



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

TEACHING TUESDAY

OTSUKIMI

Otsukimi (お月見) or Jugoya (十五夜) is the annual viewing of the harvest moon that takes place every autumn in Japan. A tradition dating back to the Heian period, the viewing of the full harvest moon is supposed to take place in the eighth month of the traditional Japanese lunar calendar. On the modern calendar, these days usually fall in September and October. This year, it falls on September 27.

Originally the festival was celebrated among aristocrats, who would gather under the full moon to indulge in banquets, music and recitation of poems dedicated to the moon. This period in particular was chosen because the eighth solar month (corresponding to September) is seen as the best time to look at the moon, since the relative positions of the earth, sun, and moon cause the moon to appear especially bright. It quickly became a popular tradition to gather on the evening of the full moon in a place where the moon can be seen clearly, decorate the scene with Japanese pampas grass and autumn flowers, and offer tsukimi ryori (月見料理) in hopes for happiness and a good harvest.

Kabocha (pumpkin), chestnuts, satoimo (taro potato) and tsukimi dango (small white rice dumplings, piled high on a tray), are all traditional tsukimi ryori offerings. Perhaps the most important are the tsukimi dango, which not only represent the beauty of the moon, but also hopes for happiness and health. Special tsukimi soba and udon are also made, topped with egg to represent the moon. Be sure to take a look for the full moon this coming Sunday for your own otsukimi!