

Last weekend, I was excited to go to a yakiniku enkai in Matsusaka. Not only do I always enjoy the chance to talk to other teachers outside of school, but I also love beef! In that respect, I think I am a stereotypical American. Sometimes other ALTs don't like to go to enkais because they are vegetarians, don't like Japanese food, or are just picky eaters. Since I've been to Japan before, and had a chance to get used to Japanese food, I don't usually have problems with the food. Even though there are some Japanese specialties that I don't like, I used to boast that I could eat anything. “なんでもいい!” All that changed last Friday.

When we got to the restaurant, there were about twelve people in all, myself and the other ALT from Tsu Nishi included. There were some teachers I had never met before, let alone talked to, but it turned out to be an interesting night. When the first plate of vegetables was brought out, I thought I would just have a little bit and save myself for the tasty beef that was sure to follow. The first plate of meat was tongue. I know that tongue tastes just like the regular beef that I'm used to eating at home, but the first time I ate it, there was a cold cross-section of a tongue on my plate and I have never been able to get that image out of my head. I cringed a little bit, but I still ate a few pieces and waited for the next kind of meat to come.

I didn't know what was in store for me, or else I would have eaten that whole plate of tongue. When the next plate of meat came, I didn't see anything familiar to me, and I actually thought there might have been some seafood in there. As it turns out, it was a “great” selection of cow intestines, heart, liver and bladder. I started off with a piece of horumon, and made the fatal mistake of asking what it was. After some complicated explanation, I didn't know the translation for horumon, but I understood enough to understand that it was something I didn't want to eat. After a plate of daikon salad, I decided that I should at least try everything. If I didn't like it, at least I tried.

The teachers around me started to catch on and were enjoying the spectacle of watching me eat all these gross cow parts that I never wanted to eat before. I explained that I would rather not know exactly what I was eating until after I had swallowed it, but they still egged each other on. They certainly enjoyed watching me struggle to eat each different body part, probably even more so since I can usually eat or drink most Japanese specialties with ease. In the end, I did think that shinjou was not so bad, but I won't be eating horumon, kanzou, or mino again anytime soon.

As it turned out, the plate of classic beef that I was waiting for never came. I should have learned by now that living in another country, things are never what they seem. I thought I had gotten used to Japanese food, but as it turns out, there is always

something unknown waiting around the corner. After this experience, I remembered what it was like the first time I came to Japan and thought sashimi, natto and unagi were the most disgusting foods ever. Now I eat them with ease, but I still can't imagine I'll get comfortable eating horumon again anytime soon.