

# MURORAN TIMES



January 1, 2008 No.219

Muroran City Office 1-2 Saiwai-cho, Muroran,  
Hokkaido 051-8511 JAPAN <0143-22-1111>

## News and Topics



### Prevalence of Influenza

Influenza is spreading nationwide. It became prevalent earlier this year than is had been for the past twenty years, since the recording of the spread of influenza started in 1987. This year the number of the patients was particularly noticeable in Hokkaido. Authorities publicize that influenza has spread nationwide if more than one patient is reported in a week at each of the designated 4,700 medical facilities throughout Japan.

Many pupils in elementary schools, junior high schools and kindergartens throughout Japan were told to stay home, owing to the epidemic. In Muroran as well, one class in an elementary school was closed in early December.

A vaccine is effective for prevention, though it takes 2 or 3 weeks to work efficiently. Therefore, early vaccination is essential. In every day life, washing hands, gargling and wearing masks are effective countermeasures against influenza.

インフルエンザが全国的に流行しており、特に北海道  
で多く発生しています。予防には「手洗い」と「うがい」  
が大切です。

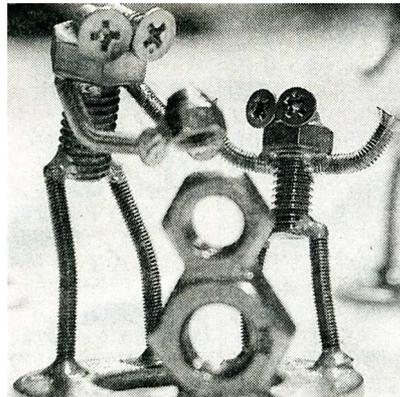
### Bolta Figures



Members of the citizen's group named "Tetsu-no-Machi-Project" in Muroran have been making Bolta Figures. Bolta Figures are small dolls made from machine nuts and bolts. The cute figures draw people's attention.

Recently a winter version of the Bolta Figure made its debut. The new figure depicts Bolta making a snowman. Two sizes are available, ordinary size and small size. The motif is just like winter. Two hundred figures per month will be on limited sale from December 11<sup>th</sup> to the end of February at the

Bolta studio in *Wanishi*, Muroran. The new figure costs 1,500 yen. There are 100 variations of the Bolta Figure so far, and the studio is planning to make a new version every season.



むろらん しみん だんたい つく にんぎょう とうき  
室蘭の市民団体が作るボルト人形「ボルタ」の冬季  
げんてい あたら さくひん おやこ ゆき  
限定となる新しい作品ができました。親子で雪だるまを  
つく ようす ひょうげん いっこ せんごひゃくえん  
作る様子を表現したもので、1個 1500円です。

### Super Arcs Nakajima Closed on New Year's Day

Muroran Chamber of Commerce and Industry requested large shops in Muroran not to open on New Year's Day.

Recently, most large shops have started their business from New Year's Day. It has been the custom for most people in Japan to take a holiday and spend time with their families on New Year's Day.

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry wants employees of large shops to take a rest and spend at least New Year's Day with their families.

Super Arcs Nakajima and other 18 shops at the shopping mall "Morue" in Nakajima-cho decided to refrain from doing business on New Year's Day. However, Shimamura, Super Xebio, Tsutaya and Max Dencodo which are located next to "Morue" will be open on New Year's Day.

Mr. *Ryuji Terashima*, the acting manager of Super Arcs said: "At first, only 30% of the shops at "Morue" agreed to our proposal. We made a lot of effort and finally got the agreement from all the shops in the mall. We are hoping all the shops in the area will refrain from doing business next year."

Muroran Chamber of Commerce said, "We value

Super Arc's coherent attitude. We hope the other large shops will join the mall in restraining themselves from doing business on New Year's Day for the sake of their employees."

Super Arcs Nakajima will close at 7:00pm, and other shops in the mall at 6:00pm on December 31<sup>st</sup>.

従業員が家族とお正月を過ごせるようにと、中島町のスーパーアークスおよび同じ建物内の店が元日に営業しないことを決めました。

## Information and Invitations

### Fire fighters New Year Parade of Fire Brigades



[Date] January 6(Sun) 11:00a.m. -11:30a.m.

[Place] Ranran Bridge(Nakajima-cho)

[Contents] Marching and songs by the young steeplejacks group, Draining water with the fire fighting vehicle

[More Information] Fire fighters' headquarters Administration Section (Tel:0143-41-4131)

### Gardening Photographs Panel Exhibition

[Date] January 9 (Wed) – 27(Sun)  
9:00a.m. - 5:00p.m.



[Place] Historical Muroran JR Station

[More Information] City Planning Division, Park Section, Muroran  
City Office(Tel:0143-25-2603)

### Making Original Calendars on Personal Computers

[Date] January 12(Sat) 10:00a.m. ~ 4:00p.m.

[Place] Muroran Science Museum

[Conditions] elementary school children and their parents

[Limit] first 20 people

[Admission Fee] free

[Materials] Please bring a facial photo, CD-R, and lunch.

[Application] by telephone from January 4 until 11

[More Information] Muroran Science Museum (Tel: 0143-22-1058)

### Free Cross-Country Skiing Experience and Lecture

[Date] January 12, 20 and February 17 10:00a.m. - 12:00noon



[Place] Danpara Ski Ground

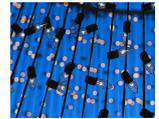
[Contents] Lecture for beginners \*skis can be rented free of charge from the Muroran Gymnasium  
[Application] At the lodge from 9:00a.m.until 9:45a.m. on that day

[Admission Fee] 200 yen

[Information]Mr.Kobayashi (Tel: 0143-55-4543)

### Illumination Factory at Muroran IT

Muroran Institute of Technology (Muroran IT) will be decorated with 20,000 colorful lights and ice candles for 2 days. The event team plans to serve cookies and hot drinks.



[Date] January 26(Sat), 27(Sun)

5:00p.m. – 10:00p.m.

[More Information] Muroran Institute of Technology studio events:

Mr.Furuse (Tel:090-5228-3430)

### Noboribetsu Hot Spring Festival

[Date] February 3(Sun), 4(Mon)

[Place] Noboribetsu Hot Spring Street

[More Information] Noboribetsu Sightseeing Association (Tel: 0143-84-3311)

### In-the-Snow Kick Baseball

[Date] February 17(Sun) 9:00a.m. – 2:00p.m.

[Place] Danpara park exercise field

[Contents] School children division, a general division (more than a junior high school student)

[Limit] first 24 teams (7~10 persons)

[Participation Fee] 2,000 yen per team

[Application] Please apply directly at Muroran Gymnasium or Irie Swimming Pool from January 5 until February 13. Please pay the participation fee and fill out a registration form at that time.

[More Information] Muroran Gymnasium (Tel: 0143-44-7521)

## Japanese Cooking 194

### Savory Cup Egg Custard 茶碗蒸し

- Ingredients (serve four) -

prawns	4
slices kamaboko (fish cake)	4
shiitake mushrooms	4
ginkgo nuts	12
strigs mituba(trefoil)	8



pinch of salt

Custard

eggs	4
broth	600 cc
sake	1 teaspoon
soy sauce	1 teaspoon
salt	1 teaspoon

### <Preparations>

#### Directions

- (1) Remove the shell and black vein from the prawns, sprinkle with a pinch of salt.
- (2) Cut the stems off the shiitake mushrooms, score the heads with a cross.
- (3) Remove the hard shells of the ginkgo nuts, boil in salted water and remove the soft skins.
- (4) Cut the roots off the mituba, put two mituba stems together, and tie a knot.
- (5) Make the custard: Boil the broth in a pan, add the seasonings, and cool.
- (6) Beat the eggs in a large bowl gently, add (5) and mix well, then strain through a fine sieve (this will keep the custard smooth).

#### <How to steam>

- (1) Divide the prawn, fish cake, shiitake mushrooms and ginkgo nuts into serving cups.
- (2) Pour the custard mixture into each cup.
- (3) Fill a steamer half full of water, cover with a lid, and bring to a boil over high heat.

When it is steaming, turn off the heat, and then transfer (2) with lids on to the steamer.

- (4) Cover the steamer, and steam on high for about 2 or 3 minutes, and then reduce the heat to medium-low, steam for about 20 minutes. (Take care. If the temperature is too low, moisture will come out from the ingredients and the custard will be watery.

If it's steamed for too long, the custard will go hard.

- (5) Check by inserting a bamboo skewer into the custard.

If a clear liquid emerges, it's done.

But if yellow liquid comes out, steam for 2 or 3 minutes more.

- (6) Remove the cups from the steamer, garnish with mituba, then cover each with a lid and serve.

## *Becoming a Parent in Muroran*

A childbirthing class; “Hahaoya gakkyu” (class for mothers) was held at the public health center in Higashi-machi last month, which was sponsored by the city of Muroran. Twenty-six pregnant women who are expecting their first child participated in the three-session class. Most of the participants were in their third trimester of pregnancy or between 6-9 months pregnant. The main purpose of the birthing class is to help prepare new parents to cope with all kinds of problems surrounding childbirth and health problems during pregnancy, breathing techniques and for parenting once the baby is born.

The first session was a lecture about good nutrition, and how to make pregnancy, labor, and delivery more comfortable. Also, we practiced how to change diapers and clothes by using a baby doll. The second session was geared to the “fathers”. The new fathers wore a special suit and experienced what it is like to be pregnant. The new mothers and fathers practiced and learned together how to bathe the baby and do CPR. In the last session, we met newborn babies and were able to talk to their mothers. New mothers were excited to make new friends and talk about their pregnant life.

“Hahaoya gakkyu” in Japan started in 1949, proposed by a nurse named Ms. Madison from the GHQ office. Since the infant mortality rate after World War II in Japan was very high, health guidance was urgently necessary. The child birth class was a significant project for its ability to educate and provide health guidance to a large number of pregnant women. The project succeeded to improve health conditions of pregnant women and to provide health education.

However, as time has passed by the purpose of the “Hahaoya gakkyu” has been changing. Nowadays, a high percentage of pregnant women are under obstetric supervision, hence the improvement of health conditions is no longer the main purpose. An important purpose of the child birth class today is not only to help calm the pregnant mothers with their worries about pregnancy, but also to socialize and make friends with other pregnant women. Urbanization of our population has isolated families from the community so this class helps mothers to form friendship with other new mothers, which will help reduce the stress of child care and increase the

**Letter**

*Nozomi SATO*



joy parenting more.

The declining number of obstetricians is a very serious problem and a threat to pregnant women in Muroran. Yet, it is nice to know that the city of Muroran is trying hard to make a better child rearing environment for new parents. Being nine months pregnant myself, the child birth class was a great opportunity for me to get to know new mothers. I hope to enjoy becoming and being a parent with my new pregnant friends in Muroran.

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## About Japan

### Shougatsu



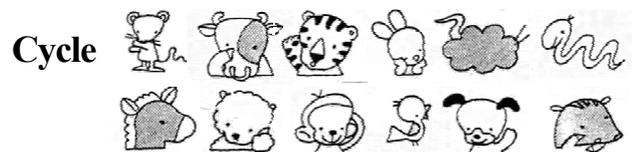
For the Japanese, *shougatsu* serves to punctuate life with an annual beginning and end. *Shougatsu* is a time when government offices, private companies, schools, and everyone else takes a few days off to celebrate the arrival of a new year. The Japanese word for January, *Ichigatsu* (first moon), reflects *shougatsu's* original significance as the beginning of the lunar year, a time when families paid their respects to their ancestors and prayed for successful crops. Nowadays, however, the first week of January is generally referred to as *shougatsu* and is celebrated as simply the start of the new year.

Come late December, and Japanese homes are abuzz with activity as housewives clean the house and garden, set traditional pine ornaments called *kado-matsu* outside the front door to welcome ancestral spirits, and prepare holiday foods such as *o-sechi-ryouri*, *zouni*, and *mochi*. Just prior to the new year's arrival is the big urban exodus – a period of several days during which every transportation artery is clogged with people leaving the city to return to their ancestral village or to take a vacation trip. On New Year's Eve it is common to eat *soba* noodles to symbolize long life and continuity across the years. Many people also sit awake far into the night on New Year's Eve with their family members to share the joy of having spent the outgoing year in good health, as they listen to shrine or temple bells ringing (*joya no kane*\*) just before the arrival of the New Year.

Many special events take place during the first week of the new year, and especially during the first three days. The two most typical are the first visit to a shrine or temple where people gather to pray for

good fortune during the year ahead, and the formal New Year's calls paid on relatives, company superiors, and anyone else to whom you have become indebted during the past year. It is also during this week that Japanese women, most of whom ordinarily wear Western clothing, take the trouble to put their hair up and wear traditional *kimono*. New Year's calls have to some extent been replaced by *nengajou* (New Year's cards), an indispensable part of *shougatsu* if only because receiving large numbers of *nengajou* is an indication of high social status. *Otoshidama* - small gifts of money from parents and relatives - is a treat for the children.

## Twelve Symbols of the Chinese Zodiac



The ancient Chinese divided the course of the sun into twelve parts, to which they gave the names of twelve animals. They are *Ne* (rat), *Ushi* (ox), *Tora* (tiger), *U* (rabbit), *Tatsu* (dragon), *Mi* (snake), *Uma* (horse), *Hitsuji* (sheep), *Saru* (monkey), *Tori* (cock), *Imu* (dog), and *I* (boar).

These symbols used to refer to the directions, and the hours of a day, as well as the years, but today, they are mainly used in reference to the years. For example, 2007 is the year of the boar, and 2008 the year of the rat, and so on. So by asking someone what his year of the zodiac is, one can guess the age of the person.

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## Cinema Guide

### Muroran Gekijo (Higashi-machi)

1. I AM LEGEND
2. マリと子犬の物語 (Japanese)
3. スマイル～聖夜の奇跡 (Japanese)
4. Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street (January 19 ～)



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## About the Muroran Times

The Muroran Times is designed to bring information about local events to the international community of Muroran. Staff: Mitani Yoichi, Ishizawa Yuko, Yamashita Mayumi, Tagashira Kazui, Nomura Ikuko, Nakamura Mari, English advisor: Jane Takizawa.