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*Lunar
New Year
2026*

Traditions, food and celebrations





Intro

Lunar New Year is a major cultural celebration observed by hundreds of millions of people across Asia and around the world. One of the most widely celebrated forms is the Chinese New Year, which is marked in China, Singapore, Malaysia, and by Chinese communities worldwide. Lunar New Year is also celebrated in other countries, like Vietnam and South Korea, each with its own customs and traditions. Across these cultures, the celebration focuses on family reunions, honouring ancestors, and welcoming a new year with good fortune. Traditions are rich in symbolism: red decorations represent luck and protection, fireworks are used to drive away bad spirits, and specific foods are chosen because they symbolise wishes such as prosperity, long life, and abundance. Rather than being a single day, the Chinese New Year is part of a multi-day festival rooted in centuries-old traditions.



The Significance of Lunar New Year

Lunar New Year is based on the lunar calendar, which measures time using the cycles of the moon, rather than the sun. Most of the world today uses the Gregorian calendar, which is a solar calendar. A solar calendar is based on how long it takes the Earth to travel once around the sun (about 365 days) and this is why our months and seasons stay consistent each year. A lunar calendar follows the moon's phases. Each lunar month begins with a new moon and lasts about 29 to 30 days. Because twelve lunar months equal only about 354 days, a lunar year is shorter than a solar year. To keep the calendar aligned with the seasons, lunar calendars occasionally add an extra month, known as a leap month. This system is why Lunar New Year does not fall on the same date every year.



The Significance of Lunar New Year

Countries like China traditionally used the lunar calendar for agriculture, festivals, and family life, while many Western countries gradually adopted solar calendars to standardise timekeeping. Today, China and other East Asian cultures use the Gregorian calendar for daily life but still follow the lunar calendar for traditional holidays, especially the Chinese New Year. Similar lunar-based celebrations are observed in places like Vietnam and South Korea, though each culture has its own customs.

In 2026, the Chinese New Year begins on February 17, which marks the first new moon of the lunar year. The celebration lasts 15 days and ends on March 3, 2026, with the Lantern Festival. This entire period, from February 17 to March 3, is known as the Lunar New Year festival.

Origins of Lunar New Year

The origins of the Chinese New Year go back more than 4,000 years, making it one of the oldest continuous celebrations in the world. It began in ancient China as an agricultural festival, a way for farmers to mark the end of winter and the beginning of spring, the planting season. In early times, families would offer sacrifices to gods and ancestors, asking for a good harvest, protection, and prosperity in the year ahead. The festival followed the lunar calendar, which helped communities track the seasons and plan agricultural activities.



Origins of Lunar New Year

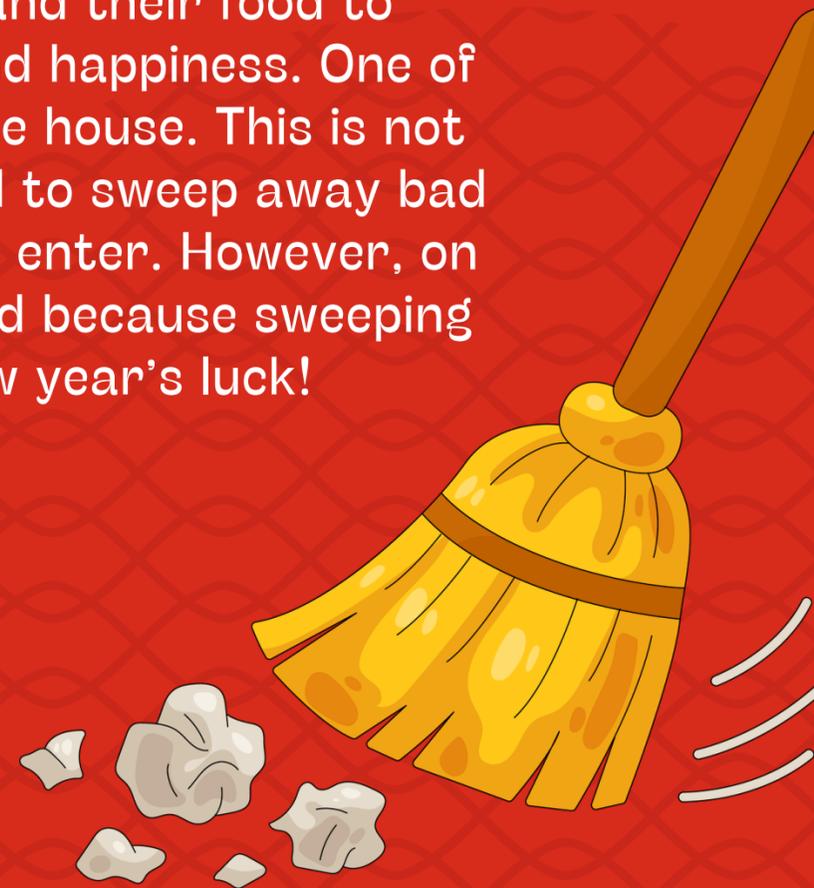
Over time, myths and stories became an important part of the celebration, giving it rich cultural meaning. One of the most famous legends is the story of Nian, a fierce mythical creature. According to the tale, Nian would emerge from the mountains every New Year's Eve to attack villages and eat crops or even children. To protect themselves, people discovered that Nian was afraid of loud noises, fire, and the colour red. This is why traditions such as firecrackers, red lanterns, red couplets, and wearing red clothing became part of the festival. They were believed to scare Nian away and bring safety and good luck.





Preparations for Lunar New Year

In the days leading up to Chinese New Year, families begin preparing their homes, themselves, and their food to welcome the new year with good luck and happiness. One of the first steps is thoroughly cleaning the house. This is not just about tidying up; cleaning is believed to sweep away bad luck and make room for good fortune to enter. However, on New Year's Day itself, cleaning is avoided because sweeping is thought to sweep away the new year's luck!

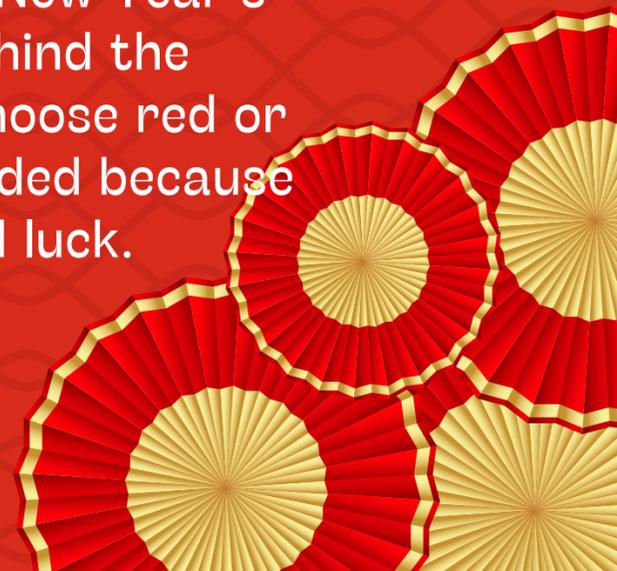




Preparations for Lunar New Year

Homes are also decorated with bright red items, because red is considered the colour of happiness, prosperity, and protection from evil spirits. Families hang red lanterns, put up red couplets with lucky messages, and sometimes paste paper cuttings of flowers, animals, or zodiac symbols. These decorations are meant to bring energy and positive vibes into the household.

Another important preparation is buying new clothes, especially for children. Wearing new outfits on New Year's Day symbolises a fresh start and leaving behind the misfortune of the previous year. People often choose red or other bright colours, while black or white is avoided because they are associated with mourning or bad luck.



Lunar New Year Foods

Foods served during Lunar New Year carry deep symbolism, such as:



Dumplings and spring rolls for wealth.



Noodles for longevity.



Fish for abundance.

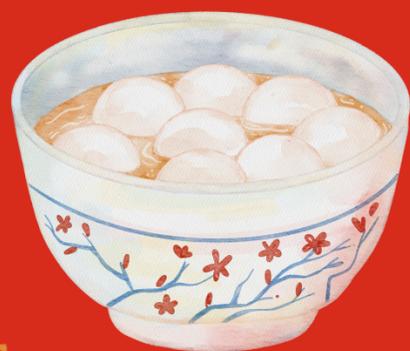


Sweet rice cakes for growth and progress.



Lunar New Year Foods

Foods served during Lunar New Year carry deep symbolism, such as:



Sweet glutinous rice balls for family unity.



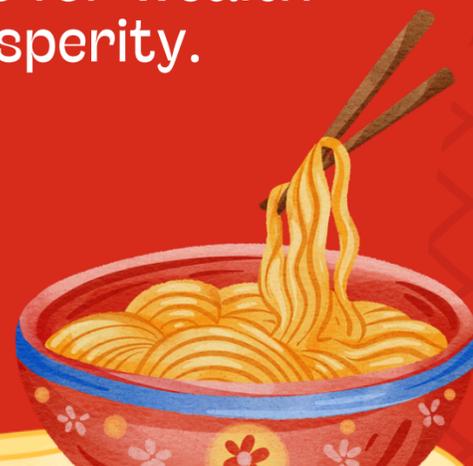
Spring rolls for wealth and prosperity.



Kumquats for prosperity.



Ba Bao Fan for health and happiness.



Lunar Zodiac Animals

Each Lunar New Year is associated with one of 12 zodiac animals, which repeat in a cycle every 12 years. These animals are deeply rooted in Chinese culture, and many people believe they can influence personalities, luck, and fortunes. The zodiac plays an important role in traditions, stories, and celebrations during Chinese New Year.



Lunar Zodiac Animals

In 2026, we are entering the Year of the Horse. People born in the Year of the Horse are thought to be energetic, confident, and independent, often full of drive, passion and enthusiasm. During the New Year celebrations, zodiac animals are everywhere, from decorations to red envelopes, cards, and even foods shaped like animals. Many families also like to find out their zodiac animal and read about its traits for fun, connecting with the rich cultural traditions of the lunar calendar.

The 12 zodiac animals are:

1. Rat – Clever, resourceful, and quick-witted
2. Ox – Hardworking, reliable, and patient
3. Tiger – Brave, confident, and adventurous
4. Rabbit – Gentle, kind, and creative
5. Dragon – Powerful, energetic, and charismatic
6. Snake – Wise, graceful, and intuitive
7. Horse – Energetic, independent, and confident
8. Goat – Calm, gentle, and artistic
9. Monkey – Playful, smart, and curious
10. Rooster – Honest, observant, and hardworking
11. Dog – Loyal, friendly, and protective
12. Pig – Generous, kind, and easygoing



The Spirit of Lunar New Year

Lunar New Year is more than a celebration, it's a time to honour ancestors, strengthen family bonds, reflect on the past, and embrace the hope for a prosperous future.



May the Lunar New Year bring you health,
happiness, and
success.



*Happy Lunar
New Year!*

Wishing You
Prosperity and Joy



HAPPY CHINESE NEW YEAR

