



The reasons for the festive period...

RESET, REBOOT, RE-START

Farewell 2024 ! How do you do? 2025



Hatsumode -The first visit of the year to a shrine- at Fushimi Inari

All the fuss for the sake of family? Festival defines the meaning of kindred

あけましておめでとう
ございました？

A Happy New Year 2025...

It's already the beginning of February. Our festive spirits have vanished completely, and almost all households are free from Christmas decorations except the Yuletide lovers.

For the British, Christmas is the biggest annual event for 'Family Gathering', while New Year is the Japanese equivalent.

About two weeks before the New Year's holiday, the population under the Gregorian calendar became in a fever of festivals.

In general, young children literally become 'pink in a fever' because of the excess of excitement.

The teens are frustrated by other people's views of a 'perfect' Christmas and they feel rising tension towards the 'big day' each day.

Then, the middle generations who are the leading figures in running the events, find it impossible to add this to their overstretched life at work and home.

The older generation is still in charge of the protocol in family tradition, but they are no longer capable of running the event as efficiently as before, and their mobility and health are the top issues for a successful festive period.

All of the fuss sounds so exhausting, but without this madness, we really feel missing something!

'But I am sure that I have always thought of Christmas time, when it has come round...as a good time; a kind, forgiving, charitable, pleasant time; the only time I know of, in the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by one consent to open their shut-up hearts freely.
By Charles Dickens

This mad annual ritual has become less relevant among modern nuclear families, nonsocial conformists and broad-minded people.

In the UK, since the late 1990s, when the John Major government amended Sunday trading laws, Boxing Day has become the start of the 'clearance sale.' People rush to shop on Christmas Eve for last-minute gifts and then return the day after Christmas to hunt for bargain deals.

In Japan, in 1996, large supermarket chains Daiei and Ito-Yokado opened the shops on New Year's Day. There was a growing trend for opening on the first of January, and people had no time to be free from consumerism. However, after prolonged recession, in 2018, the Work Style Reform Law was implemented. Together with an economic slump and labour shortage, the number of shops opening on New Year's Day tends to decrease. Besides, the first day of the New Year's sale is delayed to the 2nd or 3rd of the recent year.

However, the festive period is dominated by consumerism, and people follow the traditional conventions with a huge pressure from not only their own family but also people all over the world through social media.

Christmas and New Year are becoming a tedious TASK, and I do understand why some turn their backs on the events completely and just spend this period as 'another day of the rest of the year'.

Having said all that, I still cannot get rid of these stressful habits myself.

This New Year, my sisters' families came over for the New Year and four of them stayed for one week, and the other three stayed for 5 days. It is the curse of the middle daughter and due to my mother's health, I was caught in the toil of house chores all week.



Sazae san, the 3rd January 1947

For the next week, I moaned and moaned about my burden. However, when I recovered from my fatigue, I felt warm satisfaction.

I guess that without this feeling, my New Year won't start properly. Spending the festive period in the UK is also the same. If I don't bake any mince pies, do any Christmas roasting, put up the Christmas tree, and hang up a handmade Christmas wreath, I feel a big hole inside of me.

Then I came up to the conclusion... We all need to self-destruct to reset ourselves. Putting yourself into abnormal situations and you must enjoy the annual events obliviously. Once you reach your 'popping' point, you can reboot and restart forward.

That is why, at least once a year, every culture has an opportunity to celebrate in the name of something great.

So far, 2025 has plenty of stuff to worry about all around the world. To survive this uncertain world, we need more than one annual reset required.

So I propose that we should have a festival each month to have a mini-reset to adjust ourselves. Meanwhile, I adapt Japanese festivals to encourage everybody to reset- reboot- and re-start!



This year's Harada family's Osechi, cooked by Keiko, Kaori & Yuka! Team efforts!

February Festival: Setsubun 節分 Sunday 2nd February 二月二日(日)

What is this?

Literally means 'seasonal division', referring to the day just before the first day of spring in the traditional calendar. Its origins in Tsuina (追儺) a Chinese custom introduced to Japan in the 8th century. The custom of Setsubun as we know it today began in the Muromachi period (1336–1573). People have been performing rituals to chase away evil spirits at the start of spring.

How to celebrate?

The most commonly performed setsubun ritual is the throwing of roasted beans around one's house and at temples and shrines across the country. When throwing the beans, you are supposed to shout, "**Oni wa soto! Fuku wa uchi!**" ("Devils out, happiness in"). Afterwards, you should pick up and eat the number of beans which corresponds to your age. Another widespread custom is the eating of Eho-maki sushi rolls. One is supposed to eat the roll without talking while facing the lucky direction of the year. This year's Lucky direction is **南西南 South West South!**

THE LESSON SCHEDULE FOR FEBRUARY & MARCH 2025

Group Lessons- T2 Beginner
from the 4th February 20:00~21:30

Lesson 1

Tuesday 4th February
Tuesday 11th February

Lesson2

Tuesday 18th February
Tuesday 25th February

Lesson3

Tuesday 4th March
Tuesday 11th March

Lesson4

Tuesday 18th March
Tuesday 25th March

PRIVATE LESSONS SLOTS

FEBRUARY 2025

Monday

- 9:30-10:30 (Booked)
- 11:00-12:00
- 12:15-13:15(Booked)
- 14:00-15:00 (Booked)

Wednesday

- 20:00~21:00
- 21:15~22:15

Thursday

- 9:30-10:30 (Booked)
- 11:00-12:00

Friday

- 9:30-10:30
- 11:00-12:00 (Booked)
- 12:15-13:15
- 20:00~21:00

MARCH 2025

Monday

- 9:30-10:30 (Booked)
- 11:00-12:00
- 12:15-13:15(Booked)
- 14:00-15:00 (Booked)

Wednesday

- 20:00~21:00
- 21:15~22:15

Thursday

- 9:30-10:30 (Booked)
- 11:00-12:00

Friday

- 9:30-10:30
- 11:00-12:00 (Booked)
- 12:15-13:15
- 20:00~21:00

1月 & 2月のオノマトペ ほくほく & はふはふ

What sound is this?

• **ほくほく** = Also used to describe a feeling of being pleased with oneself, *hoku-hoku* is the hot and flaky texture of a freshly baked potato or pie as it crumbles in your mouth. It's that warm burst of steam as it escapes the tender crust and fills you with joy.

• **はふはふ** = We use the onomatopoeia "fu-fu" to let it cool down! And when we're taking something hot in our mouth, we use the onomatopoeia "hafu-hafu".

For example

- This baked sweet potato is really "hoku hoku" and delicious!
- I won my lottery, and I felt 'hokuhoku' for my fortune.
- I take a nabe with the sound of "hafu-hafu" because it's very hot.



JAPANESE CULTURE FACTOID

Omikuji 御神籤

Written oracles

At New Year, most people visit Shinto shrines or Buddhist temples, which is called, Hatsumode. One of the highlights of this visit is drawing *Omikuji*. On a long, narrow paper, their fortune of this year is written. The point of this activity is rather than learning about their fortune, most people seem to do it with a sense of playfulness. Except for drawing the 'Daikichi-大吉'

people tied the paper to trees in the Shrines/Temples after being read in hopes that their prayers would be answered.

Type of fortunes

大吉 Dai-kichi: Great (big) blessing

中吉 Chu-kichi: Middle blessing

小吉 Sho-kichi: Small blessing

半吉 Han-kichi Half blessing

末吉 Sue-kichi: Blessing to come*

末小吉 Sue-sho-kichi: Small blessing to come

吉 Kichi: Blessing

凶 Kyo: Curse

末凶 Sue-kyo: Curse to come

半凶 Han-kyo: Half curse

小凶 Sho-kyo: Small curse

大凶 Dai-kyo: Big curse

You can try to draw Omikuji online as well. Here are some Omikuji sites!

<https://www.animangaki.com/omikuji/>
<http://www.shi-yaku-jin-no-hokora.org/>



January was a difficult month for Harada family because we lost our aunt in Shizuoka suddenly. It was unexpected and brought us sadness. However, she had an ideal death, "Pin Pin Korori ピンピンころり", which means she had a life with full energy and died quickly and with no pain. All our nine cousins and surviving senior members of the family got together for the first time in a long time. It was an unfortunate situation but we were all pleased to see each other!

2025 has started, and I am still in Japan. However, I value seeing you in person and I am thinking about any physical events in summertime. Do you have any ideas? I am most welcome to have any ideas, opinions and feedback from YOU!