

What letters did we learn?

た (tah)    ち (chee)    つ (tsoo)    て (teh)    と (toh)

What words did we learn?

(neh-zoo-mee) : mouse

(oo-mah) : horse

(oo-shee) : ox

(hee-tsoo-jee) : sheep

(toh-rah) : tiger

(sah-roo) : monkey

(oo-sah-gee) : rabbit

(toh-ree) : cock

(tah-tsoo) : dragon

(ee-noo) : dog

(heh-bee) : snake

(ee-noh-shee-shee) : boar

How do animals talk?

A dog goes, "Wahn! Wahn!" : Bow, Wow!

A cow goes, "Moh! Moh!" : Moo! Moo!

A sheep goes, "Meh-meh!" : Baa! Baa!

A horse goes, "Hee-heen!" : Heeeee!

A rooster goes, "Koh-keh-kohk-koh!" : Cock-A—Doodle-Do!

What stories did we read?

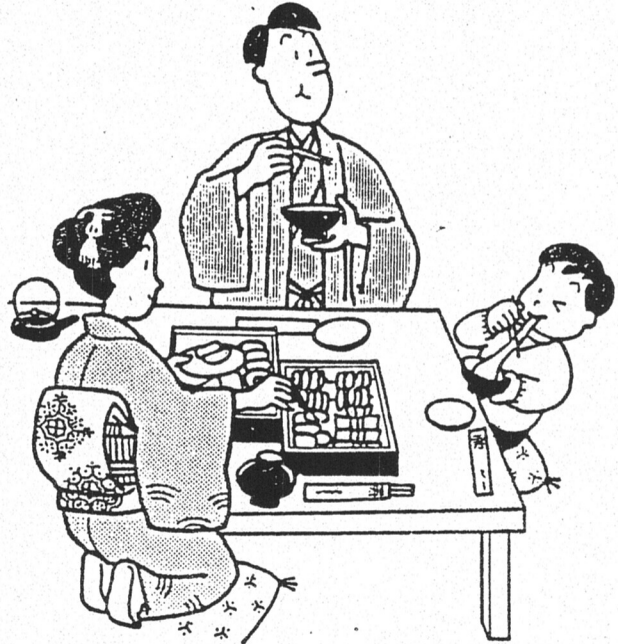
"How the years were named?"

"Where are you going?" "To see my friend!"

## Osechi Ryōri おせち料理

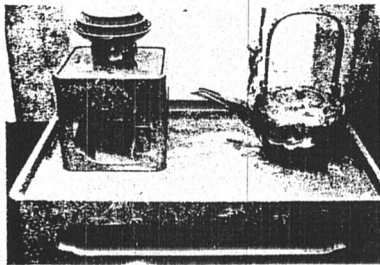
*Osechi ryōri* originally meant dishes served on seasonal festive occasions as an offering to the gods.

New Year's Day has been considered as one of the most important festive events. A variety of ingredients is prepared and arranged artistically in a set of layered lacquer-boxes; such as seasoned herring roe, sweet black beans, seaweed-rolls, sliced strings of carrot-radish salad, cooked rootvegetables and so on. Nowadays Chinese and Western dishes are added, and ready-made *osechi*-sets are available at any department store. *Osechi* dishes are made ahead as preserved food and served through the first three days of the year, so women of the family can take a break from daily cooking during the New Year holiday period.



### O-toso

おとそ



*O-toso* is spiced *sake* with medicinal herbs and served in a decorative lacquered *sake* pot and cups to celebrate New Year's Day. It aids digestion and is effective for a stomach heavy with New Year's dishes. *O-toso* spices are sold in tea-bag style to be steeped in *sake*. It is said to drive away evil and preserve health.

### Shimekazari

しめかざり



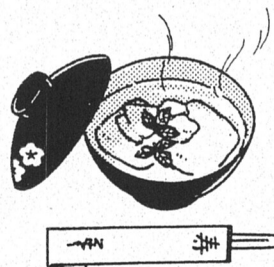
### O-zōni

おぞうに

*O-zōni* is a special dish for the New Year. It contains rice cakes (*mochi*) in plain broth with little fish, or chicken and vegetables such as trefoil leaves, mushrooms and bamboo shoots.

In the Kanto district, plain soup is served with square rice cakes. In the Kansai district, *miso* soup is served with round rice cakes.

The way of cooking *o-zōni* varies among regions or families, and each district boasts its own specialty.



*Shimekazari* is a decorative, sacred straw rope festooned with strips of white paper. It is decorated with a piece of bitter orange, a lobster, and green fern leaves. It is hung above the entrance of a house to purify the

### Kadomatsu

門松

A New Year's decoration is for inviting the god of the year and for welcoming ancestral spirits. It is set up with the hope for longevity, prosperity and constancy, on either or both sides of the front entrance of the house. It is composed of pine boughs, bamboo stalks and plum-tree sprigs, and it is regarded as the residence of the god of the year. There are also simple ones that are made of pine branches wrapped with Japanese paper.



home for the New Year. Bitter orange is symbolic of continued good health in the family, and lobster is a symbol of longevity.

A house with *shimekazari* is believed to be pure, with no devils able to enter.