

Marugame *Uchiwa*

Marugame *uchiwa* (fans) date back to early in the Edo period, when these distinctive fans were first made as souvenirs for pilgrims who came to Konpira Shrine. They typically had the character for “gold” inscribed on them, which is the first Chinese character in the name of Konpira Shrine. The stamping of the gold mark on the fan was both a reminder of the name of the place one had visited and also seen as bringing good fortune to the receiver.

Marugame *uchiwa* now account for 90% of all fans produced in Japan, and over one billion are made each year. In 1997 the Japanese government officially recognized them as traditional craft products.

The process of making them is complex, with forty-seven separate steps involved, and the craftsmen mostly perform these by hand. Throughout the history of making the fans, many distinctive shapes were invented, not only for the purpose of cooling oneself in the summer but also for cooling food, starting fires, swatting insects, and as fashion statements and decorations. This tradition continues to evolve today, connecting the past with the present.

Please see the Marugame Uchiwa website for further information on these lovely fans. You can design your own fan in a fan-making experience. For details, visit the website: