

## Learning to Say “Maa Ikka” More

Imagine you went to a restaurant and ordered spaghetti, but you had gyoza brought to your table. Or the hot coffee you ordered came with two straws. What would you think? You might think, “What a terrible restaurant!” or “I’m never coming back here again!”

There is a restaurant where mistakes like these happen all the time, but it’s a happy place, full of smiles and laughter. At this restaurant, 37% of orders are mistaken, but 99% of customers say they don’t mind at all.

The restaurant is called the “Restaurant of Mistaken Orders”. What makes this restaurant special is that all the waiting staff are people who are suffering from dementia, meaning they have difficulty remembering things or making judgements.

When I first visited this restaurant, I ordered a glass of Calpis with my meal. After asking three times, my drink finally arrived, but I felt something was wrong. It was a strange color. She had brought me Calpis syrup by mistake.

At the time, I was worried about what to say to the staff member about my drink. Finally, I thought, “Maa, Ikka,” or in English, “Oh, well.” With my mother’s help, I diluted the syrup with water, and we had five glasses of Calpis. How lucky I was to go to the Restaurant of Mistaken Orders!

I think all of you have used the phrase “Maa, Ikka.” Perhaps you say it when you have to do something you don’t want to do, and you give up and do it anyway. I think it often has a negative meaning. On the other hand, when I make a mistake and my friends say this to me, it makes me feel better.

For me, by saying “Maa, Ikka”, we are forgiving others for making mistakes. I am very forgetful and I often used to punish myself for it. However, after visiting this restaurant, I started to use this phrase more when I and others make mistakes.

At the Restaurant of Mistaken Orders I learned that it’s possible for us to create a society where people can naturally accept each other’s mistakes. Making mistakes is one special characteristic of humans. The waiting staff all have dementia, so customers can appreciate this even more. They don’t get upset when something with their order is wrong. They learn to shrug it off with a smile.

My experience eating at this restaurant has taught me that we’re not perfect and we don’t have to be perfect. Mistakes are not necessarily a bad thing. Unless of course, you are making a speech! So, the next time you make a mistake or mess something up, don’t feel bad about yourself. Instead, try to say “Maa, Ikka.” Then you can start to move on and discover what you should do next.

The Restaurant of Mistaken Orders started in Japan, but it’s now open in the UK, South Korea, and China. I hope it opens in more countries, and the feeling of open-minded caring and communication I experienced in the restaurant can continue to spread around Japan and the world.

I’m sure many of you would now like to go to the Restaurant of Mistaken Orders too, so I’ll tell you where it is... It’s... Oh, I’ve forgotten. Maa, Ikka!