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This newsletter is distributed four times a year by the Okaya International Center, with the aim of providing local foreign residents with information necessary for daily life, as well as insight into aspects of Japanese culture. Please feel free to contact us with your feedback or any questions you may have.

Japanese Table Manners



- ☆ Japanese Table Manners
- ☆ Japanese Culture: Obon Fires (Mukaebi & Okuribi) / Raccoon Dogs (Tanuki)
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Table manners differ across countries and regions. In Japan, there are many uncommon etiquettes that one should need to know. These rules have been concocted from centuries of Japanese history, the people's way of thinking, and the wisdom of everyday life. Confusing if one is unaccustomed at first, but once you grasp the basics, you will certainly find enjoyment in partaking the heavenly cuisines that Japan has to offer.

★Special characteristics of Japanese table manners★

- You use chopsticks in every meal.
- You pick up your plate (except for large plates) and hold it by your mouth when eating.
- Instead of scooping it up with a spoon, you drink the soup straight from the bowl.
- It is considered more polite to finish everything on your plate.

★Using chopsticks and tableware★

① Things to avoid when using chopsticks

- Waving your chopsticks over the choice of dishes spread out in front of you in an indecisive manner (mayoi-bashi)
- Licking your chopsticks (neburi-bashi)
- Piercing food with your chopsticks (sashi-bashi)
- Passing food from one person to the other by chopsticks (hiro-i-bashi)
- Dripping chopsticks (namida-bashi)

② When holding bowls or plates.

- When eating, pick up your plate or bowl and hold it at chest-level. Sit up straight and do not rest your elbow on the table.

Japanese Traditions ~One point Japanese culture~



Mukaebi & Okuribi

In general, Obon goes from August 13th to 16th. During this period, it is believed that the spirit of the ancestors return home to their families. On the evening of the 13th, people light small fires in front of their houses to welcome the spirit of their ancestors. This fire is called "mukaebi" (welcoming fire). And again, on the evening of the 16th, they light small fires, this time



to send the spirits back to the grave. This fire is called "okuribi" (farewell fire). Families who are unable to light actual fires, can display electric bon-paper lanterns as a substitute for mukaebi and okuribi.

Japanese Raccoon Dog (Tanuki)

Living only in East Asia (Japan, Korean Peninsula, and China), Japanese raccoon dogs (tanuki) are nocturnal animals resembling badgers.



"Tanuki-neiri" means someone pretending to be asleep when circumstances become difficult. "Tanuki-oyaji" (a raccoon dog father) or furu-danuki (an old raccoon dog) refers to a crafty old person. Tanuki-baba (a raccoon dog grandmother) is a shrewd old woman. In Japan, raccoon dogs are often depicted as humorous animals. They are also believed to beat a drum on their bellies. There is even a popular song that sings of this - "The Tanuki Party at Shojo-ji Temple," which also has an English version.

The New Residence Card

In Japan, the 60 year old alien registration system became obsolete on July 9th and was replaced by a new system that issues "Residence Cards." Under the new system, the national government now handles the issuance of all ID/residence cards to all medium and long-term residents, replacing the local municipal government, previously administering the "alien registration card." Foreign nationals can now also be issued a Juminhyo (or residence record), the same system used by Japanese nationals. From this day forward, the local municipal government will now be linked with the immigration bureau, with the latter having full control of all information.

FAQ

Frequently Asked Questions about the Residence Management System

Q: How does the new Residence Management System work?

A: A resident card will be issued to all medium/long-term foreign residents who are legally permitted to stay in Japan. This card shall state the basic personal information, residence status, period of stay of the foreign resident. Because the new system will allow authorities to more accurately track resident status than with the previous system, it makes it possible to introduce measures that will improve the convenience of foreign nationals who legally reside in Japan, such as a maximum period of stay of five years instead of the previous three years, and a new reentry permit system that waives reentry permit formalities for foreign nationals who leave and reenter Japan within one year of the date of their original departure.

Q: What should I do if I have lost or damaged my residence card?

A: If you have lost or damaged your residence card, you need to follow the required procedures at the nearest regional immigration bureau. After the completion of which, you will be issued with a new residence card. This is free of charge. However, if you wish to replace your residence card even if it has not been damaged, you will be required to pay a fee after doing the required procedures at the nearest regional immigration bureau.

Q: Can illegal residents receive a residence card?

A: Illegal residents (without any permission to stay in Japan) will not be issued residence cards.

Q: Do I need to always carry my residence card with me? If I do not have my residence card with me, will there be any problems (penalties)?

A: You are required to always carry your residence card with you and to present it to an immigration inspector, immigration control officer, police official or other officials if such official asks you to present your residence card. If you do not have your residence card with you, you will be subject to a fine of not more than 200,000 yen or if you fail to present it, imprisonment with work of not more than 1 year or a fine of not more than 200,000 yen.



Q: If I carry my passport instead of my residence card, will that suffice?

A: Regardless of whether or not you are carrying your passport, you are required to always carry your residence card.

Q: Do my children also need to always carry their residence cards?

A: Those who are under the age of 16 years are exempt from the obligation to always carry the residence card. Therefore, such children do not need to carry their residence card.

Q: What kind of information will be included on the residence card?

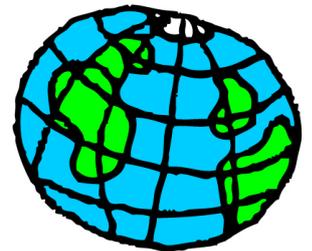


A: The following information will be included on the residence card along with a photograph under the amended law:

1. Name in full, date of birth, sex, nationality or region provided for by a Cabinet order as stipulated in Article 2, item 5, sub-item 2 of the Immigration Control Act;
2. Address of the main residence in Japan (hereinafter referred to as “place of residence”);
3. Status of residence, period of stay, date of expiration;
4. Type of permission, date of permission;
5. Number of the residence card, date of issue, date of expiration;
6. Existence or absence of a working permit; and
7. Existence of permission to engage in an activity other than those permitted under the status of residence previously granted.

Q: Can I apply for a residence card online (over the internet)?

A: You cannot apply over the internet or by postal mail.



Q: What do I need to bring when applying for a residence card?

A: When applying for the residence card, the following are required:

- Application form (one (1) 4cm X 3cm photo pasted on the application form for applicants age 16 or above)
- Passport or certificate of residence status
- Alien registration card (or copy of the alien registration card (both sides) if the applicants is a legal representative or an intermediary)
- Certificate of permission to engage in activity other than that permitted under the status of residence (if applicable)

Q: Do I need to return my alien registration card after receiving my new resident card?

A: You need to return the alien card to the Ministry of Justice (Immigration Bureau). After returning it, the Immigration Officer will punch a hole on the alien card.

Q: What do I need to do if I forgot to renew my resident card, and the card has already expired?

A: If the validity of the residence card is past its expiration date, apply for the “extension of period of stay” as quickly as possible. Failure to do so is punishable by imprisonment with work for not more than 1 year or a fine not exceeding 200,000 yen (Immigration Control and Refugee Recognition Act Article 71 Section 2).



Please take note of the following!



In line with the introduction of the new residency management system, the following grounds have been established for revocation of resident status, deportation and penalties. Regarding the penalty on promoting illegal work, if an employer does not know by negligence that the employed person works illegally, the employer will be punished.

Revocation of resident status

- ★ You have obtained special permission to stay by wrongful means.
- ★ You are residing as a spouse with "Spouse or Child of Japanese National" or "Spouse of Child of Permanent Resident" status, but you have failed to engage in activities as a spouse for six months or more without a justifiable reason.*
- ★ You have failed to give notification of your place of residence without a justifiable reason or have submitted a false notification.

Grounds for deportation

- ★ You have forged or altered a resident card.
- ★ You have been sentenced to imprisonment with labor or a heavier punishment for submitting false notification or similar act.

Penalties

- ★ You have submitted a false notification or have violated the obligation to submit a notification relating to any of the notifications required of mid- to long-term residents or have violated the obligation concerning receipt, carrying or mandatory presentation of your resident card.
- ★ You have forged or altered a resident card.