



LUNAR NEW YEAR 2008

— The Year of Rat, a new start of a cycle

■ Compiled By Shally Wong

Thousands of exploding firecrackers, magnificent dragon dancing in the street, many sounding dishes and sweets, and red envelopes stuffed with cash. These are the recalls of my childhood in Hong Kong during Lunar New Year – my favorite festival in the year.

Time to celebrate

The festivities begin on the first day of the first lunar month of the New Year and last for 15 days. Lunar New Year 4706, which falls on February 7 this year, is the most important festival among Chinese (as Spring Festival), Vietnamese (as Tet Festival) and Korean (as Solnal). It is the time for renewal, family gatherings, eating rich foods and paying respect to your ancestors and elders. Also, what you do and how you act during the period is crucial in determining how the rest of your year will go. So, eating the right foods, dressing the new clothes, saying the blessing words all symbolize the prosperous year to come.

Rat is Number One

The sequence of 12 astrology animals is rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep monkey, rooster, dog, pig. Why was rat ranked number 1 in the 12 calendar animals? There is a myth related to it. The God of Heaven wanted to choose 12 animal names as the sequence of the calendar. He announced to hold an animal racing to determine the order. When the racing date is closing, Cat forgot the time and asked Rat the schedule. Alert Rat gave Cat the wrong time on purpose. Smart Rat stayed on the horn of Ox while crossing the river, then jumped over the bank to reach the final line to win the champion. Cat missed the racing time and sworn to kill Rat for generations.

Where to celebrate and what to say

There are many ways you can participate in the Lunar New Year. Asia Trend Magazine prepares you a list of events you can attend to celebrate the year of Rat with us. Before you do that, make sure learn how to say the following greetings to impress your Asian friends, co-workers and neighbors.

Kung Hay Fat Choy – to people from Hong Kong, Macau, or Southern China

Gong Xi Fa Cai – to people from Mainland China or Taiwan

Saehae Bok Mani Paduseyo – to people from Korea

Chuc Mung Nam Moi – to people from Vietnam