

Beginning 2017 again: The Chinese Year of the Rooster

The celestial bodies gracing the planet's sky have had their fair share of astronomical fascination over thousands of years. The Lunar Year, based on the waxing and waning of the moon throughout the seasons is celebrated in very many ways across cultures of the world, the biggest among which is probably by the Chinese.

The culture marks the Chinese Lunar Year with much fanfare. Celebrated by nearly 1.38 billion people, it is more commonly known as the Chinese Spring Festival (the celebrations fall alongside the onset of spring, according to the Chinese calendar), and is filled with traditional and ever transforming celebratory features.

The Chinese New Year has quite a number of fascinating stories and fables, as expected from a culture rich with centuries old tales and customs. Each Chinese Lunar Year cycle has twelve years. Every year is marked by a specific animal in a specified order: Rat, Ox, Tiger, Rabbit, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Goat, Monkey, Rooster, Dog, and Pig. Unlike the Gregorian calendar (the one we commonly use), which categorises the months into the twelve zodiac signs, the Chinese Lunar Calendar celebrates every year with a specific zodiac animal.

Instead of being born in the month assigned to Leo or Scorpio, people born in each year are assigned the same zodiac animal!

The year 2017 happens to be the Year of the Rooster, the zodiac animal (or rather bird, in this instance) associated with punctuality, honesty and a hard working character with a natural flair for taking centre stage.

The last Year of the Rooster was in 2005 and the next one will be in 2029 and 12 years onwards for the next, thus the cycle goes.

Websites and App Stores are brimming with Chinese Zodiac calculators to find your animal year, and a perfect match, so no need to panic if you cannot find yours. But beware, the bad luck of Ben Ming Nian may be upon you on your zodiac year; the Chinese believe that one's own zodiac year is supposed to bring about bad luck. No need to worry though - the week long celebrations are sure to wash out



any of the bad aura!

Within mainland China, people are gearing up for the biggest traditional festival of the year. There will be reds galore with traditional scripting in gold and black; paper lanterns and intricate decorations will adorn doorways, streets and walkways. Instead of exchanging gifts, good luck charms and red envelopes of money are given and received to show goodwill for the coming year.

And let's not forget about the food. Following tradition of the olden times, rice flour dumplings filled with vegetables, or meat, long uncut noodles signifying longevity, and New Year Cakes are served. Fish dishes are must haves as fish is considered one of the luckiest possible food items on the menu. There is always room for modern delights as well,

and international food chains throughout China as well as other places of the world offer their own special menus during the season.

One of the rising tourist trends in China is now based on celebrating this event. Although during the New Year festivities most commercial activities are halted, to promote tourism and cultural awareness, tourists are welcome to take part in the festivities throughout the Spring Festival Week.

So if you are looking for another shot at celebrating New Year all over again, why not give the Chinese New Year a try?

Outside of China, the largest celebration is held in London. Of course we cannot leave out the China Towns dotting most major cities in the world. From San Francisco to New York to Amsterdam to Sydney, preparations are taking place to celebrate the upcoming festivals.

Typical activities include parades with the traditional dragon and lion dances, acrobatics, and ornate paper lanterns being carried by parade attendees. Usually the evening's set of activities include a more glamorous turn of affairs with extravagant fireworks shows.

Over the last few years, Bangladesh too has had a fair share of this celebration. Universities like BRAC and North South have celebrated Chinese New Year with their own flair. The Chinese Embassy in Dhaka has arranged for Chinese Carnivals as well as Chinese theatre troops for stimulating displays of the nation's finest performance arts in celebration of the Chinese Spring Festival. This year too will be no exception to the festivities.

Whether you consider yourself a global-culture aware individual out to explore as many festivities as possible or just looking for another event to celebrate this January, do mark the Chinese New Year in your calendar. Be like the symbolic bird this year, add a bit of confidence in your steps and do not forget to be in the spotlight once in a while. Here's to having one more great year in the calendar of life!

By Iris Farina
Photo: Collected

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hair on your side!



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