



新年快乐

# LUNAR NEW YEAR

BY SHAWN THACKER

Today, February 16th, marks the beginning of the Year of the Dog in the Chinese lunar calendar. With traditions ranging from fireworks to dumplings, Chinese New Year is regarded as the most important celebration of the year in Chinese culture.

## HISTORY

Lunar New Year was first celebrated around the 14th century BCE in mainland China. The story of how this holiday came to be starts out not with festivity, but fear. As the legend goes, at the end of each year, a mythical beast named Nian that resembled an ox with a lion's head came to a Chinese village and destroyed crops, property and people alike. Eventually, a wise

old man in the village told his fellow villagers to ward off Nian, coincidentally meaning "year" in Chinese, with loud noises, fire and the color red, all of which the monster was afraid of. Villagers started setting off firecrackers and hanging lanterns all night on New Year's Eve, and as the wise man predicted, Nian was too scared to come out to attack their village. Celebrations

each year began to include lanterns, lots of red decorations and fireworks set off at midnight. Although this 15 day-long holiday evolved as a period to honor deities and ancestors, today Chinese New Year marks a time for families to get a break and spend some time together over a good meal, celebrating the traditions of the past.

## TIMELINE

Families gather on this day to have a celebratory dinner, wearing and decorating their houses with the color red and enjoying midnight firework shows

**FEBRUARY 15**



**FEBRUARY 16**

Day children receive money in red envelopes called *hong bao* from their elders. Nowadays, there are even red envelope apps for parents to virtually transfer money to their children

Jie Cai Ceng - Gods of prosperity supposedly come down from heaven so businesses set off firecrackers for a year of fortune for business

**FEBRUARY 20**



**MARCH 2**

Yuan Xiao Jie/Lantern Festival - Last day of the New Year celebrations, lanterns are lit throughout streets if heart is pure you can see Chang E and her rabbit on the moon

## IOWA CITY EVENTS CHINESE SPRING FESTIVAL CELEBRATION

February 16, 6-7pm, Room 1117 University Capitol Center  
With free admission, all are welcome to come to this Chinese Spring Festival Celebration hosted by the University of Iowa Confucius Institute. Come to enjoy Chinese cultural performances and refreshments

## FOODS



**Eight Treasures Rice**  
Glutinous rice, raisins, red bean paste, jujube, almond, dry fruit, walnuts



**Tang Yuan**  
Black sesame rice ball soup, represents family ties and togetherness



**Dumplings**  
Spend New Year's Eve preparing dumplings and then eat at midnight; more dumplings signify more wealth



**Noodles**  
Long noodles stand for happiness and longevity



**Fish**  
Symbolizes an increase in prosperity