

Sometimes when I sit down to write a journal, I have some ideas to write about but realize that I have already used those topics in years past. I might have to start recycling ideas! I don't think that I have touched on today's topic in the past, but I am not going to go back and check. Today my topic is about something very important in my life, and something that my friends tease me about all the time—a supermarket points day (today!).

When I first came to Japan there was the supermarket points card in my apartment from my predecessor. She left me a note explaining that on the 20th and 30th of the month, I could get extra points. At first, this didn't mean anything to me. I rode my bike to the grocery store and couldn't fit much in my basket so even on points day I couldn't really do a big shopping trip like I could when I lived at home. But I always had points day in the back of my head. When my parents came to visit in my first year, I asked my dad to ride bikes with me to the supermarket so that I could stuff both of our baskets full of groceries on the bike ride back. My mom thought we were crazy!

Now I have a car, so points day is much less stressful. But now I am always stingy about the food I am willing to buy on normal shopping trips. It feels like such a waste to buy something expensive like a bag of rice on a non-points day. If I bought it on the special day I would get so many more points to get me to that 500 yen coupon! My friends tease me because I take points day really seriously. Someone even told me that it would be easier just to buy one less 500-yen item per month than to be so serious about getting points for the coupon. But it is not entirely about the savings for me. I don't know why I enjoy accumulating points so much, but if it makes planning meals and grocery shopping more fun for me, what is the harm?

I know that points are just a marketing tool that stores use to get customers to buy more. I know this in my head, and I know that in the end, I am probably not saving money but actually spending more on points day. For some reason, I still can't help buying into it! None of the stores I used to shop at in America had points deals like this, especially not the grocery store. I'm sure there are other points systems like the ones that come together with special credit cards, but that is all too complicated for me. After these few years living in Japan, I think I will always have a little feeling of excitement when I notice it is the 20th or the 30th of the month!