

## **The Mid-Autumn Festival**

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Chinese culture is deeply imbedded in traditional festivals. The Mid-Autumn Festival, also known as the Moon Festival, is one of the most significant for Chinese people. Many myths about this festival came down to us from ancient times. The festival is significant because it is a special occasion for family reunion.

The Mid-Autumn Festival comes on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month each year. It is named according to the ancient calendar system. That day, the moon is completely full and the most radiant of the year. Thus, it is also called the Moon Festival. Moreover, the full moon is also the symbol of this important day. The festival dates back to the Tang Dynasty (618 A.D-907 A.D). At that time, ancient Chinese used the moon as a time guide and planted according to the lunar calendar. The biggest harvest was just around the middle of the eighth lunar month: therefore, Chinese croppers set this day as a harvest holiday.

Like most Chinese holidays, the Mid-Autumn Festival is rich in legends. The most widespread myth is about fairy Chang-E. According to the legend, there were ten suns blazing in the sky in the ancient times. All people lived on the earth were nearly dead. Then there came an archer named Hou Yi, who shot down nine suns and left one in the sky. Because of his achievement, he was selected to be the king. But unfortunately, he became a tyrant. Chang-E was his beautiful wife. One day Hou Yi received some elixirs from a fairy. Hou Yi wanted to eat them with his wife. But Chang-E was not willing to stay with him any more. Clandestinely, Chang-E swallowed all of them and then floated to the moon. Even today, when some people gaze at the moon, they still imagine that Chang-E is living in the cold moon palace alone.

The most representative food of this festival is the moon cake. The traditional moon cake is round baked pastry filled with different ingredients such as red bean paste, mixed nuts, and salted egg yolk. Modern moon cake could even be filled with ice cream. The round cake is a symbol of reunion. Furthermore, there are rich and colorful celebrations at the festival. All family members are expected to gather together that day. After dinner, most people will take a walk outside enjoying the beautiful night, and especially the bright full moon. In addition, the Dragon and Lion Dance is popular at the festival, for it represents luck and happiness. Chinese regard dragons and lions as powerful animals that can expel devils. That day people hang up lanterns of different sizes and variable shapes, some representing animals such as dragons.

Chinese people still value this traditional festival. Most people look forward to going back home on or before that day. Especially for those who are overseas, the festival always has significant meanings. People who cannot return home that day will look at the moon and think of their loved ones.

In summary, most countries have their particular festivals, which reveal different cultures. The Mid-Autumn Festival represents Chinese cultural characteristics. Chinese pay attention to family unity, no matter how the world changes. China has a long history and Chinese are proud of the civilization.