

LESSON NOTES

Newbie S5 #5

Whoa, What's That in Your Japanese Lunchbox?

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KANJI

1. ケント: 山菜は何？
2. まどか: うーん。。。山の野菜？
3. ケント: へー。それ、おいしい？
4. まどか: うん、まあまあ。
ケントのは何？カレー？
5. ケント: うん。カツカレー。
6. まどか: それ、おいしい？
7. ケント: うーん。いまいち。

KANA

1. ケント: さんさいはなに？
2. まどか: うーん。。。やまのやさい？
3. ケント: へー。それ、おいしい？
4. まどか: うん、まあまあ。
ケントのはなに？カレー？
5. ケント: うん。カツカレー。
6. まどか: それ、おいしい？

CONT'D OVER

7. ケント: うーん。いまいち。

ROMANIZATION

1. KENTO: Sansai wa nani?
2. MADOKA: Ūn... yama no yasai?
3. KENTO: Hē. Sore, oishii?
4. MADOKA: Un, māmā.
Kento no wa nani? Karē?
5. KENTO: Un. Katsukarē.
6. MADOKA: Sore, oishii?
7. KENTO: Ūn. Imaichi.

ENGLISH

1. KENT: What's "sansai?"
2. MADOKA: Um...mountain vegetables?
3. KENT: Really? Is that tasty?
4. MADOKA: Mmm, it's so-so.
What have you got? Curry?

CONT'D OVER

5. KENT: Mm, fried cutlet curry.
6. MADOKA: Is that tasty?
7. KENT: Mm. Not really.

VOCABULARY

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
山菜	さんさい	sansai	wild mountain vegetables
おいしい	おいしい	oishii	delicious, tasty; Adj (i)
野菜	やさい	yasai	vegetable, vegetables
カレー	カレー	karē	curry
いまいち	いまいち	imaichi	not very good, could be better
まあまあ	まあまあ	māmā	so so, ok

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>山菜はとても美味しいです。 <i>Sansai wa totemo oishii desu.</i></p> <p>Wild mountain vegetables are really tasty.</p>	<p>これはとても美味しいです。 <i>Kore wa totemo oishii desu.</i></p> <p>This is very tasty.</p>
<p>私の子供は野菜がきらいです。 <i>Watashi no kodomo wa yasai ga kirai desu.</i></p> <p>My child hates vegetables.</p>	<p>カレーが大好きです。 <i>Karē ga daisuki desu.</i></p> <p>I love curry.</p>

彼の歌はいまいちです。
Kare no uta wa imaichi desu.
His singing is not very good.

この寿司はまあまあです。
Koko no sushi wa māmā desu.
The sushi at this place is so-so.

GRAMMAR

The Focus of This Lesson Is Asking What Something Is in Informal Japanese.

これ (は) なに？

Kore (wa) nani?

"What's this?"

In this lesson, we'll take a look at how to ask what something is in informal Japanese.

Asking What Something Is

In earlier lessons, we learned that to ask "What is this?" we say *Kore wa nan desu ka?* (これは何ですか) in formal Japanese. In casual Japanese, we shorten this phrase considerably as follows:

Formal Japanese	___ wa nan desu <i>ka?</i>	___ は何です <i>か?</i>	"What is ___?"
Informal Japanese	___ (wa) nani?	___ (は) 何？	"What is ___?"

In informal Japanese, we pronounce the word for "what" *nani* (何) when there is no copula after it. The topic-marking particle *wa* that comes before *nani* is also optional.

For Example:

1. 山菜は何？
Sansai wa nani?
"What's 'sansai?'"
2. ケントのは何？カレー？
Kento no wa nani? Karē?
"What have you got? Curry?"

Expressing that Something Is Neither Good nor Bad

You are probably familiar with the adjectives for "good," *ii* (いい), and "bad," *warui* (悪い). But how do you express that something is in the middle or that it leans slightly to one side of the spectrum? Let's take a look.

Japanese	"English"	Notes
まあまあ <i>mā-mā</i>	"So-so."	We use まあまあ when something is merely so-so.
いまいち <i>imaichi</i>	"Not very good." "Iffy."	We use いまいち to express that something isn't very good. It's a little worse than まあまあ.

For Example:

1. ケント : それ、おいしい?
Kento: Sore, oishii?
Kentō: "Is that tasty?"
まどか : うん、まあまあ。
Madoka: Un, mā-mā.
Madoka: "Mmm, it's so-so."

Language Tip: へー

In the dialogue, Kento's reaction was *hē* (へー) when Madoka told him that *sansai* was "mountain vegetables." This reaction is similar to "wow," "whoa," or "really?" in English, and we use it when someone is surprised or impressed. This is a very common Japanese reaction that will sound natural when used in casual conversation!