

The History of Hina Matsuri

Amazingly, we are already two months into 2020! In this month's Living In Miyazaki, we will teach you a little bit about Hina Matsuri, which is celebrated on March 3rd (plus, since peach blossoms bloom this time of year, the festival is also sometimes referred to as "*momo no sekku*" – literally "The Peach Festival"). Nowadays, hina matsuri is celebrated as a festival to honor girls. However, the origins of the celebration are actually deeply rooted in "*jōshi sekku*," rituals performed to pray for blessings such as bountiful harvests, protection from disease and disaster and auspicious lives for children which involved making offerings to the gods and exorcising evil spirits.



Jōshi Sekku and Hina Asobi

In ancient China, the 3rd day of the 3rd month on the lunar calendar was defined as a day for performing exorcism rituals and *misogi* (purification ceremonies) by rivers. This custom made its way to Japan around the 7th to 9th Century, and during the Heian period (the late 8th to 11th century), became known as "*jōshi no sechie*." This ritual involved making 人形- *hitogata* – human-shaped objects made of paper, wood or earth, and allowing them to be washed away in the river in place of a person's impurity. Soon after this, the practice of "*hina asobi*," or playing house, became popular among children of wealthy families. The word "*hina*" means "small and adorable." It then followed that the dolls used for "*jōshi no sechie*" and "*hina asobi*" started to become more elaborate, and eventually the two customs were combined into the "hina matsuri." Around the start of the Edo period (the early 17th Century), it was also documented that the women in the *Ō-oku* (the inner palace of Edo Castle where women serving the Shogun resided), practiced the "hina matsuri." It is also recorded that whenever a baby girl was born during the Edo period, it was popular practice to celebrate the event with a "hina matsuri." What was originally a ritual to pray for protection from illness and misfortune carried out by men and women both old and young ended up crossing borders and over a long time transformed into a festival to celebrate the birth and pray for the good health and prosperity of girls.

Hina Matsuri / Momo no Sekku

Nowadays, many families decorate their homes during February with "*hina ningyō*"

– the dolls used in the hina matsuri, and peach blossoms, and celebrate the festival on March 3rd by eating chirashi-zushi and clear soup made from clams. People use all kinds of dolls made from all kinds of things to decorate and celebrate the hina matsuri, from elaborate tiered displays to more simple ceramic “*ohina-sama*” dolls and earthen bells. There are hina matsuri doll displays exhibited around Miyazaki Prefecture, too. We’ll list a few of them here – if you have the chance, make sure to go and check them out!



- *Hina Ningyō-ten* Saturday February 15th – Sunday, March 8th
Miyakonojo Shimazu Residence, Miyakonojo
Tel: 0986-23-2116
- *Aya Hinayama Matsuri* Saturday February 22nd – Tuesday, March 3rd
Aya Chuo-dori (central shopping area)
Tel: 0985-77-0017
- *Karikobōzu no Hina Matsuri* Saturday February 1st – Tuesday, March 31st
Various places in Nishimera
Tel: 0983-36-1111
- *Yoshimatsu-tei Hina Matsuri* Wednesday February 5th – Sunday, March 8th
Former Yoshimatsu Residence, Kushima
Tel: 0987-72-6511

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