

Hinamatsuri

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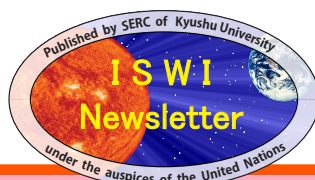
The Japanese **Doll Festival** (雛祭り *Hina-matsuri*), or **Girls' Day**, is held on March 3.^[1] Platforms covered with a red carpet are used to display a set of ornamental dolls (雛人形 *hina-ningyō*) representing the Emperor, Empress, attendants, and musicians in traditional court dress of the Heian period.^[2]

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Seven-tiered Hina doll set



Today is Girls' Day in Japan :
called Hina Matsuri.

Origin and customs

The custom of displaying dolls began during the Heian period. Formerly, people believed the dolls possessed the power to contain bad spirits. Hinamatsuri traces its origins to an ancient Japanese custom called *hina-nagashi* (雛流し, lit. "doll floating"), in which straw hina dolls are set afloat on a boat and sent down a river to the sea, supposedly taking troubles or bad spirits with them. The Shimogamo Shrine (part of the Kamo Shrine complex in Kyoto) celebrates the *Nagashibina* by floating these dolls between the Takano and Kamo Rivers to pray for the safety of children. People have stopped doing this now because of fishermen catching the dolls in their nets. They now send them out to sea, and when the spectators are gone they take the boats out of the water and bring them back to the temple and burn them.

The customary drink for the festival is *shirozake*, a sake made from fermented rice. A colored *hina-arare*, bite-sized crackers flavored with sugar or soy sauce depending on the region, and *hishimochi*, a diamond-shaped colored rice cake, are served.^[3] *Chirashizushi* (sushi rice flavored with sugar, vinegar, topped with raw fish and a variety of ingredients) is often eaten. A salt-based soup called *ushiojiru* containing clams still in the shell is also served. Clam shells in food are deemed the symbol of a united and peaceful couple, because a pair of clam shells fits perfectly, and no pair but the original pair can do so.

Families generally start to display the dolls in February and take them down immediately after the festival. Superstition^[citation needed] says that leaving the dolls past March 4 will result in a late marriage for the daughter.

Placement

The Kantō region and Kansai region have different placement orders of the dolls from left to right, but the order of

dolls per level are the same.

The term for the platform in Japanese is *hina dan* (雛壇). The layer of covering is called *dankake* (段掛) or simply *hi-mōsen* (緋毛氈), a red carpet with rainbow stripes at the bottom.

First platform

The top tier holds two dolls, known as imperial dolls (内裏雛 (だいらびな) *dairi-bina*). These are the Emperor (御内裏様 *Odairi-sama*) holding a ritual baton (笏 *shaku*) and Empress (御雛様 *Ohina-sama*) holding a fan. The words *dairi* means "imperial palace", and *hina* means "girl" or "princess".

The dolls are usually placed in front of a gold folding screen *byōbu* (屏風).

Optional are the two lampstands, called *bonbori* (雪洞),^[4] and the paper or silk lanterns that are known as *hibukuro* (火袋), which are usually decorated with cherry or ume blossom patterns.

Complete sets would include accessories placed between the two figures, known as *sanbō kazari* (三方飾),^[5] composing of two vases of artificial peach branch *kuchibana* (口花).^[6]

The traditional arrangement had the male on the right, while modern arrangements had him on the left (from the viewer's perspective).



An Emperor doll, with two handmaidens.

Second platform

The second tier holds three court ladies *san-nin kanjo* (三人官女). Each holds sake equipment. From the viewer's perspective, the standing lady on the right is the long-handled sake-bearer *Nagae no chōshi* (長柄の銚子), the standing lady on the left is the backup sake-bearer *Kuwae no chōshi* (加えの銚子), and the only lady in the middle is the seated sake bearer *Sanpō* (三方).

Accessories placed between the ladies are *takatsuki* (高坏), stands with round table-tops for seasonal sweets, excluding *hishimochi*.



(video) A five platform doll set.

Third platform

The third tier holds five male musicians *gonin bayashi* (五人囃子). Each holds a musical instrument except the singer, who holds a fan.

Left to right, from viewer's perspective, they are the:

1. Small drum *Taiko* (太鼓), seated,
2. Large drum *Ōtsuzumi* (大鼓), standing,
3. Hand drum *Kotsuzumi* (小鼓), standing,
4. Flute *Fue* (笛), or *Yokobue* (横笛), seated,
5. Singer *Utaikata* (謡い方), holding a folding fan *sensu* (扇子), seated.

Fourth platform

Two ministers (*daijin*) may be displayed on the fourth tier: the Minister of the Right (右大臣 *Udaijin*) and the Minister of the Left (左大臣 *Sadaijin*). The Minister of the Right is depicted as a young person, while the Minister of

the Left is much older. Also, because the dolls are placed in positions relative to each other, the Minister of the Right will be on the viewer's left and the Minister of the Left will be on the viewer's right. Both are sometimes equipped with bows and arrows.

Between the two figures are covered bowl tables *kakebanzen* (掛盤膳), also referred to as *o-zen* (お膳), as well as diamond-shaped stands *hishidai* (菱台) bearing diamond-shaped ricecakes *hishimochi* (菱餅). *Hishidai* with feline-shaped legs are known as *nekoashigata hishidai* (猫足形菱台).

Just below the ministers: on the rightmost, a mandarin orange tree *Ukon no tachibana* (右近の橘), and on the leftmost, a cherry tree *Sakon no sakura* (左近の桜).

Fifth platform

The fifth tier, between the plants, holds three helpers or samurai as the protectors of the Emperor and Empress. From left to right (viewer's perspective):

1. Maudlin drinker *nakijōgo* (泣き上戸),
2. Cantankerous drinker *okorijōgo* (怒り上戸), and
3. Merry drinker *waraijōgo* (笑い上戸)

Other platforms

On the sixth and seventh tiers, a variety of miniature furniture, tools, carriages, etc., are displayed.

Sixth platform

These are items used within the palatial residence.

- *tansu* (箆笥) : chest of (usually five) drawers, sometimes with swinging outer covering doors.
- *nagamochi* (長持) : long chest for kimono storage.
- *hasamibako* (挟箱) : smaller clothing storage box, placed on top of *nagamochi*.
- *kyōdai* (鏡台) : literally *mirror stand*, a smaller chest of drawer with a mirror on top.
- *haribako* (針箱) : sewing kit box.
- two *hibachi* (火鉢) : braziers.
- *daisu* (台子) : a set of *ocha dōgu* (お茶道具) or *cha no yu dōgu* (茶の湯道具), utensils for the tea ceremony.

Seventh platform

These are items used when away from the palatial residence.

- *jubako* (重箱), a set of nested lacquered food boxes with either a cord tied vertically around the boxes or a stiff handle that locks them together.
- *gokago* (御駕籠 or 御駕籠), a palanquin.
- *goshoguruma* (御所車), an ox-drawn carriage favored by Heian nobility. This last is sometimes known as *gisha* or *gyuusha* (牛車).
- Less common, *hanaguruma* (花車), an ox drawing a cart of flowers.

Elsewhere

The Hinamatsuri is also celebrated in Florence (Italy), with the patronage of the *Embassy of Japan*, the *Japanese Institute* and the historical *Gabinetto Vieusseux*.

