**Traditional *Kurikinton* Chestnut Sweet**

Nakatsugawa is said to be the birthplace of *kurikinton*, a Japanese chestnut sweet. The town takes great pride in this popular autumn treat, which is made using chestnuts collected in the foothills of mountains near the city. Recipes differ between shops specializing in Japanese sweets (*wagashi*), and each version offers a unique flavor and texture.

*Different Types of Kurikinton*

There are two different types of *kurikinton*. One is a sweet, sticky version that is served as part of traditional Japanese New Year dishes *osechi ryori*) and the other is a sweet paste that originated in Nakatsugawa. The *kurikinton* served at New Year’s is typically sweet-simmered chestnuts coated in sweet potato paste.

The sweet paste confection served in Nakatsugawa is made by boiling or steaming fresh chestnuts until tender. The softened chestnuts are then mashed and mixed with sugar, which creates a sweet, smooth paste. This paste is shaped using a *chakin* tea cloth or gauze cloth into small, bite-sized pieces that resemble chestnuts. The paste has a smooth texture and subtle sweet taste that pairs well with the slightly bitter flavor of Japanese green tea.

*Origins and History of Kurikinton in Nakatsugawa*

Nakatsugawa is known for its abundant harvest of chestnuts, which were often used to make dishes and sweets. When the Nakasendo highway was built in the early Edo period (1603–1867) to connect Edo (modern-day Tokyo) to Kyoto, many post stations were built along the route to provide accommodations for those passing through, and Nakatsugawa-juku was the 45th post station. The tea shops at the post stations near Nakatsugawa mashed up chestnuts to make sweets to serve with tea to weary travelers and are credited as the first places to sell *kurikinton*.

Around 1900, *kurikinton* started to appear in specialized sweet shops around Nakatsugawa. Today the area is home to many long-established stores selling this local confection, including Suya and Kawakamiya. A stone monument was built in front of Nakatsugawa Station to honor the city’s history as the birthplace of *kurikinton*.