

# Sake, Tea and Hanami: Partying with Petals in a Japanese Rite of Spring! (With Hanami Dango Recipe!)

Posted on March 26, 2008 by Rachel

Spring! It's officially here—I can smell it. Winter knows its time has come, and even though freak snowstorms batter our doors, they're merely the death throes of a passing season. Soon the ground will be covered in colorful drifts of crocuses, daffodils, and depending on the locale, **cherry blossoms**.



Cherry Blossoms, © The Anime Blog 2007

For anyone who's never sat in the gentle rain of cherry blossoms in spring, I encourage you to do so. It's an incredible sight to watch as millions of pink petals slowly tumble to the ground and cover it with a pastel carpet. Profuse amounts of cherry blossoms, *sakura*, are a rare sight in the States (unless you live in Washington D.C.) but in Japan, cherry trees line streets and are common in parks.

It's a Japanese rite of spring to travel to parks and boulevards filled with sakura to drink sake, sip tea and hang with friends during what's known as *hanami*, "flower viewing". This ancient rite of spring is a way to celebrate the end of winter and to rejoice in one of Japan's national symbols, **the cherry blossom**.

Hanami is an old tradition that's hugely popular. Everyone enjoys hanami in their own way, but most hanami-goers can be put in two categories: those who go to silently contemplate the drifting pink petals and those who bring their stereos, a barrel of sake, and as many friends as can sit on a tarp. The latter mostly adhere to the popular adage, "*hana yori dango*", translated as "dumplings over flowers", alluding to the preference of eating dumplings over admiring the flowers.

Hanami is such a big deal in Japan, it continues into the night, when it's then called "*yozakura*", night viewing. I have yet to experience *yozakura*, but who knows? Maybe this year is my year to see cherry blossoms under the stars.



Cherry Blossoms, © The Anime Blog 2007

Personally, I enjoy both sides of hanami. I like to stroll through the Japanese Garden at the Missouri Botanical Garden, sit in the mossy alcove by myself and imagine I can hear the sound the petals make as they drop. Then I'll go home, call my friends, pack a lunch and hightail it to a park to giggle like schoolchildren in the slow warmth of the new season.

There's much to be enjoyed during hanami, and even if you don't have a grove of cherry trees handy, you can still celebrate hanami by enjoying a picnic under some dogwoods or other local blooming trees. The spirit of hanami is to have fun, relax, and reflect on the beauty of the season. **Create your own hanami this year!**

If anyone's interested in reading more about hanami, or in a recipe for one of the star confections of the season, **hanami dango**, [read my article](#) on *Sauce's* website! The article includes a recipe for delicious **hanami dango** in the right side bar!

**\*Note:** The ingredients that have an odd symbol in front followed by "1/2" should be noted as being "1/2".