

2005

1.1

No. 93

monthly

City
News

うらやす

U R A Y A S U



URAYASU CITY

Published by City of Urayasu
1-1-1 Nekozone, Urayasu-shi,
Chiba 279 - 8501
☎ 351-1111

Population: 150,408 (Male: 76,383 Female: 74,025) Households: 64,925 International Residents: 3,280 (As of November 30, 2004)



View of Mt. Fuji seen from Horie bridge

A Happy New Year!

Hideki Matsuzaki, the Mayor of Urayasu City

I extend warm greetings to all the citizens of Urayasu who I trust are celebrating a glorious new year full of hope.

Looking back on last year, extreme superlarge typhoons struck causing damage all over the country, a new record was set for the consecutive days on which the temperature rose above 30C, and in October the Niigata Prefecture Chuetsu Earthquake occurred. It was a year we became keenly aware of the terror of unpredictable natural disasters once again.

Concerning the re-expansion of the Tokyo International Airport (commonly called Haneda Airport), which has become an issue since two years ago, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport presented to Urayasu City last May a revised plan for the flight route after Haneda Airport will be expanded. The plan drastically accepted our city's claim, and can be called a noteworthy outcome in that the government was made to change its intention. We will continue to keep an eye on the government's course of action regarding this matter in order to further improve our citizens' living environment.

With the aim of improving the service to citizens, the days and hours that public facilities open were extended. In addition, City Hall opens some of its sections on Sundays.

Amid such development, under the second Enforcement Program ,which will enter its second year this year, we will positively and systematically carry out various projects. To give an example, more nurseries will be built to support children and families that are raising children.

And, to review the future of the Jido Ikusei Club (Children's

After-School Club), we have organized the project team, there were voices suggesting the need of interaction between the aged and the younger generation who are to lead the next age. Incorporating such new plans and ideas, I am determined to resolutely tackle the task of creating a community that is called for.

To make school education more substantial, the construction of a new school meals center and additional elementary and junior high schools in the Shinmachi area will be pushed ahead. Also, in collaboration with Oriental Land Co., Ltd., a Youth Center providing accommodation will be developed.

Furthermore, the opening of a funeral hall requested by many citizens, creating a park at the former site of the waste disposal plant, completing the facilities complex in front of Shin-Urayasu Station, as well as drawing up an operation plan for new routes of the community bus will be addressed.

Last year, in a ranking by a private organization, Urayasu City's "administrative service level" placed third in the whole country. Such appraisal should not make us feel contented and I will do my utmost to render service to the advancement of the city administration so that our municipality will have a strong foundation in all the aspects of administration. I will persevere to strive this year, to realize the city's basic objective: "Urayasu, a city full of radiant and energetic people." I appreciate your constant, warm understanding and support.



The Japanese New Year

The word *Oshogatsu*

The word *Oshogatsu* was introduced from China. The character *Shou* has the meaning "to renew," *Shogatsu* becomes "the first month when the year has been renewed." The name for *Shogatsu* native to Japan is *Mutsuki* and it can be found in *Nihon Shoki* (Chronicles of Japan). The character *Mutu* has the meaning "affectionate, in harmony," therefor *Mutuki* signifies "the month when family members greet the new year together affectionately."

Osechi Ryori (New Year's cuisine)

The Japanese calendar has five *sekku* (seasonal festivals) in a year. On those days, delicacies were offered to deities and were later served to the whole family, a practice known as *sechi-burumai*. This became the origin of *osechi* and today this word refers to New Year's cuisine. [For your information, the five *sekku* are: *Jinjitsu* of Jan. 7, *Joshi* of March 3, *Tango* of May 5, *Tanabata* of July 7 and *Choyo* of Sept. 9.]



Osechi is prepared using products of the sea and the mountains. Food ingredients that were regarded to be auspicious were chosen to carry the wishes for a rich harvest, safety and good health of the family, and prosperity to the descendants.

From the old days, *osechi* was to be made keeping a good balance of *goho* (the five ways: raw, boil, grill, steam and deep fry), *gomi* (the five tastes: sweet, sour, bitter, acrid and salty) and *goshiki* (the five colors: blue, yellow, red, white and black).

There are meanings to the names of *Osechi Ryori*. What kind of meanings do they have?

- * **Kuro-mame**
Kuro-mame (black soybeans cooked salty-sweet with soy sauce) has the meaning of hoping to live "in good health (mame)."
- * **Kazunoko**
Kazunoko (herring roe) symbolizes the prosperity for one's descendants.
- * **Nishiki tamago**
This dish is made by separating the egg into yoke and white, hence a play on the words "nishiki (two colors)" and the celebratory and splendid "nishiki (brocade)."
- * **Konbu**
Associated with the word "yorokobu (be glad)," konbu (sea tangle) is also used for decorating New Year's *kagami-kazari* (offering of round rice cakes).
- * **Tai**
Tai (sea bream) leads to the word "medetai (happy)." Tai was later associated with the worship of the Seven Deities of Good Fortune that dates to the Edo Period, and is famous as a lucky fish. [Note: Ebisu, the deity of wealth and the sea, is often depicted holding this fish.]
- * **Kohaku-kamaboko**
The auspicious color combination of *kohaku* (red and white) presumably made this *kamaboko* (broiled fish paste) an *osechi* staple.
- * **Kuri-kinton**
Kinton means "golden round dumplings." Kuri-kinton (mashed sweet potato with chestnuts) is colored yellow using gardenia seeds. Its "golden" hue and its gorgeous look seem to have made this an indispensable item for *osechi*.
- * **Date-maki**
The word "date" describes dandyism and flamboyance. *Date-maki* (rolled omelet with shrimp or whitefish paste) was adopted as the New Year's hors d'oeuvre, the "formal dish," because it was a florid and fancy omelet dish. It apparently gained its position in *osechi* for its color and shape.
- * **Kachi-guri**
The word "kachi" for *kachi-guri* (dried chestnuts) has the same sound as "win."

Osechi Ryori for celebrating New Year's Day bears all sorts of wishes and prayers of the family. Expressing such wishes through word play on the names and shapes of food gives us the feeling of the witty and magnanimous townfolk culture of the Edo Period.

About *Eto*

Junishi (the 12 zodiac signs) to be exact is *Jikkan Junishi* [lit. 10 stems and 12 branches] but in Japan it is commonly called *Eto*.

As Jupiter travels through the sky in 12 years, the way was divided into 12 and each was given a name to serve as the name of the years. The 12 are "Ne (rat), Ushi (ox), Tora (tiger), U (hare), Tatsu (dragon), Mi (serpent), Uma (horse), Hitsuji (sheep), Saru (monkey), Tori (rooster), Inu (dog) and I (boar)," which are familiar to the Japanese. This year is the Year of the Rooster.

The 12 zodiac signs were also used as the unit to indicate the time. Ne (rat) corresponds roughly to an hour before and after 12 a.m. [i.e. 11 p.m. to 1 a.m.] and from there each zodiac symbol was allotted two hours. You might have heard the expression "Ushi-mitsu-doki [lit. the third hour of the ox] when even plants and trees are asleep," which could be

translated as "in the dead of night." Each time period was divided into four sections, so this expression refers to the third section of Ushi (ox) [i.e. 1 a.m. to 3 a.m.], in other words from 2 a.m. to 2:30 a.m.

Not only that, *gozen* and *gogo* are often used to indicate a time period. They literally mean "before the horse" and "after the horse," respectively, and they come from the fact that 午 (horse) indicates 12 noon.

We have discussed *Junishi* so far, but as a matter of fact, it is not certain why each character was assigned with what meaning. Then naturally the question arises why *Junishi* was likened to animals. This was presumably because it was convenient in making the calendar easy to remember to manage farming efficiently.



The story on the order of the animals of *Eto*

Long, long ago, the deity said to the animals, "The first 12 animals that come to the shrine early on New Year's Day will take turns at becoming the guardian for a year and this will become *Eto* (the 12 zodiac signs)."

The animals started to get ready but somehow only the cat forgot when the day to assemble was. The cat decided to ask the rat. "When is the day to assemble?" asked the cat. The rat replied, "It's the second day of the new year." The cunning rat told a lie. Not knowing it was deceived the unsuspecting cat was in no hurry. Meanwhile, the ox thought, "I'm a slow walker so I'd better start a little ahead." The ox set out at the end of the year earlier than everyone else, but just then the shrewd rat jumped on to the ox's back.

Because the ox started out before anyone else, it was the first to reach the shrine. "I'm relieved now that I have come this far," the ox thought and decided to wait for New Year's Day in front of the shrine.

Before long the sun came up and the doors of the shrine began to open. The ox started to go in unhur-

riedly, but at that moment the rat jumped off the ox's back and rushed into the shrine. "I'm the first to arrive!" the rat cried.

In this way the rat became the first in the *Eto* and the ox came second. Since the cat arrived on the second day of the new year, it could not join the *Eto*. From that day on the cat bears a grudge against the rat and this is why the cat always chases after the rat.

Note: As described in this story the cat failed to become a member of the *Eto*. Unexpectedly, though, the cat actually did become one of the *Eto*! Not in Japan or in China, but in Vietnam. There, the cat takes the place of the hare, and similarly the boar becomes the pig, and the ox becomes the water buffalo. That's right, the cat had gained a position in the *Eto*!

Hatsumode

Hatsumode is the first visit of the year to a Shinto shrine or Buddhist temple. In Japan there is a custom of visiting shrines or temples during the New Year's holidays to pray for good health and happiness for the year even if you are not particularly a believer in Buddhism or Shinto. When you go to hatsumode, you make a money offering, draw a sacred lot and buy good-luck articles. Famous shrines and temples attract large crowds and are always broadcast on TV.



Omikuji

Omikuji is the sacred lot for consulting fortune on matters by praying at shrines and temples. Overall fortune is indicated by *Dai-kichi* (Excellent luck), *Chu-kichi* (Fair luck), *Kichi* (Good luck), *Sho-kichi* (Small luck), *Kyo* (Ill luck) and others. In addition, under various headings such as studies, business, marriage, game, the separate fortunes are given for each. Many people go to hatsumode during the New Year's holidays looking forward to drawing a lot. However, most people draw an *omikuji* for fun rather than to really find out their fortunes for the coming year. *Omikuji* is printed on a long, thin slip of paper, so after reading it, it is often tied to a tree hoping that wish will be fulfilled.



Omamori

Omamori (protective amulet) is a small piece of wood or paper bearing the name of a deity, prayer sentence or the name of the shrine or temple. It is believed to bring good luck and drive away evil spirits, and is usually sold at shrines and temples. Their divine grace ranges from traffic safety, success in an examination, flourishing business, good health to easy child delivery. Some *omamori* are put into small amulet bags and carried on one's person while others are hung inside the car, placed in the house or affixed to a pillar or door. It is common practice to pray for safety and good health by giving an *omamori* to a family member or dear one who is setting out on a journey or has to do a dangerous task.



Saisen

Saisen is the money offering you make when visiting a shrine or temple. Most shrines and temples have an offertory box, and visitors throw in money to make a wish or to express gratitude for a wish that was realized.

Film masterpieces

Double glory – Director Shohei Imamura and the Cannes Film Festival special

1) Jan. 8 (Sat.), from 2 p.m.

Narayama bushiko (Ballad of Narayama) (1983, a Japanese movie, 130 min.)

2) Jan. 9 (Sun.), from 2 p.m.

Unagi (The Eel) (1997, a Japanese movie, 117 min.)

Place: Chuo (Central) Library

Capacity: Space is limited to the first 100 people

For more information, call the Chuo Library, Tel. 352-4646.

URAYASU Music Festa Vol. 4

Nineteen groups of various musical genres and extensive age brackets ranging from student bands to seniors' bands will organize this music festa as they actively interact with one another through music. Come and enjoy yourself together with the performers.

Date & time: Jan. 16 (Sun.), from 1 p.m. [doors open 12:30 p.m.]

Place: Bunka Kaikan (Culture Hall) large hall

* Free of charge.

For inquiries, contact the Bunka Kaikan, Tel. 353-1121.

The American "Ino large map" Homecoming Floor Exhibition

Tadataka Ino [1745-1818] is the pioneer maker of modern maps of Japan. The maps drawn on a scale of 1 to 36,000 comprised of 214 sheets based on Ino's survey are popularly known as "the Ino large map." Only some 60 sheets of this type of map have been confirmed in Japan as they were lost by fire or other reasons. In 2001, however, 207 sheets were found at the U.S. Library of Congress in Washington, D.C., which included 148 sheets of hitherto undiscovered maps at home. The Geographical Survey Institute has produced a colored restoration of these and will exhibit the nationwide version of "the Ino large map" on a spacious floor. Furthermore, state-of-the-art surveying techniques and maps showing the development of Chiba will be put on display.

Dates & time: Jan. 22 (Sat.) – Jan. 23 (Sun.), 10 a.m. – 5 p.m.

* Until 3 p.m. on Jan. 23.

Place: Makuhari Messe Event Hall

If you have any questions, contact the Geographical Survey Institute, Kanto Regional Survey Department, Tel. (03) 5213-2051.

Experiencing Japanese food culture

Let's make *matsuri-zushi* (sushi rolls for ceremonial occasions), a local specialty food of the Chiba Boso area, together with foreign students studying in Japan and enjoy getting to know each other.

Date & time: Jan. 22 (Sat.), 10 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Place: Hinode Kominkan (Public Hall)

Capacity: Number is limited to 13 people. (A drawing will be held if the number of applicants exceeds the limit.)

Nursery: Available for children under 4 years old. Number is limited to six.

Fee: ¥1,000

How to apply: Send a fax with your name, address, phone number and fax number to the Urayasu International Friendship Association (UIFA) Office, Fax 381-8822. Applications must arrive by Jan. 14 (Fri).

For inquiries, contact Ms. Adachi (UIFA member), Tel. 353-7339.

Fire brigades' New Year's ceremony



Date & time: Jan. 9 (Sun.)

from 9:30 a.m. = Ceremony

from 10:30 a.m. = Acrobatic performance

Place: Higashi Elementary School school-yard

* In case of rain, the ceremony alone will take place at the gymnasium of Higashi Elementary School from 10 a.m.

Program: Commendation for people who have rendered distinguished services in putting out fires, performance of technical skill, and simultaneous water spraying, etc.

* Ornamental kites will be given to the first 150 people.

For inquiries, call the Fire Department Headquarters, General Affairs Section, Tel. 352-3550.

Welcome Urayasu ~ Child-care Assistance Messe

As a selected project of fiscal 2004

Chiba Prefecture model plan "Creating a peaceful and safe town," this is an event to assist families raising babies and infants.

Families that are bringing up children are provided with an opportunity to get to know, experience and interact with local child-care supporters and the support services. In this way it aims to promote forming networks between child-care networks and supporters so that people can raise their children without anxiety.

Date & time: Jan. 14 (Fri), 10:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Place: Shimin Plaza Wave 101 (Cultural Facility) large hall, Citizen's Salon 5&6

Eligibility: Urayasu citizens or citizens-to-be who are expectant mothers or who are bringing up infants up to 4 years old, and people related to child-care support

Program: Experiencing the activities of various groups, presentation of the activities by child-care support groups, flea market, workshops, child-care counseling corner, etc.

Fees: Free of charge. Applications are not necessary.

* However, depending on the event, reservation or a participation fee will be required. Sponsored by: Urayasu child-care information network MY Urayasu

Supported by: The City of Urayasu and the Urayasu City Board of Education

For more information, call Junko Nakajima, Tel. 090-8015-6798.

Old Hamano Clinic Hometown pictures exhibition "Sketches of Urayasu"

From the folk reference material in the city's possession, pen watercolor drawings depicting landscape, people, scenes and manners of Urayasu in the old days will be exhibited.

Program & date:

First series: "Seasonal customs of the town," Jan. 14 (Fri.) – Jan. 16 (Sun.), Jan. 21 (Fri.) – Jan. 23 (Sun.)

Second series: "Industries of the town," Feb. 18 (Fri.) – Feb. 20 (Sun.), Feb. 25 (Fri.) – Feb. 27 (Sun.)

Time: 10 a.m. – 4 p.m.

Place: Old Hamano Clinic (Flower-dori St.) For inquiries, contact the Lifelong Learning Section.

Citizens' Winter athletic meet skiing competition & skiing lessons

Date: Feb. 4 (Fri.) – Feb. 6 (Sun.)

Place: Mountain Park Tsunan skiing ground Meeting time & place: Feb. 4 (Fri.), 8 p.m. at the City Hall general parking lot

Eligibility: Elementary school children or over (beginners are welcome). Number is limited to 40 applicants. (If the number of applicants exceeds the limit, a drawing will be held.)

* Elementary school children should be accompanied by a guardian.

* For the skiing lessons, elementary school fourth graders or over will be placed in a separate group from their parents.

* The accommodation rooms will be shared by the same sex.

Fee: ¥27,000 for junior high-school students or over, ¥25,000 for elementary school children (There is a ¥2,000 reduction for Urayasu Ski Association members)

* The fee includes accommodation, transportation, skiing lessons, insurance and athletic meet participation fee. Cost for ski lift, ski rental and lunch are not included.

* People who will only take part in the athletic meet and not require accommodation will be charged ¥5,000 on that day.

How to apply: Send either a postcard, fax or e-mail with your name, address, postal code, phone number, date of birth, age, blood type, your ski level, whether you need to rent skiing equipment, and whether you are participating in the athletic meet and the skiing lessons, only the athletic meet or only the skiing lessons: to Mr. Saito (1-7-38 Nekozone, ☎279-0004; Fax 381-7422; http://uski.stbbs.net). Applications must arrive by Jan. 28 (Fri.).

* Cancellation will require a charge: ¥10,000 after Jan. 28 (Fri.) and the full amount for Feb. 4.

If you have any questions, call Mr. Saito (Urayasu Ski Association), Tel. 090-9325-0769.

Times and Seasons

Hakone Ekiden road relay

The Tokyo-Hakone Ofuku Daigaku Ekiden Kyoso, a relay road race for male college students, is commonly known as the "Hakone Ekiden." It takes place Jan. 2 and 3, and is firmly established as the annual event of the New Year's holidays. This year again, students from 19 universities will compete against each other going and coming back from Otemachi in Tokyo (in front of the Yomiuri Shimbun head office) to Ashinoko lake in Hakone (Kanagawa Prefecture). The outward and return legs of approximately 220 km are each divided into five sections.

The first Hakone Ekiden was held Feb. 14, 1920, and although it was temporarily suspended during World War II, it was revived in 1947. This year marks the 81st competition.

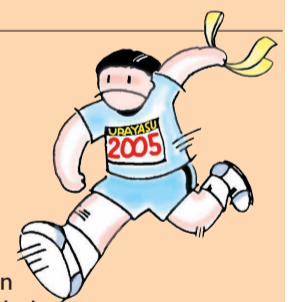
Ekiden is a sport that originated in Japan and has a history of more than 80 years. Recently, international competitions are being held and it is gaining worldwide recognition.

It is said that originally ekiden has its roots in "ekidensei" (lit. poststation system), which was used as a means of

communication between the ancient central government and the provinces. It was a system of conveying information from the provinces to the capital and vice versa. Ekiden kyoso is the sport in which instead of information, *tasuki* (cloth sash) is passed from one runner to the next as they run their assigned sections.

The Hakone Ekiden, held at the beginning of the year, is especially well known for the difficult pass – the fifth section going up the mountain of Hakone, and the sixth section going down. Runners must confront the weather and other harsh natural phenomena, so every year dramatic races that cannot be planned lie in store.

How about spending a moment of the New Year's holidays getting excited by watching such an unpredictable drama?



Recyclable Waste disposal schedule for January

Collection Area	Bottles/Cans/PET plastic bottles	Newspapers/Magazines
Nekozone, Kitazakae, Todaijima	Every Tue.	Every Mon.
Horie, Higashino, Fujimi, Maihama	Every Wed.	Every Sat.
Kairaku, Mihama, Irifune, Hinode, Akemi	Every Thurs.	Every Mon.
Tomioka, Imagawa, Benten, Tekkadori, Takasu, Minato, Chidori	Every Fri.	Every Sat.

* Please put out your garbage between 7 a.m. and 8 a.m. It is against the rules to put it out earlier or later than this designated time, and could become a nuisance to your neighborhood.

* Bulky items will be collected separately on request by phone. Call the Bulky Items Reception Center, ☎305-4000. For inquiries, contact the Garbage Disposal Administration Section.

FOREIGN RESIDENTS' ASSISTANCE DESK

Urayasu City provides consultation services concerning daily life such as medical, educational or job-related matters.

HOURS: 10 a.m.- noon, 1 p.m.- 4 p.m. weekdays

LANGUAGES: English, French, Chinese, Polish, Spanish, Russian and Japanese

PHONE NUMBER & LOCATION:

☎351-1111 Ext.1665,

Cultural and International Affairs Section (Urayasu City Hall 4Fl.)