

# Chinese new year or spring festival

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Spring festival In China, New Year's Day is a solemn occasion.

Everyfamilyperforms religious rites at the family altar. In order to rejoice at the New Year, people wished others a happy new year and blessed heartily. Some stick calligraphies full of joy on doors, most of them were antithetical couplet, phrase, individual character, such as: blessing, longevity, luckiness, propitious New Year and so on.

Whereas, some people pasted paper-cuts for window decorations to do away with the old and set up the new, the patterns of paper-cuts mainly consisted of figure, flower, character, any of the twelve animals representing the twelve Earthly Branches, and other animals. On New Year's Eve, all the members of families come together to feast. Jiaozi is popular in the north, while southerners favor a sticky sweet glutinous rice pudding called Nian Gao. Before the eve of the New Year, everyone tries to come back home from every corner of the country to join the entire family, just like Americans' practice for Christmas, to greet the New Year.

A New Year big dinner is served. After the meal, the table is cleared, dishes washed and put away. Then it is time to undertake final preparations to meet the New Year. In the morning, people put on their new clothes and shoes. Men, with their wives, call on relatives and friends to wish them a " Happy and Prosperous New Year ". The caller is served tea with sweet-meats; melon seeds, both red and black; and fruits and delicacies such as puffed rice cakes, dump-lings and deep-fried round doughnuts. In addition, liquor and tobacco are offered.

Before leaving, the well-wisher present gifts ofmoneywrapped in red paper to all the unmarried children of the family. Starting from the New Year's Day,

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people began going out to visit friends and relatives, taking with them gifts such as fruits, wines, flowers, etc. This period was a time for visiting and amusement. Common expressions heard at this time are: Happy New Year. People also enjoy all sorts of entertainment, going to the temple fairs, treating themselves to the local delicacies, and watching performances of folk art forms, which usually include ballads singing, story telling, comic dialogues, clapper talk and cross talk.

During this period, quarrels are to be avoided. Words with bad connotations such as defeat, illness, surgical operations, a coffin or death are not to be used. Dishes are handled carefully, for breaking a dish on New Year's Day indicate bad luck for the coming year. An important tradition on New Year's Eve is for families to gather together and spend the evening preparing dumpling or boiled dumplings. According to ChineseCulture, it is common to hide a coin or Chinese date in some of the dumplings. Whoever gets these dumplings will supposedly have good luck in the coming year.

Give out money packets - On New Year's day, children receive red packets decorated with gold symbols and filled with " lucky money".  
Serve festive foods - Throughout the New Years season, certain foods are served because they symbolize abundance and good fortune. Besides preparing special dishes, tangerines and oranges are often passed out to children and guests, as they symbolize wealth and good luck.  
Prepare a Tray of Togetherness - This is a circular tray with eight compartments, each containing symbolic foods such as lotus seeds which provides a sweet beginning to the New Year.