

## The Year of the Ox



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Princess Diana, George Clooney, Napoleon, and Barack Obama were all born in the Year of the Ox. Do you have an "ox" in your life?

February 12 - February 22, 2021 is the Chinese New Year celebration, starting with the Spring Festival, ending with the Lantern Festival on February 26. It is a public holiday in China that allows people at least 7 days off from work to celebrate with family. The dates for the celebration are in keeping with the lunar calendar. The year is set on a repeating twelve-year cycle of a dozen animals: rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. There are also five elements connected to each year: wood, fire, earth, metal, and water.

According to one myth the Jade Emperor, ruler of the gods, decreed the order of the zodiac calendar was to be decided by whoever won a particular race. The ox would have been first but when rat asked for a ride in exchange for a song, the ox agreed and then rat jumped off near the finish line to be first.

Since the ox was, and still is, important to agriculture throughout Chinese history, it is associated with the positive characteristics of being hard working, strong, enduring, honest, and low key. Those born in the Year of the Ox also look for steady work, do well in school, and enjoy food. On the other hand, an ox can be stubborn.

As for the celebration, there is a legend that says once a year the monster Nian would rise from the bottom of the sea and terrorize villages. Therefore, people would prepare a feast with offerings then head for the hills. One year a beggar asked for shelter from an old woman and, when she gave it to him, he vowed to make the monster flee. He decorated the village with red designs and when Nian approached, the monster did not like the red. Then the beggar shot off fireworks, which frightened Nian and it ran off.

There are also do's and don'ts during the festival. Here are a few examples: don't say negative words and risk jinxing yourself or your loved ones, don't sweep or clean during the festival but clean and sweep the day before to sweep away bad luck, and lastly try not to take medicine, to avoid being sick the entire year.

Food is very important during the festival. What is served can depend on what part of the country one lives in. Spring rolls are a more southern dish to celebrate the coming of spring and dumplings are a more northern dish. This is also the time to make a great stir-fry by using up all the vegetables stored during winter. Steamed fish, chicken, and rice cakes are all eaten. If you are looking to celebrate this year, try one of these tasty recipes at <https://chinesenewyear.net/food/> or if you don't want to cook, support one of our great local restaurants and carry-out a tasty meal. [More information here on local Rio Rancho dining.](#)

For more information on Chinese New Year or to reference the above information please visit <https://chinesenewyear.net/>