

Mini Column

Today's Japan ～ Cup Noodles ～

Cup noodles come with noodles and flavoring prepackaged in a cup so that it can be enjoyed almost instantly by simply adding hot water. Now a popular product around the world, it was originally invented in Japan. From its invention around 40 years ago until today, cup noodles have evolved to become even more convenient and better tasting. In fact, recent years are seeing successive launching of “authentic” cup noodles developed and intended to satisfy even individuals with discerning palates.

For instance, some cup noodles now offer thick, resilient noodles with body, almost like hand-kneaded noodles, and include larger cuts of meat and vegetables that were difficult to process in the past. Furthermore, products that offer the local tastes of popular restaurants throughout Japan are rapidly appearing on the market, while novel products such as cheese- and tomato-flavored noodle soups are also gaining popularity.

Cup noodles are inexpensive and are available in a wide selection that makes choosing one fun. While eating too much is not good for you, fortunately, reduced-calorie products are also emerging on the market today.

Communicating Feelings in Japanese ～ Words of Greeting ～

Saying “*Ohayogozaimasu*” is a good way to start each day on a cheerful note.

Different words of greeting are used depending on whom you greet, the time of day, and location, so until you get used to it, you might find it slightly difficult to use the right word at the right time. While you should say “*Ohayogozaimasu*” to the president of your company and your superiors, you can just say “*Ohayo*” to your friends. The Japanese language also has many words of parting. *Sayonara*, *ojamashimashita*, *shitsureishimasu*, and *shikkei* are all used when taking one's leave.

In olden days, people referred to others as *hito-sama*, adding the honorific *-sama* to the word *hito* meaning person. The term embodies feelings of respect and kindness to others, which were considered the basic underpinning of greetings between people.

The term *gochisosama* also expresses feelings of appreciation and gratitude. It is frequently used after a meal, in thanks to the cook for collecting the ingredients and cooking the meal.

Some ambiguous terms were inspired from the wisdom of daily living. In a well-known children's song called “Yamaguchi-san chi no Tsutomu-kun,” Tsutomu-kun's friend says, “Let's play,” but Tsutomu-kun replies, “*Atode*,” which literally means “later.” The reply is in effect Tsutomu-kun's rejection of the friend's invitation to play, but the term gently softens the rejection.

ミニ情報

日本のいま ～ カップ麺 ～

カップ状の容器に麺とかやくが入っており湯を注ぐだけで完成するカップ麺は、今では世界中で親しまれていますが、元々日本に生まれたもの。およそ40年前に開発されてからこれまで、日本で生まれたもの。およそ40年前に開発されてからこれまで、より便利に、より美味しく進化を遂げてきましたが、最近では更に“本格派”と銘打つような商品が次々と発売されています。

例えば手打ち生麺のような太さやコシ、もちもち感のある麺や、これまで難しかった大き目の肉やざく切りの野菜がカップ麺で実現するようになりました。全国各地の人気店の味を再現したご当地ものの商品もどんどん登場する一方で、チーズ味やトマト味のラーメンといった、目新しい商品も流行しています。

手軽な値段で買え、選ぶのも楽しいカップ麺。食べ過ぎは体に毒ですが、カロリーを控え目にした商品等も登場しています。

心を伝える日本語 ～ あいさつの日本語 ～

『おはようございます』とあいさつをすると、いい気持ちで一日のスタートが切れます。

あいさつの言葉は、相手、時、場所等によって言い方が様々で、ちょっと難しいところがあります。会社の社長や上司には『おはようございます』、友達には『おはよう』といいます。また、別れのあいさつひとつとっても、『さようなら』『お邪魔しました』『失礼します』『しっけい』などがあります。

日本では昔、他人のことを人様という言い方があり、そう表現する気持ちの持ち方、それがあいさつの基本だと言えるでしょう。相手を思いやる気持ちが詰まっています。

『ごちそうさま』には、ねぎらいや感謝のニュアンスがあり、食事が済んだ後に使う場合は、材料を集めたり調理をするなどの労に対して使われます。

さらに、生活の知恵から生まれた決まり文句という一面もあります。“山口さんのツトム君”という童謡で、友達がツトム君に「遊ぼう」と声を掛けますが、『あとで』と返ってきます。つまり、今は遊べないという拒否の返事なのですが、こういうと優しく受け止められます。