

LESSON TRANSCRIPT

Culture Class: Holidays in Japan S1 #2 Coming of Age Day

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Hello, and welcome to the Culture Class- Holidays in Japan Series at JapanesePod101.com. In this series, we're exploring the traditions behind Japanese holidays and observances. I'm Becky, and you're listening to Season 1, Lesson 2- "Coming of Age Day."

Coming of Age Day is celebrated on the 2nd Monday in January. In Japan, a person legally becomes an adult at the age of twenty, and this holiday congratulates and encourages those young people who have just turned twenty. This current celebration of adulthood is said to have derived from a coming of age festival that started just after the Second World War. It was held first in Saitama Prefecture with the goal of giving hope and courage to young people in the post-war society.

Now, before we go further, do you know the answer to this question- while Coming of Age Day is currently celebrated on the 2nd Monday in January, on what day was it held prior to 2000?

If you don't already know, you'll find out a bit later. Keep listening.

On this holiday, a coming of age ceremony is held in each municipality. Cities in regions with heavy snowfall may hold these ceremonies later in the year during Golden Week or お盆 (o-bon). For the ceremony, young people who are turning twenty gather at public places, such as city hall, and receive congratulations from town officials before being awarded a souvenir. A representative of the new adults also makes a short speech expressing resolutions for a healthy, productive adult life. Sometimes class reunions are held after the coming of age ceremony. Many people leave their hometown after graduating from high school, and the coming of age ceremony is a good opportunity for them to catch up with old friends.

Since the coming of age ceremony is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, special clothes are worn. Men generally wear a suit, and women wear a 振袖 (furisode). A 振袖 (furisode) is a long-sleeved kimono for unmarried women, and it's quite expensive. In addition to the furisode, women should also wear kimono accessories, such as belts and sandals. While some people rent these outfits for the ceremony, many parents buy the furisode and accessories for their daughters because it is a time of celebration.

Coming of Age Day is also celebrated in some homes by cooking "red rice." The color red is often used to represent auspicious occasions in Japanese culture. Red rice is glutinous rice that has been mixed with 小豆 (azuki) beans. The 小豆 (azuki) beans dye

the rice a pink color and, as a "red" food, it's an essential part of many Japanese celebrations. Some young people also receive gifts or money from relatives and acquaintances to congratulate them on their coming of age.

Now it's time to answer our quiz question- when was this day held prior to 2000?

The correct answer is January 15th. In 2000, in order to create a three-day weekend, the holiday was moved to the 2nd Monday of January. When it was a single-day public holiday held on January 15th, it was often difficult for people to return to their hometowns. By moving it to create a three-day weekend, it became easier for people to return home.

Well listeners, how was this lesson?

Did you learn something new?

Do you have a day in your country when you congratulate young people who have just become adults?

Please leave us a comment telling us at JapanesePod101.com.

And we'll see you next time!