

ASIAN ART MUSEUM
Chong-Moon Lee Center
for Asian Art & Culture
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Asian

News



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MOCHITSUKI! JAPANESE MOCHI POUNDING PARTY AT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM



SAN FRANCISCO, January 14, 2012— The Asian Art Museum invites everyone to participate in its annual Japanese Mochi Pounding New Year Party on Saturday, January 14, beginning at 12:00 noon. In Japan, mochi (a sticky rice dumpling) is a tasty treat made to commemorate special occasions, most notably the New Year.

The museum's party will be led by Kagami Kai, a San Francisco-based group dedicated to maintaining the Japanese tradition of mochi pounding, or mochitsuki, where glutinous steamed rice is pounded into delectable soft, chewy cakes. To inspire the communal spirit associated with mochitsuki, people of all ages are encouraged to try their hand at swinging the wooden mallets that pound the wet rice paste. Afterward, everyone gets to share the mocha they made together.

This lively ceremony is an interactive performance, complete with music, dance, and costumes. Visitors can also create their own art (after the ceremony), shop in the museum store, refresh at Cafe Asia, stroll the museum's permanent collection galleries, and view the special exhibition, *Maharaja: The Splendor of India's Royal Courts*.

The mochi pounding party is free with museum admission, and children 12 and under are always admitted free. For more information, please call 415.581.3500 or visit www.asianart.org.

Oshogatsu (Japanese New Year; literally, new month) is the most important time of the year for most Japanese, a joyous period imbued with good feelings and nostalgia. Once essential to the New Year celebration, the practice of mochitsuki is now rare even in Japan, as busy people eat store-bought mochi rather than make their own. Traditionally, glutinous rice is washed and soaked overnight on the evening before the pounding.

The next morning the rice is steamed and placed in the *usu* (large mortar), where it is pounded with a *kine* (wooden mallet). Once the mass is soft and smooth, it is pulled into various sizes and shapes. It can be enjoyed a variety of ways: fresh, with different sauces, with sweet stuffing, or along with seaweed, to name a few. An offering to the *kani* (deity), called *kagami-mochi*, or *okasane*, is comprised of two mochi cakes, usually placed on a sheet of pure white paper in the center of a wooden tray. *Kagami-mochi* at New Year is an auspicious gesture that signifies hope for a happy and bright year ahead.

San Francisco's Kagami Kai was started nearly twenty years ago by Tetsu Takatani upon his arrival to the United States. Longing for the taste of fresh mochi, he decided to make his own equipment in hopes of preserving the mochitsuki custom and sharing it with the Bay Area community. Kagami Kai performs demonstrations locally throughout the year.

ABOUT THE ASIAN ART MUSEUM

The Asian Art Museum—Chong-Moon Lee Center for Asian Art and Culture is one of San Francisco's premier arts institutions and home to a world-renown collection of more than 18,000 Asian Art treasures spanning 6000 years of history. Through rich art experiences, centered on historic and contemporary artworks, the Asian Art Museum unlocks the past for visitors, bringing it to life, while serving as a catalyst for new art, new creativity and new thinking.

Information: 415.581.3500 or www.asianart.org

Location: 200 Larkin Street, San Francisco, CA 94102

Hours: The museum is open Tuesdays through Sundays from 10:00 am to 5:00 pm. From January through October, hours are extended on Thursdays until 9:00 pm. Closed Mondays, as well as New Year's Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day.

General Admission: FREE for museum members, \$12 for adults, \$8 for seniors (65+), \$7 for college students with ID, \$7 for youths 13–17, and FREE for children under 12 and SFUSD students with ID. Admission on Thursdays after 5:00 pm is \$5 for all visitors (except those under 12, SFUSD students, and members, who are always admitted FREE). Admission is FREE to all on Target First Free Sundays (the first Sunday of every month). A surcharge may apply for admission into special exhibitions.

Access: The Asian Art Museum is wheelchair accessible. For more information regarding access: 415.581.3598; TDD: 415.861.2035.