

LESSON NOTES

Absolute Beginner S2 #18

Being a Vegetarian is a Bit Difficult in Japan

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KANJI

1. (At dinner)
2. みんな: いただきます。
3. かおり: あれ？ちえみさん、にく、きらいですか。
4. ちえみ: すみません。にくはちょっと・・・。
5. テイラー: ちえみは肉を食べません。
6. かおり: ...ベジタリアン？
7. テイラー: はい。ちえみはベジタリアンです。
8. かおり: ああ、なるほど！

ROMANIZATION

1. (At dinner)
2. MIN'NA: Itadakimasu.
3. KAORI: Are? Chiemi-san, niku, kirai desu ka.
4. CHIEMI: Sumimasen. Niku wa chotto....
5. TEIRĀ: Chiemi wa niku o tabemasen.
6. KAORI: ...Bejitarian ?

CONT'D OVER

7. TAYLOR: Hai. Chiemi wa bejitarian desu.
8. KAORI: Ā, naruhodo.

ENGLISH

1. (At dinner)
2. EVERYONE: Let's eat.
3. KAORI: Huh? Chiemi, do you dislike meat?
4. CHIEMI: Sorry. Meat is a little...
5. TAYLOR: Chiemi doesn't eat meat.
6. KAORI: Is she vegetarian?
7. TAYLOR: Yes, Chiemi's a vegetarian.
8. KAORI: Ah, I see!

VOCABULARY

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
たべません	たべません	tabemasen	don't eat; masu form (negative)
にく	にく	niku	meat, flesh
あれ?	あれ?	Are?	Huh? Hmm?
みんな	みんな	min'na	everyone, everybody

ちょっと	ちょっと	chotto	a bit, a little
いただきます。	いただきます	itadakimasu	expression of gratitude before meals; let's eat
ベジタリアン	べじたりあん	bejitarian	Vegetarians
たべます	たべます	tabemasu	to eat;V2
きらい	きらい	kirai	to dislike;Adj(na)
ビーガン	びーがん	bīgan	vegan

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>わたしはさかなをたべません。 <i>Watashi wa sakana o tabemasen.</i></p> <p>I don't eat fish.</p>	<p>にくがだいすきです。 <i>Niku ga daisuki desu.</i></p> <p>I love meat.</p>
<p>あれ？これ、なに？ <i>Are? Kore nani?</i></p> <p>Huh? What's this?</p>	<p>私はみんながだいすきです。 <i>Watashi wa min'na ga daisuki desu.</i></p> <p>I love everyone.</p>
<p>ちょっと、すみません。 <i>Chotto, sumimasen.</i></p> <p>Excuse me for a minute.</p>	<p>いただきます！ <i>Itadakimasu!</i></p> <p>(Phrase said before eating a meal)</p>
<p>わたしはベジタリアンです。 <i>Watashi wa bejitarian desu.</i></p> <p>I am a vegetarian.</p>	<p>にくをたべます。 <i>Niku o tabemasu.</i></p> <p>I eat meat.</p>
<p>ぼくはとうがらしがきらいです。 <i>Boku wa tōgarashi ga kirai desu.</i></p> <p>I hate hot chillies.</p>	<p>ビーガンはにくをたべません。 <i>Bīgan wa niku o tabemasen.</i></p> <p>A vegan doesn't eat meat.</p>

VOCABULARY PHRASE USAGE

~はちよつと。。。 (~ *wa chotto...*)

This is a phrase that sums up the Japanese culture of restraint perfectly! It literally means "[something] is a little..." but what it really means is that the speaker does not like, does not want, or is troubled by what the speaker is talking about.

For example, *guroi eiga wa chotto...* literally translates as "gory movies are a little..." but actually means that the speaker does not like gory movies and perhaps does not want to say this directly in case someone in the group does like them and might be offended.

ベジタリアン (*bejitarian*)

The word for "vegetarian" in Japanese is simply the English word turned into *katakana*: ベジタリアン. Vegetarians are not common in Japan, but vegans are even less so, so the word ビーガン (*biigan*) may not be understood depending on whom you are talking to.

Some useful food words

Japanese	Romanization	"English"
にく	<i>niku</i>	"meat"
さかな	<i>sakana</i>	"fish"
たまご	<i>tamago</i>	"egg"
やさい	<i>yasai</i>	"vegetables"

In Japanese, we often say some foods (particularly those considered to be staple foods) with the honorific *o-* prefix. *Niku* becomes *o-niku*, *sakana* becomes *o-sakana*, and *yasai* becomes *o-yasai*.

However, you cannot say *o-tamago*, for example, so be careful to check which foods you can use *o-* with!

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Talking about NOT Doing Actions to Objects Using Negative Verbs.

ちえみはにくをたべません。

Chiemi wa niku o tabemasen.

"Chiemi doesn't eat meat."

In this lesson, you'll use the structure you learned in the previous lesson to make negative

sentences and to be able to say that you don't do something to a given object.

Polite Negative Forms of Verbs

You've already learned how to make polite *-masu* verbs. Now we'll look at how to turn these into negative verbs so you can express ideas such as "don't eat," "don't watch," "don't listen," etc.

It's really easy! All you need to do is take off the *-masu* ending of the verb and replace it with *-masen*.

Formation

v-masu

For Example:

Meaning	Non-Past	Non-Past Negative
"to eat"	たべます <i>tabemasu</i> "eat"	たべません <i>tabemasen</i> "don't eat"
"to drink"	のみます <i>nomimasu</i> "drink"	のみません <i>nomimasen</i> "don't drink"
"to buy"	かいます <i>kaimasu</i> "buy"	かいません <i>kaimasen</i> "don't buy"
"to go"	いきます <i>ikimasu</i> "go"	いきません <i>ikimasen</i> "don't go"
"to come"	きます <i>kimasu</i> "come"	きません <i>kimasen</i> "don't come"

"I don't drink alcohol."

To state that you don't do something (such as "don't drink alcohol," "don't eat meat," "don't watch TV," etc.), you simply use the structure we learned in the previous lesson, but you replace the verb with a *-masen* negative verb.

Formation

[Person] wa [thing] o [verb-masen] → "[Person] doesn't [verb] [thing]."

As always, if the person who is the subject of the sentence is already known by the listener, you don't need to keep saying **[Person] wa**.

For Example:

1. わたしはさかなをたべません。
Watashi wa sakana o tabemasen.
"I don't eat fish."
2. むすめはやさいをたべません。
Musume wa yasai wo tabemasen.
"My daughter doesn't eat vegetables."
3. たなかさんはテレビをみますか。
いいえ。みません。
A: *Tanaka-san wa terebi o mimasu ka.*
B: *ie. Mimasen.*
A: "Do you watch TV, Ms. Tanaka?"
B: "No, I don't."

Reference

Please also review the following Grammar Points.

- *Itadakimasu* → Absolute Beginner Season 1 Lesson 11
- *...ga kirai desu* → Absolute Beginner Season 1 Lesson 18
- *Sumimasen* → Absolute Beginner Season 1 Lesson 13
- Talking about doing an action (verbs) → Absolute Beginner Season 1 Lesson 21

- Asking about doing an action (verbs in question sentences) → Absolute Beginner Season 1 Lesson 22

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Can You Eat Meat in Japan?

Meat and dairy are relatively recent introductions to the Japanese diet, only dating back to the influence of Western missions to Japan from the late nineteenth century onward. The eating of meat was prohibited by Buddhist teachings (as well as the landscape of Japan, which is not very well suited to animal farming), and traditional Buddhist temple cuisine (called *shojin ryouri*) is one hundred percent vegan.

So, given this historical background, you would think that there are still many Japanese who follow a vegan diet, right? Wrong! Seafood has always been a huge part of the Japanese diet, and even things such as soups like *miso shiru* ("miso soup") are often made from bonito stock or boiled pork bones.

With the exception of practicing Buddhist monks, Japanese vegetarians are very rare, and vegans are almost nonexistent. As we heard in the dialogue, while most Japanese will know what a "vegetarian" is, the concept of veganism ("vegan" = ビーガン, *biigan*) is much less well known, and many Japanese may not know what it means.