

Chikara Mochi

Chikara Mochi is a regional confection inspired by a local legend. Sweetened red bean paste is wrapped in a thin, dough-like skin of pounded glutinous rice and sandwiched between light, crispy rice flour wafers. The sweet was devised in 1955 by a family-run confectioner's shop operating in the town of Yura since 1887.

The legend is reflected in the paper the sweets are wrapped in, which is illustrated with the face of a *tengu*, a bird-like goblin depicted in traditional folk tales and literature. According to the story, after the nearby Kokokuji Temple complex burned to the ground, a wandering monk came from the nearby mountains and offered assistance, promising to rebuild the temple on the condition that the temple monks and villagers go home and remain there until dawn. On waking the next day, they discovered the temple had been rebuilt but found no trace of the monk. They concluded that this feat could only be the work of an almighty *tengu*, which must have disguised itself as a human. Using mochi as one of the key ingredients continues the theme, as it is said to be a favorite food of *tengu*.