

## *Reading and Talking*

### Valentine's "yokan"

Funawa is a Japanese sweets store in Asakusa, Tokyo. It's famous for "imo yokan" sweet potato jelly. For Valentine's Day this year, Funawa is making "Heart de Ii-mon" (ハートでい〜もん). It's a box of four heart-shaped sweet-potato yokan sweets. You can order Heart de Ii-mon at Funawa stores or online <<https://funawa.jp/shop/>> until February 9th. It is delivered on February 13th or 14th. You should keep Heart de Ii-mon in the refrigerator, and eat it before three days (or two days if you live in Hokkaido and Kyushu). One box is 594 yen.

(105 words)

What do you think about giving Japanese sweets for Valentine's Day?

↳ I think it's great. / I think it's OK. / I think it's stupid. (→ How come you think so? / Do you think it's going to be popular? / Do you like Valentine's Day? / Have you ever worn pink clothes on Valentine's Day?)

Are you going to give something to someone for Valentine's Day this year?

↳ Yes, I am. (--Who are you going to give a present to? / What are you going to give? / Did you get a present for Valentine's Day last year?)

↳ No, I'm not. (--Have you ever given a present to someone for Valentine's Day? / Did you give someone a birthday present last year? / Do you like giving presents to friends?)

Which do you like better, custard cream or "anko" sweet red bean paste?

↳ I like both. (--Have you ever made custard cream? / Do you like "dorayaki" pancakes?)

↳ I like [XXX] better. (--How come? / Do you like "nama kuriimu" whipped cream?)

↳ I don't like either. (--Do you like chocolate? / Do you like vanilla ice cream?)

(22 January, 2021)

## *More Information*

### Valentine's "yokan"

In many countries, February 14 is a day to tell someone that you love them by sending a Valentine's card (sometimes anonymously), giving candy and flowers, or inviting them on a romantic dinner date. Valentine's Day finally caught on in Japan in the mid 1970s (around Showa 50), but here it was a day for women to give chocolate to the men in their lives, lovers and coworkers both.

Now, 50 years on, Valentine's Day in Japan may be changing. One sign is that presents have begun to expand beyond chocolate. Funawa is a traditional Japanese confectionery store in Asakusa, Tokyo. It's famous for its smooth, creamy "imo yokan" jelly that is made from sweet potatoes with nothing added except salt and sugar. For Valentine's Day this year, the store is making a box of four heart-shaped sweet-potato yokan desserts that are arranged to look like a lucky four-leaf clover.

The Valentine's gift is called "Heart de Ii-mon" (ハートでい〜もん), and you can order it at Funawa stores or online <<https://funawa.jp/shop/>> until February 9, for delivery on February 13 or 14. Because it is made without preservatives, Heart de Ii-mon should be kept in the refrigerator and eaten within three days of delivery (or two days if you live in Hokkaido and Kyushu). One box of the sweet-potato Valentine's treat is ¥594.

(234 words)

(22 January, 2021)

# *Reading and Talking*

## Cute “daikon oroshi”

On February 1st, Kokubo, a kitchen goods company, starts selling “Meow Mold Daikon Oroshi Nyan” (大根おろしニャン). “Nyan” is Japanese for “meow,” the sound that a cat makes. If you put grated daikon radish into the plastic mold, you can make a daikon cat. Then use a fork or a toothpick to paint patterns on the cat with soy sauce. If you make several cats and put them around a grilled fish, it looks like the cats are trying to eat the fish! Meow Mold Daikon Oroshi Nyan is 198 yen in stores or online <<https://kokuboshop.com/>>.

(112 words)

Do you want to buy a “Meow Mold Daikon Oroshi Nyan” mold?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you have any molds for making rice balls? / Have you ever used a mold to make fried eggs? / Do you have kitchen scissors?)

↳No, I don't. (--Have you ever made a “kyaraben” food picture and character lunch box? / Can you cut a sausage to look like an octopus? / Can you make beautifully triangular rice balls?)

Do you like daikon radish?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you know how to simmer daikon? / Have you ever fried thick slices of daikon? / What's your favorite daikon dish?)

↳No, I don't. (--Why don't you like them? / Do you like kaiware daikon sprouts? / Have you ever eaten “takuan” yellow pickled daikon radish?)

Do you like cats more than dogs?

↳Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Why do you prefer cats? / Have you ever had a cat as a pet? / Have you ever fed a stray cat?)

↳No, I don't. (--Why do you prefer dogs? / Have you ever had a dog as a pet? / Do you know someone who has more than two dogs?)

(22 January, 2021)

## *More Information*

### Cute “daikon oroshi”

Grated daikon radish is a versatile condiment that can make food taste either milder or sharper. It depends on which part of daikon you use: the tip contains more of the chemicals that make daikon taste spicy. Grated daikon is often placed on the side of, for example, grilled “sanma” Pacific saury, or “dashimaki tamago” Japanese rolled omelet.

Now you can make those little white piles of grated radish a lot cuter. On February 1, Kokubo, a kitchenware company, starts selling a gadget called “Meow Mold Daikon Oroshi Nyan” (大根おろしニャン), “nyan” being the Japanese onomatopoeia for a cat’s meow. You put grated daikon into the plastic mold, squeeze out the excess juice, and voila! You have a daikon cat. If you use a fork or toothpick to paint on patterns with soy sauce, the cat looks even more realistic. If you make several and put them around a grilled fish, it looks as if the cats are trying to eat it!

Meow Mold Daikon Oroshi Nyan is ¥198 at kitchen goods stores and online <<https://kokuboshop.com/>>.

(189 words)

(22 January, 2021)