



COLORADO SPRINGS
CHINESE CULTURAL INSTITUTE
科泉市中華文化協會

茶葉香談

春 Spring

TEA LEAVES

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Colorado Springs Chinese Cultural Institute

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Chinese Proverb

"Love is not about possession, it's all about appreciation."

爱不是占有, 是欣赏

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The Pressures of Chinese New Year

By Haifan Tang

Translated by Boni Jiang

The focus of Chinese New Year (also called the Spring Festival) is the night before, when people gather together for the New Year Eve Dinner. After that the Chinese New Year Festival begins and lasts a few weeks. This period of time usually gives me huge pressure. Nothing is more miserable and exhausting than going through this time. This holiday compresses and then releases people's emotions that have been oppressed and stored over ordinary days. In general we will receive invitations for dinner from many people and are required to attend various activities. All of these make me feel ill and it is hard to recover from it. However, the result is also huge. We have plenty of time for entertainment or communicating with relatives and improving relationships. This is the grandest festival among Chinese people. When families are together, it is important for a teenager like me to play an appropriate role during this occasion. Under constant attention from all around, it is often exhausting for a teenager.

Typically this is how we spend Chinese New Year Eve. Children will try to receive the "red envelopes", which contain gift money, from their relatives as early as possible, so they can take part of the cash out to buy fireworks and play with their friends. Parents are busy taking care of their elders and visiting relatives from far away. They usually chat, play mahjong, watch TV, or walk around to kill some time until early evening, when mothers begin to prepare dinner. It is usually a big feast. After dinner, people stay to watch some more TV and play with some fireworks. Then people leave for their own homes gradually until the mid-night, when some will go out and play the last round of firecrackers. When they finish that, the Chinese New Year Eve is over.

Every night during this festival, our neighborhood in the city is filled with lights and colors. Every family will hang something on their front doors, such as lanterns, colorful lights, duilian (a pair of scrolls containing a poetic couplet). Trees are decorated, and it is sparkling everywhere. People wander around on the evening streets, especially around shopping areas. Everything becomes extremely crowded, displaying amazing passion and energy, outshining every tree or LED screen on the streets. Accidents happen in these situations, arguments between customers and vendors, a light bulb explosion in the tree, or a naughty kids lighting a powerful firecracker. Whenever such things happen, people swarm together and watch what is going on. When it is over, people giggle and scatter back to the bright streets as if nothing has happened.

During the day time people usually do the same thing: watching TV in sofa, playing mahjong, or sitting in front of a computer for days. They also chat about salaries, families, health, TV shows, and news. It seems they can never finish it. Houses are filled with lasting cigarette smoke and smells of alcohol, meat, and sauces. Floors are covered by sunflower seed shells, which are rarely cleaned these days. Although the history of New Year Festival is much longer than other holidays, unfortunately, today's celebration has been simplified into activities such as watching TV, playing mahjong, chatting, and drinking. People truly believe this is the way according to the worldly wisdom. Old traditions, such as praying in a temple and buying new clothing for a new year, are all done online now. Internet does help the Chinese a lot, but they replace the rituals of the Spring Festival. The Chinese New Year is gradually becoming a holiday of insignificance: it does not matter if you celebrate it or not when it comes, and this is the pressure of the Chinese New Year.

(The author is a student in Xingfu Xuetang, a small private school based in Guiyang, China. He is 15.)

The Lantern Festival

By Jiaying Peng

The most famous Chinese holiday is no doubt the Chinese New Year. This celebration lasts for almost two weeks and ends in another holiday, the Lantern Festival, or Yuan Xiao Jie, in Chinese. The literal meaning of Yuan Xiao Jie is Prime Night Festival, which is fitting since this day is the second most festive, right after the first day of the Chinese New Year.

Traditionally, the Lantern Festival is celebrated with a feast and the lighting of paper lanterns. Sometimes, on these red paper lanterns, there will be riddles written for children to solve. Back in the dynastic time periods, only the lanterns of the emperor and the nobles were ornately decorated with designs. Nowadays, decorated lanterns are easily accessible to everyone.

One of the most important foods eaten on the night of the Lantern Festival is the dessert of small dumpling sized sweet rice balls filled with sesame paste. These treats are called tang yuan, literally meaning "sweet circles". The symbolic significance of the tang yuan lies in its shape. Circular shapes in Chinese culture represents the completeness of family. Families gather on the night of the Lantern Festival to eat these treats together at the end of a great feast to celebrate one more year of a happy family life.



春节的压力

作者: 唐海帆

春节的中心在前一晚,大家会聚在一起吃一段饭,这称之为“年夜饭”,此后长达几周的时间一直处于“春节”期间,这一段时间通常会带给我很大的压力。没有什么事情能比渡过那段时间更苦更累,它把大家平日里积蓄压抑着的情绪压缩起来然后再释放出去。通常,我们会收到来自各方的宴请,被要求参加各种活动,这些常让人感到既难受又缓不过神来,不过,收获通常也很大,我们会有一大笔时间娱乐或跟身边各种关系的人呆在一起交流、改善双方印象或者讨论一些别的东西。这是中国人最盛大的日子,举家团聚,而作为一青少年,意味着你在这种节日里所充当的角色会显得比较重要,而长期处于这种来自各方的关注下,常让人感到身心疲惫。

比较经典的春节前一晚是这样度过的:小孩子会因为想尽早从自己的各路亲戚那里拿到“红包”里包着的钱而找机会拜年,然后拿着这笔钱的一部分跑出家门买鞭炮去找自己的朋友玩耍一阵子。父母会招待好他们的上一辈和从远方赶来过节的亲戚,然后通常大家会以聊天、打麻将、看电视、出去逛的方式消磨时间直到傍晚,这时,母亲就要开始着手准备晚餐,通常,这是一顿相当丰富的晚餐。吃完饭后,大家会一起留下来看电视、放鞭炮,接着,有的人陆陆续续离开,时间到达深夜,还有一些人会出去放最后一次鞭炮,然后回来,春节前一晚就这样结束。

春节期间每一个晚上,整个我们所处的城区流光溢彩,每家每户都会在门前挂上一些东西,灯笼、彩灯、对联,很多树都被装饰,到处闪闪发光。城里夜间每天都有很多的人在街上漫无目的地游荡,特别是商场周围,所有的东西都会变得异常密集,显现出令人惊叹的激情与活力,街道旁的每一棵树或者每一块散发着刺眼光彩的LED灯都显得那么微不足道,这样的场景下,也常会发生意外,或是商家与顾客争吵,或是树上的灯泡爆炸,或是哪个调皮的小孩放了一颗威力不小的鞭炮,每当这样的事情发生,人群反而更加密集地聚集起来观看这种种“闹剧”,罢了,大家哈哈一笑,又各自散开,继续走在灯火通明的大道上,仿佛没有任何事发生过。

春节期间的很多个白天,人们通常都会做同一件事:坐在沙发上看电视、打麻将亦或是坐在电脑前娱乐,整整好几天,他们盯着电视、电脑,互相聊天,这些聊天的内容常是关于工资、家庭情况、身体情况、电视节目、新闻等为中心,永远聊不完,满屋的烟味或是酒味或是肉味、酱汁味常迟迟没有散去,满地的瓜子也少有人打扫。令人惋惜的是,这个节日的历史远远超过很多个其他的节日,但这个节日的庆祝方式却被简化成看电视、打麻将、聊聊天、喝酒酒如此简单,而人们却认为这才是真真正正的符合人情的节日庆祝方式、曾经的上庙祈祷、买新衣等传统现在统统变成在网络上完成,网络的却帮了我们很大的忙,但中国人却常常丢弃了春节的仪式感,春节正逐渐变为得过且过、可过不过的节日,这是春节的压力。

[作者是中国贵阳市幸福学堂的一名学生,今年15岁。]

The Origin of Fireworks

by Eric Woods

It seems like no festival is complete without fireworks. One constant across every culture is the mesmerizing beauty of bright flashes and flares in the night sky. From the world-unifying Olympics, to the American Independence Day, to the Chinese New Year Festival, fireworks have become symbols of human achievement and success.

Humanity's struggle and triumph over the natural world is in fact central to origin of fireworks and the Chinese New Year Festival. The Legend goes that in ancient times a horrible monster named Nian dwelled in a dark lake nearby a village. He had sharp teeth and horns, and would emerge on the first day of every year to damage the village and steal away any children stuck outside. For years the villagers lived in fear of Nian and would flee to nearby mountain caves to hide from the monster every New Year Day. However, one year a god disguised as a wandering beggar arrived in the village on New Year Eve and asked for shelter for the night. In exchange he promised to teach the villagers how to protect themselves from Nian. The following day, the beggar cut down bamboo stalks and threw them in a roaring fire. To the villagers' surprise the stalks exploded with loud bangs, scaring Nian and forcing him to retreat from the village. These first firecrackers, along with decorating the village with red, lighting candles, and playing drums, forever protected the village from the terrible Nian. Thus the groundwork for the Chinese New Year was laid. This is why the Chinese word for New Year, Guo Nian, can be interpreted as "overcoming Nian."

Fireworks have come a long way from their humble beginnings as roasted bamboo stalks. These first firecrackers were purely noisemakers, as the loud pops were made by hollow air pockets in the bamboo expanding and eventually bursting the stalk apart. Around 700 A.D., Chinese alchemists discovered that the odd mixture of saltpeter, charcoal, and sulfur had astonishing properties when burned. Gunpowder had just been discovered. Soon this powder was being stuffed in bamboo stalks giving the firecrackers a much bigger bang. Along with the loud bang, these new firecrackers displayed brilliant orange flashes and gold sparks. The world had entered the era of fireworks.

Over the next one and a half millennia, firework masters invented new ways of both firework display and propulsion. By 1,000 A.D. fireworks were being strapped to rockets for revolutionary bright displays in the skies. Later that century, the Silk Road had brought gunpowder to Europe. By the time of the European Renaissance, Italian firework artists were adding trace amounts of metals to create multi-color fireworks. From then on, people across the world have been performing more and more incredible firework displays. The same ingenuity that helped Chinese villagers overcome Nian pushed centuries of inventors to improve fireworks to the beautiful masterpieces that they are today.



Mission Statement

The CSCCI is committed to fostering understanding of Chinese culture by promoting opportunities for events, networking, travel, education and services available to the people of Colorado Springs.

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Dinner Menu

奶油果生鱼色拉	Sashimi Avocado Salad
寿司拼盘	U-Like Sushi chef's Special
北京烤鸭	Roasted PeKing Duck
泰式牛肉	Thai style Beef
椰子虾	Coconut Shrimp
清蒸鲈鱼	Steamed Sea Bass
海南鸡	Hainanese Chicken
元宵芝麻汤圆	Sesame Sweet Rice Ball
熱茶	Hot Tea

Upcoming Asian Cultural Events

CSCCI Chinese New Year Festival
City Auditorium, Colorado Springs
January 30, 2016

CSCCI Lantern Festival Dinner Event*
3680 Citadel Dr. N., Colorado Springs
February 19, 2016

*Register online at www.cscCI.org

CSCCI Lantern Festival Dinner

By Jiaying Peng

Every year, around February, the Chinese celebrate the Lantern Festival. It is a holiday that celebrates the first full moon of the Chinese lunar calendar. The holiday marks the end of the weeks long celebration of the Chinese New Year.

Like most other traditional Chinese holidays, the Lantern Festival is celebrated with a feast, the most important course being the dessert, consisting of small mochi balls filled with sesame paste, swimming in a hot, sugary syrup. These sweet tidbits are called *tangyuan*, the literal translation meaning "sweet circles."

Every year, the Colorado Springs Chinese Cultural Institution celebrates this holiday with a dinner, and this year, it is being hosted by a new restaurant called, U-Like. The dinner will feature traditional Asian dishes such as Peking duck and Thai style beef. The dish that I am looking most forward to, however, are the sesame sweet rice balls.

The cost of this huge eight course meal is only \$28, and \$25 for active CSCCI members. Register now online at www.cscCI.org.

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