

# 2020 PHILADELPHIA OBON FESTIVAL



SHOFUSO  
JAPANESE CULTURAL CENTER



**CUCUMBER HORSE AND EGGPLANT COW CRAFTS**



## STORY

During Obon, families make offerings of food and drinks for ancestors to "come back home" to enjoy with them. However, there are two foods that are set out that play a more important role than being an offering, the cucumber and the eggplant.

A staple of Obon, the cucumber horse and eggplant cow are shoryoma, or spiritual conveyances, representing vessels or spirit animals for ancestors to use to come back home and then back to their world.

The cucumber is the slim, fast horse, to bring the ancestors home the fastest. The eggplant serves as the slower, fatter cow, allowing ancestors to leisurely return to their world with all of their favorite foods and drinks offered to them.



# Instructions

To turn these simple vegetables into spirit animals, you'll need the following items:

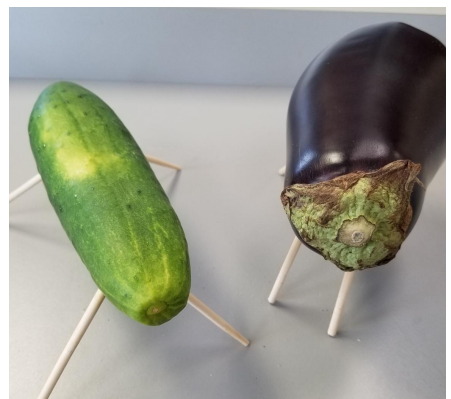
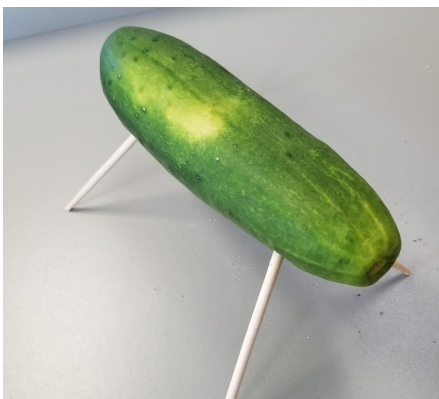
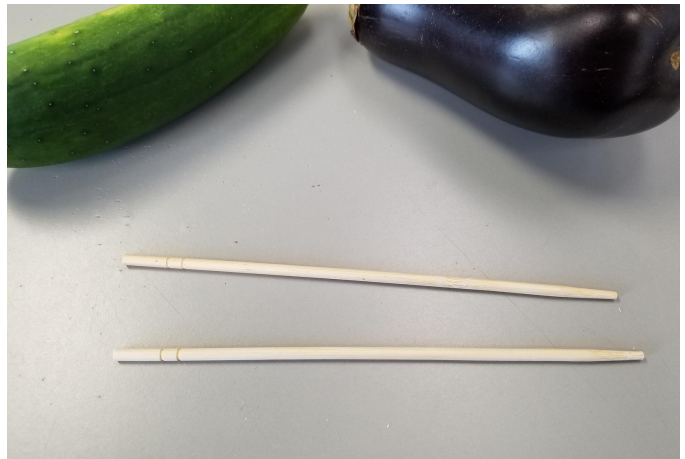
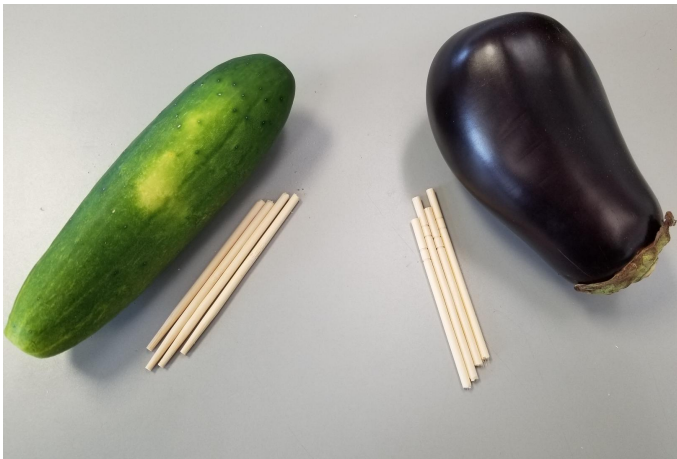
- 1 Cucumber (can be substituted with Green Squash)
- 1 Eggplant
- 8 large toothpicks (typically made of bamboo)

If your vegetables are too big for the toothpicks, you can cut down wooden skewers or chopsticks to the size of your choosing.

Once you've completed your cows and horses, it's time to place them. It is common to leave them on your doorstep to allow your ancestors to ride them home. After the first day, the shoryoma are taken in and placed with the rest of the food offerings. Lastly, the vegetable vessels will often be left along a local river bank for ancestors to ride them back to their world.

If you want to get more creative with it, try carving your cucumber and eggplant into more elaborate horse and cow shapes on your own! This is something that has been growing in popularity but if you do try this, make sure to have adult supervision and be careful.







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