

ASAHIKAWA INFO

October 2026, Volume 358



Serbian Cooking Class



Ever tried Southeastern European food? This October, AIC will be doing a Serbian cooking class in English and in Japanese! Refine your cooking skills, polish your Japanese & English, and connect with us!



When:

Where:

Available Seats:

Cost:

Dish:

NOTE:

10/17 (Sat) 10:30 AM ~ 1:30 PM

Tokiwa Shimin Hall 3F Cooking Room

30 People (Kids Welcome!)

Only ¥ 1,500

Punjene paprike (stuffed peppers), Šopska salata (Balkan salad)

Please bring the following to the cooking class:

Apron, bandana, hand towel, & a firm bread like a baguette



Scan to Register

Nihongo Lounge

Looking to practice speaking Japanese? Make new friends with locals? Or just to even chat with new people? Come join us for our monthly Nihongo lounge!

When: 10/22 (Thu) 6:00 PM~ 7:00 PM

Where: Asahikawa International Center, Lounge

Cost: FREE

NOTE: No registrations needed!



Japanese Study Workshop

From JLPT prep to Japanese conversation, members of AICs Nihongo Support Volunteers are here to help you improve your Japanese!



Scan to Register

When: 11/6 (Fri) 6:00 PM~ 7:30 PM

Where: Asahikawa International Center, Lounge

Cost: ¥ 500

NOTE: Please bring your textbooks if you have any

Check out our website and social media for information regarding the events above.

For further information or to register for events, contact:
Asahikawa International Committee (AIC)
Address: Asahikawa International Center Faeal Asahikawa 7F,
1-jo-dori 8-chome, Asahikawa 070-0031
Tel: (0166) 25-7491 Fax: (0166) 23-4924
Email: asahikawainternationalcenter@gmail.com
Website: <https://asahikawaic.jp/en/>



The opinions expressed in the essays are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the AIC or the City of Asahikawa.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE...

- 01 Cover Page
- 02 AIC Event Report: AIC Stand X...
- 03..... Halloween in the United States
- 04 Reading the Room and Being...

One Point Japanese

ぎりぎり - Barely; at the last moment;

Example Sentence:

駅(えき)まで走(はし)ったら、
ぎりぎり間(ま)に合(あ)うかも。
If we run to the station, we might barely make it.



Harunire Café (left) and AIC Stand (right)

AIC Event Report: AIC Stand x Harunire Café

By John M. (CIR)



Food by Harunire Café

Food and Drinks

Food and drinks were at the heart of the AIC Stand x Harunire Café collaboration. To prepare, AIC collaborated with local volunteers from diverse cultural backgrounds to curate a cocktail menu featuring Somaek (Korean liquor and beer), Daiquiri, Bloody Mary, and Black Eyed Susan.

Harunire Café, located along Asahikawa's Ryokudo Street, served an international, spice-filled menu featuring samosas, Korean fried chicken, mango pudding, and many more. The limited-edition offerings proved so popular that their menu was sold out even before it was over.

Connecting with the Community

On the evening of September 4th, laughter and vibrant conversation filled the air as the AIC x Harunire Café event brought together both familiar faces and new guests. Between 3:30 PM and 7:30 PM, a steady stream of visitors arrived—some eager to taste Harunire Café's flavorful dishes, others excited to sample international drinks at the AIC Stand. Beyond the menu, the event served as a lively gathering space for meaningful connection, bringing together long-time expats, well-traveled locals, and those experiencing cross-cultural exchange for the first time.

It was truly an unforgettable night.



Cultural Exchange with the Community



Halloween in the U.S.

By John M. (CIR)

As September sets the stage for the arrival of fall, October welcomes the Halloween season across the United States. By the first day of October, you can already feel the Halloween spirit in the air. People dive into the festivities with Halloween costumes, decorations, and candy sales, along with spooky attractions like horror mazes and haunted drive-thru experiences.

Jack-O-Lantern Carving

During October, doorsteps and windowsills in many neighborhoods are sprinkled with pumpkin orange. While pumpkins are traditional for Thanksgiving dishes and decor at the end of November, many Americans start enjoying them in early autumn. One popular activity is pumpkin crafting, which involves painting a pumpkin or hollowing it out and carving a face or design to create a jack-o'-lantern. Jack-o'-lanterns are one of the main motifs of Halloween. At night, some people like to put lights and lanterns inside the pumpkin to give it a nice glow at night; making it an extremely popular Halloween decoration.



Halloween Mazes



While haunted houses, or obake yashiki, are common in Japan, the US takes the horror experience completely outdoors! Imagine running for your life as you're chased in total darkness, surrounded by eerie lights and cobwebs. These outdoor attractions often take the form of haunted mazes set in cornfields or along dark trails lined with spooky Halloween decorations. Just like in traditional haunted houses, actors in terrifying costumes wait along the paths to jump out, chase, and give patrons a thrillingly horrifying experience.

On October 31st

Usually, October 31st is seen as the day of trick-or-treating, when kids go door-to-door for free candy; however, Halloween is much more than that. Many schools and companies allow students and employees to come in wearing costumes to foster a fun, festive atmosphere. Beyond dressing up at work or school, many cities host Halloween parades where locals can soak up the Halloween spirit while watching participants march in spooky or creative outfits. The day typically finishes with evening parties, where people gather in costume to enjoy games, themed movies, and festive activities like scary storytelling and costume contests. In America, Halloween is not just for kids, but for everyone to enjoy!



Nihongo Tips: Beyond the Textbook

Reading the Room and Being Considerate

By John M. (CIR)

Throughout the six years I studied Japanese grammar, vocabulary, and kanji, there was one aspect that was never thoroughly covered in textbooks: how to truly communicate. Japanese, unlike Western languages, is highly contextual, meaning that communication relies heavily on shared social cues, mutual understanding, and the immediate situation rather than just direct words. Moving to Japan taught me that there is a big difference between being able to speak and understand Japanese versus actually being able to communicate in it.



Reading the Room (“Kuuki wo Yomu”)

“**kuuki wo yomu**” or “**reading the room**” is all about being able to act and communicate based on the given situation and who you are speaking to. Essentially, there is an emphasis about being aware of the feelings, situation, and atmosphere of the people around you. When speaking in Japanese, it’s necessary to pay attention to the reaction and words of people and respond accordingly.

1. **Quietly observe and match.** For instance, when entering a space like a train or a cafe and much of the atmosphere is quiet, it is important to match the atmosphere you are in so as not to disturb anyone. If someone is speaking in a low and quiet voice, then it is more acceptable to match their volume while speaking. If everyone is standing on one side of the escalator, stand with them. If your colleagues stand and bow at a guest, then doing the same would be polite. Embrace the silence, observe the situation, and mirror what everyone is doing. When in Rome, do as the Romans do.
2. **Understand hidden cues.** In Japanese, many words and expressions tend to have an unsaid meaning to them. For instance, words like “chotto” (ちょっと) tend to imply resistance or disagreement; that someone is not on the same page as you. Or words like “kangaemasu” (考えます) as a response to invite tend to mean “no”. Japanese uses a lot of cushion words so as to soften their thoughts and opinions. Pay attention to their tone and word usage to understand how your listener feels in the conversation. Being able to recognize the hidden meaning in words takes practice, but is also an essential communication skill!

Being Considerate (“Omoiyari”)

“**Omoiyari**” or **being considerate** is all about putting yourself in the shoes of your listener and acting accordingly. It is empathy in action—considering your listener, their situation, and how your words or actions might make them feel.

In a Japanese workplace, for example, you rarely interrupt a colleague without using a “cushion phrase” like “Chotto ii desu ka?” (“Do you have a quick moment?”). This simple check acknowledges that their time is just as valuable as yours.

Similarly, in social settings—like when a friend cooks a dish that isn't quite to your taste—omoiyari guides how you offer feedback. Rather than listing what went wrong, you highlight what worked well and offer gentle suggestions for next time. By prioritizing their effort and feelings over blunt honesty, you preserve the relationship while still helping them improve.

Keep Trying

True fluency in Japanese goes far beyond mastering natural grammar and native expressions—it requires navigating the cultural context behind the language. Skills like reading the room (kuuki wo yomu) and practicing consideration (omoiyari) aren't found in textbooks; they are learned by observing, listening, and connecting with people in real life. While mastering these subtle nuances takes time and experience, doing so opens the door to the most meaningful connections you can make in Japan.