

The Setsubun-e Ritual

Setsubun, also known as the “bean-throwing” ritual, is a seasonal celebration on February 3 that marks the beginning of spring. At temples and homes around the country, people throw handfuls of dried beans to get rid of demons (*oni*) while chanting “*Oni wa soto, fuku wa uchi*” (“Demons out, good luck in”).

During the ritual at Kinpusenji Temple, however, the cry is changed to, “Demons in, good luck in,” as the temple welcomes and exorcises all the demons that have been kicked out of their accommodations all over the country. This unusual take on the Setsubun tradition is ascribed to En no Gyoja (634–701), the founder of Shugendo, who, according to legend, exorcised two demons called Zenki and Goki.

Another highlight of the ritual is the Oni Odori (demon dance) held at Kinpusenji’s main hall, the Zaodo. This is followed by a fire ritual (*goma*) and, finally, the long-awaited bean throwing (*mamemaki*), a ritual meant to drive out bad influences and pray for good things.