



Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu

Volume 4, Issue 7

Autumn Thanksgiving Festival 秋季感謝大祭

For thousands of years, people have set aside a day to celebrate the autumn harvest, giving thanks for a plentiful growing season.

Ancient Hebrews held a special eight-day feast to celebrate their harvest season. People in ancient Greece dedicated a nine-day harvest festival to Demeter, the goddess of agriculture.

Pre-Christian Europeans also marked a good harvest with a large feast before crops were gathered.

Celebrations surrounding the autumn harvest have continued throughout history, and many cultures have set aside a specific day to give thanks.

The date and customs may vary from country to country, but the desire to take time and reflect on life's blessings remains the same.

In the United States, this day of thanks is called Thanksgiving, a national holiday observed in November where family and friends get together for a feast to celebrate their good fortune, relax and enjoy one another's company.

The Festival of the Autumn Moon, is the Chinese celebration of thanksgiving. The Moon Goddess is honored with mooncakes, and at night, children parade with colored lanterns.

Rice has long been the main staple of the traditional Japanese diet. It is not only consumed daily as a staple food but also used to brew sake.

Japanese cuisine has developed the art of providing side dishes to complement consumption of rice and table manners were established in the



quest for more refined ways of eating rice and drinking sake.

Japanese culture is inseparable from rice cultivation and many festivals evolve around rice cultivation.

The shrine's Autumn Thanksgiving Festival, meant to express gratitude to the bounties that we receive from nature was held on Sunday, September 28 officiated by Rev. Masa Takizawa and assisted by Rev. Akihiro Okada of Daijingu Temple of Hawaii, Rev. Daiya Amano of Izumo Taishakyo Mission of Hawaii and Rev. Naoya Shimura of Hawaii Ishizuchi Jinja.

Our heartfelt mahalo goes out to the members for their kokua in the preparations, Shawna Arakaki for the miko mai, Hanayagi Mitsutamae sensei and the students of Hanayagi Dancing Academy Hawaii Foundation and Chika Miyazono sensei and her students for the fabulous lineup of classical and modern Japanese dances.



MAHALO for your generous donations

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Hawaii Kotohira Jinsha-Hawaii Dazaifu Tenmangu is a 501(C)(3) nonprofit church.
 All contributions are tax deductible to the fullest extent allowed by law.

MAHALO
Give Five Campaign
 August Volunteers
Arthur Isa
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Shrine Calendar

October

- 1 Reservations accepted for Shichigosan 七五三予約受付開始
- 12 Tsukinami-sai Monthly Service 月次祭
- 25-31 Shichigosan 七五三

November

- 1-30 Shichigosan 七五三
- 2 Tsukinami-sai Monthly Service 月次祭

December

- 7 Tsukinami-sai Monthly Service 月次祭
- TBA Mochi pounding 餅つき
- TBA Susubarai Clean-up 煤払い
- 30 Hatsumode Set-up 初詣準備
- 31 Year End Purification Ritual 年越しの大祓い



Shichigosan 七五三

**October 25 -
 November 30**

Go to: www.e-shrine.org
 or call 841-4755 for details



Mathew Mason & Rev. Takizawa manning the shrine booth at the annual the Kapahuu Community Center Bon Dance Festival on August 23

MAHALO Festival Volunteers

Shawna Arakaki
Rev. Daiya Amano
Jeff Fujioka
Melissa Hamada
Hanayagi Dancing Academy
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Yumi Hoshino
Emi Igarashi
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Autumn Thanksgiving Festival 大祭あれこれ

Rev. Akihiro Okada
Rev. Naoya Shimura
Eiko Wong



Rice - Japan's Essential Food

By Jaclyn Landry

When the word rice is mentioned, most people visualize a sticky white food commonly served with meat and vegetables. To some people, however, rice is not just part of a meal, but a fundamental part of who they are.

The Japanese are a group of people that would never refer to rice as a "side dish." Not only is rice quantitatively Japan's most important food, but it is the heart of their culture. One cannot possibly appreciate the Japanese people and their rich culture until they recognize the fundamental role rice has played in shaping it.

By studying something as tiny as a grain of rice, and its influence on social behavior, language, religion and traditions, one can begin to understand the Japanese people and their unique culture.

Rice has a long and meaningful history in Japan. It was first introduced to the country two thousand years ago during the Yayoi Period.

During these early periods, Japanese people's lives were governed by the seasonal rhythms of rice growing: sowing, planting, fertilizing, weeding, flooding, harvesting, threshing, hulling, and polishing.

Their lives from birth to death were bound to rice. This dedication to the crop would enter every part of the Japanese life, shaping the culture we know today.

One of the most important characteristics that help to define a culture or group of people is their way of communicating. Language is what allows a group of people to share ideas, and therefore interact with other members of their society.

Language provides clues to a culture's core values and beliefs. Japanese language alone, signifies the enormous influence rice has on Japanese life.

In Japanese "Gohan" is both

the word for "cooked rice" as well as "meal." The fact that the Japanese use the word for rice and meal interchangeably reveals the significance of this food to the Japanese people.

The word *gohan* is also used with prefixes to give us *asagohan* (breakfast), *hirugohan* (lunch), and *bangohan* (dinner).

These multiple words reveal to us that it was impossible for the Japanese to think of a meal without rice.

The Japanese indigenous name for Japan also makes reference to the importance of rice.

The early settlers called the country *Toyo Ashihara no Mizu ho no kuni* or land of the water stalk plant. Rice was such a crucial part of Japanese life that they referred to their land as the land of rice.

Another aspect of the Japanese lifestyle that rice has significantly impacted is that of social structure and behavior.

There are two specific social behaviors of the Japanese that originate from the cultivation of wet rice.

The cultivation of wet rice is an extremely labor intensive task, and cannot be completed easily. As a result, families pooled their labor.

They worked together with other families sharing water resources, irrigation facilities and dividing up the laborious tasks.

The families built their houses clustered together, depending heavily upon each other during the growing process.

This dependence on others was the foundation of the Japanese people's belief in group harmony.

The people avoided any conflict between families, for they were not only neighbors, but workmates for life.

The Japanese idea of group unity is an important characteristic that defines the Japanese people. They use the word *wa* to refer to their need for group harmony, and



amae to refer to the dependency they have on others. These strong ties to family and friends are still valued in Japan today.

Even though it has been many decades since Japan was a predominantly agricultural society, and most of the nation's citizens now live in urban environments, the ideal of the village community still remains powerful.

Another aspect of Japanese culture that has been shaped by the dependence on rice is religion.

One cannot begin to understand a group of people without understanding their religious beliefs.

To the Japanese, rice is the grain that links Heaven and Earth, gods and mortals.

Not only was the cultivation of rice sacred, but the grain itself was considered holy. The Japanese believed that each grain of rice had a soul and that its soul was alive while in the hull.

In order to ensure that the soul was alive when it was consumed, the Japanese would thresh the plant right before serving it. They believed that hulled rice soon became lifeless and therefore would not replenish the Japanese soul if eaten.

Not only was rice a source of worship, but it was the foundation of worship in the Japanese community.

Rice was slowly shaping all aspects of Japanese culture, and defining who they would become.

The final aspect of Japanese culture that has been influenced by

rice are the celebrations and traditions that have evolved from the cultivation of this crop.

Traditions and celebrations provide a glimpse into the hearts and minds of the Japanese people. These celebrations exemplify what it is the people consider important, and what ideas they value enough to celebrate. Rice serves as a foundation of this aspect of the Japanese culture.

Rice also influences many Japanese holidays. The most important traditional holiday celebrated in Japan is *Oshogatsu*, the Japanese New Year.

During this celebration the Japanese make and consume *kagami mochi* or two round rice cakes placed on top of each other. The mirror cakes represent the deities, and it is believed to give power and good fortune to those who consume them.

Rice cakes are not only consumed on New Years, but they are also used as an offering to the New Year God.

On New Years day the Japanese people visit a Shinto shrine bearing gifts. Since rice is considered a gift from the deities in heaven, the Japanese show their appreciation and devotion to the gods by presenting them with rice or sake.

The ideas and beliefs central to the New Year celebration are derived from the old rice cultivation age in Japan.

The people believe so strongly in the power of rice that they start of their year by showing their appreciation to the rice gods ensuring



a prosperous year to come.

These celebrations demonstrate that the Japanese lifestyle still revolves around rice. It is so much a part of who they are and what they value that they hold rituals and celebrations in its honor.

Rice represents the *kokoro*, the heart and soul of Japan's culture, not only the basic source of food but also the historical nucleus of the language, religion, rituals, and the spirit of cooperation and harmony in the Japanese people.

the impact of rice on the lives and beliefs of the Japanese is inconceivable. Not only does it define the cultural beliefs and traditions of these people, but it defines who they are.

To the Japanese rice is more than just a grain, it is a concept that is the basis of many cultural practices, beliefs, and self-identification.

In Japan today, rice agriculture, the foundation of "rice culture," is disappearing fast.

Full time farmers are becoming so rare that they may soon be designated "human national treasures."

The nation struggles with the tough question of whether or not to give up its rice economy and begin importing rice from other countries.

The Japanese goal of national rice self-sufficiency is not just a national economic goal, but a statement about the social-cultural importance of rice production. The end of rice production to them would symbolize the destruction of a culture.

Here are some popular rice dishes:

Donburi (Rice Bowls)

Plain rice is served in a large bowl with various toppings and sauce. Some popular donburi dishes are - Ten-don, Katsu-don, and Oyako-don.

Sushi

There are many sushi dishes such as Nigiri-zushi, maki-zushi, inari-zushi, chirashi, temaki-suzhi, oshi-zushi, mebari-zushi, etc.

Takikomi-gohan

Rice is boiled with various ingredients and seasonings.

O-kayu (rice porridge)

Plain rice is simmered very soft.

O-chazuke

A simple rice soup, which is made by simply pouring green tea or dashi soup on top of plain rice with various ingredients.

Mochi (rice cakes)

Mochi-gome rice is steamed and pounded to make mochi.

Sekihan (red rice)

Mochi rice is steamed with azuki beans to make a pink colored rice used for festive and auspicious occasions.

Chimaki

Mochi rice wrapped in bamboo leaves with a variety of ingredients and steamed.

Zosui

Rice porridge with various ingredients

Senbei (Rice Crackers)

Assorted snacks made from deep frying rice with various seasonings.

The traditional respect accorded to rice has both a practical as well as a mystical side. The belief that rice is a unique source of vital energy has been confirmed by scientific discoveries showing that it is an almost perfect source of food, with an ideal balance of proteins, lipids, and carbohydrates.

The germ and the bran, though often removed during polishing, are rich in vitamins (particularly B1), minerals, fiber and enzymes.

Such discoveries have caused a renewed interest in rice as the key to a healthy diet.



Wasabi 山葵

While cultivation of *wasabi* in Japan dates to the 10th century, and has since spread to Taiwan, China, New Zealand, Canada, America and elsewhere, this plant has a well deserved reputation of being tricky to grow, largely because it requires cold, pristine water with just the right balance of minerals.

Today, most wasabi plants are grown on commercial wasabi farms in mountain environs in the Shizuoka prefecture as well as in the Azumino plains of the Nagano prefecture. Effective wasabi horticulture practices are carefully guarded secrets.

With so few producers worldwide, supply of wasabi japonica is quite limited, while demand for real wasabi is growing exponentially and prices reportedly are rising accordingly.

Japanese history describes the defeat of the Heike clan in the Dan-noura war, from 795 to 797 CE. The survivors fled to other parts of Honshu, Shikoku and Kyushu. Some of them settled near Mount Bafun, located in the upriver district of the Nishiki River. Here they sought a place where they could live in peace and are said to have been involved in agriculture and hunting while some became craftsmen.

Tradition has it that Wasabi grew wild in the valleys of Mt. Heike, Mt. Mizuo, and Mt. Bafun. The Heike survivors are believed to have gathered wild wasabi to use as a seasoning for slices of raw *yamame* (a kind of trout), and raw venison. Many of these survivors were originally noble samurai and were familiar with the life and culture of Kyoto. With this knowledge of Kyoto cuisine, they ate pickled vegetables made from stems and leaves of wasabi along with many other edible wild plants. Here is a story that has made wasabi the most popular condiment in Japan.

Around 1876, Ichiroku Hashimoto, living in Kitakonishi, first produced a commercial wasabi product, "Kitani-Kyo" Wasabi. Although the sales figures are not known, he seems to have made a good living through this enterprise, earning one yen, which was an incredible profit for those times. By this business, wasabi leapt to fame and its cultivation spread in the Kitani-Kyo area. Growing techniques at that time are said to be somewhat primitive; young wasabi plants were transplanted in simple fields which were created on the banks of a ravine by roughly arranging stones, rather than the current style of preparing fields dedicated only to wasabi.

In 1920, a new technology of growing wasabi was developed. Wasabi began to be grown in the soils alongside mountain streams instead of in flowing water. In spite of the decline in the quality of wasabi products, this technique attracted a great deal of attention among farmers because of the ability to produce in larger quantities. Wasabi grown using this method became known as Hatake-Wasabi. Fields for Hatake-Wasabi production were then adopted extensively. Wasabi products were usually harvested two years after planting.

In 1939, accelerated cultivation using normal fields was first introduced. This further reduced growing time, controlled diseases, and increased cost effectiveness.

Cherished for decades in the East for its unique flavor and healthful influences, wasabi is best known as an age-old food pairing with sashimi or sushi dishes that include raw fish. Wasabi is also served as a garnish with Soba noodles and made into pickles, jams, wine and other foods. While distinguishing itself with unique and versatile flavors true wasabi also serves up benefits that strengthen immune system, and have powerful anti-bacterial properties, which help mitigate microbial elements or pathogens potentially present. Rich in beta-carotenes and glucosinolates, wasabi also kills some forms of E-Coli and Staphylococcus. Studies also indicate it helps reduce mucous, which has made it the focus of experiments relating to its use in combating asthma and congestive disorders.

The unique ITC spectrum present in wasabi includes have proven efficacy and potency in supporting natural liver and digestive detoxification functions. Wasabi is also very low in Saturated Fat, Cholesterol and Sodium and is a good source of Vitamin B6, Calcium, Magnesium, Potassium and Manganese, and an excellent source of Dietary Fiber and Vitamin C. With so much healthful activity going on within one plant, it is not surprising that studies and laboratory tests continue to indicate that wasabi shows promise as a pharmaceutical component.

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