

FASHION LIFESTYLE ART ENTERTAINMENT

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JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2012

FREE

Lunar New Year & Valentines Special Issue

**Hotel Hansar is
Bangkok's Best**

**The Dragon
Comes Alive at
The Palazzo**

**The Zodiac
of Love**

**Lucky Treats for
the New Year**

yellowmags.com



Photo by Collin Kelly

Time is such a fascinating subject when you think in terms of the calendar. There was an Egyptian calendar, Lunar calendar, Roman (Julian) calendar and Gregorian calendar. Throughout history the evolution of time and calendars has transitioned from a need to know the best time to plant the crops that sustain us to keeping track of all the events that we schedule and which define our modern lives.

Julius Caesar was so annoyed by the imprecision of the then current calendar that by imperial decree he declared that 46 B.C. would have 445 days, so that the calendar would more closely align with the seasons moving forward. Henceforth, the New Year was to begin on January 1 and not the spring equinox in late March. Despite the correction, the Julian calendar was still 11 1/2 minutes longer than the actual solar year, an amount of time that adds up over the centuries. Pope Gregory XIII sought to fix this inaccuracy and decreed that Thursday, October 4, 1582, would be the last day of the Julian calendar and that the next day would be Friday, October 15, the first day of the Gregorian calendar. The recognition of periodic leap years would maintain the calendar's accuracy which has continued to this day. Notwithstanding the leap year fix, the current calendar gains an average of 26 seconds per year. It will equal one full day in 3,323 years.

The Chinese calendar is based on numerous precise astronomical observations of the longitude of the sun and the phases of the moon. It is so complicated that I dare not try to summarize it here. Suffice it to say that in most Asian societies, the Gregorian calendar is relied upon for day-to-day life and the Chinese calendar is used to recognize important holidays such as the Lunar New Year.

On this note, it is only fitting that I wish you Happy New Years in the plural to cover the Gregorian New Year of 2012 and the Lunar New Year of 4710, the Year of the Water Dragon. In this issue, we highlight a long list of New Year's "Do's and Don'ts" and advise you how to observe the 15 days of the Lunar New Year along with a host of traditional activities intended to bring luck and prosperity. We have highlighted traits of each animal zodiac sign that impact their love lives in preparation for Valentine's Day which has gained in popularity in Asia. We show you how the different Asian countries have added their cultural spin to this holiday of love. They may give us some ideas!

V. Hoang



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The color yellow has played a recurrent symbolic role throughout the history of Asian culture. It symbolizes the earth that sustains all life, yet has been embraced by Buddhist monks as an expression of unchallenged power. Such is the role of yellow: always revered but in different ways under different circumstances.

The mission of *Yellow Magazine* is to introduce our readers to the artistic, fashion, lifestyle and entertainment contributions made by Asian Americans. It is our hope that the depth and breadth of the topics and events we cover do justice to the pride that the color yellow has represented throughout the millennia. As the editor in chief of *Yellow Magazine*, my last name is Hoang, which also means yellow. Just as I am proud of my name, I am proud of my heritage, and proud of *Yellow Magazine*.

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On the cover

Sweater by Robert Rodriguez

\$495

Pants by Vince \$995

Model: Song Faulkner at

Neal Hamil Models

January / February 2012



DOGE TABLE
Design by Carlo Scarpa



The Doge table was produced by Simon in 1968, although it was originally first designed by Carlo Scarpa as part of the furniture for the work he was carrying out on the Zentner house in Zurich. While the original table top was in wood, with decorative coloured marble inserts, when

Gavina saw it he, openly criticised the fact that you could not see through its top to admire the magnificent frame below, and later convinced Scarpa to replace this with a glass top in order to better highlight the table's extraordinary architecture and its expressive and inventive combination of materials.

The very thick, flat, drawn steel, glazed finish frame is the essential part of the table, and the refined elegance of the resting mechanism is made the most of by the transparent float glass.

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Hansar Hospitality
Wins Hearts

Bangkok's Best

by MATT SIMS

After the flooding that deluged Bangkok and large portions of Thailand this past year, you may be wondering when it will be safe to visit again. Having just returned from Bangkok, I can tell you without hesitation that now is a great time to visit. While certain parts of the country were devastated and a few won't be ready for visitors for a while, most of the main points of interest that attract an estimated 14 million tourists to Thailand every year are in great shape and ready for you to explore.

I spent a week in the middle of Bangkok and saw no signs of flooding. The downtown areas where most people go to stay and play and eat all that incredible Thai food were untouched. The incredible beaches to the south, the islands reachable via an hour long plane flight, the beautiful hills and jungles in the north and the Suvarnabhumi Airport were all unaffected. So, you can rest assured that you can enjoy your holiday without facing any water-related inconveniences.

And now that you know Bangkok is ready, the question is where to stay? Well, let me answer that question with a question. Why not stay at the number one hotel in the number one destination in South East Asia which, according to tripadvisor.com, is the Hansar (hansarbangkok.com)?

The rankings on the website are based on actual traveler reviews and not on advertising dollars spent or on the preferences of professional travel writers. So, of course, I had to see for myself how this small boutique hotel of which I was unfamiliar managed to overtake the better known giants in the hotel industry and 648 others to be ranked as the best hotel in a city of 6 million people. After a short stay, I found a host of reasons (pun intended).

The Hansar is ideally located. The view from my room of the Bangkok skyline near the Royal Bangkok Sports Center with its horse race track and golf course rivals any other in the city. Let the regular tourists stay in the overcrowded riverside hotels where they have to spend half of their time getting to the heart of Bangkok's action. It is much more preferable to be on a quiet side street off Rajadamri Road that is close to the BTS Skytrain station and a short walk (or shorter Skytrain ride) to Bangkok's best shopping and eating at Siam Paragon and Central World shopping centers. You could find me every day at these two places trying new restaurants and strolling through countless high end shops. The dozens of restaurants and food sellers in Siam Paragon provided me with my favorite dining venue because of the sheer variety of food available.

The rooms and amenities at the Hansar blow away the competition. I was thrilled with my suite that consisted of a comfortable bedroom, huge bathroom/changing room, office, hidden washer/dryer and a mini kitchen that was really handy for re-heating the delicious leftovers from my favorite restaurants and street vendors. It felt much more like an executive club apartment than a stuffy hotel. All the rooms are accessible through an open-air breezeway that is specially designed to keep the building cool naturally. It is quite unlike any other hotel in Bangkok and was designed by WOHA, a renowned design and architectural firm in Singapore responsible for some of the most cutting-edge buildings in Asia.

The Director of Rooms, Nirun Chompoo, took me on a tour of the different types of spectacular suites that were much larger than hotel rooms and suites to which we are accustomed. Some included enormous offices and lounging areas that more closely resembled fashionable libraries decked out in modern furniture and beautiful, dark rosewood shelves and hardwood flooring. The "Vertigo Suite" has floor to ceiling windows that enable you to look straight down as if you are on the edge of a cliff. "The Loft Suite" has an upstairs bedroom area that appears to hang in space off the side of



the building with views on both sides of the bed. Each room offered stellar views, big soft beds, rain showerheads, oversized marble tubs, subtle recessed lighting, sophisticated furnishings, and plush carpets.

The small pool area feels very private and also seems to hang on the edge of the building several stories up. While there was plenty of room to swim laps, there are also quiet enclaves between walled dividers into which you may retreat that separate the sunbathing area into several mini-terraces for more privacy.

The hotel's restaurant, Eve, offers a French inspired menu that competed quite effectively for my appetite against all the delicious traditional Thai food available all over Bangkok. I was rewarded with one of the best steaks I've ever had and complemented with excellent fisherman's soup, crab cakes, and calamari. The open kitchen allowed me to watch the chefs in action. It should be noted that for the normally pedestrian breakfasts served at even the finest establishments, these chefs deliver a gourmet spread worthy of a televised competition. For example, the honey was not just fresh—it was actually dripping from a beehive (minus the bees, of course) into a container.

While it is safe to say that all the nice hotels in Bangkok have good spas, the Luxsa Spa at the Hansar provides what may be the best massages you will ever experience. Even though my wife and I had just spent a couple of weeks in Bali where massage therapy is an art form, we both agreed that the treatment at the Luxsa Spa was exceptional. The relaxing rooms, skilled therapists and the aromatic products provided the perfect combination. To tell the truth, I'm a bit of a massage snob and can usually find fault with almost any spa treatment. The fact that I visited Luxsa Spa twice in two days speaks volumes.

While it is safe to say that all the nice hotels in Bangkok have good spas, the Luxsa Spa at the Hansar provides what may be the best massages you will ever experience.

Lastly, the flawless service provided by the staff at the Hansar was uncompromising and as perfect as any I have experienced in my travel around the world. By the second day, many of the staff knew my name and my preferences. Nirun confided in me that although much of it comes from training, the underlying attitude has to come from the heart. I could tell that he and his staff cared about every aspect of my experience. It was not just a job, but a reflection of Thai hospitality and a pride in being the best.

Make It Happen

There is no shortage of flights to Bangkok. Compare fares at kayak.com and then double check with your favorite airline websites. I flew Japan Airlines (jal.com) this time, but have enjoyed flying Korean Air (koreanair.com) on the last several visits to Bangkok. Cathay Pacific (cathayair.com) is also worth a look.

The BTS Skytrain now offers train service from the airport into the city, but a taxi (between 300 to 500 Thai Baht—about \$10 to \$15 dollars including airport fee and toll fees) will get you there quicker. Just book a taxi through the kiosk outside Level 1 (signs are in Thai and English) and make sure they use the meter.



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The Year Of The Dragon
Comes Alive In Las Vegas

Breathing Fire

by LEO SIPRAS

In honor of the most celebrated sign of the Chinese Zodiac, The Venetian and The Palazzo are commemorating the prosperous holiday in an over-the-top fashion beginning January 23 complete with lavish feng shui-inspired décor, auspicious dish offerings and festive cocktails. If you have never experienced Lunar New Year events in Las Vegas, then you are missing out on some of the most extravagant and festive decorations you have ever seen.



The Palazzo

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palazzo.com

The Venetian

3355 Las Vegas Blvd. South
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Reservations 866.659.9643
venetian.com

In what will probably be one of the most spectacular Chinese New Year attractions ever in Las Vegas, the Waterfall & Atrium Gardens of The Palazzo will host a 128-foot hand-crafted, fire-breathing dragon, suspended in the 65-foot-high space. Spanning the entire atrium, the one-of-a-kind dragon will be perched amidst the ground fountain and breathe fire from January 23 through February 5 at 1 and 5 p.m. (2 p.m. on Chinese New Year Day following the dragon dance). Symbolizing good luck and prosperity for the upcoming year, the dragon dance is an important ritual of Chinese culture. On Monday, January 23 at 1 p.m., a ceremonial dragon dance complete with firecrackers and eye painting ceremony will begin at The Venetian porte cochere, making its way through The Palazzo. The colorful spectacle will feature a parade of dancers and musicians dressed in elaborate costumes playing authentic music.

Regarded as the mightiest of signs, the dragon symbolizes such traits as ambition, passion and success. Those who possess the sign of the Dragon are said to take risks, are unafraid of challenges and embody colorful personalities.

“During Chinese New Year, it is beneficial to visit the dragon for its blessing and protection. It is good luck to walk around the entire dragon three times in a clockwise motion to remove obstacles for 2012,” said Peter Lung, with World of Feng Shui, who consulted on the design of the dragon. “You should build friendships with those who possess the sign of the dragon for better luck and blessings in the New Year.”

The west garden will be complete with rocks, plants and metals representing earth elements while the east garden will embody water elements with live orange Koi fish and one black fish to represent Yin and Yang, the ancient Chinese philosophy of polar opposites being interconnected and interdependent.

“The dragon is the most powerful of the zodiac signs. We had to create something that Las Vegas would never forget,” said Dana Beatty, director of horticulture for The Venetian and The Palazzo. “From the number and location of our displays to the length and direction of the dragon, everything about the Waterfall & Atrium Gardens is feng shui-inspired, creating the perfect environment to bring wealth and prosperity in 2012.”

A secret friend to the dragon, a rooster will sit to the west of the ground fountain. The two zodiacs are compatible to one another and together bring harmony, wealth and lucky relationships.



The larger-than-life dragon took more than a year to create and will take nearly 10 days to construct onsite.



Artist's rendering of the 128-foot fire-breathing dragon, which will be located in the Waterfall & Atrium Gardens of The Palazzo Las Vegas.

Rendering credit: TKOart

The gardens and entrances to both resorts will be adorned with fresh bamboo, citrus trees and 15-foot floral arrangements of tangerines, bromeliads and orchids. Nine traditional I-Ching coins, representing an abundance of wealth, will sit amidst the dragon and Laliqie statues of The Palazzo. Six-foot-tall, hand-loomed brocade silk and jade gold and red lanterns will be suspended from the atrium ceilings signifying the lives of those around to always be bright.

The larger-than-life dragon took more than 50 designers, conceptualists, welders and painters more than a year to create and will take nearly 10 days to construct onsite. The Venetian and The Palazzo have consistently been upping the ante as far as holiday events and decorations are concerned, including this year's Winter in Venice celebration that included an outdoor ice skating rink, a spectacular 65-foot LED holiday tree, and a nightly light show. The Chinese New Year attractions are certain to continue the tradition.

“During Chinese New Year, it is beneficial to visit the dragon for its blessing and protection.”

With more than 3,000 spacious suites, luxury shopping, world-class dining and entertainment, the \$1.9 billion, Silver LEED® (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design)-certified Palazzo Las Vegas literally takes luxury to new heights. Ranked as one of the top 25 hotels in the U.S. and Canada in *Travel + Leisure* “World's Best Awards” for two consecutive years, the AAA Five Diamond and Forbes Travel Guide Four Star-Award winning resort is highlighted by a flagship 85,000-square-foot Barneys New York. If shopping is your focus, The Shoppes at The Palazzo feature more than 60 luxury boutiques, including 20 remarkable stores and couture brands making their Las Vegas debuts. The Palazzo also offers a variety of cuisines from a collection of award-winning chefs such as Carnevino by Mario Batali, CUT by Wolfgang Puck and Table 10 by Emeril Lagasse. Other unique offerings include the Tony Award-winning Broadway musical, *Jersey Boys*; the chic dining and nightlife hotspot, LAVO; the world's largest Canyon Ranch SpaClub; and Prestige at The Palazzo—an exclusive space designed to offer the sophisticated traveler an elevated level of services and amenities including private champagne check in, packing and unpacking services, exclusive bath and pillow menus, complimentary cocktail reception and more.

During Chinese New Year, guests can enjoy auspicious dishes at The Palazzo's Zine Noodles Dim Sum, ranked as one of the top 10 Chinese restaurants in the U.S. by Chinese Restaurant News. Celebrated chef Simon To has created limited-time signature dishes including Live Lobster with Golden Garlic and Spicy Salt, the word “lobster” resembles that of “dragon” in Chinese, representing positive energy; Firecracker Manila Clams, infused with Chinese White Wine, Fish Paste and Spicy Roasted Pepper, representing hidden treasures, the dish brings wealth into the coming year; and Buddha Feast Creation, Sautéed Seasonal Vegetables with Ginger Juice, carrying the meaning “a whole, good, healthy family for the entire year.”



Guests can also enjoy the signature Dragon Cocktail created from vodka, ginger liqueur, lime, a spring of tarragon, lemongrass syrup and lemon rind. The refreshing cocktail will be served at Zine and each of bars and lounges at The Venetian and The Palazzo.

Blast Off With The Promise
of Good Fortune and Prosperity

New Year Countdown

Unlike the West's New Year celebration, which lasts one night, the Lunar New Year is celebrated over a fifteen day span. Whether or not you will be observing a traditional Lunar New Year, we offer guidance as to what such observance entails.

Day 1

The most important religious day with celebrations that welcomes "the gods of the heavens and earth." Many people forego meat on this day because it is believed that doing so will assure long and happy lives.

Day 2

On this day, celebrations consist of prayers to ancestors and other gods rather than to those of the heavens and earth. Extra kindness is shown to dogs because it is believed that this day is the birthday of all dogs.

Days 3 and 4

Sons-in-law pay respect to their parents-in-law and to old friends from whom they have grown distant. Gifts and other items are offered to demonstrate their love.

Day 5

On this day called "Po Woo", people remain at home to welcome the god of luck. No one visits family or friends, which would interrupt the gathering of luck at home before it was completed.

Days 6 to 10

Relatives and friends visit each other for fun and celebrations. They also go to temple to pray for good health and fortune.

Day 7

This day is considered the birthday of all people so everyone goes out of their way to be kind to each person they encounter. Farmers display their produce and make a drink from seven vegetables. Noodles are eaten to assure longevity and fish is eaten to assure success.

Day 8

Families have dinner together and, at midnight, pray to Tian Gong, the god of heaven.

Day 9

This day is reserved to extend offerings to the Jade Emperor, one of the most important Chinese gods.

Days 10 to 13

It is customary to invite friends and family to dinner on these days. On the 13th day, simple rice congee and mustard greens are consumed to cleanse the system following days of dining on rich foods.

Days 14 to 15

The 14th day is spent preparing for the Lantern Festival on the 15th day. This festival is considered to be the least religious day but the one that is the most fun. The festival is based upon the belief that on the first full moon of the New Year, spirits fly about and require the light emanating from lanterns to guide them to heaven. Children parade around with lanterns upon which they have written riddles for surrounding people to solve.



The Lantern Festival is considered to be the least religious day but the one that is the most fun.

Thursday Island

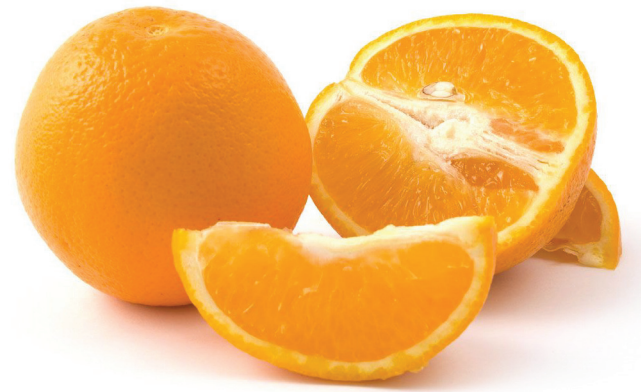
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Best Of Luck
In The New Year

Prepare for Prosperity



The Chinese New Year or Vietnamese “Tet” will be celebrated on Monday, January 23, 2012, the first day of the Year of the Dragon and the year 4710 on the Chinese calendar.

It is a time of new beginning. We need to put things in order, sweep out the dust that has gathered inside our homes and mend any interrupted friendships.

We should have only good thoughts, say kind words and behave in a positive manner. It is a time to accumulate luck for the coming year. The Lunar New Year is also called the Spring Festival because it signifies the end of winter and the beginning of spring, and it is when farmers plant their new crops.

The Lunar New Year has given rise to many beliefs. It is believed that the events that occur on New Year’s Day will impact your life for the rest of the year. So, be mindful of your actions and what you consume. Make sure you greet all people who will bring you joy and happiness. Enhance and stimulate positive energy flow at home and at your place of business to ensure a prosperous and healthy year. Everything associated with New Year’s Day should represent good fortune.

Here is a list of traditions and customs and the “do’s” and “don’ts” to bring you good fortune in the Year of the Dragon.

Before New Year’s Day

Clean the entire house and put away all brooms and brushes.
Pay all debts, and resolve differences with family, friends, neighbors, and business associates.

New Year’s Eve

Gather with close family members for dinner.
Open every door and window in your home at midnight to release the old year, and light firecrackers at midnight (where legal) to send out the old year and welcome in the new one.

New Year’s Day

Decorate your home in red for happiness and gold/orange for wealth and happiness.
Circular candy trays symbolize togetherness. Have oranges and

tangerines for good health and long life. Tangerines with leaves intact symbolize long lasting relationships. Persimmons symbolize happiness and wealth.

Flowers that bloom on New Year’s Day will portend a prosperous year. Hang red banners or couplets with New Year’s wishes and symbols of good fortune in gold.

Food for the New Year

Jai is comprised of ginkgo nut, black moss, bamboo shoots, bean curd, scallion and vermicelli. It represents good fortune.
Noodles represent longevity. They should not be cut but eaten whole.
Fish and chicken represent prosperity. They should be presented whole, symbolizing completeness, and only cut when served.

The “Do’s” and “Don’ts” on New Year’s Day

Do give two lei sees (red envelopes) to each child. Happiness comes in twos. This is a way to pass good luck to the next generation. Businesses should also give lei sees to employees and associates.

Do wear new clothes and new shoes, preferably red. Red is considered to be a bright and happy color to bring you a bright and happy future.
Don’t sweep the floor, clean the table or dump rubbish, as you may disturb the “Feng Shui” and good luck. Dirt and bad luck were swept away on New Year’s Eve and the remainder should be viewed as contributing to good fortune.

Don’t drop chopsticks because you will not make a good living.
Don’t use words that do not reflect good luck, like number “four”, which is a Chinese homonym for death.

Don’t borrow from others, as it suggests that you will be lacking on the first day of the year. Also, don’t lend anything because you will be lending all year.

Don’t wash your hair because you will wash away good luck.

Don’t use knives or scissors as this may cut off good fortune.

Don’t cry or you will be crying throughout the year.

While some may not believe in these “do’s” and “don’ts”, they are traditions and customs that have survived because they provide us with historical continuity and strengthens our sense of identity and community.



Dance Of Asian American 10th Anniversary

Held at Omni Hotel

Dance of Asian America celebrated their 10th anniversary by honoring former Houston Ballet prima ballerina Janie Parker and former principal dancer Li Cunxin, who also wrote the autobiography *Mao’s Last Dancer*. Over 300 guests attended this memorable event, as Janie Parker and Li Cunxin reminisce their time together on stage. The evening entertainment included performances of traditional Chinese dances performed by Dance of Asian America dancers.

Photos by Mitchell Alexander



Kim & Betty Gee, Tina Walker, Judge Theresa Chang



Linda Wu, Ben Stevenson, Cindi Rose, Li Cunxin, Janie Parker



Jacquie Chaumette, Viet Hoang



Arthur & Ella Hamberger



Duyen Huynh, Marc Nguyen



Adrianna Nelson, Erica Hui



Lauren Anderson, Lily Foster



Ted & Linda Wu



Mitsi Shen, George Gee, Kenny Kan, Janie Yao



Ben Stevenson, Carolyn Farb



DAA Dancers



DAA Dancers



Amy Sung, Melissa Chan, Connie Kwan-Wong, William & Mandy Kao, Duyen Huynh



Yuki Rogers

PAOLA
LENTI



ALLNEW SOFA

Design by Francesco Rota

Modular seating system for indoor environments with fully removable covers, composed of central and corner elements available with two seat depths. The structure is made of wood, metal and polyurethane foam and the seat down cushions can be upholstered with a wide range of fabrics offered by the Paola Lenti collection. The feet are steel with a nickel finish.

GROOVE RUG

Design by Paola Lenti

Composition is 100% pure new wool. This hand tufted rug is made with wool braids, with relief lines created with bouclé stitches, executed with a flat wool braid.

SUNSET LOW TABLE

Design by Francesco Rota

Table and side table for outdoor environments. The structures are made of steel treated against corrosion and varnished in avorio and grafite color, and the tops are available in Sassafras wood or in white or black marble with a natural finish.

PICOT POUF

Design by Paola Lenti

The poufs are hand-crocheted with a wool braid for interior environments and with a braid in Rope yarn for the exterior. They are available in different shapes and dimensions and can be produced in the multiple colors of the Paola Lenti collection.

HIMBA BASKET

Design by Paola Lenti

The baskets, inspired by the African tradition, are woven by hand with Rope braids and are available in several shapes and dimensions.

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It's A New Year

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Fashion Stylist	Leslie Rivas
Hair and Makeup	Bianca Linette
Fashion Stylist Assistants	Laura Tylka Andrea Herrera
Model	Song Faulkner at Neal Hamil Models

Wire Headpiece created by Bianca Linette
All clothing from Neiman Marcus



Blouse by Robert Rodriguez \$365
Vest by Robbi & Nikki
Skirt by Elizabeth & James \$895
Booties by Alexandre Birman \$585



Sweater by Robert Rodriguez \$495
Pants by Vince \$995



Dress by Robert Rodriguez \$545
Booties by Alexandre Birman \$750



Blouse by Fendi \$960
Skirt by Robert Rodriguez \$495
Boots by Tom Ford \$6,000



Coat by Robert Rodriguez \$695
Pants by Adriano Goldschmied \$225

Hope Initiative 2012 Charity Calendar Launch Party

Held at Mo Mong Restaurant

Photos by Mitchell Alexander

Hope Initiative released their 2012 calendar just in time for Christmas. Many supporters came out to purchase a calendar and meet the models, who were there for pictures and autographs. Hope Initiative produces the calendar each year as a fundraiser for orphanages in Vietnam. To purchase a calendar, visit hionline.org.



Vy Le



Jannette Vo, Kevin Hsu



Mindy Le, Viet Hoang



Sandy Truong, Stephen Le Jr., Tu Huynh



Toan Vu, Christine Nguyen



Be Lon Nguyen, Mike Truong



Michelle Martin, Kevin Tran



Hoa Tran, Guest, Allison Le



Laura Le, Catherine Le

Paul Nguyen



Trung Do, Dylan & Tina Nguyen



Nick Dunbar, Van Nguyen, Mike Dang, Loc Nguyen



David Vinh, Adrienne Nguyen, Phi Doan, Cam Vu

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Valentine's Day
Around Asia

by HENRI MERCERON

All You Need Is Love

The most recent statistics show that Americans spent \$14.7 billion on Valentine's Day.

They bought 189 million roses and exchanged more than one billion cards which is pretty impressive considering that 2.6 billion cards were exchanged during Christmas. All of these statistics demonstrate that Valentine's Day is one of America's biggest days of celebration, a fact that would not be altogether surprising. What is perhaps less appreciated is that Asian countries have adopted many of the western Valentine's Day traditions and have also expanded upon them and introduced innovative ways of expressing the passion and love that such days inspire.

Japan

The Mary Chocolate Company introduced Valentine's Day to Japan in 1958 as part of its marketing strategy. It succeeded. Twenty percent (\$477 million!) of chocolate sold in Japan occurs around February 14th. At great expense, women give chocolate to all the men they know—family, friends, co-workers and lovers. To all except the last, they give "giri-choco" (obligation chocolate); lovers receive "honmei choco" (prospective winner chocolate). They offer other gifts and prepare fancy dinners in addition to chocolate. Clearly, Valentine's Day in Japan is for the men! In fact, a majority of women polled thought that it was a time for "the blues" only because of the amount of preparation and expense required.

In the 1970s, producers of confections introduced "White Day" to be celebrated on March 14th when men were expected to give candy and cookies to women. While it would appear that the men get off easy since they only give to women with whom they have a romantic connection, expectations have grown over the years. Today, women expect (in order of preference) jewelry, watches and handbags.

China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore

Chinese culture had already provided for a day of love. On the seventh day of the seventh lunar month they traditionally celebrated the love between a cowherd (represented by the star Altair) and the seventh sister (represented by the star Vega) who are separated by obligation and the Milky Way. Once a year, they are permitted to meet when all the magpies in the world join to form a temporary bridge that crosses the Milky Way so that they may have a day together.

Celebration of Valentine's Day on February 14th has gained in popularity over time, especially amongst the younger generation and in the major cities. In addition, the Western tradition of exchanging gifts, cards, flowers and candy has also taken hold in recent years. In China's main cities of Beijing, Shanghai and Guanzhou, people spend as much as their American counterparts. Despite a price of \$25 per stem for special blue roses, tens of thousands of them are sold. In Nanjing City, one florist stated that Valentine's Day sales accounted for half of his annual sales.

A month before Valentine's Day, the media begins printing articles about clever ways to celebrate, seek reader input for love stories that they may report, and recommend the best places to eat, drink and shop for the occasion.

Korea

Koreans have gone a step beyond the Japanese; not only do they celebrate Valentine's Day and White Day, they have very considerably added Black Day. It is celebrated on April 14th and is reserved for young singles. On this day, they wear black clothes, eat jia jiang myun (black noodles) and drink black coffee together. Hey, just because you cannot get a date, it doesn't mean you should not have cause for celebration, too.

India

As India's economy has blossomed, more educated and gainfully employed women have assumed more independence. Traditionally, a woman's parents decided who she would marry, but in current times, young professional women are more likely to make their own selections. In turn, men are more motivated to display their affection by impressing the women in whom they are interested with gifts on Valentine's Day. As a result, Indians account for approximately 10% (\$2.6 billion) of global Valentine's Day related sales. They spent 20% more in 2011 than they did the previous year, mostly on romantic dinners and gifts. Indians are so enthusiastic about Valentine's Day that they basically celebrate Valentine's Week. It begins on February 7 with Rose Day, followed by Proposal Day on February 8, Chocolate Day on February 9, Teddy Day on February 10, Promise Day on February 11, Kiss Day on February 12, Hug Day on February 13, and ends grandly with the actual Valentine's Day on February 14.

Thailand

Thailand has sought to capitalize upon Valentine's Day to promote tourism. They have sponsored such events as the world's largest mass wedding, the world's largest underwater wedding and even staged the

spectacle of a wedding between the world's largest groom and bride which happened to be—elephants! Hosting Valentine's Day events has proven to be an effective approach to highlighting traditional Thai wedding ceremonies, cuisine and entertainment, while also boosting tourism revenue. Despite a difficult economy, Valentine's Day sales in 2007, was approximately \$15.4 million.

Although technological capabilities have improved and mask certain phenomena, it is worth noting that in 2001, Thailand's biggest cellular phone operator experienced a system crash when more than 100,000 Valentine's Day text messages were sent out in one hour. The volume was twice as high as the number sent on New Year's Eve.

Vietnam

In 2006, hundreds of Saigon youth sought to set a world record 100 meter long paper "notebook of love" in which they wrote love notes to their Valentines. Similar with other countries, stores offer all the typical Valentine's chocolate, flowers, jewelry and countless other gifts fitting the occasion. Unlike other countries, recording artists release a rash of romantic albums in which they sing about love. A number of live musical productions were shown on television including one sponsored by Honda Vietnam, *Valentine Hong (Pink Valentine)*. Love is in the air (and on the airwaves) in Vietnam on Valentine's Day.

On Valentine's Day in 2011, the largest kissing competition in Vietnam was held in Hai Phong with more than a 100 couples participating. The event's slogan was "There is no everlasting love, only everlasting moments of love" offered young lovers the chance to express their affection in a romantic and fun forum. The couples had to kiss positioned in such a manner that only one of them was allowed to be standing. The couple that kissed the longest was pronounced the winner. I hope they had plenty of lip balm!

Celebration of Valentine's Day on February 14th has gained in popularity over time, especially amongst the younger generation and in the major cities.

Another good measure of the adoption of Valentine's Day by Asian countries is the location of Hallmark printing facilities in Japan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Shanghai. And while cards are printed in numerous languages, the biggest sellers are those that are in English. It would appear that the best way to impress your sweetheart with how "hip" you are is to send them a Valentine's card in English. Even if the words are not understood by the giver and recipient, it does not seem to matter as love is the universal language, understood by all.

Although many Asian countries have their own traditional days for celebrating love, the adoption of the West's Valentine's Day by the younger generation in the world's major cities has led to broader acceptance in the general population. In India, China, and Thailand there is a surge of marriages that occur on February 14th. While there are many cultures in which the public display of affection is considered inappropriate and conservatives fear the loss of tradition under a wave of Western influence, a Chinese scholar offered the following in a China Today article by Li Wuzhou:

"Chinese wear Western suits and celebrate foreign festivals, and foreigners wear Chinese-style coats and have Chinese festivals. This manifests the tolerance of Chinese culture and the trend of all cultures of the world learning from each other and blending."

I could not agree more.



Find Your Inner Animal
(And Your Best Partner)

Asian from A to Z by V. HOANG

Lunar New Year starts on January 23 and extends into February, the month of love, which compels us to highlight love, romance, and sexual compatibility in our synopses of the various zodiac signs. Get in touch with your inner animal and be familiar with those of the ones with whom you should romantically connect.



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Year of the Dragon

1916, 1928, 1940, 1952, 1964, 1976, 1988, 2000, 2012

Dragons are egotistical and love to be the center of attention. Modesty is not one of their attributes. They have bad tempers and are bossy, dominating and authoritative. They hate unsolicited advice and can be hopelessly tactless and insensitive to their lovers.

People are strongly attracted to Dragons because they are generous, charismatic, irresistible, and so brave that standing beside them banishes fear. They generate excitement and turn heads anywhere they go. They are free-spirited, impulsive and can help others achieve their dreams. Others love to be around Dragons because they have a way of making people feel better. Dragons are quick to fall in love but do not surrender their independence easily, leaving most of them to live life alone. However, smart, witty, and funny companions may intrigue Dragons to the point that they may want to get married. Once Dragons commit, they are unlikely to ever separate.

It takes someone who is both thick skinned and easygoing to be a Dragon's partner because, despite their sentimental characteristics, they can be moody and insensitive. When confronted by their temper, people instinctively want to run away.

Dragon with Rat: A brilliant relationship based on plenty of love, mental sensitivity and understanding. Attaining happiness is achievable.

Dragon with Ox: When it comes to being obstinate, Dragons have met their match in the Ox. The "give and take" that is essential for a happy marriage to be realized is lacking in this partnership.

Dragon with Tiger: A gutsy combination that has ample energy to stoke the fires of passion.

Dragon with Rabbit: Obstacles will either unite you or divide you.

Dragon with Dragon: If you learn to share the spotlight, you can accomplish anything together.

Dragon with Snake: Clever, crafty and quick-witted, you fit together like pieces of a puzzle.

Dragon with Horse: You share a powerful sexual chemistry.

Dragon with Sheep: Despite a strong sexual attraction, your relationship will not survive your countless differences.

Dragon with Monkey: You share common opinions and goals that destine you for happiness.

Dragon with Dog: A truly tumultuous affair that is not recommended.

Dragon with Pig: A caring and deeply affectionate relationship.

Dragon with Rooster: You make a beautiful couple but your egotism blinds you.

Year of the Snake

1917, 1929, 1941, 1953, 1965, 1977, 1989, 2001

Snakes are beautiful people who exhibit strong sexual appeal. They are sleek and seductive. If they want you, they will cast a spell on you and you will not be able to stop thinking about them. However, Snakes are quite particular when it comes to selecting a partner and do not do so based on physical qualities. The Snake needs a partner who can appreciate his quirky sense of humor and his wacky way of handling situations. Therefore, although they are quite beautiful and tempt others to approach them, Snakes do all the pursuing.

Because they are so selective, Snakes can become jealous and obsessive about their partners. They can be a bit stand-offish with their mates, choosing to push away emotions rather than to confront their feelings and insecurities. Once betrayed, Snakes will never trust you again and they will get their revenge.

Not everyone can live with and be happy with a Snake. It takes a patient soul who is ready for the long haul and who can effectively calm the Snake's nerves and deal with their obsessions.

Snake with Rat: You stand to learn much from each other. You are fascinated and very sexually attracted to one another.

Snake with Ox: You have a stable, loving relationship.

Snake with Tiger: Various differences will divide you down the road.

Snake with Rabbit: Intense and sensual, you have a lot to look forward to.

Snake with Dragon: You fit well together, sharing flirtatious natures and zesty outlooks.

Snake with Snake: You are both intelligent but too envious of one another to be in a partnership. You must remain independent to make it work.

Snake with Horse: The outlook is doubtful because there is too much about which to fight. You must communicate to make it work.

Snake with Sheep: You make great friends and even better lovers.

Snake with Monkey: You can't really trust each other, can you?

Snake with Rooster: Dynamic duo!

Snake with Dog: Love at first sight. Go for it!

Snake with Pig: You do not have enough in common to pursue a relationship.

Year of the Horse

1918, 1930, 1942, 1954, 1966, 1978, 1990, 2002

Horse lovers are eternally young at heart. They sail through life on a whim. They are spontaneous and open-minded, waiting for the next big adventure. Horse lovers are charming and affectionate. Their imagination, vigor, intellect and wit are inspiring. They make you want to be around them and, thus, they have no problem securing dates on Saturday nights.

Horses are energetic spouses who rapidly fall in love. Along with their spontaneity comes a bit of impatience which emerges when they meet someone with whom they want to be involved. They throw themselves into a relationship, sometimes losing bits of themselves along the way. Once they reach adulthood, Horses are more stable, enabling their adult relationships to proceed more successfully. Horses live large. They have boundless energy and spend more time on the go than they do at home.

Horse with Rat: There is not much going for you.

Horse with Ox: They are decent business partners but lousy lovers.

Horse with Tiger: Both of you love adventure, so it should be a happy partnership.

Horse with Rabbit: While you may argue, you enjoy each other's company.

Horse with Dragon: Sexually charged!

Horse with Snake: You have opposing opinions that will be hard to reconcile.

Horse with Horse: Both of you are very opinionated and independent; it may be difficult to find common ground.

Horse with Sheep: Love at first sight becomes a long life of love.

Horse with Monkey: Better suited to be friends than lovers.

Horse with Rooster: You have a few conflicting points of views but enough staying power to make a great relationship.

Horse with Dog: You have a successful relationship on the horizon.

Horse with Pig: Both of you are laid back and full of energy but there's no one to make sure things keep running smoothly.

Year of the Sheep

1919, 1931, 1943, 1955, 1967, 1979, 1991, 2003

Sheep do not like to be alone. They are very family-oriented people. If you do not like children or big families, Sheep are not right for you. They will give themselves to the right person and will do everything they can to maintain a stable, loving, happy relationship.

Even though Sheep can be clingy and self-deprecating they are loving and make great romantic partners. They are compassionate and kind, genuine and affectionate. Sheep need partners who will be supportive and attentive and who will help them develop their self-confidence.

They are often unaware of their talents but with encouragement and love those talents will come forth. Sheep crave a partner who makes them feel safe enough to try new things and who will give them the confidence they need to shine.

Sheep with Rat: Sometimes tough but worth pursuing. Rat might be distant.

Sheep with Ox: You may be physically attracted but nothing more.

Sheep with Tiger: You both walk on too many eggshells to maintain a stable partnership. You may be able to have a good business relationship but not a romantic one.

Sheep with Rabbit: You share a mutual respect, understanding and points of view. Go for it!

Sheep with Dragon: Sexually attracted but not mentally or intellectually compatible.

Sheep with Snake: Great friends, even better lovers with great sexual energy.

Sheep with Horse: Love at first sight becomes so much more.

Sheep with Sheep: You understand each other perfectly.

Sheep with Monkey: Your differences could unite you.

Sheep with Rooster: A lot to overcome. You may want to reconsider entering into a relationship.

Sheep with Dog: A tiring union fraught with personality conflicts.

Sheep with Pig: You make great companions.

Year of the Monkey

1908, 1920, 1932, 1944, 1956, 1968, 1980, 1992, 2004

Monkeys are the most promiscuous of all the signs. They are flirtatious and like to seek the attention of others to get what they want. They are easily bored and must be stimulated intellectually as well as physically in order to stay around for extended periods of time. Monkeys can be clever, mischievous and manipulative when pursuing a love interest.

Monkeys are intense, sensual lovers. They can tease or charm anyone quickly. They enjoy entertaining their lovers with their senses of humor and their ability to captivate a crowd. When the Monkey decides on a mate, it is likely to be forever. A Monkey's best lover is lighthearted and open-minded. They can not be overly sensitive or the Monkey will lose interest.

Monkey with Rat: Common ground gets you on the right track.

Monkey with Ox: If it works out, it'll be a lot of fun.

Monkey with Tiger: You'll drive each other crazy because you are too competitive with each other.

Monkey with Rabbit: It won't end well. Don't try the romance. It is better to nurture and preserve a friendship.

Monkey with Dragon: You share similar points of view and a common understanding.

Monkey with Snake: You make a great pair, intellectually, but envy will drive you apart. To stay together you must learn to compromise.

Monkey with Horse: Better suited as friends than lovers.

Monkey with Sheep: Your differences could unite you plus there is a lot of sexual energy.

Monkey with Monkey: You can bring out the youth in each other. What a fun partnership!

Monkey with Rooster: Not an ideal romance.

Monkey with Dog: You have a lot going for you.

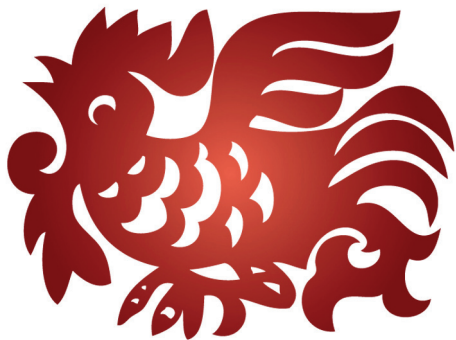
Monkey with Pig: Arguments bring you together and leave you sexually charged.

Year of the Rooster

1909, 1921, 1933, 1945, 1957, 1969, 1981, 1993, 2005

Roosters are generally black or white when it comes to their feelings. They either like you or they don't. There is no in between. Although they are vocal with their opinions and ideas, Roosters are pretty tight-lipped about their personal emotions and feelings. They certainly don't wear their hearts on their sleeves. They are intensely private people who never kiss and tell.

Although it is not easy to live with Roosters, if you can get past their bossy, obstinate, "my way or the highway" exterior, you will find wonderfully romantic, caring individuals hidden underneath. Their hearts are made of solid gold and they genuinely care about their family and friends as much as they care about themselves. They are not suited for a sensitive partner;



their candor and wit can be humiliating. Roosters can be highly critical of their partners, often expecting too much of them. They need stable companions who can absorb everything they dish out. They need someone who will stand up to them and put them in their place if needed. Roosters also need partners who will deflate them when they are a bit too high on themselves and who can tolerate their constant boasting.

Rooster with Rat: More conflict than love.

Rooster with Ox: Good match. You are both sexual and passionate and will love each other intensely.

Rooster with Tiger: Both are strong-willed which can make for difficult times.

Rooster with Rabbit: Could not be more diametrically opposed and there is no mutual attraction.

Rooster with Dragon: Your egos will deflate one another. The relationship would be too high-maintenance.

Rooster with Snake: Great pair! Go for it!

Rooster with Horse: You conflict about who is boss but, for the most part, you get along quite well.

Rooster with Sheep: Not a good match. You will fight a lot.

Rooster with Monkey: There is no strong physical attraction which can make for a difficult romance.

Rooster with Rooster: You are both way too egotistical. There's not enough room for the two of you to coexist.

Rooster with Dog: With little in common, your conversations will be quite dull.

Rooster with Pig: Your differences can unite you.

Year of the Dog

1910, 1922, 1934, 1946, 1958, 1970, 1982, 1994, 2006

Dogs can be overly shy when making friends or courting. If they are interested in you, they want to make certain that you are also interested in them before they will express their interest. They are emotionally sensitive and don't deal with wounds to the heart very easily. As a lover, Dogs are compassionate, supportive and eager to hear about your day at work or the project you just finished. They share the highs and lows of being in love, defending their partners against anyone who attacks them.

Happy Dogs are more likely to want families than Dogs in mediocre relationships. Dogs are simple and lead very easygoing lives. They can be mean with their words and must learn to control their angry tongues. They make good partners and most people find them easy to live with. Their seriousness and grounded personalities, while boring to some, demonstrate innate stability to others.

Dog with Rat: Stable union. You'll share dull moments, so improvise.

Dog with Ox: Not much in common.

Dog with Tiger: Mutual affection makes you a great duo.

Dog with Rabbit: You'll go a long way.

Dog with Dragon: One of you is outgoing and the other is easygoing. Not recommended.

Dog with Snake: Love at first sight.

Dog with Horse: The scale is tipped in your favor.

Dog with Sheep: Don't try it. You will bore each other.

Dog with Monkey: Take a shot. You have nothing to lose.

Dog with Rooster: With little in common, your conversations will be quite dull.

Dog with Dog: You share so much, why not try it?

Dog with Pig: A stable and committed partnership destined for happiness.

Year of the Pig

1911, 1923, 1935, 1947, 1959, 1971, 1983, 1995, 2007

Pigs are great partners to have because they are so supportive and giving of themselves. They are happiest at home, so arguments about late nights out with friends are few and far between. They are sexual, love to show affection, appreciative, caring, and grateful for the things they have, especially a loving and healthy family. Once they choose a partner, they are in it for the long haul. Pigs do not like discord and will do whatever it takes to maintain a peaceful homestead. They make good partners and most people would consider themselves lucky to be involved with one. Still, some people are not suited for a Pig's easygoing nature.

Pig with Rat: You'll spend a lot of money and have a lot of fun doing it.

Pig with Ox: You are two sexually charged individuals who will likely share a strong mental relationship, as well.

Pig with Tiger: You share trust and friendship.

Pig with Rabbit: Affectionate and caring, you're headed for a wonderful relationship.

Pig with Dragon: You will have a loving and warm relationship.

Pig with Snake: You do not have enough in common to commit to a stable union.

Pig with Horse: Easygoing but maybe too much so for your own good.

Pig with Sheep: Trust and honesty make this a winning combination.

Pig with Monkey: Sexual tension is heightened by a constant need to disagree.

Pig with Rooster: Even though you disagree on a few things, if you try to make it work, it will be great.

Pig with Dog: Stable and supportive but lacks passion and fire.

Pig with Pig: You are off to a good start that will eventually fade.



Continued on page 20



Year of the Rat

1900, 1912, 1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996, 2008

Rats are beautiful people with magnetic personalities who can not help but notice the admiration of others. If the Chinese say there are few poor Rats, there are even fewer who are not sexually stimulating, especially when young. Rat people are romantic and always happier to have someone with whom to share romance. One of their greatest assets is their charm that they use to melt hearts. Add their coquettish personalities and you can easily see how they conquer the hearts of others. And, since they love to go out, they have plenty of chances to meet potential suitors. An annoying quirk of some Rats is that they have a difficult time severing ties with former lovers. Obviously, this can pose potential conflicts for them and their new lovers, endangering their ability to develop new relationships. When the Rat finally settles down with Mr. or Ms. Right, he will find sincere satisfaction in the intimacy of the partnership.

Although Rats like to be in the driver's seat, they do need partners who can keep up with their active lifestyles.

Rat with Rat: This is a prosperous partnership, especially in business. These two are bound to compete.

Rat with Ox: Very sexually enticing, yet likely to fail at marriage.

Rat with Tiger: Potential for great companionship but there will be some major disputes.

Rat with Rabbit: Rats think Rabbits are boring. Rabbits love to be out and about. You will only frustrate each other.

Rat with Dragon: A solid, caring partnership. You value each other and get along very well.

Rat with Snake: Work on your differences and you could learn something from each other.

Rat with Horse: Don't even think about it.

Rat with Sheep: If you both try hard and make great efforts, you will survive.

Rat with Monkey: You share similar goals and will make a great match.

Rat with Rooster: It's just not worth it because there are too many conflicts.

Rat with Dog: Rats think Dogs are tiresome but you have the potential to be a good match for each other.

Rat with Pig: Uphill, downhill, uphill. You love each other intensely but need to keep an eye on your checkbooks.



Year of the Ox

1901, 1913, 1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997, 2009

Oxen dislike chit-chat. They don't have fun at parties and don't have man friends. They are not very sociable and would rather be spending their time at home with their families. When Oxen are in love, they do not confirm their feelings verbally, preferring to show how they feel. They will take a long time to decide if you are the right match because they hate change and want to find lovers who are ready for a stable marriage. Oxen never rush into anything and are not flirtatious people. Once they have committed to you, they will usually be faithful and expect the same from you.

Many Ox marriages dissolve after a couple of years, possibly because the Ox is too dominant or inflexible. Perhaps it's because Ox people tend to place blame on everyone but themselves. If an Ox is fortunate and has chosen wisely, the couple can maintain a close-knit family to which he will completely devote himself.

Oxen are strong, silent, reliable people who sometimes take for granted that their relationship is a partnership and that they may not always be the dominant figure. Others may find them quite stubborn and overbearing.

Ox with Rat: Really good sex but it is best enjoyed outside of a marriage.

Ox with Ox: A solid partnership but a bit dull.

Ox with Tiger: You are completely drawn to each other but headed for a dead end.

Ox with Rabbit: As lovers you'll have a solid content marriage.

Ox with Dragon: Give-and-take is not your forte and you are both stubborn.

Ox with Snake: You are headed for happiness.

Ox with Horse: Better in business than in bed.

Ox with Sheep: You may be physically attracted to each other but there's not much more.

Ox with Monkey: If you can make it work, you're destined for happiness and a lot of fun.

Ox with Rooster: Sexually stimulating, passionate and spontaneous. This should be a good fit.

Ox with Dog: You probably aren't truly comfortable with each other because you do not have much in common.

Ox with Pig: Passion and similar opinions destine you for a successful marriage.

Year of the Tiger

1914, 1926, 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010

Tigers are incredibly sexy people who are widely considered beautiful and sensually romantic. They are spontaneous in love and creatively ignite evenings filled with passion. They offer their partners hints of danger and exhibit a curiosity for the unknown.

Once a Tiger has committed himself to you, he tends to want to dominate or lead you. This is a natural nurturing mechanism and must be closely observed to avoid being completely controlled. On the positive side of the equation, Tigers are trustworthy, passionate, polite and spontaneous in their relationships.

Tigers love excitement and need someone who can keep up with all they want to do and see. His partner must also be able to indulge the mood swings as they move from up to down and from good to bad.

Tiger with Rat: Although this union is filled with an abundance of friendship, frequent temper tantrums will blur the good times. The relationship requires continual work and attention.

Tiger with Ox: The attraction is indisputable but is but plagued by arguments and drama. Hence, this is one of the worst possible pairings and you should ask yourself if it is worth it notwithstanding the attraction.

Tiger with Tiger: You are both so dominant and creative that you will undoubtedly inspire each other's curiosity. With two Tigers, there will be a constant changing of minds which will require much work. But, in this case, it will be worth it.

Tiger with Rabbit: This is another good match which is heightened by intense sexual attraction.

Tiger with Dragon: A brave combination that generates considerable fire to keep you interested and stoked by intense sexual attraction.

Tiger with Snake: You are on completely different paths that are not worth crossing.

Tiger with Horse: You are destined for an exciting life together.

Tiger with Sheep: You will not have sufficient openness to keep the relationship together. Marriage is inadvisable.

Tiger with Monkey: You will aggravate each other to exhaustion and the resulting frustration will be overwhelming. It is best to avoid this union before it begins.

Tiger with Rooster: Poor communication results in big issues that take on lives of their own. Exhibiting indecisiveness will cause severe disputes. It is better to part company than to remain indecisive.

Tiger with Dog: An auspicious union that will grow solidly on the basis of mutual admiration and respect.

Tiger with Pig: An auspicious union founded on humor and strong friendship.

Year of the Rabbit

1915, 1927, 1939, 1951, 1963, 1975, 1987, 1999, 2011

Rabbit lovers would never dream of wearing their hearts on their sleeves. Outwardly, they appear aloof but, internally, they are sensual and loving. Their tough facades protect their tenderness. Rabbits are romantic yet realistic and generous yet mercenary. They are strongly Yin and are in tune with their "feminine side". Their mothering instincts compel them to nurture others and they demonstrate an innate love of home and family.

Rabbits are easily moved to tears by words, thoughts and actions. They are deeply sensitive, shun conflict, tend to be a little moody and are sometimes influenced by their friends. Despite their cool outward appearance, they have a reputation for being very sexual and intimate. Although they may go a little crazy when young, they will readily commit themselves to a partner for life.

Rabbits need partners who are affectionate and loving and who will pamper them. A partner who shares their sense of style and suave attributes are ideally suited to be their lovers, as well.

Rabbit with Rat: The Rat will get on your last nerve. You better steer clear.

Rabbit with Ox: Ideally suited for you as they are calm, quiet, caring and sensitive.

Rabbit with Tiger: You'll make a good pair. Not only will your differences bring you closer together, they will heighten the intense sexual attraction you have for each other.

Rabbit with Rabbit: Such a union is destined for success. You share the same outlook and relaxed lifestyle and this will keep you mutually content.

Rabbit with Dragon: Your differences could either drive you apart or make your bond that much stronger. Hence, this relationship will require a little work to stay together.

Rabbit with Snake: A sharing of intense romantic ideals and heated passions make this combination exotic and exciting! Defined by strong sexual intensity.

Rabbit with Horse: You can handle it...if you want to.

Rabbit with Sheep: You will be well suited because you share love, affection and truth.

Rabbit with Monkey: It is likely that you will hurt each other irreparably. This union should definitely be avoided.

Rabbit with Rooster: You can't stand each other so why risk getting involved? It is best to just stay away.

Rabbit with Dog: You've got potential with a strong sexual attraction.

Rabbit with Pig: Absolute bliss. You're good friends and great lovers.



International Trade Center Inaugural Grand Ball

Held at Westin Galleria

The International Trade Center (ITC) held its inaugural grand ball *The Winter White Night*, which was co-chaired by Gordon and Sylvia Quan. Over 500 people attended the event where guests were dressed in winter white or ethnic chic. The evening honored Robert T. Sakowitz, President and CEO of Hazak Corporation, for lifetime achievement and success in the world of business.



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Yuki Rogers, Thu Nguyen

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Fruits, Nuts, And Flowers
For The New Year

Sweet and Floral

Everyone knows that fruits are rich in antioxidants and that nuts and seeds have beneficial fats and enzymes. And fresh cut flowers will brighten the moods of those in their presence. What may be less known is that during Lunar New Year, many of the fruits, nuts, seeds, and flowers import more powerful—and traditional—benefits.



Tangerines symbolize good tidings.



Sweets

During the 15 day Lunar New Year celebration many families display a “Tray of Togetherness” on a table that consists of an array of sweets. The tray has eight compartments, each of which is filled to the rim with a food item that bears significance during this season. The number eight symbolizes good fortune. Based upon your preference, select eight items from the list provided below that also includes information about the type of good fortune associated with each.

- Sweetened Candied Winter Melons – a sweet and easy life
- Sweetened Lotus Root – marital bliss or “match made in heaven”
- Sweetened Tangerine – auspiciousness
- Sweetened Shredded Coconut Pieces – everlasting love
- Sweetened Ginger – longevity
- Sweetened Carrots – wealth and precious jewels
- Sweetened Lotus Seeds – fertility
- Sweetened Dried Red Dates – good luck in every endeavor
- Sweetened Water Chestnut – accomplishment in all activities
- Sweetened Pineapple – great achievement in career or business
- Sweetened Potato – overflowing pot of gold
- Sweetened Mandarin Orange – auspiciousness
- Sweetened Dried Longans – many good sons
- Pistachio Nuts – happiness
- Red Melon Seeds – joy and happiness

Money

Lai-See Envelopes: (also called Hong-Bao) Money is placed in these envelopes and given to children and young adults at New Year’s time. Presents are often exchanged between families, as well.

Fruits

An assortment of fruits is commonly displayed in homes and shops. Tangerines symbolize good tidings, oranges symbolize wealth, and pomelos symbolize abundance and prosperity. Tangerines, oranges and pomelos are a “must” gift item when visiting family or friends during the New Year celebration.

Florals

Flowers and plants play a significant role in Lunar New Year decorations as they symbolize rebirth and new growth. Flowers are believed to be symbolic of wealth and high position in one’s career. Asians believe that without flowers there would be no fruits. Therefore, it is of the utmost importance to have flowers and floral decorations for the New Year.

Pussy Willows are the flower of the New Year. The fluffy white blossoms of Pussy Willows resemble silk and they soon give forth to young shoots that are the color of green jade. The signs of growth represent the coming prosperity.

Water Narcissus signifies “good luck and prosperity”. If the Narcissus flowers blossom on the first day of the New Year, it indicates good fortune for the rest of the year.

Other flowers and plants that are popular for the Lunar New Year include Peach Blossom, Red Azaleas, bendable bamboo, Pine sprigs and Kumquat trees.

Eating pistachio nuts will bring happiness.



A Cool Place To Be
(For Now)

A World Awash in Wine

by PHILIP CUISIMANO

In 2011, the American wine industry was shaped by two factors: a worldwide wine glut and a soft economy. Discussion of the latter is beyond my reach but I can shed some light on the cause and effects of too much wine in the market and the implications for the future.

Today, the amount of wine being produced is far greater than demand, the primary cause of which I believe is declining consumption in parts of Europe. Statistics from Trade Data and Analysis (TDA) indicates that per capita consumption between 2006 and 2009, as measured in liters, declined in the following countries by the indicated amounts: France 14%, Italy 10.4%, Portugal 3.2%, Austria 7.7%, Spain 17.5%, Argentina 7.3% and Germany 0.5%. Consumers in these countries are drinking significantly less wine, creating a surplus in worldwide supply. As a frame of reference, note that the above listed countries account for 43.5% of total wine consumption and produce 60.25% of the total supply.

Another consequence of Europe's declining consumption rate is an enhanced focus on the American market.

Factors contributing to the declining rates of consumption in Europe include some of the following: changing demographics (the world's population is becoming increasingly older), a movement toward temperance, and a focus upon healthier lifestyles.

The results of this wine glut are a mixed bag. In the short

term, we can enjoy lower prices and have a greater variety from which to select, but a flood of inferior wine is washing through the market's distribution pipelines, creating stresses that, in the long term, could result in higher prices along with less selection.

Another consequence of Europe's declining consumption rate is an enhanced focus on the American market. This is because our consumption rates are continuing to trend upwards. During the same period of Europe's decline, our per capita rate rose by 11.71% (TDA). Here in Texas, based on data from the Texas Alcoholic Beverage Commission, during the months of January through November 2011, per capita consumption increased by 6.4% over the same period last year.

To illustrate the importance of America's wine market, consider this; in 2009, the per capita consumption rate for wine in France was 45.24 while in the United States our rate was 8.99. France's population in 2009 was estimated at 64,420,073 while America's population base was at 307,212,123. This means that the average French citizen consumes five times the amount of wine than the typical American while the United States has roughly five times the population of France. Can you imagine if Americans begin to consume wine at the same rate as the French? Some predict that wine consumption in the United States will continue to rise and if the level approaches that of France and Italy, then perhaps the supply demand of wine will balance.

However, today, there is too much wine available. Enjoy the great pricing and wide array of choices but keep in mind it is never a healthy market when the supply of goods so greatly outstrips demand and we are likely to pay the price, in the future.



Wine of the Month

Sant'Elena Pinot Grigio 2007

This is really a special white wine and not at all typical of the mass-produced Pinot Grigio that dominates store shelves and restaurant lists. For one thing, this wine is from extremely low-yielding vineyards allowing for its rich, full fruit flavors of pear, apple and mango. Additionally, the juice is allowed to lie on its lees for an extended period of time imparting minerals and layers of delicious complexity. This is a crowd pleaser, perfect to serve at special occasions, including your Super Bowl Party. \$19.00

Wines available at Spec's Wines, Spirits, & Finer Foods, various locations. Visit specsonline.com for the store nearest you.

Dining Guide

Yellow Magazine's featured restaurants

JAPANESE

Tokyo One

7465 W. Greens Rd., 281.955.8898
2938 W. Sam Houston S., 713.785.8899
Tokyo One is a sushi buffet restaurant, situated in a fancy boat house with an outside deck. The food is fresh and is constantly replenished. Selections include: salads such as sea weed, beef, squid, salmon and watercress. Sushi includes a variety of rolls and sashimi.

Zushi Japanese Cuisine

5900 Memorial Dr., 713.861.5588
Zushi serves extremely fresh and high quality sushi. Stand out items are the sashimi appetizers served with perfectly paired sauces or any one of the many house specialty rolls.

Uptown Sushi

1131 Uptown Park Blvd. #14 713.871.1200
Uptown Sushi personifies an upscale sushi restaurant located near the Galleria in the swanky Uptown Park Plaza. The menu offers Japanese fusion dishes and a great selection of high-end sashimi and sushi. Side note: Uptown Sushi has "off-the-menu" specialty rolls served daily!

CHINESE

Auntie Chang's

2621 South Shepherd #290, 713.524.8410
Auntie Chang's offers the most flavorful home-style Chinese cuisine around. Although known for their dumplings, any of your favorite classic Chinese dishes are done extremely well.

Hong Kong Food Street

9750 Bellaire Blvd., 713.981.9888
Peking duck and roasted pork hang from cleavers in a front window display giving a Hong Kong street market feel. In addition, the menu is divided into sections including Seafood, Hot Pot, Special Stir Fry, Sizzling and Chef Specials.

San Dong Noodle House

9938-F Bellaire Blvd., 713.271.3945
Authentic hand pulled Chinese noodle dishes are served at a reasonable price. A few favorites include the Roast Beef Noodle soup served in a beef broth accented by ginger and soy, or the oh so addicting pan fried dumplings.

VIETNAMESE

Sinh Sinh

9788 Bellaire Blvd., 713.541.0888
The seafood at Sinh Sinh is quite exciting because everything served comes from live tanks. Prawns, Australian king lobster, King crabs, Coral Leopard trout, Surf clams, Geoduck clams, Trunk clams, Elephant clams, etc...are all featured as live seafood.

THAI

Thai Spice

8282 Bellaire Blvd. 713.777.4888
Thai Spice on Bellaire is a foodies dream. It's a casual place that serves Thai dishes you won't find anywhere else in Houston, with a huge selection of interesting, rare, tasty dishes at excellent prices. A must have is the whole fried tilapia with hot and sour dipping sauce and papaya salad and Tom Yum soup.

Nit Noi

6700 Woodway Pkwy., Suite 580
281.597.8200
Nit Noi means "a little bit" and Thai food lovers pack Nit Noi restaurants and cafes all around Houston. Nit Noi will always be known for their Pad Thai, but other must try dishes include Pad Thai Korat (flat noodles stir-fried with chicken, pork or shrimp with vegetables) and Tom Yum Goong (spicy and sour shrimp soup).

Tony Thai

10613 Bellaire Blvd., 281.495.1711
A sophisticated approach to traditional Thai cuisine, Tony's executes with perfect balance and pizzazz. Tony's Wings, wet or dry, and the Steamed Mussels are popular appetizers. For the main course try the Basil Lamb, Garlic Salmon or the Steamed Fish with Chili.

INDIAN

Kiran's Restaurant

4100 Westheimer Rd. #151, 713.960.8472
This northern Indian style restaurant embodies a fusion approach to its cuisine. With a focus on well balanced flavors rather than spice, the Flaky Halibut Swimming in Watermelon Curry sauce and the Tandoori Platter typify this perfectly.

VIETNAMESE

Kim Son Restaurants

2001 Jefferson (and other locations), 713.222.2461
The menu is the most imposing part of this casual, highly regarded landmark Vietnamese restaurant. There are no poor choices among the 100 or so options. Enjoy finely prepared delicacies as well as the expected fare, such as the pork vermicelli and fried eggroll. Must try is their black pepper softshell crab. Special event facilities available.

Vietopia

5176 Buffalo Speedway, 713.664.7303
Trendy yet elegant, Vietopia delivers top notch Vietnamese cuisine at reasonable lunch prices and a stellar dinner menu. The lounge works perfectly for those who want a less formal dining experience but still want to enjoy quality food.

Mo Mong

1201 Westheimer Rd. #B, 713.524.5664
This Trendy Montrose establishment has a great lunch crowd as well as a packed martini night on Wednesdays. But the real draw is the food-traditional family recipes mixed in with some tasty modern dishes. Must try items include the Mango Spring Rolls, Shrimp and Avocado Spring Roll, Volcano Chicken, and the Bo Luc Lac.

CONTINENTAL

Voice Restaurant & Lounge

Hotel Icon, 220 Main, 832.667.4470
The impressive décor has thoughtfully transformed the space of an old bank lobby into a warm cozy and elegant dining area. Try the Mushroom Soup "Cappuccino", reduction of garlic, onion, crimini mushrooms topped with frothy truffle foam, and the Bryan Farms Roast Chicken, a free range and 100% corn fed chicken.

Colombe d'Or Restaurant and Hotel

3410 Montrose Blvd. 713.524.7999
Built in 1923 and originally the mansion of Walter Fondren, one of the founders of Humble Oil, Colombe d'Or Hotel is considered a Texas historical landmark. Featuring French and Continental fare, we recommend the Carre d'Agneau, individual rack of baby lamb grilled with natural herbs and red wine sauce.

"America's Ethnic Restaurant"-- Bon Appetite



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