



## The Chinese New Year Dinner

The Chinese love to eat. Being full is the ultimate sign of wellness. Feeding and eating together is a sign of affection. Families eat when getting together. Moms like to think of what to cook or feed the family as a sign of love. Therefore, during the start of the year, to invite wellness and happiness it is but natural to spend time with the family eating.

The Chinese New Year's eve dinner is believed to be the most important family ritual of the year. Food symbolizes abundance, and being together stands for family ties. Abundance, health and happiness of the family are the main focus of the New Year's Eve dinner. It is said that if a family does not share this all-important meal of the year, the family's love will grow cold. This is a special event in the year that sibling rivalries and family issues are set aside. Everybody is encouraged to eat well and be merry.

The Chinese New Year's eve dinner honors both the past and current generations. Ancestors are remembered and honored. They too are included in the feast as food is offered at the family altar, especially for them. Letting the family elders eat first is a sign of respect and love. Before the family sits down to eat together, the family ancestral spirits are served the dinner first, including tea and wine, at the altar. This gesture not only pays respects to the forebears but is also a way of giving thanks. After all, it is believed that the wellness of the ancestors reflect on the family fortune.

The family dinner brings hope for the Chinese New Year. Food served also has many symbols of abundance, health and happiness.

Here are some of the courses offered for the family's Chinese New Year eve dinner:

- Soup. Favorites are bird's nest soup and shark's fin soup. The bird's nest soup symbolizes long life and youthfulness. While shark's fin symbolizes prosperity.
- Jai Choy is a special vegetarian dish that is most appropriate for Chinese New Year. All ingredients symbolize good fortune, long life and abundance. It has:
  - dried oysters for good business
  - sea moss called fat choy that mean prosperity
  - Chinese black mushrooms is about getting wishes granted
  - bean noodles called fun see symbolize long life
  - lily buds mean 100 years of blissful union
  - lotus seeds to have sons
  - dried bean curd also symbolize abundance

- cloud ears are good luck  
- and snow peas also bring in prosperity.

- Poultry like duck or chicken are served whole (with head and feet) to symbolize unity or wholeness. Missing body parts mean it is broken and are not good symbols, so best have it in 1 complete piece when possible.

- Long, leafy green vegetables such as Chinese broccoli and Chinese string beans are served whole, believed to bring longevity to parents.

- Fish is yu. "Yu" sounds like abundance. This dish is often served last. The head and tail should not be removed from the body to ensure good luck throughout the year. The family should also be careful to not flip the fish over. This superstition stems from the old fisherfolk belief that flipping fish over will also flip fishing boats.

- Rice or long-grain noodles are also eaten with this hearty feast. Some of the food are deliberately left over to signify abundance through out the year. This is also convenient, as it is custom that animals cannot be killed, even for meals, on the first day of the new year.

Other [Chinese New Year](#) beliefs for the new year's eve banquet are: All utensils and plates should be clean and unbroken. Even a small chip on a plate is not allowed, as this signifies that something will eat into the family fortune. Chopsticks should also be of equal length to represent harmony.

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