



EAST ASIAN HOLIDAYS

LESSON TWO THE LANTERN FESTIVAL DR. XIAOBING LI



Fifteen days after the Chinese New Year comes the Lantern Festival, another important holiday for the East Asian people. The festival coincides with the first full moon of the year. Beautiful lanterns are displayed everywhere at night, and lantern shows and contests are organized. The lion dance is popular for the celebration in Vietnam, and in Japan local parades are well organized to include local musicians, martial arts crews, and dancers with festive gongs, umbrellas, and fans.

The typical food for this holiday is yuanxiao, which the southerners call tangyuan. These are round dumplings made of glutinous rice flour and stuffed with a variety of sweet fillings, including sweet red or green bean paste, sesame seeds, lotus seeds, jujube (Chinese date) paste, nuts, and brown sugar. The type of yuanxiao and ways of eating them are numerous. It is most often served in soup, but it is sometimes pan-fried or deep-fried.

The most common drink during the holiday is tea (cha or chai in Chinese and Korean). Tea is an important part of the Chinese people's social life. It is believed that drinking tea regularly can dispel fatigue, help digestion, prevent some diseases, and generally benefit health. In



comparison with Western tea, the Chinese make a cup of tea from tea leaves, rather than from a tea bag or powder. The standard set for tea making includes a water cooker, teapot, filter, and cup. Before preparing tea, East Asian people ask the preference of their guests to determine whether they prefer green tea, red tea, oolong, or scented tea. The host will then put tea leaves into the teapot and pour boiled water into it.



REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. When do the Asian people celebrate their Lantern Festival each year?
2. What is tea called in Korean?
3. In what ways does tea making differ between Americans and East Asian people?
4. Do you have a favorite type of tea? What are some of the health benefits of your favorite tea?

