

# Ugan (Prayer Ceremony) and Ceremonial Cuisine

## Strengthening the Bonds Between People and the Land with Prayers for a Fruitful Year and Ancestor Worship



Soki jiru

### New Year

January 1st by Japan's old calendar

If New Year on the mainland is a "Rice Cake New Year," then the Okinawan New Year could be called the "Pork New Year," as pork features heavily in festivities, with soup dishes such as inamuduchi, nakami jiru, and soki jiru being traditionally eaten.



Inamuduchi



Rice Porridge with 7 Plants of Spring



Nakami jiru (Entrails soup)

### Seasonal Festival of January 7th

January 7th by Japan's old calendar

On the mainland there is the custom of nanakusa gayu, where the seven plants of spring (nanakusa) are put into a porridge, and this event has been transmitted to Okinawa, where this seventh day seasonal festival of vegetable porridge is becoming a year-round event in various places.

### Hamauri

March 3rd by Japan's old calendar

Called "Sanguwachi Sannichi" and known as a women's seasonal festival, hamauri features women and children bringing picnic lunch boxes (in recent years, with only mugwort rice cakes and March sweets) to the beach to spend an enjoyable time together.

Yomogi mochi (mugwort rice cakes)



Sanguwachi guwashi (March sweets)



Muchi (Rice cakes)



Usanmi



### Shimi

Around April

In Okinawa, where the concept of ancestor worship is very strong, the Shimi festival is performed at great scale. Rice cakes and usanmi (boxed food with various fishcakes) are special dishes that even in the present day always accompany ancestor worship events.



A wide variety of annual events are held in each region of Okinawa, such as those related to prayers for a bountiful harvest and catch, those derived from ideas of ancestor worship, those transmitted from China and the mainland, and also those that originated in Okinawa. Relatives and local residents gather around ceremonial cuisine to share stories, and in this way it serves the role of strengthening the bonds of the community, person to person, and between people and the land.

\*Here we have selected one part of ceremonial cuisine. The contents differ depending on the region.



Jushi

### Bon Festival

July 13th - 15th by Japan's old calendar

For the three days from its beginning with Unke (welcoming the spirits) on July 13th until the end with July 15th's Uku (sending the spirits off), the festival carries on magnificently in various places. Unke Jushi (rice seasoned and cooked with pork and ginger) is an indispensable dish on the evening of the 13th.



Amagashi



Popo

### Yukkanuhi

May 4th by Japan's old calendar

May 4th on the Japan's old calendar is called Yukkanuhi, and hari festivals (prayers for a bountiful catch) are carried out on a grand scale in fishing villages and ports all around. On this day, the traditional sweets called "popo" and "chinbin" are made in each household, much to the delight of the children.

### May 5th

Solar calendar events

May 5th is the "Boy's Day Festival" imported from the mainland. Irises along with Japanese mugwort have from ancient times believed to drive away plagues and toxicity, are believed to be medicinal herbs that avert all kinds of maladies. And amagashi (Okinawan sweet bean jam) is eaten with iris leaves as a garnish.



Fuchagi

### Jyugoya

August 15th by Japan's old calendar

During the time of year when the moon is at its most beautiful, there is a custom that each household offers a fuchagi (rice cake covered in adzuki beans) to their Buddhist altar and fire god shrine.

### Muuchii

December 8th by Japan's old calendar

Muuchii is an aromatic rice cake wrapped in the leaves of a sannin (shell ginger) or kuba (fountain palm) and steamed. Since it makes use of the kasa (leaves) of plants, it is also called "kasa muchii."



Muuchii

# Ryukyu Sweets

Influenced by China and Japan  
Many excellent cakes were invented

Through the harmonious intertwining of Chinese and Japanese styles, confectionary craftsmen refined their techniques to create something unique to the Okinawa climate in which it was created: Ryukyu sweets. With names such as chinsuko, ritopen, chirunko, on the other hand, yoshino muchu, machikaji, and fuji sarasa, their lineage is obvious at a glance.

Due to the hot local color, there are more fried confectionery and baked sweets than wagashi-style red bean sweets. Even today, traditional Ryukyu sweets are used for important events and ceremonies.



## Machikaji

Refers to a baked confectionery with poppy seeds or sesame seeds sprinkled on the surface. This Okinawan machikaji is characterized by the fact that it is dyed red and shaped into a belt which is tied into a large knot.



## Chinsuko

A confectionery made by melting lard and mixing in sugar and wheat flour, they have been made since the Dynastic period.

## Chirunko

An elegant cake with plenty of eggs, steamed and covered with chippan and peanuts.



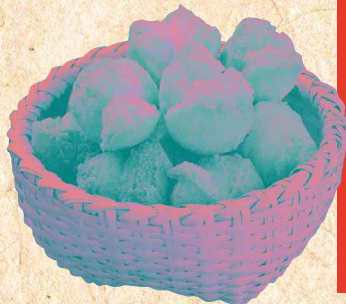
## Senjuko

With dough made of wheat flour kneaded into lard and wrapped around black sesame bean paste and arranged in a tubular shape, this is a baked confection decorated in red, yellow, and green colors.



## Sata andagi

A confection representative of Okinawa, with eggs, sugar and wheat flour kneaded and fried, it is characterized by its spherical shape with one side split open.



## Chippan

A sweet made by boiling down citrus fruits such as kunibu (kunenbo) and kabuchii in sugar. Also known as "kippan."



## Natunsu

An aromatic rice cake popular as a New Year's tea cake. Decorated on top with peanuts shaped like four flower petals.



## Kogwashi

A hard candy that comes in various shapes and colors, it is an indispensable sweet of festivals and ceremonies.



## Tauchicho

A fried pastry with dough that is a mixture of melted lard and wheat flour, wrapped around sesame paste, rounded into half-circles and folded around the edges.



If you have a taste for traditional tea to go along with your Ryukyu sweets, take a journey to the ancient world.



## Bukubuku-cha

Bukubuku-cha is made by adding roasted rice soup made by broiling rice along with tea water to a wooden bowl (bukubuku dish), and whipping with a long bamboo whisk. The top of the teacup is permeated with a mountain of thick froth, and it is drunk directly from the teacup without using a spoon or the like.



## Sanpin-cha

In Okinawa, sanpin-cha, which has been transmitted from China since ancient times, is consumed often. Sanpin-cha is a jasmine-scented tea, and the name comes from the Chinese word Xiangpian.