

it would have been most useful to have an indication in the glossary of where a particular term is discussed in the main text (especially since the index does not include the glossary entries).

Yet these are relatively minor points, and their omission does not negate the

worth of this valuable work by these two eminent experts. Rather, even as I hope the next edition will be better still, I would urge you to rush out and buy this book. It is the best introduction to the financial behavior of Japanese corporations that exists, and it should be required reading

for anyone hoping to do business in and with Japan.

'Maurie' Kaoru Kobayashi
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Outside Tokyo

Nozawa Onsen: Pleasant Retreat

If you're looking for a pleasant retreat this winter, try Nozawa Onsen in Nagano Prefecture. Snugly ensconced on a steep hillside, woven with narrow, winding streets and alleys, this friendly ski resort has become our home away from home. The skiing is superb (even my Austrian wife is satisfied), and the dark, warm doorways of the town never fail to open onto unexpected surprises.

There are three reasons we go to Nozawa, and it would be a mistake for anyone to leave without enjoying them all. As the name suggests, there are the hot springs. There are the mountains, with rewarding summer hiking and some of the best ski slopes you will find on these islands in the winter. It's the people, however, who keep us coming back.

Snowy streets

Our friends in this village are hard-headed, tempestuous and romantic. There is a word for it in Japanese, *ganko*. They love to drink and eat, to argue and ski. Debate with a Nozawan and then try to drink him under the table, and you've won his respect. Above all, however, whether gliding down the powdery slopes or simmering in a steaming *onsen*, there is peace here.

Take the train to Echigo-Yuzawa station, and a bus or taxi from there to Nozawa.

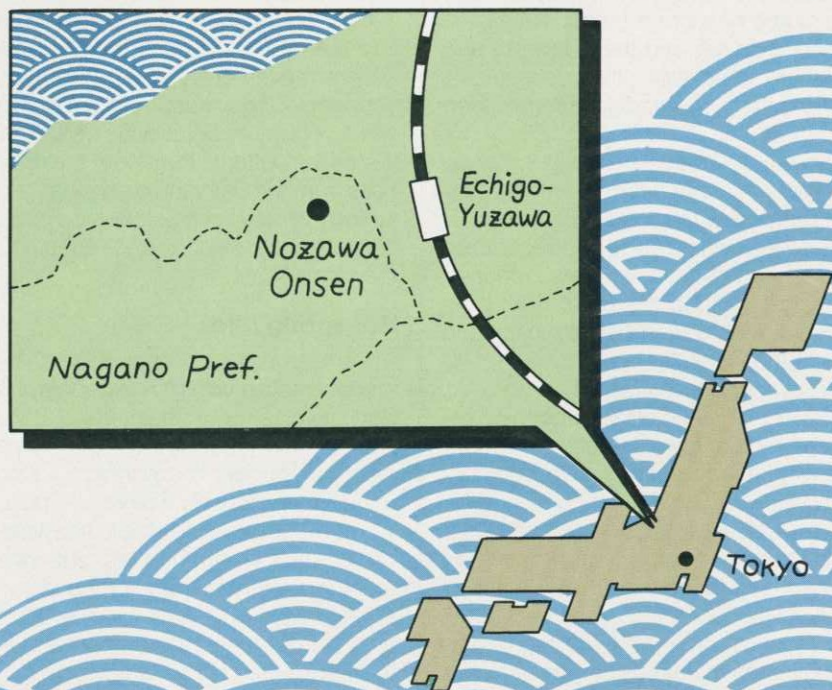
Visitors make their way through the frosty air, the snowy streets with their icicle-fringed shops and pensions, arms full of skis, bags, and in our case a baby daughter. We'll stay at the St. Anton, a cozy pension named after Nozawa's Tyrolean sister-city.

Owned and managed by charming Itchan Katagiri and her handsome husband Mikio (an ex-downhill ski champion and now the downhill coach of the Japanese national ski team), the St. Anton is popular among visiting Austrian skiers. Itchan and Mikio spent several years in Austria and both speak German, and the

intimate, neighborly ambiance here can't be beaten. It is here that the locals meet for coffee and friendly disputes.

Leaving our bags at the St. Anton, we'll head for the slopes. An injury sustained in the Austrian Alps will keep me off skis this winter. I'll make angels in the snow with my daughter or visit the ski museum with her while my wife tests her new bindings. She'll take the series of lifts all the way to the top of the mountain and spend a second or two marveling at the fantastic view before schussing all the way down into the valley.

That's something else you find in No-





zawa that makes you wonder if you're really in Japan—long ski runs and good snow. There are slopes for all skill levels. If you're feeling courageous, try the Schneider slope. Here at the top of the mountain, there is snow—and skiing—well into the early-May “golden week.”

Finished with the snow for the day, chilled to the bone, we typically don our *yukata* and head for the bath. The sun is beginning to set, and the sidewalks and alleys are filling with other pedestrians, towels in hand, all heading for one *onsen* or another.

The snug wooden buildings on each side close in cozily, seem to embrace us. We pass steaming outdoor pools of *onsen* water, where eggs and vegetables bob, tended by old women crouched alongside, sharing the day's gossip as they rock their woven baskets back and forth in the water.

Nozawa's hottest *onsen* is called *O-yu*, “Hot Water.” It is one of the congenial surprises in this town which continually reveal themselves to the patient and curious visitor. *O-yu* is “hidden” in a nondescript, weathered wooden building on a street corner, and is not prominently marked. I wouldn't normally think of opening the door and looking in. But I do, and am confronted with two dozen elderly gentlemen in various stages of nudity. My wife, on the other side, is mingling with their female counterparts. There is

no entry hall or dressing room, the bath opens directly onto the street. Get in quickly, don't let the cold in.

There are no taps for washing, no shower nozzles snaking from the wall. You dip scalding water from the tub and douse yourself. Coming in from the snow, it's a shock. But this is nothing compared with the bath.

Once in the water, the natural human impulse is to leap back out screaming, but any movement at all would only scald you worse. You must hold perfectly still while your body adjusts. Sit and simmer. Watch the patterns the steam makes as it rises from the bath and disappears in the fading evening light. Listen to the patterns of good-humored voices echoing on the tiles.

Hot spring tale

Sometimes I relax enough to strike up a conversation with my neighbors, if they don't involve me in theirs first. Now and then, a watery cackle from the women's side flutters over the partition. I am reminded of a story my wife tells. If you are a woman, then you'll be able to see whether or not she's telling the truth. She swears that the ancient nymphs of the *O-yu* hot spring, although typically steel-toothed and wrinkle-faced, have—perhaps from the water—the bodies of teenagers.

Later, still incandescent, we make our way back to the pension, through dark-

ness and lightly falling snow. As we walk, steam rises from our glowing skin. We watch as it dissipates into the bracing night air. We listen as feet crunch on snow.

Back at the St. Anton, we collapse at the intimate wooden bar. Looking around, we could be in a *Huette* in any Tyrolean village. There are the same checkered tablecloths, the same artifacts of Alpine life adorning the walls. With our last breath, we order a beer, and it comes just in time. Is there anything like that first draught after a day of skiing?

Soon, the soft voice of Itchan calling us to dinner rouses us from our reverie. Across the room, some locals are gathered for coffee, chatting quietly at one of the tables. Maybe Italian pop music from 15 years ago is playing softly on the stereo, maybe even Tyrolean yodel music. The cooking is hearty, and good. A specialty in spring is *tempura* using wild vegetables freshly gleaned from the surrounding mountains. Other specialties include horsemeat *sashimi* and bee larvae in honey.

Explore after dinner. Take a slow stroll through those narrow streets. Duck into one of the many souvenir shops. One of the *ryokan*, Sumiyoshiya, has an especially nice shop in a corner near the entrance. It is in the lobby, but you have to take off your shoes to get to it. It specializes in souvenirs a cut above the usual.

As we wander uphill, we gradually

leave the level of shops and bars, and continue onward past the steaming pools. We come to a staircase which disappears steeply between a pair of old, weathered cedars. Passing between them, we find ourselves at a shrine, about as high as you can get in the village of Nozawa.

I close my jacket more tightly, rub my hands together to dispel the cold. The cloud our breath makes has a faint, irides-

cent glow from the lights of the village. It is so quiet that you can hear your breathing, your heartbeat. Faint voices, snatches of conversation from the old women boiling eggs down below, drift up. There is the faint smell of sulfur, from the *onsen*, but the sweetness of mountain air as well, the tang of cedar and fir trees, a fresh breeze carrying snow, and peace.

The night is full of possibilities. We could go barhopping with some friends,

sing *karaoke* and celebrate until we find ourselves drinking *sake* from a *sushi* boat at one of our favorite bars. I suspect, though, that a glass of warm milk and a couple rounds of patty-cake with the baby is more likely.

Michael O'Rourke

A writer and fiction-editor
of *Edge* magazine

Table Talk

Bunryu

Bunryu is an abbreviation of "cultural exchange" in Japanese, and this restaurant specializing in South European dishes is certainly aptly named. Owner Nobuo Nishimura opened the eatery not only to please the palates of Tokyo gourmets, but also to promote cultural exchange between Japan and Italy.

Nishimura, a student of Italy who speaks fluent Italian, established Bunryu Co. in 1973 to import Italian books into Japan and translate books between the two languages.

He had discovered that in Italy many leading publishing companies are located in smaller regional cities, a phenomenon befitting a country which was once an amalgam of city states, but a stark contrast to Japan's concentration of publishing firms in Tokyo.

Making the rounds of Italian publishers, Nishimura was introduced to the foods and wines peculiar to each city. He was impressed by the pleasure Italians take in eating, often spending as long as two hours for lunch and supper in family circles. That was when he hit on the idea of starting a restaurant himself, one that would introduce Italian regional dishes and family eating to Japan.

The first Bunryu restaurant opened in Tokyo's Takadanobaba in 1973 and the

second in Ikebukuro in 1979. They still remain two of the finest places in Japan to enjoy typical Italian cuisine.

I once had occasion to ask my friend named Izeki, a Japanese specialist in Italian art, a long-time resident of Italy and a true gourmand of Italian food, which is the most conscientious Italian restaurant in Tokyo. Without hesitation he recommended Bunryu. Several visits later, I have to concur. Izeki is a true gourmet.

Bunryu, of course, offers excellent meat and fish dishes, as well as Spanish specialties. But its real forte is its spaghetti, which comes in half a dozen varieties. My personal favorite is spaghetti with fresh tomato, Bunryu's original, priced at a modest ¥1,000.

Bunryu owes the quality of its food to the expertise Nishimura acquired from his close friend Enzo Dellea, the head teacher at a famed cooking school in Brescia. In fact, Nishimura has himself become an enthusiast of Italian cookery, establishing a school for Japanese chefs, Accademia Bunryu, in Siena three years ago. Every year the school takes in 15 Japanese cooks to drill them in the Italian language and give them the opportunity to learn Italy's culinary art from some of the nation's leading chefs.

Incidentally, Nishimura's favorite restaurant in all of Italy is Vissani in Baschi, a small town near Perugia. He also recommends Enoteca Pinchiorri in Florence. But he withholds comment on Harry's Bar in Venice, said to be one of the most famous restaurants in the country.

Of the 40 or more offerings on Bunryu's menu, I specially recommend the

following: *Spaghetti monte e mare* (Italian/Bunryu original, ¥1,000); *Spaghetti alle vongole* (Italian/Toscana, ¥1,100); *Spaghetti al pomodoro fresco* (Italian/Bunryu original, ¥1,000); *Orata al finocchio* (Italian/new style, ¥2,200); *Langosta con pollo* (Spanish/Catalonia, ¥2,700); *Costolette d'agnello arrosto* (Italian/Lazio, ¥2,000); *Filetto di bue capperi e pinocchi* (Italian/new style, ¥2,400).

(Yoshimichi Hori, editor-in-chief)

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Tel: (03) 208-5447

Open every day: 11:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

5 p.m.-10 p.m.

Reservations necessary in the evening.

