

# EAT. STAY. LOVE.

## OKINAWA Japan

**Now may be the perfect time to learn of other lifestyles across the globe and perhaps make educated adjustments to extend your longevity, like taking a cue from the diets and lifestyles of the original 5 Blue Zones! In this 5-week lighthearted mini-guide, I'll offer suggestions on ways to eat, stay safe and love all 5 of these diverse cultures that have the largest population of folks living over the age of 100! All hail centenarians!**

### Week four: Okinawa, Japan

Okinawa is the largest of the Ryukyu Islands located between the East China and Philippine Seas off the coast of Japan. Okinawans are known for their health and longevity; especially the women! Hurray! Great news for women - if you happen to live there! You actually live longer than women any other place on earth. No joke!

All those unsolicited, unsavory diseases that hit the rest of us as we age? Cancer, heart disease, dementia—nope, nope, nope. Not in Okinawa.

What's their secret? The answer to that question has been the subject of an ongoing study since the seventies - focusing on the lifestyles and genetics of over 800 centenarians living on the island. But, you gotta stay put - What happens to live long in Okinawa, stays in Okinawa!

Like most Blue Zones, diet plays a very important role in longevity and, again, like most B.Z.'s, Okinawans enjoy a plant-based diet which is low in calories and fat. Theirs differs a bit from others in that it is heavy on the carbohydrates. Just not the fun ones. Remember hearing most your life that carbs are your enemy!? Well, again, not in Okinawa. However, it's important to choose the right carbs. Turns out most of those come from sweet potatoes and not rice as one would think.

Simply put the Okinawa diet is comprised of whole, nutrient-dense, high-antioxidant foods and spices which protect the body against cellular damage. No surprise at all, mostly vegetables fill the dinner plates on this island, along with the usual soy suspects; tofu, miso and edamame. Not big meat eaters either. Again, no surprise! Some fish and on special occasions pork. Copious amounts of tea consumed there - turmeric tea and jasmine green tea. An occasional nip or two of awamori (island sake). Made by using an ancient technique fermenting black mold, Thai rice, yeast and distilling for a very, very, very long time. Sounds delicious, doesn't it? Well, if you like sweet brandy and can get past the whole "black mold" thing then perhaps give it a try!

Just as important to these age-defying islanders is the Okinawa life-style and belief system consisting of three pillars which perfectly explains their very happy and very fulfilling very long lives.

"Moai" (not to be confused with the Easter Island figures) can easily be translated, for us, to literally mean BFF (best friend forever). For Okinawans it is a lifetime and powerful social network of friends that support each other well into old age. If you've got this going on in your life you are indeed one of the lucky ones. In fact, you should probably get T-shirts made. "PROUD MOAI MOMMA" or something like that.

The equally strong concept for the Okinawans is "Ikagai" which is basically a strong purpose in life. Every morning they get up with a mission. They feel needed by and responsible for others. And not just their peers. Okinawans find it important to include young people in their daily lives. They do this by being fun to be around! And their youngins actually respect their elders. Now more than ever, in these difficult and trying times, a sense of purpose is high priority. I recommend looking further into this pillar. Construct your own Ikagai and let me know what you learn about yourself!

The third and final pillar is called "Hara Hachi Bu". Gesundheit! To practice this means to eat less. Consume all of your meals to only 80% of fullness - eat slowly and mindfully and stop when slightly full. You'll consume fewer calories and might even shed a pound or two.

Fun fact: Okinawa is the birthplace of karate. So, perhaps a quick YouTube karate lesson could kill some quarantine time. Or, get outside and "paint the fence, Daniel san"! Again, getting outside in nature and the sun is vital for all of us! You also get plenty of Vitamin D from the sun but remember that sunscreen. Be safe SPB. Virtual hugs!

Next week: Nicoya Peninsula, Costa Rica