

Chinese New Year

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The Chinese New Year is an important celebration in China. It is the first day of the lunar Calendar and is usually in January or February of the Gregorian calendar. The festival signifies the coming of spring and has been regarded as the only day of the year when China's hard-working peasants allow themselves to rest. Since it is such an old festival, the legend, rituals, and food are especially interesting.

There is a wonderful legend about the Chinese New Year. Thousands of years ago, an evil monster, Nian, ravaged a village in China one winter eve. The following year the monster returned and again ravaged the village. In order to avoid the further damage, the villagers devised a plan to scare the monster away. Red banners were hung everywhere. The color red has been believed to protect against evils. It was also believed that lighting firecrackers could scare the beast away. The plan worked and the celebration of joy lasted for several days. People visited each other, exchanged gifts, danced, and enjoyed delicious food.

Chinese New Year is also a series of celebrations that involve a number of rituals. Spring-cleaning starts about a month prior to the New Year and must be completed before the celebrations begin. People wipe windows and paint the window pans or the wooden gates bring a look to the home. It gives a refreshing change to the home. Typically red packets with money tucked inside are given as a symbol of good luck by the elder generation to the child or adult who has not started employment. The amount of money is usually an even number as odd numbers are regarded as unlucky. Decorating the doors with vertical scrolls of characters on red paper is also one of the common rituals. The red scrolls are believed to bring good luck. The fifth day of the New Year is the time to welcome the "*Wealth God*". Generally, people do not go to bed before midnight but prepare a delicious meal for the "*Wealth God*". Firing fireworks is also a good way to welcome the coming of the "*Wealth God*". Thus, people hope to get a promotion or more money in the coming year. The fifteenth day of the New Year is marked by the "*Lantern Festival*". Lighting colorful lanterns in the houses is the main ritual of this day. It is also the most cheerful day in the New Year for children since they can tote all kinds of lanterns playing on the street. Eating a famous Chinese snack called "*Tang Yuan*" (small balls made of rice flour with ground black sesames inside) is another ritual for this day. It symbolizes a hope that everything will be smooth and easy for the year.

The food during the New Year is diverse and symbolic. For instance, fish is believed to ensure abundant crops and a long life. Red dates bring the hope for prosperity. Oranges and tangerines symbolize wealth and good fortune. *Nian Gao*, the New Year's cake made of glutinous rice, suggests the coming year will be better than year the past. The northern Chinese enjoy a delicacy of boiled dumpling, known as "*jiao zi*" to celebrate the festival. But if you are a foreigner and plan to spend the New Year festival in China, you should learn how to use chopsticks to enjoy the foods.

In conclusion, the celebrations for Spring Festival are very meaningful. In addition, everyone should maintain an optimistic approach to welcome whatever lies

ahead. Most importantly, the Chinese New Year is a time to spend with one's family, relatives, and friends. It is also a time to meet with friends.