The rainy season of plum work

In the ripe season, I helped harvest the neighborhood’s small plum grove.

Time flies fast even though the plum blossoms were just recently cared for.

No one had noticed that the plums had already grown plump hiding within their green shells and nourished by the droplets of rain.

The fruit were collected by hand, and those that fell from the branches, they were collected first.

The bucket was immediately filled to the brim.

The kitchen, upon returning with their share poured in a colander, was filled with a sweet and bitter aroma.

An aroma which suits this rainy season very well.

Preserving plums with vinegar, or distilling it with liquor, people refer to these jobs involving plums as “plum work”.

A certain flavor fills this title, one you wouldn’t be able to find in your on-hand dictionary.

Handmade dishes using plums and vegetables like boiled plums or juice are enjoyed by many.

Jam can also be made with the wounded plums, while the unharmed ones can be pickled.

The wisdom of your ancestors blesses you when you see the rising of the vinegar from the bottle of salting plums.

Despite the soft shape imitating the rising sun, the inside is pretty thick when being prepared.

There exists a song known as “The Pickled Plum Song”

That song includes the lyrics “In February and March, the flowers bloom” and continues with “In May and June, when the fruits are ripe, they are shaken off the branches, sold by size, pickled in salt, and stained with the red of perilla…”

Throughout the life of the plum, that song is sung.

Upon the end of the rainy season, the plums await under 3 days and nights of the dry summer.

For one serving of pickled plums to be made, a great deal of time and work has been exerted.

And each drop helps increase your appetite and prevent food poisoning.

I remember a phrase often forgotten by most in this yearly plum work. “Raise your salt by hand”, give care to another.

For the harvest in this rainy season in Japan, filled with the most sincerity and joy.