

---

# The UC Center NEWSLETTER

## 2010 Winter

It's getting colder and colder each day.  
Hope all of you get ready for winter break and  
have a jolly Christmas and a happy New Year!!

### ★★CONTENTS★★

- Important Notice During Winter Holiday
- Greetings from the UC Center – Kayo Takahashi
- Cooking Recipe-Kuromame
- Japanese New Year and New Year's Eve     ■ Seasonal Notice



### Important Notice during winter holidays



If you will be away for 24 hours or more, you must submit this [Travel Signout Form in MyEAP](#). This sends an email notification to the Tokyo Study Center and Universitywide Office of EAP with the student's name and travel plans. This information is crucial in case of an emergency.

If you wish to leave Japan for a short trip, you will need to obtain a [Re-entry Permit](#) from the immigration office in Japan. With this permit, you can keep your college student visa status through the duration of your EAP participation in Japan.

Note that our office will be closed from **December 24 to January 5** due to winter holidays. Also please note that most facilities such as bank, post office, hospital, and stores will be closed approximately from **December 29 to January 3**.

In case you get sick or injured and need to visit hospital facilities, please refer to the **“Medical Information”** section on our UCTSC Website which tells you about available hospitals in Tohoku, Kanto, and Kansai areas during the winter holiday.

The term *osechi* originally referred to *o-sechi*, a season or significant period. [New Year's Day](#) was one of the five seasonal festivals (節句 *sekku*) in the [Imperial Court in Kyoto](#).

Originally, during first three days of the New Year it was a taboo to use a hearth and cook meals, except when cooking *zōni*. *Osechi* was made by the close of the previous year, as women did not cook in the New Year.



### Simmered Kuromame 黒豆



Since the Japanese word for beans, “*豆-Mame*”, also means “working like a bee”, it's traditional for Japanese people to eat *kuromame* on New Year's holidays, hoping for being able to work in good health.

#### Ingredients (Makes 4 servings)

- 1 cup Black Soy Beans
- 4 cups Water
- 1 cup Sugar
- 2 tsp Soy Sauce
- 1/2 tsp Salt
- 1/2 tsp Baking Soda

#### Procedure

1. Wash black beans. Put water, sugar, salt, soy sauce, and baking soda in large deep pot or iron pot.
2. Bring to a boil. Stop the heat and add black beans. Leave it over night, or about 8 hours.
3. Clean a couple of rusty nails, and wrap them by gauze. Add it in the pot. Put the pot on high heat and bring to a boil. Turn down the heat to low. Skim off any foam that rise to the surface.
4. Cover the pot and simmer the beans on low heat for about 5 hours, or until beans are softened. When the liquid decreases, add some water.
5. Stop the heat and let it sit until cool.

This time, our office manager, Kayo reports her recent bike race held in mid-December. She started biking since 2007.

Here are some pictures and comments which show how brave she is!!



John F. Kennedy once said “Nothing compares to the simple pleasure of a bike ride”, and this truly expresses what cycling means to me.

It brings the pleasure of accomplishment, and the pleasure of meeting new people who also love cycling. This year, I participated in 10 competitive bicycle races and came 1st in 4 of them. Not bad...but I will win more gold medals in 2011 with my new bike on which I am going to spend a fortune!

(The pictures above were taken in the race held at Sodegaura Forest Speedway- it was 4 hour Enduro race, in which I won in the category of Female Teams. We were 3 laps ahead of the 2<sup>nd</sup> place team!)



## Nengajyo 年賀状

### Want to try New Year Greeting Cards??

The Japanese have a custom of sending New Year's Day postcards (年賀状 *nengajō*) to their friends and relatives. Their original purpose was to give your faraway friends and relatives tidings of yourself and your immediate family.

Japanese people send these postcards so that they arrive on the 1st of January. It is customary not to send these postcards when one has had a death in the family during the year.

Here are some examples of conventional *nengajō* greetings:

- ・ 今年もよろしくお願ひします  
—Kotoshi mo yoroshiku o-negai-shimasu
- ・ あけましておめでとうございます  
Akemashite o-medetō-gozaïmasu



## Otoshidama お 年玉

### One of the biggest events of the New Year!!!

On New Year's Day, Japanese people have a custom of giving money to children/students. This is known as お年玉 *-otoshidama*. It is handed out in small decorated envelopes called "Pochibukuro". The amount of money given depends on the age of the child/student but is usually the same if there is more than one child so that no one feels slighted.

One of the best way to spend your お年玉, 福袋-Fukubukuro: lucky/mystery bag sounds perfect. Fukubukuro is a Japanese New Year's Day custom where merchants make grab bags filled with unknown random contents and sell them for 50% or more off the list price of the items contained within. Nowadays, Fukubukuro are pushed as a lavish New Year's event rather than a way for stores to get rid of excess merchandise.



## 初詣 Hatsumōde

### Japanese New Year's Eve and its New Year

As midnight approaches, Buddhist temples begin literally ringing out the old year (除夜の鐘 *-Jyoya no kane*), sounding the temple bell 108 times. This practice is based on a belief that humans have 108 earthy passions they have to overcome in order to attain enlightenment, and each ring is thought to drive away one such passion.

The breaking of dawn the next morning is the beginning of a new day (元日- *Ganjitsu*). People flock to temples and shrines to pray for a healthy and prosperous year. This visit is called 初詣- *hatsumōde*.

A common custom during *hatsumōde* is to buy a written oracle called *omikuji*. If your *omikuji* predicts bad luck you can tie it onto a tree on the shrine grounds, in the hope that its prediction will not come true.



## New Year's Eve 大晦日

New Year's Eve is the second-most important day in Japanese tradition. On Ōmisoka, people have much to do to prepare for New Year's Day, even they do a thorough house cleaning, called *ōsōji* (大掃除).

After cleaning, Japanese have the last dinner of the year. It's a bowl of *toshikoshi-soba* (年越しそば) or *toshikoshi-udon* (年越しうどん) — a tradition based on people's association of eating the long noodles with “crossing over from one year to the next,” which is the meaning of *toshi-koshi*.



## Seasonal Notice

### December: Shiwasu 師走

- 23 Emperor's Birthday  
天皇誕生日 *Tennō Tanjōbi*
- 24 Christmas Eve
- 25 Christmas
- 31 New Year's Eve 大晦日 *Ōmisoka*

### January: Mutsuki 睦月

- 1 New Year 元日 *Ganjitsu*
- 2 Hatsuyume 初夢 *Hatsuyume*  
Japanese word for the first dream had in the New Year. It is considered to be particularly good luck to dream of Mt. Fuji, a hawk, and an eggplant.
- 7 Nanakusa 七草 *Nanakusa*  
A Seven-herb rice, a traditional Japanese soup to let the overworked stomach rest.
- 10 Coming of Age Day  
成人の日 *Seijin no hi*  
Japanese holiday held annually on the second Monday of January. It is to congratulate and encourage all those who have reached the age of 20 years old (二十歳 *hatachi*) over the past year, and to help them realize that they have become adults.

### February: Kisaragi 如月

- 3 Bean-Throwing Ceremony  
節分 *Setsubun*
- 11 National Foundation Day  
建国記念日 *Kenkoku kinen bi*
- 14 Valentine's Day



University of California, Tokyo Study Center  
c/o International Christian University  
3-10-2 Osawa, Mitaka-shi, Tokyo  
181-8585 JAPAN  
TEL: (0422) 33-3118 FAX: (0422) 32-0393

