

# U.n.l Bites

A compilation by the Inclusion & Integration Unit



Lunar New Year

Hari Raya Puasa

National Day

Mid-Autumn Festival

Deepavali

International Migrants Day  
(Special Edition)

# HARI RAYA PUASA: FOOD AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

HARI RAYA PUASA ISSUE 4

MAY 2021

## A compilation by the Inclusion & Integration Unit, Student Affairs Office

Hari Raya Puasa, also known as Hari Raya Aidilfitri or the festival of Eid, is celebrated at the end of Ramadan.<sup>1</sup> In Malay, *Hari Raya* means 'big (or grand) day of rejoicing', while *Puasa* means 'fasting'.<sup>2</sup> The festival is celebrated with a variety of dishes and treats.

**Beef rendang** is a stew cooked with spices and coconut milk.<sup>3</sup> The meat is tender and soft and has complex flavours from the spices used in the cooking process.

Rendang is a celebratory dish loved throughout Singapore, Indonesia and Malaysia and is often served during festive occasions such as weddings.<sup>4</sup>



Beef Rendang - Photo Credit: su-lin/Flickr

The cooking process requires patience, wisdom, and persistence.<sup>5</sup> The choice of spices and method require wisdom while patience and persistence are needed during the long cooking process.

## Did you know...

Rendang derives its name from the Indonesian term *merandang* or *randang*, which means 'slowly'.<sup>6</sup> The longer the cooking time, the tastier it is as the liquid thickens into a gravy.



Spices - Photo Credit: Ariyani Tedjo / Shutterstock

Rendang is best enjoyed with rice or **ketupat**, a diamond-shaped rice cake wrapped in coconut leaves.<sup>7</sup> In addition to being a side dish, ketupat pouches are used to decorate homes during Hari Raya Puasa.<sup>8</sup>



Ketupat - Photo Credit: Jpquidores/Wikimedia

<sup>1</sup> Singapore Tourism Board. "Hari Raya Aidilfitri." VisitSingapore.com. Accessed March 26, 2021. <https://www.visitsingapore.com/festivals-events-singapore/cultural-festivals/hari-raya-aidilfitri/>

<sup>2</sup> Mazelan Anuar, Heirwin Mohd Nasir and Sharon Koh. "Hari Raya Puasa." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. Accessed March 26, 2021. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_919\\_2004-12-20.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_919_2004-12-20.html)

<sup>3</sup> Chong, Jayme. "The Food of Hari Raya Puasa." Expat Living. May 5, 2020. <https://expatliving.sg/the-food-of-hari-raya-kuih-muih/>

<sup>4</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Rendang." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. Accessed March 18, 2021. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1767\\_2011-02-11.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1767_2011-02-11.html)

<sup>5</sup> Muthia Nurmufida, Gervasius H. Wangrinen, Risty Reinalta, and Kevin Leonardi. "Rendang: The Treasure of Minangkabau." *Journal of Ethnic Foods* 4, no. 4 (2017): 232–35. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jef.2017.10.005>.

<sup>6</sup> Khoo, Hedy. "3 things to know about rendang, beyond the fact that it's not crispy". The Straits Times. April 5, 2018. Accessed March 26, 2021. <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/food/3-things-to-know-about-rendang>

<sup>7</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Ketupat." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. Accessed March 18, 2021. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_2015-10-26\\_111827.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_2015-10-26_111827.html)

<sup>8</sup> National Heritage Board. "Weaving Ketupat". Roots. Accessed March 26, 2021. <https://www.roots.gov.sg/ich-landing/ich/weaving-ketupat>

# HARI RAYA PUASA: FOOD AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

HARI RAYA PUASA ISSUE 4

MAY 2021



Putu Piring -Photo Credit: Nasuru/Wikimedia

**Putu Piring** are circular steamed rice cakes cooked in moulds with *gula melaka* (palm sugar) and covered with freshly grated coconut.<sup>9</sup> In addition to being a breakfast food<sup>10</sup>, it is also eaten during festivities such as Hari Raya Puasa.<sup>11</sup>

**Sayur lodeh** is a dish of vegetables (such as cabbage, carrots and long beans) cooked in coconut milk.<sup>12</sup> *Sayur* means 'vegetables' in Malay, while *lodeh* indicates that the ingredients are cooked until soft.<sup>13</sup> In Singapore and Malaysia, the dish is often cooked with prawn stock, *belacan* (prawn paste) and *hae bee* (dried shrimp) which can be skipped when preparing vegetarian versions.<sup>14</sup>



Ondeh Ondeh-Photo Credit: ProjectManhattan/Wikimedia

**Ondeh Ondeh**, also known as *klepon* in Indonesia, are glutinous rice balls with palm sugar filling coated with grated coconut.<sup>15</sup> The dough is made from glutinous rice flour and pandan leaves which give the dough its green colour.



Sayur lodeh - Photo Credit: ProjectManhattan/Wikimedia

**Look out for our U.n.I Bites in 2022, where we cover other aspects of Hari Raya Puasa in Singapore.**

<sup>9</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Putu Piring." Infopedia. Accessed March 18, 2021. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1750\\_2011-01-05.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1750_2011-01-05.html)

<sup>10</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Putu Piring."

<sup>11</sup> Singapore Tourism Board. "Hari raya Aidilfitri." VisitSingapore.com. Accessed March 26, 2021. <https://www.visitsingapore.com/festivals-events-singapore/cultural-festivals/hari-aya-aidilfitri/>

<sup>12</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Lontong." Infopedia. Accessed March 18, 2021 [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_2015-09-28\\_105540.html?s=Sayur%20Lodeh](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_2015-09-28_105540.html?s=Sayur%20Lodeh)

<sup>13</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Lontong."

<sup>14</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Lontong."

<sup>15</sup> Saini, Azimin. "Recipe for Ondeh-ondeh or Klepon." Michelin Guide. Accessed March 26, 2021. <https://guide.michelin.com/sg/en/article/dining-in/recipe-for-ondeh-ondeh-or-klepon>

# LUNAR NEW YEAR: NEW YEAR FOODS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

LUNAR NEW YEAR ISSUE 4  
•  
FEBRUARY 2021

A compilation by the Inclusion & Integration Unit,  
Student Affairs Office



Photo credit: Szeyuen/Getty Images

**Steamboat**, also known as hotpot, is often enjoyed on Lunar New Year's Eve. Raw ingredients such as beef, vegetables, meatballs, fish and tofu are cooked in a hotpot full of flavoured soup as family members come together for their reunion dinner.<sup>1</sup>



Photo credit: Alpha/Flickr

**Fat choy** (发菜), or 'hair vegetable' in Cantonese, is a sea moss<sup>2</sup> that derives its name from its likeness to hair. Its popularity during Lunar New Year is due to its homophone *fat choy* (发财), which is part of the Cantonese new year greeting 'gung hei fat choy' to wish others good fortune.<sup>3</sup>



Photo credit: ProjectManhattan/Wikimedia Commons

**Seeds and Nuts** are often served as snacks during Lunar New Year.

Melon Seeds, known as *guazi* (瓜子) in Mandarin, symbolize fertility as the character *Zi* (子) means 'child'. Lotus seeds are similarly considered auspicious as the term in Mandarin (*lianzi*) means 'many sons'.<sup>4</sup>



Peanuts are *huasheng* (花生) or 'flower of life' in Mandarin. They are also known as 'longevity nuts' (长生果) and are thought to symbolise a long life<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "Intangible Cultural Heritage in Singapore." National Heritage Board, Singapore. Accessed December 5, 2020. <https://www.roots.gov.sg/-/media/Roots/ich/ich-booklet/ich-booklet.pdf?la=en>

<sup>2</sup> Tan, Bonny and Gao, Vicky. "Chinese New Year delicacies." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. Accessed December 5, 2020. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_27\\_2\\_2009-01-07.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_27_2_2009-01-07.html)

<sup>3</sup> Huang, Echo. "For the Cantonese, Lunar New Year means scouring the black market for an auspicious, delicious bacteria". QUARTZ. January 26, 2017. <https://qz.com/882734/for-the-cantonese-preparing-for-lunar-new-year-means-scouring-the-black-market-for-an-auspicious-delicious-bacteria/>

<sup>4</sup> Lim Beittler, Mandy. "Why We Eat Pineapple Tarts during CNY and the Meanings behind Other Goodies." Stomp. January 24, 2017. <https://stomp.straitstimes.com/singapore/why-we-eat-pineapple-tarts-during-cny-and-the-meanings-behind-other-goodies>.

<sup>5</sup> Tan, Bonny and Gao, Vicky. "Chinese New Year delicacies."

# LUNAR NEW YEAR: NEW YEAR FOODS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

LUNAR NEW YEAR ISSUE 4  
•  
FEBRUARY 2021

**Bak kwa** (also known as *rougan* in Mandarin) is a salty, sweet, dried meat similar to jerky and commonly made of pork. It is believed to have originated from ancient Chinese meat preservation and preparation techniques.<sup>6</sup>

Bak kwa is regarded as an important part of the Lunar New Year celebrations in Singapore and is usually offered to guests during visits or as gifts to relatives and friends. As the new year approaches, long queues are often seen at popular bak kwa outlets.<sup>7</sup>



Photo credit: Alpha/Flickr

**Pineapple tarts**, rich biscuits with pineapple jam, are loved for their sweetness and because 'pineapple' (*ong lai*) means 'fortune come' in Hokkien.<sup>8</sup> Pineapple tarts are popular gifts during Lunar New Year as they are believed to bring luck and prosperity for the coming year.



Photo credit: tbSMITH/Flickr

**Yusheng**, a salad with thin strips of raw fish and a variety of vegetables and sauces, is often served during Lunar New Year. *Yu* is the homophone for 'fish' and 'rich', while *sheng* means 'raw' and 'life'.

The ritual of enjoying yusheng often begins with family members coming together at the table to toss the ingredients while voicing auspicious words and phrases.

The two common types of yusheng consumed in Singapore are Cantonese yusheng and Teochew yusheng.<sup>9</sup>

**Look out for our U.n.I Bites in 2022, where we cover Lunar New Year celebrations across the region.**

<sup>6</sup> Makansutra Singapore: The frank & no frills guide to street food & restaurants in Singapore, (Singapore: Makansutra (S) Pte Ltd, 2012), p. 41.

<sup>7</sup> Guay, Ee Ling and Chee, Veronica. "Bak Kwa." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. Accessed December 5, 2020. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1746\\_2010-12-30.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1746_2010-12-30.html).

<sup>8</sup> Tan, Bonny and Gao, Vicky. "Chinese New Year delicacies." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. Accessed December 5, 2020. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_27\\_2\\_2009-01-07.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_27_2_2009-01-07.html)

<sup>9</sup> Tan, Bonny, Narayanan, Rakunathan and Lee Meiyu. "Yusheng." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. Accessed December 5, 2020. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_177\\_2009-01-08.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_177_2009-01-08.html)

# INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY

SPECIAL EDITION

DECEMBER 2020

A compilation by the Inclusion & Integration Unit, Student Affairs Office

## International Migrants Day

December 18<sup>th</sup> is International Migrants Day, a day to recognise the role and contributions of migrants around the world.<sup>1</sup> The opportunities and challenges of migration are multifaceted and are [linked to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals \(SDGs\)](#) which pledge to 'leave no one behind'.

While there is no universally accepted definition of 'migrant',<sup>2</sup> the term is used by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to reflect "a person who moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently, and for a variety of reasons".<sup>3</sup>



### Did you know...

There were approximately 272 million migrants around the world in 2019, including those moving for work opportunities or to study overseas.<sup>4</sup>



## Migrant Workers in Singapore

In Singapore, the term 'migrant' often signifies 'migrant workers' on Work Permits. Work Permit holders include domestic workers, as well as those working in the construction, marine shipyard and process (CMP) sectors<sup>5</sup> who make significant contributions to the development and maintenance of Singapore's infrastructure.

## The Impact of COVID-19

Migrant workers, particularly those in the CMP sectors living in large dormitories, have been thrust into the spotlight during the COVID-19 pandemic. While daily reports focused on the infection rates within the dormitories, individual stories serve as a reminder that each worker is more than just a number – an individual with their own history, experiences, hopes and dreams.

Learn about the lives of migrant workers in Singapore through the work of NTU students enrolled in Go-Far (Going Overseas for Advanced Reporting), a journalism module of the Wee Kim Wee School of Communication and Information.

<https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/students-go-far-with-migrant-workers>

<sup>1</sup> International Migrants Day, UNESCO, accessed 2 Nov 2020, <https://en.unesco.org/events/international-migrants-day>

<sup>2</sup> Who is a Migrant?, IOM, accessed 2 Nov 2020, <https://www.iom.int/who-is-a-migrant>

<sup>3</sup> Glossary on Migration, International Organization for Migration, s.v. "migrant," accessed 2 Nov 2020, [https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml\\_34\\_glossary.pdf](https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/iml_34_glossary.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> International Migrants Day, IOM, accessed 2 Nov 2020, <https://www.iom.int/migrantsday>

<sup>5</sup> Foreign workforce numbers, Ministry of Manpower, accessed 2 Nov 2020, <https://www.mom.gov.sg/documents-and-publications/foreign-workforce-numbers>

# INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS DAY

SPECIAL EDITION

•  
DECEMBER 2020

## Supporting Migrant Workers

The Migrant Workers' Centre (MWC) functions as a non-governmental organisation whose mission is to champion fair employment practices and the well-being of migrant workers in Singapore.

We spoke with Vignesh, a migrant worker and a MWC Volunteer Ambassador. Vignesh joined MWC's efforts to support migrant workers during the pandemic by making phone calls to fellow workers in quarantine to check on their wellbeing.

- *What do you miss most about home?*

I miss my family in India as I haven't been home in 4 years. My parents are farmers and I have a brother and a sister. I usually call them once a week on Sundays, but I called them every day during the Circuit Breaker.

- *What do you do to relax after work?*

I relax in my room or spend time with friends, talking and sharing stories. We also discuss topics related to work such as incoming materials, to prepare for the following day.

- *What is your favourite place in Singapore?*

Little India because it reminds me of home, with groups of friends meeting on Sundays to eat together [before COVID-19].

- *What are your future plans?*

When I return to India, I plan to open my own electrical shop providing replacements and mechanical repair services. I have experience in this area, so I hope to use my skills and start my own business.

### How can we support MWC's efforts?

We are gathering messages as One NTU, for MWC to share with their network of migrant workers. Click to [submit a message of support](#) for the migrant worker community.

[Click to submit a message of support](#)

**Find out how NTU students are embarking on initiatives to engage and support migrant workers!**

### RESEARCH

Through her internship with Soap Cycling, **Janice** (Year 4, Environmental Earth Systems Science) published a report on migrant workers' access to soap and sanitation facilities. [Read the report here.](#)

### INTERNSHIP

**Wai Yan** (Year 4, Psychology) is a Casework and Social Service **Intern at HealthServe**, addressing the complex needs of migrant workers. As a second-generation Singaporean, Wai Yan hopes to be a bridge between migrant and local communities.

### EDUCATE/ADVOCATE

In addition to interacting with migrant workers through weekly online sessions, the **NTU United Nations Students Association - Humanitarian Wing** organised a talk to raise awareness of the domestic worker community. Read their posts on the [implications of negative stereotypes](#) and the [impacts of COVID-19](#).

### VOLUNTEER

A team of **NTU International Students** conducted online English lessons for migrant workers from June to July through the **MAD WISH tutoring programme**.

# DEEPAVALI: ACTUAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

DEEPAVALI ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER 2020

A compilation by the Inclusion & Integration Unit,  
Student Affairs Office

Did you know...



Photo Credit: [Udayaditya Barua](#)



Photo credit: [Isuann L.](#)

**Lighting oil lamps (diya)** is a traditional activity that gives the 'Festival of Lights' its name.<sup>5</sup>

In South India, it is believed the demon king Naraka, who is likened to darkness, was defeated by Lord Krishna to bring brightness to people's lives. In Northern India, firecrackers and oil lamps celebrate Lord Rama of Ayuthya's victory against demon Ravana.<sup>6</sup> Lights displayed during Deepavali celebrate these mythical victories and signify that only light can counter darkness.<sup>7</sup>

At night, when it is time to visit and welcome family and friends, oil lamps are lit to invite fortune and the goddess Lakshmi into people's homes.<sup>8</sup>

## Thanksgiving prayers and pujas

Deepavali, also known as the 'Festival of Lights', is celebrated in Singapore and around the world. For many Hindu families, performing prayers and *pujas* (prayer rituals) before the deity Lakshmi is an important part of the celebrations. As the goddess of prosperity, fertility and good fortune,<sup>1</sup> farming families traditionally gave thanks for the harvest, while merchants sought blessings for the financial year ahead.<sup>2</sup> The morning of Deepavali involves thanksgiving prayers and *pujas* conducted at the family shrine, where young family members receive blessings from their elders.<sup>3</sup>

## Visiting temples, family and friends

After performing prayers and *pujas* at home, families visit the temple to join communal offerings and prayers. Temple prayers are led by a priest and food is often provided.<sup>4</sup> At dusk, family and friends gather and light *diya* (oil lamps) to brighten windows and doorways.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Heiligman, Deborah, and Vasudha Narayanan. Celebrate Diwali: with Sweets, Lights and Fireworks. Washington, D.C.: National Geographic, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Kinsley, David R. Hindu Goddesses: Visions of the Divine Feminine in the Hindu Religious Tradition. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Ho, Stephanie. "Deepavali." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. October 13, 2014. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_559\\_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_559_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali).

<sup>4</sup> Hong, Xinying. "Deepavali 2015: Religious Rites and Rituals at a South Indian Hindu Temple in Singapore." Yahoo! News. November 5, 2015. <https://sg.news.yahoo.com/deepavali-2015-religious-rites-rituals-035007827.html>.

<sup>5</sup> "Happy Diwali". National Geographic Education Resource Library. Accessed 11 September 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/happy-diwali/>

<sup>6</sup> Ho, Stephanie. "Deepavali." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. October 13, 2014. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_559\\_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_559_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali).

<sup>7</sup> "Happy Diwali". National Geographic Education Resource Library. Accessed 11 September 2020. <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/media/happy-diwali/>

<sup>8</sup> Ho, Stephanie. "Deepavali." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. October 13, 2014. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_559\\_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_559_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali).

# DEEPAVALI: ACTUAL DAY CELEBRATIONS

DEEPAVALI ISSUE 3

NOVEMBER 2020

**Rangoli** is a form of floor design used to decorate doorways and welcome deities during Deepavali.<sup>9</sup>

Colourful patterns are created on the ground using rice, flour, flower petals, powder or coloured sand to symbolise prosperity and prevent evil from entering the household.<sup>10</sup> The bright and intricate rangoli designs make use of symmetry and continuous lines as any gaps or break in the patterns are believed to allow evil spirits to enter.<sup>11</sup>

The decorative patterns play an important role in welcoming guests during the festive season<sup>12</sup> and the designs are traditionally passed down from each generation, often by female family members.<sup>13</sup>



Photo credit: [Mckay Savage](#)

## Did you know...



Photo Credit: [Christin Hume](#)

## Taking an oil bath very early in the morning

is a traditional practice by many Hindus during Deepavali. Three drops of oil are placed on the forehead before the morning bath, and the ritual is believed to be as significant as taking a bath in India's sacred Ganges river.<sup>14</sup>

## Rangoli designs are also an act of charity

and are traditionally made of edible items to feed insects and birds.<sup>15</sup> A new rangoli design may therefore be redrawn daily during the festive season to keep the patterns bright and prominent.<sup>16</sup>

**Look out for our U.n.I Bites in 2021, where we cover the types of food that are part of the Deepavali celebrations.**

<sup>9</sup> "Deepavali". Visit Singapore, Singapore Tourism Board. Accessed 11 September 2020. <https://www.visitsingapore.com/festivals-events-singapore/cultural-festivals/deepavali/>.

<sup>10</sup> M, Renuka. "Kolam." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. May 21, 2002. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_605\\_2004-12-23.html?s=rangoli](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_605_2004-12-23.html?s=rangoli).

<sup>11</sup> "Rangoli." Roots.sg, National Heritage Board. Accessed June 13, 2020. <https://www.roots.sg/learn/resources/ich/rangoli>.

<sup>12</sup> "Rangoli, a Colourful Tradition to Usher in Deepavali." The Straits Times. November 10, 2015. <https://www.straitstimes.com/singapore/rangoli-a-colourful-tradition-to-usher-in-deepavali>

<sup>13</sup> "Rangoli." Roots.sg, National Heritage Board. Accessed June 13, 2020. <https://www.roots.sg/learn/resources/ich/rangoli>.

<sup>14</sup> Ho, Stephanie. "Deepavali." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. October 13, 2014. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_559\\_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_559_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali).

<sup>15</sup> Ho, Stephanie. "Deepavali." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. October 13, 2014. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_559\\_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_559_2005-01-04.html?s=deepavali).

<sup>16</sup> "Rangoli." Roots.sg, National Heritage Board. Accessed June 13, 2020. <https://www.roots.sg/learn/resources/ich/rangoli>.

# MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL: FOOD OF THE FESTIVAL

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL ISSUE 3

OCTOBER 2020

A compilation by the Inclusion & Integration Unit,  
Student Affairs Office



**Festival Treats** are an important part of any festival celebration and are often only available during the festival season. As a widely celebrated occasion in Singapore and around the world, the Mid-Autumn Festival is famous for a variety of sweet and savoury treats.

Mooncakes are the most essential delicacy of the Mid-Autumn celebration. Eating mooncakes is often a way to celebrate a reunion or, if family members are physically separated, to acknowledge and think of loved ones.

Traditionally, mooncakes were made as offerings to the moon or shared within the family. Today, mooncakes are commercially produced and are commonly purchased as gifts for friends and family members.<sup>1</sup>

In addition to the mooncake, the pomelo is traditionally associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival, as the fruit becomes ripe during the festival season. Notably, the Chinese pronunciation of the pomelo, *youzi* (柚子) is the homophone for "protecting the children". Similar to the mooncake, the pomelo evokes a sense of union and wholesomeness, and has therefore become part of the festivities.<sup>2</sup>



A third type of food commonly associated with the festival is the hairy crab. Like the pomelo, it is in season and most flavorful during the Mid-Autumn celebrations and families often come together to sit around a table as they chat and enjoy the cooked crabs.<sup>3</sup>

## Did you know...

**Mooncakes** There are a variety of types of mooncakes, ranging from Beijing to Hong Kong and Taiwanese styles; from sweet to salty and spicy tastes; from nuts to meat fillings; from tender to crispy textures.

**Cantonese Style** mooncakes are the most notable and widespread. Originating from Guangdong and Guangxi province, they are now available across the globe and are characterised by a rich filling and thin crust. The crust is oily, giving it a smooth and soft texture. The filling is often represented by the premium white lotus seed paste, which is sweet and has a silky texture.



**Hokkien Style** mooncakes are known as "Scholar Cakes", as they are often eaten by exam candidates before exams. The filling usually contains winter melon, tangerine peel, and melon seeds, and can sometimes contain minced-meat fillings.

**Teochew Style** mooncakes are often differentiated by a flaky crust. *La bia* is a type of Teochew mooncake, which uses pork oil to cook the skin and fillings. Another type is *la gao*, a steamed black sesame cake.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Mid-Autumn Festival (Zhong Qiu Jie)." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. April 16, 1999. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_804\\_2005-01-13.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_804_2005-01-13.html).

<sup>2</sup> Bartholomew, Ian. "Mid-Autumn Fruit." Taipei Times. October 02, 2015. Accessed June 22, 2020. <http://www.taipetitimes.com/News/feat/archives/2015/10/03/2003629141>.

<sup>3</sup> Bin, Li. "Mid-Autumn Festival Customs – Old and New." Accessed June 22, 2020. [https://news.cgtn.com/news/31416a4e78597a6333566d54/share\\_p.html](https://news.cgtn.com/news/31416a4e78597a6333566d54/share_p.html).

<sup>4</sup> Quek, Eunice. "Taste of Tradition: Teochew, Hainanese and Hokkien Mooncakes." The Straits Times. January 19, 2016. Accessed June 22, 2020. <https://www.straitstimes.com/lifestyle/food/taste-of-tradition-teochew-hainanese-and-hokkien-mooncakes>.

# MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL: FOOD OF THE FESTIVAL

MID-AUTUMN FESTIVAL ISSUE 3  
•  
OCTOBER 2020

## Mooncakes and Tea

During the Mid-Autumn Festival, mooncakes are traditionally served with tea. As mooncakes are sweet and greasy, tea can help reduce the greasiness and aid digestion.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is also believed to have started during the Song Dynasty<sup>5</sup>, an era when tea was flourishing<sup>6</sup>.



## Variations of Tea

Various types of tea can be paired with different varieties of mooncake. Pu'er tea is often enjoyed with mooncakes containing nuts or meat, as Pu'er tea is refreshing but has a flavour strong enough to match the heavy filling.<sup>7</sup>

Oolong tea is considered an optimal choice for sweet or salty mooncakes<sup>8</sup>, as the taste is gentler compared to Pu'er tea. It is smoother and does not overpower the flavour of the mooncake.

Mooncakes which are sweet, such as those with red bean, are often accompanied by a lighter white tea to balance the sweetness of the filling.<sup>9</sup>

**Look out for our U.n.I Bites in 2021, where we cover 'About Being Together' as part of the Mid-Autumn Festival Celebrations.**

<sup>5</sup> Tan, Bonny. "Mid-Autumn Festival (Zhong Qiu Jie)." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. April 16, 1999. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_804\\_2005-01-13.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_804_2005-01-13.html).

<sup>6</sup> Qing, Ye. "Tea and Mooncakes: 3 Pairings You Should Try". CGTN. Accessed 1 September 2020. [https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-12/Tea-and-Mooncakes-3-pairings-you-should-try-JSt5kUUKyc/index.html#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20mooncakes%20and,Dynasty%20\(618%2D907\)](https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-12/Tea-and-Mooncakes-3-pairings-you-should-try-JSt5kUUKyc/index.html#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20mooncakes%20and,Dynasty%20(618%2D907)).

<sup>7</sup> Tan, Alethea. "Tea and Mooncakes: 5 Pairings You Should Try". Michelin Guide. Accessed 1 September 2020. <https://guide.michelin.com/sg/en/article/features/tea-and-mooncakes-5-pairings-you-should-try>.

<sup>8</sup> Qing, Ye. "Tea and Mooncakes: 3 Pairings You Should Try". CGTN. Accessed 1 September 2020. [https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-12/Tea-and-Mooncakes-3-pairings-you-should-try-JSt5kUUKyc/index.html#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20mooncakes%20and,Dynasty%20\(618%2D907\)](https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-12/Tea-and-Mooncakes-3-pairings-you-should-try-JSt5kUUKyc/index.html#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20mooncakes%20and,Dynasty%20(618%2D907)).

<sup>9</sup> Qing, Ye. "Tea and Mooncakes: 3 Pairings You Should Try". CGTN. Accessed 1 September. [https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-12/Tea-and-Mooncakes-3-pairings-you-should-try-JSt5kUUKyc/index.html#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20mooncakes%20and,Dynasty%20\(618%2D907\)](https://news.cgtn.com/news/2019-09-12/Tea-and-Mooncakes-3-pairings-you-should-try-JSt5kUUKyc/index.html#:~:text=In%20addition%20to%20mooncakes%20and,Dynasty%20(618%2D907)).

<sup>10</sup> Thomson, Julie R. "In Case You Didn't Know, Green and Black Tea Come from the Same Plant". Huffpost. Accessed 1 September 2020. [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/green-vs-black-tea\\_n\\_58ff7915e4b0c46f07829738](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/green-vs-black-tea_n_58ff7915e4b0c46f07829738).

<sup>11</sup> The Times of India. "10 Weird and Interesting Facts Every Tea Lover Must Know". Accessed 1 September 2020. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/life-style/food-news/10-weird-and-interesting-facts-every-tea-lover-must-know/photostory/69563249.cms>.

## Did you know...



Most types of tea, including black tea, green tea, white tea and oolong tea, are all derived from the same plant known as the *camellia sinensis*. The way the leaves are picked and processed produces the different variations of tea.<sup>10</sup>

The process of producing just one pound of tea (just under 0.5kg), requires approximately 2000 tea leaves.<sup>11</sup>

# NATIONAL DAY OF SINGAPORE: NAMING CONVENTIONS, SYMBOLS AND SIGNIFICANCE

NATIONAL DAY ISSUE 3

AUGUST 2020

A compilation by the Inclusion & Integration Unit,  
Student Affairs Office



Graphic illustration by Yee Chien Ping – Sang Nila Utama, Blue Ink.

**Singapore / Singapura** was first known as “Temasek”. “Temasek” was derived from the word “tasek”, which means “lake” in Malay.<sup>1</sup> It was Sang Nila Utama, a prince from Palembang, who discovered the island, “Temasek” in 1299 and renamed it “Singapura”.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Malay Annals, Sang Nila Utama came across Temasek during a hunting trip. He was standing on a stone to view the opposite shore, when he saw an island with white sands and decided to sail over. The prince and his attendants landed on the shores of the island known as “Temasek” and started hunting. While hunting, an animal with a red body, black head, and white breast showing great strength and size was spotted. It matched the description of a Singha or Lion in ancient times.<sup>3</sup>

The prince then decided to settle there and renamed the city “Singapura”, which means *Lion City* in Sanskrit.<sup>4</sup>



**The Merlion**, designed by Alec Fraser-Brunner, in 1964 for use as the logo for the Singapore Tourist Promotion Board (now known as Singapore Tourism Board). It has a lion's head and body of a fish and has since become a famous Singapore's icon. The Merlion's body signifies Singapore's early-stage as a fishing village while its head represents the sighting of a lion by Sang Nila Utama.<sup>5</sup>



**The Lion Head** is a national symbol of Singapore that was introduced in 1986 to foster a sense of national identity. The Lion Head in solid red against a white background symbolises strength, courage and excellence. The five partings of the mane represent Singapore's ideals of democracy, peace, progress, justice and equality.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Temasek/Singapura.” eResources. Accessed April 21, 2020. <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/d24d6da6-0013-4a12-a6bc-68ad1497148e>.

<sup>2</sup> “Sang Nila Utama.” eResources. Accessed April 23, 2020. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopeia/articles/SIP\\_93\\_2005-01-26.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopeia/articles/SIP_93_2005-01-26.html).

<sup>3</sup> “Malay Annals.” Google Books. Google. Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://books.google.com.sg/books?id=J9JAAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA42#v=onepage&q&f=false>.

<sup>4</sup> “Temasek/Singapura.” eResources. Accessed April 21, 2020. <http://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/history/events/d24d6da6-0013-4a12-a6bc-68ad1497148e>.

<sup>5</sup> Tan, Joanna HS, and Yong Chun Yuan. “Merlion.” Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore. June 29, 2011. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopeia/articles/SIP\\_938\\_2004-12-27.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopeia/articles/SIP_938_2004-12-27.html).

<sup>6</sup> “The Lion Head Symbol.” NHB Corp - Homepage. August 16, 2019. <https://www.nhb.gov.sg/what-we-do/our-work/community-engagement/education/resources/national-symbols/the-lion-head-symbol>.

# NATIONAL DAY OF SINGAPORE: NAMING CONVENTIONS, SYMBOLS AND SIGNIFICANCE

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Photo by lamg - [A Cluster of Vanda Miss Joaquim orchids](#), CCBY3.0

**Singapore's National Flower** is represented by the first orchid hybrid successfully bred in Singapore, known as Vanda Miss Joaquim. It was officially launched on 15 April 1981 as the national flower. This one-of-a-kind hybrid orchid was named after her creator, a successful horticulturist, Miss Agnes Joaquim. The Vanda Miss Joaquim was chosen for its "resilience and year-round blooming quality"<sup>7</sup> and a reflection of Singapore's multicultural background.<sup>8</sup>

## Designs of Singapore Notes and Meaning



The Portrait series currency notes were launched on 9 September 1999. The highlight of Singapore's fourth series of currency notes is a portrait of Singapore's first President, the late Encik Yusof bin Ishak. It was chosen to honour his contributions to Singapore.

The front of each denomination shows the National Coat of Arms, a symbol of the Singapore Lion, the word "Singapore" in the four official languages, the portrait's watermark, as well as the Monetary Authority of Singapore Chairman's seal and signature. The back of every note displays a special motif based on Encik Yusof bin Ishak's life. The motifs are Arts, Sports, Youth, Garden City, Education, Economics and Government.<sup>9</sup>

**Look out for our U.n.l Bites in 2021, where we cover the National Day Celebrations.**



The **\$2 note** shows an educator interacting with a group of students. The background features three educational institutions; Victoria Bridge School (right), the old Raffles Institution at Bras Basah Road (middle) and the College of Medicine (left). The institutions symbolise the progression of primary, secondary and tertiary education in Singapore.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, Encik Yusof studied in both Victoria Bridge School and Raffles Institution.<sup>11</sup>

## Do you know...

Take out a note and look at the top of the front note closely. Do you see a line of microtext, "Monetary Authority of Singapore", spelled out repeatedly above the four official languages of the word "Singapore"?



It gets even better on a \$1000 note, which has a microprint of the entire lyrics of the national anthem on the back of the note!<sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "National Flower." NHB Corp - Homepage, November 6, 2017. <https://www.nhb.gov.sg/what-we-do/our-work/community-engagement/education/resources/national-symbols/national-flower>.

<sup>8</sup> Balamurugan, Anasuya, and Sitragandi Arunalam. "Vanda Miss Joaquim." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore, October 5, 2016. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_752\\_2005-01-10.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_752_2005-01-10.html).

<sup>9</sup> "Circulation Currency: Notes." Monetary Authority of Singapore. Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://www.mas.gov.sg/currency/Singapores-Circulation-Currency-Notes>.

<sup>10</sup> "Circulation Currency: Notes." Monetary Authority of Singapore. Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://www.mas.gov.sg/currency/Singapores-Circulation-Currency-Notes>.

<sup>11</sup> Omar, Marsita. "Yusof Bin Ishak." Infopedia. National Library Board Singapore, July 26, 2006. [https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP\\_1097\\_2006-07-28.html](https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/infopedia/articles/SIP_1097_2006-07-28.html).

<sup>12</sup> "Security Features of Singapore Paper Currency Notes." Monetary Authority of Singapore. Accessed April 21, 2020. <https://www.mas.gov.sg/currency/Identifying-Genuine-Currency/security-features-of-singapore-paper-currency-notes>.