

The Machida Tourist Times

Vol.7

Tuesday, JANUARY 25th, 2011

FREE Paper

January

■ *Setsubun*

Setsubun is a seasonal division in the lunar calendar. It is the eve of the new season.

■ *Fuku Mame*

It means Fortune beans, or happy beans. The roasted soybeans can be easily purchased at any supermarket.

■ *Mame-maki*

A bean-throwing festival. It is believed to chase demons away, and bring good luck to your family.

■ Machida Tourist Gallery

It is the visitor center of Machida in the Poppo Building near the Machida Station. English service is available when an English-speaking staff member is available.



People enjoying Setsubun festival at the Machida Tenmanguu shrine in 2010. The “mame-maki”, or bean-throwing ritual is performed by the people who were born on the matching Chinese zodiac animal year.

“Begone, Ogres! Luck, Come Inside!”

***Setsubun* is coming back to Machida City, in order to bring good luck to your household in 2011.**

From the middle of January, supermarkets and other stores begin to advertise a particular soy product to sell. It is called *fuku mame*, roughly translated as fortune beans. These roasted beans are not only for eating, but also for throwing on the day of the *setsubun* ceremony in February.

Setsubun originally meant, the “division of seasons” Therefore, we technically have 4 *setsubun* days throughout a year. However, when *setsubun* is mentioned nowadays, everyone assumes that it is the *setsubun* in February.

On the day of *setsubun*, Japanese people throw the *fuku mame*; it is due to the belief of the beans possessing powers to cleanse your house from the evil spirits that will bring disease and misfortune. The most common shout accompanying throwing the beans is “Oni wa soto! Fuku

wa uchi!” Basically saying, “Ogres, get out! Happiness, come inside!” *Oni*, or ogres refer to any demonic spirits that will bring bad luck to the household.

When at home, traditionally the head of the household or the oldest boy in the house has the honor of doing the *mame-maki*, or the bean-throwing while the rest of the family members participate in the ritual as witnesses. In modern days, however, *mame-maki* can be done casually by everyone in the household. Of course, there are variations in the style of *mame-maki* from one region to another, or even, one household to the next.

When finished with *mame-maki*, it is time to eat some *fukumame*. You take the number of beans equal to your age, plus one extra. For example, if you are 25 years old, you should have 26 beans. The reason for this is related to the East Asian age system in Japan; in this age counting system,

you become 1 year old the moment you are born. When a new year comes, you turn 2 years old. As you may already know, we do not use the system anymore.

At certain temples and shrines, priests and monks welcome people for the *setsubun* event. For example, at the Machida *Tenmanguu* shrine, toshi otoko and toshi on-na (Males and females who were born in the corresponding Chinese Zodiac animal year) throw the bags of beans towards the audience, who try to catch them. A fun part of this event is that a few bags have winning tickets in them. If you win the lottery, you get a present from the shrine.

There are other shrines and temples in Machida that hold similar *mame-maki* events to those above. The Machida Tourist and Convention Bureau strongly recommends the fun *mame-maki* ceremony.



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Cultural Note

Valentine's Day VS. White Day

On Japanese Valentine's Day, ladies give chocolate to confess their love to the ones they love.

Japanese St. Valentine's Day significantly differs from the standard one recognized in Western society. Hordes of women in Japan start fussing over Valentine's Day as it gets nearer. In Japan, the day is recognized as a (or possibly your own) day of confession: women confess their feelings to the ones they love by sending chocolate. Cookies and cakes could be other options, but chocolate is by far the most common present. For men, on the other hand, Valentine's Day means a day to receive chocolate. They are not obliged to give out sweets on that day. Still, there are men

who send chocolate for their love: these chocolates are called "gyaku choco", roughly translated as "reverse-chocolate". Moreover, many people in Japan do not recognize Valentine's Day's relation to Christianity.

People can still send chocolate to their bosses, colleagues, and friends. These kinds of chocolates are called "giri choco", or obligation chocolate. In fact, many Japanese weigh sending your boss giri choco greatly. Sometimes chocolates exchanged among girls are called "tomo choco", or friend's chocolate.

The mirror of Valentine's Day is called

White Day, which is on March 14th. Men return the favor by sending cookies, candies, and more.

However, since Japanese Valentine's Day became something unique, there emerged a considerable problem. Many people suffer from high expectations from your work people that they should get chocolate, and some find themselves spending too much money. How to approach Valentine's Day always alters. Who knows? It may even resemble the Western version someday. No matter what, just enjoy it!

Events & Festivals

Seven Lucky Gods Walking Tour

Date: February 1st (Tue)

Place: In the Haramachida area

Reservation: Needed

Cost: 1,200 yen

(Including Zen meditation, material, and insurance fee)

Language: Japanese only

Flea Market

Date: February 1st (Tue)

Place: Machida Tenmanguu

Time: 7am-4pm

Setsubun Festival

Date: February 3rd (Thu)

Place: Machida Tenmanguu

Description: A sumo wrestler from Machida, Kita Taiki will throw Fukumame (the fortune beans) around 4pm. Kita Taiki is the only sumo wrestler who is from the Tokyo area.



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Ramen Shop Map

The 54 shops on the map are hand selected by staff of the Machida Tourist Gallery Ramen Department. It is available at the Machida Tourist Gallery in the Poppo Machida building. (Only available in Japanese language)

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Secondhand Clothing Shop Map

Machida is a hidden mecca of secondhand clothing shops. The map has selected 35 shops and 2 cafes. In this economic slump, secondhand clothing shops offer an atmosphere in which to find all the things you need at a low cost. Available in Japanese.

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