

Information Sheet for TET- Lunar New Year

25th January 2020

Tet is known as Lunar New Year, which has similar principal as Western New Year. It is considered as the first day of spring which is a special occasion for family reunions. It is also seen as an opportunity for a fresh new start for each individual, in which debts are settled and old grievances are forgiven.

1. How TET is celebrated?

Before New Year Eve: one to a few weeks before New Year

People are often busy with shopping for food, decorating and cleaning up the house and cooking traditional food. Most of Vietnamese families would have a family altar to pay respect to their ancestors. The altars are usually cleaned thoroughly before New Year. People also try to pay any debt in order to be debt-free on New Year. Children would go shopping for new clothes, especially traditional “Ao Dai”, with their parents. People, who are away from their hometown, often finish off work to go back home and reunite with their families for Tet.

New Year Eve:

Families would prepare trays of five different fruits and traditional food to put on family altars. The most famous traditional food for Tet which is often cooked on the New Year Eve are “banh chung”, spring-rolls, etc... Preparations for these foods are time-consuming and family members often take turns to keep watch on the cooking overnight.

One of the most important traditions on the New Year Eve is the emphasis put on who is the first to enter a house in the New Year. The first person could bring the blessings or bad luck to the family for the whole year! Hence, the chosen person, usually the head

of the house must leave the house before and come back few minutes after midnight ensuring they are the first to come in, saying good wishes and greetings to the family.

- **New Year:** traditionally three days after new year eve

First day of Tet is reserved for closed family. Children wear their new clothes, give their adults and elderly the traditional Tet greetings. It is a tradition that adults would give lucky money to children in exchange. On this day, people would also visit, clean up and put out new offerings (food, fruits and incense) the graves of their ancestors.

Subsequent days are for visiting relatives, friends and also teachers who are highly respect in Vietnam.

2. Family and Relatives:

Family and relative are the main focus on Tet. Therefore, people often make effort to go back to their family either few days before or on the New Year. On New Year days, people pay their relatives a visit with new year gifts and lucky money for the children.

3. Lucky Money:



Also known as “Li Xi”, it is a small amount of money in red envelope that can bring good fortune to the upcoming year. Children will respectfully fold their arms in front of their chests, facing their parents and elderly and give them the best wishes for a “Happy New Year” or “good health and longevity”. The adults, in return, give them ‘li xi’ and give their wishes to the children for “eating well and growing up healthy,” and “happiness and prosperity” for all family members. Guests who come over during the Tet period also give children lucky money.

4. Religion:

Tet is celebrated by all Vietnamese people with different religious belief. Local Buddhist pagoda or shrines are especially busy and popular locations as people like to visit to pray for safety, health and luck.

5. Food and Drinks: some of the traditional foods:

Banh Chung: tightly packed square sticky rice with meat or bean fillings wrapped in Phrynium placentarium leaves.

Cu Kieu: pickled small leeks.

Mut: Dried candied fruits

Xoi Gac: red sticky, steamed, sweetened sticky rice.



6. Activities:

Decorating is the most important part among all the New Year preparations. Decorations such as posters, phrases with red colour are considered to be good for the house. People also shop for peach blossom trees, kumquat trees, and orange trees. People will try to purchase trees with the most fruits/buds/flowers which symbolize the fertility and fruitfulness that the family hopes for in the coming year.

Fireworks and firecrackers are used in the belief that evil spirits that bring bad fortune could be scared away. Fireworks during the New Year's Eve display at big cities such as Ha Noi, Ho Chi Minh city and Da Nang and they will be broadcasted live on TV.

7. Suggestions for activities you can do in UK to celebrate Tet?

- You could give the children lucky money in any red envelope and New Year wishes in Vietnamese either orally or written.
- If it is not appropriate to give the child money for safety reasons then New Year messages could be placed inside red envelopes to symbolise the significance of the event.
- Tet is actually a family reunion occasion; hence, a big family meal would make the children feel the New Year atmosphere. If possible, you could buy some Vietnamese food from Vietnamese/Asian stores to bring more variety to the meal.
- Most importantly, please talk to the child about their experiences of TET in Vietnam and explore some of the traditions they would have celebrated within their family or community.

Print at home New Year Card

Happy New Year *chúc mừng năm mới*



Leaflet has been developed by Vietnamese children who are engaging with Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service.

For more information or to make a referral to Barnardo's Independent Child Trafficking Guardianship Service, please contact our 24/7 Support Line on 0800 043 4303 or CounterTrafficking@Barnardos.org.uk or www.barnardos.org.uk/cta