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CHINESE NEW YEAR

ZODIAC PEOPLE

Each of the 12 Chinese zodiac signs has different characteristics.



Rat

Creative, resourceful and hardworking, the Rat can be counted on to get the job done.

He is also quick to seize opportunities and being decisive helps.

Quick-witted and intuitive, he adapts easily to change and can wrangle his way out of harm's way.



Rabbit

The Rabbit is clever, gentle, kind and patient. When the going gets tough, he will persevere.

The Rabbit is popular because he is considerate and ever willing to help people.

But being overcautious, he tends to miss out on opportunities.



Goat

The Goat is quiet, timid, gentle and obedient. It is easy to work with him as he will listen and follow instructions.

But he can be pessimistic. The Goat is vain and loves flattery. He also has difficulty expressing his feelings.



Ox

The Ox is opinionated and thinks highly of himself. He may not see eye to eye with people and lacks communication skills. If you can accept him as he is, he is your loyal friend.

The Ox is diligent, dependable and determined. He also has the drive and will strive to execute his plans.



Dragon

The Dragon is hot tempered but he is intelligent and hardworking.

A risk taker, the ambitious Dragon will go far once he sets his mind on his goals. Trust him to work miracles.



Monkey

The Monkey is smart and energetic. Resourceful, he can turn a bad situation around.

He is gentle, honest and sociable. Hot-headed at times, he has a jealous and suspicious streak.



Snake

The Snake is intuitive and intelligent. He loves to act on his own and will strive hard to succeed in all endeavours.

He is a great thinker. He does not make friends easily but he will treasure and protect his friends.



Dog

The Dog is faithful, trustworthy and hardworking.

His kindness knows no bounds. He would go the extra mile to help others. He is resilient and can weather the tough times.

He is sociable and liked by those around him.



Tiger

The Tiger is brave, confident and authoritative. A born leader, he likes to take charge and dislikes taking orders. He is respected for his courage and firm stand.

You need to be patient and understanding towards the domineering Tiger.

If you can tolerate him, you will find him to be fun and loving. He is adventurous and loves challenges.



Horse

The Horse is cheerful and talkative. Witty, confident and hardworking are also his virtues.

The Horse has passion and zeal and enjoys independence and freedom.

However, the Horse is a spendthrift and is not good in saving money.



Pig

The Pig is tolerant, gentle, honest, quiet and warm. Generous and forgiving, he makes friends easily.

The Pig is calm and has a great sense of responsibility. He is also altruistic. However, the naive Pig can sometimes be easily fooled.

Rooster

The Rooster is observant, confident and outspoken. Born with good looks, the Rooster loves attention and enjoys dressing up.

He dares to be different and can be extravagant. He is easily excitable but his interest wanes easily.

CUSTOMS AND TABOOS

DURING Chinese New Year, some Chinese families still follow traditional beliefs and observe taboos. These cultural practices are observed to avert misfortune and bad luck. In modern times, however, many beliefs have been discarded as the younger generations consider customs outdated or plain old superstitions.

For example, after the winter solstice (approximately Dec 21), the home is spruced up to prepare for the new year. Spring cleaning takes place on the 24th day of the 12th lunar month. It is believed the cleaning rids the home of the preceding year's bad luck, and prepares it for good luck. On this day too, all household gods are also given a send-off; they return on the fourth day of Chinese New Year.

1 Nearer to the festive season, doors and windows will be decorated with red paper cutouts and couplets with auspicious words printed on them, such as good fortune, happiness, wealth and longevity.



2 No fighting, quarrelling or crying is recommended.



3 All outstanding debts have to be settled before new year's eve (Dec 31).



4 No needlework as it depletes wealth.



5 One must try and avoid uttering inauspicious words such as "break", "die" and "poor".



6 Don't lend money or you'll suffer losses. No borrowing money, either, as it'll lead to more debts all year.



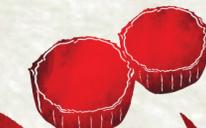
7 Don't wash your hair on the first day or you'll wash away good luck!



8 No laundry on the first two days as it is the birthday of the Water God.

9 New year cakes (nian gao in Mandarin), or sticky glutinous rice cakes, are placed at the altar to usher in a good year. These cakes represent the promise of a better year.

10 No sweeping of floors is done on the first day of the Chinese New Year, lest luck is swept away.



11 One must try not to break or chip anything to avoid having a bad start to the new year.



15 days of CNY SPRING IS HERE

The Chinese celebrate the Lunar New Year, or Spring Festival, with 15 days of feasting and visiting friends and relatives, and giving thanks to the gods.

Early in the morning, many Chinese families worship the gods to pray for a year of abundance. Every one dresses in new clothes and greets their elders. Red is auspicious and colour symbolises good fortune and prosperity. The elders give children and unmarried family members red packets or ang pow.

Day 1

The Chinese pray to their ancestors and also household gods. Married women visit their parents.

Day 3

Some Chinese regard this day as *chi kou ri* (day of red mouth). To avoid quarrels and fights, they think it is best not to visit others. However, the majority of Chinese still consider it a festive day to visit or welcome visitors.

Day 4

The Chinese welcome back the Kitchen God, the God of Fortune and other gods. A feast is prepared with an abundance of fruits, while incense and candles are burnt.

Day 5

It is the birthday of the God of Wealth. A feast is held for this deity to gain his blessings. It is deemed auspicious to start work again after the festive holidays.



Day 6

From the sixth to the 10th day, the Chinese can freely visit their relatives and friends. There are also people who visit temples on this day.



Day 7

The birthday of all human beings; *yan yat* in Cantonese. Traditionally, this is the day to gather for a feast. A must-have dish is raw fish salad, or *yeo sang* a symbol of abundance, prosperity and vigour.



Day 8

At midnight (the morning of the ninth day), the Hokkiens pray to the Jade Emperor or Heavenly God as it is his birthday to give thanks to him for protecting them. The sugarcane is a reminder of how the Hokkien people were saved from their enemies when they sought refuge in a sugarcane plantation for nine days and escaped a massacre.



Stories by MAJORIE CHIEW

Day 9

This day is also celebrated as the Hokkien New Year. From this day onwards, friends and relatives are invited to more feasting. Businessmen invite their friends and associates to thank them for their support.

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Day 15

This is the last day of Chinese New Year. On Chap Goh Meh (Hokkien for 15th night), Young unmarried women throw mandarin oranges (with their contact numbers written on them) into a river or pond in the hopes of finding a good husband.

