

## 6 Popular Chinese festivals

### Chinese New Year

First on our list of Chinese festivals is Chinese New Year (also known as the Spring Festival, Chūnjié (春节)), which incidentally is probably the most important of all the popular Chinese holidays. With around 3,500 years of history, the holiday originated with the Chinese lunar calendar, which is why it's often also referred to as Lunar New Year. According to legend, the origins of Chinese New Year started with the fight against a mythical lion-like monster called Nian who would terrorise villages every new year. Once it was discovered that the beast was afraid of the colour red, loud noises, and fire, villagers began the tradition of staying up all night, letting off fireworks and adorning their homes with red decorations (symbolising wealth and good fortune) to ward off Nian. To this day, the Chinese still wear red during Chinese New Year to scare away spirits of bad fortune.

A national holiday in China, the festival has come to be regarded as a 'reunion' holiday, with Chinese families traveling in droves from all corners of the world to be with their family in what's become known as the largest annual human migration in the world. Fittingly, the tradition of having a family feast on Chinese New Year eve is called the 'reunion dinner' (年夜饭), and is believed to be the most important meal of the year boasting an excess of food and drink.

### Mid-Autumn Festival

Mid-Autumn Festival also known as Lantern Festival, Moon Festival or Mooncake Festival, Zhōngqiū jié (中秋节) is a holiday that is all about the appreciation of the moon, and is one of the most popular Chinese festivals to date. There are many legends tied to the origins of the Mid-Autumn Festival, from the story of Chang'e (the goddess that floated up to the moon) to the jade rabbit in the moon. Fittingly, the festival is supposed to take place on the day that the moon is at its brightest and fullest. Like with most popular Chinese festivals, it is typical to spend the holiday dining with family, with one of the most common traditions being eating and gifting mooncakes. Aside from gazing at the moon, people are also expected to gift other items to their friends and families, such as fruit or even fresh hairy crab.

### Qingming Festival

Another popular Chinese holiday is Qingming (清明) (also known as Tomb-Sweeping Day), a festival that commemorates the life of the departed through an elaborate set of rituals. These rituals are all about continuing to pay respects to your ancestors by continuing the upkeep of their graves. Every year, family members will congregate together as they clean and sweep their ancestors' graves. Offerings of traditional dishes such as roast suckling pig, whole steamed chicken, and an impressive array of fruits are also made to their ancestors as a mark of respect. The tradition of burning joss sticks and joss paper (also known as ghost money) is a common Qing Ming practice. A means of honouring the dead, it is believed that the ritual transmits money to their deceased relatives, ensuring their comfort in the afterlife.

## **Dragon Boat Festival**

The origin of the Dragon Boat Festival (also known as Duan Wu Jie (端午节)) is nothing short of unique. In ancient China, locals paddled out on boats to scare the fish away and retrieve the body of Qu Yuan (a patriotic poet who drowned himself in the river when the Chu state fell in 278BC). The dragon boat races that still happen till this day are symbolic attempts to rescue and recover the body of Qu Yuan. As one of the oldest and most traditional festivals, there are a few traditions that take place on the day that locals like to practice, such as eating zongzi or hanging calamus and wormwood on doors to dispel evil and bring health.

## **Winter Solstice**

Held on the only day of the year when the night is the longest and the day is the shortest, and when the yin qualities of darkness and cold are at their height (symbolising that yang is just around the corner), the Winter Solstice Festival (also known as Dōngzhì Festival (冬至)) is a day meant for eating warm and hearty food. The most commonly enjoyed food during this occasion is tangyuan, a Chinese dessert which is supposed to symbolise family, unity, and prosperity.

Celebrated by the Chinese, Taiwanese, Japanese, Koreans, and Vietnamese, Winter Solstice is a long carried out tradition with years of history and customs that differ depending on where you hail from, with some rituals involving lamb and others dumplings, wontons, or porridge.

## **The Hungry Ghost Festival**

Celebrated over a month-long period, The Hungry Ghost Festival (also known as the Zhongyuan Festival (中元节) in Taoism and Yulanpen Festival (盂兰盆节) in Buddhism) falls on the fifteenth day of the seventh month of the lunar new year during Ghost Month, a time when it is believed that troubled spirits are able to roam the streets and haunt the living. As with all Chinese celebrations, the Hungry Ghost Festival is steeped in rich tradition, including: making money and food offerings to the ghosts, burning incense sticks, joss paper, and even little pieces of origami. These acts all share one purpose: to avoid the wrath of these wandering souls.

Customs and superstitions vary but include paying tribute to the deceased, leaving food and paper offerings, releasing floating water lanterns, the staging of traditional Chinese operas, and the handing out of rice. It's also recommended that you avoid going out too late, don't go swimming, and don't sing or whistle.

## **Lantern Festival**

The Lantern Festival is another significant celebration following the spring festival. Yuan Xiao Jie, known as Lantern Festival, has the meaning of a night with a full moon. Lantern Festival is celebrated on the fifteenth day of the first lunar month. It includes a lantern-viewing event.

The lantern festival is full of activities, among which eating tangyuan (glutinous rice balls) is of prime importance as it is seen as a wish for reunion and prosperity. If you're celebrating the festival, try your hand at making this traditional Chinese snack.

Besides, during the festival, most of the streets of China will be illuminated by many shapes of lanterns. Children will parade along the street with a lantern in their hands. In some regions, locals will put bright lanterns on the river or lake, offering a gorgeous view of flowing lights.

Furthermore, you may also enjoy a distinctive kind of traditional folk entertainment, the lantern riddle. Riddle makers will put up the riddle on the lantern. Everyone who gives the correct answer will get rewards. You can give it a try or make your own riddle. That's full of lots of fun.

## **Double Seventh Festival**

The Double Seventh Festival is also known as Chinese Valentine's Day or Qi Qiao Jie. There is a moving and romantic fairy tale behind the festival. According to legend, a couple called Niu Lang (the cowboy) and Zhi Nǚ (the weaver fairy), respectively, live separately. They can only meet on the seventh day of the seventh lunar month on the bridge made of magpies. Thus, the Double Seventh Festival raises young people's hopes for a happy marriage.

## **The Double Ninth Festival 2024**

Enjoying chrysanthemum is a kind of custom in the Double Ninth Festival. The Double Ninth Festival, also known as Chongyang Festival, is held on the ninth day of the ninth lunar month. It is also known as the Senior Citizens' Festival.

In ancient times, people believed that the double ninth day was worth a celebration. Since folk people had the tradition of climbing a mountain on that day, the Chongyang Festival is also called the Height Ascending Festival. The Chongyang Festival also has other names, such as the Chrysanthemum Festival. As "double ninth" is pronounced the same as the word meaning "forever," ancestors are also worshipped on that day.

## **Laba Festival**

The Laba Festival, Also Known As Laba Rice Porridge Festival, Is A Traditional Chinese Celebration That Falls On The Eighth Day Of The Twelfth Month Of The Lunar Calendar, Which Usually Occurs In Early January. The Festival Marks The Official Beginning Of The Chinese New Year Preparations.

The Festival Has Its Roots In Ancient Agricultural Practices, Where People Offered Sacrifices To The Ancestors And The Kitchen God To Pray For A Good Harvest. Over Time, Laba Festival Evolved Into A Time For Family Reunions And The Consumption Of Laba Congee, A Special Rice Porridge Made With Mixed Grains, Beans, Dried Fruits, And Nuts.

During The Laba Festival, It Is Customary For Families To Come Together To Make Laba Congee, Symbolizing Abundance And Unity. Additionally, People Often Engage In Charitable Activities, Such As Donating Food To The Less Fortunate, As A Way Of Promoting Compassion And Kindness.