

Wisdom Mochi

Wisdom Mochi (*chie no mochi*), with over 600 years of history, is a special confection and popular souvenir of the Amanohashidate area. The story of its origin involves a monk who encountered a boy near the local Chionji Temple and was impressed by his intelligence. When questioned about his knowledge, the boy replied that he had eaten mochi made for Monju, the bodhisattva of wisdom, who is worshipped at Chionji. Soon the story spread. The temple gave permission to four tea shops to sell “wisdom mochi” in the late seventeenth century. The shops initially worked together making mochi on the temple grounds, but began preparing the sweets individually during the Meiji era (1868–1912). Today, the four teahouses (Chitose, Hikobe, Kanshichi, and Yoshino) are located right outside the gates of the temple.

Wisdom mochi is bite-sized mochi topped with generous daubs of mildly sweetened bean paste. The recipe has been passed down through many generations, so the taste and texture of wisdom mochi have evolved slightly over time, and today the sweet at each shop has a distinctive flavor. Some shops even modify their recipe depending on the weather or quality of ingredients, so it may be fun to try more than one. However, the main ingredients are still the same: glutinous rice, adzuki beans, and sugar. Because none of the shops use artificial preservatives, wisdom mochi are best eaten in the shop, paired with a cup of green tea. If you must take them with you, eat them within a day or buy them frozen from Yoshino.