

Perhaps many people approach the season of autumn with an unconscious sense of anticipation. I often think that as the days grow crisp and jackets are freed from closets everywhere, those who prefer the summer sun mourn can't help but mourn the changing of each leaf. I've also often observed friends stare longingly at bare mountainsides, clearly picturing them in white rather than red-gold, waiting impatiently for October to draw to a close. But I think that all of us who are lucky enough to live in a place where there is an autumn as lovely as Hokkaido's can't help but enjoy the season. In my first issue of the Red Brick Bulletin, I'd like to introduce some of my favorite parts of Hokkaido's autumn. 🍁



## Events

Probably the first thing any visitor to Hokkaido learns is that the people here love their food. Autumn events are no exception to this obsession and appropriately the celebrations in the harvest months are usually based around food. Two wonderful examples of this are the Sapporo Autumn Fest and the Kita no Megumi Tabemarche in Asahikawa. At each event town representatives, local producers, and companies from all over Hokkaido come together to showcase their best wares to hungry crowds. When you walk through the long blocks lined with never ending food stalls, you can't help but think that all Hokkaido people do is eat!

However, some of the over 130 autumn events in Hokkaido have very little to do with food. One of the most famous and interesting festivals held in Hokkaido is the Marimo Festival. It is celebrated in early autumn and held at Lake Akan, in Eastern Hokkaido, where marimo (round balls of green algae) are found. Marimo represent the vitality of the lake

to the indigenous people of Hokkaido, the Ainu, and the festival was started 58 years ago to help protect the marimo from being damaged as tourism increased in the area. Ainu celebrations are not always open to the general public, so this festival is often an excellent opportunity for people who are interested in Ainu culture.

## Food

Hokkaido is a gourmet mecca in Japan, and is one of the few places in the world which is self sufficient in terms of food production. The harvest season in Hokkaido differs for every vegetable, but the staples of autumn are kabocha (Japanese pumpkin), onions, potatoes, and carrots. Small smelts called shishamo are also enjoyed during autumn and are a Hokkaido specialty. One of my favorite things to do during a Hokkaido autumn is to take advantage of all the fresh produce. Below is one of my recipes for Hokkaido style pumpkin and apple soup.

### Method

1. Dice garlic and onions. In a large soup pot heat oil and sweat garlic and onions until the onions have just started to change colour.
2. Add chicken stock and simmer for at least 10 minutes.
3. Cut kabocha into quarters and remove pulp and seeds. Place in a microwave on 500w until the kabocha is soft and comes off easily from its green skin. Be careful not to overcook! Remove kabocha from skin and set aside.
4. Peel, core and cut up apples. Add kabocha and apples, as well as salt, pepper, cinnamon, cumin and basil. Simmer for at least 30 mins.
5. Blend mixture either with emulsion blender or in batches with an upright one. Simmer mixture for another 10-15 minutes or until soup reaches desired thickness.
6. Add cream or whole milk at the very end for a creamier taste!

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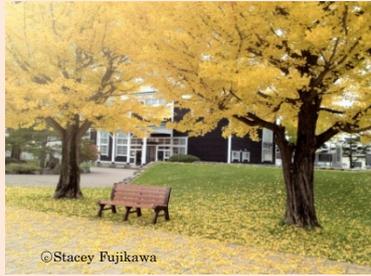
## Pumpkin and Apple Soup

### Ingredients

Kabocha – 500g	Salt – To taste
Apples – 2-3 apples	Pepper – To Taste
Garlic – 2 cloves	Cinnamon – 2 tsp
Onion – 2 Medium	Cumin – 1 tsp
Olive Oil – 2 tblsp	Fresh Basil – handful
Chicken Stock – 500ml – 800ml	
Milk or Cream – around 200ml	

## 🍁 A Town with a View, Higashikawa 🍁

While Hokkaido's autumn might be filled with good food and fun events, it's natural beauty is also shown to great advantage during the season. One of the most popular viewing leaf viewing spots in Hokkaido is the national park of Daisetsuzan, in the central northern region of the island. The national park is the largest in Japan and boasts some impressive statistics. It has 16 peaks over 2000m tall and straddles the two



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sub-prefectures of Kamikawa and Tokachi. It is home to a variety of wildlife, both cute and cuddly like the little pika and the not so huggable like the Hokkaido bear! While the park often attracts hikers in the summer and snowboarders in the winter, in the autumn you will often see photographers making the trek to the park's mountains. The area is so picturesque, that the nearby town of Higashikawa is known as the town of photography!

Higashikawa is located on the northwestern edge of the park, near Hokkaido's tallest mountain,

Delicious Eats in Higashikawa



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All seasons are beautiful in Higashikawa



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Asahidake. The community was founded as a village in 1897, but has since grown into a bustling town of over 7000. Higashikawa is renowned for its wooden handicrafts as well as its farm produce like tomatoes and rice. However it might be best known to locals and visitors alike for its numerous delicious cafes! Higashikawa also has a reputation for being a very internationally focused town. Higashikawa has been twinned with Canmore in Alberta, Canada since 1989 and with Rujiena in Latvia since 2008. Higashikawa and Canmore often send students and delegations to each other's cities as well, in November Higashikawa will host films from the Banff International Film Festival further strengthening their friendship.

Recently Higashikawa has also started to expand its relationship with Rujiena. Two Japanese high school students from Higashikawa had the chance to visit Latvia this summer, and soon students from Latvia will return the visit. When you stop in at cafes or shops, you will often find Taiwanese, Korean or other Asian students from the local language exchange program manning the till or taking your order. Finally, the town is also the home of the Higashikawa International Photography Festival. Since 1985 Higashikawa has invited the local, Japanese, and international photographers to exhibit their work and compete in the town's celebration of the art of photography. The town has a local gallery which exhibits photography all year round, but in 2006 the past winners of the Higashikawa Overseas Photographer Prize were exhibited in the Tokyo Metropolitan Museum of Photography.



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With so much emphasis on internationalization, it is no surprise that Higashikawa is home to people from many different parts of the world. Stacey Fujikawa, Karin Strom, and Una Volkova are three ladies with very different backgrounds who have been brought together by the JET Programme and Higashikawa. Stacey and Karin, from Alberta in Canada and Washington State in the US respectively, are the town ALTs, while Una, from Latvia, works as a CIR in the Town Hall. All three girls enjoy living in Hokkaido very much, but are especially fond of Higashikawa.

Each of the three came to Higashikawa for different reasons. Una was chosen from candidates in Latvia to help further relations between Higashikawa and Rujiena. Stacey and Karin on the other hand were eager to experience life in another country – Stacy especially so because her paternal grandparents are both from Japan. When asked what they liked most about living in Hokkaido, the girls were quick to reply that Hokkaido's nature exerted a big pull on them. "I love that it's so wild and spread out." wrote Una, while Karin commented that "The nature is absolutely stunning in Hokkaido. There are so many outdoor activities to pursue. I love living in a small town that is so close to nature." While Karin and Una have both taken up

mountain sports and gotten into the local music scene since coming to Hokkaido, Stacey has become interested in the local produce and scenery. "The amazing cuisine here in Hokkaido has inspired me to cook and bake more often, as well as to try using local ingredients that we don't always have in Canada. I took up photography a few years ago, but since moving to Hokkaido there always seems to be something beautiful and interesting close by that I want to take photos of. Higashikawa is the "town of photography" and annually hosts a photography competition and festival. I was very excited to enter my first exhibit this summer!"

The Higashikawa girls are also active in their local community. They plan regular Halloween, Christmas and Easter holiday events for pre-school and elementary aged children in their town. Often the girls try to incorporate activities that children in their home countries enjoy, like writing letters to Santa Claus. They also partake in international cooking or music events, helping hosting and prepping exchange students as well as participating in town festivals. However, what most made an impression on the three is the kindness and generosity of the people of Higashikawa. The girls all commented on how much they enjoy the atmosphere of the town, where everyone knows each other - and where free treats in cafes are frequent. Stacey wrote that "My first few days in Higashikawa were spent with host parents, so I was able to build strong connections from the very beginning. I continue to visit my host parents regularly, and I love cooking with my host mom." But perhaps Una said it best when she commented "You don't need to live here to fall in love with Hokkaido and Higashikawa. Many people come here once and want to come more and more. It's a wonderful place to live in."

Halloween volunteers smile for the camera?



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