

Sakura Ishadoh

"Would you rather..."

Good morning everyone! I am Sakura Ishadoh. Today is such a nice day with the sun and the breeze and we can feel the summer ending and autumn kicking in. Okinawa's beach party season is almost over...

I'm pretty sure a lot of you went to a beach party last summer, I also attended one. There you can meet up with friends, swim in the ocean, eat some grilled burgers and hotdogs, BBQs, yakisoba, and many other awesome foods, and just have a good time. After the party, you're full and a little exhausted, but you still have to clean up the place. Unfortunately, some people don't clean up after themselves and just leave everything behind, things like (show and say names). I don't want to just talk about plastic litter, I want to talk about the whole issue of using disposable tableware.

Do all of you go to the School Union? At lunch time I see people buying curry there and carrying it around the school in plastic bowls instead of eating it in the Union, using the ceramic plates. I am also guilty of this, because I love drinking tea and coffee from Maki-san's cafe, and I usually get a plastic take-out cup. Disposables have made our lives much easier now, but behind the bright side, there is always a dark side. So, what is the dark side? All these things (point at stuff) are having a negative effect on our earth. Did you know that we Japanese snap and use approximately 200 pairs of chopsticks per person every year? That amounts to an estimated 24 billion pairs. That's more than 20 million trees cut down just to make these. Chopsticks are one of the causes of deforestation. And deforestation could lead to the earth losing oxygen, to wild animals losing their habitats, to the increased frequency of landslides, just because we want disposable chopsticks and don't want the inconvenience of carrying our own cutlery around with us.

Another problem with disposables, is that they have to be manufactured. When things are manufactured at a factory, what comes out? Smoke and other emissions full of Carbon Dioxide. Carbon dioxide or Co2 for short, is one of the chief causes of global warming. And then, after we use these disposable

products, we throw them away into the garbage can. After that, they are brought to the incinerator and burned and guess what? Burning them releases even more carbon dioxide. So even if we responsibly dispose of these things, there are still environmental problems. But what happens when we don't even bother to throw them in the garbage? Like all the trash left after the beach party.

Do you all like eating sushi, or just fish in general? I do. Well there is a pretty high possibility that fish might disappear from our dinner table. As a lot of you might already know, there are millions of tonnes of plastic garbage going into the ocean every year. Some of it is the stuff we leave on the beach. This plastic, as time goes by, breaks down into small particles called "microplastic". These microplastics are being eaten by fish and then we humans eat the fish and we could be ingesting the microplastics without even knowing. If this continues, we won't be able to eat fish anymore.

Disposables are causing damage not only to the earth and to marine life but also to our own health. Let's go back to these chopsticks again. They look nice because they are made by soaking wood in preservatives, bleach, acids and a chemical called Sulfur dioxide. This is one of the sources of air pollution and it can cause asthma and other respiratory diseases.

So to summarize disposable tableware definitely saves us time, makes our lives much easier, in the short term. BUT we have to stop using these things. Would you rather risk the earth, the lives of the wild animals, the health of your family, your loved ones, and yourself. Or would you rather take 10 minutes out of your life to wash your dishes? Thank you for listening.