

Maple Leaf Times

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REVIEWS

Food Beat

By Raelene Tan

LUNAR NEW YEAR CUSTOMS

The Lunar New Year of the Rooster will be celebrated on **Wednesday, 9th February, 2005.**

After spring-cleaning homes and buildings, decorations of red banners, potted kumquats, pussy willows, flowers and red lanterns will be seen. Household chores are not carried out on the first day of the new year, for fear of brushing away good luck. Superstition dictates that harsh words must not be uttered, nor topics of poor health and misfortune mentioned.

Visits are traditionally made to relatives and friends during the first two days of the festival, with the third day considered inauspicious. Bright clothing is favoured – red signifies good luck.

Red envelopes (*hongbao*) containing money in even numbers, are given to children and unmarried persons as good luck gifts by married relatives and friends during the celebrations, which continue for 15 days. By the way, it is impolite to open the envelopes in the givers' presence.

Customarily, mandarins are presented in even numbers (two are common) to one's host or hostess, using both hands, with the wish, "*Gong Xi Fa Cai!*" ("A wish for prosperity!")

Festive food and drinks are served in abundance. A unique custom is the mixing and eating of *yu sheng* (raw fish), traditionally done on the seventh day, observed as Everybody's Birthday. Finely sliced raw fish and vegetables constitute this colourful dish, served with sweet sauce and spices. Groups of family members, friends or business associates gather together and, using chopsticks, mix the

ingredients by tossing them high, amidst much merriment and cries of, "Lo Hei" (Cantonese), meaning "raise up wealth".

For a memorable experience, visit **Chef Chan's Restaurant**. Admire the priceless Chinese antique collection while indulging your tastebuds. Well-respected Master Chef Chan Chen Hei is known for his *yu sheng* dishes at this festive time of year. Salmon *yu sheng* (\$48+++ for two to four persons, \$68+++ for five to eight persons) is a favourite with its artistic presentation. Or try the lobster variety. Abalone *yu sheng* is also offered. Join in the merriment as you raise up wealth! Eat, drink and enjoy, as it is impolite to refuse at this auspicious time of year!

"*Gong Xi Fa Cai!*"

CHEF CHAN'S RESTAURANT

331 North Bridge Road
#01-02/08 Odeon Towers
telephone 62503363

Lunch 11.45am-2.30pm,
Dinner 6.15pm-9.45pm (last order).

Excerpts from "*Chinese Etiquette – A Matter Of Course*" by Raelene Tan, published by Landmark Books.

Photograph courtesy of Chef Chan's Restaurant.

