

# FGL Community Newsletter



## Best noodle recommendations for students in Sendai!

Get some electrolytes and ice cream, turn on the A.C.  
and sit together for the FGL newsletter summer edition

# Summer



COMFORT FOOD FOR STUDENTS IN SENDAI  
THE HISTORY OF TOHOKU UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL  
CELEBRATION OF SUMMER IN SENDAI



# *The History of TUIF - Tohoku University International Festival*

*Robert Szymon Wrobel*

Japan is a country of festivals. Each season and region has their own unique festivals. Some of them are known nationwide and attract hundreds of thousands of people, like the Sendai Tanabata Festival. Some are much smaller, like our local Shiogama Minato Festival. Tohoku University is no different, having many festivals throughout the whole year. But one of them stands out - the Tohoku University International Festival, also known as TUIF and 国際祭り.

But why is TUIF so special? It's because it is entirely organized by the students! Specifically, out of the initiative of the Tohoku University Foreign Students Organization (TUFSA). What is more, it is one of the biggest cultural exchange events in the entire Tohoku region, with a few thousand people visiting it every time!

The festival started in 1986, by Glenn Mansfield Keeni, and has happened continuously almost every year since then. Interestingly, TUIF was initially a Tohoku University Indian festival; however, after a few years it was converted into an international festival. TUIF will return on October 12th, 2025, after a 2-year break, with the theme "Passport to the World."

But what actually happens in TUIF? The international festival is all about enjoying each other's culture, making friends, and celebrating the wonderful diversity of Tohoku's student body. The 3 main sections—the food stalls, cultural booths, and the main stage—give students the opportunity to represent their countries and regions. Coming to the festival means that you get to try food from regions of the world you never thought you would try or see a dance performance which can be seen in only one distant region of the world! On top of that, you will have the opportunity to try out some traditional clothes or enjoy a unique art technique in the cultural booths. And all of that is organized by the students!

Furthermore, you can be more than just a participant! You can be a volunteer to help out in one of the food stalls on the day of, cultural booths, and other activities! TUIF is an event organized by the people, for the people, and that is what I think makes it such a memorable experience! The festival will be held on the lawn in front of Tohoku University Centennial Hall (Kawauchi Hagi Hall). See you there!



# *Comfort Food for Students in Sendai*

*Chonmabhum (I-nam) Chaisrisawatsuk*  
*Bravery Sebastian Tjahjanto*

Once again, summer—the season of youth—comes to an end, ushering in a new season along with a fresh batch of FGL students. Many new faces are going to go through a brand-new chapter in their lives, living abroad by themselves for the very first time. As new students try to settle into these unfamiliar surroundings, one of the best ways I found to help make a foreign place feel like home is food. Whether finding a place to quickly eat between campuses or planning a long weekend outing, immersing yourself in local delicacies is a surefire way to make Sendai feel like home.

Whenever you're in a hurry to grab lunch between campuses, one of the best ways to fill your stomach is through this long-standing Japanese classic from the Edo period: standing soba shops. A favorite especially among businessmen who don't have much time to eat lunch away from their companies, eating at a standing soba shop offers quick service with minimal social interaction (perfect for shy people.) Almost all standing soba shops are cramped, but regulars don't expect comfort or elegant interiors. What they want is speedy, cheap, and simple food.

A standing soba place I recommend around central Sendai is “Soba no Kanda.” With five locations along the metro Tozai Line, the chain mainly offers kakesoba (かけそば)—a bowl of hot or cold soba noodles. Just walk in, buy a ticket from the vending machine for the type of soba and toppings you want, hand it to the counter, and let them know whether you prefer soba or udon. Within a few minutes, your ticket will be called, and you'll be served a quick, delicious bowl of soba. The general price range is between 400 to 700 yen per meal and it operates every day between 7AM and 1AM.





For something heartier, another option that university students often flock to is the relatively cheap yet very filling abura soba (油そば)—a dry noodle dish made with a shoyu-tare base, lard, aromatic oil, and various toppings. Thought to have originated in Tokyo in the 1950s, abura soba became a staple among university students thanks to its large portions and cheap price. According to a 1997 Weekly Asahi interview, going out to eat abura soba is considered a rite of passage for incoming freshmen at Asia University—one of the theorized birthplaces of the dish.



If you're looking for good abura soba spots in Sendai, one place you shouldn't miss is Menya Masamune. Opened in 2014, the shop offers the classic abura soba topped with flavorful chashu pork. Another recommendation is Ganso Aburado, a newer restaurant that opened in December 2024. It offers a modern take on abura soba, with toppings ranging from the traditional eggs and spring onion to more unique choices like parmesan cheese. They also offer a complimentary condiment bar in front of each seat, stocked with a wide variety of toppings to customize your bowl. The general price range is between 1100 to 2500 yen per meal, and it operates every day between 11:30AM and 11:50PM.



# *Celebration of Summer in Sendai*

*Maximilian Fernaldy*

In Sendai, summer is more than just heat and humidity. In summer, the city is filled to the brim with color and energy, offering visitors and residents unique memories and experiences every year. Here's three of the city's most exciting summer events (in our opinion!), and how to join in the fun.

To start us off, we have the fireworks festival. It takes place annually on August 5th, and most people watch on the banks of the Hirose River, near Nishi Park (paid entrance). This festival marks the beginning of Tanabata Festival, lighting up the sky above Sendai with thousands of fireworks. Although this event is particularly popular with couples, people also come with their friends and families to enjoy the show. If you're thinking of going, be sure to arrive early, because people can sometimes arrive hours early to reserve spots, especially in the more popular places like Nishi Park. Also, don't forget to bring a picnic mat or something to sit on, some snacks, and cold drinks to fight the heat. If you're in the festive mood, you could also wear a yukata, but casual clothes are fine too. The crowds can be pretty overwhelming, and cell service is not great in some spots, so make sure to plan meeting spots ahead of time!

The day after the fireworks festival, the Sendai Tanabata Festival begins. From August 6th to 8th, the shopping arcades in downtown Sendai are decked out with paper decorations, and something especially worth looking out for is the fukinagashi, which are long, colorful paper streamers handmade from washi paper. Many local businesses will make a new one every year, and each one is unique. In recent years, Tohoku University has held a culture class on the Tanabata Festival, where students work together to design and make their own fukinagashi, which will take part in the festival, too. Although the arcades are crowded almost every weekend, it is especially so on August 6th to 8th, so go early or later in the evening if you're planning to take pictures. There will be food stalls around the Aoba-dori Ichibancho station area, so be sure to try local specialties like zunda mochi or grilled squid!

Finally, we have the Bon Odori and smaller neighborhood summer festivals. Although they might not be as grand as the others we've talked about, they have their own charm, and personally, I find the food to be as good, if not better. As for the time and place, they can vary by neighborhood, but come summertime, organizers will usually put up posters on information boards detailing when and where they will happen, so keep a look out for those. Some will also be announced on the city's official website. For example, there are summer festivals at Tsutsujigaoka Park and Dainohara Forest Park around mid to late August. If you're going to one, be sure to bring cash, because most stalls won't take cards.

So, what do you think? Will we be seeing you in the crowd this summer?



# Hidden Gems: Summer Festivals of the Tohoku Region

*Alicia Adrian, Pavarit Phanichkul*

The Tohoku region consists of 6 prefectures in the Northwest part of Japan; Aomori, Akita, Iwate, Miyagi, Yamagata, and Fukushima. Sendai, the capital of Miyagi Prefecture, is well-known for one of its festivals; the Sendai Tanabata Festival, which is held annually on August 6 - 8.

Of course, the Tanabata Festival isn't the only charming aspect of the summer season. Mr. Robert is a Tohoku university student who is planning to do a "Summer Festival" road trip around the Tohoku region with his friends before coming back to participate in the Sendai Tanabata festival. Unfortunately, he does not have the complete information for each festival. Find out which festivals belong to which regions and when they are celebrated!

		Prefecture					Name of festival				
		Aomori	Akita	Iwate	Yamagata	Fukushima	Hanagasa	Kanto	Morioka Sansa Dance	Nebuta	Waraji
Starting date of festival (August)	1st										
	2nd										
	3rd										
	5th						✓				
	First Friday										
Name of festival	Hanagasa										
	Kanto										
	Morioka Sansa Dance										
	Nebuta										
	Waraji										



The first hint has been provided and used for you. Use the rest of the clues provided below to complete the information and help Mr. Robert plan his trip!

~~Ex. The festival that starts on August 5th is the “Hanagasa” festival.~~

1. The name of the festival held in Yamagata is either “Hanagasa” or “Nebuta”.
2. Between Iwate and Aomori, one prefecture holds their festival starting from August 2nd and the other prefecture’s festival is the “Morioka Sansa Dance” festival.
3. The festival held in Fukushima either starts from the First Friday of August or is called the “Kanto” festival.
4. The festival held in Iwate isn’t the “Nebuta” festival.
5. The “Nebuta” festival, the festival held in Fukushima, the festival that starts on August 1st, and the festival that starts on August 3rd are all separate festivals.
6. The festival held on August 3rd is the “Kanto” festival.

Answer key:

Aomori - Nebuta - 2nd  
Akita - Kanto - 3rd  
Iwate - Morioka Sansa Dance - 1st  
Yamagata - Hanagasa - 5th  
Fukushima - Waraji - First Friday

Thank you for reading the summer 2025 issue of the FGL Community Newsletter! See you next season!