



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

# TEACHING TUESDAY

## HINA-MATSURI

One of the biggest festivals celebrated in March is Hina-matsuri (雛祭り), or Girl's Day. Celebrated every year on March 3rd, this day celebrates the growth of girls and their happiness in the future. The day is often marked with large displays of ornamental dolls, known as hina, dressed in Heian period court clothing.

The origins of Hina-matsuri begin with the Heian period custom of nagashi-bina (流し雛). Dolls made of straw or paper were crafted and set on small boats to be floated down the river. It was said that these dolls would carry bad luck and troubles away with them, which was especially important during this time frame, when the seasons were changing and illness was common. Eventually, as the dolls began to be used to pray for the safety of children, the tradition mixed with the ornamental dolls of the wealthy and Hina-matsuri took its current form.

In addition to the large doll displays, the day is celebrated with certain foods, such as hina-arare (colorful pellet-like rice crackers coated with sugar), hishi-mochi (diamond-shaped layers of colorful, thin rice cakes), chirashi-zushi, (sushi rice mixed with colorful ingredients suitable for the occasion), and other traditional food. Hina dolls are put away immediately after March 3rd, and are typically 'retired' to shrines after the daughter of the family gets married.