

## Mini Column

### Today's Japan ～ Regional Revitalization with “B-kyu Gourmet” ～

The fifth annual B-1 Grand Prix, a competition to decide the best “B-kyu” gourmet dish in Japan, was held this September in Atsugi City, Kanagawa Prefecture. Many of you may have seen its news coverage on TV.

“B-kyu” literally means “B class,” but B-kyu gourmet is far from mediocre, and is defined by the competition as “local specialties or traditional dishes that are cheap, delicious, and beloved by local residents.” The competition brings together B-kyu gourmet dishes from all over Japan. Visitors eat what they like, comparing one dish with another, and vote on one they think is best using their used chopsticks. Each person can cast up to two votes. This year, Kofu’s *tori motsu-ni* stewed gizzards, which originated in Kofu City, Yamanashi Prefecture, obtained the highest number of chopsticks and won the grand prix.

Owing to the success of this annual competition, interest in regional B-kyu gourmet has increased dramatically in recent years, with rapidly growing numbers of people traveling to destinations where few tourists have ever visited, just to savor the authentic flavor of a popular B-kyu dish. Many local communities, for their part, are setting their sights on offering B-kyu gourmet that anyone can casually enjoy, and are turning up and arranging foods and traditional dishes that have a distinctly local flavor, as an effective strategy for regional revitalization.

### Communicating Feelings in Japanese ～ Words for the Year-end and New Year Season ～

In Japan, toward the end of the year, people part with each other, saying “*Yoi otoshi wo omukae kudasai*,” if they probably will not see each other again until the New Year. The expression literally means “Best wishes for the New Year,” and is used with hopes that the other person will welcome in the New Year on a happy note and have a good year ahead. On the last day of work for the year, you might want to use this phrase to express your gratitude to your superior and colleagues for their support and friendship during the past year.

The standard greeting for the beginning of the New Year is “*Akemashite omedeto gozaimasu*.” Quite simply it means “Happy New Year,” but it is also an expression of mutual congratulations on welcoming the New Year peacefully and in good health. It is often used in combination with the phrase “*Kotoshimo yoroshiku onegaishimasu*,” which is slightly difficult to translate but basically means “Best regards for this year as in the past.”

By the way, the Japanese have a custom of celebrating the New Year by sending each other New Year’s postcards, or *nengajo*. You would send these *nengajo* to people you seldom have the opportunity to meet regularly or people you have not seen for a long time as a way to relate a little about what you have been up to, and to mutually verify each other’s health and happiness. The postman’s *nengajo* delivery is something to look forward to on New Year’s morning. In many cases, words such as “賀正 (*Gasho*),” “謹賀新年 (*Kinga shinnen*),” and “迎春 (*Geishun*)” that are normally used only in writing, also adorn the *nengajo*.

## ミニ情報

### 日本のいま ～ B級グルメで地域おこし ～

B級グルメの日本一を決める「B-1 (ビーワン) グランプリ」の第5回大会が今年の9月に神奈川県厚木市で行われました。テレビのニュースなどで見かけたという人も多いのではないのでしょうか。

B級グルメといっても二流の料理という意味ではなく、大会の定義は「安くて旨くて地元の人に愛されている地域の名物料理や郷土料理」です。それらを一堂に集めた会場で、来場者は好きな料理を買って食べ比べ投票するのですが、なんと投票に使われるのは使用後のお箸で、一人2票まで投じることが出来ます。今年は山梨県甲府市発祥の「甲府鳥もつ煮」が一番たくさんのお箸を集め優勝しました。

この大会が盛況なこともあって、最近地方のB級グルメが俄然注目され、これまであまり観光客のいなかった場所へそれらを味わいに出掛ける人が急増しました。地方もその土地ならではの食材や伝統料理を掘り起こしたりアレンジしたりして、誰もが気軽に味わえるB級グルメとしてクローズアップし、地域活性化に繋げようという動きが盛んになっています。

### 心を伝える日本語 ～ 年末年始の日本語 ～

年末には、おそらく来年までは会わないだろうという時に、別れ際に「よいお年をお迎えください」と言います。よい新年を迎えて、いい一年にしてくださいという意味です。仕事納めの日に、お世話になった上司や同僚に、一年の感謝の意も込めて言ってみてはいかがでしょうか。

年始には、「明けましておめでとうございます」とあいさつします。新しい年を無事に健康に迎えられておめでとうという意味です。「今年もよろしく願います」を添えるのもよいでしょう。

ところで、日本では新年に年賀状を送る風習があります。日頃なかなか会えない人やご無沙汰している人に宛てて、近況などを書き添えて新年のあいさつをし、お互いの健康や無事を確認し合います。元旦の朝に郵便屋さんが届けてくれ、お正月の楽しみのひとつです。年賀状には「賀正」、「謹賀新年」、「迎春」など、会ってあいさつするときと違う言葉も使われます。