

INTERVIEW SERIES WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF JAPAN-RELATED ORGANIZATIONS (No. 5)

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Pink Hibiscus Club

Introduction of your organization

The Pink Hibiscus Club is an organization primarily run by long-term Japanese residents in Penang, many of whom have mixed heritage. This diverse background gives us a unique perspective and the ability to explain the subtle nuances of being Japanese in a way that resonates with the local community.



What is your relationship with Japan?

My relationship with Japan is deeply rooted in my heritage. With a Japanese mother, I am half Japanese, which has profoundly shaped my connection to Japanese culture. This background fuels my passion for Japanese traditions and inspires me to actively participate in cultural events and activities.

How is your involvement in Japanese related activities?

I'm actively involved in Japanese-related activities through various roles and engagements. I was honored to be Miss Yosakoi Penang 2020 and served as the ambassador for the Penang Yosakoi Parade. I also attend Japanese-related meetings and events, including those organized by the Pink Hibiscus Club, where we promote Japanese culture and traditions. Additionally, I help organize and participate in the annual Penang Yosakoi Parade, celebrating Japanese dance and community spirit. These experiences allow me to deeply connect with Japanese culture and share it with others.

Who is the Japanese person who has influenced you the most?

Aside from my mom and grandparents, the person who has influenced me the most is my mentor, Emi Yamazaki. She is an old family friend who has known me since I was young, and she feels like a godmother to me. Emi is the founder of the Pink Hibiscus Club and the organizer of the annual Penang Yosakoi Parade, both of which celebrate Japanese culture and community. Her dedication to promoting cultural exchange and fostering a sense of community has deeply inspired me.



What is the most interesting element about Japan?

One of the most interesting aspects of Japan, from my perspective as someone from Penang, is its unique blend of tradition and modernity. Japan combines cutting-edge technology and futuristic cities with a deep respect for its ancient customs. This balance between old and new is especially fascinating for me, as Penang also values cultural heritage while modernizing.

I'm always impressed by how Japan integrates ancient temples and traditional practices with modern design and technology, creating a cultural tapestry that is both timeless and innovative. This harmony is inspiring, showing how a society can honor its history while looking to the future.



Aunty Emi is one of the most genuine and kind people I know; she leads by example, showing that strength and compassion can go hand in hand. From her, I've learned the importance of staying true to one's values while being open-minded and inclusive. She has been a guiding force in my life, encouraging me to pursue my passions

and reminding me of the value of kindness and hard work in everything I do.

What is your favorite place in Japan?

My favorite place in Japan would be my grandmother's hometown in Hamamatsu-shi, Shizuoka. This city holds a special place in my heart because it's where I spent many of my childhood summers, surrounded by the warmth of family and the beauty of the local landscape. The serene atmosphere, combined with the vibrant culture and the delicious local cuisine, makes Hamamatsu a place that feels like home to me. Whether it's enjoying fresh eel dishes, exploring the scenic countryside, or visiting the historic temples, Hamamatsu embodies the essence of what I love about Japan. It's a place where I truly feel connected to my roots and heritage.



What is your favorite Japanese food?

Japan offers an incredible variety of dishes, but if I had to choose my favorites, it would definitely be ikura and warabimochi. I have always been passionate about Japanese cuisine, and I vividly recall the distinct experience of eating ikura—the delicate eggs bursting with a savory richness that fills the palate. Warabimochi also holds a

special place in my heart, not just for its delicate taste but for the memories associated with it. It reminds me of Penang's muarchiee, as both share a similar chewy texture and nutty flavor. I have many fond memories of enjoying warabimochi with my late grandfather during our hiking trips, fishing outings, or relaxing picnics. Every time I eat it, I'm transported back to those cherished moments.

What is the Japan custom/culture that you like the most?

What I love most about Japanese culture is the incredible politeness and high level of customer service. People in Japan are always so respectful and considerate, even in everyday situations. For example, it's common to see pedestrians bow to drivers who stop for them, showing their gratitude. This kindness extends to everyone, including foreigners—despite language barriers, people go out of their way to help. It's amazing how dedicated they are to making others feel respected and welcome. I think other countries could learn a lot from this level of thoughtfulness.

What are the future plans of your organization in terms of promoting Japan?

Promoting Japan through Yosakoi in Penang is an incredible opportunity to share the vibrant culture and traditions of Japan with the world. By showcasing the energy and spirit of Yosakoi dance, we can create a unique cultural bridge that connects people internationally. The goal is to elevate Yosakoi beyond local celebrations, turning it into a global movement that captures the hearts and imaginations of people everywhere. This way, we not only

celebrate Japanese culture but also foster a deeper understanding and appreciation of it on an international scale.

