ŌMISOKA

Ōmisoka is the Japanese word for New Year's Eve, and Shōgatsu is the name given to the New Year celebrations that begin on January 1. Families and children start preparing for the New Year soon after Christmas: they clean their homes, prepare special foods, and decorate with Oshogatsukazari, a special decoration with pine boughs, straw, and bamboo to symbolize longevity, and Kagamimochi, a special set of mochi (mirror-like rice cakes), with a small orange on top.

On the eve of the new year, temple bells ring 108 times: 8 times to ring out the old year and 100 times to usher in the new year. People traditionally wake early on New Year’s Day to view the first sunrise of the year (hatsuhinode) and visit their local temple or shrine (hatsumōde) to ask that the coming year be filled with prosperity and good health.

People also send cards as New Year's greetings in December, to be delivered on New Year's Day. They are called Nengajo. Young children receive Otoshidama, a small gift of money in a special envelope.*

To learn more about Ōmisoka and Japan:

On our Student Research page use the keyword "Omisoka" in Brittanica High School and "Japan" and "Japan new year" in other databases.

You will need a Redwood City Public Library card.

http://www.redwoodcity.org/studentresearch

*Hikooka, Chisato. Personal interview. 30 Nov 2020.