



Japan's delicious supersized strawberries

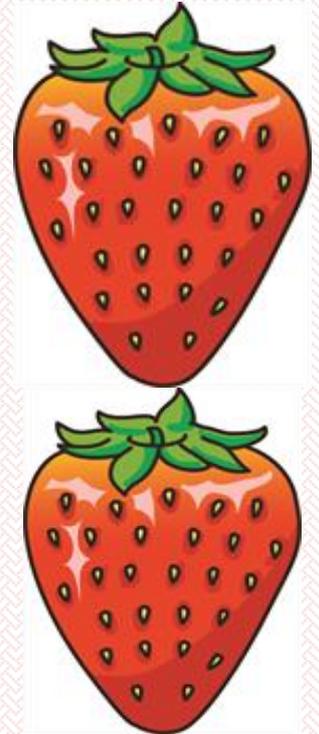
Strawberries were first brought here in Japan in the Edo Period (1603-1868) by Dutch. In 1872, growing strawberries was a full-fledged operation, but you had to wait until after the WWII to be commercially successful. In the 1950's, people grew them in plastic greenhouses, which dramatically increased the output, made costs lower, and strawberries became affordable to everyone.

Today, many brand strawberries have been developed. In Gunma, **Yayoihime** strawberries debuted in 2005 and still remains at the top today. **Amao** of Fukuoka and **Skyberry** of Tochigi are among the country's top brands. You see them at local supermarkets. They are also exported to overseas markets.

Although a bit expensive, why not pick a pack at a supermarket near you or *Michinoeki* roadside station?

Strawberry-picking is in season now, and it will last until late May. Visit the URL below for strawberry-picking farms in Gunma.

<http://www.aic.pref.gunma.jp/visit/strawberry/index.html>



Hinamatsuri (Doll Festival) on the Stone Steps of Ikaho Onsen Spa Resort

Shibukawa

Instead of dolls, these are real kindergarten children in *hina* doll costumes who line up on Ikaho's landmark stone steps. They are dressed as emperor and empress, three ladies in waiting, five court musicians, and other court security guards and servants.

When: March 2 (Sat.) & 3 (Sun.)

Where: Stone Steps of Ikaho Onsen
(12 Ikaho, Ikaho-machi, Shibukawa) [MAP](#)

Contact: 0279-72-3151



Hanamomo (peach blossoms) Festival at Gunma Flower Park

Maebashi

Miyagimura Village, now part of Maebashi, is a well-known producer of *hanamomo* flowers. *Hanamomo* are peach blossoms bred for only viewing, rather than eating the fruits thereof. They are believed to work for keeping evil away from little girls and are often decorated with *hina* dolls.

As you may know, we have *Hina Matsuri* (Doll's Festival) to wish for girls' well-being by decorating Hina dolls on March 3 of every year. The equivalent

When: Until March 10 (Sun.)

Where: Gunma Flower Park
(2471-7 Kashiwagura-machi, Maebashi) [MAP](#)

Contact: 027-283-8189



Gunma's Three Major Plum-Grove Parks

Takasaki

In the west of Gunma, there are three large-scale plum-grove parks (*Bairin* in Japanese). They are [Akima Bairin](#) in Annaka, [Haruna Bairin](#) and [Misato Bairin](#) in Takasaki.

Japanese plums are almost all for processed food. They are considered very good for your health, and that is why have become a very important foodstuff for everyday use. You find them in *onigiri* rice balls and other home-cooked meals. Some of the high-end brands from Wakayama Prefecture (country's number-one producer) are among the popular items during gift-giving seasons.

Just viewing them as appreciation is called *Umemi*. How about going out for an *Umemi* outing this spring, if you hadn't done so yet? All three plum-grove parks offer their own fun events throughout the festival season.



Gunma Events

March 2019

Samurai Warrior Procession at the Old Castle Town Obata

In 1615, the third son of Tokugawa Ieyasu (the first head of Tokugawa Samurai Government) inherited an estate near current Obata area of Kanra-machi. From then on it was under Samurai rule for 152 years until 1767. That is why the Samurai warrior procession is offered as part of this local festival.

When: March 31 (Sun.) Procession: 10:00-12:00

Other attractions: 10:00-15:00

Where: Kanra Sogo Koen Park
(1346 Oaza Obata, Kanra-machi) [MAP](#)

Contact: 0274-74-3131

Kanra-machi



Yamagiwa Inari Jinja Shrine Annual Festival

As you can see in the photo to the right, shrine parishioners will carry floats on the streets of Shimonita. 85% of Shimonita Town is either high mountains or wilderness. A market that sells agricultural equipment and saplings will be held.

When: March 23 (Sat.) & 24 (Sun.)

Where: Yamagiwa Inari Jinja
(701 Ooaza Shimonita, Shimonita-machi, Kanra-gun) [MAP](#)

Contact: 0274-67-7500

Shimonita-machi



International Cuisine Festival

Food stalls that sell Japanese as well as South American, Middle Eastern, Asian and other international cuisine will be set up at the usual venue. Along with Samba dance, this is one of the signature events of the town where they have the largest foreign population rate (more than 18%) among all Gunma municipalities.

When: March 24 (Sun.) 11:00~18:00

Where: Izumi Ryokudo Hanano Hiroba Square
(2-1 Sakata, Oizumi-machi, Oura-gun) [MAP](#)

Contact: 0276-61-2038

Oizumi-machi



Tatebayashi Sakura Festival

Of the many cherry festivals around the prefecture, this one is unique because they hang *koinobori* carp streamers along the row of cherry trees. They are lit up in the evening.

When: March 24 (Sun.)

Where: Tsurudagawa River banks, Tatarahoarin Forest Reserve, Kondonuma Pond, and Tsutsujigaoka Park Inn [MAP](#)

Contact: 0276-72-4111

Tatebayashi



Cherry Blossom-Viewing Spots: [Spring 2019](#) [PDF](#)

Ranch Fair

At Ikaho Green Bokujo (ranch), you can meet little lambs that were born this spring. Horse-drawn carriages, strawberry-picking, and cherry blossom-viewing are other attractions you can enjoy there.

When: March 17 (Sun.) to May 6 9:00-16:00 gate closes at 15:00

Where: Ikaho Green Bokujo
(2844-1 Kanai, Shibukawa) [MAP](#)

Admissions: JPY1,200 for adults (13 years old and up)
JPY600 for children (3 to 12 years old)

Contact: 0279-24-5335

Shibukawa

