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CIR's Corner

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Hello everyone! "CIR's Corner" is my monthly article about international exchange and cultures around the world. I will introduce a variety of interesting international topics.

This Month's Topic: Enjoy American Summer!

In last month's issue, I introduced one of the biggest events of American summer: Independence Day, also called "the Fourth of July." Summer's not over yet though, so in this issue, I'll explain three more American summer topics. Read on to learn about Seattle's largest summer festival, American camping, and ice cream trucks.

Seattle's Summer Festival: Seafair

When you think about Japanese summer, festivals are probably one of the first things to spring to mind. America has got its own fair share of festivals as well. In my hometown of Seattle, Seafair is held every year on the first weekend of August. Tens of thousands of people flock to the shores of



Lake Washington to enjoy the water and air events.

The main events on the water are the hydroplane races. Hydroplanes are extremely light and fast motorboats. They just barely skim the surface of the water, so it's not uncommon for them to flip over at high speeds. Spectators watch the races with bated breath, hoping their favorite will safely win the race.

The other main event of the weekend is the air show put on by the US Navy aerobatics team, the

Blue Angels. Watching the air show is like watching a live version of the movie *Top Gun*.



However, what stands out in my memory is not the thrilling performance, but the sound. It's because my childhood home was near the park where the festival was held, so for a few days before the air show, the Blue Angels practiced right over my neighborhood. The thunderous roar of the engines rattled the windows so hard that I thought they'd break. We dreaded the noise every year, but at least we had a free, front-row seat to the show!

In addition to the above events, there are many food stalls and a parade. Also, Seattleites own more boats per capita than any other US city, so Lake Washington turns into a huge floating party. (My family was too poor to own a boat, however. ☹️)





American Camping

I'm a city girl, so I haven't been camping much, but based on my experience, camping in the US is more rugged than in Japan. For example, Japanese campsites have many amenities, such as running water, flushing toilets, showers, cooking areas, and vending machines, yet in America, you might only get a place to set up your tent. Also, campsites in Japan have well-maintained lawns, camp managers, and few trees, while American campsites are left closer to their natural state. American camping enthusiasts love camping in old-growth forests, surrounded by natural beauty. My opinion as a city girl though is that Japanese campsites with flushing toilets are preferable to roughing it in the wilderness.



Camping is a great way to enjoy nature, but it's also an opportunity to enjoy food. You can experience ingredients and cooking methods different from the everyday lineup. A standard camp food for Americans is a dessert called "s'mores." The name is a shortened version of the phrase "some more." S'mores are made by roasting a marshmallow over a campfire, and sandwiching it along with a piece of chocolate between two graham crackers. Americans cannot go camping without s'mores, so during the summer you'll often find all of the ingredients lined up right in front of the cash registers at supermarkets. Graham crackers are not sold in Japanese

supermarkets, however, so when making s'mores here, you will need to find an appropriate substitute. My recommendation is digestive biscuits. They are British biscuits whose plain whole-wheat flavor resembles the taste and texture of graham crackers. If you buy the kind with chocolate coating, then you won't even need to buy bars of chocolate.

People have different preferences on how they like their marshmallow toasted. Some like it just barely melted. Some take their time to slowly roast it until it's golden. And others, like me, light their marshmallow on fire like a miniature torch and let it burn. The bitterness of a charred marshmallow perfectly balances the sweetness of the chocolate. (Is it just me who thinks so?)

Ice Cream Trucks



Finally, let's talk about ice cream trucks. They were actually more like vans in my neighborhood. On hot days, as soon as we heard Scott Joplin's "The Entertainer" echoing through the neighborhood, we'd grab our change and dash out the door. There were lots of treats to choose from, but the most

coveted ones were shaped like popular characters and had gumballs for eyes. Those gumballs were so cold and hard that there was a serious risk of dental trauma if you bit into them. Even now, whenever I hear "The Entertainer," I remember the taste (and tooth pain) of summer. ★



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