Dragons dancing aggressively in the street. Firecrackers popping off and scaring off bad spirits. Rich feasts cooking, bringing together family members. Red envelopes popping open with money to the delight of children.

The Lunar New Year – or Chinese New Year to Westerners – is one of the biggest and most important holidays across Asia. The festival typically begins on the first day of the first lunar month – in 2009, the new year begins January 26 – and lasts for 15 days until a full moon appears.

The New Year is a time for renewal, family gatherings, eating opulent foods and paying respect to your ancestors and elders. What you do and how you act during the period is crucial in determining how the rest of your year will go.

These customs are widely known by most mainstream Westerners, but in many parts of Asia, New Year celebrations take on a different and richly diverse flavor.

The Chinese attribute animals to years because, according to legend, when Buddha asked all the animals to meet him on New Year’s, 12 animals showed up. He proclaimed that those born in each animal’s year would share the animal’s personalities. The new year will be the Year of the Ox. Ox people are born leaders. They are patient, speak little and inspire confidence in others. Although generally easy-going, they can be remarkably stubborn.

In Korea, the New Year is known as Seollal or Gujeong. Koreans will travel to the East coast in order to watch the first rays of the sun as it rises for the first time.

With a brand new semester ahead of us, don’t miss out on awesome events and opportunities to take part in them. If winter break has given you a small bout of amnesia, here is a quick reminder of when and where some of our organizations get together.

**Asian American Leadership & Educational Conference**  
5:30 Mondays - HT Portico BCD

**Persian Students Society**  
5:30 Tuesdays - HT Portico E

**Vietnamese Student Association**  
5:30 Tuesdays - HT Atrium AB

**East Asian Student Association**  
5:00 Wednesdays - HT Portico BCD

**Indian Student Association**  
5:00 Thursdays - HT Promenade AB
time in the New Year.

Vietnam calls its New Years, Tết Nguyên Đán, or Tết for short. The name is Sino-Vietnamese for “Feast of the First Morning.” The Vietnamese celebrate with gifts of fruit, cakes and money. The mood of Tết is generally jovial. In the Vietnamese zodiac, the water buffalo takes the place of the ox.

For the Hmong (an Asian ethnic group in mostly the mountainous regions of southern China), Lunar New Year is a time for eating a lot and for matchmaking. Unmarried women dress up in decorative attires and play traditional games like “toss ball” with the men. Many courting songs are sung.

Also, because many countries interpret the lunar calendar differently or use the solar system, the dates of celebrations vary as well. In Thailand, Songkran is set from April 13 to April 15. People celebrate the new year by throwing water at each other.

The Indian holiday of Diwali falls in late October or early November, the Cambodians enter their Chaul Chnam Thmey (from the Khmer language) in mid-April and modern Japan celebrates New Year, oddly enough, on January 1st.

Chaul Chnam Thmey means three days praying at the temple, where people also engage in tug-of-war type games and build a sand mountain. Cambodians wash Buddha statues with perfumed water and then wash themselves, as a way to christen the new year.

Even though the Japanese adopted the Gregorian calendar during the Meiji era, around 100 years ago, under the influence of the West, they still partake in the same New Year activities as they did when they were on the lunar calendar: pounding rice, do housekeeping, visit relatives and bosses and make special foods.

Laos New Year is actually in December but festivities are delayed until April when days are longer than nights. As in Thailand, Laotians douse each other with water. The festival serves to invite the rains.

Despite a number of differences, there’s one common theme that takes center stage for all Asian New Year celebrations: family. No matter what the country, religion or race, New Year’s Day is a time for family reunions, gatherings and reflection and reaffirming bonds.

Restaurant Review: Tom Tom’s Asian Grill
By: John Mak

Located in the thriving, urban West Village, Tom Tom Asian Grill excels at delivering on its namesake of culturally vibrant Asian cuisine. As night time arrives, the outdoor dining area comes alive with food, fun, and people, replicating the dining scene often seen in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Thailand. Inside, its Asian-inspired décor offers a modern elegance with its ambient lighting and wood furnishings. Despite its smaller dining area, it succeeds in offering an intimate dining environment.

Tom Tom’s menu features a delectable palette of Asian fusion cuisine, from Thai noodle dishes to Japanese rolls. Its signature items are what the restaurant calls its “Street Food.” Equivalent to Spanish tapas, Tom offers various appetizers from various Asian countries. Standout options include the Salt and pepper Calamari and Mango Sake Pork Ribs.

Entrée items such as the Chargrilled Beef Tenderloin, Shrimp Coconut Curry, and Pad Thai are highly recommended. However, every visit to Tom Tom should include a tasting of its top dishes, the Singapore Laksa. Shredded chicken, shrimp, and vegetables are served in a spicy, coconut milk broth, making it a wonderful treat for those upcoming winter nights.

Coupled with its convenient location in the heart of Uptown Dallas, Tom Tom Asian Grill is an excellent dining option for gathering with friends, enjoying the elegant dining atmosphere, and experiencing authentic Asian inspired cuisine.
On 8th December 2008, Muslims around the world celebrate their one of the most important festival called Eid-Ul-Adha (called by different names in different countries). The festival falls on the tenth day of the month of Dhul Hijja of Islamic Calendar and is an important day of Hajj (a religious pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Madina in Saudi Arabia). The festival revolves around the concept of submission to Allah (God) which also forms the definition of Islam.

This festival is based on the story of submission and obedience of Ibrahim to God. Muslims commemorate the acts of obedience and submission performed by Prophet Ibrahim and his family when he was commanded to take his wife Hajar and their son Ismaeel to an uninhabited, barren, distant land and leaves them there alone. He submitted and obeyed. Furthermore, when his son Ismail became older, Ibrahim received a command from his Lord to sacrifice him. He submitted and so did his son. The family of Ibrahim was a family of obedience and submission. They were tested and tried again and again, but the result was always submission and obedience. In fact, Eid al-Adha and Eid al-Fitr come after performing a pillar of Islam and an act of obedience and hence are annual reminders that this life is an exam and we must be obedient if we wish to score an A grade!!

What did GWSJ Staff do this Winter Break?

I can’t wait to spend my winter break in Oaxaca, Mexico studying abroad! - Udoka Omenukor

“You mean besides gear up for an awesome spring semester for VSA? Well, sleep, win the lottery, sleep, catch up on television shows, sleep, not talk to anyone from SMU, sleep...” Can this be anonymous? - Christy Vutam

For Winter Break I plan to shop to my heart out and hibernate till spring! - Julianne Nguyen

“I wish to meet Santa Claus this Christmas!”
John Mak

“Love spending time with my family.” - Prerit Souda

“Remember to enjoy your life!” - Mylinh Nguyen

SPECIAL THANKS TO STUDENT SENATE!!!

GWSJ Staff
Editor-in-Chief
Mai Lyn Ngo

Writers
Jessika Chi
Mylinh Nguyen
Winfred Ko
Prerit Souda
Julianne Nguyen
Seena Jose
Udoka Omenukor
Nili Sangani
Daniel Liu
Christy Vutam
John Mak
Stephen Lu

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