Celebrity Chef Tyler Florence visits Yokosuka

Story and photo by MCSN Mike Mulcare, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Celebrity Chef Tyler Florence visited Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) March 31 to prepare a dinner for Sailors and to sign autographs for his fans.

Florence is the star of Food Network shows "*Food 9-1-1*," "*How to Boil Water*" and "*Tyler's Ultimate*."

"I'm here for you guys tonight," Florence said to those who showed up for his specially prepared meal. "You guys do a wonderful job out here and I know everyone back home misses you."

More than 120 service members and their families came to Florence's dinner at the base Chief Petty Officer's Club. The meal offered a variety of foods ranging from American southern-style cornbread to a dessert of ice cream with a topping of butter sauce.

"It's awesome to be able to have Tyler come out here," said Chief Electronics Technician (SS) Trent Shaw. "Out here we don't have certain things from back home and we sometimes lose a sense of America and Tyler helped bring that back to us."

The famous chef signed autographs, took pictures with fans and chatted with his fans for two hours before preparing dinner.

"I think a lot of Sailors here enjoy having celebrities on base and getting involved in activities they do," said Master-at-Arms 3rd Class Christopher Roybal. "It gives us a tie to the states."

Florence also visited the *USS George Washington* (CVN 73) and spent time talking food with the ship's culinary specialists.

(Right) Celebrity Chef Tyler Florence signs an autograph for ETC Trent Shaw, of Virginia Beach, Va., after preparing a meal for Sailors at the Chief Petty Officer's Club on board Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka March 31. More than 120 service members and their families attended the special dinner.

"I'm here to see the military in action," said Florence, "how it flows and how wonderfully everyone gets along and what a great big family and organization it is."

Chili Cook-Off warms up relations with Yokosuka neighbors

Story and photo by MCSN Mike R. Mulcare, Navy Public Affairs Support Element Japan

Chili cooks from Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) turned up the heat March 28 for the first ever Chili Cook-Off contest at the annual U.S. – Japan Spring Festival.

The contest gave area residents and commands an opportunity to compete in a friendly competition heated by flavorful homemade recipes.

The Chili Cook-Off was judged by five electorates charged with sampling and grading each entry, which ranged from white chili to rabbit meat submissions.

Keeping with the cultural exchange goal of the day, Yokosuka city's Vice Mayor Satomi Hirokawa served as a special guest judge of the event.

"I really love American western movies and every scene I see families eating chili," Hirokawa said. "I've always wanted to taste it and today I was able to taste many different homemade style chilis, so it was a wonderful opportunity."

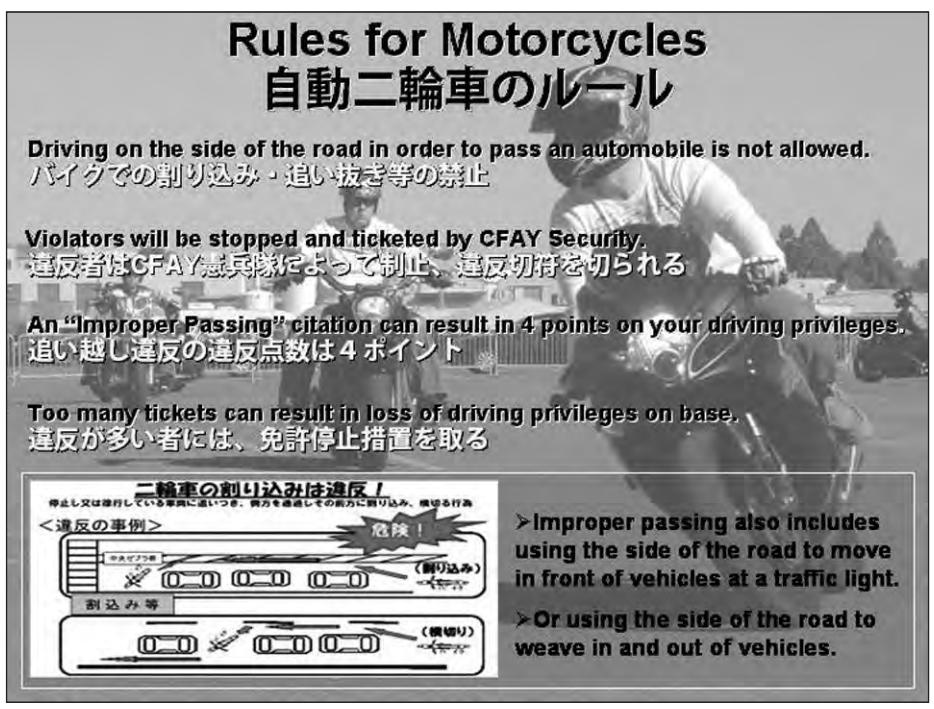
While judges reveled in the experience, competitors were equally happy to share their culinary masterpieces.

"It's a high honor to have the vice mayor eat and enjoy my chili," said Port Operations Chief Warrant Officer Jeff Lindaman, whose California Sunshine Chili took top honors. "I heard through the grapevine that the mayor even tried my chili and really liked it too."

Introducing American-style cuisine to Japanese neighbors is not an uncommon practice for Yokosuka area Sailors. In the recent past, U.S. Navy leadership in Yokosuka shared Navy Burger and New York Style Cherry Cheesecake recipes with host-city leaders as a token of friendship.

Judges taste and record the scores of contestants at the inaugural Chili Cook-Off contest at Commander Fleet Activities Yokosuka (CFAY) March 28. The Chili Cook-Off, part of the U.S. – Japan Spring Festival, was judged by five tasters including Yokosuka Vice Mayor Satomi Kirokawa and CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Weed.

"Last year the city of Yokosuka, with the introduction of the Navy Burger, sold more than 100,000 burgers with a grand total of 1.25 million dollars in revenue," said CFAY Commanding Officer Capt. Daniel Weed. "Events where we offer new foods to our neighbors are not insignificant events."

The Spring Festival open base event, which has been held annually for 17 years, allows curious Japanese neighbors the opportunity to come on base to interact with Sailors and sample each other's culture. This is usually in the form of enjoying the beauty of blooming cherry blossoms, sampling food, enjoying live music or participating in sporting events as friends and neighbors.

"The open base events are probably the most important things we do here," said Weed. "Many of us understand how our ships, aircraft and ground forces protect the country, but it's very cold and sterile. This shows our very best qualities of the American people and it brings a bond that will never be broken."