

FESTIVALS

Closed on the last few days of the year

Government offices: Dec. 28 to Jan. 5

City service centers: Iyotetsu Takashimaya, Fuji Grand Matsuyama: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

Banks: Dec. 31 to Jan. 5

Post offices: Dec. 31 to Jan. 5

City libraries: Chuo, Mitsuhamma, Hojo, Nakajima: Dec. 29 to Jan. 3

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

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 (*tosō*), special New Year's food (*osechi-ryōri*) and rice cakes boiled with vegetables (*zoni*). People enjoy reading New Year's cards (*nenga-jō*). Many people pay the year's first visit to temples and shrines (*hatsu-mode*). Children are given good luck gifts or money (*otoshidama*).

A New Year's Dictionary

SHIMEKAZARI	A sacred decoration made of straw, two fern leaves and <i>daidai</i> (a small citrus). It is hung above entrance doors and various places, even in front of cars.
KADOMATSU	More extravagant than <i>shimekazari</i> is <i>kadomatsu</i> . It is made of bamboo, pine and plum tree branches and set on both sides of a gate or entryway.
TOSO	<i>Toso</i> is <i>yakushu</i> 薬酒 (alcoholic beverage for medical purposes) prepared by soaking a <i>tososan</i> bag in <i>sake</i> or <i>mirin</i> (sweet sake) overnight. <i>Tososan</i> is a mixture of herbs and is said to be originally invented by a famous doctor Kada in ancient China. <i>Toso</i> 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).
OSECHI-RYORI	* <i>Kazunoko</i> (herring roe) symbolizes prosperity because it is a clump of many eggs. * <i>Kuromame</i> (black beans) are chosen because 'mame' means hard working. * <i>Gobo</i> (burdock root) symbolizes a stable foundation because the root of <i>gobo</i> grows deep into the ground. * <i>Kuri-kinton</i> (sweet chestnut paste) is chosen because the word 'kuri' sometimes means mastery. * <i>Kohaku Kamaboko</i> (red and white boiled fish paste) is prepared because red and white are auspicious colors.
ZONI	<i>Zoni</i> 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 <i>nenga-jo</i> are posted during December and delivered in a batch on New Year's Day. People make the cards in various ways, such as wood block prints, calligraphy and picture prints. Nowadays <i>e-nengajo</i> are becoming more popular than cards. If there has been a death in the family the past year you do not send <i>nenga-jo</i> 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. Ehineken-Gokoku-jinja 愛媛県護国神社 in Miyuki-machi, Isaniwa-jinja 伊佐爾波神社 in Sakuradani, Mitsu-Itsukushima-jinja 三津巖島神社 in kanda-cho, Tsubaki-jinja 椿神社 in Iai-cho and Ishite-ji 石手寺 are popular places for <i>hatsu-mode</i> in Matsuyama.
OTOSHIDAMA	This is a gift of money given to children. The money is put in a small envelope.

Jan. 7 **NANAKUSA-GAYU** 七草粥

Nanakusa-gayu is a porridge of rice made with *haru-no-nanakusa*, seven spring herbs (*seri, nazuna, gogyo, hakobera, hotokenoza, suzuna, and suzushiro*).

In ancient China there was a custom that people had soup with seven kinds of vegetable on January 7th, praying for good health, and this event was introduced to Japan. In Japan there was a custom called *Wakanatsumi* 若菜摘 where people gathered fresh green leaves and ate them, praying for longevity during the New Year in the Nara era (710-784). It is thought that these two customs combined into *Nanakusagayu*.

In the Edo era (1603-1867) eating *nanakusa-gayu* on January 7th had become an annual event. January 7th is *Jinjitsu-no-sekku* 人日の節句, one of the *go-sekku* 五節句, five seasonal festivals, when the *Shogun* and his men ate it. It is said that *nanakusagayu* has an effect on every disease, so Japanese still enjoy eating it on this day after the celebration and feasting over New Year. You can find packs of these seven herbs in supermarkets about this time.

The following *waka* poem contained in *Hyakunin-ishu* 百人一首, represents *Wakanatsumi*, which was composed by Emperor Koko 光孝天皇 (830-889).

<i>kimigatame</i>	君がため	for your sake
<i>harunononi idete</i>	春の野に出でて	I have been in the spring field
<i>wakana tsumu</i>	若菜摘む	gathering fresh green leaves
<i>waga koromode ni</i>	わが衣手に	sleeves of my <i>koromo</i> (Emperor's robe)
<i>yukiwa furitsutsu</i>	雪は降りつつ	are sprinkled with falling snow

Jan. 13 **SEIJIN-NO-HI (Coming-of-Age Day)** 成人の日 **National Holiday**

Coming-of-Age Day was established in 1948 in order to celebrate young people who would turn twenty, expecting them to have a sense of responsibility as an adult and as a member of the society and to contribute to society. *Seijin-nenrei* 成人年齢 (Coming-of-Age) was changed from 20 to 18 in April, 2022 in *Minpo* 民法 (the Civil Code). Most 18-year-olds are third-year high school students and busy preparing for the entrance examinations or finding jobs about this time of the year, so it is difficult for them to join the Coming-of-Age ceremony. Most of the local governments hold the ceremony for 20-year-old people as *Hatachi-no-tsudoi* 二十歳の集い (Gathering of 20-year-old people) as before.

※Changing of Coming-of-Age from 20 to 18 means that young people are legally regarded as

adults when they turn 18 years old. (Some of the changes are that they can make an effective contract by themselves and do not submit to parental right, etc.)

SEIJIN-SHIKI (Coming-of-age ceremony)

In Matsuyama a Coming-of-Age ceremony is held on the day before Seijinn-no-hi, January 12th and invitation cards have already been sent to those who were born between April 2nd, 2004 and April 1st, 2005 and have Matsuyama city resident cards on November 1, including those of foreign nationalities.

Further information: Matsuyama City Office Chiiki-gakushu-shinkoka 地域学習振興課

Tel: 089-948-6813 / E-mail: hatachi@city.matsuyama.ehime.jp

Jan. 12-13 HATSUNE-SAN 初子祭

Yu-jinja shrine 湯神社 & Dogo-onsen parking place

According to legend, Okuninushino-mikoto 大国主命, the god of the shrine, was saved by a mouse (=ne 子). It is commemorated on Coming-of-Age Day and the day before. Visitors pray for their family's happiness, longevity, or success in business. They take their old paper charms and New Year decorations to the shrine because they shouldn't be thrown out with the garbage. Shrine priests purify and burn them (*dondo-yaki*).

12th 11:00, 13:00, 15:00, 16:30 / 13th 10:00, 14:30, 16:00 *Mochi-maki*

13th 12:00 Lucky *mochimaki* for children younger than 10 years old

Atari-kuji (prizes) are hidden in some mochi.

12th 14:00 / 13th 13:00 *Dondo-yaki*

You should remove plastic bags and metal.

Other events are as follows:

Ashiyu (foot bath) / *Shishimai* (lion dance) / *Suigun-daiko* (Sea-guard drum) /

Mochitsuki (rice-cake pounding)

<https://yu-jinja.official.jp> (Tel. 089-931-5856)

Mid Jan. TONDO (DONDO)-YAKI

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.