

### **Itsukushima Shrine: Takatsuki Tray**

This red lacquer tray was used when offering food and drink, including rice, sake, and red sea bream (a fish considered auspicious) to the deities of the shrine. Such offerings (shinsen) may be made day-to-day but they tend to be particularly lavish after a harvest and on the occasion of a shrine festival (matsuri), of which there are several every year. In Shinto practice, humans are thought to invoke the presence of deities and present them with food, drink, and other consumable offerings. Such offerings are usually the highest-quality local seasonal food or drink available, such as fine sake, perfectly shaped fruit, or rare delicacies such as the red sea bream. The specific items tend to vary by ceremony and region, but usually include seafood and/or produce, salt, water, and the two essentials of rice and sake. Rice, the staple grain, and the drink made from it permeate Japanese life and culture.