



## THE CHALLENGE

# Living out of vending machines in Tokyo

—Japan's five million vending machines aren't just full of lollies and soft drink – you can trade coins for batteries, eggs, fruit and even toilet paper. David Allegretti has 24 hours in Tokyo, a handful of loose change and a mission to seek them all out. The twist? He won't eat or drink anything unless it's dispensed from a machine. Can he stomach it?—

8AM

**Bottled water \$1.50**

Yes, I know – a boring choice for stop numero uno of my fun-filled mechanistic culinary adventure through Japan's capital but hear me out. Your body needs water first thing in the morning.

**WHERE?** Pretty much every vending machine in Toyko.

8.12AM

**Suntory Boss coffee \$1.40**

Now, onto the good stuff. Specifically, the silky smooth, artificially flavoured brown liquid brought to you by Boss. Who is Boss? No-one really knows but what I can tell you is that his face is plastered over more than 20 varieties of canned coffee, all of which taste about the same. I go for Premium Boss and I wouldn't have it any other way.

**WHERE?** Like water, you're never too far from a Boss coffee in this city.

9.15AM

**Super banana \$2.30**

Inside the magnificent banana vending machine, you'll find there are two price points: \$1.90 for the standard banana and \$2.30 for a "super" banana. I don't know the difference but I go for the super banana. I think it's slightly bigger but I'll never know for sure. For those playing at home, the machine is kept at the optimum banana temperature of 13°C – and it shows. That was a quality banana.

**WHERE?** Near Shibuya Station.

9.21AM

**Pokka Lifeplus Vitamin \$1.60**

Japanese winters are unforgiving. Or maybe I'm soft. Whatever the case, I feel a cold coming on so I'm stoked to stumble upon a machine offering what look to be vitamin C drinks. I down a nice lemon-flavoured immune booster and I'm on my way.

**WHERE?** Around the corner from the super banana vending machine.

9.49AM

**Bourbon Slowbar \$1.50**  
**Funwari Chocolate Cake \$1.50**

I don't know what a Slowbar is but it tastes bloody amazing. Ditto for the white chocolate cake bar.

**WHERE?** Shibuya.

10.30AM

**Blueberry crêpes \$1.75**

Light. Fluffy. Subtle. Well done.

**WHERE?** Near Ueno Station.

11.00AM

**Pocari Sweat \$1.75**

There are two types of people: those who like Pocari Sweat and those who haven't tasted Pocari Sweat. If you fall into the latter, here's a run-down. It's a sweet sports beverage, marketed as an "ion supply" drink that mimics the chemical composition of human sweat. Hydration never tasted so good.

**WHERE?** Everywhere. I wouldn't trust a machine that didn't dispense Pocari.

12.56PM

**Bourbon Choco Brownie \$1.40**

This was good – really good.

**WHERE?** Akihabara.

2.04PM

**Cheese sticks \$1.75**

Squishy, highly processed, salty and hardly a trace of real cheese to be found. These tasted exactly as I hoped they would.

**WHERE?** Harajuku.

3.22PM

**Pepsi Refresh Shot \$1.60**

My eyelids are getting heavy, so what better than a half-size Pepsi with twice the caffeine to wake me from my impending slumber? Don't bother answering – I can't hear you. Let me tell you this, though – a Refresh Shot isn't as exciting as I hoped. It just tastes like regular Pepsi but with extra jitters.

**WHERE?** Shibuya Station.

5.00PM

**Yona Yona Ale \$3.65**

I stop in the old neighbourhood of Nippori with a pal of mine and decide to enjoy a nice, early evening beer the Japanese way – on the street. We perch on a bench near the vending machine and crack open a Yona Yona Ale, a pleasant little pale ale alternative to the big four beers – Suntory, Sapporo, Asahi and Kirin.

**WHERE?** Nippori.

5.29PM

**Suiyoubi no Neko beer \$3.65**

With peak-hour people-watching and the sun setting in this picturesque area, it would be rude not to stay for another drink. This time I go with the Belgian white ale Suiyoubi no Neko, which translates to "Wednesday cat".

**WHERE?** Nippori.

8.09PM

**Corn soup \$1.60**

I was expecting this to taste foul but I was pleasantly surprised. Thank you, Japan, for your delicious corn soup in a can. I could have downed five more of these.

**WHERE?** Tokyo Station surrounds.

8.14PM

**Tomato soup \$1.60**

Buoyed by the unforeseen deliciousness of the canned corn soup, I throw myself towards its neighbour. Big mistake. The contents of my can were less tomato soup and more lukewarm salty water. I had two sips before trashing it.

**WHERE?** Tokyo Station surrounds.

9.07PM

**Ice cream \$1.90**

I'd heard rumours of a lettuce vending machine near Tokyo Station but after an hour of searching bore no fruit – er... vegetables, I give up and go one better – ice cream. I find an ice cream vending machine. Amazing! The chocolate mint waffle ice cream sandwich I opt for? Not so amazing.

**WHERE?** Tokyo Station surrounds.

By this point, I'm feeling kind of sick. I can't imagine why. Anyway, the moral of the story is... um, Japan has vending machines – more than Australia. But maybe don't eat exclusively from them or you'll end up with a stomach-ache.