

Holiday Handout: Lunar New Year

February 12, 2021

The new Lunar calendar has begun – celebrated in many Asian cultures as the beginning of a new year.

Lunar New Year, or Spring Festival, is one of the most important holidays in Asian cultures. Tied to the lunar calendar, the holiday was traditionally a time to honor household and heavenly deities and ancestors. It's a time to bring family together for feasting.

The Lunar New Year is marked by the first new moon of the lunisolar calendars traditional to many east Asian countries, which are regulated by the cycles of the moon and sun.

In China (Chinese New Year), the 15-day celebration kicks off on New Year's Eve with a family feast called a reunion dinner full of traditional Lunar New Year foods, and typically ends with the Festival of Lanterns, when the full moon arrives.

It's important to note that the Lunar New Year isn't only observed in China and is celebrated across several countries and other territories in Asia, including South Korea, Vietnam, and Singapore among others.

When is the Lunar New Year?

This year, Lunar New Year begins February 12, 2021.

Zodiac Animal Signs

The lunar calendar has 12 zodiac animal signs which rotate every year, as opposed to every month like in the Gregorian calendar. Each new year is marked by the characteristics of one of the zodiac animals: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Pig.

February 2021 starts the year of the Ox. The Ox has traits of strength, reliability, fairness and conscientiousness, as well as inspiring confidence in others. People born in the year of the Ox (1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009 and 2021) are believed to be endowed with these traits.

How is Lunar New Year Celebrated?

Millions of people all over the world celebrate Lunar New Year in their communities and families. Before the celebrations begin, people deep clean their homes. On the day itself, it is considered bad luck to sweep or clean your home.

Families and friends come together to celebrate with food and parties. Parades and performances are usually held, including beautifully decorated dragons, people in traditional costumes and fireworks. The colorful lights and bang of fireworks are said to ward off evil spirits.

2021 Lunar New Year Celebrations

Despite the lack of in person celebrations this year, families are still encouraged to have intimate, traditional dinner gatherings in their homes, which includes meals like fish and dumplings on New Year's Eve (brings prosperity) and noodle soup on New Year's day (brings luck).

Sources:

<https://www.oprahmag.com/life/a34892893/what-is-lunar-new-year-festival/>

<https://www.history.com/topics/holidays/chinese-new-year>