



## Osechi Ryori (おせち料理)

Osechi are special Japanese foods, eaten during the first three days of the New Year's season. Traditionally, during the last few days of the previous year, Japanese women prepare enough of these special preserved foods to last 3 days, so that they can take a break from daily cooking during the New Year holiday.

Typical foods include sweet black beans (黒豆: kuro-mame), rolled kelp (ごぶ巻き: gobumaki), preserved fish boiled in soy sauce (田作り: tazukuri), sweet rolled omelets (伊達巻き), and many other foods. Cooked radishes, carrots, spinach and other vegetables are also served. Mashed sweet potatoes and sweetened chestnuts (栗きんとん: kurikinton) is one of the most popular dishes. To add color, kamaboko (蒲鉾), a kind of fish paste colored red and white, is sliced and served as a garnish. Delicious herring roe and lobsters are also served as main dishes. These foods are put in jubako (重箱), layered square lacquerware boxes with dividers.



## Nengajo (年賀状)

Sending New Year's greeting cards is now a custom similar to sending holiday cards. This custom originated from filial duties of the New Year. During feudal times, on the morning of New Year's Day, the heads of branch families used to go to the house of the main family, to pay

respects and the main family used to serve sake (酒) and food to them. This custom came to include friends and acquaintances. Then, the postal service developed during the Meiji Period (1868-1912), and sending greetings by postcards became popular. Frequently, the year's animal is pictured on these cards (2002 is the year of the Horse). They are delivered in great bundles on the morning of New Year's Day.

## Otoshidama (お年玉)

Otoshidama originated with the idea of dividing the good fortune granted by the gods. Each visitor to a shrine was given a small stone. The stones were called toshidama, year's gem. It is said that the stones protected their holders for the whole year. In modern Japan, many parents give their children money as otoshidama (average total monetary gifts per elementary and secondary school child was about \$300 in 1991 according to Nihon Seimei). Visitors on New Year's Day also present some money to children. This may be why many Japanese children happily welcome their relatives and acquaintances that day. It is only during the New Year's season that children receive a large amount of money. Generally otoshidama also includes small gifts, such as towels given by merchants.

## Kadomatsu (門松)



The kadomatsu, a pair of pine boughs originally intended to welcome the ancestral spirits, is now used to decorate the gates of homes during the New Year's season. It is a combination of pine boughs, bamboo shoots, and plum sprigs. These three symbolize good fortune and are abbreviated sho-chiku-bai (松竹梅). The pine is evergreen, symbolizing long life. Bamboo grows upright even when loaded with heavy snow— it is straight and tenacious. The plum tree blossoms in spite of the cold weather. These trees are used for kadomatsu, representing the hope for long life, constancy, and prosperity. Usually a pair of kadomatsu is displayed symmetrically at gates. Japanese people begin decorating their homes with kadomatsu around December 28<sup>th</sup>. All decorations are taken down around January 7<sup>th</sup>.

## Why Get Up

### *Starting and Continuing on the Path*

Wendy K Haidukewych

I have been training in Aikido for four months now. I initially became interested in the art not for self-defense but more for the spiritual nature of Aikido. Being a wife and mother of two young, energetic children the idea of connecting with a greater energy, and being more centered, peaceful, and loving, had true appeal to me.

I eagerly look forward to class each week as it is “my time” to learn and grow. Yet frequently, after a long day of work, I feel mentally and physically unprepared for class. During training when I have been thrown and am lying on the mat the question often arises, “why get up?”. It’s comfortable down here I don’t have to move, or push myself to go on, to try harder, and it feels good to finally just rest.

In the short time I’ve been training I’ve had a glimpse of the awesome power that lies within each of us; the pleasant feeling when you match with your partner’s energy during a technique, and really feel the blend. My training has become energizing, exhilarating, and it motivates me to continue down the path in an effort to tune into that greater power. Before class I feel as though I am ready to sleep for the night, and after class I often feel positively rejuvenated.

I have noticed that my Aikido training has carried beyond the mat into other aspects of my life. I find myself better able to blend with my husband and children in a more loving, peaceful way. I still get frustrated when things don’t go well in my daily life, or when there is friction between others and myself. Aikido philosophy teaches me to “blend” in all such situations.

I know that if I don’t get up I will lose the opportunity to connect. We all have the choice to stay on the mat, but in doing so would be to give up on ourselves and miss the opportunity to learn and grow along the path.

I choose to get up.



## Teachings of Aikido

*Advice from the Masters*

“Welcome that which comes at you, adhering to it and making it adhere to you, like sticky rice cakes, never competing, never conflicting, and send that which pulls you on its way. In any encounter, make your own energy one with that of your partner, for in becoming one with him it becomes effortless to convince him of the love you offer.”

~ Ueshiba Morihei O-Sensei



“This path is not one by which we fight and destroy others using physical strength or lethal weapons. It is a path by which to bring the world into harmony, to unify the whole of humanity as one family; a path of service upon which every practitioner is part of the august working of love and takes part in bringing all that there is into great harmony... Only through these do we add to ourselves the power of the universe and become in accord with it.”

~ Ueshiba Morihei O-Sensei



“Form, in all sense of the word, is secondary. Concentrate rather on using form as a place to awaken the higher spirit of your heart and mind.”

~ Ueshiba Morihei O-Sensei



“If your partner has great breath power, then melt into that greater power and allow it to foster and nurture you, so that you can become greater. If your partner’s breath power is less than your own, then take that lesser power within yours and foster and nurture it so that your partner can become greater.”

~ Nishio Shoji Sensei (1997 AJ#111)



“The greatest strength is the accumulation of virtue. This means being strict with yourself and devoting yourself sincerely to self-discipline and training.”

~ Shioda Gozo Sensei

