

七夕(7月7日)

7月6日の夜から7日にかけて、願いごとを書いた短冊を笹の枝につるした七夕飾りを家の軒先に飾り、願い事をします。

Tanabata (July 7)

Tanabata, the Star Festival, is celebrated on the night of July 6 by writing wishes on strips of colorful paper called *tanzaku* and hanging them along with other decorations on bamboo branches.



五色の短冊

短冊の5色は、鯉のぼりのふき流しと同様、緑=木、赤=火、黄=土、白=金、黒=水という、陰陽五行説からきたもの。

Five-Colored Tanzaku

Symbolic five-colored strips of paper called *tanzaku* are hung on bamboo branches during *Tanabata*. The five colors are green for wood; red for fire; yellow for earth; white for metal; and black for water. These representations are derived from the theory of Yin-yang and the five elements.

織姫星と彦星

七夕は、7月7日に行なわれる祭りですが、星空が美しいのが午前1時頃のため、6日から飾りつけが行われます。起源は、豊作を祈る祭りですが、天の川をはさんで引き離された織姫星と彦星が、年に一度だけ会える、という伝説とともに日本人に親しまれています。

Tanabata Legend

Tanabata, which was originally a festival to pray for a good harvest, is now the celebration of the annual meeting of the couple, *Orihime* (Vega) and *Hikoboshi* (Altair). The two stars, which were separated by *Amanogawa* (the Milky Way), are allowed to meet once a year on the night of *Tanabata*. Because Vega and Altair can be seen beautifully after midnight of the previous day, the bamboo decoration starts on the 6th.



July (Fumitsuki)

「文月」は、短冊に文字を書き、書道の上達を願った七夕の行事に由来。また、稲が影らみつつかある含み月から、という説も。

Fumitsuki (month of letters) is derived from the *Tanabata* festival, a day on which people wished for improvements in their calligraphy. Others say it is derived from *Fukumitsuki*, which translates into "bountiful crops."

浴衣のマナー

浴衣は本来、入浴や湯上り時に着たもの。ホテルや高級レストランなど、かしこまった場に着ていくのは控えて。

女性の場合、裾がはだけたり、脇の穴(身ハツ口)から肌が見えたりしないように、浴衣の下には、着用用の下着(肌じゅばんや裾よけ)を必ずつけましょう。和装の足元は内股が基本。いつもよりしとやかな歩き方を心がけて。

Yukata Etiquette

Yukata literally means a bathing robe, and it was traditionally worn after bathing. Unlike other kinds of *kimono*, a *yukata* is made of cotton and is unlined; thus, it is not appropriate to wear it in a hotel or at a fancy restaurant. Make sure to wear special undergarments, like *hadajuban* (undershirt) and *susoyoke* (petticoat), under a *yukata* so that skin isn't seen through *miyatsukuchi* (openings under the sleeves).

The key to wearing a *yukata* tightly is to keep the body shape straight or cylindrical. In order to level off the body curves, *kimono* brassiere or padding around the waist line might be needed. Walk with toes turned slightly inward to look more elegant.

襟元は必ず左が上になるように。
The left side collar should be out front.

着付けのサービスを提供する美容院もあります。
Some hair salons offer a *yukata*-wearing service to help women wear *yukata*.



お中元

お世話になった人へ贈り物をする習慣。関東は7月1日から7月15日、関西は7月中旬から8月15日の間に持参するか、届くように贈ります。

Ochūgen

Ochūgen is a midsummer gift-giving tradition. People send gifts to bosses, teachers, relatives or anyone to whom they want to express their gratitude. Gifts should be given or delivered between July 1 and July 15 in the *Kantō* region, and mid-July and August 15 in the *Kansai* region.

誰にでも喜ばれるお中元

Popular Gift Ideas

**カタログ**

好きなものを選ぶので、贈られた側も楽しめます。

Catalog

Recipients can choose the item they like from a catalog.

**商品券**

人気が高いが、そっけない印象も与えるので、ちょっとしたお菓子を添えると気持ち伝わりやすく◎。

Gift Certificate

Gift certificates are another popular gift given for *ochūgen*. Send it along with an assortment of sweets, because sending only gift certificates will leave somewhat unfriendly impressions.

**特別お世話になった方**

Someone to whom you want to express extra gratitude (5000yen~10000yen)

親戚や知人

Relatives or Acquaintances (3000yen~4000yen)

お世話になった上司

Bosses and Teachers (Around 5000yen)

お中元の渡し方

相手のお宅を訪問して直接渡すのが正式ですが、デパートなどから配送や宅配便するなどでもOK。その際は、手紙であいさつ状を別に送るか、カードを入れると好印象。

Giving an Ochūgen

It is preferable to visit the home of the recipient and hand the gift directly. However, it is okay to have a department store or a delivery service deliver the gift with a letter or a greeting card.

**日用品**

洗剤、調味料などの生活必需品。日持ちするお茶や海苔なども喜ばれます。

Articles of Daily Necessities

Daily necessities, like assortments of detergents, seasonings, tea leaves or roasted lavers, will make excellent gifts as well.



夏休み

日本の小学生・中学生・高校生にとって、夏休みは、(土地の気候や風土により、期間の長短がありますが)1年で一番長い休暇です。また、日本では、「お盆」の期間に夏休みになる会社、夏休みを取る人も多いです。この時期、盆踊り、夏祭り、花火大会など、夏季の伝統行事も多く行われます。家族で故郷に帰り、過ごす人や家族旅行に出かける人も多くいます。

Summer Vacation

Summer vacation is the year's longest recess for students from elementary to high school. It generally starts at the end of July and lasts until the end of August, though there are some regional differences. Since many companies are closed during *Obon*, many people take vacation from work during this period for family vacations or family events. Traditional summer events like summer festivals, *bon-dance* and fireworks festivals are scheduled during the summer.



暑中見舞い

夏に出す、相手の体調を気づかうあいさつ状。7月20日頃から立秋(8月8日頃)の前日までを「暑中」と言い、立秋を過ぎたら「残暑見舞い」とします。

Shochū-mimai


People send *shochū-mimai*, or midsummer greeting cards, to friends and relatives as an expression of concern for the recipients' health in the heat. *Shochū* (midsummer) is considered to be from around July 20 to the day before *risshū*, which is around August 8. Since *risshū* is the day on which autumn begins in the lunar calendar, the name "*shochū-mimai*" changes to "*zansho mimai*," which means lingering heat greeting, when the greetings are sent after *risshū*.

8月 (葉月)

August (Hazuki)

8月は、旧暦では秋にあたり、「葉の落ちる月＝葉落ち月」が転じて「葉月」になったとする説や、初雁の来る月の「初来」に由来するという説がある。

August is autumn in the lunar calendar, and one theory says that *hazuki* is derived from *ha-ochi-zuki*, or the month of falling leaves. Another theory says it is derived from *hatsuki-zuki*, which means the month when geese first migrate.



お隣りの
じいちゃんも帰って
来ないかな
あとでお隣りに
行ってこよ。

お盆

先祖の霊を供養する仏教行事。8月13日から16日(地方によっては7月13日から16日)に先祖の霊が家に帰ってくる다고されます。お墓や仏壇をキレイにして、先祖の帰宅の準備をします。

Obon

Obon, or *Bon Festival*, is a Buddhist observance to honor the spirits of ancestors. *Obon* lasts from August 13 to 16, or July 13 to 16 in some regions, and it is believed that the spirits of ancestors return to their former homes during this period. People visit and clean ancestral graves and the family altar in order to welcome the spirits.

新盆

家族が亡くなってから最初の盆(新盆)は、故人の好物を供えたりして、とくに手厚い供養が行われます。親族は盆提灯を贈るのが好きですが、最近は「御提灯代」として現金(1~2万程度)を贈る場合も。盆が四十九日の忌明け前の場合は、翌年に持ち越されます。

Niibon

The first *obon* after the death of a family member is called *niibon*, and a special service is held. Relatives generally give *bon-chōchin* lanterns to the family; others give cash instead (10000yen~20000yen).

迎え火・送り火

先祖の霊が迷わず帰ってこられるように「迎え火」を灯し、盆の最終日の夕方に「送り火」で見送ります。

Mukae-bi, Okuri-bi

Small bonfires called *Mukae-bi* (welcoming fire) are lit on the night of August 13 so that the spirits of the deceased won't lose their way home. The other bonfires called *Okuri-bi* (send-off fire) are lit on the last day of *obon*. It is believed that the smoke carries the spirits of the deceased back to the spirit world.

**マメ知識****大文字焼き**

山に「大」の字をかたどった文字を松明の炎で描く「大文字焼き」は、大がかりな送り火のひとつ。京都の五山送り火(ござんのおくりび)が有名です。

Daimonji-yaki

Daimonji-yaki is one of the five giant bonfires lit on the flank of mountains in Kyoto. It is the iconic festival of *obon* and is held on the evening of the 16th.



盆棚の作り方

仏壇の前に小机を置いて、ござやむしろを敷き、仏壇の戸は閉め、位牌や灯明、香炉、鈴などを移します。位牌の前には、なすやきゅうりで作った牛や馬(精霊馬)、キキョウ、萩、ホオズキなどの盆花、水や野菜、果物を供えます。お盆の期間中は毎日盆棚や仏壇の水を取り替え、食事を供え、線香をあげて供養を。14・15日のどちらかで僧侶を呼び読経を上げてもらいます。

※宗教や地方によって異なります Varies by religions and regions.

How to Set Up a Bondana (Spirit Altar)

Place a low table in front of the family altar, and spread matting over it. Move ancestral tablets, votive lights, incense burner and Buddhist bell out from the family altar and place them on the table. Make sure to close the doors of the altar. Offer "bon" flowers like Japanese bellflowers, Japanese clovers and Chinese lantern flowers, water, vegetables and fruit. During the obon period, people exchange water on the altar, offer food and burn incense daily. A Buddhist monk is asked to come and recite sutras either on the 14th or 15th



精霊馬(しょうりょううま)

先祖の霊が「きゅうりの馬」に乗って一刻も早くこの世に帰り、「なすの牛」に乗ってゆっくりにあの世に戻って行ってほしい、という願いが込められています。

Shōryō-Uma (Animal Figurines)

Set up figurines of a cucumber horse and an eggplant cow to provide symbolic transportation for ancestors to and from the house. A horse represents the wish that ancestors will arrive quickly; a cow, that they will take their time leaving.

盆踊り

盆の時期の夜間に広場の中央に「やぐら」を組み、やぐらの上の太鼓の音や音頭にあわせて老若男女が踊る形式が一般的です。踊り子は、揃いの浴衣を着ることもあります。一般参加者は自分の浴衣やカジュアルな平服でもOKです。

Bon-odori

Bon-odori (Bon folk dance festival), a summer tradition, was originally a religious event to send off the spirits of the deceased back to the spirit world. Now, it has become one of the summer festivals held during the obon period. People line in a circle around the wooden tower called *yagura*, and dance to the taiko drums and folk songs played on the *yagura*. Many wear *yukatas* to the bon-odori, especially a community's bon-odori dancers who may wear matching *yukatas*. But anyone can join the circle in ordinary dress.



9月 (長月)

September (Nagatsuki)

徐々に夜が長くなってくる「夜長月」に由来。

Nagatsuki, or long month, is derived from "Yonagazuki," which means the month of long nights.

秋分の日(9月23日頃)

春分の日と同様、昼夜の長さが同じになる時期。秋分の日を中日にはさんだ一週間は、お墓参りをするなど、秋の彼岸供養を行います。

Shūbun-no-Hi (around September 23rd)

Shūbun-no-Hi is Autumnal Equinox Day. Just like the Vernal Equinox Day, daytime and nighttime are of equal length during this period. People visit ancestral graves and honor the deceased during a one-week period in which the Autumnal Equinox Day falls on the middle day.

敬老の日(9月の第3月曜日)

高齢者を敬い、長寿を祝う日。本来は還暦(満60歳)から祝うのが慣わし。身内にお年寄りがいる場合は、本人の好物を並べて食事会をしたり、プレゼントを贈るなどを。

Keirō-no-Hi (the third Monday of September)

Keirō-no-Hi is Respect-for-the-Aged Day. It is the day to honor the elderly, traditionally over 60 years old, and to celebrate their long lives. People give gifts to elderly family members or invite them to a special dinner with their favorite dishes.

月見だんご

だんごの数は、15個または5個。

Tsukimi-Dango (Moon-Viewing Dumplings)

Five or fifteen *tsukimi-dango* are offered. The decoration of *tsukimi-dango* and flowers are set on a small table on the veranda.



秋の七草

ススキ、藤袴、葛、なでしこ、桔梗、おみなえし、萩。

The Seven Autumnal Flowers

Susuki (Pampas grass), *Fujibakama* (Eutrochium), *Kuzu* (Kudzu), *Nadeshiko* (Dianthus), *Kikyō* (Bellflower), *Ominaeshi* (Valerianaceae) and *Hagi* (Japanese clover)

十五夜(9月中旬)

旧暦8月15日の満月を楽しむ風雅な行事。「中秋の名月」ともいわれ、秋の七草ほか、月見だんご、芋などの農作物を飾り、月を祭ります。収穫を感謝する儀式的の意味も。

Jūgo-ya (mid September)

Jūgo-ya, or the 15th night, is the Moon-Viewing Festival celebrated on August 15th in the lunar calendar. It is also called *Chūshū-no-Meigetsu*, or harvest moon. It is the night on which to appreciate the beautiful full moon. *Tsukimi-dango* (moon-viewing dumplings) and vegetables in addition to seven autumnal flowers are offered to the moon. It was originally the festival to appreciate the harvest in autumn.

