



JAPAN INFORMATION
AND CULTURE CENTER
在米国日本大使館広報文化センター

TEACHING TUESDAY

JAPANESE LAUGHING FESTIVALS

Laughter festivals are a tradition that date back as far as 800 years in some places. The most famous of these is the 笑い講 (わらいこう waraiko), which takes place in Hofu, Yamaguchi Prefecture. The waraiko traditionally occurs on the first Sunday of December, but laughing festivals of all kinds take place throughout December and the New Year.

Participants gather at the designated location, typically a shrine, and sit or stand in a circle. They then take turns laughing three times, which each laugh having a different symbolic meaning. The first laugh celebrates a good harvest, the second laugh prays for a good harvest for the next year, and the third and final laugh is a full body laugh meant to shake away all the pain and worries accumulated over the year.

The competition is judged by a person who goes around striking a metal tub several times loudly if a laugh is satisfactory, but only once, sadly, if the laugh is too forced or not full enough. At the end, all members join together to laugh one last big laugh all together.