



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

TEACHING TUESDAY

SUMMER GREETINGS

Like the tradition of sending nengajo at the New Year, the tradition of shochū mimai (暑中見舞い) revolves around sending seasonal greeting cards to friends and loved ones. Also called midsummer greetings, 'shochū' refers to the eighteen-day-period ending around August 7. This period tends to be the hottest time of the year in Japan, falling right between what is considered the end of the rainy season and the beginning of fall on the old calendar. These cards are a way of showing concern for someone's health in the summer heat, as well as to thank the recipient for support in the course of the first half of the year.

Cards sent after this period are called zansho mimai (残暑見舞い). These late-summer greetings can be sent until the end of August. Also, just like nengajo, the post offices offer special cards called kamomeru (かもめ〜る). When someone buys a kamomeru, they will receive a number for a prize drawing.

Shochū mimai and zansho mimai are often decorated with cooling imagery, such as sea animals, summer flowers, and firework displays. For a shochū mimai card, the traditional greeting is "shochū omimai moushiagemasu (暑中お見舞い申し上げます)" meaning "How is your health in this hot weather?" A zansho mimai has a similar greeting, asking "zansho omimai moushiagemasu (残暑お見舞い申し上げます)" or "Are you feeling all right in the lingering heat?" An important way to keep in touch with friends and relatives not seen very often, the tradition of shochū mimai and zansho mimai continues even today.