



Design: Masako Ban

taste 味 aji

Pera Pera Penguin's 5-minute Japanese Class by Hitomi Hirayama Vol. 57

My friend asked me if I wanted to see a kabuki performance. She loves kabuki and is very familiar with it. During the **makuai** (interlude) of **kabuki**, she was eating **makunouchi-bentō** (a boxed lunch with a variety of side dishes) and said, "**kyonen to wa hito-aji chigau ne.** (It has a slightly different taste compared to last year's). **mochi-aji ga ikasarete, aji ga deteiru yo ne** (the flavor of rice cake is well used, and it has a good taste, doesn't it?)." So, I replied, "I agree, it's tasty." Then, she smiled and said, "**Pole-san mo sō omoimasu ka?** (Do you think so, too, Mr. Pole?) **Nihon no bunka o ajiwau nomo i desu yo.**" (It is also good to savor Japanese **bunka**) I didn't know what **bunka** meant, but I said, "**ē totemo oishī desu yo ne** (yes, it is delicious, isn't it?)" because the lunch was delicious. Then, she was very surprised saying "huh?," and she gave me a confused look. **aji** means "taste" in English, so she meant that the lunch this year was more delicious than last year's, and **mochi** (rice cake) was also delicious and tasty, didn't she? Or, does **aji** have another meaning, rather than "taste"?

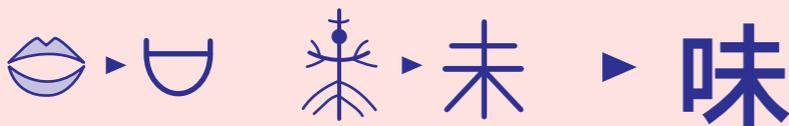
TASTE 味 aji

When you want to know the taste of a dish in a restaurant before making an order, point to the dish in the menu and ask your waiter or waitress:

Q: What kind of taste does this have? A: _____ です。
どんな味ですか。
donna aji desu ka

- 1.) sweet 2.) hot (spicy) 3.) salty 4.) bitter
5.) sour 6.) good taste 7.) bad taste 8.) taste like cheese (noun)
- 1.) 甘い **amai** 2.) 辛い **karai** 3.) しょっぱい **shoppai** 4.) 苦い **nigai** 5.) すっぱい **suppai**
6.) おいしい **oishi** 7.) まずい **mazui** 8.) cheese (noun) **mitai na aji**

When fruit ripens on a tree, a man tries to taste if it has become sweet. This **kanji** originated from the scene of a man eating fruit.



Shape of a mouth

a picture of fruit on a branch

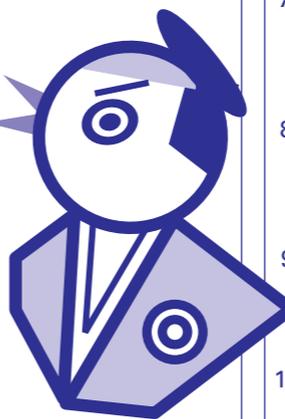
There are a lot of expressions that include 「味」.

- interest
興味 kyōmi
- become inferior, deteriorate (the taste of cuisines served in a restaurant, etc. goes bad.)
味が落ちる aji ga ochiru
- a close examination (Examining the quality and content of something, etc.)
吟味 ginmi
- one's special ability, one's style (a quality or unique style that can be found in a person or a work of art, etc.)
持味 mochiaji
- unpleasant aftertaste (unpleasant feeling that result from an event.)
後味が悪い atoaji ga warui

■■■ **aji** has many different meanings, rather than just "taste," and it's used in various ways, too. **hito-aji** means "profound remarks," **mochi-aji** means "one's ability" and **aji ga deteiru** means "being tasteful." So, what she meant was "**kyonen to wa hito-aji chigau ne.** (Today's **kabuki** performance has profound remarks compared to last year's). **mochi-aji ga ikasarete, aji ga deteiru yo ne** (the actors abilities were adequately used, and the performance was very tasteful, wasn't it?)"

- slightly different and better (profound remarks or characteristics that make person or object different from others)
一味違う hitoaji chigau
- meaningless, worthless, senseless, nonsense
無意味 muimi
- hobby, interest
趣味 shumi
- appreciate, taste, experience, savor
味わう ajiwau
- eat-by or expiration date
賞味期限 shōmikigen

taste



味 aji / mi

Complete the sentences below with the terms at the bottom that use the kanji 「味」

- Is it OK for me to eat ham that is past the eat-by date?
eat-by date が切れたハムを食べても大丈夫ですか。
ga kireta ham o tabetemo daijebu desu ka
- I had no interest in music at all.
音楽に全く interested がなかった。
ongaku ni mattaku ga nakatta
- I do my job as my hobby and profit from it, too.
私の仕事は hobby と実益を兼ねている。
watashi no shigoto wa to jitsueki o kaneteiru
- I'm looking for a job that utilizes my abilities.
自分の one's special ability をいかせる 仕事を探している。
jibun no o ikaseru shigoto o sagashiteiru
- Apparently, the result left an unpleasant aftertaste.
どうも unpleasant aftertaste 結果となった。
dōmo kekka to natta
- We spent a lot of time discussing it, but ultimately it was worthless.
時間をかけて話し合ったが、結局 meaningless だった。
jikan o kakete hanashi-atta ga kekkyoku datta
- Recently, this restaurant has gone downhill.
このレストランは最近 deteriorated だ。
kono restaurant wa saikin
- Mr. Muto's speech is somewhat different and better than other people's.
武藤さんのスピーチは他の人とは a slightly different and better ね。
Mutō-san no speech wa hoka no hito towa ne
- I thought I looked carefully at this food before buying, but it was rotten.
よく examine して買ったのに腐っていた。
yoku shite katta noni kusatte-ita
- Unless you have undergone hardship, you will never understand this happiness.
苦勞を experience 人じゃないとこの喜びはわからないでしょう。
kurō o hito janaito kono yorokobi wa wakaranai deshō

- Answers
- 1) 10. **shōmikigen** 2) 1. **kyōmi** 3) 8. **shumi** 4) 4. **mochiaji**
5) 5. **atoaji ga warui** 6) 7. **muimi** 7) 2. **aji ga ochimashita**
8) 6. **hitoaji chigau** 9) 3. **ginmi** 10) 9. **ajiwatta**