

## *New Year's in Japan*

「 日本のお正月 」

In Japan, the start of a new year is called “*o-shōgatsu*,” and the first day of a year is referred to as the “*ganjitsu*.” *O-shōgatsu* is very important to Japanese people. A lot of celebrations and events held for *o-shōgatsu* are based around Japanese traditions and often have a strong religious influence. In this month's *Living In Miyazaki*, we'd like to explain a little bit about Japanese New Year's celebrations.



### Getting Ready for *O-shōgatsu*

Firstly, on December 13<sup>th</sup>, preparations begin with a thorough cleaning, called “*susubarai*.” Since it is believed that the deities like cleanliness, it is said that you will have better luck the more you purify (i.e. clean) your home.



After the cleaning, a decoration called a “*shime kazari*” is put up to show that the deities are welcome, and in the entranceway, another decoration made with pine branches called a “*kadomatsu*” is displayed, as the pine tree is regarded as sacred.

Inside, the space the deities are said to occupy is decorated with some “*Kagami mochi*”. Mochi are made from rice, which is revered as a sacred plant, and so the mochi are placed somewhere where they won't be disturbed, or in a high place. People also prepare food, called “*o-sechi*” to show their hospitality to the deities.



### How to Celebrate *Ganjitsu*

On the morning of the first day of the year, people want to show their gratitude and wish congratulations for having welcomed the deities properly, and so greet their families with a hearty “*akemashite omedetō*.”

The day is also celebrated by eating “*o-zōni*” (a soup made from mochi simmered with various vegetables), and *o-sechi*.



As a lot of people start the new year with hopes and dreams of what they want to achieve, many people pray while watching the first sunrise of the year, or go to a shrine.

There is also the custom of giving money as a present to children in a special envelope, called “*o-toshi dama*.” Many children look forward to their *o-toshi dama*!



We would like to wish everyone a Happy New Year, and all the best for 2021.

If you have any questions, comments or suggestions about this column, please contact the Miyazaki International Foundation:

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If you have any worries, questions, concerns or anything you would like to talk about in your daily life here in Miyazaki, feel free to contact the Miyazaki Support Center for Foreign Residents any time:

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