

January 睦月 (*Mutsuki*)

It is natural in January that the host will consider themes reflecting the start of the year. 初釜, (*hatsugama*/first kettle); 点初, (*tatezome*/first tea); 書初め, (*kakizome*/first calligraphy); 初活け, (*hatsuike*/first flower arrangement); and the like all celebrate new beginnings. Auspicious and more formal celebratory themes like long life, good fortune, and prosperity are appropriate, in contrast to the more pronounced emphasis on *wabi* seen in autumn. Traditional images seen at this time include knotted willow branches (symbolizing abundance for its many buds and perseverance as it will stay alive for many days without water), pine (representing long life), water buckets (recalling the drawing of well water for the year's first tea), and cranes with turtles (recalling the depiction of the world supported by a crane standing on the back of a turtle). 松竹梅, (*shochikubai*/pine, bamboo, and plum – the “three friends of winter”) is a poetic motif for the this time of year. Dreams on the first day of the year (初夢, *hatsuyume*) featuring Mt. Fuji are considered auspicious, while those with hawks or eggplants symbolize bravery or fertility, respectively, and thus these images are nice to consider as well. A scroll with calligraphy done at New Year's is naturally appropriate. For *dogu*, consider including something representing the monkey (申, *saru*) this year. 福耳 (*fukumimi*/ear lobes) are auspicious, so *dogu* with handles depicting them are a seasonal choice. The cold weather makes it nice to use items that suggest warmth, like *shioge* (Korean salt ware) and *tsutsu-jawan* (tall, cylindrical tea bowls) that hold in the heat.

Zengo/seasonal expressions for *jiku*:

松樹千年翠 (*shoji sennen midori*/the pine trees, a thousand years green)
慶雲五彩生 (*keiun gosai wo shozu*/congratulatory clouds give birth to five colors)

Chabana 茶花 flowers for the month:

大神樂椿 (*daikagura-tsubaki*/camellia, *Camellia japonica*)
曙椿 (*akebono-tsubaki*/camellia, *C. japonica*)
猫柳 (*nekoyanagi*/willow, *Salix gracilistyla*)
寒牡丹 (*kanbotan*/peony, *Paeonia suffruticosa*)
鶯神樂 (*uguisukagura*/honeysuckle, *Lonicera gracilipes*)¹
土佐美豆木 (*tosamizuki*/winter hazel, *Corylopsis spicata*)¹
衝羽根 (*tsukubane*, *Buckleya lanceolata*)¹

Mei/poetic themes for the month:

老松 (*oimatsu*/an old pine tree)
銀嶺 (*ginrei*/silvery mountain)
初霞 (*hatsugasumi*/first mist)
若水 (*wakamizu*/the first water drawn on the morning of new year's day)
初茜 (*hatsuakane*/dawn sky of new year's day)
初空 (*hatsusora*/sky on the first day of new year)
鶴寿 (*kakuju*/longevity (as of a crane's life))
丹頂 (*tanchou*/red-crested (as of a crane))
福寿 (*fukuju*/happy and long-lived)
瑞雲 (*zuiun*/auspicious cloud)
幾千代 (*ikuchiyo*/thousands of generations)
長久 (*choukyuu*/permanence)
吉兆 (*kicchou*/a good omen)
乾坤輝 (*kenkon kagayaku*/the world is shining)
去年今年 (*kyonen kotoshi*/"last year- this year")
細石 (*sazare-ishi*/pebbles)
裏白 (*urajiro*/type of fern)
寒月 (*kangetsu*/cold moon)

Sweets (主菓子/干菓子; *omogashi/higashi*):

菱葩餅 *Hishihanabiramochi* “diamond flower petal” (主)
若菜金団 *Wakanakinton* (white/green) (主)
寒紅梅 *Kankobai* “blossoming red plum” (主)
干支 煎餅 *Eto* (calendar animal (羊, *hitsuji*))
senbei (干)
鶴亀 *Tsuru-kame* “crane and turtle” (干)

¹ used simply as branches with buds this month

February 如月 (*Kisaragi*)

February is the month with the most severe cold in the old calendar; still, it is now also the beginning of spring. It is considerate in the continued cold to use 大炉, (*dairo*/large hearth) to help keep the room warmer. Likewise, a wide-mouthed *kama* is nice in the cold. It happens that the room at *Konnichian* with *dairo* has an orientation that obliges alterations to the procedure for laying the fire and making tea; in consideration of this, we will practice 逆勝手 (*gyakugatte*/"opposite sides") this month, though of course this is appropriate whenever performing *temae* in such a room. *Tsutsu-jawan* (tall, cylindrical tea bowls) that retain the heat of the tea remain appropriate. Imagery for themes is not the depths of winter used earlier; instead, perhaps think of images of lingering cold despite the growing warmth. Buds or blossoms encased in ice or peeking out of the snow are a poetic image, as is thin ice on the verge of melting or a dusting of snow that will melt in bright sun. The very earliest harbingers of spring will appear this month, and these can serve as themes in which we anticipate the coming change in seasons. Red (紅梅/*kobai*) or white (白梅/*hakubai*) plum blossoms are an obvious choices in this regard, and examples appear on scrolls, as sweets, and in poetic names for every type of dogu. Birds are also a classic sign of spring, particularly 鶯 (*uguisu*/bush warbler) and 雉 (*kiji*/pheasant).

節分 (*setsubun*, lit. "seasonal division") is the turning point from winter to spring. The tradition has transformed into a household practice of opening doors and windows; roasted soybeans are scattered from a 枡 (*masu*/square box, once used for measuring rice) while saying, "oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi" ("bad spirits out, good fortune in"). It was customary for people to sleep with a picture of a treasure boat (宝船, *takarabune*) under their pillows at this time; any of these images could appear on scrolls or *dogu*, or as poetic themes.

Sweets (主菓子/干菓子; *omogashi/higashi*):
此花金団 *Konohanakinton* "plum flower"
(red/white) (主)

鶯餅 *Uguisu-mochi* "warbler cake" (主)

薄氷 *Usugoori* "filmy ice" *wasanbon*-coated
senbei (干)

狐面 *Kitsune-men* "fox mask" (干)

Chabana 茶花 flowers for the month:

本阿弥椿 (*hon'ami-tsubaki*/camellia, *Camellia japonica*)

有楽椿 (*uraku-tsubaki*/camellia, *C. japonica*)

梅 (*ume*/apricot, *Prunus mume*)

山茱萸 (*sanshuyu*/dogwood, *Cornus officinalis*)¹

Mei/poetic themes for the month:

薄氷 (*usugoori*/filmy ice)

春寒 (*shunkan*/early spring's lingering cold)

残雪 (*zansetsu*/lingering snow)

雪明かり (*yuki'akari*/light (reflected off) snow)

雪兎 (*yuki-usagi*/snow rabbit)

寒梅 (*kanbai*/plum trees in winter)

未開紅 (*mikaiko*/red at the unopened tips
(referring to plum flower buds))

梅の香 (*ume no ka*/fragrance of the plums)

鶯宿梅 (*oushukubai*/plum tree-nested warbler)

こぼれ梅 (*kobore-ume*/falling plum blossoms)

春告鳥 (*harutsugedori*/bird heralding spring)

雪間の草 (*yukima no kusa*/grass amidst snow)

早蕨 (*sawarabi*/early bracken)

鶯笛 (*outeki*/nightengale's flute)

住吉 (*sumiyoshi*/name of the shrine of the spirit
of poetry)

暁天 (*gyôten*/dusk, evening sky)

雪解 (*yukidoke*/melting snow)

梅月 (*baigetsu*/plum moon)

Zengo/seasonal expressions for jiku:

紅炉上一点雪 (*koro itten no yuki*/(above) the
crimson hearth, one flake of snow)

一花開天下春 (*ikka hiraite tenka haru nari*/one
flower opens, the whole world is spring)

¹ used simply as branches with buds this month

March 弥生 (Yayoi)

March is the middle of spring in the tea calendar, but it is really only now that the landscape begins waking up from the winter. Peach and willow blossoms are timely themes. It is also now the time to gather clams, so shells and their gathering are nice motifs; shells will themselves be used for *dogu* such as *kogo*, serving dishes, and *futaoki*. Other seasonal images include birds returning at the advent of spring (鳥帰る, *tori kaeru*), the spring mist (霞, *kasumi*), or something obscured by it (perhaps flowers, the moon, or distant mountains). Soft, falling rain and snow-fed streams are also striking images, as is anything relating to the return of green, including sprouts, planting, and leaf buds.

雛祭り (*Hina-matsuri*, Dolls' Festival) is March 3rd, so scrolls and *dogu* with dolls or a similar theme is appropriate. March 15th is the memorial service for the death of Buddha, appropriate for a contemplative, Zen-centered tea; an image of Buddha can be used for the scroll. This is also the traditional time to use 釣釜 (*tsurigama*/hanging kettle). It is now that the easterly spring winds are blowing (in Japan); there will thus be a bit of a breeze in the tearoom and the kettle will sway a little. This creates a nice atmosphere for the host and guest to anticipate the blooming of spring. We do not use 五徳 (*gotoku*, hearth trivet) with *tsurigama*, so the host might choose a 蓋置 (*futaoki*) shaped like one to recall it, in its absence.

This month we observe 利休忌 (*Rikyu-ki*), memorial tea to commemorate Sen Rikyu. He received his death on 2 月 28 日 in the old calendar; however, the modern calendar puts this date noticeably earlier in the season. As it is seasonally equivalent to observe it a month later (and a much colder time of year if held on the actual date) it is widely observed on March 28th.

Zengo/seasonal expressions for *jiku*:

桃花笑春風 (*toka shunpu ni emu*/the peach flower laughs in the spring wind)

Chabana 茶花 flowers for the month:

白角倉椿 (*shirosuminokura-tsubaki*/camellia, *Camellia japonica*)
乙女椿 (*otome-tsubaki*/camellia, *C. japonica*)
菜の花 (*nanohana*/rape flower, *Brassica napus*)
木瓜 (*boke*/quince, *Chaenomeles japonica*)
桃 (*momo*/peach, *Prunus persica*)
貝母 (*baimo*/amigasa lily, *Fritillaria verticillata*)

Mei/poetic themes for the month:

朧夜 (*oboroyo*/a misty moonlit night)
東風 (*kochi*/easterly (spring) wind)
汐干狩 (*shiohigari*/shell gathering)
貝寄風 (*kaiyose*/shell-drawing wind)
春風 (*harukaze*/gentle spring wind)
帰雁 (*kigan*/returning of wild geese)
若菜 (*wakana*/young green herb)
野遊 (*noasobi*/enjoying the fields)
柳の鬢 (*yanagi no kazura*/long, drooping willow branch)
啓蟄 (*keichitsu*/the end of hibernation)
巢立 (*sudachi*/leaving the nest)
羽衣 (*hagoromo*/a robe of feathers)
春雨 (*harusame*/soft spring rain)
春の山 (*haru no yama*/mountain green in spring)
春の川 (*haru no kawa*/spring river)
曲水 (*kyokusui*/meandering stream)
水ぬるむ (*mizu nurumu*/water getting warmer)
春月 (*shungetsu*/spring moon)

Sweets (主菓子/干菓子; *omogashi/higashi*):

草餅 *Kusa-mochi* “grass (colored) mochi” (主)
(also called 蓬餅, *Yomogi-mochi*)
菜の花金団 *Nanohanakinton* “rape flower”
(green/yellow) (主)
引千切 *Hichigiri* “pull & cut” (see picture) (主)
早蕨 *Sawarabi* “early (curly tips) bracken” (干)
貝尽し *Kaizukushi* “bounteous shells” (干)
稚児桜 *Chigozakura* “young cherry blooms” (干)
柳 *Yanagi* “willow” (干)
春霞 *Harugasumi* “springtime haze” (干)
胡蝶 *Kocho* “butterfly” (干)