

Reading and Talking

Good neighbor cat

Koko is a cat. She lives with a family in the city of Toyama in Toyama Prefecture. On the evening of June 17th, a neighbor noticed that Koko was standing and looking into a farm waterway. “What is Koko looking at?” she thought. She looked closer and she saw an old man lying on his back in the shallow water. She called other neighbors, and five people worked together to rescue the man, who luckily was almost unhurt. On June 27th, Toyama Minami Police Station thanked the rescuers. They also thanked Koko by giving her some cat food.

(101 words)

Did you hear this news before you read the story above?

↳ Yes, I did. (--Did you see the news on TV? / What did you think about Koko? / Do you think Koko is proud of herself?)

↳ No, I didn't. (--What kind of cat food do you think Koko got? / Have you heard about the cat that tries to go into an art museum in Onomichi?)

Have you tripped and fallen down recently?

↳ Yes, I have. (--Where did you fall down? / Did you hurt yourself? / Have you ever lost your balance and fallen down some stairs?)

↳ No, I haven't. (--Have you ever “ki o ushinau” fainted? / Have you ever broken an arm or a leg? / Have you ever fallen off your bicycle?)

Have you ever watched the Studio Ghibli movie “Neko no Ongaeshi” (The Cat Returns)?

↳ Yes, I have. (--Did you like the movie? / Where did you watch it? / Have you watched a Studio Ghibli movie recently?)

↳ No, I haven't. (--Have you ever watched “Nagagutsu o Haita Neko” (Puss in Boots) or “Oshare Cat (The Aristocats)? / Do you like cats?)

(July 3, 2020)

More information

Good neighbor cat

Cats have been living with humans for thousands of years, and they are as beloved in Japan as anywhere in the world. Once in a while they appear in the news, as happened recently in Toyama Prefecture to a cat named Koko.

Koko is a striped tabby, also known as a mackerel tabby, of unknown age. She lives with a family in the city of Toyama. On the evening of June 17, Koko was on what cat lovers know as her “evening patrol” to check her territory. A neighbor happened by, and saw Koko staring into an agricultural irrigation channel 60 centimeters wide and 40 centimeters deep. “What is she looking at?” wondered the neighbor, who looked closer herself and saw an old man lying on his back in the shallow water. She immediately summoned other neighbors, and five people worked together to rescue the man, who luckily escaped with just scrapes and scratches.

On June 27, Toyama Minami Police Station had a ceremony to honor the rescuers. The five received certificates of commendation. Koko was not ignored; she was given some cat food.

(187 words)

(July 3, 2020)

Reading and Talking

Just like “unagi” eel

This year, the “Doyo no Ushi ni Hi” (Days of the Ox) are July 21st and August 2nd. On those days, we eat “unagi” eel to fight the summer heat. “Unajiro” is “kamaboko” fish cake that looks and tastes like grilled eel. A package (361 yen) has thick sauce and “sansho” Japanese pepper spice. Heat Unajiro in a microwave oven for one minute, and put it on top of rice. This summer there are two special versions: “Unaru Oishisa Unajiro” (Unajiro so delicious that you say wow / 361 yen) and “Sugoku Nagai Unajiro” (Really Long Unajiro / 498 yen).
(104 words)

Have you ever eaten Ichimasa Kamaboko’s Unajiro?

↳Yes, I have. (--When did you eat it? / Did it really taste like “unagi no kabayaki” grilled eel? / Do you want to eat it on July 21 or August 2 this summer?)

↳No, I haven’t. (--Do you want to try it? / Do you like grilled eel? / Are you going to eat grilled eel on Doyo Ushi no Hi this summer?)

Have you eaten a grilled “ayu” sweetfish this summer yet?

↳Yes, I have. (--Where did you eat it? / How was it? / Have you eaten “katsuo” bonito this summer yet?)

↳No, I haven’t. (--Do you like “tansuigyo” freshwater fish? / Have you ever eaten “namazu” catfish? / Have you ever eaten “dojou” loaches or “koi” carp?)

Do you lose your “shokuyoku” appetite in summer?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you lose weight in summer? / What do you eat when you lose your appetite in summer?)

↳No, I don’t. (--What’s your favorite summer food? / When you’re very tired, do you lose your appetite?)

(July 3, 2020)

More information

Just like “unagi” eel

According to the old calendar, July brings the “Doyo” period before summer. This year there are two “Doyo no Ushi ni Hi” Days of the Ox--July 21 and August 2--when “unagi” eel is traditionally eaten to give us stamina against the heat. Earlier this year, the catch of domestic baby eels was much better than expected, so prices might be lower than usual. However, domestic eels are on the endangered species list. This has encouraged the development of sustainable alternatives.

“Unajiro” is a “kamaboko” fish cake product from Ichimasa Kamaboko (一正蒲鉾). It looks and tastes similar to grilled eel, and it’s even rich in vitamin B1 like the real thing. A package of two fillets (¥361) includes a sachet of thick sauce, and another of ground “sansho” Japanese pepper spice. Heat Unajiro in a microwave oven for one minute, and it’s ready to be put on top of a bowl of rice.

This summer Ichimasa Kamaboko has two special versions of Unajiro: “Unaru Oishisa Unajiro” (Unajiro so delicious that you say wow / ¥361) and “Sugoku Nagai Unajiro” (Really Long Unajiro / ¥498).

(188 words)

(July 3, 2020)