

# *Reading and Talking*

## Unusual vending machines

Recently, there are new vending machines, partly because of Covid-19. Dydo, the Osaka drink company, showed a vending machine that you don't touch with your hands. You step on buttons to choose your drink. In Miyagi Prefecture, "sasa kamaboko" bamboo-leaf-shaped fishcakes are sold from a vending machine on Matsushima Beach. Many tourists now use it instead of buying a souvenir at a store. Farm Suzuki in Takehara, Hiroshima Prefecture, now sells "kuruma ebi" Japanese tiger prawns and frozen oysters from a vending machine.

(89 words)

Do you want to use any of the unusual vending machines in this article?

↳ I want to use all of them. (--What do you think about the oyster vending machine?)

↳ I want to use [XXX]. (--How come? / Do you often buy drinks from a vending machine?)

↳ I don't want to use any of them. (--How come? / Have you ever used a passport photo booth?)

Have you eaten oysters this autumn yet?

↳ Yes, I have. (--When and where did you have them? / What oyster dish did you have? / What's your favorite oyster dish?)

↳ No, I haven't. (--Do you like oysters? / Do you like "hotate" scallops?)

Have you ever gotten "shoku chudoku" food poisoning?

↳ Yes, I have. (--What gave you food poisoning? / Did you go to the doctor? / Can you still eat that food?)

↳ No, I haven't. (--Do you often get "muneyake" indigestion? / What's your least favorite food? / What did you have for lunch yesterday?)

(6 November, 2020)

## *More Information*

### Unusual vending machines

Recently, there have been several vending machine innovations, and some are related to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Here are just a few.

Last month the Osaka drink maker Dydo demonstrated a foot-operated vending machine. You step on buttons to choose your drink, and even to open the plastic flap so that you can take out your purchase without touching anything else. In Miyagi Prefecture, a company that makes “sasa kamaboko” bamboo-leaf-shaped fishcakes put them in a vending machine on Matsushima Beach. It was an unexpected success with tourists who prefer it to interacting with store clerks, and more machines are planned. Farm Suzuki, a fish and shellfish farming company in Takehara, Hiroshima Prefecture, now sells “kuruma ebi” Japanese tiger prawns and frozen oysters from a vending machine. In December, the same company is debuting vending machines with a built-in microwave to sell hot deep-fried oysters.

*Did you know that...?* Visitors to Japan are often astonished by the number of vending machines, and the variety of goods they sell. The lack of vandalism and theft here means that vending machines can be safely placed in public spaces.

(191 words)

(6 November, 2020)

# *Reading and Talking*

## Women making shochu

Shochu is a popular alcoholic drink. “Imo” sweet potato shochu has a strong smell and taste, and it is delicious when you drink it warm. Jikuya Shuzo Distillery (軸屋酒造) and Sagara Shuzo Distillery (相良酒造) in Kagoshima Prefecture both have female “kuramoto” presidents. They, Maiko Jikuiya (軸屋麻衣子) and Yumiko Sagara (相良由美子), recently made Exotic Kagoshima (エキゾチック鹿児島). It is a sweet potato shochu that is made with black tea leaves, so it has a milder, sweeter flavor. A 720ml bottle (25% alcohol) is 1,565 yen.

(84 words)

(If you are over 20) Do you want to try Exotic Kagoshima?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you think it is going to taste good? / Do you like shochu? / Have you ever drunk “imo” sweet potato shochu?)

↳No, I don't. (--How come you don't want to try it? / Do you like beer? / Do you drink whiskey?)

(If you are over 20) Have you ever drunk vodka?

↳Yes, I have. (--Do you like it? / Have you ever drunk tequila and rum? / What's your favorite alcoholic drink?)

↳No, I haven't. (--Have you ever drunk sake? / Are you a big drinker? / When did you last get a “futsukayoi” hangover?)

Do you make tea at home?

↳Yes, I do. (--How do you make tea? / Do you drink tea with milk and sugar? / Did you make tea this morning?)

↳No, I don't. (--Do you make coffee at home? / What do you drink for breakfast? / Do you make green tea at home?)

(6 November, 2020)

## *More Information*

### Women making shochu

Shochu is a popular alcoholic drink that is commonly used to make “chuhai” (abbreviated from “shochu highball”) cocktails with fruit juice and club soda on the rocks. It can be distilled from “mugi” barley, “kokuto” brown sugar, rice, or “soba” buckwheat, but shochu that is made from “imo” sweet potatoes, with its strong aroma and flavor, is said to be the best kind to drink warm.

Kagoshima is an important center of sweet potato shochu production. There are over 100 shochu distilleries in the prefecture. Two of them, Jikuya Shuzo (軸屋酒造) and Sagara Shuzo (相良酒造) have something else in common: both distilleries have female “kuramoto” presidents. The two, Maiko Jikuiya (軸屋麻衣子) and Yumiko Sagara (相良由美子), recently worked together to produce a different kind of sweet potato shochu.

The result is called Exotic Kagoshima (エキゾチック鹿児島). Its base is a blend of sweet potato shochus from the two distilleries, with black tea leaves added for a milder, sweeter flavor. The label features both their family crests. Only 2,000 bottles, 1,000 for each distillery, were produced. A 720ml bottle at 25% alcohol is ¥1,565.

(181 words)

(6 November, 2020)