

V. 57- Dec 2011–Feb 2012

- p.1 Introduction
- p.2 Year-end celebrations
- p.3 Coming up events
- p.4 Miscellaneous

# The Chiyoda International

Edited by

The International Relations  
Chiyoda City Hall

1-2-1 Kudan-Minami Chiyoda-ku 102-8688

Tel : (03)-3264-2111 Ext: 2254

HP: <http://www.city.chiyoda.lg.jp>



Reaching December or "Shiwasu" (師走) "Priests Running" in Japanese Calendar when not only priests are being busy for New Year's preparations and blessings but everyone else for gifts giving. It is more of a ritualized custom, where there are two main periods every year: "Ochugen" (お中元) from mid of June to mid of August, and "Oseibo" (お歳暮) from mid of November to the end of December. These two periods are about giving presents to thank your seniors, your good customers, people who treated you well or bestowed you with a favor, or people with whom you would like to keep good relationships. There is quite a lot to talk about, but let's just say that this is all part of a Japanese principle called "Giri" (義理), which one might simply translate by "Social obligation", even though there is more than meets the eye.



So what do people give?! During these periods, you may have seen in the department stores really expensive boxes of food, alcohol, soap etc. For example: a box of strawberries costs 5000 Yen.



*「The train came out of the long tunnel into the snow country.*

*The earth lay white under the night sky」*

This is the opening of Nobel Prize-winning novelist Kawabata Yasunari's masterpiece "Snow Country." This phrase accurately indicates a geographical feature of Japan. With its long distance from north to south, Japan experience various winters.

**Winter in Japan** Central Japan, around Tokyo, has short winters with cold and sunny days and occasional snowfall. Northern Japan experiences long, cold winters that help keep snow on the ground for up to four months a year. This is a perfect area for skiing!!! Winter is a remarkably dry, bright season across the Kansai area, but there are still some snowfalls so that you may admire Kyoto's temple wearing pure white roofs. If you want to escape from cold temperatures you may also go to Okinawa. There, even in January, Naha averages a moderate high temperature of 16 ° C.



"Camellia-sasanqua"



These flowers are called "Sazanka". They are "winter flowers" ^.^ you may enjoy them while wandering in Tokyo's parks.



**Did you know what does Chiyoda mark refer to?**

The "Chi" 「千」 represents a flying crane, which is also the same shape as the hiragana "yo" 「よ」, and the whole mark looks like the kanji "ta/da" 「田」. The three letters form together "Chiyoda".

## Celebration at work

**Bonenkai** means a party occurring in December to wildly celebrate, while drinking **Sake** and forget that year's hard labor and unpleasantness. Originally, it took place as a gathering for family, relatives and friends, but now groups from the workplace and groups of people, sharing the same taste or interest in amusement, go as units to **bars** and restaurants and sometimes even to **karaoke** to celebrate together in lively enjoyment. In addition, just after the New Year, a party called the **New Year Party** takes place. Both are regular parties with no special ceremony.

## Merry Christmas

In western culture, Christmas is mainly meant for everyone to get together with one's family, eating special baked cookies or singing carols together, and probably gossiping and laughing at each other. It's a tremendous time. Nowadays Japan grasped a similar celebration, where kids are waiting for Santa Claus's visit at the night of Christmas. Not only Christians, but all people enjoy it by exchanging presents, with family and sweethearts and by eating out. The real family time is saved for "Oshogatsu" お正月 New Year eve.



## Toshigami blessing for a purified 2012

Osooji"大掃除 in other word the massive house cleaning/ desk cleaning (at a company)! Every one is in charge of cleaning during the end of the year. It is time to clean every single part of the house. Since New Year Eve is usually spent with all members of the family, they'd rather welcome everyone in a clean place. Actually this custom has its roots from a Shinto belief, that one's house, heart and body have to be purified so as to welcome the "Toshigami" 年神, the god of grains.

## Oomisoka or the last day of the year

New Year's Eve, is when Japanese family reunion. It refers to entering the New Year with the sense of togetherness. At about midnight, bells are rung at Buddhists temples all around the country. According to old belief, these 108 times strikes symbolize the 108 worldly desires which are removed by bell. While listening to the sound of bells, few people eat Toshikoshi Soba (year crossing noodles), wishing for health in the coming year and long life.

## Traditional Japanese New Year's game

Jovial laughter game or « 福笑い » Fukuwarai is a Japanese traditional game where pieces of paper are cut in the shape of eyebrows, eyes, nose, mouth, and ears are to be matched with an outline drawing of a woman's face, known as the **homely woman** (Otafuku); to play, one person is blindfolded and creates a face by placing the eyes, nose and other pieces on the outline. Because one proceeds by instinct, the comical feature of the completed picture causes jovial laughter.



New Year dishes / Osechi-ryori are special side dishes eaten on the first three days of the New Year. The contents are respectively charged with wishes: e.g. (Kobu maki) "Sea tangle roll" means happiness.

## Hibiya Library Reopening

Closed in April 2009 to be renewed, Hibiya Library reopened by early November 2011. It is well known for its extensive collection of magazines, newspapers and foreign books. It houses also halls for exhibitions and seminars. Now that it belongs to Chiyoda Ku, it also provides a profound knowledge of old history and culture in Chiyoda area. Hours: 10:00 a.m. to 22:00 from Monday till Friday (19:00 p.m. on Saturdays, 17:00 on Sundays and holidays). It is closed monthly every third Monday, during the New Year holidays and special book rearrangement days.



## The 11<sup>th</sup> Snowman Fair

In cooperation with Gunma prefecture a huge load of snow will be brought to Jimbocho intersection, to build a giant snow man on the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> of January. Every one is welcomed. The location extends from Jimbocho till Ogawacho (Yasukuni street), Surugadai shita and Ogawa Square areas.



## Tsujimura Jusaburo

He is one of the most famous "dolls teachers" in Japan. He also worked as a Kimono designer, stage and costumes design, movie art director, and screenwriter. He will perform a show acted by dolls divided into three stories with a shamisen background live music, titled "Iki mono no henge" which literally means "The changes in living things". Location: Nikkei Hall. Address: Otemachi 2-3-7 Nikei Building 3F. Entrance fee: 1000 yen for adult, 500 yen for kids. Date: Feb 19<sup>th</sup> from 3:00 to 5:00 PM. You may buy tickets at Chiyoda Ward city 2F. For more information please contact us (03-5211-3628)

## 「2k540 AKI-OKA ARTISAN」

On September 29<sup>th</sup> 2011, a grand opening under the overpass Okachimachi – Akihabara JR revealing "manufacturing town". This unique gathering is full of goods and fashion creations creators "street" to stage. This special event for foreigners will be held from Nov 24<sup>th</sup> - Feb 26<sup>th</sup>, 11:00 ~ 19:00 (closed on Wednesdays).

During the event, there will be a 5% off for foreign passport holders! (Excluding some items). For more information pls. check <http://tcvb.or.jp/ja/> (only Japanese)



Every weekend, just in front of Yurakucho station, you may enjoy shopping for groceries at "Marché" or a French market. All vegetables, fruits and other products are fresh and brought directly from a natural environment.

## Appearance Of the Emperor

Every year the Imperial Family makes an appearance on the balcony of Imperial Palace on two occasions: Emperor Akihito's birthday on December 23<sup>rd</sup> and on January 2<sup>nd</sup> to welcome Year 2013 with the crowd.

On these occasions you will have the opportunity to enter that part of the garden which is usually closed to public. On both days it opens during the morning.



**Ladies:** Did you know that you are the only ones to give chocolate on **Valentine's Day** in Japan? But don't you worry! You will get your turn on March 14<sup>th</sup> "**White day**" when men are simply supposed to give you back three times up (valued) of what they received from you.

## Tax clarification

As in almost every country, in Japan it is necessary to pay taxes based on your income, and the deadline for completing your tax return is by **March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2012**.

All the information about the fiscal deductible incomes and income calculation for self-employed people and business owners is detailed in the **Income Tax Guide for Foreigners**.

[http://www.nta.go.jp/foreign\\_language/index.htm](http://www.nta.go.jp/foreign_language/index.htm)

## Influenza

The most effective way to prevent influenza is by getting the influenza vaccine (the flu shot) and using simple infection control measures such as hand washing and gargling.

For more info you may check our websites: For kids

[http://trans.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/LUCCHIYODA/ns/tl.cgi/http%3a//www.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/service/00134/d0013412.html?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XPARAM=query,&XCHARSET=Shift\\_JIS&XPORG](http://trans.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/LUCCHIYODA/ns/tl.cgi/http%3a//www.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/service/00134/d0013412.html?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XPARAM=query,&XCHARSET=Shift_JIS&XPORG),

Elderly may take the shot for free, please visit

[http://trans.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/LUCCHIYODA/ns/tl.cgi/http%3a//www.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/service/00103/d0010327.html?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XPARAM=query,&XCHARSET=Shift\\_JIS&XPORG](http://trans.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/LUCCHIYODA/ns/tl.cgi/http%3a//www.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/service/00103/d0010327.html?SLANG=ja&TLANG=en&XMODE=0&XPARAM=query,&XCHARSET=Shift_JIS&XPORG)

## Saving electricity

After the big disaster early this year, we all are trying to make an effort in saving electricity as possible as we can. Your effort will make a difference too by:

- Using the heater or the AC moderately.
- Not using the heater and "the hot carpet" at the same time.
- Using thick curtains to optimize the use of the heater.

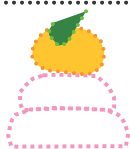
It is usually cold from end of January until mid-February in Tokyo. But it is expected to be even colder due to the changes that Japan has been through.

## Separating trash

Spread the FUN, not the trash. Year-end festivities come with parties with friends and family, which means a lot of food and whatever goes with that kind of celebration. Please, do not forget to separate all the trash according to their type.

Please refer to our home page for more details on "How to separate and dispose of recyclable materials and waste".

<http://www.city.chiyoda.lg.jp/service/00021/d0002141.html>



*We, Chiyoda Ward City wish you a happy 2012*

*\*Closing days of Chiyoda City (Dec 29<sup>th</sup> ~ Jan 3<sup>rd</sup>)*

