

■FESTIVALS

Closed on the first few days of the new year

Government offices: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Shimin service centers ----- Iyotetsu Takashimaya: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Fuji Grand Matsuyama: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Banks: Dec. 31 to Jan. 3 / Post offices: Dec. 31 to Jan. 3

City libraries ----- Chuo, Mitsuhamma, Hojo, Nakajima: Dec. 28 to Jan. 4

City passport center: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3 (Fuji Grand Matsuyama Annex 2F)

City Hoken-jo (public health center): Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Underground parking lot for bicycles in front of City office: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Jan. 1-3 SHOGATSU (New Year Days)

Shogatsu, more often means a particular period of the New Year, especially the first three days of January. New Year's Day (Gantan or Ganjitsu) is the most important. People place round rice cakes (kagami-mochi) on the household altar (kami-dana) and/or in the alcove (tokonoma) before New Year's Day. New Year decorations (shime-kazari and kadomatsu) are also set up. Family members, even those who live in remote areas, gather together. On the morning of Gantan, people celebrate the New Year with spiced sake (toso), special New Year's food (osechi-ryori) and rice cakes boiled with vegetables (zoni). People enjoy reading New Year's cards (nenga-jo). Many people pay the year's first visit to temples and shrines (hatsu-mode). Children are given good luck gifts or money (otoshidama). Unfortunately, many will miss this important time to be with family due to the pandemic.

A New Year's Dictionary

SHIMEKAZARI	A sacred decoration made of straw, two fern leaves and daidai (a small citrus). It is hung above entrance doors and various places, even in front of cars.
KADOMATSU	More extravagant than shimekazari is kadomatsu. It is made of bamboo, pine and plum tree branches and set on both sides of a gate or entry-way.
TOSO	Toso is prepared by soaking overnight a tosoan bag in sake or mirin (sweet sake) like a teabag. Tososan is a mixture of herbs and was originally prepared by the great Chinese doctor Kada of ancient times. Toso is taken on New Year's Day to cleanse oneself

	of malice and to live long, a custom that dates from the Heian era (794-1191). You can get toso-san at drug stores the week before New Year's Day.
OSECHI-RYORI	<p>*Kazunoko (herring roe) symbolizes prosperity because it is a clump of many eggs.</p> <p>*Kuromame (black beans) are chosen because 'mame' means hard working.</p> <p>*Gobo (burdock root) symbolizes a stable foundation because the root of gobo grows deep into the ground.</p> <p>*Kuri-kinton (sweet chestnut paste) is chosen because the word 'kuri' sometimes means mastery.</p> <p>*Kohaku Kamaboko (red and white boiled fish paste) is prepared because red and white are auspicious colors.</p>
ZONI	Zoni is a special soup served with pieces of rice cake (mochi) in it. The ingredients vary with the region.
NINGA-JO	New Year's cards called nenga-jo are posted during in December and delivered in a batch on the New Year's day. People make the cards in various ways, such as wood block prints, calligraphy and picture prints. If there has been a death in the family the past year you do not send nenga-jo and no one should send them to you because you are still in mourning.
HATSU-MODE	This is the first visit of the year to temples and shrines. People pray for good health and fortune throughout the year. Gokoku-jinja is the most popular place for hatsu-mode in Matsuyama. White arrows named "hamaya" are often sold as good luck charms.
OTOSHIDAMA	This is a gift of money given to children. The money is put in a small envelope. The amount ranges from 1,000 yen to as much as 10,000 or more depending on the age of and relationship to the child.

Early Jan. HATSU-URI (First Sales)

Many stores have special bargains to celebrate the re-opening after the New Year's holidays. "Good fortune bags" containing various goods (fuku-bukuro) are often sold at a very reasonable price, but you

take a chance because you don't know what they contain until you open them.

Jan. 7 NANAKUSA-GAYU

Nanakusa-gayu is a porridge of rice made with haru-no-nanakusa, seven spring herbs. Eating nanakusa-gayu on January 7th has been a traditional event for a long time. In the Edo era (1603-1867) this event was one of the go-sekku, five seasonal festivals, and the shogun and his men would celebrate it. The porridge is said to have an effect on every disease, so Japanese still enjoy eating it on this day after the celebration and feasting over New Year's. You can find packs of these seven herbs in the vegetable section of supermarkets at this time.

Take one home and make your own soup or porridge!

Jan. 11 SEIJIN-NO-HI (Coming-of-Age-Day) National Holiday

In Japan people celebrate the coming of age of those who will turn twenty during the course of that particular year. Ceremonies for those young people are held all over Japan by local governments. When they become twenty years old, they are expected to have a sense of responsibility as adults and members of society, having already acquired the right to vote. In Matsuyama seijin-shiki, a coming-of-age celebration, has been canceled this year to prevent spread of the novel coronavirus infection.

Mid Jan. HATSUNE-SAN Yu-jinja shrine in Dogo

The schedule and the details of Hatsune-san in 2021 have not been decided yet.

Mid Jan. TONDO (DONDO)-YAKI FESTIVAL

Tondo -yaki is a fire festival in some regions where people pray for good health and prosperity in the New Year by gathering bamboo, wood, and New Year's decorations from their homes, such as shimenawa and kadomatsu, and burning them together. Tondo-yaki is held early in the morning or at night. You can see the festival in many places, and the date varies according to the place.