In America, New Year Eve celebration is a one-day event, but in China, New Year, or more accurately the Spring Festival is a 15-day celebration full of food, family, and fireworks. The Spring Festival is the largest celebration of the year in China and represents many aspects of Chinese culture. In the weeks leading to the festival, families decorate their houses with red lanterns and red banners of luck, happiness, and health. On New Year’s Eve, dumplings are traditionally made and eaten during a family gathering as they watch CCTV’s famous show that hosts the largest celebrity performances in the country.

On New Year’s Day, many families offer blessing to their ancestors, setting aside part of the meal and burning paper money (紙錢) and incents. These offerings are to thank their ancestors and to ask for protection for their family and children. After this, close families splurge and have the most bountiful traditional meal they can make. Out of the many diverse dishes, families almost always have a whole fish to wish for surplus for the next year. The story behind this tradition of the fish dish is that in Chinese, fish is pronounced “yu” (魚) which is sounds the same as surplus (餘).

After New Year’s Day, relatives visit with their extended family for several days, every day feasting and strengthening family bonds. It is customary for the men to drink expensive liquor. Typically, the tables are divided by generations. The young adults show respect to their elders by walking to the older generations’ tables and wishing them health and prosperity by giving individual toasts. Often during the Festival, the older generation will give red envelopes or Hong Bao (紅包) to children and unmarried adults to wish them luck and success. (To learn more about this tradition read the “Hong Bao” article).

The 15th day that ends the Spring Festival is called Yuan Xiao Je (元宵節) or Lantern Festival. On this day, lanterns are lit across the country and are often arranged into the shapes of animals, especially the zodiac animal of that year. It is common for families to make lantern poems and riddles for fun while they walk around the city looking at the displays. Another longstanding tradition during the Lantern Festival is eating Yuan Xiao (元宵), glutinous rice balls filled with sweets and crushed nuts (extremely tasty). Days before the Lantern Festival, the process of making the Yuan Xiao begins as children and parents work together to grind sweet rice to prepare it for dough, traditionally on a grinding wheel. Once the sweet filling is made, the parents wrap the Yuan Xiao and cook them. Some of my mom’s happiest childhood memories are of making and eating Yuan Xiao with her parents and siblings. Finally, during that last night of the Spring Festival, dragon dances and firework shows light up towns and cities.

Last, but not least, a special tiding for the Spring Festival is Gong Xi Fa Cai (恭喜發財), or “wish you prosperity.” So CSCCI hopes you enjoy your Chinese New Year and have a healthy, happy, and prosperous year. Gong Xi Fa Cai!
Erhu and Me
By Liping Woods

An erhu (二胡) is a two-stringed Chinese musical instrument that's often known as the Chinese Violin as its tone is similar to a western violin. It consists of a horsehair bow, a long vertical shaft, two tuning pegs, a sound box covered with python skin, two strings, and a tiny bridge. Traditionally, erhu is played sitting down held upright with the sound box placed on the top of the left thigh. Although using a specially developed belt-clip, performers can now play while standing up. The bow is played horizontally with the right-hand which alters the bow's pressure against the strings.

Erhu was first mentioned in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). It was originally described as a plucked string instrument and had evolved from a barbarian instrument called “huqing” in northern China. This precursor eventually came to resemble today’s erhu in the Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368) under the Mongolian’s rule. In modern China, erhu is extremely popular as an instrument for both traditional and contemporary music.

The erhu has a special meaning in my life. I grew up in Chongqing, China during the chaotic decade of Cultural Revolution that was lunched by Chairman Mao in 1966. I first learned erhu when I was a teenager in 1975. I decided to learn an instrument hoping to have a skill that may provide me better job opportunities. My parents were very supportive and bought my first erhu using an entire month of my mom’s salary of 50 renminbi. In 1976 the death of Chairman Mao and the arrest of the Gang of Four ended the turbulent and chaotic decade of the Cultural Revolution. Due to this, in 1977 China restored its national wide university entrance examination that was previously banned during the decade long Cultural Revolution. I felt hope, a kind of hope I had never felt before: the possibility of going to a college. I stopped doing everything else, including learning erhu, my passion, instead devoting 100% of my time studying and preparing for the college entrance exam. I went to college and graduate schools in China and played erhu for pleasure.

I came to the USA to pursue graduate studies in 1991 in Oklahoma and moved to Colorado Springs in 1996. For the past many years, I have been honored to play erhu at the Chinese New Year Festivals and dinner events held by Colorado Spring Chinese Cultural Institute. I was amazed how much my audiences liked the sound of the erhu and appreciated their interest to this unique instrument. I enjoy playing Chinese and even some western folk songs. I am looking forward to many more years of sharing my erhu music with our Colorado Springs community at future Chinese New Year Festivals.

MISSION STATEMENT

The CSCCI is committed to fostering understanding of Chinese culture by promoting opportunities for events, networking, travel, education and services available to the people of Colorado Springs.

Become a member

Colorado Springs Chinese Cultural Institute

To become a member, please complete the information below and send the form with your check or money order to:

COLORADO SPRINGS CHINESE CULTURAL INSTITUTE
PO BOX 2625
COLORADO SPRINGS, CO 80901-2625

Membership Benefits:
- Discount ticket pricing for all events and activities
- Free Quarterly Newsletter
- E-mail reminders to all our future events
- and More....

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Mailing Address _______________________________ _______________________________
City ____________________________________________________________
State ___________________________ Zip ___________________________
Phone ___________________________ (H/W/C) ___________________________ (H/W/C)
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E-mail _______________________________

Annual Membership

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CSCCI Hot Pot Dinner
By Eric Woods

CSCCI's first hot pot dinner event at the Jade Dragon last November went so well that we would like to make it an annual tradition! From the delicious food, to the fun of hot pot cooking, to the beautiful music we enjoyed, the dinner was incredibly enjoyable in every aspect.

Whenever I have hot pot at home, my family usually uses premade, frozen meat, but at the Jade Dragon, all the ingredients were made by their head chef that morning and everything was scrumptiously fresh. For meat, we had fish, beef, pork, shrimp, chicken, and even squid, all of which were tender and full of flavor. My favorite food was the fish balls made by our chef because they soaked by the hot pot broth's flavor so well. For even more flavor I dipped them in a special fish sauce that was served on the side. It was thoroughly enjoyable.

For those who didn't eat as much meat, napa, kale, and green onions were just a few of the vegetables that were also served. No matter their food preference, everyone had more than enough to eat as the Jade Dragon kept serving plates full of ingredients even after we were all stuffed.

After our filling dinner, we were lucky to enjoy a wonderful erhu (Chinese violin) performance from our CSCCI board of director Liping Woods. Her performance was at times moving and at others fun as she played traditional Chinese folk songs like “Longing” and “Jasmine Flowers” and famous American pieces like “Scarborough Fair.” Throughout the event, everyone was in a cheery mood, and even once the dinner ended, no one left because we were comfortably socializing. Our organization enjoyed holding our first hot pot dinner and would be delighted to share the hot pot experience with you. We will be hosting another hot pot dinner next year. So next autumn, make sure to check our website, www.cscci.org, or keep reading our Tea Leaves Newsletters to find out more details about our next hot pot dinner.

Hong Bao
By Eric Woods

If you have been to Chinese celebrations such as New Year festivals, birthdays, or weddings, you might have noticed that some gifts were little red envelopes, often given to children and young adults. These presents are called Hong Bao (紅包) or “red pockets” for their distinct vibrant red color. If you have never seen Hong Bao, they are thin and rectangular, bright red to symbolize luck, happiness, and longevity, and often have golden writing or images to wish the receiver prosperity in the coming year.

In ancient times Hong Bao was used to ward off evil spirits on New Year’s Eve, but the tradition soon spread to become the most popular gift for all occasions (from the birth of a child to celebrating a significant success). Hong Bao is given with money inside, the amount depending on the importance of the event and how close the relationship is between the giver and receiver. However, much more important than the material value of Hong Bao is the goodwill and caring that it represents. In fact, opening Hong Bao in front of the person who gave it to you is considered disrespectful because it seems like you care more about the money than the person’s wishes. Giving a friend or relative Hong Bao lets them know that you wish them a healthy, happy, and successful year.

If you would like to try out in this tradition of giving Hong Bao, stop by the CSCCI station during our Chinese New Year Festival to buy your own Hong Bao to wish someone special a lucky and prosperous year.

Year of the Horse Celebrities
By Eric Woods

People born during the Year of the Horse are known to be hard working, energetic, sociable, cunning, and headstrong. Considering all these traits, its no surprise that so many people born in the Year of the Horse are very successful. All of the famous people listed below share the Horse as their Chinese Zodiac, how many have you heard of?

Nelson Mandela
Neil Armstrong
Clint Eastwood
Warren Buffett
Buzz Aldrin
Shel Silverstein
Muhammad Ali
Paul MacCartney
Harrison Ford
Jimmy Hendrix

Stephen Hawking
Barbara Streisand
Joe Biden
Jackie Chan
Oprah Winfrey
James Cameron
David Cameron
Kobe Bryant
Jep Robertson
Emma Watson

An Extra Special Thanks To:
KKTU
KLite
Kvor
The Gazette
and Colorado Technical University
與誰共廚
作家 - 醒食世界

我，出國留學之前，生活無憂無慮，茶來伸手，飯來張口。從未進廚房一步，吃的食物，毫無品味可言。爸媽吃什麼，就跟着吃什麼，從來也不嚷著要吃什麼特別的菜。日子的重心完全放在學業和前景上，順利留學是爸媽的唯一心願。

群，出國留學之前，生活挺有規矩，要茶自泡，吃飯自煮。常常下廚做羹湯，吃的食物，必須考慮家人。爸媽要什麼，就試著做什麼，從來也不為自己做什麼特別的菜，日子的重心完全放在家人和學業上，三從四德是爸媽的唯一心願。

異國定情，相與共廚，樂趣無窮！群已經在臺灣學了所有的烹飪廚藝，做菜一級棒，正好能當我的最佳老師，但是對我而言，食譜的輔助還是需要的。

出國時，就算從來沒有計劃學習做菜，親友仍然為我準備三本書，味全食譜黃淑惠編著的“中國菜”，按照食材分類，有拼盤、湯、主菜和飯麵點心的家常菜食譜。自然科學文化事業公司出版的“中國家常菜”，按照烹飪方式，炒、炸、煮、蒸和拌來分類。當然，絕不能缺的是傅培梅編著的“培梅食譜”，按照不同省分的菜來分類。三本書各有所長，交互使用，效果非常好，至今仍然放在我的書架上，隨時取用。留學苦讀期間，除了大嫂的長途電話授課之外，由這三本書學會了基本工，不斷的練習，經驗的累積，倒也能做得有模有樣。不曉得食材的講究，只求複製出濃郁的家鄉味，做出好吃的家常菜，成為生活的樂趣。

吃的經驗不斷累積，美國大學餐廳的混搭沙拉，豐富而營養。煎烤炸的美式食物，紮紮實實。曾為第一次吃義大利海鮮麵的驚艷而興奮不已。舊金山的法國餐廳，紐奧良融合美南和法式的料理，也讓人印象深刻。有了學習美式、法式和義大利式料理的衝動。

不好高騖遠，食譜之類的書，很難賺得到我的錢，現在常去信義誠品，瀏覽成千上萬的食譜，心想，都買回去了，就能成大廚了嗎？我不認為如此！倒覺得跟著一本可靠的食譜，用心學習，耐心操作，成果不難讓人刮目相看。

學西餐的心態，也是買兩本信譽好、有份量的食譜，好好把基礎打好最重要。我

UPCOMING ASIAN CULTURAL EVENTS

January 25, 2014: Uta Gassen (Singing Competition) Denver Buddhist Temple Auditorium
January 25, 2014: CSCCI Chinese New Year Festival, City Auditorium, Co. Springs
Late June 2014: 42nd Annual Cherry Blossom Festival Sakura Square, Denver
Late July 2014: Colorado Dragon Boat Festival, Sloan's Lake Park, Denver.
February 14, 2014: Yuanxiao (Lantern) Festival
April 25, 2014: Quin Ming (Pure and Bright) Festival
September 9, 2014: Mid-Autumn Festival

SPECIAL THANKS TO:
Colorado Technical University
Colorado Springs, CO
graphic design
Eric Woods
Newsletter Writer & Editor-In-Chief

Newsletter Design by: Eagle Graphic Group / Colorado Technical University
Sr. Designer: Justin Abshire Creative Director: John Chlebus
Editor: Thomas Bradley