
Chinese New Year's Day Taboos



To be avoided on the first day of the Chinese New Year:

1. **Medicine:** Taking medicine on the first day of the lunar year means one will get ill for a whole year.
2. **New Year's breakfast:** Porridge should not be eaten, because it is considered that only poor people have porridge for breakfast, and people don't want to start the year "poor" as this is a bad omen.
3. **Laundry:** People do not wash clothes on the first and second day, because these two days are celebrated as the birthday of Shuishen (水神, the Water God).
4. **Washing hair:** Hair must not be washed on the first day of the lunar year. In the Chinese language, hair (发) has the same pronunciation and character as 'fa' in facai (发财), which means 'to become wealthy'. Therefore, it is seen as not a good thing to "wash one's fortune away" at the beginning of the New Year.
5. **Sharp objects:** The use of knives and scissors is to be avoided as any accident is thought to lead to inauspicious things and the depletion of wealth.
6. **Going out:** A woman may not leave her house; otherwise she will be plagued with bad luck for the entire coming year. A married daughter is not allowed to visit the house of her parents, as this is believed to bring bad luck to the parents, causing economic hardship for the family.
7. **The broom:** If you sweep on this day then your wealth will be swept away too.
8. **Crying children:** The cry of a child is believed to bring bad luck to the family, so parents do their best to keep children as happy as possible.
9. **Theft:** Having your pocket picked is believed to portend your whole wealth in the coming year being stolen.
10. **Debt:** Money should not be lent on New Year's Day, and all debts have to be paid by New Year's Eve. If someone who owes you money, do not go to his or her home to demand it. Anyone who does so it is said will be unlucky all the year.
11. **An empty rice jar:** A depleted receptacle may cause grave anxiety, as the cessation of cooking during the New Year period is considered to be an ill omen.
12. **Damaged clothes:** Wearing threadbare duds can cause more bad luck for the year.
13. **Killing things:** Blood is considered an ill omen, which will cause misfortunes such as a knife wound, or a bloody disaster.
14. **Monochrome fashion:** White or black clothes are barred as these two colours are traditionally associated with mourning.
15. **Welcoming the New Year:** According to tradition, people must stay up late on New Year's Eve to welcome the New Year, and then to let off firecrackers and fireworks to scare off inauspicious spirits and Nian, the New Year monster.
16. **Giving of certain gifts:** Clocks, scissors, and pears all have a bad meaning in Chinese culture.

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