



Kite Flying (Takoage 凧揚げ)

Feeling the wind at your back, your kite is flying up to the white clouds floating in the blue sky. It seems the kite is dancing above you. Kite flying used to be a traditional activity that only took part during the New Year's Holiday period, but now it takes place at any time all over Japan. So let's look at the history of kite flying in the Hitachi area..

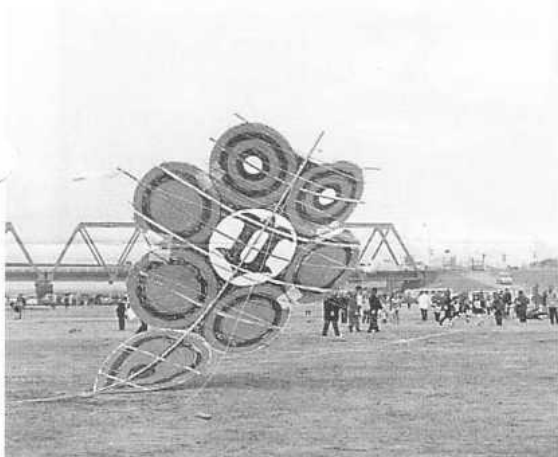
◆ The Traditional Kite of Hitachi

The Hitachi area has its own variety of kite called the "yatsu-dako", which consists of seven circular kites and one shaped like a heart at the foot of them. This kite was often flown in the fields and on the riversides of the current Momiya-cho and Kuji-cho, Hitachi, during the agricultural off-season from the 1910's to the 1930's. After that, this custom went out of practice for a short time. However, yatsu-dako frames from that period were found in this area and were restored in 1958. Recently, the "Yatsu-dako Preservation Group" has been formed by a group of 20 or so kite-flying fanatics to keep this tradition going.

Mr. Tamotsu Tomioka, the leader of this group, said "our group teaches the making yatsu-dako and sometimes holds kite flying events at schools and the community centers in order to show people the real pleasure of kite flying".

◆ The Hitachi Kite Festival

The Hitachi Kite Festival takes place every January in the recreation ground at the mouth of the Kuji River. Anybody can bring their own kites and fly them there. This festival also contains a kite flying competition. Judging of the competition is carried out mainly by the "Yatsu-dako Preservation Group." Yatus-dako are more difficult to make and fly than other kinds of kites. The yatsu-dako entered in the competition are judged on their construction and patterns and whether they can fly in a straight line or not. Many different kinds of kites are flown at every festival, such as square kites (kaku-dako), yakko kites (yakko-dako the shape of a footman of olden times), stringed kites (ren-dako), bird-shaped kites (tonbi-dako,) and spinning top kites (koma-dako). Out of these, the kites which are considered to be of the best design or show the most originality are awarded prizes. This year's festival was due to take place on the weekend of January 15th or 16th, but it was unfortunately rained out.



Yatsu-Dako (Jan. 2004)

◆ The History of Kite Flying

Kite flying is believed to originate from China. According to sources, in 3rd Century BC, General in China used to use the kite as a measuring device to measure distances between his own and enemy castles. As it was in 105 that paper was invented in China, naturally from that time on the kite was made of paper. Then, the kite gradually spread over the entire Asian region and even to Europe.

The kite came to Japan in the Heian era (794-1192). As the kite at that time was in the shape of Tonbidako (See illustration), it required a certain flying technique. Kite flying was popular as a special sport among aristocrats. Although the kite was used for fighting purposes in the Kamakura era (1192-1333), only samurai or warriors were allowed use it, so there was not much chance for commoners to practice kite flying.

Over a long period of time, the kite gradually became familiar to ordinary people. During the Edo era

(1603-1867), the kite became very popular as a children's toy and in such fashion spread across the country. In the mean time, the handiwork kite of China and a kite from the Southeast were introduced to Japan through Nagasaki and merged with the original Japanese kite. Such kites have developed to add diversity to the form, design and color of these unique Japanese kites.

Social conditions changed dramatically in the Meiji era (1868-1912) with the arrival of civilization and the enlightenment movement. As a result of the modernization of Japan, it has become increasingly difficult to fly kites out in the open without obstruction, owing to all the intrusive power lines and conglomeration of high-rise buildings. Since the end of the Second World War, kite flying has gradually disappeared from streets corners because of rapid changes in traffic conditions and urbanization.

Recently a "kite flying competitions" are held in open spaces by rivers in various places all over Japan, where speciality kites such as a stringed-kites called Rendako are seen. On these occasions, we can see many young people fly sport kites.



Tonbidako

Hello! My name is Katharina Ditte

I am an exchange student from Germany. I am 18 years old and recently I am studying at Hitachi Second High School. My father is Russian and my mother is German. I was born in the Ukraine and have lived there until the age of six. In 1991 my parents, my older sister and myself moved to Germany. In Germany, my parents continued to speak Russian with me but at school and with friends I speak in German.



I have been always very interested in languages and different countries. So I started studying English 6 years ago. When I was 13 year I also began to study French at school. Two years ago I became very interested in Asia and its culture. Especially in Japan, because Japan is very rich in old traditional arts: Kendo, Iaido, Tea ceremony, Calligraphy, Ikebana, Kabuki and much more. I really love Japanese culture and hope it will be saved in the future. It's very unique in the world. In Japan I started to practice Kendo and Iaido and my host mother teaches me Ikebana. I hope I can continue my new hobbies in Germany.

My dream for the future is to become a diplomat and work in many different countries for peace and justice. At the beginning of February I'm going back to Germany. I really enjoyed my stay in Japan. I wish HYOTAN readers a happy day.

Hitachi Popular Eating Spots (Part IV Omika Area)

When you want to eat out with your friends or your family, where do you go? We would like to introduce several spots you can enjoy different type of food in each area.

Noodle Restaurant "Henkotsu"

うどんれすとらん へんこつ

There are more than seventy seats including ones around an imitation *irori* (fireplace), in the shop. Black partitions and the *shoji* (paper screen)-like wall look familiar and pleasant. Besides old style dishes, the *Henkotsu* staff are proud of the variety of noodle dishes on their menu. They create some fantastic dishes using *kimuchi* (Korean pickles), oysters, and scallops. And there are also many dishes that supplement the noodles nicely. At lunch time some noodle dishes are served with seasoned rice. Those who have a sweet will be delighted with the traditional Japanese sweets served with the *maccha* (powdered green tea) on offer. Recently we seldom find shops that serve this kind of dessert.



The manager said, "Every year we add new dishes to the menu and the ones that do not please the customers are soon taken off the menu. We value our customers highly." It seems that the stubborn spirit of *Henkotsu* is alive in this challenging attitude. (*Henkotsu* means a stubborn workman who does not compromise the high standards of his workmanship) We hope that they stick to this principle and create many more nice dishes for us.

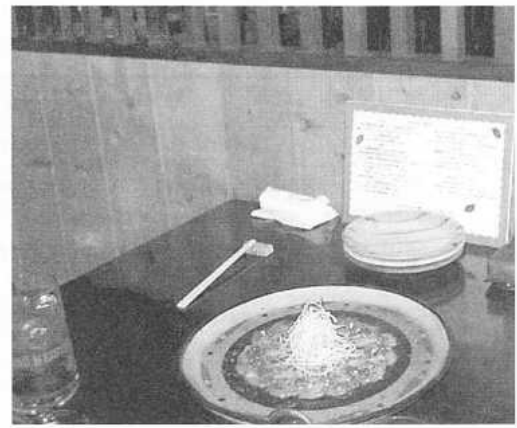
There are twenty-three *Henkotsu* shops through out northern Kanto area including three in Hitachi.

French- town (フレンチタウン)

If you come here to find this restaurant imagining a typical western style building, you will go past it because the appearance is somewhat like "蔵" [kura], the warehouse of a private house. Once you step into the restaurant, you will be relaxed by the wooden paneled interior, moderate lighting and jazz music playing in the background. Most dishes are the chef's original creations based on French cuisine. There is a menu but the day's specials are shown on blackboards. Examples of some of these are: fluffy omelet with tomato flavored beef, oyster and white radish cooked in a creamy sauce, Pot-au-feu with sausages and smoked salmon etc.

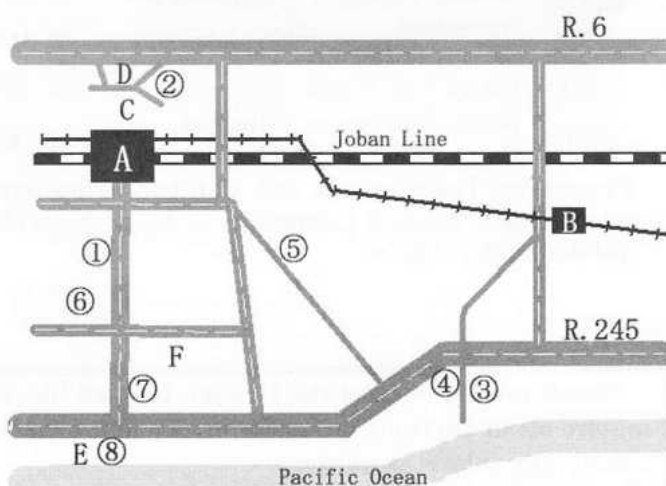
When you visit this restaurant with friends, we recommend you choose a range of different dishes. Then, those dishes are served with extra serving plates for each person. So by sharing, you can enjoy a real variety of different dishes. Such thoughtfulness gives this restaurant a good reputation for customer service. On the first floor, there are 8 tables and a counter where 6 people can sit. For a larger group of people, there are Japanese style rooms available on the second floor.

There are only 3 kinds of dessert listed on the menu, but they are all worth trying. And there is a large selection of beverages. We are sure you will enjoy the chef's original culinary creations which are prepared using a different combination of vegetables, meat and seafood. The average price of a dish from the "a-la-carte" menu is ¥900.



No.& Category	Name/ Phone	Open hours/ Holiday	Note
① Ja.	Henkotsu へんこつ 0294-53-7253	11:00am~0:30am No Holiday	Various <i>udon</i> and <i>soba</i> dishes are served(¥399~). Small size rice with various ingredients is also popular. P:20
② Ja.	Mikano 美かの 0294-52-3019	11:00am~9:00pm Monday	The menu offers a variety of dishes from appetizers to full course dinners in a relaxed atmosphere P: 25
③ Ja.	Jinroku 甚六 0294-53-3581	11:00am~2:00pm 5:00pm~10:00 Sunday	A popular eel restaurant (¥1800) Also with "a-la carte" fresh fish dish (¥1500 ~¥3000) P: 6
④ Ch.	Suzuki Shokudo すずき食堂 0294-52-0772	10:30am~10:00pm Wednesday	Ramen (¥480~¥780),Ramen & donburi (¥760~¥870) In the evening, this restaurant turns into a pub. P: 16
⑤ Ch.	Fujiyoshi 中国料理ふじよし 0294-53-2244	11:00am~3:00pm 5:00pm~10:00pm Monday	Both the interior and exterior are typically Chinese. Offers anything from ramen(¥525) to genuine Chinese dishes. Can deal with groups of up to 80 people P:20
⑥ Wes.	French Town フレンチタウン 0294-54-1277	5:30pm~12:00pm Last order 11:30pm Tuesday	Original a-la carte menu making the best use of a variety of ingredients (¥750~¥1280 P: 8
⑦ Wes.	MERCATO メルカート 0294-54-3388	11:30am~2:30pm 5:30pm~10:30pm Monday	French and Italian dishes in a relaxed atmosphere, Good for couples, groups of friends, group parties(¥880 ~)P: 50
⑧ Wes.	Seikai 晴海 0294-53-3637	11:00am~10:00pm Thursday	Specialty include beef and pork steak with salad and drink (¥1550 ~/¥1260 ~) Take-out lunch available (¥1050) P: 20

Ja.: Japanese Ch.: Chinese Wes.: Western



A : JR.Omika Station
B : Hitachidetetsu Mizuki Station
C : Ibaraki Christian University
D : Omika Shinto Shrine
E : Hitachi Lighthouse
F : Omika Primary School

① : Henkotsu
② : Mikano
③ : Jinroku
④ : Suzuki Shokudo
⑤ : Fujiyoshi
⑥ : French Town
⑦ : MERCATO
⑧ : Seikai

EVENTS in HITACHI in February

Date	Event & Main Attractions	Place	Admission	Inquiry
5 th (Sat) 9:00-12:00	Bird watching at the Sukegawa-yama Citizens' Grove Park	Parking lot at Aobadai Entrance of the Park	Free	Mr. Kuboi: Nature Sch. of Grove Tel 37-1956
5 th (Sat) 18:00	Citizens' speed skating races & recreations	Wel-Sunpia Hitachi	¥700(adult) ¥600(stud.)	Hitachi Sports Assoc. Tel 36-6661
6 th (Sun) 8:30	Papa & Mama volley ball mass meeting in Taga Distret	Izumiga-mori Gym.	Free	Taga Public Hall Tel 34-0535
7 th (Mon) 13:00-16:00	A movie and a tea with chats "Sunset in the distance" 1992	Josei (Womens') Center	¥200	Jo-sei Center Tel 36-0554
13 th (Sun) 9:00	Kendo Tournament	Ikenokawa Gymnasium	Free	Hitachi Chuo Lions Club Tel. 21-0009
17 th (Th)-20 th (Sun) 10:00	"Koga" Calligraphy (penmanship) School Exhibition	Hitachi Civic Center Gallery	Free	Civic Center Tel 24-7711
20 th (Sun) 10:00	50 th Hitachi Noh-music Recital displayed at the Art Festival	Hitachi Civic Center Music Hall	Free	Civic Center Tel 24-7711
26 th (Sat) 27 th (Sun) 10:00	Children's Fair for their cultural hands-on learning	Hitachi Civic Center Multi-purpose Hall	Free	Community Relations Sec. City Hall Tel: 22-3111 Ex.535

JAPANESE LANGUAGE CLASSES

NAME	LOCATION	DATE & TIME	Fee	Contact
Sakura	Shichokaku Center etc	Saturday 10:00-11:30	¥1,800/semester	Ms. Reiko Tsuru Tel (0294) 53-4558 reiko_tip@yahoo.com
Sakura (Kanji)	Kyoiku Plaza	Thursday 10:00-11:30	¥1,800/semester	
		Friday 10:00-11:30	¥1,000/semester	
Anzu	Shichokaku Center	Tuesday 19:00-20:45	¥300/month	Mr. Shichizoh Kohsaka Tel/Fax (0294) 35-3989 Kohsaka73@ybb.ne.jp Ms. Keiko Kanaoka Tel/Fax (0294)42-8176
	Kyoiku Plaza	Friday 14:00-16:00		

Movies in February

Theater	Day	Titles (Original Titles)
Cinefesta 1&2 Tel:21-7472	-	HOWLS MOVING CASTLE [J]
	11	The NEVERLAND [E]
	5-	ALEXANDER [E]
	19-	MAKOTO [J]
Hitachi Central Tel:21-1386	-	HOWLS MOVING CASTLE [J]
Aigakan 1&2 Tel:23-2323	-	KITANO-ZERONEN [J]
	-	Kung Fu Hustle [J]
	4	THE INCREDIBLE [J]
	5-	Chakushin-ari 2 [J]
Theater Isejin Tel:22-1761	-	THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA [E]
	-	OCEAN'S TWELVE [E]
	11	THE TERMINAL [E]
	12-	THE BOURNE SUPREMACY [E]

[E]: English with Japanese subtitle [J]: Japanese

Emergency Doctors on Duty

Hitachi uses a system called "TOBAN-I". The doctors in the city take turns standing by for emergency patients from 9:00 to 16:00 on Sundays and national holidays.

Surgeons

Feb.	Hospital Name	Address	Tel
6	Kujichinone Byoin	Kuji-cho	52-2119
11	Yamate Byoin	Chikoku-cho	33-2121
13	Kuriyama Seikeigeka Byoin	Hidaka-cho	42-8100
20	Hitachikou Byoin	Kuji-cho	52-3576
27	Naito Seikeigeka Iin	Higashi Onuma-cho	53-1833

Physicians, Pediatricians and Dentists seven days a week: Hitachi Medical Center (5-1-1 Higashitaga-cho Tel 0294-34-2105

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We are looking forward to receiving your letter.