

Chinese New Year taboos~ Recommendations~

~ Recommendations ~

- [Mid-autumn Festival \(Zhong Qiu Jie\)](#)
The Mid-autumn Festival (or Zhong Qiu Jie in Mandarin), also known as the Mooncake Festival, falls on the 15th day of ...
- [Qing Ming Jie \(All Souls' Day\)](#)
Qing Ming Jie (), which can be translated to mean “Clear and Bright Festival” or “Pure and Bright Festival”, is similar ...
- [Seven Maidens' Festival](#)
The Seven Maidens' Festival (Qi Qiao Jie,), also known as Qixi (Seventh Night) Festival or Chinese Valentine's Day, ...
- [Zhong Yuan Jie \(Hungry Ghost Festival\)](#)
Zhong Yuan Jie (), also known as the Hungry Ghost Festival, traditionally falls on the 15th day of the seventh month ...
- [Chinese New Year customs in Singapore](#)
Chinese New Year is celebrated by most Chinese in Singapore. The first day of the lunar new year usually falls between ...
- [Teh Cheang Wan](#)
Teh Cheang Wan (b. 3 March 1928, China–d. 14 December 1986, Singapore) was a trained architect widely known for his ...
- [Yusheng](#)
Yusheng (; yusang in Cantonese), meaning “raw fish” in Chinese, is a salad dish comprising thin slices of raw fish ...
- [Hari Raya Puasa](#)
The festival of Eid, known in Singapore as Hari Raya Aidilfitri or Hari Raya Puasa, falls on the first day of Syawal, ...
- [Ponggal](#)
Ponggal or Pongal, also known as Makara Sankranti, is celebrated in mid-January by South Indians as a festival marking ...
- [Abdul Rahim Ishak](#)
Abdul Rahim Ishak (b. 25 July 1925, Singapore–d. 18 January 2001, Singapore) was a former envoy and senior minister ...
- [Dragon Boat Festival](#)
The Dragon Boat Festival (Duan Wu Jie), is also known as Duan Yang, which means “Upright Sun” or “Double Fifth”. Falling ...
- [Deepavali](#)
Deepavali, or diwali (literally translated as “a row of lights”; also known as the Festival of Lights), is a festival ...
- [South East Asia Cultural Festival](#)
The South East Asia Cultural Festival was held in Singapore from 8 to 15 August 1963. It featured a series of performances ...
- [S. Rajaratnam](#)
Sinnathamby Rajaratnam (b. 25 February 1915, Jaffna, Sri Lanka–d. 22 February 2006, Singapore), better known as S. Rajaratnam, ...
- [Chinese New Year delicacies](#)
Various cakes, fruits, sweetmeats, nuts and delicacies are popular treats served and eaten during Chinese New Year as ...
- [Hongbao giving](#)
A hongbao (or ang pow in Hokkien) is a gift of money packed into a red packet. Red is considered a symbol of luck, life ...
- [Firecrackers](#)
Firecrackers are called baozhu () in Mandarin, meaning “bamboo explosions”. In ancient China, bamboo stems were burnt ...
- [Lion dance](#)
The lion dance is a pugilistic performance dating back to more than 1,500 years. Its performance during auspicious occasions, ...
- [Dragon dance](#)
The dragon dance, also known as longwu () or longdeng (), is a traditional Chinese dance performance involving a ...
- [Chingay](#)
Chingay is an annual street parade held in Singapore as part of the Lunar New Year celebrations. The term “Chingay” ...

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Chinese New Year is celebrated by most Chinese in Singapore. The first day of the lunar new year usually falls between the winter solstice (*dongzhi*) and spring's beginning (*lichun*). This typically falls between 21 January and 20 February each year. ¹

One month before Chinese New Year

On the 24th day of the 12th month of the Chinese lunar calendar is *xiaoguo* (little new year), which marks the beginning of the new year festivities. It is believed that on this day, household deities report to Yu Huang (Jade Emperor), the supreme ruler of heaven and earth. Special food offerings such as sweet cakes, candied fruits and sweet rice dishes are provided for the Hearth God or Kitchen God (*zaojun* or *zao**wang*) in the hope that he would put in a good word for the family to the Jade Emperor. Sometimes, honey or rock sugar is placed on the mouth of the Kitchen God's statue. [Firecrackers](#) are then lit to bid farewell to the deities and spring cleaning commences.² However, firecrackers have been banned in Singapore for public safety reasons since June 1972, following the introduction of the [Dangerous Fireworks Act](#).³

Spring cleaning

Prior to the New Year, homes are usually swept; bamboo leaves are traditionally used to sweep the floor as it is believed that this would drive evil spirits out. It is customary not to sweep, mop, scrub or wash on the first day of the Lunar New Year lest the good luck be swept away, with some even hiding their brooms.⁴ Pots of kumquat and flowers are also put up as part of the festive decorations to brighten up the home. Red scrolls and posters with auspicious sayings (*chunlian*, or spring couplets) are placed at the doorway. To usher in the new year, the Chinese wear new clothes and sometimes sport fresh hairdos.⁵ As cutting one's hair is seen as cutting off one's luck, people choose to get a haircut before Chinese New Year. Thus many local salons usually charge a premium for services during this period.⁶

Chinese New Year's eve

The family reunion dinner and ancestor worship are the two of the most important highlights of the celebrations on the eve of the new year (*chuxi*). The Lunar New Year is traditionally ushered in at 11 pm, but many families, especially those in Singapore, have adopted 12 am as the norm.⁷

Ancestor worship

Before the reunion dinner, it is customary for families to worship their ancestors and invite them to join in the family's celebrations with an offering of food, fruits, tea and flowers.⁸

Reunion dinner

The reunion dinner (*tuan'nianfan*) is an annual feast where family members reaffirm the love and respect that bind them together as a unit. It is also known as *tuanyuan* (or *weilu*) meaning "gathering around the family hearth". This event is of sociological significance as it is a means to ensure the solidarity of the family and its cohesiveness.⁹

Family members are expected return to the family home for reunion dinner. The more traditional Chinese families also "invite" their deceased ancestors to join them by placing offerings on the family altar.¹⁰ As convention dictates, all sons return to their parental homes for the occasion. Married daughters, on the other hand, join their husbands' families for reunion dinner on *chuxi*.¹¹

At this gathering, food is served in abundance regardless of whether the family is rich or poor as the Chinese believe that having plenty of food during *tuanyuan* would bring the family great material wealth in the new year. *Tuanyuan* delicacies include dried sea moss (*facai*), red dates, dried flaked bean (*fuzhu*), dried black jelly fungus (*mu'er*), ginkgo nuts (*baiguo*), transparent rice vermicelli (*dongfen*), dried mushrooms picked in winter (*xianggu* or *donggu*) and dried pickled vegetables (*jinzhen*).¹²

Some families also cook abalone soup, chicken, mushrooms, duck, fish, mixed vegetables (*chapchye*), roast pork and steamboat.¹³ Other traditional food items stocked up for the Lunar New Year (but not necessarily eaten during the reunion dinner itself) include red preserved waxed pork sausages (*lachang*), waxed duck (*laya*), waxed lean pork in thick oil (*larou*), melon seeds (*guazi*), glutinous rice cake (*niangao*), [mandarin oranges](#) (*gan*) and kumquats (*ganju*).¹⁴

Financial matters

Chinese New Year's eve is one of three days in the Chinese lunar calendar for settling debts, particularly for businessmen. This day is set aside for this purpose as it is considered shameful for one to start a new year with unpaid debts. The other two days for settling debts are the fifth day of the fifth lunar month ([Dragon Boat Festival](#)) and the 15th day of the eighth lunar month ([Mid-Autumn Festival](#)). After closing accounts for the year, traditional Chinese bosses may hand out bonuses to their workers.¹⁵

Chinese New Year's Eve vigil

Children are encouraged to stay awake past midnight to send off the "old" year and welcome the "new". Many children also do this to convey their new year wishes to their parents early in the morning. Some Chinese believe that the longer the children stay awake, the longer their lives or the lives of their parents. In return, the young ones get a [hongbao](#) – traditional red packets containing money – before going to bed.¹⁶

Welcoming the God of Wealth

Some Chinese offer joss sticks to welcome the God of Wealth, while others usher in the new year by praying at temples. They consult the almanac for the most favourable hour and direction to receive this deity, usually between 11 pm and 6 am the next morning.¹⁷ The lights are switched on and the doors and windows unlocked so as to welcome good fortune and prosperity.¹⁸

First day (New Year's Day)

The first day of the New Year is known as *yuandan* (also *yuanri*, *yuanchen* and *duanri*).¹⁹ The children pay their respects to their parents and elders, and in return, receive their blessings. *Hongbao* are given by parents to their children, as well as elders to those who are unmarried and younger than them. Other relatives and visitors also give *hongbao* to any child present.²⁰

The first of 15 days of the Lunar New Year are set aside for visiting, with close and senior family members visited on the first day.

Visits to homes during Chinese New Year are usually accompanied by the exchange of Mandarin oranges. The Chinese words for orange sound like "luck" and "wealth", and it is considered rude to visit anyone's home during Chinese New Year empty handed. When visiting someone during Chinese New Year, a pair (or pairs) of oranges should be presented to the head of the household. They will then return this gesture during the festive period.²¹

Second day

Known as *thoe ya*, the God of Wealth is welcomed through the display of auspicious pictures to "attract wealth and draw in treasures" during this period.²² *Thoe ya* and the 16th day (known as *weiya*) are the best "feast" days for employees. For employees, the *weiya* feast is not only a sumptuous meal, but also a bonus for their hard work during the year. Besides being a reward for a year's work, the bonuses are to make workers happy, as grim faces are a taboo during the festival. The second day is also traditionally a time for married women to visit their maiden homes and renew ties with their families.²³

Third day

Known as the “Loyal Dog Day”, the third day is a day of rest. No visits are made nor are visitors received, as it is believed that evil spirits roam the earth this day and being outdoors would invite bad luck. Thus, conservative Chinese businesses do not open until after the fifth day of the Lunar New Year.²⁴

Seventh day

The seventh day is known as *renri* or *yan-ya*²⁵ (meaning “birthday of man”, “day of man”, “day of humanity” or “everyman’s birthday”). Customs in celebrating the seventh day vary from place to place. The people from Fujian, China prepare a special soup with seven health-promoting ingredients to counteract ill health, while those in Zhejiang, China eat “peace dumplings” to bring peace to the country. In Singapore and Malaysia, *yusheng* (a dish with raw fish and a salad that includes shredded carrots, radish, ginger, spring onions, red chilli, lemon leaves, pickled leeks, crispy fried biscuits, pounded peanuts, lime, cinnamon powder, salt, pepper and vinegar) is served.²⁶

Ninth day

The birthday of the Jade Emperor falls on the ninth day of the first lunar month. The Jade Emperor is believed to be the God of Heaven and is said to have been born several millennia before the current era. The people of Quanzhou, China observe the ninth day as the birthday of Heaven, while the people of Amoy observe the same day as the birthday of the Jade Emperor.²⁷

Fifteenth day

The 15th day marks the first full moon of the new year. It is known as *yuanxiaojie*, meaning “first night of the full moon” ([Hokkiens](#) call it *chap goh mei*, meaning 15th night).²⁸ Another reunion dinner is held with lanterns and oranges being a large part of the celebrations. It is also referred to as *dengjie* or “lantern festival” due to a tradition that originated during the Tang Dynasty involving the lighting of lanterns on this day. In Singapore, *chap goh mei* is also a day where single ladies wishing for husbands throw oranges, red dates and *longans* into the [Singapore River](#).²⁹

Chinese New Year events and trends in Singapore

Lion dance

Another Chinese New Year tradition is the [lion dance](#), which commemorates a legend where villagers in China donned a costume made of cloth and straw to scare away a monster called *nian*. The lion, typically portrayed by members of local pugilistic associations, performs ritualised dances to pluck a green vegetable (*caiqing*) to re-enact how *nian* had eaten all the crops. In Singapore, many lion dance troupes use the Singapore drum to accompany their performances — the Singapore drum has a softer resonance than traditional ones.³⁰ In pre-war Singapore, it was common for these lions to perform a feat that required them to scale “human towers” to pluck the greens from a 100-foot-high window of a six- or seven-storey building.³¹

Lunar New Year mass in Baba Malay

Since 1984, the Holy Family Church (Roman Catholic) in Katong has been celebrating a unique [Peranakan](#) midnight mass on Chinese New Year’s eve conducted entirely in Baba Malay. The congregation dress in [sarong kebaya](#) for the women and *baju lok chuan* for the men. After the mass, oranges blessed by the priest are distributed.³² In 1990, several leaders of churches of other denominations in Singapore clarified that Christians could take part in most Chinese festivals, including Chinese New Year.³³

Singapore River Hong Bao

The River Hong Bao has been on Singapore’s festive calendar every year since 1987. This iconic event has become an integral tradition of Singapore’s Lunar New Year celebrations for locals and tourists alike. This lively festival offers a special Chinese cultural experience – from giant lanterns to mouth-watering food. There are also fringe activities such as amusement rides and street performances.³⁴

Cash deposits

In recent years, some Singaporeans have adopted the practice of depositing cash into their own bank accounts on the auspicious day of *li chun* (which marks the start of spring in the Chinese calendar). They believe that this will boost one’s wealth and ensure good luck. Some wear auspicious colours and prepare a particular sum of money to deposit for extra luck.³⁵

Author

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Home Chinese Festivals Chinese New Year Taboos. Chinese New Year Taboos - Things You Should Not Do During Chinese New Year. Chinese people believe that, as the Spring Festival is the start of a new year, what you do then will affect your luck in the coming year. There are many things you should not do. Traditionally many taboos are associated with the New Year Festival, but in recent years some of them have been discarded, especially among the modern urban populations in larger cities and the younger generation. Things to Avoid on New Year's Day. Here are top 6 things that people should a Here are 8 Chinese New Year taboos that you may not have known about. 1. Do Not Eat Congee and Meat for Breakfast. Congee (or porridge) should not be eaten as breakfast during Chinese New Year as it is considered as a meal for the poor. Doing so is believed to be a bad omen as you are "starting the year poor". As the first 2 days of the Chinese New Year are celebrated as the birthday of the Water God (Shuishen), people are advised to not wash their clothes to avoid offending the God. As for the hair, in the Chinese language the word 'hair' (Fa) has the same pronunciation as the word 'wealth' (Fa Cai). Hence, hair washing is seen as "washing one's fortune away" and should not be done at the beginning of the year. 4. Avoid Taking Medicine.

Chinese taboos are things you should never do. Going against of these taboos in China can bring you bad luck. Check out the top 8 Chinese cultural taboos! To perform best practices and to bring good luck in the coming New Year, one should not cut hair until Feb 2nd in Chinese lunar calendar. Cut Hair at a Proper Time. 6. Don't cry on New Year's Day. Chinese New Year is the most important festival in China. There are many traditions on this day such as exchanging Chinese New Year greetings, setting firecrackers, etc. Because it is the new beginning, Chinese people will make this festival "perfect" and avoid any unhappy things including CRYING. If you do cry, it is said you will cry all year. For many people, Chinese New Year is a religious festival as well as a lot of fun. There are many taboos during the period of Lunar New Year in according to Chinese traditions and culture. Chinese people traditionally consider a special moment or action as a bad sign or fortune. We either call it superstition or taboos. Some elder people still take them seriously. There is an old saying "To be safe than to be sorry", it's all up to you to believe it or not. Here is a roundup of the taboos during the Chinese New Year, which will all on Feb 8th this year. Taboos before Chinese New Year. On 24th, Learn about the taboos during the Chinese New Year period to avoid unpleasant experience. Many people today may not believe the taboos attached to the festival, but these customs are still kept, with the hope for a happy and lucky new year. Before New Year: 1. All debts have to be paid back before New Year. 2. Everyone in the family helps to clean the house from top to bottom before the New Year fun begins to sweep away the bad luck. 3. All the lucky decorations should be hung over doors and around rooms on New Year's Eve, including Spring Festival couplets, paper-cuts and pictures of the Door Gods. 4. The color black and white are carefully kept away, as these colors signify death

Taboos during Chinese new year: A list of things you should never do during Spring Festival, the biggest holiday event for Chinese.Â During Chinese New Year, funeral colors are not welcomed and thought to be inauspicious and may bring death for the family. Avoiding bringing illness. No Hospital Visits: Visiting hospitals during Chinese New Year period is omen to bring illness for the coming year. You should avoid hospital visits except it is necessary. No Medicine Taking: Taking medicines on the first of Chinese lunar New Year is a taboo. It is an inauspicious omen saying one may be ill for the whole year. Avoiding bringing Bad Luck. NO Killings: Killings during Chinese New Year Festival should be avoided as blood is an ill

For many people, Chinese New Year is a religious festival as well as a lot of fun. There are many taboos during the period of Lunar New Year in according to Chinese traditions and culture. Chinese people traditionally consider a special moment or action as a bad sign or fortune. We either call it superstition or taboos. Some elder people still take them seriously. There is an old saying "To be safe than to be sorry", it's all up to you to believe it or not. Here is a roundup of the taboos during the Chinese New Year, which will all on Feb 8th this year. Taboos before Chinese New Year. On 24th, Can wash clothes on Chinese New Year? Learn some taboos and superstitions and have fun during Chinese New Year period. Many people today may not believe the taboos and superstitions attached to the festival, but these customs are still kept, with the hope for a happy and lucky new year. Below are some do's and don'ts before and during Chinese New Year period. Before New Year: 1. All debts have to be paid back before New Year. 2. Everyone in the family helps to clean the house from top to bottom before the New Year fun begins to sweep away the bad luck. 3. All the lucky decorations should be hung over doors and around rooms on New Year's Eve, including Spring Festival couplets, paper-cuts and pictures