

Wishing You a Happy New Year

As the year 2023 comes to a close, this month's issue of Living in Miyazaki invites you to explore Japan's New Year celebrations.

When exactly are Japan's New Year holidays? Many public offices and private companies wrap up the year's work on December 28th and close from the 29th to January 3rd. Thus, this period can generally be referred to as the year-end and New Year holidays. For Japanese people, the New Year's celebration holds significant importance, marking the beginning of a new year with various traditional activities.

The traditional way to spend the year-end days includes:

- 1) After an extensive house cleaning, adorn it with Kagami Mochi (two-tiered sticky rice cakes with an orange on top), Kado Matsu (pine and bamboo decorations), and Shime Nawa (ropes made with rice straw) to welcome the new year with a sense of cleanliness.
- 2) Go shopping to prepare for the traditional New Year's dish called Osechi, where each ingredient carries a happy meaning.
- 3) On Omisoka, or New Year's Eve, await the new year while eating Soba, or buckwheat noodles.



After the New Year arrives:

- 4) Witness the first sunrise of the year, known as Hatsu-Hinode. People offer prayers to the Sun for the wellbeing and happiness of all, as the Sun is revered as the most sacred entity in Shintoism.
- 5) Share Osechi on the morning of January 1st with all family members and drink O-toso, special Sake for New Year's celebration.
- 6) Embark on a Hatsu-moude, a visit to shrines or temples for the first time in the year. During this visit, people express gratitude for the past year and extend wishes for the new year to be a good one. Many individuals undertake Hatsu-moude along with witnessing the first sunrise. In the Kyushu region, Hatsu-moude is usually done by January 7th, and this period is called "Matsu no Uchi".



The New Year holidays provide a wonderful opportunity to reunite with family members and relatives who live apart. While each family has its unique way of celebrating, the common thread is the shared wish for the coming year to be a good one. How do you plan to spend your New Year holidays?

Thank you for reading Living in Miyazaki this year. Wishing you all a wonderful 2024 and looking forward to sharing more stories with you in the coming year.

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

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