2021: The Year of the Ox
Lunar New Year is celebrated in many countries, and it commemorates the beginning of a calendar year based on the cycles of the moon and sun. In China, they use the Chinese zodiac, a repeating cycle of 12 years, with each year being represented by an animal and its attributes. This year, Lunar New Year will be celebrated on Friday, February 12, and 2021 is the Year of the Ox.
Many families celebrate Lunar New Year by making dumplings, gathering and sharing a meal with family and friends, gifting red envelopes, and attending parades with lion and dragon dances, firecrackers and lucky red and gold colors.

Stories of Lunar New Year

*Fairmeadow parent Amber Chang Smith (parent of Ella, 2nd grade) shares a traditional story:*

There are many myths about the origin of Lunar New Year, many of them involve a monster called Nian. Here is the version that was told in my family.

There was a monster called Nian that lived in the mountains in ancient China. Nina would wake up hungry on the eve of every New Year. He would come down from the mountains and destroy crops and livestock in villages.

Finally, a god took pity on the people and descended to the villages in disguise as an old man. The old man told the people that Nian was afraid of the color red, and did not like loud noises. He taught the villagers to put up red decorations, wear red, and burn bamboo and wood to make loud crackling noises to drive Nian back to the mountains. From that day forward, a Chinese custom is to wear red, hang red decorations, and light firecrackers to celebrate the New Year.

The Chinese character for Nian is the same as the one for “year.” The Chinese phrase for the New Year celebration is “guo nian.” The direct translation for “guo nian” is passing over new year (or surviving Nian).

**Storybook Read Aloud**

Enjoy this read aloud by our teacher librarian, Mrs. Brown: *Silk Peony, Parade Dragon*, by Elizabeth Steckman, and illustrated by Carol Inouye

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/18Gzp82teryuom2RFeih6XSo29-KcbfuowZ9ZeFb3zs/edit?usp=sharing](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/18Gzp82teryuom2RFeih6XSo29-KcbfuowZ9ZeFb3zs/edit?usp=sharing)

**Celebrate Safely**

Since we can't gather with friends and family this year, here are some ideas to celebrate:
• Hang red decorations on your door to celebrate the New Year.
• Create a lion or dragon mask with your art supplies, and have a mini-parade around the house.
• Upcycle bubble wrap from those deliveries! Place the bubble wrap on the floor, (bubbles up!) and let the kids jump on it to create their own fireworks.
• Enjoy videos of parades from previous years from all over the world, via YouTube.

**Craft: Make a Lucky Dragon**
• Using construction paper (or whatever paper you have,) and oil pastels, chalk or crayons, start by drawing a long wavy line the length of your paper.
• Using bright colors, add shapes to either side of the line - triangles, rectangles, semi-circles, and any type of line works!
• Add a dragon head, and a tail to each end of the line.
• Feel free to add fireworks, or any other detail to make the dragon unique!

**Recipe: Traditional Chinese Dumplings, from Miss Panda Chinese**
餃子 = jiaó zi = dumpling

“Do you know dumplings, 餃子 | 饺子 jiǎo zi, are called 元寶|元宝 yuán bǎo during the Chinese Lunar New Year celebration? Dumplings are called 元寶|元宝 yuán bǎo because the shape of a dumpling resembles a block of gold in Ancient China, which represents wealth!”

When the cooking method varies the name of the dumpling dish changes:
Boiled dumplings are called … Shuǐ jiǎo 水餃 (water dumplings)
Boiled dumplings in the soup are called … Tāng jiǎo 湯餃 (soup dumplings)
Steamed dumplings are called … Zhēng jiǎo 蒸餃 (steamed dumplings)
Pan fried dumplings are called … Jiān jiāo 煎餃 (pan-fried dumplings)

Traditional Dumpling Ingredients:
● 50 round wrappers - store bought (Homemade wrappers recipe below)
● 1-2 lbs. ground pork (or ground turkey, chicken, or beef)
• ½-1 Tbsp. fresh ginger, peeled and minced
• 2-4 garlic cloves, minced (optional)
• 1-2 Tbsp. Green onion, thinly sliced
• 3-5 Tbsp. Soy sauce OR pinch of salt to taste
• 1 Tbsp. Sesame oil
• 1 egg, beaten (optional)
• 5 cups Chinese cabbage, finely shredded (approx. 2/3 to 1 whole)

Preparation:
1. In a large bowl, mix the shredded cabbage with 1 Tbsp. salt. Stir and combine well. Set aside for 10-15 minutes, and then squeeze out the water from cabbage.
2. In another large bowl, combine ground pork, ginger, green onion, soy sauce (or salt,) sesame oil and egg*. Mix well.
3. Add salted cabbage.
4. Place 1 teaspoon of pork filling onto each round wrapper. Moisten the edge with water, and fold the edge over to form a half circle shape. Pinch sides to seal in filling. Set dumplings aside on a lightly floured surface until ready to cook.
5. Freeze the dumplings before cooking if you are making them like pot stickers (pan fried style).

To Cook:
1. Boil a large pot of water.
2. Gently place dumplings in boiling water, gently stirring occasionally.
4. Add ¼ cup of water in the pot when the water is boiling 2-3 mins. (approx. 12-15 minutes.)
5. When the dumplings float, they are ready.
6. Serve immediately with dipping sauce (recipe follows.)

Dipping Sauce:
1. Mix together:
   • 2 Tbsp. soy sauce
   • ½ tsp. vinegar
   • 1-2 drops sesame oil
2. Add minced garlic for more flavor (optional)

** When reheating leftovers, try the pot sticker style: heat 2 Tbsp. of oil in pan, place the dumplings in the the frying pan. Cook 1-2 minutes per side until slightly brown & crispy.

Homemade Dumpling Wrappers:
1. Combine 2 cups of flour + 2 Tbsp. more for dusting
2. Add 1/2 – 2/3 cup of cold water at room temperature. Add water gradually, until dough is firm and smooth.
3. Shape dough into a firm and smooth round.
4. Cover dough and let rest for 10 minutes.
5. Roll the dough into a thin flat piece, and use a round cutter to make the wrappers.