

Things you probably didn't know about America

When an American comes to Japan there are a number of questions he gets asked by just about every Japanese person he meets. These questions are often things most Americans would never even think of. However, I recently realized that if these things come up so often, they must represent some fundamental points of curiosity that all Japanese people share. With that in mind, let's discuss some of the things Japanese people seem to want to know about America.

"You eat bread for every meal, right?"

There's no two ways about it, Japanese people love rice. Many eat it at every meal. So what do Americans eat at every meal? Oops! That question is impossible to answer because it's based on a false assumption. America is a "melting pot;" there just isn't any one thing that we eat at every meal. Italian Americans probably eat a lot of pasta, and Irish Americans probably eat a lot of potatoes. The restaurant selection is just as diverse as the population—you can easily find everything from Thai to Mexican, Middle Eastern, Vietnamese and Korean. With all this to choose from, "what you eat most of" depends mostly on "what you like best."

While we're on the subject, there certainly are a lot of foods that include bread in some way, like pizza and hamburgers. But we don't tend to eat a whole big chunk of bread with nothing on it, despite what people seem to think here (and despite what shows up in school lunches).

"You own a gun, right?"

In the movies it seems like all Americans carry guns around with them everywhere. But in reality I don't have a gun, and neither do the people around me. In my home town of Minneapolis I only know of one person who owns a gun, but he has a permit and actually hunts with it.

Interestingly, in America it's legal to own a gun, but depending on the state you may need a special permit to carry it around with you. A few years ago Minnesota passed a concealed-carry law, but since businesses are private property most stores ban guns on their premises. In other words you can't really go anywhere while carrying a gun, so there isn't much point in having one. Guns aren't new and have never been a real concern to the average American citizen.

"What's your blood type?"

I bet that if you ask this question to any foreigner, no matter where he's from, 90% of the time the answer will be "I don't know." The idea that blood type influences personality is practically unheard of in America. Out of curiosity I did some research, and it has about as much scientific credibility as horoscopes.

Incidentally, I happen to know my blood type from when I gave blood—I'm B but I forgot my RF type.