



Chinese New Year Firecrackers

One of the highlights of Chinese New Year are firecrackers that beautifully light up the sky. Families also enjoy the deafening pop-pop-pops of the firecrackers. Firecrackers are called "pau jeun" in Chinese, meaning exploding bamboo. Pau jeun are burned at home, for work, or for public displays. Firecrackers are used for worship and for celebration. This is why the pau jeun brings a meaning of joy or upliftment for the Chinese. Chinese New Year is also about joy and upliftment, so the pau jeun is used to celebrate it.

Firecrackers are widely used during Chinese New Year because it is believed the bright lights and the noise can scare away evil spirits like Nian. It was believed that Nian is a monster that would awake only during the Lunar New Year and would devour men and animals in its path. People used to light a pile of bamboos on Chinese New Year to scare away Nian. When gun powder was invented, it was added to the bamboos, causing loud bangs. With Nian and the other evil spirits scared off, it is believed that prosperity, good health and happy relationships will fill the year.

The modern day firecrackers now are tubular, similar to the shape of the bamboo. Chinese firecrackers in the US come in assorted sizes and shapes. The most common firecrackers used during the [Chinese New Year](#) are the red tubes 1 ½ inches long and are braided together with string, wrapped in transparent paper. A bundle is usually tied with 16 or 50 tubes per pack.

Common brands of Chinese New Year Firecrackers are Black Cat, Red Devil, China Doll, Mighty Mite and Zebra. Stronger versions used for public display are several ropes of firecrackers, topped with a box that can equal 15,000 sticks of fire power. These are suspended on poles high up in the air so the crowd can better see the wonderful colors contrast against the night sky.

In the urban areas of China, it is prohibited to light up fire crackers privately for everybody's safety. One can usually see firecracker displays only during Chinese New Year and special days. However, in rural China where there is bigger space, children may buy and play with the different firecrackers available; thus one can hear the familiar pop-pop-pop all through out the Spring Festival.

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