

# MATSUYAMA OUTLOUD, July 2025

—Voices of the WGO? Staff and Members of the Volunteer Guide Seminar—

## July Eat and Drink

Drinking beer creates a sense of camaraderie. It reduces stress, has a relaxing effect and often leads to pleasant conversation.

Beer gardens, a feature of summer in Japan, are currently being held outdoors on terraces and rooftops of hotels and department stores all over the country.

The more people, the merrier the beer garden. I've never seen anyone - even those who drink alone - with a sad face there. All-you-can-drink beers, sake, wines, non-alcoholic beverages and various kinds of buffet dishes are provided to seduce you, your family, friends and colleagues to spend warm summer evenings there.

One summer holiday, my relatives decided on a beer garden that had a Ferris wheel. When we got tipsy, my little niece break-danced across the table in the small plaza. My nephew and my children wanted to ride on the Ferris wheel, but they needed an adult escort to get on, so we played rock-paper-scissors. The loser rushed to empty his jockey, as he was being led away by the impatient kids.

We liked it there because we didn't have to worry about disturbing other customers even when our toddlers were making a lot of noise. The uproarious drunken crowds that gather at beer gardens are probably a lot noisier than my kids could ever be.

Drinking is a fun way to get away from work or whatever role you must play in everyday life. For example, my kids' school's PTA held an annual gathering at a beer garden. After a mug or two, the teachers became a lot more casual and forthcoming in their conversation. As did my son's softball coach when the team threw a celebration party. With a smile he chatted with everyone at the event.

Beer has a enticing aroma with a tangy sharpness that stimulates the brain. It opens people's hearts, brings a bright sense of unity and seems to make things go just a little better.

When I knew a beer garden offered an all-you-can-drink menu, I used to feel I might lose money if I didn't drink as much as I could. These days, one medium mug is just right for me. Still, it feels as if a second visit during the hot summer season isn't a bad idea.

Just a few years ago, the COVID-19 pandemic made it impossible to throw such big, boisterous drinking parties. So, I think it's a relief to see all these lively beer hall customers enjoying themselves again. So let's drink to small miracles, normal life and everyday pleasures.

Cheers!

(Miwa N.)

Kagawa prefecture is famous for udon and probably most famous for Kamatama Udon (iron pot udon with raw egg), a piping hot bowl of udon wheat noodles with, yes, raw egg poured over the top and briskly stirred.

Kind of tastes like a Japanese version of parmesan.

But my favorite Kagawa udon-ya is of the nabeyaki variety, and the particular udon-ya I most fondly remember was doing business in a slowly deteriorating, prefabricated hothouse.

Pieces of tattered vinyl were literally shredding off onto the floor. Just hilariously filthy.

Wooden pallets scattered on the dirt floors of the dining room were for customers to pick their way to and from the kitchen, and the kitchen area was propped up on uneven concrete slabs that probably came nowhere near building codes.

Discarded umbrellas, rusting farming tools and empty Boss coffee cans provided the ambience.

And I won't even mention the hunks of raw ginger left on the picnic tables for diners to grate into their udon, violating any and all rules of hygiene.

But the nabeyaki beef udon they dished out? Unsurpassed. The noodles? Heaven. The soup? As nuanced as a flying mallet but wonderful nonetheless.

All day long, tour busses pulled up filled with senior citizens from even more remote areas, and they all lined up with trays to sample Kagawa's finest.

They've recently moved everything including broken umbrellas, torn galoshes and stacks of old newspapers into another slightly less decayed hothouse but are still dispensing the same amazing food.

(Editor)