

The Harvest Moon—*Chūshū no Meigetsu*

It's still warm outside, but according to the calendar at least, we've moved into autumn. This time of year, the moon shines beautifully in the night sky, captivating people's hearts. September 25, 2026 will be the best night to see the harvest moon, so the theme for this month's *Living in Miyazaki* is moon-viewing.

What is the "Harvest Moon?"

The "Harvest Moon" refers to the moon as viewed on the fifteenth night of the eighth month of the old lunisolar calendar. Viewing the moon, or *tsukimi*, was a popular traditional practice in Japan, which migrated over from China during the Heian period (794-1185 CE). In the Heian period, however, moon-viewing gatherings were an exclusive, refined custom, limited to the nobility of the time. In the Edo period (1603-1868), the practice also became popular among the rest of the population, and was combined with the custom of giving thanks for a successful crop harvest. As a result, it became a tradition to view the moon, make an offering to pray, and give thanks for a bountiful crop harvest.

Dumplings and *Susuki* Grass



Q: Why are there dumplings at moon-viewing gatherings?

A: *Dango* dumplings are round and white, symbolizing the full moon, so they are thought to make a perfect offering to give thanks for the previous year's harvest, and to pray for a good harvest for the coming year, as well as for health and happiness.

Q: Why is *susuki* grass used as an offering?

A: Ideally, rice plants would be preferred as a symbolic offering to give thanks for the harvest, but the rice harvest occurs later in the year than the harvest moon, and so *susuki* grass is used as a decoration instead, as it looks quite similar. It is also believed that the sharp cut edges of the grass help to ward off bad luck.

The sight of the moon shining in the clear autumn sky is bound to make your heart soar.

How about taking some time out to view the moon, and listen to the gentle calls of the insects in the distance?

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

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