

Traditional Chinese Festival – the Spring Festival (Chunǐ jié)

Chinese 1 -7th

Handout

What is Chun1 jie 2?



The Spring Festival (Chun1 jie2) is the most important festival for the Chinese people and is when all family members get together, just like Christmas in the West. All people living away from home go back, becoming the busiest time for transportation systems of about half a month from the Spring Festival. Airports, railway stations and long-distance bus stations are crowded with home returnees.



When is Chun1 jie 2?

- *The Spring Festival falls on the 1st day of the 1st lunar month, often one month later than the Western . It originated in the Shang Dynasty (c. 1600 BC-c. 1100 BC) from the people's sacrifice to gods and ancestors at the end of an old year and the beginning of a new one.*
- *Strictly speaking, the Spring Festival starts every year in the early days of the 12th lunar month and will last till the mid 1st lunar month of the next year. Of them, the most important days are Spring Festival Eve (chu2 xi1) and the first three days. The Chinese government now stipulates people have seven days off for the Chinese Lunar New Year.*

How do Chinese people celebrate the Spring Festival?

Spring Festival is a time for celebrating with family and friends. No matter wherever, how busy they are, the Chinese will squeeze into the roads going home to spend the festival season with their family members. Traditionally, the Chinese celebrate the Spring Festival in the following ways:

- *Spring Cleaning: From December 23rd in the Chinese calendar, people begin to clean their houses to bid farewell to the old year and usher in a happy and fresh new year.*
- *Spring Decorating: People hang flower-decorated red lanterns in front of their houses. Office buildings and stores are also decorated with red lanterns. Red couplets-red posters with black Chinese calligraphy, colored New Year paintings are posted on the doors of people's houses. They symbolize happiness, prosperity and good luck in the New Year.*

- *The Chinese character "fu" (meaning blessing or happiness) is a must. The character put on paper can be pasted normally or upside down, in Chinese the "reversed fu" is homophonous with "fu comes", both being pronounced as "fudaole." What's more, two big red lanterns can be raised on both sides of the front door. Red paper-cuttings can be seen on window glass and brightly colored New Year paintings with auspicious meanings may be put on the wall.*



New Year's Feast: Spring Festival is a time for family reunion. The New Year's Feast is "a must" banquet with all the family members getting together. People from north and south have different sayings about the food they eat on this special day. Southern Chinese eat "niangao" (New Year cake made of glutinous rice flour) on this occasion, because as a homophone, niangao means "higher and higher every year". In northern China, a traditional dish for the feast is "Jiaozi" or dumplings shaped like a crescent moon.





- *Burning fireworks was once the most typical custom on the Spring Festival. People thought the spluttering sound could help drive away evil spirits. However, such an activity was completely or partially forbidden in big cities once the government took security, noise and pollution factors into consideration. As a replacement, some buy tapes with firecracker sounds to listen to, some break little balloons to get the sound too, while others buy firecracker handicrafts to hang in the living room.*

Lantern Festival: These lanterns differ from those of Mid Autumn Festival in general. They will be red in colour and tend to be oval in shape. These are the traditional Chinese paper lanterns. Those lanterns, used on the fifteenth day of the Chinese New Year for the Lantern Festival, are bright, colourful, and in many different sizes and shapes.



•*Luck Money: It is the money given to kids from their parents and grandparents as New Year gift. The money is believed to bring good luck, ward off monsters; hence the name "lucky money". Parents and grandparents first put money in small, especially made red envelope and give to their kids after the New Year's Feast. It is one of the kids' favorite things in Spring Festival.*

•*New Year Greetings: On the first day of the new year, everybody wears new clothes and greets relatives and friends with bows and Gongxi(congratulations), wishing each other good luck, happiness during the new year.*

Chun1 jie2 zhu4 yu3 - Spring Festival Greetings

- *Guo4 nian2 hao3 (have a good new year)*
- *Xin1 nian2 kuai4 le4 (happy new year)*
- *Gong1 xi3 fa1 cai2 (congratulations and be prosperous)*
- *Sui4 sui4 ping2 an1 (everlasting peace year after year)*
- *Nian2 nian2 you3 yu2 (a wish for harvest every year)*

Questions

- What similarities do spring festival and Christmas share? How about the difference?
- Do you have something similar to Chinese new year's eve dinner?
- Do you use fireworks to celebrate certain holidays?
- What's your favorite thing about Chinese new year?
- What are the special greetings used for Christmas?