

## Mochi-tsuki

Literally translates “rice-cake pounding”. A traditional festive event takes place all over the Japan islands a few days before the arrival of the New Year.

Freshly steamed hot rice[ not that of the regular “sushi-grade” but the “sweet rice” or “mochi rice” ] is used for this particular purpose.

Piping hot rice is transferred into a large wooden mortar mill to be pounded by a heavy wooden mallet. Mochi-tsuki calls for two to perform the work. Traditionally, a person who pounds is head of the house and the other sits right beside the mortar whose role is to keep his hand wet with water, and give a quick pat or two on the hot rice dough and turn it over with a blink-of-an-eye motion. It requires precise timing plus trust between the two.

The finished rice cake is then cut in certain sizes and shapes. One of the typical treats is to lightly toast a piece or two and sink in the bottom of a large soup bowl filled with vegetables and hot, flavorful broth.



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Mochi making some 200 years ago in Japan. Steaming sweet rice, pounding and shaping into sizes. A typical household mochi-tsuki\* in 1800's.