

Reading and Talking

A store for the latest products

In 2015, four Americans opened a store called “b8ta.” It was a place where you could buy some of the newest technology products. It was successful, and there are now more than 20 b8ta stores in the US. On August 1st, two b8ta stores open in Tokyo, one in Shinjuku and the other in Yurakucho. At b8ta, you can now see “Swim Goggles,” smart goggles that record your swim workout, “Qoobo,” a robot friend that looks like a hairy Roomba with a tail, “Kapok Knot” coats that are only 5mm thick but they are as warm as down, and many more things.

(111 words)

Do you want to visit a b8ta store in Tokyo?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you want to go to the Shijuku store or the Yurakucho store? / Do you use any digital stationery?)

↳No, I don't. (--Are you interested in new “kaden” home appliances? / Do you still use a “garake” flip phone?)

When you buy clothes, do you visit a lot of stores?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you usually go shopping for clothes alone? / Where do you usually go? / Which clothes stores do you like?)

↳No, I don't. (--Do you always buy clothes at the same store? / Do you enjoy talking with the salespeople at clothing stores? / Do you buy clothes online?)

Do you like swimming?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you swim regularly? / Are you good at the backstroke and breaststroke? / Can you swim more than one kilometer?)

↳No, I don't. (--Can you swim? / Is there a public swimming pool near you? / Do you like going to the beach?)

(July 31, 2020)

More information

A store for the latest products

In 2015, four Americans had an idea. How about a store where you could find some of the latest inventions and innovations, and you could try them out and buy them if you wanted to. They called their store “b8ta.” The idea took off, and there are now more than 20 b8ta stores in the US. On August 1, two b8ta stores open in Tokyo, one in Shinjuku and the other in Yurakucho.

At b8ta, you can browse a variety of cutting-edge consumer goods. Companies rent space at b8ta to display and demonstrate their products. The stores have the same look and vibe as an Apple Store: white, minimalist décor, with rows of tables and counters to display sample products. Pick them up and try them. If you need help, a knowledgeable staff member is waiting to assist you.

Right now at b8ta, you can find “Swim Goggles,” smart goggles that track your swim workout, “Qoobo,” the therapeutic robot that looks like a furry Roomba with a tail, “Kapok Knot” coats that are just 5mm thick but are as warm as down, and much, much more.

(194 words)

(July 31, 2020)

Reading and Talking

Raising seahorses

Dried “tatsuno otoshigo” seahorses are used in Chinese medicine, but seahorses are expensive, and they are disappearing from the sea. Now, a research group from Tokai University and Shizuoka Prefecture has found a way to raise seahorses in fish tanks. In the sea, less than 1 percent of seahorses grow up to be adults, but the research group helps 60 percent of the babies to become adults. It has this success because it controls the water temperature and the food for the seahorses. Now a seahorse farm is being built on an island in Ehime Prefecture.

(101 words)

When you catch a cold, do you make “tamago zake” with egg and sake?

↳Yes, I do. (--How do you make it? / Do you make “negiyu” with green onion, ginger, soy sauce, and “katsubushi” dried bonito in hot water?)

↳No, I don't. (--Have you ever had tamago zake? / Do you go to the doctor right away when you think you have a cold?)

Do you know any food that gives you energy when you feel tired?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--What do you like eating when you feel very tired? / Do you lose your appetite when you are tired?)

↳No, I don't. (--Do you like garlic? / Do you like “nira” garlic chives? / Do you like “nagaimo” Japanese yam? / Do you like “amazake” traditional non-alcoholic fermented rice drink?)

What's your favorite grilled fish?

↳I like [grilled salmon / grilled “buri” yellowtail / grilled “saba” mackerel / grilled “hokke” Okhotsk atka mackerel / grilled “aji” jack mackerel / grilled “shishamo” smelt / XXX]. (--Have you eaten it recently? / What's your next favorite grilled fish? / What's your favorite “nizakana” simmered fish?)

↳Nothing special. (--Can you eat seafood? / Do you like “yakiniku” grilled meat? / Do you like sushi?)

(July 31, 2020)

More information

Raising seahorses

As fishing catches decline and species face extinction from overfishing, fish farming, also called aquaculture or aquafarming, gains importance. In Japan, farmed fish now include “hamachi” yellowtail, “kanpachi” greater amberjack, “hirame” flounder, “tai” red snapper, “fugu” blowfish, “kuromaguro” bluefin tuna, and shellfish like shrimps, oysters, and scallops.

Recently, a joint research project between Tokai University and Shizuoka Prefecture announced that it had developed a successful system of farming “tatsuno otoshigo” seahorses for the first time. Dried seahorses are used in traditional Chinese medicine, where there is a saying, “North is ginseng and South is seahorse.” Like ginseng, seahorse commands a very high price. Seahorse is a source of testosterone, and it is used to treat asthma and male sexual dysfunction.

In the wild, less than 1 percent of seahorses survive from infancy, but the research team has succeeded in raising 60 percent or more to adulthood by controlling water temperature and food. Seahorses are becoming extinct, and the project now plans to help reverse this by building a commercial seahorse farming facility on an island in Ehime Prefecture.

(182 words)

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