

Celebrate the Year of the
Monkey with The Wing!



Journey with Newspapers In Education and Wing Luke Museum to learn how different Asian Americans celebrate the New Year.

One of the most important celebrations for Asian Americans is the New Year. Oshogatsu, the Japanese New Year, was traditionally observed in Japan for weeks beginning on New Year's Eve. Now, the holiday in Japan is only 3 days long and in the United States, Japanese Americans celebrate on January 1.

NEW YEAR TRADITIONS

Oshogatsu is an occasion for merriment and enjoying time with your loved ones. Some of the customs from Japan have continued in the United States, such as the ringing of the Buddhist temple bell 108 times on New Year's Eve and visiting relatives on New Year's Day. The new year should start off fresh, so families clean their homes before the new year begins and wear new or clean clothes.

Other rituals include the Lion Dance that spread to Japan from China. Called the Shi Shi Mai, the dance is performed for special events and believed to bring good luck if you feed the lion an offering of money. The animal year, according to the legendary animal zodiac, is also highlighted around this time. 2016 is the year of the monkey!

Many also prepare osechi (special New Year foods) that they hope will bring good health and peace. For example, long noodles made from buckwheat called soba are eaten on New Year's Eve to ensure a long life; black soy beans called kuromame assure good health; and a fishcake called kamaboko is served because it is pinkish/red and white, which are considered lucky colors.

One popular traditional New Year food is mochi (rice cakes). It is made from sweet rice, which is an important food in Japan. After the rice is cooked and steamed, it is pounded with a heavy wooden mallet in a curved bowl made of cement or in older days, made from a tree trunk.

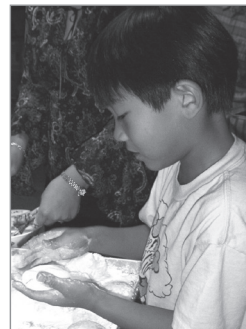
Some families still make mochi this way, but there are also machines that can cook rice and grind it into mochi. Everyone helps to form the mochi into smaller balls, flattening them down a bit, or wrapping the mochi around sweet pastes made from beans and sugar.

Another type of mochi is made with glutinous rice flour called mochiko and baked in the oven instead of pounding. You can make a dessert mochi at home with the recipe in the Teacher's Guide or look up one on the Internet.

This article is geared for grades K-5. The Teacher's Guide includes extension plans for these articles and lesson plans for grades 4-9 (based on past NIE Asian New Year articles printed in 2013).



Pounding the mochi on Bainbridge Island. Dean Wong photographer.



Forming the mochi. Photo courtesy of Leslie Matsuda.

GLOSSARY

Kuromame	Black soy beans that are simmered in a sweet and savory sauce.
Mochi	Sweet rice that has been steamed, pounded, and formed into a soft mound.
Mochiko	Flour made from rice
Osechi	New Year foods
Oshogatsu	Japanese New Year
Shi Shi Mai	Lion dance used for special celebrations

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**LUNAR NEW YEAR
OPENING CELEBRATION**
Wing Luke Museum
8th Ave S. and S. King St.
wingluke.org/2016newyear

Saturday, Feb. 6
11 a.m. – 5 p.m.

Featuring lion dance (11 a.m.) and family-friendly activities including story-time, stuffed animal petting zoo, face painting, and a kids' scavenger hunt with prizes! *Children and students (with ID) are FREE. Sponsored by The National Committee on United States-China Relations.*

**SEATTLE CHINATOWN—INTERNATIONAL
DISTRICT ANNUAL LUNAR NEW YEAR FESTIVAL**
Hing Hay Park
Maynard Ave S. and S. King St.
cidbia.org/events

Saturday, Feb. 13
11 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Learn more about The Wing's current New Years All Year Round tour featuring Japanese, Vietnamese and Hmong New Year celebrations; an interactive and fun experience for Pre-K through 5th grade. For more information, including other tour options for all ages, email tours@wingluke.org.