As the Issei established their new community in the Western Addition, they made an effort to maintain their cultural traditions. For over 100 years, Benkyodo has provided generations of Japanese Americans with manju, tea cakes filled with sweetened bean paste. Manju are presented as osechi (a gift to take to a host), served at tea ceremonies, or placed as memorial offerings on Buddhist shrines and altars. The New Year is ushered in with special round sugo mochi (pounded sweet rice cakes), a symbol of prosperity, and the cherry blossoms of spring are greeted with delicate sakura manju.

Benkyodo was one of the first businesses founded in the new Nihonmachi (Japanese Town) after the 1906 Earthquake and Fire. Founder Suyetichi Ohzuma handed down recipes and traditions to his son Hirofumi and to grandsons Ricky and Bobby. Today, Benkyodo is Japantown’s last original manjukuya (Japanese pastry shop), where over 300 pieces of mochi and manju are made by hand each day. The shop remains an important community gathering place, filled with sweet memories and neighborhood camaraderie.