

Growing up in a traditional Chinese family, we celebrated any major holiday. Chinese New Year, also known as Spring Festival, is one such holiday. This 15-day event starts on a different day each year since the Chinese calendar is lunisolar, following both the moon phase and the time of the solar year. This year Chinese New Year is on January 31, 2014. It is the Year of the Horse.

Before the festivities begin, it is customary to clean and decorate the house. Red is usually favored since it is believed to be the lucky color. Oftentimes, decorations are Chinese characters. One popular symbol is Fu, which symbolizes luck or blessing. According to tradition, cleaning must be finished before midnight hits on New Year's Day. Otherwise, we will sweep away good luck.

On New Year's Eve, the family gathers together and the food-fest begins. Traditionally, on New Year Day, a religious ceremony is given in honor of heaven, earth, and other gods, as well as ancestors. Lion dances and firecrackers will take place, to ward off evil spirits. During the 2-week event, families visit each other, bringing fruits or sweets, which are believed to bring someone a "sweet life." Married couples give children (and those who are single) *hong bao* or red envelopes, which are gifts of money, symbolizing fortune.

Many Chinese believe that the New Year is a time to bring in good luck. Foods eaten have favorable meanings. One popular dish is dumplings. Salty dumplings made with meat look like ingots, symbolizing wealth. Sweet dumplings are often made with sesame or red beans, symbolizing family unity. Other foods include whole fish, to represent togetherness and abundance, and chicken for prosperity. The chicken must be presented with a head, tail and feet to symbolize completeness. In addition, noodles should be uncut, as they represent long life. If you want to try your own, check out [this easy Chinese Style Longevity Noodles recipe](#).

The 15th day of the New Year, also known as The Festival of Lanterns, marks the end of the Chinese New Year. Various types of lanterns are lit throughout the streets or in a parade. There are many events held in New York City during this holiday. [Visit this website](#) for listings of parades and events.

*Gung hay fat choy* Wishing you prosperity! We say this to anyone we greet during Chinese New Year!

