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Quinoa, food for today and the next generation.



The year 2013 has been declared the "International Year of Quinoa". The ambassador of Peru kindly contributed an article on quinoa, a crop that is hardly known to the Japanese people.

As a tribute to quinoa, we are organizing an event, "The 12th Meeting for Understanding Culture through Food" at Sakura-tei on December 7th, and an exhibition at the Design Festa Gallery from December 6th through December 9th. We look forward to seeing you.

The International Year of Quinoa

Food and Agricultural Organization of the United Nation (FAO) launched the International Year of Quinoa at UN headquarters.

Quinoa can play an important role in eradicating hunger, malnutrition and poverty. The First Lady of Peru, Nadine Heredia Humala has been named Special Ambassador to FAO for the International Year of Quinoa, along with the President of Bolivia. They advocate for better nutrition for mothers and children.

The main producing countries are Peru, Bolivia and the United States; however, the cultivation of quinoa has transcended continental boundaries: it is being cultivated in France, England, Sweden, Denmark, Holland and Italy. In the United States it is being grown in Colorado and Nevada, and in Canada in the fields of Ontario. In Kenya it has shown high yields and in the Himalayas and the plains of northern India, the crop can also develop successfully.

Faced with the challenge of increasing the production of quality food to feed the world's population in the context of climate change, quinoa offers an alternative for those countries suffering from food insecurity. The United Nations General Assembly has therefore declared 2013 as the "International Year of Quinoa", in recognition of ancestral practices of the Andean people. Peru installed the Commission of the International Year of Quinoa on August 8, 2012. This commission is in charge of developing and implementing the Peruvian plan of activities for the International Year of Quinoa 2013, nationally and international.

History of quinoa

Quinoa is a grain-like crop grown primarily for its edible seeds. It is a pseudocereal rather than a true cereal, or grain, as it is not a member of the true grass family. Quinoa originated in the Andean region of Peru, where it was successfully domesticated 3,000 to 4,000 years ago for human consumption, though archeological evidence shows a non-domesticated association

with pastoral herding some 5,200 to 7,000 years ago.

The Incas, who held the crop to be sacred, referred to quinoa as chisaya mama or "mother of all grains", and it was the Inca emperor who would traditionally sow the first seeds of the season using "golden implements".

During the Spanish conquest of South America, the Spanish colonists scorned quinoa as "food for Indians", and even actively suppressed its cultivation, due to its status within indigenous religious ceremonies. In fact, the conquistadores forbade quinoa cultivation for a time and the Incas were forced to grow wheat instead.

After harvest, the seeds need to be processed to remove the coating containing the bitter-tasting saponins. This bitterness has beneficial effects during cultivation, as the plant is unpopular with birds and therefore requires minimal protection. Quinoa seeds are in general cooked the same way as rice and can be used in a wide range of dishes.

Fun Facts About Quinoa

Inca warriors ate balls of quinoa and fat to keep them going on long marches and in battle. NASA has proposed quinoa as an ideal food for long-duration space flights. Chicha is a traditional beer made from fermented quinoa. A quinoa poultice or plaster was traditionally thought to heal bones, and Andean families have traditionally used the saponin-filled wash water from quinoa as a shampoo.

Chenopodium, the botanical name for quinoa, means "goose foot," so named because the leaves of the plant resemble the webbed foot of a goose.

In times of drought, when other crops in quinoa-growing areas fail, quinoa can actually increase its yields. The crop can thrive on as little as three to four inches of annual rainfall.

(H.E. Mr. Elard ESCALA, Ambassador of Embassy of Peru)

World Quinoa Production (thousand metric tons)		
	2009	2011
Peru	39.4	41.2
Bolivia	34.1	38.3
Ecuador	0.8	0.8
World Total	74.3	80.3

Source: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

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Understanding the culture of Serbia through Food



Presentation about Serbia followed by Serbian cooking class by Mr. Nemanja Grbić, Attaché and Ms. Tijana Nagato, Office of the Ambassador, was held on July 6, 2013 at "Sakura Tei" in Harajuku.

"Two of us were wearing traditional Serbian costumes from Šumadija area (central part of Serbia) and we introduced Serbian history, culture and tourism to around 50 guests who were present. We heard that there was a long waiting list for attending it and we are sorry we couldn't accommodate everyone interested.

During cooking part of the event we were able to demonstrate how to make "Pljeskavica" (Serbian hamburger), "Šopska

salata" (Serbian style salad), "Proja" (corn bread) and "Palačinke" (Serbian pancakes). We truly enjoyed the event which enabled us to present our culture not only to Japanese guests, but also to foreign ones, while having fun together in making authentic Serbian food, especially "Pljeskavica".

It was truly an international event and we would like to thank organizers "IAC", "Sakura House" and "Sakura Tei" for this remarkable opportunity and hope to continue our cooperation from now on.

(Embassy of Serbia)

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Introducing to the world, the charm of Omagari Hanabi(Japanese fireworks) Festival – The most prestigious fireworks festival in Japan.

“Omagari Fireworks Festival” began in 1910, and celebrated its 103rd anniversary this year(2013). Today, the festival is regarded as the most prestigious “fireworks competition” in Japan. It is because the winner of this competition receives the “Prime Minister Award,” which is one of the most honorable awards in Japan. Only 2 fireworks festivals in Japan, Omagari Festival (Omagari, Daisen-shi, Akita-ken) and Tsuchiura Festival (Tsuchiura-shi, Ibaraki-ken) have the honor to give out the award. Japan Pyrotechnics Association has recommended these two festivals as worthy of this most prestigious award. Omagari Fireworks Festival, is a thus endorsed by top-ranking pyrotechnics of this country.

Here are six reasons to visit the Omagari Fireworks Festival.

① Among with the night events, you can see the only “daytime fireworks” competition in Japan!

② The best “artistic round shell fireworks” in Japan!
A whole range of multiple core round shells will burst in the sky with the most advanced techniques seen nowhere else in the world. This IS “Cool Japan” - something we can recommend to the world with great pride.

③ You will be enchanted by the Omagari original “creative fireworks”- creative starmine (rapid-fire fireworks) with music and artistry!
“Creative fireworks” are fireworks that are created with great imagination and originality by each competitor. Each fireworks have a unique storyline and are designed and timed to match the music.

④ “Fireworks commemorating the year’s festival (Taikai - Teikyo-Hanabi)” is a starmine on a grand scale that has an annual theme and last more than 5 minutes. This is great entertainment! The segment has become one of the most anticipated parts of this festival.

⑤ It has the largest “fireworks spectator stand” in Japan that can seat as many as 130,000 people. It is a huge structure that is 1.2km long!

The tickets for “the Omagari Fireworks Festival” spectator stand seats are one of the most pursued tickets in Japanese fireworks festivals. The stand accommodates people 3 times larger than the Tokyo dome. It is the largest numbers of paid seats in Japanese fireworks festivals and is probably the largest in the world. It would be interesting, if it applied for the Guinness record! The cost is 21,000 yen per box that can seat 6 people.

⑥ Arguably Japan’s largest “drinking and eating festival”, too!

Every year, more than 700,000 people come to “the Omagari Fireworks Festival”, the greatest fireworks festival in Japan. The festival is larger in scale than any other fireworks festival in many ways. You can enjoy the fireworks, the site and the competitive atmosphere. In 2014, a special festival will be held to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the birth of its “creative fireworks”.

We would like people from around the world to come to the “Omagari Fireworks Festival”. Once they see Omagari Fireworks Festival, I am sure it will completely change their images of a fireworks festival.

To get to Omagari, (Daisen-shi, Akita-ken), take Akita Shinkan-sen (3 hours 20 minutes from Tokyo) and get off at Omagari station.

Koichiro Konishi
Fireworks researcher
NPO Omagari Hanabi (Japanese fireworks) Club
(Omagari, Daisen-shi, Akita-ken)

(translated by Keiko Hori, International Artists Center and Takeshi Akiba, Akita International University)

The Design Festa Gallery is an international art gallery and a mecca of artistic and cultural diversity found in the heart of Tokyo's Harajuku. With two buildings and 21 show rooms, over 30% of the 80,000 guests the gallery welcomes annually visit from overseas. There are no conditions, restrictions, regulations or censorship at the Design Festa gallery, which offers equal opportunity to all painters, photographers, sculptors, cinematographers, performers, fashion designers, illustrators, workshop instructors and graphic artists of all ages, nationalities and genres.



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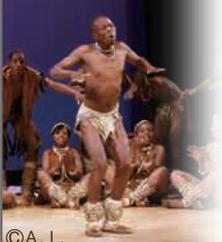
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Dancers from Botswana



Join the IAC!

International Artists Center (IAC) is a non-profit organization. It was established in 1960 and has been doing its activities in the aim to contribute to the international understanding and the world peace through cultural exchanges programs.



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