

## OCHA NO WA

SPRING 2012

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## OKASHI OF THE SEASON

BY KATIE BECHTOLD

During my year in Urasenke's Midorikai program for non-Japanese students in Kyoto, I was privileged with the chance to sample many different kinds of *wagashi* (traditional Japanese sweets), particularly the moist, perishable types classified as *namagashi*. Most of these sweets were the ones procured by the Urasenke Gakuen school from local confectioneries for use in our daily *temae* practice, but I also had the chance to try sweets at special events, confectioneries I explored on my own, and on a few occasions when we tried making them ourselves. I'd like to share with you photos and descriptions of some of the *namagashi* I encountered in Kyoto; in this year-long series I'll focus on two types of *namagashi* in each newsletter issue. To begin with, I'd like to present *nerikiri* and *kinton*. If you find yourself in Kyoto and would like to see *nerikiri* or *kinton* sweets being formed by a master confectioner, I recommend visiting Tsuruya Yoshinobu 鶴屋吉信, on the corner of Hori-



Hōzuki ホオズキ (Chinese lantern plant)

Sweet by Tsuruya Yoshinobu 鶴屋吉信

Kara-nadeshiko カラナデシコ (Chinese pink)  
by Tsuruya Yoshinobu 鶴屋吉信

kawa-dori and Imadegawa-dori. On the second floor of the shop is a demonstration area where, for 800 yen, you can enjoy a bowl of *usucha* and a sweet that is made right before your eyes.

**Nerikiri 煉り切り**

*Nerikiri* is a dense, smooth sweet that is usually tinted and sculpted into the shape of a seasonal flower. The body of the sweet is made of a blend of *gyūhi* and *shiroan* 白餡, a white bean-based version of *anko*.

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## MEMORIES OF ONE TIME

BY MARY EVA REPASS

My first large tea gathering of teachers and students was to commemorate the 80th year since construction of one of the beautiful tea houses near Yokosuka, Japan. The tea house with several tea rooms had been used for many special events. The architecture of the building, the gardens, and the rooms' interiors were very conducive to formal tea ceremonies. My tea teacher, Ohishi Sensei, was to be one of the main hosts for the tea gathering and asked me to be her assistant.

I was most hesitant and felt she was very brave with this request, but she assured me that it would be something I would never forget. She was correct. By participating, I have never forgotten the challenge, the task, and most of all the feeling for the concept of what a "bowl of tea" encompasses.

A few years later when I had returned to Virginia, I received a plate along with a small piece of cloth from Ohishi Sensei. It was not just any plate; the glass plate enclosed a piece of cloth from the obi that I had worn at the tea gathering. A note from Ohishi Sensei was attached: "Remember pleasant memories and the feeling one has toward one another through the tea ceremony." Needless to say, the plate is very special and creates wonderful memories of tea.



## OPEN LETTER OF APPRECIATION

BY NORIE WATNAUKI

Ms. Miyahara returned to New York when the Washington, DC Branch closed at the end of 2011. She will now be traveling to various states as a Tankokai Visiting Chado Instructor. We were fortunate to have her as our Honorary Advisor during her stay in DC. We would like to thank her again and wish her health and continued success in New York.

## TEA DEMONSTRATION AT CAPITOL HILL DAY SCHOOL

BY AKIKO TAKAGI

On January 25, 2012, three of us who are members of the Association visited Capitol Hill Day School in Washington, D.C. We were invited to demonstrate the Way of Tea for eight middle school students who were studying tea cultures of the world.

When we arrived, we were surprised to see that their school building was a prefabricated one. When I entered the class room where we would have the demonstration, I started to worry whether we could demonstrate the idea of peace and purity in this setting. It was a very small and somewhat untidy classroom because it was in a temporary schoolhouse.

However, once we started *Ryakubon Temae* 略盆点前 (tea procedure on a tray), all of my concerns vanished. The calm *Temae* 点前 by the hostess and the attentive attitude of the students magically transformed a typical middle school classroom into a quiet and cozy tea room. I learned that the four principles, *Wa, Kei, Sei, Jaku* 和敬清寂 (Harmony, Respect, Purity, Tranquility) could be achieved anywhere if you had those principles in your mind. I appreciated very much that I had a chance to volunteer that day.

## GREEN SPRINGS GARDENS

BY AKI GOTO

Blessed with the early-spring sunshine and the nature-surrounding setting of Green Spring Gardens in Alexandria, Virginia, 25 guests who gathered on March 10, 2012, got to experience the authentic taste of Japanese green tea. The event was organized through collaboration between the Chado Urasenke Tankokai D.C. Association and the staff of Green Spring Gardens. The guests were given the opportunity to view a Japanese tea ceremony at practice. The ceremony included the tasting of *higashi* (dry confectionary traditionally served at Japanese tea ceremonies) and the drinking of green tea served in ceramic tea bowls.

The demonstration was conducted mostly in silence and was accompanied with brief explanatory comments on the philosophy and history of the Way of Tea. The audience quietly observed the hostess prepare tea on the *Misonodana* 御園棚, a black lacquered table. Preparing the tea on the table, rather than kneeling on *tatami*, is another option of viewing the *otemae*. Next to the *Misonodana*, the hostess served two guests that also offered the audience a further demonstration of the procedures of the *otemae*.

Since this was the first time for most of the guests to observe a Japanese tea ceremony and to taste authentic green tea (matcha), they left the room more eager to learn about the tea ceremony and attend further events.

## OKASHI OF THE SEASON

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### Kinton 金団

*Kinton* sweets consist of a ball of bean paste covered with strands of sweetened mashed potato, bean paste, or – in autumn – mashed chestnuts. The inner ball can be red or white bean paste, smooth or coarse, and can be tinted for contrast or seasonal interest, as can the strands covering it. Further decoration can be added – for instance, tiny, translucent cubes of *kanten* on top can represent dew or fireflies in the summertime. In the winter, flakes of freeze-dried *mochi* (*korimochi* 氷餅) scattered on top suggest frost. At a Christmas *chaji* I attended, we were served *kinton* topped with flakes of gold leaf that sparkled in the candlelight.



Hotaru 螢 (Fireflies) by Nijo Wakasaya 二条若狭屋



Shinsetsu no Niwa 新雪の庭 (Garden with Freshly-Fallen Snow) by Tsuruya Yoshinobu 鶴屋吉信

Kimika Soko Takechi and Larry Sokyo Tiscornia ([teatimes@chanoyu.com](mailto:teatimes@chanoyu.com)) have kindly granted permission for me to share their *kinton* recipe from the Midorikai alumni web site, which we have reprinted below. For a different method of making *kinton*, this one using *tsukune-imo* rather than bean paste, see my photos documenting a Midorikai class workshop on making *kinton* at the confectionery Oimatsu at <http://flic.kr/s/aHsjwEv4Bs>

### Basic Kinton

Make small balls of *an* (bean paste) approximately 15g (1/2oz) for the center. Press the prepared *koshian* (smooth bean paste) through a sieve forming strands. (Coarser or finer mesh will create different finished effects.)

Use damp pointed bamboo chopsticks to gather a small pile of strands. Place a small ball of *an* on top of the gathered strands.

Continue to place strands around the *an* ball, pressing lightly so they stick together, until desired shape is created. A small amount of yellow *an* placed in the center will give the feeling of a chrysanthemum. A good size finished sweet is about 40gm to 50gm (approx. 1 1/2oz).

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## OKASHI OF THE SEASON

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

### Ajisai 紫陽花 (Hydrangea) Kinton

This sweet can be made in many colors depending on your preference. The yellow/gold jewels of *kanten* (agar agar) on top symbolize dew.

#### **For the kanten:**

*kanten* (agar) 3.5g or 1/2 stick

water 225cc (0.9c.)

sugar 75g (2.64oz)

*mizuame* (or light corn syrup) 1.5 tsp

yellow food color (approx. 1 small drop)

#### **Preparation:**

Wash the *kanten* well in cold water and remove any black/brown specks. Soak in fresh cold water to cover for a couple of hours. Squeeze the excess water from the *kanten* and tear into small pieces. Place the *kanten* and water in a heavy bottom pan and cook over low heat until the *kanten* is dissolved stirring now and again. Be careful that the mixture doesn't boil too high as it will become too thick.

Add the sugar and *mizuame*, or light corn syrup, after the *kanten* is completely dissolved. Continue to cook until the sugar is completely dissolved. (Be careful that you do not cook too long or the *kanten* will become too hard.) Turn off the heat and mix in a small amount of yellow food color, to achieve a golden color. Stir in well. Pour through a fine mesh strainer into a *nagashikan*, lined mold, that is approximately 7" X 7" and let cool. Bubbles can be removed by running a piece of Japanese *washi* paper over the surface. Once cool, unmold and cut into approximately 1/8" squares. (Note - Any container of the same approximate size can be substituted for the *nagashikan*.)

#### **For the *ajisai kinton*:**

Make small balls of *an* (bean paste) approx. 15gm (1/2oz) for the center. Press the prepared *an* through a sieve forming strands. (Coarser or finer mesh will create different finished effects.) Use damp pointed bamboo chopsticks to gather a small pile of strands. Place a small ball of *an* on top of the gathered strands. Continue to place strands around the *an* ball, pressing lightly so they stick together, until desired shape is created. A good size finished sweet is about 40gm to 45gm (approx. 1 1/2oz). Using pointed chopsticks place some of the *kanten* jewels around the top of the sweet.



**CORRECTION**

In the previous issue of *Ocha no Wa*, Miyahara Sensei was accidentally omitted from the list of officers while she was still an officer. The editors of *Ocha no Wa* sincerely apologize to her for this error.

**2011-2012 Officers**

President: William T. Breer

Vice President: Masakazu Watanuki

Honorary Member: Yoriko Fujisaki

Honorary Member: Irene Hirano

Counselor: John Miller

Chief of Administration: Norie Watanuki

Treasurer: Mioko Miller

Event Secretary: Akiko Takagi

Membership Secretary/Chief Instructor: Yumi Yamasaki

Bilingual Recording Secretary: Takako Dickinson

Supervisors: Margaret Ann Linn, Mary Repass

**YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS**

Dear Members,

Have you ever been urged to write something about the Way of Tea? Did you discover something new while attending a tea event? Have you experienced a “eureka” moment about a Zen phrase? We would like to invite you to write for *Ocha no Wa* about anything concerning the Way of Tea or any related cultural aspects of it. We are sorry that the space is limited only to a page or two including photos. Contact us at [ochanowa@tankokaidc.org](mailto:ochanowa@tankokaidc.org) for more details or questions.

-- Editors