

Reading and Talking

A best season for potato chips?

Koikeya has made “nori-shio aji” potato chips since 1962 (Showa 37). A few years ago, one fan noticed small differences in flavor. He emailed Koikeya, and the company said yes, it did make small changes to the thickness and size of its chips because potatoes from Kyushu are different from Hokkaido potatoes. If you like a saltier flavor, with more “aonori” green seaweed flakes on each chip, January and February are the best months. Also FamilyMart’s “nori-shio aji” potato chips, which are made by Koikeya, have the strongest flavor.

(98 words)

Do you like potato chips?

↳Yes, I do. (--Do you like thicker or thinner chips? / What’s your favorite potato chip flavor? / Do you lick your fingers after you eat potato chips?)

↳No, I don’t. (--How come you don’t like them? / Have you ever seen tongs for eating potato chips without making your fingers dirty? / Have you heard of healthier potato chips?)

Have you ever dug potatoes on a farm?

↳Yes, I have. (--When and where did you dig them? / How did you eat the potatoes? / Have you ever grown potatoes?)

↳No, I haven’t. (--Do you like potatoes? / Can you make potato salad? / Is there a vegetable field near your house?)

When you have “yakisoba” stir-fried noodles, do you put “aonori” green seaweed flakes over it?

↳Yes, I do. (--Do you put a lot of “aonori” green seaweed flakes over your noodles? / Do you use green seaweed flakes for spaghetti?)

↳No, I don’t. (--How come? / How about over takoyaki and okonomiyaki?)

(6 February, 2021)

More Information

A best season for potato chips?

You know that certain fresh foods are in or out of season depending on the month of the year and where you live. It's also true that some foods are at their flavor peak at particular times of year. Fish, fruit and vegetables follow these time cycles, but can you say the same about... potato chips?

Koikeya has been making “nori-shio aji” seaweed-and-salt-flavored potato chips since 1962 (Showa 37). About 15 years ago, one fan noticed occasional small differences in flavor. He emailed Koikeya and was told that the company, which uses only domestic potatoes, did indeed make slight adjustments to the thickness, size and frying time of its chips because potatoes vary according to age and where they are grown. In May, the potato harvest begins in Kyushu, while in Hokkaido it starts in August. After the Hokkaido harvest, the company uses stockpiled potatoes until the following May.

Why is this a Hot Topic this week? It's a subtle difference, but if you like a fuller, saltier flavor, with more “aonori” green seaweed flakes on each chip, January and February are the best months. One more thing to know: FamilyMart's store-brand “nori-shio aji” potato chips, which are made by Koikeya, have the fullest flavor of all.

(215 words)

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Reading and Talking

Not “chabako,” *Chabacco*

Maybe you know a “chabako” is an old-fashioned box for storing green tea, but do you know “Chabacco”? Chabacco is sticks of instant powdered green tea that you mix with hot or cold water. The sticks look like burning cigarettes, and they are in a box that looks like a pack of cigarettes. One pack, with eight tea sticks, costs ¥600. You buy them from old cigarette vending machines that are now tea vending machines! Chabacco machines are in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Shizuoka, Yamanashi, Mie, and Osaka. See <https://chabacco.jp/archives/521>.

(94 words)

Have you heard of “Chabacco” green tea sticks?

↳ Yes, I have. (--What do you think about Chabacco? / Do you want to buy a pack of Chabacco? / Are there a lot of vending machines near your house?)

↳ No, I haven't. (--Have you ever seen an unusual vending machine? / Have you been to Mishima or Shuzenji? / Do you make instant green tea at home?)

Do you know someone who quit smoking?

↳ Yes, I do. (--How many cigarettes did they use to smoke per day? / Was it difficult for them to quit? / Have you ever smoked?)

↳ No, I don't. (--Do you know someone who wants to quit smoking? / Is there someone who you want to quit smoking? / Do you like the smell of cigarette smoke?)

Do you like green tea?

↳ Yes, I do. / Kind of. (--Do you make green tea every day? / Do you like strong green tea or weak green tea? / Do you drink green tea in the evening?)

↳ No, I don't. (--How come you don't like it? / Do you like coffee? / Do you like oolong tea? / What do you drink at breakfast?)

(6 February, 2021)

More Information

Not “chabako,” *Chabacco*

Fewer people are smoking these days, so cigarette vending machines are slowly disappearing. Actually, around 20,000 of the machines are removed and junked annually. Two years ago, a company came up with the idea of repurposing these old machines to sell a healthier product that it calls “Chabacco.” The name combines “cha” (green tea) and “tobacco,” and it’s a pun on the word “chabako,” a wooden chest that was used in stores for keeping green tea.

Chabacco is sticks of instant powdered green tea that dissolve in hot or cold water. Each stick is packaged to look like two burning cigarettes, and there are eight sticks in a box that looks just like a pack of cigarettes. Each pack, which sells for ¥600, even has a “Warning” label, but instead of listing the dangers of smoking, it says that green tea is beneficial!

The first Chabacco vending machines appeared in Kakegawa, Shizuoka Prefecture. In April, 2020, machines were placed at seven stations on the Oigawa Railway Line, and last December, Mishima, Izu-Nagaoka, and Shuzenji stations on the Izu Hakone Line joined in. You don’t have to go that far to get your Chabacco fix, though, as there are also vending machines in Tokyo, Kanagawa, Yamanashi, Mie, and Osaka. For more information visit

<<https://chabacco.jp/archives/521>>.

(218 words)

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