

### ***Tsukena* Pickles and *Niina* Stews**

Traditional food culture in snow country revolves around storing enough food for winter, so pickling and other techniques for food preservation are essential. In Tokamachi, this approach is epitomized by a method of salt-curing a widely cultivated turnip green called *nozawana*.

*Nozawana* is planted in early autumn, and around the time of the first snow, the whole crop is harvested, carefully washed, and salted. After roughly a day, it becomes a pickle known locally as *tsukena*. Through the winter months, *tsukena* is served as a side dish with meals or as a snack. By the time spring comes, the *tsukena* has begun to ferment. Rather than spoiling, however, the *tsukena* is eaten as a new incarnation called *niina*. Cooks rinse out the salt and add the greens to simmered dishes and stews, further extending their shelf life. The fermentation also brings the benefit of immune-boosting lactic acids.

*Tsukena* and *niina* are still served in nearly every household in Tokamachi as an essential part of the winter table. Although the pickles are now commercially available, many people continue to make their own, following family recipes passed down for generations.