

Nakamise Shopping Street

Nakamise Shopping Street is located along the main approach to [Usa Jingu Shrine](#). It is lined with restaurants offering local cuisine and shops selling a wide assortment of regional specialties and souvenirs. The shopping street took shape around the time of the Great Showa Reconstruction conducted at Usa Jingu from 1932 to 1941, replacing the Shinmeicho shopping district that existed near the western entrance to the shrine. Today, Nakamise is a lively area catering to residents, pilgrims, and sightseers alike.

Regional Foods

Many restaurants in Nakamise Shopping Street offer specialty dishes of Usa and Oita Prefecture. Popular menu items include Usa-style *karaage* fried chicken, savory, pancake-like *negiyaki* prepared with local green onions, Usa *dojo* weatherfish served fried or in a *nabe* hot pot, and *ganjiru* soup made with river crab.

A variety of gifts and snacks available at Nakamise are made with *kabosu* and *yuzu* citrus cultivated in the area. Seafood lovers can find goods such as red rice prawns caught in nearby ocean waters, dried and packaged for incorporating into home recipes. Usa has the most sake breweries in Oita Prefecture and is the largest supplier of barley *shochu* liquor in Japan, so there is also a wide selection of traditional and modern alcoholic beverages.

Usa Gourds

Bottle gourds (*hyotan*) are believed to be auspicious in Japan. They are especially prominent in Usa as amulets and souvenirs because of a legend related to Usa Jingu. According to a story set in the third century, Empress Jingu filled a gourd with mother's milk to feed her son, the future Emperor Ojin, who is worshipped at Usa Jingu as the deity Hachiman. Gourd charms can be found in many shops, and visitors to Usa Jingu can hang votive gourds in place of the usual wooden tablets (*ema*) to convey wishes to the deities. There is a well-known shop located not far from Nakamise along the [Chokushi Kaido Road](#) that specializes in goods made from hollowed-out dried gourds, such as spice containers, flower vases, and good luck charms.

Usa Ame Candy

Another item that claims legendary origin is Usa *ame*, sweet malt and rice candy. In a story similar to the tale of Usa gourds, Empress Jingu used a liquefied version of the candy as a substitute for milk to feed the future Emperor Ojin. Usa *ame* is usually white

with a simple, mild sweetness, though other flavors have been introduced in recent years. Some candy is sold in small slabs to be broken into pieces for consumption, while other types are precut into bite-sized portions. Note that Usa *ame* is not meant for chewing: the candy should be allowed to slowly melt in the mouth. In addition to the sweet flavor and unique story, natural ingredients and a long shelf life make Usa *ame* a popular gift.