

**Letter From
NEW YORKERS**

Natto - Not-totally Everyone's Favorite
Masuo Ichida

Japanese cuisine is a favorite of many Americans. Between sushi, udon and yakitori, the healthy aspects and huge variety of Japanese food makes it understandable why. One dish, however, is notoriously disliked by many, if not most, non-Japanese people. Survey after survey, natto is chosen as Americans' most hated Japanese food.

What exactly is natto? Natto is soybeans fermented with *Bacillus subtilis*, which is basically a bacterium found in soil and the human gastrointestinal tract. Natto is primarily a breakfast food, eaten atop rice and mixed with soy sauce and *karashi* (Japanese mustard). It is especially popular in the eastern regions of Japan like Tohoku, Kanto and Hokkaido. Because of natto's strong smell and taste, especially its almost slimy texture, it is difficult for many to consume.

Many Japanese say that when mixed with raw egg and eaten with rice, the dish is a perfectly nutritious meal and covers all nutritional needs. The bacterium is especially healthy for the digestive system because of its probiotic value. Legend marks the creation of natto in the early 11th century by soldiers who accidentally produced it by forgetting about their soybean lunches for a few days.

Natto may be an acquired taste, so if you've had it before and didn't like it, try it again a few more times. It is incredibly healthy and low in fat. Enjoy!

(Masuo Ichida is an artist living in New York City.)



THE JAPAN VOICE

COOL JAPAN from New Yorkers' Viewpoints



Mayor Mine from the city of Karatsu (right) gave his speech at the United Nations. President Kajiki of the IFA also attended the conference.

Mine, Mayor of Karatsu, Gives Speech at the U.N. Over Conservation Efforts of Nijino Matsubara

Tatsuro Mine, the mayor of Karatsu, Saga prefecture, gave a speech at the United Nations about the conservation efforts of Nijino Matsubara related to the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals, established in 2000 and 2015 respectively. He explained that in order to preserve the natural environment of Nijino Matsubara, a pine forest of five kilometers in length and 500 meters in width, all citizens have contributed to a variety of cleaning activities. He also stated that the city has been using Facebook and Instagram to spread awareness about their conservation efforts. And by mentioning the Karatsu Kunchi, a festival that takes place in Karatsu that was designated as a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage last year, he introduced the United Nations to the rich culture of Karatsu.

The gist of this speech is as follows: To celebrate the 60th Anniversary of Japan's accession to the United Nations, a project titled, "Peace Alliance Linked

by Flowers and Arts" was chosen. In order to continue developing the project, Toshimi Kajiki, president of the International Flower Association who is working with the United Nations non-governmental organization OCCAM, invited the mayor of Karatsu to the OCCAM-hosted "Info poverty World Conference."

This was so that the mayor could appeal to United Nations representatives about his efforts in environmental conservation. Accompanying the mayor from Karatsu were the city's Director of Tourism Masao Nishiyama and City Secretarial Manager Tatsuya Hirata.

On the day before the United Nations Conference, the Karatsu Mayor Welcoming Party and PR Exhibit were held in the United Nations Dining Room, co-hosted by the 'Hana to Utsuwa Project' and OCCAM. The wife of United Nations Ambassador Toshiya Hoshino, UNESCO

Minbuza Performs Celebrates 25-Year Anniversary

The Minbuza 25-year anniversary performance, "Festival of Japan: Drums + Dance" was held on April 14 at the Abrons Arts Center.

Katsuhiro Chiba, who plays Tsugaru shamisen and performs Tsugaru hand dancing, and Tokyo's drum group Sukeroku Taiko were invited to the stage as guests in a compilation of folk song and dance that Minbuza's leader Momo Suzuki has been cultivating in America for a quarter of a century.

The show started with a scene



Momo Suzuki shares a big smile on stage during the 25th-anniversary performance.

The Japan News

https://www.yomiuri-info.jp/daily_yomiuri/nys/

New York Representative Ricardo de Guimaraes Pinto, Chief Jeffery of the United Nations Public Relations Department, Hajime Kishimori (Counsellor, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United

Nations), Kenichi Sannabe (First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Japan to the United Nations), Vice Chairman Tagashira of the United Nations Japanese Staff Association, Chairperson Lindsey Emiko Akutagawa of the New York Friends of RINRI, the Japanese local media and representatives from a travel agency all attended. (Ryoichi Miura/Translated by Yudai Kaneda)

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●Focusing historical issue from the overseas point of view chapter 8

"Kono Statement" Spoiled National Interest

After returning home from his official visit to South Korea, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa instructed its cabinet a full investigation on the comfort women, and Japan's response to the issue. On August 4 of the following year 1993, then-Chief Cabinet Secretary, Yohei Kono, made a statement now called "Kono Statement." Principal parts of the Statement are shown below:

The Government of Japan has been conducting a study on the issue of wartime comfort women since December 1991. I wish to announce the findings as a result of that study.

As a result of the study which indicates that comfort stations were operated in extensive areas for long periods, it is apparent that there existed a great number of comfort women. Comfort stations were operated in response to the request of the military authorities of the day. The then Japanese military was, directly or indirectly, involved in the establishment and management of comfort stations and the transfers of comfort women. The recruitment of comfort women was conducted mainly by private recruiters who acted in response to the request of the military. The Government study revealed

that in many cases they were recruited against their own will, through coaxing, coercion, etc., and at times, administrative/military personnel directly took part in the recruitments. They lived in misery at comfort stations under a coercive atmosphere. (skip a paragraph below)

Undeniably, this was an act with the involvement of the military authorities of the days, that severely injured the honor and dignity of many women. The Government of Japan would like to take this opportunity once again to extend its sincere apology and remorse for all those women, irrespective of place of origin, who suffered immeasurable pain and incurable physical and psychological wounds as comfort women. (The rest skipped) (Underlines by author)

This Kono Statement contains several ambiguous expressions. There is no wonder if "the Government of Japan was directly involved in the establishment of comfort stations, comfort women were recruited against their own will, with direct involvement of the administrative/military personnel, and they were under a coercive atmosphere, and, in addition, the Government of Japan extends its sincere apolo-

gies and remorse," then everybody took this statement as admission of guilt by the Government of Japan. International reporters took this statement meaning that the Government of Japan recruited coercively young women and forced them to be sexual partners for its soldiers. Especially so, as Chief Cabinet Secretary Kono, during the Q/A session subsequent to his statement, admitted verbally the existence of coercive recruitment by Japanese officials. Whenever we state in the United States that the Government of Japan did not recruit comfort women coercively, nor were they "sex-slaves," the response is always that the Government of Japan has already admitted these points in the "Kono Statement."

However, the Government study on which this Statement should be based revealed that there was no document that supported coercive recruitment. Then, why did the Government of Japan admitted crime in the "Kono Statement"? It took 22 years until the truth has been revealed.

On February 20th, 2014, Mr. Hiroshi Yamada, M.P. inquired Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in the Budget Committee meeting, the background in which the "Kono Statement" was made, and Mr. Abe promised a study. A study team, composed of experts, was appointed and its report was sub-

mitted on June 20th. According to this official report, the Government of Japan was exchanging views with the Government of South Korea. The South Korean side requested persistently the use of words which would imply "coerciveness" in the recruitment stage. The Government of Japan resisted to the request, but decided to use some words which could be interpreted as "coercive recruitment." The Government of Japan mistakenly believed the assertion from the Korean side that once such words were in, the Government of South Korea would never complain about the issue of comfort women in the future.

The honor of Japan has been hurt seriously by this lack of prudence in diplomacy. However, the Government of Japan has not learned enough from this critical mistake. This kind of action which evades a temporary issue leads to serious long-term implications. At the time of Japan-South Korea Agreement of 2015, Japan apologized and paid money. These actions are certainly taken by observers as solid evidence of crimes committed by Japan.

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