

Setsubun (節分) Good Luck Sushi

Winter officially ends on February 3rd in the old Japanese calendar and this day is known as Setsubun. Some people still enjoy the tradition of throwing roasted soybeans at "demons" within their house and shouting "Oni wa soto, Fuku wa uchi," which basically means "Out with demons, come in Fortune." They then proceed to eat the same number of soybeans as their age, to wish for good health and prosperity in the new spring. These days some people prefer to go to a temple for the bean-throwing festival, while others simply buy a packet of roasted soybeans at a supermarket and eat them at home.

In recent years, another Setsubun tradition has become popular in Okayama and many other parts of Japan, but it originated in the Kansai district. It involves the eating of a special kind of sushi roll, called Ehoumaki (恵方巻.) Ehou means "the lucky direction for the year"

and Maki means "roll." The rolls are also called Ehouzushi (恵方寿司, "lucky direction sushi") or Maru-kaburi-zushi (丸かぶり寿司, "Sushi to eat whole.") They usually contain egg, a strip of gourd, eel, shrimp and cucumber, but traditionally they have

seven different ingredients, one for each of the "Seven Gods of Good Fortune."



How to eat Ehoumaki

- 1) Do not cut the Ehoumaki into bite sizes. You'll cut off your good luck. Eat the whole roll, like a hotdog.
- 2) Face the lucky direction for the year (east-northeast in 2009) and take big bites.
- 3) Make a wish while you are eating and don't say a word until you finish! If you speak, your luck will all go away.

You can buy Ehoumaki at most convenience stores, supermarkets, department stores and sometimes from restaurants. Enjoy the traditions of Setsubun and have a happy spring!!

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