken liberties in its creation: Yuzu Salt flavor ramen. It was an OKAY bowl of ramen. Not great. Not terrible. So tell me why it was \$16.00 (approximately ¥2500)?? What an outrageous price for a bowl of ramen. This was not an artisanal shop – the ramen noodles were neither handmade nor do I believe this chef was a ramen expert freshly arrived from Japan. Furthermore, as this was in America, one was expected to tip at least 20%. I immediately missed Japanese prices for Ramen.

There were 3 items that, no matter how much I searched, I couldn’t find either a good source of the original or an American equivalent version: melon cream soda, “in Jelly” (mineral or vitamin), and finally mints. I am not sure why melon flavors haven’t taken over America in the same way that matcha has. Melon flavored drinks were noticeably missing from the supermarkets I visited, including Asian supermarkets. I would think a drink with so much sweetness and sugar would be very popular with an American consumer base however melon cream sodas haven’t taken off yet. As for “in Jelly” drinks, I have gone many months in Japan with having one daily to ensure I am getting proper vitamins and minerals. I really missed having these drinks available as a quick and convenient way to consume something healthy with my lunch for example. I haven’t found any trace of the Mineral

or Vitamin version of these drinks making their way to America yet. Finally, what's so special about Japanese mints? While I was back in the US, I experimented with many different mints to find one that could replicate the 'icy' feeling



that Japanese Frisk mints or Mintia create. I was extremely disappointed. Although it might seem strange to some, I really enjoy the "cold" sensation and so I was let down by the mildness of American mints such as "Altoids" or "Life Savers".

A large part of my diet while living in Japan has included fish. In one form or another, it is easily accessible and fairly priced from fresh salmon to ebi tempura. My family even found it strange that I would have grilled fish for breakfast in Japan! When I returned to America, to my home state that has a very large coastline (and therefore one would think access to seafood), I found I had a very large gap in my diet because fish was simply not as easily available as it is in Japan. Sure, there were fish sections and even "sushi" sections in the local supermarkets but the range of fish was much more limited and frankly looked less appealing than the fish that can be found at LAMU for a reasonable price and portion.

With that said, I was genuinely surprised and impressed by the amount of Japanese foods that were now available on American shelves. If I went to the right store, I could find Japanese Royal Milk Tea, strawberry pocky (my moms favorite), and even some very creative sushi.

Accompaniment Support for Non-Japanese-Speaking Patients

We provide volunteer accompaniment support for non-Japanese-speaking patients visiting medical facilities. Our volunteers can help explain how to complete forms, guide patients through the medical visit process, and, to the best of their ability, provide interpretation support when needed. Contact: email: yasumi@galaxy.ocn.ne.jp

Tel: 090 9454 9688



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 Tomoko Hoshita & Yoshiko Amano

24 Hour Lost Property Search via Chat JR Shikoku to roll out new system in October

(Nikkei Shimbun : April 11, 2026)

In October, JR Shikoku will initiate a system where property lost on trains and in stations can be searched via chat twenty-four hours a day. The group will introduce a service provided by the lost articles managing system "find", which was developed by the find Company (Minato Ward, Tokyo). This measure will contribute to improving customer convenience and reducing burden on the staff.



"Lost Articles Cloud find" was developed by the Find Company. Using the image registration function and AI search chat, the time to match a lost article with its owner will be shortened. The system has been adopted by public transportation companies like JR Kyushu, Keio Corporation and others.

JR Shikoku handles about 40,000 articles of lost property every year. Until now, employees respond to user inquiries face to face or by telephone, collating the features of the lost item with the owner's description. Through the Find service, they intend to improve operational efficiency.

Bonito Flakes You Can Eat As Is (Interview : Mr. Mikiharu Doi : Marutomo)

(Ehime Shimbun: June 6, 2026)

"We wanted to produce bonito flakes that could be eaten as is, or as a topping or an addition to soup."

"Pu-Re-Bushi, 25 Micron Ultra-Thin Slice" first released in 2015 by Marutomo Co., Ltd., Iyo-shi, has become quite popular. Their ultra-thin slices and soft, fluffy texture are their distinctive feature. The suggested retail price is ¥308 per package containing twelve 1.2-gram mini packs.

Though Japanese cuisine is getting more popular now, we don't like to make dashi at home as it takes time and effort. With this product, we don't have to waste any bonito flakes, even the leftover flakes after making dashi, which are rich in protein.

Marutomo pursued the ideal texture and melt-in-your-mouth quality by slicing the bonito flakes to a thickness of just 25 micrometers. This was made possible by using blades coated with synthetic diamond.

Customers comment by saying, "They melt in my mouth" and "My kids love them." The company hopes that people will enjoy all of the flakes.

(Distributed by Kyodo News)



Event (October)

Vietnamese Mid-Autumn Festival

You can enjoy quizzes, lantern making and playing, and picture-story shows.

Date: October 4 (Sun) 1:30 PM -3:30 PM

Venue: Women's Plaza

Fee: ¥500

For: Elementary and junior high school students

Please register by phone by September 17 (Thurs) with NIC (Niihama International Center) TEL : 0897-33-2180



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



☆ Yorisoi Helpline for foreigners

TEL:0120-279-338 10:00~22:00

Multilingual Your privacy will be protected.