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TEACHING TUESDAY

HASHI-OKI

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Hashi-oki (箸置き) are small chopstick rests, most frequently used in traditional washoku cuisine. In addition to keeping chopsticks clean, hashi-oki are also important to dining presentation. They are often rotated out so that the shape evokes the current season and welcomes people to the table.

The earliest origins of hashi-oki are said to go back to the Heian period, when small earthenware chopstick holders shaped like ears were placed on trays of food offerings. But hashi-oki didn't really become popular as household dining items until after 1900. Today, hashi-oki are art pieces, representing in miniature some aspect of the season and bringing cheer to the dining table. They can be made from porcelain, wood, plastic, and more, even origami.

The proper way to place chopsticks on a hashi-oki is to leave an overhang of approximately 3cm from the tip, instead of resting the tips directly on it. The hashi-oki should be placed parallel to the table edge, in front of the meal and to the left of the user.