

Chinese New Year

22nd January 2023



Chinese New Year celebrates the beginning of a new year on the traditional Chinese calendar. It is sometimes also called Lunar New Year or Spring Festival. It is one of the most important holidays in China.

The first day of Chinese New Year begins on the new moon that appears between 21 January and 20 February. In 2023, the first day of the Chinese New Year will be on Sunday, 22nd January, which is the Year of the Rabbit.

The Chinese New Year festival period lasts for 16 days, starting from Chinese New Year's eve and running through to the Lantern Festival. It is a national holiday in China and there is a 7 day holiday.

Animal signs

The Chinese lunar calendar has 12 animal signs, known as Ben Ming Nian, and these rotate every year.

The 12 signs are: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, goat, monkey, rooster, dog and pig.













Each year has a different sign, meaning each person is represented by one of the 12 animals.

Which animal represents your birth year?

2001 (24 th Jan)	Snake	2012 (23 rd Jan)	Dragon
2002 (12 th Feb)	Horse	2013 (10 th Feb)	Snake
2003 (1 st Feb)	Goat	2014 (31 st Jan)	Horse
2004 (22 nd Jan)	Monkey	2015 (19 th Feb)	Goat
2005 (9 th Feb)	Rooster	2016 (8 th Feb)	Monkey
2006 (29 th Jan)	Dog	2017 (28 th Jan)	Rooster
2007 (18 th Feb)	Pig	2018 (16 th Feb)	Dog
2008 (7 th Feb)	Rat	2019 (5 th Feb)	Pig
2009 (26 th Jan)	Ox	2020 (25 th Jan)	Rat
2010 (14 th Feb)	Tiger	2021 (12 th Feb)	Ox
2011 (3 rd Feb)	Rabbit		

**If you are born in January or February, remember you might fall under the year before.*

People born under each animal are said to have particular personality traits:

ZODIAC ANIMAL	PERSONALITY TRAITS
 RAT	Quick witted, resourceful, versatile, kind
 OX	Diligent, dependable, strong, determined
 TIGER	Brave, confident, competitive
 RABBIT	Quiet, elegant, kind, responsible
 DRAGON	Confident, intelligent, enthusiastic
 SNAKE	Enigmatic, intelligent, wise
 HORSE	Animated, active, energetic
 GOAT	Calm, gentle, sympathetic
 MONKEY	Sharp, smart, curiosity
 ROOSTER	Observant, hardworking, courageous
 DOG	Lovely, honest, prudent
 PIG	Compassionate, generous, diligent

Do you think you match yours?

Celebrating

Millions of people all over the world celebrate Chinese New Year in their communities and families.



Before the celebrations begin, people deep clean their homes as on the day itself it is back luck to sweep or clean in case you sweep the good luck for the year ahead out of your home.

The celebrations are also called the spring festival in Chinese culture, and businesses and schools close much like they do in the UK at Christmas.



People come together to celebrate with food and parties - noodle soup is a tradition as the noodles are thought to bring luck.

Parades and performances are usually held too, including beautifully decorated dragons, people in traditional costumes and fireworks.



The colourful lights and bang of fireworks are supposed to ward off evil spirits.

Chinese people may also decorate their homes with red lanterns and decorations.



Which of these celebrations would you most enjoy being a part of? Why?

Traditions



Families will have traditional dinners in their homes, including fish and dumplings on New Year's Eve to encourage prosperity, and noodle soup on New Year's day.

People will dress in bright colours as black and white are thought to be bad omens. Women will stay at home throughout New Year's Day as going out is also thought to bring misfortune to ladies.

It's a tradition on for people not to wash their hair or clothes on New Year's Day.

The date also celebrates the *God of Water*, and so this way water is spared.

Hair has the same pronunciation as 'fa' in 'facai' which means 'to become wealthy', and no one wants to "wash one's fortune away" for the year ahead.

Myths

The Monster and New Year's Eve

In ancient times, there was a monster named Nián (年). It usually lived at the bottom of the sea and came up once a year to feast on animals and humans. On this day, the villagers would all escape into the mountains.

One year, a beggar came to seek shelter, but everyone was hurrying away. Only an old woman took him in and he promised to chase Nian away. He busied himself with decorating the homes.

At midnight, Nian lumbered in but stopped short when it saw the red paper on the doors. As it roared in anger, firecrackers suddenly sounded and it trembled in fear. When it saw the beggar, dressed in red, laughing at it, it ran away.

The villagers came back the next day and were pleasantly surprised that the homes were all still standing. They realized that Nian was afraid of loud noises and the colour red.

This is why, on New Year's Eve, families eat dinner in their homes surrounded

by red decorations. At midnight, firecrackers are sounded. In addition, people will wear new and festive red clothing to celebrate.



Evil Spirits and Poetry



One of the red decorations that Chinese people love is Spring Festival couplet poems (春联 / chūn lián). They are pasted on both sides of the doorframe. Nian isn't the only monster that these poems are supposed to protect you against!

They guard against demons who wander around the human world at night looking for trouble. They must return to the underworld at dawn. Two gods guard the entrance, which is under a giant peach tree. Any demons that harmed humans during the night would be seized and fed to the tigers.

To safeguard their homes, people began to carve the gods' names into peach wood tablets. By placing them outside their doors, they were able to scare the demons away.

Fortune has Arrived!

Another popular decoration is calligraphy. The most common word is fú (福), meaning happiness or fortune. But you'll rarely see it upright.

It is said that in the Ming dynasty, the Emperor ordered every household to decorate by pasting fú onto their doors. On New Year's Day, he sent soldiers to check. They found that one illiterate family pasted the word upside down.

The Emperor ordered the family to be punished by death. Thankfully, the Empress was there and came up with an explanation: "Upside down" (倒 / dào) is a homophone of "here" (到 / dào). When it's upside down, it means that fú is here.

The explanation made sense to the Emperor and he set the family free. From then on, people would hang the word upside down, both for fortune and in remembrance of the kind Empress.



Red Pockets

According to legends, there was an evil spirit named Sui (祟). It would appear on New Year's Eve and pat the heads of sleeping children three times. The children would end up with a fever. Even though they recovered from the fever, they'd never be the same again.



One couple let their child play with some coins at night. When he fell asleep, they placed the coins on red paper and left it by the pillow. When Sui came, the coins flashed and frightened it away. From then on, parents would give children money wrapped in red paper every New Year's Eve.

The Stove God and Candy

The Stove God (灶君 / Zào Jūn) is in charge of people's meals and livelihoods. He's one of the gods that interact with humans the most.

On the little new year (小年 / xiǎo nián) before the official "big" New Year (大年 / dà nián), he returns to the heavens. The Stove God reports to the Jade Emperor (玉帝 yù dì), telling him how each family was during the year. He later returns to Earth to either bless or punish the families, as ordered by the Jade Emperor.

This is why families will make malt candy gourds and leave them out at night (a bit like cookies for Father Christmas).



The candy sweets will sweeten the Stove God's mouth so he'll only praise the family. It can also stick his teeth together, stopping him from saying bad things. This way, the family will enjoy plentiful food the entire year.

NEW YEAR GREETINGS

How to Say Happy New Year in Chinese

新年快乐

Xīn

nián

kuài

lè!

