

A report by the Exchange Students of Hokkaido University of Education , Hakodate campus: Asaichi Morning Markets



We caught a squid!

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There are many exciting places to go in Hakodate, but Asaichi (the Morning Market) is definitely one of the top places to go. With this in mind, we set out one typically rainy Saturday morning to visit Asaichi; fortunately, it's indoors, so there was no rain on our parade that morning! It was a wonderland of fresh seafood, fruits and vegetables and many other delicious things.

One of the famous activities in Asaichi is fishing for live squid. It is a bit harder than it looks - and watch out for the squid getting revenge by squirting water as you make your catch! However, it is as fun as it is famous, and you can enjoy your freshly caught squid a few minutes later served as sashimi. We definitely did, even making our own dancing squid by pouring soy sauce on the tentacles. Hakodate is famous for its fresh, delicious seafood, and squid in particular, and it doesn't get fresher than squid you catch yourself in Asaichi.



How to eat your freshly made squid sashimi: Add soy sauce and watch the squid legs dance and move!

Then, use your chopsticks and enjoy the smooth, slippery, soft texture of the squid moving around your mouth.

Us and the squid, now in sashimi form



Squid Sashimi! Delicious!

After leaving the squid and their fishers behind, we headed into the dome, where most of the produce, such as apples and other fruits and vegetables, is sold. When Asaichi was first formed, it was, as all farmers markets are, a place where all the local farmers would gather to sell their goods. Now, of course, it has evolved far beyond that, but there are still hints of the origin of Asaichi here, not least in the presence of so-called ‘obaachans’, or ‘grannies’.



The ‘Dome’ in Asaichi, complete with a cute obaachan posing for us



Chatting with an obaachan

Of course, the main attraction of coming to the Dome in Asaichi is the wide variety of goods you can buy, not to mention the delicious and fresh produce, straight from the farm; apples, asparagus and spinach. However, even when admiring the beautiful produce and the even more wonderfully cheap prices, you definitely can’t forget their charismatic (and often cheeky!) sellers.

As we bought some apples, the obaachan selling them chatted enthusiastically with us, telling us that she and her fellow vendors were all around 80 years old, but could still wake up at 5 am in the morning without fail to come to the market and sell their goods. As for us young people, who haven’t even reached 25 years old, we couldn’t imagine having to wake up at that time every morning! Maybe it is the obaachans’ cheerful passion with preparing and selling the fruit and vegetables they grew for sale that lets them achieve this remarkable feat, for as one of the obaachans told us, “I feel happy when it comes to my work.”



Buying apples (and spinach) from an obaachan

Naturally, we couldn't help but take advantage of the super cheap prices and fresh produce; much cheaper and fresher than you would ever find in a supermarket! The obaachan, amused by our enthusiasm and antics as we exclaimed over the various items on sale, gifted us with some special apples, small but undeniably delicious. In fact, the Australians and Alaskans among us, who had only recently arrived in Japan exclaimed over the apples saying that they hadn't believed that a fruit could ever tasted this good!



A gift of apples from an obaachan. The apples have to be tasted to be believed!

The thought of Asaichi conjures up images of feasting on delicious food of all kinds without a doubt, but after expending all that energy on fishing for squid, and shopping for delicious produce, or just keeping up with the obachaaans of the market, we were very hungry. But where could we satisfy this craving for a good hot meal that could keep up with the high expectations set by all this wonderful food around us?

At the very same place, Asaichi, of course!



Following the signs to cheap food!

Asaichi is split into two levels, with the second level being filled with restaurant offering all kinds of delicious meals, even offering to cook and freshly bought crabs that you may have purchased from the downstairs market! There are offerings in every price range; it's entirely up to you what you want to spend. As for us, as poor university students, we determined on spending less than 1000 yen, or slightly over 10 USD each. One of the famous meals, a seafood-don (white rice topped with a variety of seafood) costs only 500 yen (about 5 USD)!



A large variety of seafood on offer



Squid sashimi and salmon roe, or salmon sashimi, which to choose? Both, of course!

Naturally, eager to try out all of the different tastes, we ordered a wide variety of the dishes offered, not just the famed 500 yen seafood-don, we ordered all sorts of different dishes amongst ourselves, from the ginger pork set, to the salmon-don and even a mix of squid and salmon roe. Of course, we also ordered the seafood-don, and at 500 yen it was probably the cheapest thing at our table.



The 500 yen option!

However, no matter what we ordered, we couldn't be at all disappointed with the taste. The seafood was the freshest it could possibly be and expertly prepared, and the lamb was fried to perfection!

There is no faulting the wide selection available either, with raw prawns (ebi), tuna (maguro), fish roe (mentaiko), salmon roe (ikura), crab (kani), squid (ika), salmon and many other options available you will be spoilt for choice at even just this one restaurant. With such delicious food, it was the perfect lunch to end a wonderful morning (despite the gloomy weather) at the famous Asaichi!



We enjoy a great lunch all together, including our young guide, hiding behind the table