Chinese New Year

By: Nick Cheng
From: Taiwan

Happy New Year! You might wonder why I said that; won’t that be too late to say it? You are definitely right in the western view, but in Chinese culture, New Year has just arrived!

A long time ago, ancient Chinese people developed the lunar calendar to count days. All of the traditional Chinese festivals continue to follow this calendar. In the western calendar, the dates of Chinese festivals differ yearly. For example, the Chinese New Year is on January 23rd this year, but it will be on February 10th next year. However, it will always be on January 1st by lunar calendar. There are a whole bunch of activities going on from the Chinese New Year’s Eve till the Lantern Festival, which is from January 22nd to February 6th.

People will clean up their houses on December 28th (which is January 21st this year); it means to get rid of all the badness from last year. Right after the houses get cleaned, people will start putting the red scrolls on which represent fortune in the Chinese culture. Then, the most exciting and important moment comes: Chinese New Year’s Eve. On December 30th, all the family members, looking forward to the New Year, will stay together for the dinner. After dinner, adults give children red envelopes with money. Kids are always happy at this moment, but it might be painful for adults (just teasing…). From the first day of the New Year, people will start to visit friends and family in order to bring fortune to them. The Lantern Festival is the last day of the New Year series. People eat glutinous rice balls (湯圆-tāng yuán) on this day. 圓 (yuán) in Chinese means stay together; this is the reason why people eat it. Another big part of the festival is the lanterns. During the lantern festival, the Taipei city (Taiwan’s capital) will be decorated with colorful lanterns and everybody will carry assorted lanterns around. It is beautiful! The most symbolic lantern is the sky lantern. We write our wishes on it and launch it in to the sky, hoping those wishes will come true in the New Year.

I believe a lot of people will feel lonely without their family during the Chinese New Year. But never forget, you have your friends with you. Lastly, I hope everyone has a Happy Chinese New Year and that all your wishes will come true!
By: Jiyeon Song
From: Korea

A month had elapsed since my arrival to America, and I vividly remember that for the first time in my life I greeted the New Year without a person whom I loved. In Korea, I would always have nice little chats with my friends and family until the sunrise. I was unable to do so this year because it had only been about two weeks since I had arrived. Instead, I was able to enjoy the company of my friend, Younjung (who came to America with me), who I made New Year’s resolutions with. My resolution was to avoid being shy and to do my best at everything, especially speaking English. We then went out to have pizza for the first time in America. However, because we were still new to this country, we were not familiar with the tipping process and left the waiter a five-dollar tip. We eventually came to realize that we tipped too much, but were happy that we got to learn from this new experience. A few days later, I went to the South Center Mall trip with students from the Welcome Team and ISP. I met many new people. With a few of my new friends, I went to go play bowling for the first time in my life. Although I was not very good, and was nervous because I was not sure how to bowl, I believe it is safe to say that it was not a bad first attempt. As these events slowly fulfill my New Year’s resolution, additional wishes I have for my journey in America during the New Year are to continue creating great memories that I will cherish and experience the many things this country offers that my own doesn’t.

By: Takeshi Otani
From: Japan

I think I am supposed to introduce what we do on New Year’s Day according to the custom of my home culture, but I’m sure many readers would not be pleased. So, I will share something different and more personal. At 12:00 on the first day of 2012, I was at my friend’s party, and I was shouting about the new year. As you may guess, when I woke up, I was in a bathroom sitting in front of a toilet. I thought that I really enjoyed New Year’s Day, and that it was a really exciting experience for me. But, I still don’t quite feel yet that it is a new year. If I had spent the holiday with my family, this might not have happened. In my home culture, New Year’s Day is equivalent to Christmas for many Americans. For example, we reunite with family and surround the same table with them. Of course, reuniting with family and listening to drunken relatives talking all day long is not exciting; rather, that bores me to death. Thus, even though I had such an exciting night, there is still something that I miss.

“We never know the worth of water till the well is dry”.

This is a proverb in England. I take it to mean that you won’t know the value of anything that you use normally until you lose it. For us, it is a good time to appreciate anything that surrounds us. That would be different for each person. It can be a boy/girlfriend, dogs, or your friend. In my case, that was my family. I don’t want to think about living with them again, but meeting them once in a while makes me feel peaceful. So, if you are with your loved ones, just try to say “Thank you.” I bet you would get something good later.

Anyway, if you gained something through my writing, you will be better person this year. I don’t guarantee, it though; it’s up to you.
Tet Holiday

By: Ngan Vu

From: Vietnam

While New Year’s Day is celebrated on January 1st by many people around the world, most Asian countries traditionally welcome a new year in late January or early February. The most familiar name for this special occasion is Lunar New Year. But what is interesting is that people can refer to the Lunar New Year using different terms, such as Chinese New Year, Spring Festival or Tet Holiday.

In Vietnam, our people name this holiday “Tet Holiday,” or, “Tet Nguyen Dan.” In Vietnamese culture, “Tet Nguyen Dan,” the formal name, stands for the moment when a new day begins. To be more specific, “Tet” is known as a special occasion, “Nguyen” implies the commencement, and “Dan” means a fresh and peaceful morning. Nonetheless, our people simply call it “Tet Holiday.”

If Christmas Eve in most of Western countries is when all family members gather around, sit beside each other, have dinner together, share their own stories throughout a whole year, and give whomever they see warm wishes and hugs, the “Tet Nguyen Dan” atmosphere bears some similarities.

Tet Holiday is the longest holiday which lasts somewhere between 10 and 14 days. At the very beginning of the holiday, each member of the family is responsible for cleaning up each part of the house in order to make the home tidy and clean, and to wash away all unluckiness or negative feelings from the previous year. I really enjoy cleaning up and organizing everything in our home. I work hard and then feel satisfied when I see things in order. Besides, that way my mother does not have to do much work which requires a lot of energy and involves exposure to dust.

On December 23rd according to the Lunar calendar, the The Kitchen God, a kitchen guardian, together with his carp flies back to heaven and reports to the Jade Emperor about what happened in the last year. Normally, in Vietnam, before the Lunar New Year’s Eve, there is a special show on Television in which actors and actresses dress as The Jade Emperor, different kinds of Kitchen Gods, and people in heaven. That show reflects what happened in the last year in every aspect of life, including education, healthcare entertainment, etc. The show makes people laugh while also making them truly look into what needs to be improved in our country in the next year.

The most meaningful and important thing is cooking traditional dishes before the new year arrives. We have to wake up early (around 5 o’clock in the morning) to go to the market, and buy meat and vegetables. Then, we stay up late to cook 7 or 8 special dishes. Although the cooking process
By: Viviana Tinoco
From: USA

American New Year

With music blasting, people dancing, and adrenaline going, New Years Eve is always a much anticipated night for young adults and teenagers everywhere! The thrill of the night is always on their minds, thinking of what they are going to wear, how late they are going to stay up, but most importantly how they are going to celebrate it and who they are going to celebrate this fun filled night with.

As for me and my group of friends, we always have an enjoyable New Years Eve! The night usually goes something like this, all of us girls get together a few hours prior to the main event time, meet up at one of our houses, and get all dressed up for the night to come! For most New Years parties, dressing up in rhinestones, and anything that is flashy, shiny, or shimmery works! We all do our hair to perfection! Then we finish it off with doing our makeup, which usually consists of smoky eyed look or just pure sparkles for the lid!

In conclusion, Lunar New Year is considered to be a season when people hope for a better future and learn from the mistakes in the past. It is also a season full of empathy for people in our society and love between mankind and all living things. Everything is filled with vitality and there is a sense of readiness for new challenges ahead.

Now, for the main event time, we all usually just gather around at a friend’s house, drink sparkling cider or champagne and wait for the countdown to begin! While waiting, normally we play games, and mess around. Some games include Guitar Hero, Rock Band, Call of Duty, Twister, and Apples to Apples! Mainly, just get hyped up and excited for the ball to drop wherever we might be! Some years we even head down to the Space Needle and hang out there with a bunch of friends and just enjoy the night. Then we sit back and wait for the fireworks show to begin!

After midnight has passed and we have celebrated, it usually leaves us with two options: Are we tired? If not, where to next? And with my group of friends, the party never stops! So at that point, we would probably go to either a dance club or if we wanted a mellower end of the night, we would probably go bowling and just hang out around town until we couldn’t anymore.

Everyone has different ways of celebrating and enjoying New Years, but the one that really counts is the one that you spend enjoying it with friends and close acquaintances : )
“Happy New Year!” I know it’s kind of too late to say this, but I’d like to say it anyway. When talking about New Year, the first word that comes to my mind is celebration and I’m sure that every country has a different way of celebrating the New Year. However, this is my first time writing for the Mosaic, so I’m going to write an article that looks back on some of my New Year’s memories. The first image that I think about New Year celebration is food from the northern part of my country. I think some of you might know that in Thailand there is a lot of spicy food. Even though I’m from Thailand, I don’t really like to eat spicy food. It is rare for me to eat traditional food from the north except for some celebrations but New Year’s celebration is an exception. Even though the food was really spicy for me to eat, I still liked its taste. The second image in my mind is the New Year’s festival in the north. It is celebrated as a religious event in which local people throughout the region earn merit and participate in other religious activities. The highlight of this event is the launching of a balloon called Khom loy. Lanterns are launched into the night sky with the belief that misfortune will fly away in them. It is our belief that if the lanterns are made and offered to monks, we will receive wisdom in return. The flame in the lantern is said to symbolize knowledge and the light it gives will guide us to the right path of our lives. Those are my experiences from previous years and now it is your turn to tell your story about your new year experience. Have a fantastic new year.
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