



Chinese New Year Couplets (Talismans) & the Kitchen God.

A great school Chinese New Year project for the year of the Horse 2014.

©Originally written by Michael Hanna and Revised by Daniel Hanna 2014

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Are you really prepared for 2014?



Chinese New Year Talismans Couplets and the Kitchen God are very traditional festive items that are used all over Asia and nowadays the whole world as wall decoration because of their auspicious properties. These are normally printed in black ink on a thick bright red paper; you would normally hang these Chinese couplets around the different rooms of your home or by your front door; you can also present the Talismans as a gift to send good wishes to your friends and family throughout the year of the Horse.

The Talisman Couplets and the Kitchen God make a very lovely gift to print out and give as a present to a family member or friends unconditionally during or on the buildup of Chinese New Year 2014 although they can be given and placed at any time of the year in the year of the Horse with great results.

The two projects on this page are a fantastic activity for people of all ages and are a great task at school as children will especially enjoy this as it teaches them the cultures of different countries. If you are a teacher, please feel free to download this file and use it in your classroom.

You can download the printer friendly version of this page using the banners at the top and bottom of the page as this saves on printer ink by removing all side banners. The more people you share this project with, the better.

The Couplets/Talismans are usually used by most Chinese families and businesses but over the last 30 years, this has become a much more common practise with people from all walks of life. The Talismans are very powerful in any area of the world whether that is Hong Kong, Canada, Singapore, USA, Australia or the UK, they are very powerful and are said to discourage all evil and bring peace, harmony, happiness and good fortunes to the occupants of the building they are placed in if they are displayed in the correct way as shown below. These are very good to use in the year of the Yang Wood Horse 2014.

The colour red is known to be a very auspicious colour for the Chinese as it is said to frighten off the monster "Nian" who arrives and destroys crops and homes during Chinese New Year. "Nian" has three weaknesses which are noise, sunshine and the colour red. The Villagers used to build huge fires and would paint the front door of their house red with red couplets placed behind the doors; they would then set off firecrackers around their village to scare the "Nian" monster away. The colour red also represents good fortune, fame and riches to the Chinese.

These Feng Shui Couplets and Talismans can also be positioned outside your home, flat or office beside the main door and also inside your home or office in any important rooms like the kitchen, bedroom, office and lounge. The Talismans should also be hung on either side of the cooker or hob in your kitchen as of 31st January 2014. The Talismans are usually hung for two months after the beginning of the new year (31st January 2014) although a large majority of people including myself, leave them in place all year round for continued good luck throughout the year.

Printing Instructions for the Talismans/Couplets

I have attached two versions below which are both the colour and black and white version; you can print the colour version straight from your colour printer and you can print the black and white version and colour it in yourself or print onto red paper; this is a very nice project to give to children and if you are a teacher and would like to print this out for your students, please feel free to use this 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 (we recommend you print this on A4 paper) you can print straight onto the red paper or of if you wish to make it a family affair, you could print this on normal white paper or card and get your children to colour the talismans. It is a very common practise for the whole family to get involved in this activity and usually the head of the household will 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:

You can print this version straight from your printer in full colour format and cut it out and assign the head of the household the task of placing them.

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 laminating machine, it would be a good idea to laminate them or at least wrap them in a clear protective cover although this is more important for outside rather than the ones you hang by the cooker as they can become weathered very quickly when exposed to the elements but you could replace them as soon as they become weathered.

These very effective Couplets/Talismans 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 including myself 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. I tend to change mine two or three times a year and will normally print a few copies out at the beginning of the year. Do not worry if you lose this document as we post a revised version on the website every year for you all.



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/angpow.htm>

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and safety in all seasons

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Kitchen God

In ancient Chinese mythology, the Kitchen god, who was named Zao Jun which literally translates to "stove master" or Zao Shen which translates "stove god or stove spirit", is the most important of all of the Chinese domestic Gods that protect the hearth and family. In addition he is distinguished in Vietnamese culture as well.

The Kitchen God has always been seen as the guardian of the family heart (cooker). He was known in old times as the inventor of fire which of course, is necessary for cooking and was also the God of household morals.

Traditionally, the Kitchen God would leave the home on the 23rd day of the last month to report to heaven on the behaviours of each family. The family would try to do everything that they could to try and impress the Kitchen God so that he reported to heaven with good comments about their family. On the evening of the 23rd, the family would give the Kitchen God a ritualistic goodbye dinner with sweet sticky foods and honey. Some would say that this was to bribe him while others would say that the sticky sweets and honey would seal his mouth from saying bad things about them.

Once the family was 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 would now prepare for the upcoming celebrations associated with Chinese New Year.

Presents given on Chinese New Year are very similar to those given at Christmas time although the Chinese will usually give gifts of food such as fruits and tea. The last days of the old year are also an ideal time to settle accumulated debts with others.

Though there are so many stories on how Zao Jun became known as the Kitchen god, the most popular story dates right back to around the 2nd Century BC. Zao Jun was originally a mortal being who was living on earth and was known by the name of Zhang Lang. He eventually became married to an honourable woman and ended up falling in love with a younger woman. Zhang Lang left his wife to be with this younger woman and, as punishment for this adulterous act; the heavens afflicted him with ill-fortune. Zhang Lang became blind and his younger lover abandoned him, leaving him to resort to begging on the streets to support himself.

One day, while begging, Zhang Lang came across the house of his former wife and came face to face with her out on the street but of course, being blind, he did not recognise her. Despite his shoddy treatment of her, she took pity on him, and invited him in; she cooked him a fabulous meal and tended to him lovingly; he then related his story to her. As he shared his story, Zhang Lang became overwhelmed with unhappiness and the pain of his error and began to cry. Upon hearing him apologise, Zhang's ex-wife told him to open his eyes and his vision was returned to him. Recognising the wife he had abandoned, Zhang Lang felt so such shame that he threw himself into the kitchen hearth, not realising that it was lit. His former wife attempted to save him, but all she managed to salvage was one of his legs.

The devoted woman then created a shrine to her former husband above the fireplace, which began Zao Jun's association with the stove in Chinese homes. To this day, a fire poker is sometimes referred to as "Zhang Lang's Leg".

The print out below is the kitchen God with his Consort. You should print this out and place it above your oven or hob, whichever one you use the most. You must renew the print out every Chinese New Year.



Visit the pages below for further details on 2014 Chinese New Year etc.

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