



I Spy!

A couple of years ago I mentioned my local bakery in one of these stories, and for today's episode we'll head back there again. It's a pretty small bakery, and they aren't usually very busy, but they do still have a bit of a rush around lunch time. I have learned that on days when the local schools are closed, I have to arrive at the bakery a bit earlier than otherwise, if I want to make sure of a good selection of items. (This is because children here in Japan get lunch at school, and on those days when the school is on holiday, it's up to the mothers to fix lunch, resulting in longer lines at the bakery.)

The bakery people know this of course, and they plan their offerings for any given day with the school schedule in mind. The school timetable isn't the only thing they have to consider though, as the weather also seems to have a strong impact on their business. When it's raining, there seem to be fewer customers. I would guess that this is because on rainy days, mothers don't make the rounds of the local shops by bicycle, but use their cars, and end up doing all their shopping at the supermarket on the other side of the river.

Today was a school holiday, but also a rainy day, so before I headed out to pick up my own lunch, I tried to calculate what the best time would be - early, because of the holiday, or a bit later, because of the rain? Well, there was no way to guess it accurately, so I went down there right at twelve, just in 'the middle'.

It turned out that my careful calculation had been for nothing. The staff had been having problems with their equipment during the morning, and they were running behind schedule. The day's loaves were still in the oven. The girl behind the counter said that it would be 'around 20 minutes' before they would be ready.

Well, I didn't feel like riding my bike over to the supermarket in the rain, so I decided to wait. I had no newspaper or anything to read, but 20 minutes isn't all that long, so I took a chair at one of the small tables; after all, what's 20 minutes when at the end of it you get a 'prize' of a hot steaming loaf!

Now I well know what most people these days do when they are in this situation - forced to wait for something, they whip out their cell phone and get busy. Messaging, email, games, web browsing ... these are all available on phones here nowadays, so a phone owner is never in a position with 'nothing to do'. I have yet to purchase a cell phone though, as I so rarely leave my workshop that I really have no need for one, so that option was not available to me. I could, I suppose, have nodded my head and drowsed until the bread was ready, but this isn't a train carriage - I don't think the bakery people would have appreciated my nodding off!

And then I had a little flash of inspiration. I remembered my 'daddy' days - what would I have done in this situation when I had little kids in tow? No problem! Just start up one of the little games that my parents played with me all those years ago. I started to play 'I Spy'!

Do you know the game? People in the group take turns posing a little challenge to the others. "I spy, with my little eye, something that begins with (... looking around ...) the letter 'A'" The others then have to guess what it is. The one making a correct guess then poses the next question, and so on, and so on, until the kids finally run out of ideas. It usually lasts a good 20 minutes or so, and I'm pleased to report that so it was today.

Because I was by myself, I couldn't challenge anybody, but contented myself with working through the alphabet finding objects in sequence. I think that 'X' and 'Z' might have caused big problems, but I never got that far - my fresh loaf arrived in the nick of time, just when I was finishing 'V'. (I had been a bit stuck on that, and was considering whether or not 'variety' would be acceptable, but finally noticed an air vent on one wall ... saved!)

Childish? Maybe, but it was a most pleasant wait, and, the hot loaf was all the more tasty for it!

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