



## Lakeside Plum Groves and Boathouses

Tai and Elsewhere, Wakasa-cho

A village song goes “What I see across the shore/Is it clouds or mist/It is the flowers of the western plum fields.” Plum blossoms are beautiful anywhere, but the 70,000 trees of Wakasa-cho are a world apart. Dying the lake banks and surrounding the thatched-roof boathouses, they herald the coming plum harvest.



Thatched-roof boathouses used in local farming (Tai, Wakasa-cho)<sup>①</sup>

Fukui Prefecture produces the most plums on Japan’s Sea of Japan coast. Their high quality and thick flesh make them a prized commodity, and they are presented annually to the emperor and the strongest sumo wrestler. Wakasa-

cho alone produces half of the plum yield in the prefecture, with nearly 70,000 plum trees lining the shores of the Five Lakes of Mikata. The fruit is harvested in June, and in August locals begin sun drying them. Thatched-roof boathouses used to house farmers’ boats still stand at several points along the lakeshore, and are a rare sight in the prefecture.

The cultivation of Fukui *ume* (plums) has a long history, coming to Wakasa in the Tenpo Period (1830-1844) and grown there ever since. During the Meiji Period, attempts to improve plum



Drying plums in the sun



The Five Lakes of Mikata viewed through plum blossom groves (Narude, Wakasa-cho)<sup>②</sup>



Plums ripening on the branch

production resulted in the development of *benisashi* and *kensaki*, new types of plums used for dried plums and plum wine respectively.

The blossoms of plum trees lining the lakeshores dye the area a soft pink, creating a beautiful landscape that welcomes the spring.



Plum harvest

