

Scenes at the end of the year

In just a few days, it will be December. It's that time when you may be busy trying to meet a work deadline to be finished within the year, or with preparations to welcome the new year. Perhaps, amongst the chaos of it all, you feel like all of a sudden it is almost the new year. This article will introduce a few of the famous features of the winter season in December that you may see on TV.

[Osoji] Winter cleaning... from mid-December to the end of the month

In Japan, this winter season cleaning was originally termed 'susuharai', meaning annual cleaning of the house, particularly the firepit, that would happen before the new year. On the 13th December, you can see temples and shrines beginning their 'susuharai' on the TV or the news. However, since most modern homes do not use firewood, the annual winter 'susuharai' changed into general, wide-swept cleaning of the entire house. Since it is difficult to complete this type of deep-clean in one day, most people start in mid-December, following a plan which they continue throughout the month.

[Toji] Winter solstice

It is the time when the day is at its shortest and the night is at its longest. The winter solstice in Miyazaki this year is on the 22nd December (Thursday), when the sun will rise at 7:11AM and set at 5:15PM in the afternoon. Miyazaki, known as 'the south of Japan', will only see the sun for a total of 10 hours and 4 minutes. In saying this, the sunlight in Hokkaido will only last for 9 hours, making the length of the day in Miyazaki one hour longer. There is a tradition to eat pumpkins on the day of the winter solstice, although the season for pumpkins is summer. This is because they can keep for a very long time, and so they are a suitable food for getting all your nutrients in the winter. It is also said that if you take a bath that contains yuzu fruit on this day, that you won't catch a cold in the winter season. The yuzu fruit is shown to be rich in vitamin c, and effective in promoting good blood circulation and preventing colds. Furthermore, hot water and yuzu produces a fresh, invigorating aroma that helps you to relax. If you should have the opportunity, give it a go!



[Joya no Kane] The New Year's Eve bell (that rings 108 times)

When the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve, the sound of temple bells ringing can be heard all over. When you hear this sound, it is a sign that you should repent for and let go of the sins of the past year and welcome the new year with a clean and pure heart. Some temples even allow people unrelated to the temple to use these bells, so if you are interested in being the one to ring one of these bells, please enquire at your local temple.



There are many other activities and events that happen in December. Despite the chaos that comes at the end of the year, try to take time to enjoy the variety of events, and bring the year to a close.

If you have any questions, opinions, or requests about this piece, please contact the Miyazaki International Foundation.

TEL : 0985-32-8457 FAX : 0985-32-8512 Email : miyainfo@mif.or.jp

If you have any questions or queries regarding everyday life, please consult the Miyazaki Support Center for Foreign Residents

TEL : 0985-41-5901 FAX : 0985-41-5902 Email : support@mif.or.jp

※日本語訳は後日、宮崎県国際交流協会のホームページに掲載されます。