

# NORTON MUSEUM OF ART

## Celebratory Fare to Welcome Good Fortune for the Year of the Rabbit

By Laurie Barnes 潘筱莉, Elizabeth B. McGraw Curator  
of Chinese Art, Norton Museum of Art



Certain dishes are eaten during the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration for their symbolic meaning. Foods, which are believed to bring good luck for the coming year, are served during the festival season, especially at the celebratory dinner on New Year's Eve. The symbolism of these traditional Lunar New Year foods is based on their pronunciations or appearance. See the video under Note on Chinese Tones for more on proper pronunciations. Here I'll outline some of the most popular Lunar New Year foods, and include a bit of information about why they are consumed for good fortune in the New Year.



### Mandarin Oranges

The word for mandarin orange or tangerine (橘 *jú*, see note about tones below) sounds like 吉 (*jí*) "auspicious" or "lucky."



### Pan Fried Dumplings (鍋貼 *Guō Tiē*)

Dumplings in the shape of ancient Chinese golden ingots (錠 *dìng*) signify prosperity in the New Year.

[Make Pan Fried Dumplings](#)



### Eight Sweet Tray of Togetherness

An eight sweet Tray of Togetherness refers to the saying 甜甜蜜蜜 (*tián tián mì mì*) meaning sweet and happy. A traditional Tray of Togetherness is an assortment of auspicious treats

to sweeten the year featuring: red fruits or candy (for happiness), melon (for vigor and good health), and nuts or seeds (for abundance). The Chinese number eight 八 is considered lucky, because its pronunciation sounds like 發 (*fā*, meaning to acquire wealth).

[How to Make a Tray of Togetherness](#)



### Spring Rolls (春捲 Chūn Juǎn)

Spring rolls resemble bars of gold. The lucky saying associated with spring rolls is: 黃金萬兩 (*huáng jīn wàn liǎng*) 10,000 taels of gold. The weight of 10,000 taels of gold is slightly over

1100 pounds. Therefore, a plate brimming with spring rolls is associated with the blessing of wealth.

[Make Spring Rolls](#)



### Longevity Noodles (伊面 Yī Miàn)

Noodles are traditionally served on the 7th day of the 15-day Lunar New Year celebration, which is known as everyone's birthday. Those who eat long noodles are considered to be a

year older for the day. The tradition of eating noodles at birthday celebrations became popular during the Tang Dynasty (from 618 to 907). Long noodles symbolize long life, so don't cut the noodles before you eat them.

[Recipe for Longevity Noodles](#)



### Steamed Fish

A whole fish (魚 yú) is the most popular dish served during Chinese Lunar New Year celebrations. The Chinese word for fish has the same sound as the Chinese word for surplus

or abundance 余 (yú). Fish is served whole because serving chopped up food is believed to reduce good luck in the New Year.

[Make Steamed Fish](#)



### Sesame Dumplings (湯圓 Tāng Yuán) in Rice Wine Soup

Dumplings, made of sticky rice flour rolled into balls and often stuffed with sweetened black sesame seeds, are traditionally eaten at the close

of Lunar New Year festivities during the Yuan Xiao Festival also called the Lantern Festival, which occurs on February 5 in 2023. The dessert's other moniker 元宵 (*yuán xiāo*), translates to first evening, a reference to the first full moon after the Lunar New Year, with the round shape of the dessert representing the celestial body. The dumplings connote harmony and perfection, signify reunion, and are believed to ensure good luck for families. 酒釀 (*jiǔ niàng*) is sweet rice wine made by fermenting glutinous rice with a distiller's yeast known as 酒曲 (*jiǔ qū*) in Chinese.

[Make Sesame Dumplings](#)

[How to Make Sweet Rice Wine](#)

### Note on Chinese Tones

Chinese is a tonal language. The Mandarin dialect has 4 tones as noted in the text above: 1 flat tone *pīng*, 2 rising tone *qí*, 3 falling and rising tone *jǐu*, and 4 falling tone *xià*. If no tone is noted in the text above, it is neutral.

[Hear Mandarin Dialect Tones](#)

### Where to Buy Chinese Foods in West Palm Beach

While Publix will have some Chinese food staples, many can be purchased at Asian or international grocery stores, such as Foodtown Supermarket.

[Foodtown Supermarket, Palm Beach](#)