



## Getting to know Kyotanabe's Special-tea, Gyokuro



gyokuro tea!

In September I attended a seminar on how to identify different types of green tea (*chakabuku*), including *gyokuro*, produced here in Kyotanabe. First, bowls of different loose green tea leaves were passed round for us to touch and smell. The teas were then brewed and samples were handed out for us to taste. We were told to look out for differences in texture, smell, taste and appearance. Our observations were then put to the test through a blind-tasting quiz where we attempted to guess the teas correctly.

There were two types of tea, *sencha* and *gyokuro*. Sencha is yellow in colour and generally an everyday tea. Gyokuro on the other hand is more green in colour and is considered to be more of a luxury tea. The samples came from a variety of places - Uji, Shizuoka, Kagoshima and Kyotanabe.

I was surprised by how different the samples of sencha and gyokuro from each region tasted because of differences in production processes (such as the time of year the tea leaves were picked, and the length of time the plants were grown under shade).

Transformed  
into a *tsumiko*  
(tea-leaf picker)

## What's a cattle grid?



My hometown of Lymington is located on the outskirts of the New Forest National Park where many ponies, cows and pigs roam freely. To prevent these animals from entering the town boundaries, **cattle grids** such as the one pictured above are used.

Known as "cattle grids", they are made up of long metal bars fixed across a depression in the road. The width of the gap between each bar is wide enough for the leg of an animal to fall through if they attempt to cross the grid, yet narrow enough for a car to drive across safely.

Later in the month I helped run a gyokuro-tasting stand at the Doshisha Women's College. For many students it was their first time trying gyokuro. It was interesting to see the difference in reactions. The most common responses were "*oishii*" (that's delicious!) or "*issopoi!*" (it's so savoury!). Although gyokuro when served cold tastes a bit like gazpacho (cold soup), I have to say I am a fan!

## September Report ALT • CIR Exchange Event



This month the Assistant Language Teachers (ALTs) and I participated in an event hosted by the International Exchange Association. We each gave a presentation on our home countries and towns. There was also a chance to discuss in smaller groups the differences and similarities between Japan and other countries.

As we all come from a variety of places, (Guam, U.S.A., South Africa, Jamaica and the U.K.) each presentation was unique and very interesting.

Overall I thought it was great fun and I learnt a lot that I did not know before. Although there is an abundance of information available now on the internet, hearing a first-hand experience of living somewhere means that you get to know many things that aren't written in the tourist guidebooks!

*This month the ALTs and I will be running a stand at a kindergarten festival (hoiku no tsudoi).*