

# CHINESE NEW YEAR

WRITTEN BY  
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## A New Beginning

ILLUSTRATED BY  
Sanford Mock  
Leon Letoto



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# Acknowledgments

In the 1970s and 1980s the Multicultural Awareness Project of the Curriculum Research & Development Group explored our various island cultures and produced a series of publications about life in Hawai‘i, families, communities, and ethnic celebrations. These publications still draw an audience of enthusiastic readers.

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# Welcoming the New Year, Chinese Style



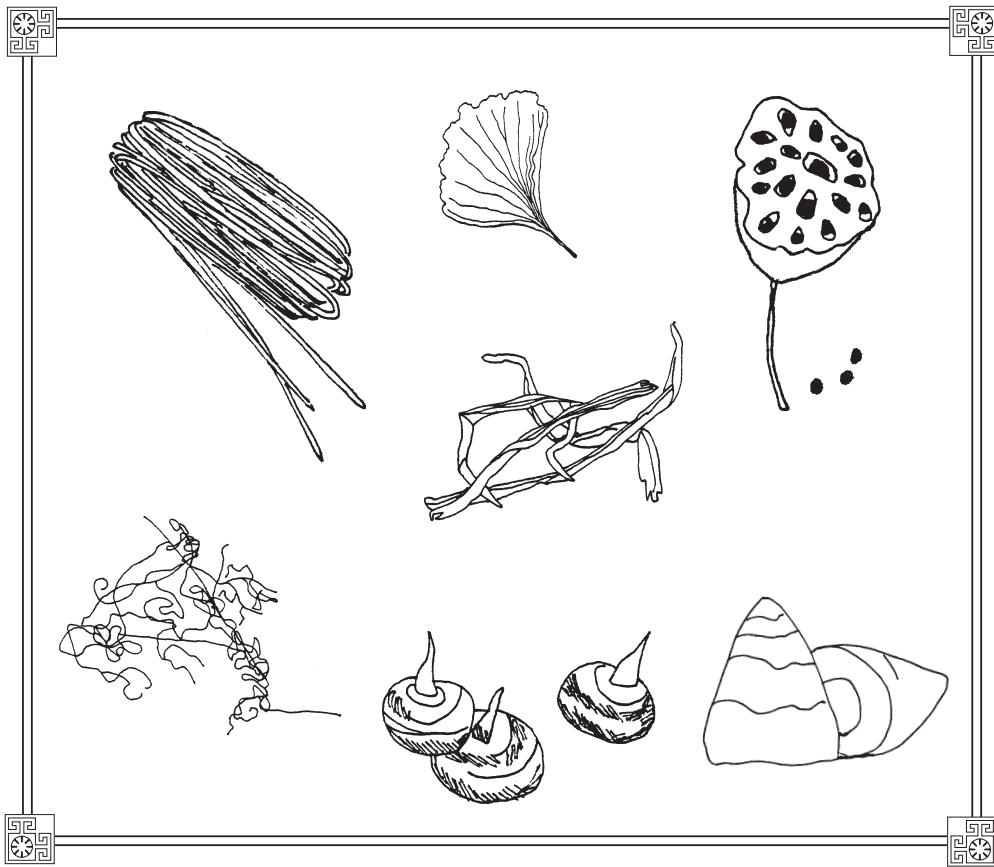


# Introduction

Chinese New Year arrives on the first day of the first new moon. Preparations begin weeks before this day. The celebration itself starts on New Year's Eve and lasts for about fifteen days, until the full moon appears.

For the Chinese, the new year means rebirth—a fresh start, a new beginning. The Chinese connect many traditional beliefs and customs with the New Year festivities.

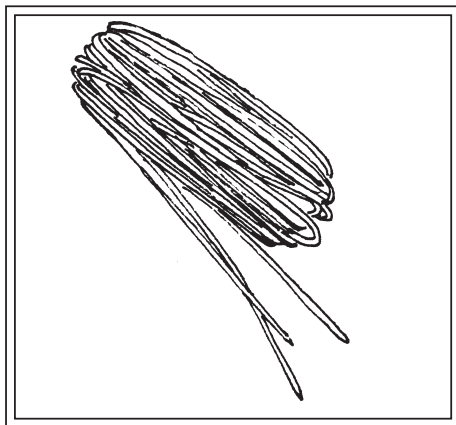
# Chinese Blessings



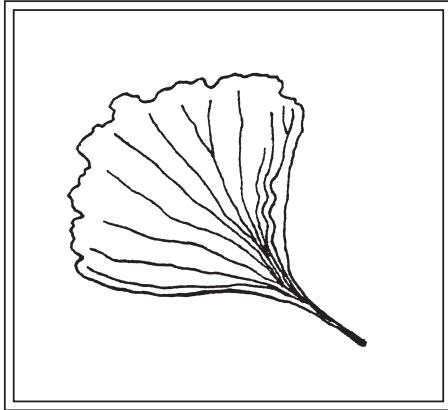
**D**uring the New Year celebration, many Chinese families prepare special foods. One of them is *jai*, a meatless dish, sometimes called monk's food. Buddhist monks did not eat meat because they believed it was wrong to kill an animal.

Traditionally *jai* was the first food eaten on New Year's Day. By eating *jai*, people paid their respects to the Buddha and started the year without sins.

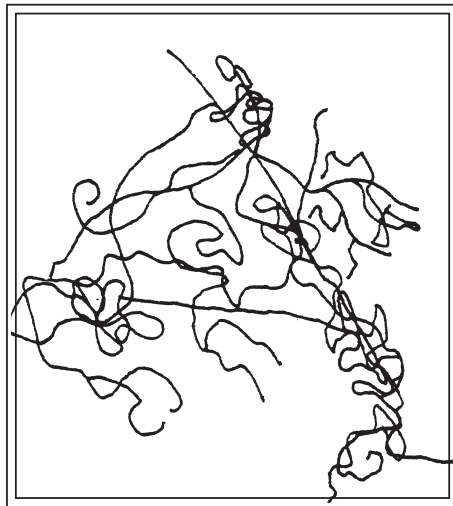
The ingredients in *jai* are special. They are believed to bring such blessings as wealth, long life, and prosperity. Some of these ingredients are listed below with their related blessings.



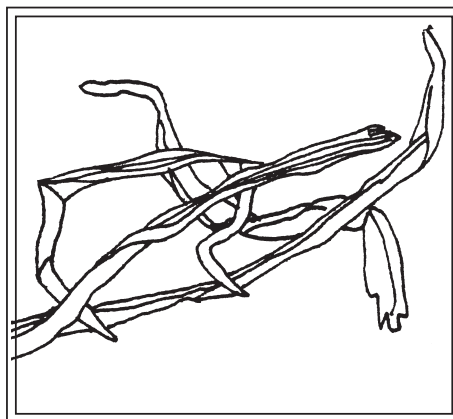
Long rice: A kind of thin, slippery noodle. The long threads suggest long life.



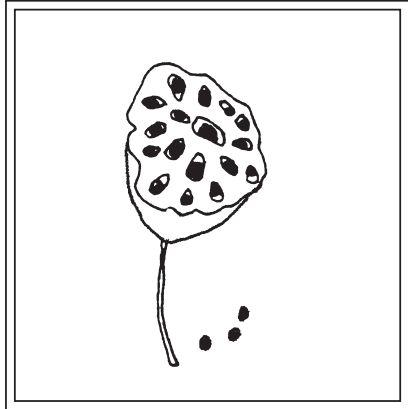
Ginkgo nuts: The silver leaves of the ginkgo nut tree suggest wealth.



Seaweed: This is a special kind of hair-like seaweed, called *fat-tsoi*. *Tsoi* also means to get rich.



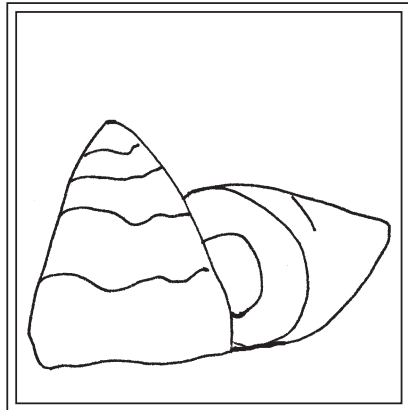
Lily flower: The Chinese name for lily, *gum-tsoi*, also suggests gold, wealth, and prosperity.



Lotus seeds: Lotus seeds represent children. Adding lotus seeds to *jai* means you will have many children.



Chestnuts: A chestnut is sweet. It suggests the blessing of sweetness in life.



Bamboo shoots: Bamboo represents longevity, or long life.

Many other ingredients go into *jai*. The blessings from these ingredients make it a special food to eat on New Year's Day.