Traditionally Fun Essay, Research Paper

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Traditionally Fun

Parents wake up very early in the morning to cook a vegetarian breakfast in order to thank the Goddess or their ancestors for the past year and to express their desire to have a better year in the future. After the food is ready, they wake their children up, wash up, and put on new clothes especially clothes with red color. Then everyone eats a piece of candy to start filling the next year with sugar, love, sweetness, and happiness. After the kids are ready, they greet their parents and everyone in the house with good morning, Happy New Years and Gung Hay Fat Choy.

Chinatown is bedecked with lights and almost overnight, roadside stalls sprout pussy willows, mandarin trees and plum blossoms while food stores work feverishly to produce loads of festive goodies. New Year as a whole the is perhaps the grandest, noisiest festival in the Chinese calendar. New Year Eve and New Year Day are celebrated as a family, a time of reunion and thanksgiving. The celebration is traditionally highlighted with a religious ceremony given in honor of Heaven and Earth, the gods of the household and the ancestors, usually our great grand parents . It?s utmost significance to go through the customary Chinese New Years traditions: house cleaning, decorations, lots of food, and more for their celebration.

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Chinese New Year is a time of special celebration and joy; therefore many old customs and performances are incorporated into the festival celebrations and competitions held on Chinese New Years. The most common of these are perhaps the dragon dance and lion dance.

The dragon dance was already a popular activity by the Sung Dynasty(960-1279A.D.), and has continued to be so up to the present. The dragon mask and boy used in the dance may be gold, green, variegated, or firey red. The dance may be performed in the daytime or at night. If performed at night, it is usually preceded by someone carrying a blazing torch to illuminate the procession, which moves with the momentum of a tidal

wave, and is a lifelike portrayal of a celestial dragon.

Like the dragon dance, the lion dance also has a long history among the Chinese. The difference is that fewer participants are required, and because the lion head and body are easier to make, and since only a small dance area is required, performance of the lion dance can be seen just about anywhere during the Chinese New Year Celebration. The lion is usually controlled by two people: one to manipulate the head, and one for the tail portion. Sometimes a third person, carrying a silk flower ball, or wearing a mask of the laughing Buddha and holding a banana leaf fan, leads and teases the lion into action, adding to the festive atmosphere.

Food is, without question, a highly significant aspect of Chinese New Years and Chinese culture and ; not only does it serve the purpose of filling one?s stomach, it also strengthens family togetherness and cohesion through the sharing of meals. The most significant is the reunion dinner. The reunion dinner is usually held on Lunar New

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Year?s eve, which is when members of the family gather together for the most important meal of the year. In many families, departed members are not forgotten; a setting is placed for them at the ancestral table and food is offered But prior to the reunion dinner, a spring cleaning is performed inside and outside of the home. This ritual is not only to get the home ready for guest, but also to get rid of evil spirits. Then the house is decorated with kumquat plants, pussy willows, and on doors and walls are poetic couplets written on red paper. These messages sound better than the typical fortune cookie messages, but are symbols of good luck and fortune.

It is very critical family members are home for dinner, even those who are away try to be home in time for dinner. Families make every effort to ensure that there is plenty of food on the table. Rice is usually cooked in excess and everyone is encourage to go for a second helping. This is to signify that the family will always have more than enough to eat and need not go hungry during the year. But some Chinese consume only eat vegetarian food on the first day of the Lunar New Year. They abstain from meat , believing that it will ensure longevity. For this reason, Lunar New Years dishes are specially selected for their auspicious meanings. Their Cantonese names are puns for all sorts of wishes, mainly pertaining to good fortune. For example, a black moss seaweed pronounced “fat choy”, in Cantonese it means “homonym for exceeding in wealth” or lotus seed-signify having many male offspring. Other food includes a whole fish, to represent togetherness and abundance, and a chicken for prosperity. The chicken must be presented with a head, tail and feet to symbolize completeness. Noodles should be uncut, as they represent long life. Then last but not least, we have desserts and one of

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which is called nian gao, a sweet glutinous rice made with brown sugar, and is sweet and sticky for a good reason. The Chinese offer it to the Kitchen God, a mystical god that watches over the household; in the hope that it sticks in the mouth, making it difficult for him to report against the family when he returns to Heaven a week before the Lunar New Year. The cake also sweetens the mouth, metaphorically.

Every traditional Chinese household should also have live blooming plants to symbolize rebirth and new growth. Flowers are believe to be symbolic of wealth and high positions in one?s career. Lucky is the home with a plant that blooms on New Year?s Day, for that foretells a year of prosperity. The Chinese firmly believe that without flowers, there would be no formation of any fruits. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to have flowers and floral decoration.

Many Chinese strongly believe in starting the Lunar New Year on the right note. Apart from all the food, flowers and the must-dos, they impose numerous must-nots during the 15 days of the Lunar New Year to further ensure good fortune. These include no fighting, no exchange of angry words or foul language. This is to prevent unpleasant occasions from recurring during the year, and from antagonizing the God of Wealth, who is believed to hate loud noises. Some more traditional families abstains from meat, because it is believed that the birthday of chicken, dogs, pigs, sheep, and cows fall on the first six days of the Lunar New Year. It would be quite unethical (not to say unlucky) to eat their meat during these six days, but most modern families skip out on meat only on new years eve. Child are most watched by their parents to make sure they don?t say or perform any ominous words or actions. Chinese are very superstitious people especially

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during new years celebration time. They avoided saying or doing anything that has a bad connotation. If should an accident occurs, they mutter an appropriate saying for dispelling misfortune. For example, it is considered bad luck to break anything, especially a rice bowl, as it signifies a loss of income. To neutralize it, older folks quickly mutter ” beauty amidst the shards” to wish that good things will come from the broken pieces. If a child unwittingly utters ominous words like sickness or death, an adult quickly counters it with “May no harm be caused by this child?s words.”

The integral part of Lunar New Years I enjoy the most is visiting of relatives and friends, bearing Mandarin oranges and festive greetings. As a child in our new years clothes, we get a whole bunch of red envelope money from every home we visited. While my parents exchanged fruits with friends or relative and wish each other ” gung hay fat choy” meaning ” congratulations for striking it rich”, the children play outside.

Chinese New Year is a special time to celebrate old traditions and be with family and friends. Families gather together to celebrate the new years which is coming and the end of the old year. Families cook different kinds of food to share with each other. They talk and laugh together in a big family gathering. Unlike the Westernized New Year, Chinese New Year is a tradition and a celebration that has been passed on from generation to generation for thousands of years. The elders treat the New Years as a special ritual with superstitious believes. While the young ones, is all about want fun and lots of food to eat in a festive mood. Overall, the whole celebration it symbolizes family unity and honors the past , present , and the future generations.