

Mid-Autumn Festival

The Mid-Autumn Festival (中秋节, *zhōng qiū jié*) is held on the fifteenth day of the eighth month in the Lunar Calendar. The holiday takes its name from the fact that it's celebrated in the middle of autumn, when the moon is at its fullest and brightest. The holiday is also known as the "Moon Festival." Chinese believe a full moon is a symbol of peace, prosperity, and family reunion. Therefore, the date is also commonly referred to as the "Day of Reunion" and is a time when family members gather together to celebrate the festival.

History

Chinese have observed the Mid-Autumn Festival for over 3,000 years, dating back to the ancient Shang Dynasty (1600–1046 BC). It has been considered such an important day that many poems were written about it, stories and legends on the festival are widespread, and generations of Chinese have speculated about its origins.

Legends

There are many legends associated with the holiday. One of the most ancient and popular legends is *Cháng É Flying to the Moon*. According to this legend, one day ten suns appeared at once in the sky. The Emperor ordered a famous archer, *Hòu Yì* to shoot down the nine extra suns. Once the task was accomplished, the Goddess of Western Heaven rewarded *Hòu Yì* with a pill that would make him immortal. However, his wife, *Cháng É* found the pill, took it, and was banished to the moon as a result. Legend says that her beauty is greatest on the day of the Moon festival.

Mooncakes (yuè bǐng)

Mooncakes are the treat most closely associated with the Mid-Autumn Festival. Mooncakes are thick round pastries with a flaky crust completely surrounding a pasty filling. A wide variety of fillings are available. Popular choices include red bean, lotus seed, mung bean, mixed nuts with ham, ice cream, and green tea. In Chinese culture, a round shape symbolizes completeness and unity, so traditionally mooncakes have been round. Modern mooncakes, however, come in a variety of shapes, with square mooncakes commonly seen. The pictures to the right show two common varieties of mooncake.

Yinghua Academy Celebration

Every staff member receives a mooncake from YACA to wish him or her a happy Mid-Autumn Festival. Students also have an opportunity to sample mooncakes in their classroom.

If you wish to purchase mooncakes, they are available locally at *Keefer Court Bakery and Cafe*, located on 326 Cedar Ave, Minneapolis, MN 55454 and *United Noodles*, located on 2015 E 24th St., Minneapolis, MN 55404.

For more information about the festival and foods:

<http://www.chinahighlights.com/festivals/mid-autumn-festival-tradition.htm>

http://www.china.org.cn/top10/2013-09/18/content_30062182.htm

<https://asianinspirations.com.au/asian-culture/why-are-pomelo-fruits-eaten-during-moon-festival/>

Happy Mid-Autumn Festival! 中秋节快樂

