

This is a printer friendly version with many of the photos removed

Chinese New Year Talismans & the Kitchen God

© Written by Michael Hanna 2006



Chinese New Year Talismans (Couplets, Chun Lian) are traditional festive items that are used as wall décor due to their auspicious nature. They are usually printed in black ink on red paper; you can hang these Chinese couplets around your house or on your main doors, or present them as gifts to send good wishes to others.

The two projects below make a lovely job for the young and old, especially for children as it also teaches the cultures of other countries. So if you are a school teacher please feel free to download and use in your classroom. You can download the printer friendly version by [clicking this link](#). This can also be saved to your computer hard drive so you can email onto friends and family.

The Couplets are used by most Chinese families and business, whether in Hong Kong Kuala Lumpa, Singapore, Australia, USA or the UK, they are very powerful and are said to ward off all evil and bring peace, happiness and good fortunes to the occupants if displayed in the correct way as shown below.

Red is a very lucky colour for the Chinese, it frightens off the New Year monster 'Nian' who arrives at this time of year and destroys crops and homes. "Nian" has three weaknesses: it was frightened by noise, sunshine, and the colour red. So villagers built fires, set off firecrackers, and painted the doors to their houses bright red and placed red couplets beside the doors. Red to the Chinese also represents good fortune, fame and riches.

These couplets can be hung outside beside the main door and also inside in important rooms like the kitchen, bedroom and lounge. They are also hung either side of the cooker or hob. They are normally hung for two months after the New Year although many people leave them all year round for continued good luck.

Printing Instructions

I have copied below two versions, one you can print straight from your colour printer and the other you can colour in yourself or print onto red paper, this is a nice project to give to children and if you are a school teacher please feel free to print this out and use in your class, all we ask is you do not alter or change any of the text on there.

Black & white version:

If you have red card or paper (A4 size) you can print straight onto this or if you wish to make it a family affair you can get your children or yourself to colour it in. It is very common for the family to get involved and usually the head of the household is given the job of placing the couplets.

Make sure the paper/card or colour you use to colour-in is the same bright red as shown below.

Colour version:

This can be printed straight from your printer.

Hanging Instructions:

Cut the couplets in half from top to bottom and place either side of your main doors, you should also place on either side of your cooker or hob.

If you have access to a laminate machine it would be wise to laminate them or at least wrap them in a clear protective cover, this is more important for outside rather than the ones you hang by the cooker.

These are traditionally left on the door or cooker area for two months after Chinese New Year although many families leave them all year round for continued good luck but they must be renewed each year so save this document for every year and pass onto as many friends and families as you can as it is considered very auspicious to receive a couplet especially without charge.

Wooden protection talismans:

You can also buy ready made ones like the type below, they are made of wood and hung all over the home and in particular by the entrance doors for protection. They are actually very nice and we use them in our own home and business each year. If you [follow this link](#) (about half way down the page) you will see further designs.

Red Envelopes (Ang Pow)

Red envelopes also known as “red packets” “Ang Pow” "laisee" or “Hung-Bao” are also an important part of a traditional Chinese New Year. I have written an interesting article on this and also made another project should you wish to make your own. If you follow this link you will find more details. <http://www.fengshuiweb.co.uk/advice/redenvelopes.htm>

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The Kitchen God is regarded as the guardian of the family hearth (cooker). He was recognised as the originator of fire, which was necessary for cooking and was also the God of household morals. By tradition, the Kitchen God left the house on the 23rd of the last month to report to heaven on the behaviour of the family. At this time, the family did everything possible to obtain a favourable report from the Kitchen God. On the evening of the 23rd, the family would give the Kitchen God a ritualistic farewell dinner with sweet sticky foods and honey. Some said this was a bribe, others said with the offerings of sticky sweets and honey sealed his mouth from saying bad things about them.

Free from the ever-watchful eyes of the Kitchen God, who was supposed to return on the first day of the New Year, the family now prepared for the upcoming festivities.

Chinese New Year presents are similar in spirit to Christmas presents, although the Chinese tended more often to give food items, such as fruits and tea. The last days of the old year was also the time to settle accumulated debts.

The image below is the kitchen God with his Consort. It should be printed and placed above the oven or hob whichever is used most. You must renew the image every Chinese New Year.



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