




Photo: Tangerine plant: Michi/Getty Images



# THE RAT PACK

## 鼠年主人翁

Five generations born in the Year of the Rat reflect on the meaning of Chinese New Year. By CHRISTINA KO

五代肖鼠人士分享農曆新年對他們的意義。

撰文：Christina Ko

**CHINESE NEW YEAR** is a time to come together and look at the year ahead with those you love the most. No matter if family are flying to Hong Kong for Chinese New Year, or the new year's coming to them, these people are looking forward to a truly special season. ☺

中國農曆新年是與親朋摯愛歡聚一堂，展望新一年的時節。不論這些屬鼠的受訪者是舉家飛往香港度歲，還是在家迎接鼠年，都同樣熱切期待本命年的來臨。☺



### ZACHARY & AVA JANG, BORN 2008

(EARTH RATS)

#### HONG KONG

They're turning 12 this year, and twins Zachary and Ava Jang know exactly what Chinese New Year is about: 'Spending time with my family, hiking and playing cards, mahjong and board games. Not having to do anything special, but generally just hanging out with my family,' Zachary says. 'We always visit the Chinese New Year fair in Po Lam before the holiday. We all pick flowers to buy – usually daffodils and pussy willows. We always get peanut brittle and try to convince our mum to get souvenirs that she knows we don't need. We used to buy kumquat trees – but last time our dog ate them.'

This year, however, will be extra special. 'This year will be a really awesome CNY as my grandparents are visiting,' says Ava. 'They've been to Hong Kong many times but never at Chinese New Year, so I'm excited to celebrate and share our traditions with them.'

鄭子龍及鄭芷蕾，2008年出生（土鼠年）

香港

學生姊弟鄭芷蕾及鄭子龍今年踏入12歲，雖然年紀輕輕，卻深諳農曆新年的意義。鄭子龍稱：「賀歲就是跟家人遠足、玩紙牌遊戲、桌上遊戲和打麻將。無論做什麼也好，總之就是和家人共度美好時光。過年前，我們都會逛寶琳的年宵市場一起選購年花，通常都是水仙和銀柳。我們亦會買花生脆糖，並努力遊說媽媽添置不實用的禮品。另外不能少的就是年桔，去年，我們家的愛犬竟把桔子全吃掉了。」

對這對姊弟來說，今年的春節份外有意義。鄭芷蕾說：「今年祖父母會來香港跟我們一起過年，到時一定會過得特別開心。雖然他們已來港多次，但這次是兩位長輩第一次在此度歲，我衷心期待與他們共賀佳節，分享我們的過節習俗。」



### ALBA KONG, BORN 1996 (FIRE RAT)

GUANGZHOU

This is Alba Kong's first Chinese New Year since taking a job in Hong Kong, which means she won't have as much time to spend at home in Guangzhou with her family. 'As I have a much shorter Chinese New Year holiday, I need to try and spend more time at home with my parents. My grandpa passed away a few months ago, so for my grandma it's really important that her family is by her side,' she says. Flowers are a must: 'Ever since I can remember, Chinese New Year has come with peach blossoms, representing a prosperous year to come. My dad spends a whole day picking flowers from the market and arranging them at home, after which my mum and I decorate them – kind of like Christmas, you could say.'

'When I was a little kid, Chinese New Year meant a big meal and pocket money; when I was in middle school it meant a break from the textbooks; and now it means family,' says Kong. 'The meaning of festivals is given by those important people in your life, and nothing is more wonderful than celebrating with them.' ☺

Alba Kong，1996年出生（火鼠年）

廣州

今年是Alba Kong第一年在香港工作，首次在港迎接新年，因此不能長時間待在廣州的家跟家人過節。她說：「我的春節假期比以前少了，因此會盡量待在家裡多陪伴爸爸媽媽。爺爺數月前去世了，所以今年的春節，大家都會回家陪奶奶，希望可以大夥兒過一個熱鬧的新年。」她表示新年少不了年花：「從我懂事開始，農曆新年時家裡總會有一株漂亮的桃花，代表花開富貴。為此，我爸爸會特地花一整天在花市挑選春節的時花，然後精心擺放在家裡，我和媽媽會為年花掛上裝飾點綴，就像聖誕節佈置聖誕樹一樣。」

她補充說：「農曆新年對我的意義，真的會隨著年齡而變化。小時候只覺得它是一頓大餐還有利是；讀中學的時候，新年代表我可以放下課本小休；現在，它則是一家團圓的日子。其實節日的意義就是由生命中重要的那些人賦予的，沒什麼比跟他們一起過節更好。」 ☺

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ALBA KONG



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PETER WONG



PETER WONG, BORN 1972 (WATER RAT)

SAN FRANCISCO

‘The Chinese New Year atmosphere in the US isn’t that strong even if you live in the heart of San Francisco,’ says Peter Wong. But he does try to keep some traditions alive. ‘With no extra holidays for adults or kids, arranging gatherings and dinner events is the only way we can carry on some basic traditions for the kids, and hope that they will pass this on to the next generation.’ Typically, the Wong family has a New Year’s Eve dinner with the grandparents. Then on the weekend, they’ll host bigger gatherings, or take the kids to Chinatown to see the Chinese Community Street Fair, an annual event with hundreds of booths and entertainment. ‘With our relatives, we cook at home, order take-out or do a potluck. The kids will hang out and play and then the adults will have them say new year’s blessings, and we give them lai see.’ While it isn’t always easy for members of the Chinese diaspora to stay in touch with their culture, Wong’s family has one unique way of doing it: ‘After dinner, we play family games – which we’ve copied from game shows that air in Hong Kong.’ ☺

Peter Wong · 1972年出生 (水鼠年)

三藩市

雖然Peter Wong與家人居於異鄉，但仍致力延續過年的傳統。他表示：「儘管住在三藩市的核心區域，過年氣氛並不濃厚。因為這裡無論是上班還是上學一族，皆無額外假期，唯有舉行聚會和晚宴，才能讓孩子認識一些農曆年基本習俗，希望他們繼續世代相傳。」一般來說，Peter一家會跟祖父母享用年夜飯。到了周末，Peter則會舉辦家庭聚會，或帶孩子到唐人街感受新春街頭市集的喜慶氣氛，這個年度活動匯聚過百個攤位和娛樂表演。「與親友度歲的時候，我們會在家中煮食、叫外賣，或請他們自備菜餚共嚐，孩子則會一起玩耍。到了最後，一眾長輩會著他們說過新年祝福語後，向他們派發利是。」雖然海外華人未必能輕易緊貼中華文化，但Peter的家庭卻自有一套：「晚飯後，我們會參考香港的電視遊戲節目，大夥兒玩集體遊戲。」☺



KENNIS YUEN, BORN 1984 (WOOD RAT)

## HONG KONG

This year's festival will have very different connotations for Kennis Yuen, who got married last November – meaning that for the first time, the tables will turn and she'll be distributing red lai see packets to the younger generations and unmarried friends. But while many newlyweds joke about hiding at home and avoiding large gatherings to cut back on those sudden overheads, Yuen looks on this rite of passage differently: 'It's finally my turn,' she says. 'And I'm so excited! To be able to give out lai see means that you have good fortune, and to be happy to give them out means you live a comfortable, lucky life. So I don't mind doing it at all after receiving them myself all these years.' An avid home cook, Yuen spends much of her time prior to the celebrations making traditional Chinese treats, including her signature turnip pudding with hefty portions of Chinese sausage and dried shrimp, which she steams in individual cupcake-sized portions to give to friends. Though she'll be starting her own family traditions soon, her turnip pudding recipe is one she won't be updating. 'Every year it's the same recipe and I won't ever change it,' she says with a wink. 'I'm loyal.'

袁靜雯，1984年出生（木鼠年）

## 香港

對於剛在去年11月結婚的袁靜雯而言，今年春節別具意義，皆因她已成家，輪到她向後輩和未婚親友派發利是。雖然不少新婚夫婦戲言為了節省開支，要躲在家中避免出席親朋滿座的拜年活動，但袁靜雯卻以不一樣的態度看待這個踏入人生新階段的儀式。她表示：「我心情非常興奮，終於到我派發利是了！能夠派利是是一種幸福，派得開心，更證明日子過得安逸美滿。因此已『逗利是』多年的我毫不介意反客為主。」廚藝了得的她未到過節，便已花大量時間埋首製作中式傳統賀年糕點，包括她的招牌蘿蔔糕，當中臘腸、蝦米和手磨蘿蔔絲均份量十足；她更悉心用杯子蛋糕大小的錫紙盤蒸製成迷你版本，送給好友分甘同味。雖然為人新婦，她卻會建立一套自家傳統，但仍堅持炮製蘿蔔糕的秘方維持不變。她調皮地眨眼道：「這份食譜不會隨年月而改變，因為我為人專一！」



ARLENE TOM, BORN 1960 (METAL RAT)

## BAY AREA

'When we were little, we went to my cousins' house for dinner,' says Arlene Tom, who has lived in the US since she was a child. 'I have seven siblings and my uncle has seven kids, so it was quite the get-together. Their house was much bigger than ours, so I remember running around, playing hide-and-seek.' Though it's been decades since these childhood fun and games, she still thinks of them fondly. 'When growing up I focused on assimilating into American culture, but I did participate in an American-born Chinese programme that spent six weeks in China: two of them visiting the village where my parents were raised. As we've grown older both my husband and I regret not exposing our kids to their culture more. It's been difficult to maintain many traditions.' She does have a few low-key annual customs, though. 'We make a whole poached chicken and buy roast meats for the closing of the new year. My mother-in-law in New York is pretty traditional and will typically call me to make sure we have a bird,' she laughs. 'I started a new tradition myself last year, after reading that dumplings are typically made during this time. I made a bunch and shared them with friends.' ■

譚玉翠，1960年出生（金鼠年）

## 加州灣區

譚玉翠於童年時移居美國至今，她憶述：「我家共有七兄弟姐妹，而我的伯父亦有七名孩子，尚記得我們兒時會到堂兄弟家中晚飯，因此好不熱鬧。他們的家遠較我家寬敞，大得可以多人一起玩捉迷藏，四處奔跑。」雖然孩提時代的嬉戲樂事已相隔數十載，但她仍然津津樂道。「雖然我在成長期間努力融入美國文化，但亦曾參加了一個美籍華人計劃，展開六星期的中國之行，其中兩周到訪我父母成長的村莊。我與丈夫年紀漸大，也後悔為何不讓子女更深入接觸中華文化。如今我們已難以延續眾多中式傳統。」不過，她也會低調地遵從一些過年習俗。她笑著說：「我們會在元宵節燉原隻鮮雞和買烤肉。家住紐約的奶奶恪守傳統，每年都會致電提醒我『雞』不可失！去年我在得知餃子亦是新年的傳統食品後，更自創習俗，包好一大堆餃子與朋友分享。」 ■



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KENNIS YUEN  
袁靜雯

