

## Ringling in the New Year, Japanese-style

## 日本のお正月

Anyone who stays in Japan during the new year period will soon discover that Japan has its own way of celebrating the new year. There's few (if any) fireworks, parties and countdowns. Instead, it's a rather quiet night of the year. In this issue of Obihiro Pioneer, we look at how you can join in the Japanese way of ringing in the new year.

### Ōmisoka

大晦日 (Ōmisoka) is the Japanese word for new year's eve, and is usually a day of tying up loose ends such as paying off any outstanding debts, cleaning and even bathing so as to enter the new year with no obligations. This is usually wrapped up by a midnight visit to a temple or shrine which is called 初詣 (hatsumōde), meaning the first visit to a temple or shrine of the new year. If you head to a Buddhist temple, you might witness the monks

literally ringing in the new year by sounding the temple bell 108

times. This ritual is called 除夜の鐘 (joya no kane) and represents the cleansing of 108 worldly temptations in Buddhist belief of all Japanese citizens. Of course here in Tokachi, midnight events at this time of year are going to be freezing, so wrap up well to stave off the cold!



### お節料理 (Osechi-ryōri)

Osechi-ryōri is the food that Japanese people will prepare in the days leading up to the new year so that they will not have to



do any cooking on New Year's Day. This custom is partially so that everyone can simply relax and enjoy the first day of the new year, but is also due to an old custom where it was taboo to use a hearth and cook meals except for お雑煮 (ozōni), a soup containing もち (mochi) rice cakes. These meals can be easily identified by their special boxes, which look like large bento boxes and are often black and red in color. The foods prepared also each carry significant meaning and well wishes for the new year. Why not try preparing your own Osechi-ryōri?

### 初日の出 (Hatsu hi no de)

In Japan, many of the "firsts" of the new year are things to be celebrated, and as expected of The Land of the Rising Sun, chief among them is 初日の出 (hatsu hi no de), greeting the first sunrise. This custom first came to be as a way of greeting 歳神様 (Toshigamisama), the god of harvests and ancestors. It was believed that Toshigamisama arrives with the first sunrise of the new year,

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# Events at TIRC and in Tokachi and Obihiro

Please be aware that these events may be cancelled to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

To find out if these events are still running, please contact the respective organizers.

When	What	Where/Contact
12/9 (Wed) 19:00-21:00	<b>International Mini-Volleyball Night</b> 国際ミニバレー・ナイト Meet new friends from around the world while enjoying a fun and easy sport. TIRC Multipurpose Hall Fee: Free of charge Organized by the Tokachi International Association	Tokachi International Relations Center 森の交流館・十勝 0155-34-0122 tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp
12/1 – 3/31 (Tue - Wed)	<b>Winter Festival in Tokachi Ecopark Opening</b> ウィンターフェスinエコパオープン When the snow falls and starts to pile up in Tokachi Ecopark, the winter selection of activities will open up! This includes cross-country skiing, snow tubing, snow raft tours and more.	Tokachi Ecology Park 十勝エコロジーパーク 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp
12/19 (Sat) 10:00-12:00	<b>Kadomatsu Creation Challenge</b> 門松づくりに挑戦しよう Try making kadomatsu with white birch instead of bamboo. Please wear a mask to this event. Limited to 10 groups Fee: 1000 Yen per group Children in elementary school and younger must be accompanied by a guardian	Tokachi Ecology Park Earthen Folly 十勝エコロジーパーク 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp
12/19 (Sat) 15:00-16:00	<b>Xmas Concert</b> Xmasコンサート Get your night off to a good start by listening to wonderful musical performances by local musicians. Fee: Free	Tokachi Ecology Park Visitor Center 十勝エコロジーパーク 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp
12/20 (Sun) 11:00-12:00	<b>Ecopark Mochi Pounding</b> エコパもちつき会 Pound mochi together with everyone, and eat the mochi when it's done! Fee: Free	Tokachi Ecology Park Visitor Center 十勝エコロジーパーク 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp
12/26 (Sat) 15:00-16:00	<b>Mr. Kuni's Musical Plaza ~End of Year Party~</b> クニさん歌の広場～忘年会～ How would you like to play some music with Kawachi Kuni, a lyricist and composer? If you would like to have a session with Mr. Kuni, please contact Tokachi Ecology Park! Please bring your favorite musical instrument. Fee: Free	Tokachi Ecology Park Visitor Center 十勝エコロジーパーク 0155-32-6780 www.tokachi-ecopark.jp

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and greeting them would grant good luck! Many Japanese people will try to get up early and find a spot from which to experience the first sunrise of the new year, with beaches, mountains and sometimes tall buildings so that they can get an unobstructed view of the sun in all its glory.



### 年賀状 (Nengajō)

The lead up the New Year is the Japanese postal service's busiest time of year, and the cause of this is all down to 年賀状 (nengajō), New Years greeting cards! In Japan it's customary to send a greeting card to family, friends, colleagues and sometimes acquaintances too. Japan Post handles so many of these cards that they will start a special nengajō service weeks in advance of the new year so ensure that all the cards get processed and delivered on time. If you get a card from someone you didn't send one too, don't panic! If these happens to you, you can send a card back within the first week of the new year. You can pick up nengajō in places like



combinis, book stores, stationary stores etc., so picking some up should be simple if you'd like to join in this custom this year!

### 門松 (Kadomatsu)

As New Years Eve approaches you might start noticing some special decorations appearing outside businesses, homes and shrines. Made from pine branches and 3 pillars of bamboo, these decorations are called 門松 (kadomatsu), and hold special spiritual meaning in the Shinto religion. The three pillars of bamboo are cut at different heights, and represent heaven, humanity and earth, with the tallest representing heaven and the shortest representing earth. These kadomatsu are usually placed in pairs on either side of a gate or entrance to welcome ancestral spirits or 神 (kami), Shinto gods.

Then after January 15<sup>th</sup> (or in some cases, January 19<sup>th</sup>), the kadomatsu are burned to appease and release the gods who have taken residence within them.



New Years is a really great time to dive right into Japan's unique culture, so try giving as many of these New Years experiences a shot as you can!

## Learn Nihongo!: Winter Words にほんごをまなびましょう! : 冬の言葉

With a new season comes a whole new battery of words. Knowing these words might even help keep you safe!

### ブラックアイスバーン burakkuaisubaan

Meaning: Black ice

### 大雪 おおゆき ōyuki

Meaning: Heavy snowfall



### 氷柱 つらら tsurara

Meaning: Icicle

### 落雪 らくせつ rakusetsu

Meaning: Snowslide

### 雪庇 せつぴ seppi

Meaning: Overhanging snow



Keep an eye out for more new vocabulary to learn over the winter season!

**Due to COVID-19, release dates for new films may be postponed.  
Please contact Cinema Taiyo directly for more details.**

Times and movies are subject to change! (for space reasons not all movies are listed)  
To confirm, call or check online at: [http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/theater/\\_obihiro/movie.shtml](http://www.taiyogroup.jp/cinema/theater/_obihiro/movie.shtml)



Title	Language	Dates
Demon Slayer: Kimetsu no Yaiba the Movie: Mugen Train (劇場版「鬼滅の刃」無限列車編, Gekijou-ban Kimetsu no Yaiba Mugen Ressha-hen)	Jpn Dub	All month
The Witches (Majo ga ippai)	Jpn Sub	From 4 <sup>th</sup>
Pokémon the Movie: Secrets of the Jungle (劇場版ポケットモンスター ココ, Gekijou-ban Pokettomonsutaa Koko)	Jpn Dub	From 25 <sup>th</sup>
Wonder Woman (Wandaa Uuman)	Jpn Sub	From 25 <sup>th</sup>

## Foodbank Tokachi Project フードバンク・トカチ・プロジェクト

**FOODBANK TOKACHI PROJECT**

For people who have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic

Foodbank Tokachi Project is a foodbank set up to provide aid to foreign residents of Tokachi who have been badly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Things like rice, canned foods, instant meals and other non-perishable foods as well as things like masks, detergent, tissues and other daily necessities will be distributed by Obihiro City civil servants and members of the Committee of International Friendship.

If you would like to receive donations from the Foodbank Tokachi Project, you can apply via the Tokachi International Relations Center Facebook page, or by emailing TIRC at [tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp](mailto:tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp)

**Target Recipients:** International residents (limited to the first 50 people)  
**Point of Distribution:** Tokachi International Relations Center (West 20, South 6-1-2)  
**Date & Time:** Dec. 20 (Sun) 10:00 - 16:00  
**Application Period:** Dec 11 (Fri) - Dec 18 (Fri)

For more information, please scan the QR code provided.

Contact us: Tokachi International Relations Center, West 20, South 6-1-2, Obihiro. Email: [tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp](mailto:tirc@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp)

Organized by the Committee for Improvement of the City in cooperation with the Obihiro Committee for International Friendship.

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**Obihiro Pioneer** can be found at the following locations: Obihiro City Hall, Tokachi International Relations Center, Obihiro University International Center, Obihiro Tourism and Convention Center inside the Obihiro JR Station, Obihiro Public Library, Tokachi Plaza, Cinema Taiyo, Joy English Academy and online at [www.city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp](http://www.city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp) (click on "Information for Foreigners")

"Obihiro Pioneer" is a newsletter published monthly by the Obihiro City Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section for residents of the Tokachi District and related parties. The contents of this newsletter do not necessarily represent the official views or opinions of the Tourism and Goodwill Exchange Section or the City of Obihiro. Questions? Tel (0155) 65-4133 or send e-mail to the Editing Team at [international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp](mailto:international@city.obihiro.hokkaido.jp).