Really Good Gazette

All The Stuff That's Fun To Learn!

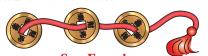
Chinese New Year Edition

Volume 007

喜 愛 HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR! 壽 財

What Is the Chinese New Year?

The Chinese New Year, sometimes called the Spring Festival, is the most important Chinese traditional holiday. Like any new year, it is celebrated on the first day of the first month of the year. But the Chinese New Year falls on a different date each year on our calendar. It's the day when the sun is at its highest point in the sky, and the moon is a new moon. Usually, the Chinese New Year begins in January or February. The festival lasts 15 days and ends when the moon is a full moon. In Asia, it marks the end of winter and the beginning of spring, so farmers plant seeds for the new harvest.



San Francisco Chinese New Year Parade

Every year, thousands of spectators crowd the streets of San Francisco for the Chinese New Year Festival and Parade. The two-week celebration is a blend of parades, traditional Chinese New Year festivities, flower markets, community festivals, and beauty pageants.



San Francisco celebrates Chinese New Year.

If you are in San Francisco for these celebrations you are likely to see dragon dancers, terra-cotta warriors, acrobats, floats, and marching bands. Chinatown, a special section of San Francisco, is filled with colorful banners, flags, lanterns, drums, and firecrackers to help scare off evil spirits.

Some parts of the festival originated in the 1860s. Many Chinese men emigrated to America during the California Gold Rush in the 1800s. U.S. immigration laws made it difficult for families to leave China, so only the men came to America to work while most women and children stayed in China. Restaurants in Chinatown held spring banquets to replace the traditional New Year's Eve dinner so that the men could eat and celebrate the holiday together. The tradition continues today. Entire families go to the restaurants to enjoy the banquet meal.



Orange You Glad We're Friends?

Tangerines and oranges are given out to friends and family and served as dessert during the Chinese New Year. The Chinese word for orange also sounds like the Chinese word for wealth,

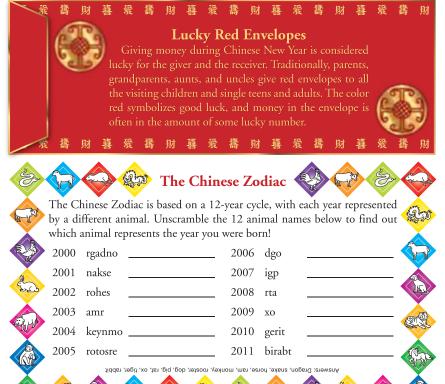
while the word for tangerine has the same sound as the word for luck. Tangerines are symbolically exchanged with the leaves still attached to assure that the giver's relationship with the receiver remains secure.

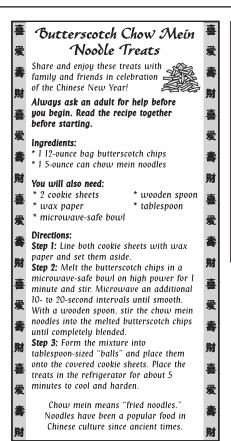


Two dancers perform the Lion Dance.

Lion Dance

The lion is a symbol of joy and happiness in the Chinese culture. In China, from the fourth day through the fifteenth day of the Spring Festival, lion dance groups travel from village to village, spreading good fortune and prosperity. In the Lion Dance, two people act as a lion: One waves the lion's head, the other waves the lion's body and tail. There are several different traditions within China. In northern China, the lion jumps, falls, and tumbles. Sometimes, it even jumps over a table or steps on a rolling ball. In southern China, the lion scratches an itch; licks its fur; and at times, falls asleep. All the dancers' movements must match the music played by a drum, gong, and cymbal. The loud music, firecrackers, and the movements are used to scare away evil spirits so that good luck will follow.

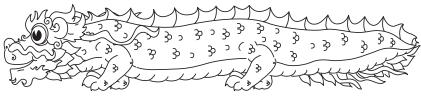




Awake the Dragons!

In ancient China, dragons did not breathe fire. Dragons were wise and caring. They guarded the wind, rain, rivers, as well as precious metals and gems. Some believe that fireworks are set off during Chinese New Year to awaken the dragon that will then fly across the sky to bring rain for the spring crops. Others believe the noise of the fireworks will scare off any evil that may be lurking. Fireworks are always thrown at the feet of the dragon during the Chinese New Year parades to help keep them awake during the celebration. It is believed that they sleep the rest of the year.

Color in the Chinese New Year Dragon



Family Celebrations

All members of a family gather for a meal on the evening of New Year's Eve. Empty seats are kept at the banquet table for family members who cannot attend. It is a time for coming together to give thanks for the year that has passed and to look forward to the New Year. Usually, eight or nine dishes are

prepared for this meal, which traditionally includes a whole chicken, including the head and feet; clams or scallops; any dish that features lettuce; lobster; rice; spring rolls; dumpling; and a fish with its head and tail intact. On New Year's Day, it is traditional to eat leftovers to avoid the use of knives, which it is believed could cut one's luck.





Let There Be Light

The fifteenth day of the Chinese New Year marks the end of the festivities. On this last night, a lantern festival is celebrated under the full moon. Paper lanterns in the shapes of butterflies, dragons, birds, dragonflies, and many other animals decorate the streets along with the common red lanterns. You can make your very own lantern by following these simple instructions:

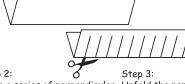
Supplies:

Red construction paper Glue, tape, or a stapler

Directions:

Step 1:

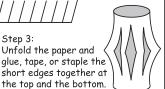
Fold the red construction paper in half vertically, making a long, thin rectangle



Step 2: Make a series of perpendicular cuts along the folded line, but do not cut all the way to the

edge of the paper.

Unfold the paper and glue, tape, or staple the short edges together at



The Wishing Trees

There are two very special

banyan trees located in Hong Kong. Tourists and nearby residents visit these "wishing" trees during the Chinese New Year to pray for good fortune. Traditionally, the big tree is used to make wishes related to careers, studies, health, and wealth. The smaller tree is for wishes related to marriage and children. Visitors write down their wishes on pieces of red paper and tie them to an orange. Years ago, they would throw the orange up into the appropriate tree. If the orange stayed in the tree, the wish would come true. Today, the paper wishes are hung on racks near the big tree so no one gets hurt and the trees stay healthy.

Fun Facts

Some Chinese New Year Beliefs:



Put away all of your brooms, vacuums, mops, rags, and cleaning supplies on New Year's Eve. On New Year's Day, avoid all housework. Otherwise, you may be washing or sweeping away your good luck for the New Year.



Avoid knives, scissors, nail clippers, and sharp objects because the sharp blades may cut the threads of good fortune ushered in on New Year's Day.



At the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve, open your windows and doors to allow the old year to leave and to let in good fortune for the New Year.



Do not wash your hair on the first day and on the fifteenth day of the New Year, or you might wash away your good luck for the New Year.

