

# Japan Now: February 2025

*Japan Now* is the email newsletter of the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage

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## Valentine's Day in Japan

What comes to mind when you think about events in February?

Valentine's Day, celebrated around the world, may be one of the answers.

**In Japan as well, a lot of people are eagerly awaiting February 14 to express gratitude and love to their nearest and dearest!**

There is a unique culture to Valentine's Day in Japan that you might not know, so today, we would like you to read all about it!



## **Who gifts to who?**

What may be most different from Valentine's Day in the West is that, in Japan, women are the ones who give gifts to men, not the other way around.

In the 1950s, a major department store in Tokyo held a Valentine's Day campaign in which it was suggested that women should give chocolate to men. Since most of the shoppers there were women and the mood at that time was for women to take the lead in love, a unique culture of gift-giving by women was born, which was the opposite of Western culture.

## **What are popular gifts on the day in Japan?**

Since the above-mentioned Valentine's Day campaign was started to sell chocolate, chocolate is the main gift item on this day in Japan even today. Many people in Japan also make their own chocolate to give the gift a heartfelt quality.



## Different types of Chocolate depending on who you give it to

Now you know that chocolate is a popular gift, but did you know that there are various names for chocolates depending on the recipient?

### ♡ **Honmei Choco (Favorite chocolate)**

Is there someone you are interested in or want to confess to? Honmei choco is a token of your love for that person.

### ♡ **Tomo Choco (Friend chocolate)**

As its name implies, chocolates exchanged between friends!

### ♡ **Giri Choco (Obligation/duty chocolate)**

Giri choco refers to the custom of women giving chocolates to men close to them. This can be a colleague, boss, or acquaintance. It is given to show respect and appreciation for that person, but not in a romantic meaning.

### ♡ **Kazoku/Fami Choco(Family chocolate)**

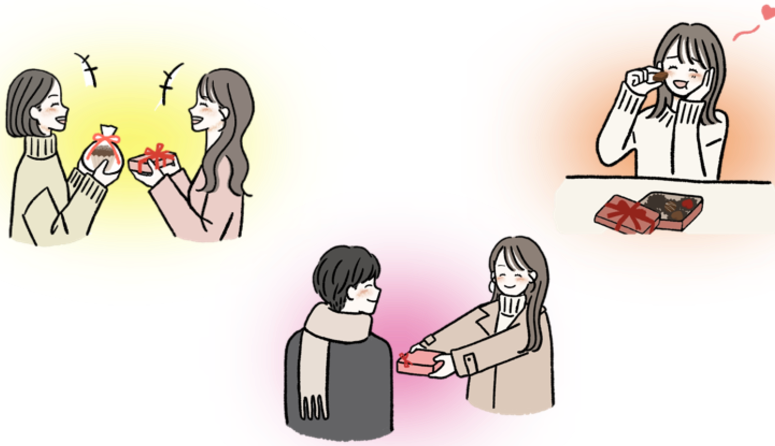
Chocolates are given to family members (husbands, children, fathers, etc.) with love.

### ♡ **Gyaku Choco (Reverse chocolate)**

It's still uncommon but if a man gives chocolate to a woman, in that case, the chocolate is called "gyaku choco."

### ♡ **Jibun Choco (Self chocolate)**

Give yourself the chocolate you most want to eat. Since it is a reward for your hard work, it tends to be an expensive product.



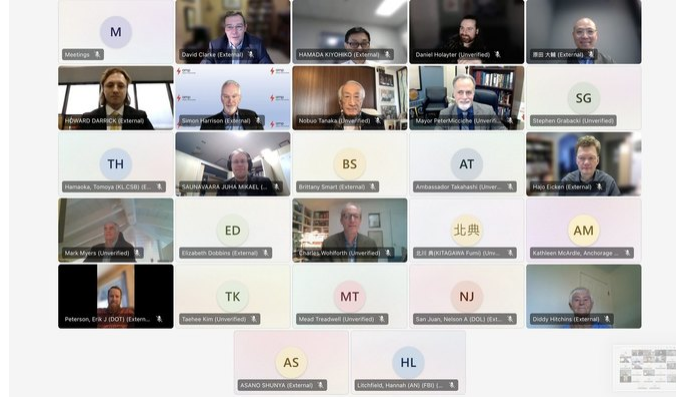
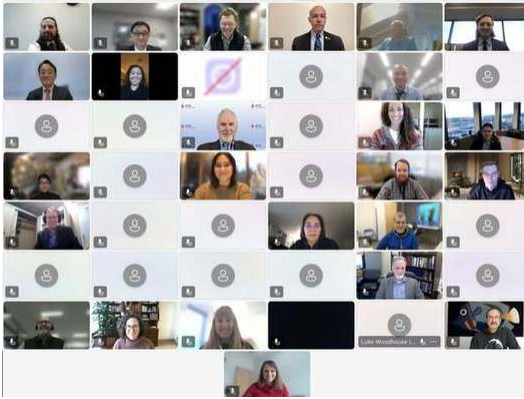
Valentine's Day in Japan is chocolate-centric, but of course, there are gifts other than chocolates. There are a variety of options, including sweets other than chocolate, and for those who do not like sweets, fancy products that add color to dinner are common, such as ham and cheese!

We have introduced a little about Valentine's Day in Japan, but there is also a proper day for women to receive gifts! If you are interested, please click a link below to read our FB article.

[White Day](#)

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## The Fourth Annual Online Arctic Symposium



On January 14 and 15, the Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage hosted the Online Arctic Symposium: Current Status and Prospects of Japan-US cooperation in the Arctic.

The Symposium started with opening remarks from the Ambassador of Japan for International Economic and Arctic Affairs, Women, Peace, and Security Katsuhiko Takahashi, ensuring Japan's continued commitment to the Arctic by means of scientific cooperation. Head Consul Kiyohiko Hamada gave his opening remarks focusing on the vital role Alaska plays in fostering collaborative research projects and trade with Japan. US Senator for Alaska Dan Sullivan and Governor of Alaska Mike Dunleavy were kind enough to send opening remarks through pre-recorded videos, emphasizing the importance of the Alaska LNG project. Day One featured topics on Japan-US bilateral cooperation in the Arctic, energy innovation in rural Alaska communities, the future of small modular reactors in Alaska, solutions to climate change, and carbon dioxide reduction systems.

The Honorable Mead Treadwell opened Day Two speaking more on viable pathways to Arctic sustainability. Day Two featured exciting topics on the role Alaska will play in future global energy markets, and Alaska's potential as a supplier of natural gas and low carbon hydrogen to Japan. Each topic was followed by a question-and-answer session that allowed for intriguing discussions.

The Consular Office of Japan in Anchorage is hopeful the Online Arctic Symposium will continue to play a role in encouraging new joint research projects

and business ventures between Japan and Alaska. Thank you to all the presenters and attendees for your kind contributions to making another successful Symposium!

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## Great Local Delicacies in Japan



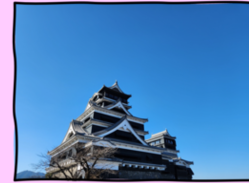
**Nikko**



**Kagoshima**



**Amami**



**Kumamoto**

Recently, our Japanese staff member temporarily returned to Japan,

and one of the things she enjoyed was, of course,

“Great local delicacies in Japan!”

Today, she would like to share some of them with you!

### **Yuba** – Nikko, Tochigi Prefecture

Have you ever heard of yuba? Yuba, perhaps also known as “tofu skin”, is made by scooping up the “skin” that forms when soy milk is boiled.

In the past, yuba was widely produced in Nikko as a vegetarian food, and even today it is sold in various arrangements throughout the city. I had a simply flavored soup with yuba, which was healthy, but the elastic texture of the yuba still satisfied my stomach.

Incidentally, yuba is a specialty of Kyoto and Nikko in Japan, but the kanji(Chinese character) for yuba is different. Kyoto's yuba, which is thin like a single leaf, is written “湯葉 (葉 means “leaf”) ” while Nikko's yuba, which is made





of many thin layers of skin and rolled up like a wave pattern, is written “湯波(波 means “wave”).”



## **Tonkatsu** – Kagoshima Prefecture

In Kagoshima Prefecture, which is the largest pork producer in Japan and famous for its “Kurobuta” brand, I enjoyed Kurobuta Tonkatsu, deep-fried pork cutlet!

I was surprised at the size and thickness of tonkatsu, but it was juicy yet light in flavor, and I finished it off quickly!

## **Keihan** – Amami-Oshima, Kagoshima Prefecture

Amami-Oshima Island in Kagoshima Prefecture, which is close to Okinawa Prefecture and has a tropical flavor, is popular for its many local dishes that are a concentrated product of the island's rich nature and crystal clear waters.

The first local dish that comes to everyone's mind might be “Keihan.” It is a local dish that has been loved on the island for more than 400 years. It consists of rice topped with chicken, eggs, shiitake mushrooms, spices, pickles, seaweed, and other ingredients served in a warm broth with the umami flavor of dashi. With many ingredients, I enjoyed a different flavor with each bite!



## **Ichigo-Daifuku** – Kumamoto Prefecture

In Kumamoto Prefecture, which produces the third largest amount of strawberries (ichigo), I enjoyed Ichigo-daifuku. It is a typical Japanese confectionery made of

glutinous rice or glutinous rice flour dough, wrapped with sweet bean paste, and then filled with fresh strawberries.

At an Ichigo-Daihuku shop in the airport, I chose the No. 1 most popular strawberry (photo on the left), which has a strong sweetness, and the commonly known “Kuro Ichigo” (photo on the right), which has a deep color, from among about four types of strawberries available.

The sweetness of the fruit and the sweetness of the bean paste matched each other, and this was one of the best tasting desserts I had in Japan!



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