



Year of the Snake

	HMONG
New Year's name	Hmong New Year
Date in 2013	Beginning of November (usually follows the harvest season)
Examples of special foods	Papaya salad, sticky rice, boiled eggs, crab, steamed fish, steamed chicken

Journey with Newspapers In Education and Wing Luke Museum to learn how different Asian Americans celebrate the New Year!

Asian Americans bring with them many holidays from their ancestral homelands. One of the most important celebrations is the New Year.

Learn about Hmong New Year from Deng Her, a recent graduate of Washington State University. For the Hmong, who come from the mountainous regions of China, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand, the New Year is one tradition that continues to thrive in the United States. Deng shares with us his New Year traditions.

NEW YEAR'S TRADITIONS

Food remains an important part of any New Year's celebration. Deng recalls how it relates to the Hmong New Year:

"There are 30 dishes that are prepared for the three days of the New Year. Afterward, everyone goes home to eat and there isn't any kind of work for those three to four days. The foods that I remember most are papaya salads and sticky rice. There are also boiled eggs, which are given to certain individuals in a family. They would remove the egg shell to see how much of the egg the ancestral spirits have eaten, and that represents how lucky one will be for the coming year."

BEING UNIQUELY AMERICAN

Moving to a new country can be difficult for many people. Language barriers and new cultural expectations abound in a new land. For Deng, living here in the United States conjures up some mixed emotions:

"Being Hmong in the United States is a good thing. Hmong is a great minority that very few people know about. Most of the time I tell people that the Hmong were sought after by the CIA to help stop the spread of communism in Southeast Asia, mainly Laos, before the Vietnam War. During the recruitment, the CIA had promised that if the United States were to withdraw from the region that they would take the Hmong with them. But promises were left broken, and many Hmong lost their lives fleeing from Laos into Thailand for refuge. For the many Hmong who now live in the U.S., they have assimilated into their new environment and have accepted their new ways of life."

After moving to the United States, Deng says that his family still celebrates the New Year and like to keep traditions alive. "The Hmong community celebrates the New Year with a gathering like the one that is held at the Seattle Center every November. At night, some host private gatherings to allow the younger generations to meet each other, which, in a sense, it is more like a party, where music and games continue to bring the community together here in the U.S."



Deng Her with friends at the Hmong New Year Festival in Fresno. Photograph courtesy of Deng Her.



Deng Her (left) and friends in traditional, formal Hmong clothing. Photograph courtesy of Deng Her.



Deng's father holding a Qeej, a traditional Hmong New Year musical instrument. Photograph courtesy of Deng Her.



Hmong jewelry called Xauv (pronounced Sau). Photograph courtesy of Deng Her.

Celebrate New Year in the Chinatown-International District

Opening Celebration — Saturday, Feb. 2 (10 a.m. – 5 p.m.)
Wing Luke Museum (8th Avenue South and South King Street)
wingluke.org/2013newyear

11 a.m. Lion Dance
12–3 p.m. Zodiac scavenger hunt and stuffed animal petting zoo, New Year passport, games, crafts and prizes!

Celebrate the arrival of Year of the Snake with your students or private group. From interactive storytelling to cultural art activities, your group will experience many exciting New Year traditions. For more information, please contact the tour coordinator at 206.623.5124, ext. 133, or tours@wingluke.org.