



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

TEACHING TUESDAY

WHITE DAY

In our Valentine's Teaching Tuesday, we learned about how Valentine's Day in Japan is more about giving gifts to men. But Japan also has a "White Date" which takes place on March 14th, exactly one month after Valentine's Day. The exact opposite of Valentine's Day, on White Day those who received gifts are supposed to give return gifts to those who gifted them chocolates on Valentine's Day. Flowers, jewelery, accessories, clothing and lingerie are also popular gifts along with traditional chocolates. More often than not, the color of the chocolate is white because of the name of the day.

White Day was first celebrated in 1978 in Japan. In 1977, a Fukuoka-based confectionery company, Ishimura Manseido (石村萬盛堂), marketed marshmallows to men on March 14, calling it "Marshmallow Day" (マシュマロデー). It was not a success, but the National Confectionery Industry Association (全国飴菓子工業協同組合) took the idea and established White Day as an "answer day" or "reply day" to Valentine's Day, encouraging men to return the favor to the women who gave them chocolates on Valentine's Day. The initial name was "Ai ni Kotae ru White Day" (Answer Love on White Day).

Those who received gifts on Valentine's Day are expected to return gifts that are at least two or three times more valuable than the gifts received on Valentine's Day. The term sanbai gaeshi (三倍返し, literally, "threefold return gift") is used to describe this rule. Not returning the gift is perceived as putting oneself in a position of superiority, even if excuses are given. Returning a present of only equal value is considered a way to say that you are ending the relationship.