How I Celebrate The Chinese New Year

by: Sarah Talkington
Have you ever celebrated the Chinese New Year? Would you like to know how I celebrate it?

I asked my Mom, “Why does the date for Chinese New Year change every year?”

My Mom explained, “The date of the Chinese New Year is decided by the traditional lunisolar Chinese calendar, which is based on exact astronomical observations of the sun’s longitude and the moon phases. The Chinese New Year is the first day of the lunisolar Chinese calendar’s first month.”
I then asked, “Why does the Chinese New Year have a different animal every year?”

My Mom replied, “Each Chinese New Year is represented by one of the 12 animals which appear in the Chinese zodiac. The animals are the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, ram, monkey, rooster, dog, and pig. This year, 2017, is the Year of the Rooster.”

“It’s my year!” I shouted out. I was so excited! I couldn’t wait to put up the New Year’s decorations.
Before putting up the New Year’s decorations, we cleaned our house from top to bottom, because we wanted to sweep out bad luck from last year and welcome the New Year.
My Mom asked, “Could you please help me hang these Chinese New Year couplets?”

“Sure!” I said.

My Mom explained, “The Chinese New Year couplets are the most important decorations for the festival. They usually express best wishes for the coming year. The couplets are written in black or golden ink on red paper.”

We together hung the Chinese New Year couplets on the front door.
My Mom also taught me how to cut paper decorations. She told me, “Paper cuts are a very old traditional craft and are often seen during the Chinese New Year. Usually, the artwork is made of red paper, as the color of red is associated with festivities and happiness in Chinese culture.” We glued our paper cut outs on to the windows.
The New Year Eve finally arrived. My Mom prepared dumplings (representing wealth), steamed fish (representing an abundant year), lettuce (representing vigorousness), celery (representing diligence), and chicken (representing good luck). My Mom said, “The New Year’s Eve dinner is called the reunion dinner. It symbolizes a good start and bonds the family.”
While we were eating dinner, we watched the New Year’s Gala online, which was a special TV show produced by China Central Television. The Gala featured music, dance, comedy, and drama performances. My Mom told me that the Gala had been described as “the most watched television program in the world”.
On New Year’s Day, I dressed up in my new clothes, which were believed to bring a sense of freshness, new energy and new confidence. I asked my Mom why red clothes were preferred by most Chinese for the New Year. She explained that the red color could ward off danger cast by evil forces and spirits.
I received a red envelope with lucky money inside.
Would you like to learn the Chinese New Year greetings? Just say, “xīn nián kuài lè!” (Happy Chinese New Year!).