

Ring in the Year of the Dragon



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Gung Hay Fat Choy!

January 23rd, 2012 rings in the Year of the Dragon in the Chinese New Year. This is the most important of Chinese holidays celebrated by more than a billion people worldwide. The festivities begin on the new moon and last 15 days culminating with the Lantern Festival on the full moon.

Before the arrival of the Chinese New Year, homes are thoroughly cleaned to sweep away ill fortune and welcome good luck. Families will gather on New Year's Eve to begin the celebration with sumptuous feasts and greet the year with fireworks at midnight. It is also customary to open all doors and windows at midnight to let out any bad spirits left over from the previous year.



In the days that follow, there are festive dance parades and children receive money in red envelopes. Red symbolizes fire, which, according to legend, can drive away bad luck. Food is symbolic also, and in the first five days long noodles are eaten to symbolize long life. On the 15th day, round dumplings shaped like full moons are shared as a sign of family unity and

perfection. Oranges and tangerines are also featured as symbols of abundance and happiness.

Legend has it that in ancient times, Buddha called all the animals to meet him on Chinese New Year. Twelve animals came and Buddha named a year after each one. He announced that people born in each animal year would have some of that animal's personality. The Chinese believe that the animal that rules the year you were born will influence your life. Dragon years are greeted with some trepidation and generally thought to be exciting but unpredictable. The dragon is a symbol of big things to come.

Those born under the sign of the dragon are thought to be colorful and confident. They are innovative, brave and passionate. Some famous people born under the Year of the Dragon are Joan of Arc, John Lennon, Sandra Bullock, Salvador Dali and Mr. Rogers.

Locally, for those of you wanting to celebrate Chinese New Year, head to Chinatown in Boston on Sunday, January 29th from 11am-5pm for the Chinese New Year Parade and enjoy the festivities and maybe some dim sum. Oh, and if you don't know what to wear, I'd suggest something red!