



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

TEACHING TUESDAY

DARUMA FAIRS

There are three major daruma fairs in Japan throughout the year, and one of the largest, the Daruma-ichi, takes place annually at Syorinzan Daruma-ji temple in Gunma on January 6 & 7. The fair is filled with thousands of people buying new Daruma dolls, having them blessed for the New Year and returning their old dolls for ritual burning.

Daruma are good luck charms, often sold during the New Year, and are said to help people fulfil their wishes and goals. They are round, rolling dolls with no eyes. They return to their upright position when tipped over, and so are said to be a sign of encouragement even when life tries to knock you down. The first eye is drawn by the owner when a wish or a goal is made, and the other is drawn when it is fulfilled. Legend goes that the Daruma-ichi and other fairs like it began over 200 years ago, when a priest, concerned about villagers who were going hungry because of a crop failure, taught them how to make these dolls to sell at small booths during a New Year festival.

Today, Daruma fairs are a traditional Japanese event, featuring anywhere from 100-300 daruma-selling stalls, selling around 20,000 dolls each year to the more than 300,000 visitors. Many of the vendors have set up shop in the same spot every year, and often have patron families who have been buying daruma from them for a generation or more.

The traditional color of a Daruma is red, for good luck and fortune, but at daruma fairs you will see daruma of all different colors. Purple or green for health, yellow for security, gold for wealth, blue for good fortune in one's career, and white or pink for love. If you're looking for a way to keep your New Year's resolutions, maybe try your own Daruma doll!