

# Chigasaki Breeze

Truly great friends are hard to find, difficult to leave, and impossible to forget.

No.0003

## SETSUBUN 節分



### *Setsubun* (eve of the first day of spring)

On February 3, a nation-wide ceremony called **MAME-MAKI** (bean-throwing) is observed at homes, shrines and temples. It's a part of **SETSUBUN** period which literally means the parting of the seasons.

On that day, before it gets dark, masters of homes open all the doors and windows and fling handfuls of parched soybeans loudly yelling "**FUKU-WA UCHI! ONI-WA SOTO!**". The louder the better! That means "**In with good luck! Out with the demons!**"

The purpose of this customs is to invite good luck or fortune and ward off whatever brings misfortune to your family. Why **MAME**? It's because **MAME** is believed to bring good luck "**FUKU**" and because "**MAME**" can be read as beans and the eyes of the demons in terms of its phonetic sound and kanji character. On this day throughout Japan, you may hear such loud voices here and there in residential area. You will be interested to know that new year's luck will come if you eat the same number of scattered beans as your age. The form and significance are gradually changing, but **Setsubun** is a traditional holiday that's still widely observed.

## What's up at "KOHMIN-KAN"

**KOHMIN-KAN** is a public hall operated by the city and there are five of them in Chigasaki. It's similar to the COMMUNITY CENTER which is also operated by the city but they are different facilities. **KOHMIN-KAN** offers rooms free to citizens for meetings, group activities such as singing, dancing, flower arrangement, cooking, etc. All **KOHMIN-KANs** are offering various programs for all family members throughout the year. These programs are announced in advance in the Chigasaki public newspaper issued on the 1st and 15th of every month. At this time of the year, they hold the '**KOHMIN-KAN Festival**'. Some of the scheduled events are shown below:

- (1) March 3 ~ 5 at **Nango Kohmin-kan**  
Pre-events on February 7, 14, 21 (Tuesday)  
**Walk the paths to follow the Chigasaki history**  
Maximum 30 people. Call 86-4355 for reservation.
- (2) March 10 ~ 12 at **Tsurumine Kohmin-kan**  
The event on the last day is titled "**Let's sing Musical Songs**". You can join everyone singing popular musical songs such as "**Singing in the Rain**", "**Shall we dance**", etc.
- (3) February 24 ~ 26 at **Kowada Kohmin-kan**

*All the staff at KOHMIN-KANs will be looking forward to your visit and participation.*

## HINA-MATSURI 雛祭り

### *The Dolls' Festival*



**Hina-Matsuri** or the **Doll's Festival** taking place on March 3 is an occasion for a family to wish for young girls' good health and happiness. Most families with daughters celebrate by displaying special dolls together with peach flowers, colored lozenge-shaped rice cakes, special sweetened rice puffs, white sake containing rice malt, etc. The origin of **Hina-Matsuri** goes back thousands of years when the sin and misfortune were believed to transfer to dolls at the imperial and aristocratic families in the **Heian Period (794-1185)**. When this practice became popular among common people, it developed to girls playing with dolls and turned into **Hina-Matsuri**.

Those dolls are called **Hina-Ningyo** (**Special dolls for the Dolls' Festival**). They are relatively small and all the decoration took the current form in the **Edo Period (1603~1867)**. A pair of dolls representing the **Emperor and Empress** are placed on the highest tier of a five-tiered or seven-tiered altar covered by red carpet. Under them come the three court ladies and on the third tier the five court musicians with other decorations. Recently many people have simpler sets of dolls and sometimes people display just the Emperor and Empress dolls placing them on a shelf. **The Hina-Matsuri** is also called the **Feast of Peach Blossoms** as the festival takes place when the peach blossoms start to bloom. **Hatsu-Zekku** is the **First Feast of Peach Blossoms** for a girl to have.



## PLUM BLOSSOM AND 'SHORAI-AN' HERMITAGE

It's not a large orchard but there are over 50 plum trees at **Takasuna Ryokuchi** garden located next to the City Library and Museum; about 5 minutes walk south from the Chigasaki Station. To watch their beautiful pink and white flowers, you don't need to travel so far as to Odawara and Atami. Following cherry blossoms or **SAKURA**, watching **plum blossoms** or **UME** is another traditional joy for the most Japanese for the last 1,000 years.

There is an old Japanese style tea house, or hermitage called "**SHORAI-AN**" quietly located in a clump of trees. It's one of the precious assets of Chigasaki City and you can enjoy a typical Japanese garden with a pond and stone lanterns as well. On February 12, they perform the **Plum Festival** or **UME Matsuri** and there is also a **tea ceremony**. Everyone can visit and of course, foreigners are welcome.

*Why not checkout the fragrant plum flowers and relax at Shorai-An!*