



June marks the start of the rainy season in Japan.

The sound and smell of rain fill the void left on what are usually busy streets.

*Why not enjoy the weather outside with your favorite umbrella and rain boots, or
bundle up with a good book and a cup of tea beside the pitter patter falling against
your window?*

There is a lot of fun to be had on a rainy day that you can't find when it's sunny.

Japan Now: June 2024

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Ume Shigoto Japanese Plum Preparation



What comes to mind when you think of flowering trees in Japan? Many people may answer “cherry blossoms,” but the plum tree is also a remarkable tree that produces colorful blossoms. It has been a symbol of nobility and longevity since the Edo period. Following the flowers, some varieties of plum trees produce fruit called “Ume” (Japanese Plum), which is harvested in large quantities during the month of June.

The harvested ume are used to make Umeboshi (pickled plums), Umeshu (plum wine), and ume jam — an annual practice termed “Ume Shigoto (梅仕事),” or Japanese Plum

Preparation.

Nowadays, fewer households engage in Ume Shigoto compared to the past, since ume-related products can be purchased at local supermarkets or convenience stores. Nevertheless, there are still some in Japan enjoying this time-honored tradition.

Ume start out lime green before ripening into a peachy-beige color. They are tart, bitter, and definitely not for snacking on raw. The size, hardness, and ripeness of ume will determine what they will become.

Green, unripe ume will become plum wine.

Slightly yellow-colored ume will become pickled plums.

Ume that are a ripe yellow all over and have a sweet aroma will become ume jam.

Processed ume products can be enjoyed all year round as preserved food.

Through social media, you can see how people engage in a variety of culinary adventures - drying it to concentrate its flavors, steeping it in spirits for a fruity infusion, or submerging it in rock sugar to create a sweet delicacy with the hashtag #梅仕事



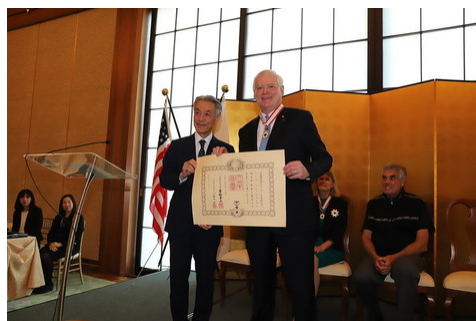
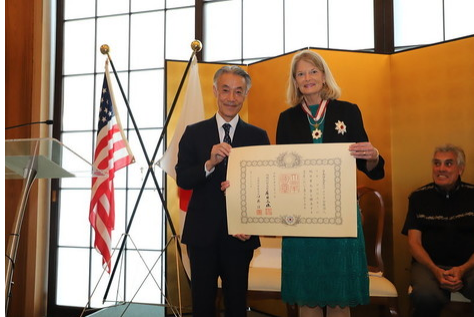
Decoration Conferment Ceremony for Sen. Lisa Murkowski and Mead Treadwell

On Tuesday, May 7th, Ambassador Yamada held a conferment ceremony to commemorate the achievements of Senator Lisa Murkowski and former Lieutenant Governor Mead Treadwell.

Senator Murkowski was awarded with the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold and Silver Star, in appreciation for her efforts in strengthening Japan-US ties as she has served as the Co-Chair to the Congressional Study Group on Japan for nearly 25 years.

Mr. Mead Treadwell was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon, in appreciation for his role in strengthening economic relations between Japan and the United States and for his contributions in promoting exchange and mutual understanding between Japan and the United States especially regarding the Arctic.

We hope that the friendship and cooperative relationship between Japan and Alaska will only continue to grow.



End of Year Ceremonies

Throughout the month of May, members of our office attended the various ceremonies related to Japanese language education in Alaska. At each, Head Consul Hamada gave a speech thanking the students for their hard work and his sincere hope for their future endeavors. We would like to thank all of the wonderful staff and students that made this year a success.

On May 9th, 20 students from Dimond High School completed the Japanese Immersion Program there, their total tally of graduates to date becoming 528!

Then, on May 10th and 13th, Sand Lake Elementary School held a completion ceremony for their 5th and 6th graders who will both advance to middle school in the fall.



Lastly, on May 16th, Palmer High School held a ceremony to induct 19 students into the Japanese National Honor Society. Our office additionally took the opportunity to congratulate four of the recent graduates from the program who attended the event. We wish all these students the best of luck and have high hopes that they will continue being a bridge between the Alaska and Japan.

Interview with a Japanese Person who loves Alaska

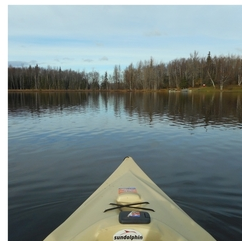
Sand Lake Elementary, Mears Middle School, and Dimond High School offer a Japanese immersion program, and every year interns come all the way from Japan to Alaska to act as a second teacher in the classes at these schools. We had an opportunity to talk to one of the interns. Her name is Yui and she shared with us what Alaska means to her.



I spent ten months (September 2018 - June 2019) in Anchorage. During that time, I had so much fun and so many valuable experiences, I don't think I can choose a favorite moment to share. What made me want to go to Alaska was my desire to see its wilderness firsthand and live in it. Being exposed to Michio Hoshino's photographs and essays when I was a child also made me yearn for a life in the far north.

So this time, I would like to write all about the wilderness of Alaska.

I was born and raised in Tokyo, but I didn't really like city life and longed for a life surrounded by nature. I grew up without any outdoor experience, but I wanted to do various activities in Alaska. My host family, the parent-teacher association at the elementary school where I worked as an intern, and the people I met in Alaska made this desire come true. I was able to experience many firsts such as kayaking on the lake, skiing, snowmachining, camping, and SUP. No matter the season, Fall, Winter, Spring, or Summer, I have memories that almost seem to shine as I replay them in my head. Thank you again to everyone that gave me the gift of these wonderful experiences.



Alaska's charm is in its close proximity to nature. In Anchorage, I can live a comfortable life even though I grew up in Tokyo. But a one-hour drive takes you such amazing landscapes. And the view of the mountains from the town are really beautiful, too; I was always so impressed by them. This balance was very perfect for me.

After returning to Japan, I worked in Tokyo for a while, but it just wasn't for me. I moved to Matsumoto City in Nagano Prefecture in 2023. It is a beautiful town with views of the Northern Alps all around, and it is actually very similar to Anchorage. I was looking for a way to live a more Alaskan lifestyle in Japan, and Matsumoto city fits the bill perfectly!

For me, living in Anchorage and the wilderness of Alaska was an unforgettable experience that changed me and what I value in life.

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