

LESSON NOTES

Japanese Culture Class #58

Spend New Year's in Japan!

CONTENTS

- 2 Vocabulary
- 2 Sample Sentences
- 2 Cultural Insight

58

VOCABULARY

Kanji	Kana	Romaji	English
正月	しょうがつ	shōgatsu	New Year's Holidays
初詣	はつもうで	hatsumōde	new year's visit to a shrine
年賀状	ねんがじょう	nengajō	New Year's greeting postcard

SAMPLE SENTENCES

<p>お正月には、地域でもちつき大会が行われます。</p> <p><i>O-shōgatsu ni wa, chiiki de mochitsuki taikai ga okonawaremasu.</i></p> <p>There are glutinous rice-pounding events held locally in Japan on New Year's Day.</p>	<p>初詣ではお守りを買ひ、古いお守りを返します。</p> <p><i>Hatsumōde de wa omamori o kai, furui omamori o kaeshimasu.</i></p> <p>At the first visit to the shrine of the year, people buy lucky charms and protective charms for the coming year and return those from the past year.</p>
<p>友人に年賀状を送った。</p> <p>I sent a New Year's greeting postcard to my friend.</p>	

CULTURAL INSIGHT

Japanese New Years

In Japan, we spend the year's end cleaning and decorating houses and offices for New Year's Day. Many people spend time with their families, and the people who work and live far from their families often go back to their hometowns for New Year's. On New Year's morning, we eat traditional Japanese New Year's cuisines. Then, we go to shrines for New Year's prayers, and we read and write New Year's cards, called nengajō.

January 1st to 3rd is called *sanga nichi*, and the 1st to 7th is called *matsu no uchi*.

O-sechi: Traditional Japanese New Year's cuisines

There used to be more families that prepared their own *o-sechi* at home, and what's in *osechi*

varies depending on the region and family. Nowadays, people often buy *o-sechi* from a supermarket or a department store. Each dish in *osechi* has a special meaning:

金団 *kinton* (sweet potato and chestnut) - for wealth

数の子 *kazunoko* (salted herring roe)- to be gifted with numerous children

黒豆 *kuromame* (sweet black beans)- for a healthy life

鯛 *tai* (sea bream)-symbolizing an auspicious event

こぶまき *kobumaki* (rolled kelp with fish) - for joy

田作り *tazukuri* (teriyaki small dried sardines)- for an abundant harvest

お雑煮 *o-zōni* (soup containing mochi rice cake)-for general good luck- in the eastern part of Japan the soup is usually clear, and in the western part of Japan *miso* soup is more common.

Hatsumōde: First shrine visit of the New Year in Japan.

People often buy new charms and take back the ones from the previous year so they can be burnt. There are usually long lines at shrines throughout Japan on New Year's Day.

Nengajō: New Year's greeting postcard.

Most Japanese send New Year's greeting cards (*nengajō*) to their friends and families. It is similar to the western culture of sending Christmas cards. People try to send the cards so that they arrive on New Year's Day and the post office will hold *nengajō* until New Year's Day if they arrive early. If there is a death in the family during the year the family is not supposed to send a card to anyone. Instead, they just send a simple postcard prior to New Year's Day so that people don't send them a *nengajō*. This custom is to show respect to the deceased.

☆Commonly used New Year's greeting phrases☆

- ・あけましておめでとうございます *Akemashite omedetō gozaimasu*
- ・謹賀新年 *Kinga Shin'nen*
- ・賀正 *Gashō*

Eto: Chinese zodiac sign

There is usually an animal of the year printed on the card along with the greetings. This is based on the twelve Chinese zodiac animals.

Animal	Japanese	English
子	ね <i>Ne</i>	rat
丑	うし <i>Ushi</i>	ox
寅	とら <i>Tora</i>	tiger

卯	う	rabbit
辰	たつ <i>Tatsu</i>	dragon
巳	み <i>Mi</i>	snake
午	うま <i>Uma</i>	horse
未	ひつじ <i>Hitsuji</i>	ram
申	さる <i>Saru</i>	monkey
酉	とり <i>Tori</i>	rooster
戌	いぬ <i>Inu</i>	dog
亥	い	boar