New Year’s day:

Hello guy’s, welcome to your first culture module, in the creation of this course, I’ve realised, due to how different and still prevalent Japanese traditional culture is in Japan today, I came to the ultimate decision that it’ll be a good idea to have videos about different facets of Japanese culture every week. Because as I’ve learned, language and culture are two very intertwined things, one helps to develop and form the other. Also there are many words that are event specific, which not known, can throw a learner completely off-guard. Having a bit of knowledge also helps in being since less as a gaijin blob. So for our first week, I’ve figured we’ll start from the beginning of the year with New Year’s Day. Or commonly referred to in Japanese as ‘おしょうがつ’.

In the West we generally don’t pay much attention to New Year’s Day, celebrating the coming of the new year on New Year’s Eve instead. What’s also considered quite ‘western’ in concept is the idea of celebrating New Year’s with friends. In Japan and other East Asian countries, the coming is considered a time to be with family, not with friends. Funnily enough, in those same countries, Christmas **is** considered a time to celebrate with friends and not family. So the two holidays do a bit of a swappies in the East.

That’s not to say that the Western version of celebrating New Years is non-existent in Japan. In Tokyo, and in other places with a large expat community, this form of New Years is celebrated, much to the chagrin of some Japanese locals.

(Insert news year eve party on the Yokohama line)

Now traditional Japanese New Years Celebrations! Hows it done? What you need? What happens?!? Well, New Years is perhaps one of the biggest celebrations on the Japanese calendar and so preparations start getting carried out all the way at the start of December, where décor specifically for the celebration are brought out of storage and setup. Such as the kagamimochi which is basically a gift to god or kamisama, made up of mochi and topped off with a mangerine. tk

This keeps going until a few days before the sun begins to shine on the new year, when food only made for New Years is made and stocked up on. Yes! They have food, specially for New Years! How crazy is that! Though I wouldn’t go crazy buying it though, I’ve had it and I think a lot of Japanese agree, I know my grandparents agree, it isn’t great. It’s actually down right disgusting.

But umm, aside from that, examples of what you’ll find yourself eating are:

Mushrooms, beans, bean paste, dried salted tk, prawns, pickles and jelly stuff called renkon.

Yum!...sorry I can’t, but the bean paste and renkon are pretty good though.

But outside the food what else do the Japanese do on New Years Day? Go to the shrine! Yep! Even though the Japanese nation largely considers itself atheist, going to the shrine on the first day of the year, called ‘tk’, is still very big. Traditions right? Done for good health and tk for the next year, people generally go back to their hometowns local shrine waaaay early in the morning, get into their kimonos and get their blessings.

Later in the day the shrines deity then takes a stroll around the block, or as much of a stroll a deity can take on the backs of a half a dozen volunteers. This is generally done so…

And for the kids there’s more! Something you may have seen, is token money, which children are given at the start of the new year for tk. But don’t expect kids getting it without doing some work writing out them New Year cards. This is also when the traditional games, like koma mawashi, and hanetsuki are brought out.

After that it’s really up to the region, in Tokyo, they generally do big festival parades, in many places in the kansai region they do tk and all the way up in Sapporo they do tk. It varies!

So that’s about it! That’s your general guide on the traditional Japanese New Year, happy new year! Or ‘あけましておめでとうございます！‘