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JANUARY 2007

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**Miss
Chinatown**

**A Crowning
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**Get Lucky
in the New Year**
**Complementary
Compliments**
**Keeping It In
the Family**

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Photographer : **Debbie Porter**
Fashion Stylist : **Summar Salah**
Hair : **David Banford for Tovas**
Makeup Artist : **Christabel for Gloss the Salon**



Connie Chen is the featured model in this month's issue. At the tender age of seventeen, she captured the title of Miss Chinatown Houston and will be competing in the Miss Chinatown USA pageant in San Francisco next month. I interviewed Connie and was impressed by her intelligence and the manner in which she expressed her thoughts. She emphasized that "anyone can accomplish anything" and that although she is not "perfect" from a modeling point of view, she was confident she could win the crown. Finally, her role as Miss Chinatown has brought her closer to her culture and to her community.

Those same thoughts and feelings have been stated in one way or another by many people we had interviewed in the past. They are thoughts and feelings that resonate with me as I have pursued my passion, publishing this magazine. But it is Connie's last sentiment that looms most significantly upon my consciousness. And that is how much closer I have come to my Asian culture and community along the way. I want to wish Connie much success as she seeks the crown of Miss Chinatown USA. She is a most worthy representative of our city on the national stage.

Also in this issue, we provide you with some "Do's" and "Don'ts" for the Chinese New Year and Vietnamese "Tet", along with some traditions and customs that may help you become closer to your culture. It is our wish that you receive much good fortune in this new year.

Viet Hoang

Publisher

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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 publisher of the *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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Viet Hoang

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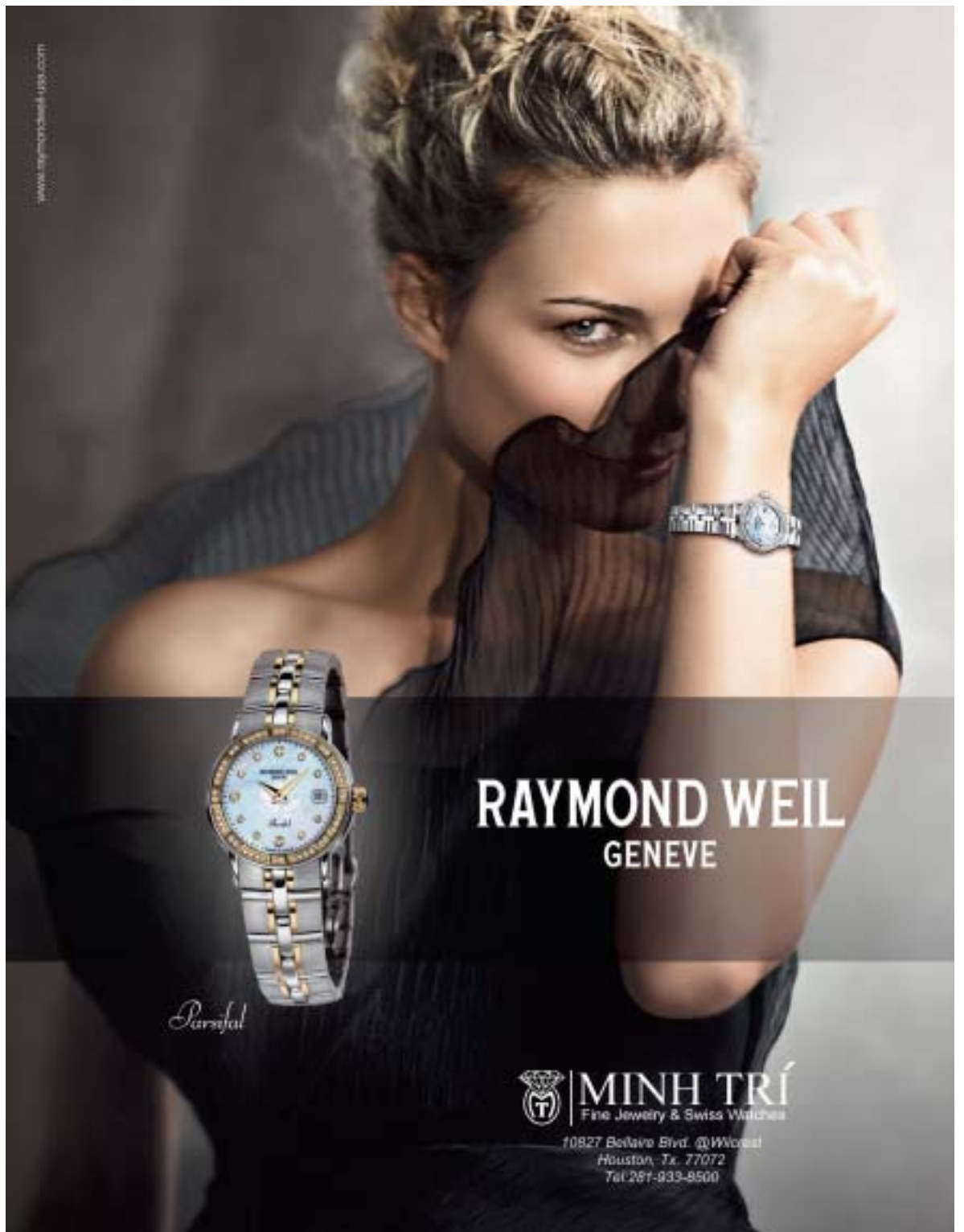
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Yellow Magazine/Hope Initiative Party

Held at Tansu

Photos by Sopheavy Than

The readers of *Yellow Magazine* celebrated the December issue in conjunction with the release of the 2007 Hope Initiative Calendar at Tansu in the Heights. Many of the calendar models were on hand to autograph the new calendars. Tansu generously donated ten percent of sales to Hope Initiative, a local non-profit organization that helps support orphanages in Vietnam. The party brought out the fashionable who drank Martell Noblige cognac with ginger ale, Martell VSOP cognac with coca cola and Tiger beer, newly imported from Singapore.



Calendar models



David Vinh, Michelle La, Paul Nguyen, Vy Le, Teresa Mai, Viet Hoang



Yellow Magazine December 2006 cover



Hanh Tran, Olivia Perng



Inside Tansu



Tina Tran, William Kao



Paul Nguyen



Bao Hoang, Teresa Mai, Huy Pham, Vy Le



Tina Tran, Phi Nguyen, Vy Pham, Theresa Pham, Catherine Tran, Mindy Le, Stevie Vu, Tu Phan



Liena Morrison, Irina Stuart, Princess Irina Gelovani, Tanya Fukshansky



Derick Mendoza, Thuy Nguyen, Lauren Nguyen, James Le Quynh



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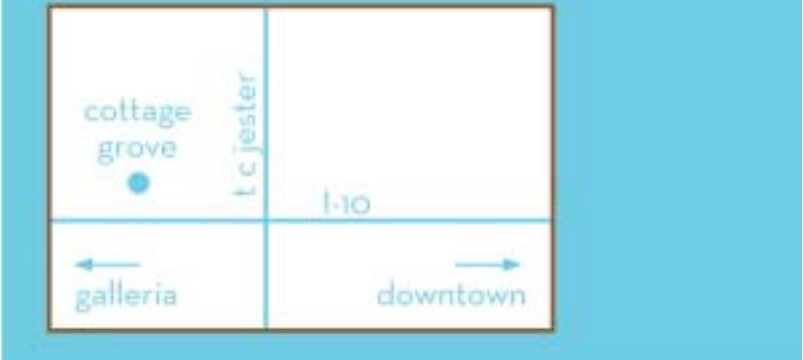


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Chinese Community Center 2006 Gala

Held at the InterContinental Hotel

Photos by Sopheavy Than

One of the largest Chinese American galas in Houston, the "who's who" in the Chinese community was out in full force at this special "Salute to Asian American All-Stars" event. Guests showed they believed in the importance of giving back to the community by raising over \$300,000 to help build a gymnasium facility at the Center. The auction highlight of the evening were shoes donated by basketball superstar Houston Rocket Yao Ming, racking up a winning bid of \$45,000. In 2006, the Chinese Community Center entered its 28th year of service, and continues to grow while focusing on its mission "to bridge East and West by enriching families with educational, cultural, and social service programs."



Gala committee members, friends and guests



Glen Gondo, Helen Chang



Yuki Rogers, Anne Cheng



Joe Ting, Jay Guerrero



Claudia Vassar, Antje Gee



K.W. Liao, D.C. Jan, Ben Ou



Yali Zou, Alice Chen



Mayling Birney, Ceyan Birney



Christina, Serena, Wellington and Catherine Yu



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Ding Zhou, Fang Li, Yao Zhiyuan, Lijuan Gao



Linda and Ted Wu



Linda Guo, Ernest Hui



Thomas Chen, Kuo Tsai-Fa, F.B. Chang



William and Mandy Kao



Anita Carman, Donna Cole



Daniel Tran, Bobbi Nguyen, Viet Hoang



Consul General Yoshihiko Kamo and Etsuko Kamo, Glen Gondo



Hoang Quan Vu, Catherine Than, Mark Lee

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You are Such a Boar!

The Year of the Pig

Instead of directly asking one's age, people in China may ask "what is your animal sign?", placing the person's age within a 12 year cycle. More commonly, people may ask about a person's animal sign to simply determine who is older among friends and acquaintances.

There are twelve signs used for dating the years. There are numerous folk tales that explain the beginning of the zodiac. One of the more popular is how a long time ago, the Lord Buddha summoned all the animals together to assign a year to each of them. When a cat heard the news, he let his friend, the rat, know about it and the two decided to go together the next day. The next day, the rat did not wake the cat who slept through the morning. Therefore, the cat did not make it to the assembly for the race and did not get a year. This is why there is no year of the cat and why cats hate rats. The rat knew that a small animal like himself could not compete with the others, so he begged the ox to let him ride on its head. The ox consented and just when they were about to arrive at the finish line, the rat jumped off the ox's head and got through first. This is why the year of the rat is the first year in the cycle and the year of the ox is the second.

The Chinese Lunar Calendar is based on the cycles of the moon, unlike the West's solar calendar. In the Chinese calendar, the beginning of the year falls somewhere between late January and mid February. This year, the Chinese year 4705 begins on February 18, 2007. Although the Chinese adopted the western calendar in 1911, they continue to use the lunar calendar for festive occasions such as the New Year.



Year of the Boar/Pig

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

Boars/Pigs are splendid companions. Intellectuals who set and complete difficult goals, they are gracious and gallant. Whatever they do, they do full strength. They have tremendous courage and great honesty. They don't make many friends but the one's they have they have for life. They speak little but have a great thirst for knowledge, studying a great deal and being well informed. They are quick-tempered, yet they hate arguments and quarreling. They are kind to their loved ones. No matter how bad problems seem to be, they try to work them out honestly if sometimes impulsively. They thrive in the arts as entertainers. For Pigs in 2007, any recent setback or obstacle can be overcome, so look forward to a year in which to really shine, either personally or professionally. Pigs are most compatible with those people born in the Year of the Rabbit and Sheep.



Year of the Rat

1924, 1936, 1948, 1960, 1972, 1984, 1996

Rats are said to be imaginative, charming and very generous to those whom they love. They tend to be quick-tempered and over-critical. These people work hard to achieve their goals, acquire possessions, and are likely to be perfectionists. They are financially thrifty, easily angered and love to gossip. They are most compatible with people born in the Year of the Dragon, Monkey, and Ox.



Year of the Ox

1925, 1937, 1949, 1961, 1973, 1985, 1997

People born in the Year of the Ox are patient, taciturn, and inspire the confidence of others. They are born leaders, however, they tend to be eccentric, bigoted, and anger easily displaying fierce tempers. They are conservative, methodical, and good with their hands. While they are generally easy-going, they can be remarkably stubborn, and are adverse to failure and opposition. They are most compatible with people born in the Year of the Snake, Rooster, and Rat.



Year of the Tiger

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

Tigers are sensitive, given to deep thinking and capable of great love. They are bold and adventurous, self-initiating and charming, and extremely short-tempered. Although they command great respect, they sometimes come into conflict with older people or those in authority. Indecisive at times, they can make poor, hasty decisions or good ones that come too late. Tigers are most compatible with people born in the Year of the Horse, Dragon, and Dog.



Year of the Rabbit

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

Rabbits are articulate, talented, ambitious, affectionate, co-operative, pleasant, and have many friends. They are prone to sentimentality, and may appear superficial, and seldom lose their temper. They are virtuous, reserved, and have excellent taste. They are admired, trusted, and often financially lucky. Clever in business and conscientious, they never back out of a contract. They would make good gamblers for they have the uncanny gift of choosing the right thing. They are most compatible with those born in the Year of the Sheep, Pig, and Dog.



Year of the Dragon

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

Dragons tend to be popular, full of life, enthusiastic and have a reputation for being fun-loving and sometimes "big-mouths." Dragons are healthy, energetic, excitable, short-tempered, stubborn, honest, sensitive, brave, and they inspire confidence and trust. They tend to be soft hearted, placing them at risk of others taking advantage of them. They are most suited to be artists, priests, or politicians. They are most compatible with people born in the Year of the Rat, Snake, Monkey, and Rooster.



Year of the Snake

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

Snakes are rich in wisdom and charm. They are romantic, deep thinkers and their intuition guides them strongly. They say little and possess great wisdom. They are always financially secure. Snake people are often quite vain, selfish, and a bit stingy. They tend to overdo things, since they have doubts about other people's judgment and prefer to rely upon themselves. They are driven and are adverse to failure. Calm on the surface, they are intense and passionate underneath. Snakes are usually attractive and sometimes have marital problems because they are fickle. They are well suited to be teachers, philosophers, writers, psychiatrists, and fortunetellers. They are most compatible with people born in the Year of the Ox and Rooster.



Year of the Horse

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

Horses are popular. Their capacity for hard work is amazing. They are very independent, cheerful, skillful with money, and perceptive, although they sometimes talk too much. They are wise, talented, good with their hands and like being entertained and being in large crowds. They are impatient and hot-blooded about everything except their daily work. They are successful adventurers, scientists, poets, or politicians. They are most compatible with people born in the Year of the Tiger, Dog, and Sheep.



Year of the Sheep/Goat

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

Sheep/ Goats are elegant and highly accomplished in the arts. They are often shy, pessimistic, and puzzled about life. Deeply religious, timid by nature, clumsy in speech, they are passionate about what they do and in their beliefs. They are well compensated for their talents, which afford them the lifestyles they wish to have. They are wise, gentle, and compassionate. They are best suited to be actors, gardeners or beachcombers. They are compatible with people born in the Year of the Rabbit, Pig, and Horse.



Year of the Monkey

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

Monkeys are very intelligent, clever, witty, skillful, flexible, and remarkably inventive and original, enabling them to easily solve difficult problems. Because of their extraordinary nature and magnetic personality, people under this sign are well liked. They want to do things immediately, and become discouraged if prevented, sometimes abandoning projects. They must guard against an opportunist and are distrustful of other people. Having common sense, the monkeys have a deep desire for knowledge and have excellent memories. People born under this zodiac are strong willed but their anger cools quickly. Monkeys are most compatible with people born in the Year of the Dragon and Rat.



Year of the Rooster

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

Roosters are hard workers, shrewd and confident decision makers who often speak their mind, making them appear boastful to others. They are deep thinkers who are capable, and talented but often over commit themselves and feel great disappointment if they fail. They always think they are right and usually they are! They are frequently loners and adventurous, they are timid. Rooster people's emotions, like their fortunes, swing erratically. They can be selfish and too outspoken, but are always interesting and extremely brave. They make good restaurant owners and world travelers. They are most compatible with those people born in the Year of the Ox, Snake, and Dragon.



Year of the Dog

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

People born in the Chinese New Year of the Dog possess the best traits of human nature. They are loyal, honest, and inspire the confidence of others because they know how to keep secrets. But dog people are also somewhat selfish, stubborn and eccentric. They care little for wealth, yet somehow always seem to have money. They can be emotional and sometimes distant in groups. Dogs are compatible with those born in the Year of the Horse, Tiger, and Rabbit.



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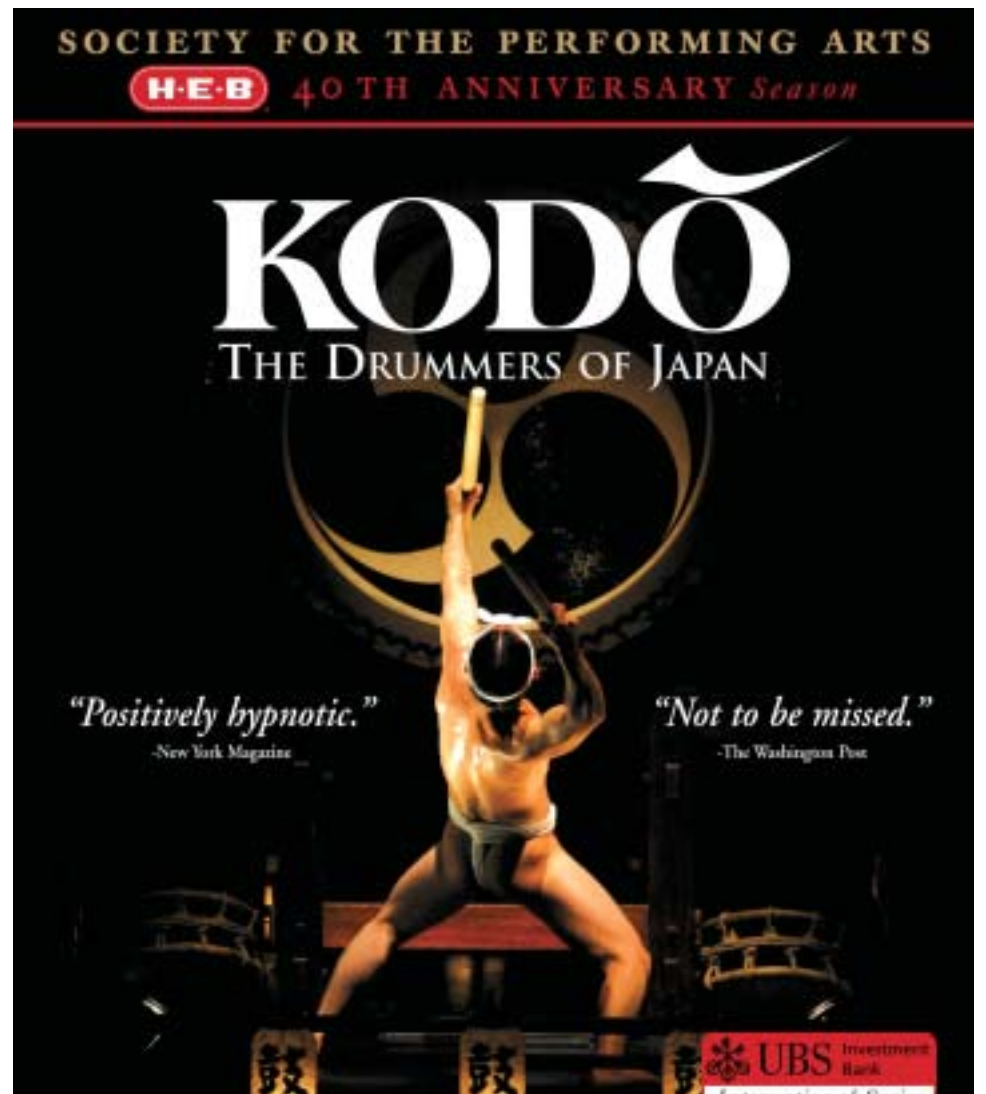


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Lunar New Year Traditions

The Chinese New Year or Vietnamese “Tet” will be celebrated on February 18, 2007, the first day of the Year of the Pig and the year 4705 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 of 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 is the time when farmers plant their new crops.



The Lunar New Year has spawned many beliefs. It is believed that the events that occur on New Year's Day may 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, work and 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 Pig”.

Before New Year's Day

- Clean the entire house.
- Put away all brooms and brushes.
- Pay all debts.
- Resolve differences with family, friends, neighbor, and business associates.

New Year's Eve

- Get together with close family members for dinner.
- Open every door and window in your home at midnight to let go of the old year.
- Shoot firecrackers at midnight (where legal) to send out the old year and welcome in the new year.

New Year's Day

- Decorate your home in red for happiness and gold/orange for wealth and happiness.
- Have oranges and tangerines for good health and long life. Tangerines with leaves intact symbolize long lasting relationships. Persimmons symbolize happiness and wealth.
- Circular candy trays symbolize togetherness.
- Having flowers that bloom on New Year's Day will signify a prosperous year.
- Red banners or couplets with New Year 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 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 two. This is a way to pass good luck onto the next generation. Business should also give lei sees to employees and associates.
- Do wear new clothes and new shoes, preferably in red. Red is considered to be bright and happy color that will bring you a bright 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 since the first day of the year.
- 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 fortune.
- Don't cry or you will be crying all through the year.

While some of us do not believe in these “do’s” and “don’ts”, these traditions and customs survive because we realize that they provide us with a sense of continuity with our history and strengthen our identity.

Everything associated with
New Year's Day should
represent good fortune.

A Crowning Achievement

Miss Chinatown

by VIET HOANG

Connie Chen has traveled a very long runway in her young life. From Shantou City, China, where she was born, her family lived in Rhode Island before settling in Houston when she was five. Twelve years later, the runway took her to the height of pageantry, as she was crowned Houston's own Miss Chinatown. In February, Connie will be competing in the Miss Chinatown USA Pageant in San Francisco.

How does it feel to be Miss Chinatown?

Being Miss Chinatown is one of the best things I have ever had happen to me. I feel proud of myself everyday for my accomplishment. I entered the pageant this year because I wanted to have an interesting and fun learning experience, but I never really expected to win the title. I gained so much more than I expected. It really isn't about getting a chance to wear a beautiful tiara and sash. The most fun and most memorable appearances have been those in which I did not wear a fancy Chinese dress and tiara. They were the ones in which I gained a greater understanding and broader knowledge of the Asian community. Every event I attend, I learn something new about the wonderful people who volunteer their time to organizations that benefit society, and not just Asian society. Being Miss Chinatown gives me a sense of pride and accomplishment. I am honored to represent the Houston Asian community at the Miss Chinatown USA pageant in San Francisco in February.

How has Miss Chinatown changed your views on the Asian or Chinese communities in Houston or in general?

I must admit, as a child, I was never really proud of being Chinese. In elementary school, I was made fun of because I spoke a "ching chang chung" language and my face was flat. In school, we were taught from a viewpoint that Asian society was inferior, that Chinatown is dirty, and that Asia is poor. All of this is completely untrue, of course.

I am amazed at how fast Asian communities are growing in the United States and how influential Asian countries are becoming. Being Miss Chinatown Houston gives me the opportunity to personally see for myself what Asian people are doing to improve our world. The CACA (Chinese American Citizens Alliance) holds meetings to raise funds to build projects throughout the city. This year, the CACA Youth Club has worked hard to raise money to sponsor 100 families. The Chinese Civic Center (CCC) supports recreation centers, daycare facilities, doctors, etc, to help those who cannot afford expensive care. And, finally, there is *Yellow Magazine*, which takes so many people and so much hard work to put together. It continuously showcases the achievements and activities within the Asian community with a sense of pride.

What do you like most about being Miss Chinatown?

I love meeting the people who influence and make up the Asian community. Being Miss Chinatown gives me the wonderful opportunity to meet local celebrities, VIPs, and politicians. There are many pictures taken, autographs signed, and my debut in *Yellow Magazine*, etc. I love every second of my experiences. But the purpose of my title is to bring me closer to my culture and community. The senior citizens who tell me endless stories of their youth, the little girls who ask me if I am a princess and tell me about their schools, and the parents who ask me to advise them on how to encourage their daughters to compete for Miss Chinatown are all the people I love meeting and talking to the most. Giving back to the community in my role of Miss Chinatown is something that I will forever cherish and it will be the one thing I will miss when I pass on my title. Through the entire process, I have learned to present myself with grace and dignity, and have taught myself to understand and respect what every person, culture, and community has to offer.



Photo by Debbie Porter

Connie Chen, Miss Chinatown 2006

What do you hope you bring to the community as Miss Chinatown?

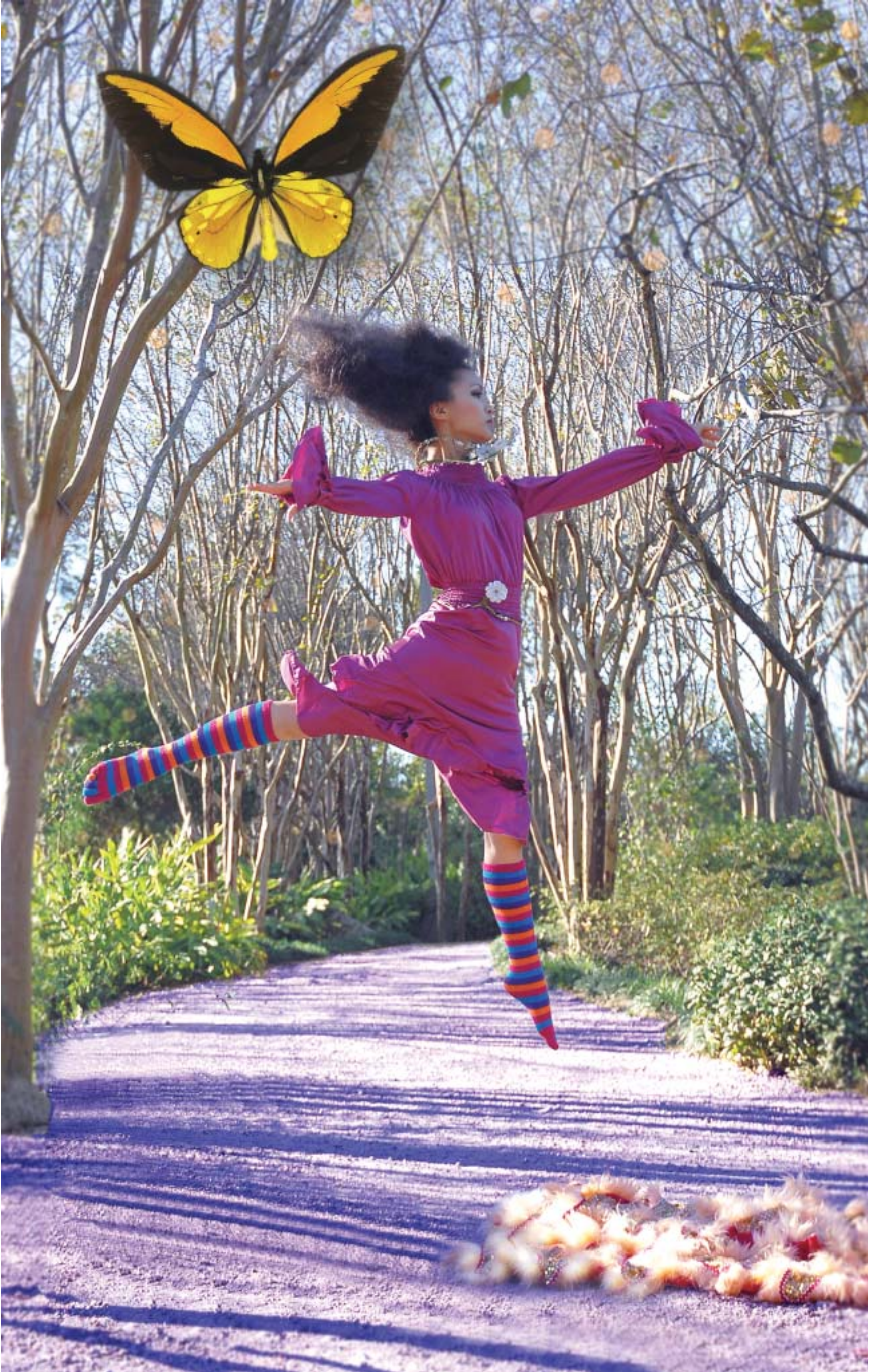
I really want to send a message that anyone can accomplish anything. The world would be a completely different place without the people who are out there striving to make a difference, leaving their marks on society. Being Miss Chinatown Houston has been a humbling experience for me. I'm not perfect. In fact, I was the shortest and one of the youngest girls in the pageant. I don't want any girl to think that they are not pretty, tall, or skinny enough to wear a crown and walk gracefully down a runway. I never thought I could, but I went for it, anyway, and won the title. It's extremely important to display confidence and I believe that this was one of the main reasons that I won. Anyone can put aside their doubts and insecurities to achieve success.

What is in your future?

As of now, I can only prepare myself to do my best and fully represent Houston at the Miss Chinatown U.S.A pageant this February in San Francisco. I hope I make Houston proud. I don't really know if I will enter more pageants in the future but I definitely want another experience like the Miss Chinatown Houston Pageant. It's been amazing and definitely something I will remember for the rest of my life. I want to thank everyone who made the experience possible, especially the CACA. They are truly incredible people.

I'm a senior in high school, so I am pretty much trying to get my college applications all together, hoping and praying that I get into the college of my dreams.

Anyone can put aside their doubts
and insecurities to achieve success.



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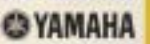
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Japan American Society Annual Gala

Held at the InterContinental Hotel

The Japan American Society of Houston annual gala was held on November 15, 2006, and was one of the most elegant and sophisticated galas of the year. Many of the hostesses were dressed in traditional kimonos, while other guests were dressed to impress. This year's keynote speaker was Ambassador J. Thomas Schieffer, U.S. Ambassador to Japan.

The mission of the Japan American Society of Houston is to provide programs, which increase the knowledge and understanding of Japan by Americans, and to encourage communication between Japanese and Americans.



Elsie Huang, Yuki Rogers, Roger and Patty Williams



Nobuyoshi Kawamoto, Council General Kamo, Etsuko Kamo, Misao Kawamoto



Glen Gondo, Mike Vallasses, Bob Blades, Will Williams



Nobuyoshi and Misao Kawamoto



Ming and Don Wang



Wayne and Setsuko Hick



Mrs. and Dr. Akira Nishikawa



Masafumi and Reiko Yamamoto



Jean Wong Wilson, John Kim, Shara Fryer



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Something New to Applaud
in the Theatre District

Sake Lounge

by HUAN LE

Some Houston areas demand the presence of at least one good restaurant. At Bayou Place, Sake Lounge fits the bill. New owner, Kenneth Goh, of Dallas' Cafe Japon has revitalized the restaurant with his brand of panache.

All photos by Sopheavy Than



Kenneth says he wants to add something new to the Japanese restaurant scene without sacrificing those things Houston diners have come to expect from a Japanese restaurant.

Some of the changes are subtle such as the new color scheme of sexy purple and yellow that improves the space without screaming for attention. Other changes, like the menu, demand a diner's complete attention. The space is still airy and loft-like with splashes of wood and metal. It is a tropical meets zen kind of space. The waiters are still dressed in black. The restaurant is still in the middle of the Houston Theater District—perfect for a meal before or after the show, but gone is the conservative Japanese menu.

Chef Yama, who has worked all around the world for the past nineteen years with stints on beautiful islands, New York and Europe, now runs the Sake Lounge sushi bar. He says Kenneth found him on a beach on some island. Houston is lucky for the chance meeting. His blue, yellow, green and black hair says it all: he wants to infuse Sake Lounge with fusion Japanese food. The extensive menu still carries the usual sashimi platters, California rolls, and miso soup, but between the traditional plates are dishes unlike anything else in Houston. Spice up your usual sushi order with specialties like the Sake Ceviche, Yama Roll, Albacore Float, or Sake Lounge Roll.

The Sake Ceviche is a carryover from the previous owners and still manages to excite the palate. Shrimp, imitation crab and bay scallops marinate in a sake cocktail sauce made from homemade tomato paste. The sake



Top: Sake ceviche
Middle: Sake lounge roll
Bottom: Yama roll

Spice up your usual sushi order with specialties like the Sake Ceviche, Yama Roll, Albacore Float, or Sake Lounge Roll.

cooks the ingredients. Fried crispy tortilla chips surround the ceviche, ready to add crunchy texture to the seafood. The sake marinade makes the shrimp and bay scallops so tender, it's almost a crime to use a fork instead of a spoon to place the ceviche on top of the chips. The taste has hints of the rice base of the sake, without being overpowered by the alcohol. Share the Sake Ceviche with others at the table, as the portion is generous.

The Yama Roll is a spicy salmon roll that is punched up with wasabi marinade, eel sauce, and Japanese mayonnaise dressing, and garnished with flecks of seaweed.

For kicks, an Albacore Float might titillate the taste buds. This delicious dish comes with Albacore tuna dressed with roasted garlic in ponzu sauce. Something about ponzu sauce always makes the tongue dance a bit. Paired with roasted garlic and Albacore, the ponzu finds a beautiful dance partner.

The restaurant's pièce de la resistance is its namesake Sake Lounge Roll (\$13). This wonderful bit of karmic inspiration begins life as an interesting spicy tuna roll spliced with bits of what I believe to be fried tempura that add a crunchy texture. Topping each roll is a slice of fruit under a piece of sashimi. The fruit and fish combination provides a perfect balance of flavor. Tuna is paired with mango, yellowtail with strawberry, and salmon with kiwi.

The way to eat this dish is to place each piece of the roll in your mouth in one bite. First, the flavor of the fish and fruit will impress you by its smoothness. Then, just as those taste buds begin to get used to the mellowness, BAM, in comes the spicy tuna and crunchy bits of tempura. All by itself, this inventive dish makes a visit to Sake Lounge a good idea.

The fish at the sushi bar, under the clear glass, is displayed whole. It is not sliced into sushi-sized portions until your order is placed. I have noticed a worrying trend in some Houston Japanese restaurants where the fish at the sushi bar comes pre-cut, unduly drying out the delicate flesh.

A discussion about a restaurant named after a Japanese drink is probably incomplete without some word about sake. To the left of the entrance is the Sake Lounge bar which is appropriately a darker version of the dining area. Patrons may try a wide selection of sake brands and Japanese beer.

People are beginning to discover the vibrant touches the new owners have brought to Sake Lounge. It won't be long before weekday dinner reservations will be a good idea. Opera, play, ballet, and symphony ticket holders will definitely want reservations on weekends when the hungry crowds seek good food in the Theater District.

Sake Lounge has always been a good restaurant in a great location. As downtown has matured, the location has only gotten better. The change in ownership of the restaurant has added an exciting edge that has improved upon what the previous owners had begun. Whether you are dining before or after the show, or just because you are in the mood for tasty Japanese food, you may want to continue your applause for the culinary talent that is on stage at Sake Lounge.



Chef Yama

Sake Lounge is located at 550 Texas Street in downtown Houston. To make reservations, call 713.228.7253. For more information visit sakelounge.com.

Chloe Dao Fashion Show

Held at Lot 8 Boutique

Fashionistas, fans and many local media showed up for a fashion show of Chloe Dao's Fall 2006 "Urbanites" Collection. The show was so popular that many fans had to stand outside of the boutique just to have a peek of the new line.

Photos by Sopheavy Than



Trinh Dao, Tricia Kim, Michelle Nguyen



Chloe Dao, Viet Hoang



Yuie Hinojosa, Judy Gomez



Cindy Le, Rnaroi Yessen, Emina Cohadzic



Adolfo Medina, Piccolino Moscovich, Juanqui Flores, Louis Landin



Chloe Dao's new designs on the runway



Yassamin Ghalidri, Carla Campbell



Thao Ho, Keysha Mcloud



Michael Scheurich, Kaitlyn Bloomquist



Morgan Holleman, Marlon Chen, Vee Chantharaj



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Mikel Marketing 7th Anniversary Party

Held at Mikel Marketing

Photos by Sopheavy Than

Hundreds of fashionable guests, trendsetters, and community leaders crowded into Mikel Marketing's office to congratulate Mimi Dinh, president of the company, for another successful year. Mikel Marketing cleverly reinforced the theme of "7" throughout the party, with the western film *The Magnificent 7* projected on the wall, honoring 7 local celebrities, featuring 7 beautiful floral arrangements around the room, and a delicious 7 layer cake to top things off.



Tri Dinh, Mimi Dinh, Pamela Tranpark, Monique Hoang



Daniel Qureshi, Anna Khalique, Uruj Perwaiz



Gordon and Sylvia Quan



Darren and Catherine Rank



Annie Chen, Michelle Cowden



Chris and Elissa Stipes



Chris Casey, Chau Nguyen, Mike Shearman



Anita Luong, Monique Hoang, Mark Dang, Pamela Tranpark



Anisha Malik, Chris Brown, Faisal Amin, Shams Siddiqui



Erica Bias, Eunice Fernandez



Dr. and Mrs. Zachary Hodges



Kenneth Goh, guest, Beth Lewis, Shana Quinnelly

UNICEF Fundraiser

Held at Smith & Wollensky

Smith & Wollensky Restaurant hosted a festive evening of cocktails and sumptuous hors d'oeuvres with an "All Star" silent auction of jewels, autographed sports memorabilia, and entertainment. Proceeds from the evening benefited the U.S. Fund for UNICEF's programs worldwide supporting orphans and children who are infected with HIV/AIDS.

Photos by Sopheavy Than



Greg Wilson, Carolyn Farb, John Tsacrios, Amber Ramirez



Joanne King Herring, George Murray



Tara Ladjevardian, Leila Ladjevardian



Yuki Rogers, Dr. James and Tamara Bonar



Deen and Norha Muneer



Reshmi Mitra, Pushan Bishi, Majid Shirali, Amber Ramirez

Russian Nobility Ball

Held at the Houstonian Hotel

Photos by Dave Clements

Many of the Russian nobles came to celebrate the first annual Russian Nobility Ball, which was held at the Houstonian Hotel. All of the proceeds from the event will go to M.D. Anderson Cancer Center to support a new program that provides treatment to disadvantaged children with cancer from Russia and elsewhere who are untreatable in their home countries.



Mrs. Irina Sofinskiy and Hon. Nikolay Sofinskiy



Dr. Cyril E. Geacintov, Mr. Alexis Geacintov



Mrs. Irina Dvorjitsky-san Felippo and Mr. Augustin J. San Felippo



Princes Daniel, Giorgi and David Gelovani



Prince Juri Gelovani, Mrs. Anne Mendelshon, Princess Irina Gelovani, Dr. John Mendelshon



Ms. Maria Vorobieva and Prince Vladimir Galitzine



Mrs. Liena Morrison, Mrs. Inez Storer, Prince Andrew Romanoff and Ms. Inez Storer

Get Compliments
on Your Complements

Wine and Food Pairings

by PHILIP CUSIMANO

The correct pairing of wine with food is an essential element in the creation of a fine dining experience. As flavors in wine can enhance the taste of food, so can the right dish bring the best out in a particular wine. With this in mind, I can think of no better way to start the new year than with a review of some simple 'do's and don'ts' that might help you plan that special menu.

First and foremost, whichever wine you select, it must be one you enjoy drinking. I have tasted many terrible wines only to be told, "it goes really well with this dish" or "that's the style of this wine". Nonsense! The wine you select must at a minimum be fun to drink, regardless of the menu. Secondly, the grand daddy of wine and food recommendations is that old saw "red wine with red meats" and "white wine with fish". It is easy to remember and still has utility.

Spicy Asian food goes well with certain fruity wines.

For more complex dining choices, try to identify the dominant flavor within a dish and then focus on pairing the wine to that flavor. It might be a hint of butter, garlic, the mushroom sauce or perhaps the peppers and spices inherent in wild game and steak. In some cases, you may want to match the wine to the key flavor and in other instances the fare may work best with a wine that is complementary.

An obvious food and wine match might be the selection of a creamy California Chardonnay to go with a lobster entrée drenched in a rich buttery sauce. The bold peppery spiciness and earthy flavors found in a good Chianti pairs well with the similar tastes one finds in rich and robust prime steak. Wines that present citrus fruit should go well with dishes that are tinged with lemon and lime tones as well as fare that have dominant garlic flavors. If an entrée is served with a wine sauce it might make sense to match that dish with a wine similar to the type used in its preparation.

On the other hand, you might select a wine that complements the flavors found within a dish. Spicy Asian food goes well with certain fruity wines such as Riesling and Gewürztraminer, while most cheeses pair better with sweeter white and softer red wines. A baked ham should work well with a brisk, dry rose.

As you select your wine, another important consideration is balance. The wine should be of the same weight as the food. A big bold wine could diminish the enjoyment of a soft, delicately prepared entrée while a rich, hearty meal demands a wine of similar structure.

Other suggestions you may find helpful include: generally, serve white wine before red, fruity wine before drier, lighter wines before those of greater body, and always present sweet wines last. Dry sparkling and still rose wines go with just about everything. So have fun and experiment.



Now for some wines to match with:

Mommessin Bourgogne Pinot Noir 2003

Mommessin is a very reputable French wine house and this is a sturdy offering of Pinot Noir. The color of the wine is dotted with violet hues while the body is medium and delivers a short finish. The fruit is that of cranberry and raspberry and as you sip you can almost taste the French countryside. This wine should complement both grilled red and white meats as well as some lightly blackened fish dishes. \$12.00

Taft Street Sonoma County Chardonnay 2005

A very workable California Chardonnay, the winery takes its name from its original location where it was founded many years ago on Taft Street in Berkeley. This is a medium bodied wine that is crisp and dry with good acidity and delivers a short finish. The fruit screams grapefruit and is very pleasant. It should pair well with all types of seafood especially shellfish. Avoid fare with butter or cream. \$12.00

H Lun Albertus Gewürztraminer 2005

This is an amazing wine from H.Lun located in Italy's Alto Adige region. It is an area that was part of Austria prior to WWI and where the inhabitants speak both German and Italian. Albertus is their reserve wine and is only produced in the best years. This is a dry style of gewürztraminer that lends itself to be consumed often and long. From the scent of rose petals in the nose to the ripe fruit undercoated with spice to its long full-bodied finish, this is an experience to savor. Highly recommended with Asian food. \$39.00

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

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Leeshan Birney

by MANDY KAO



Photo by Debbie Porter

Leeshan Birney

Leeshan Chuang Birney is the co-founder of family-run Stone Mountain Properties, a group of real estate investment companies. She is very well known in the Houston Asian community for her civic involvement and her generous support of many organizations. Her achievements in business and community service have won her recognition from the Governor of Texas, Mayor Bill White, Asian Chamber of Commerce, Chinese Community Center and Global Federation of Chinese Business Women.

This year, Leeshan was honored by the Organization of Chinese Americans (OCA) for her outstanding dedication to the Asian community and extraordinary generosity in providing for displaced victims of Hurricane Katrina. She has become a role model for civic leaders and entrepreneurs. She has been featured in a January 2005 New York Times article *A Real Estate Mogul's Unusual Path* and in the Asian Business Journal in October 2006. The Birney family was honored at the Chinese Community Center in November during the "A Salute to Asian American All-Stars Gala."

I recently had the opportunity to sit down and ask my mentor about love, work and family.

You seem to work all the time. What drives you to work so hard?

I want my children and my husband to be proud of me. James' parents didn't want us to get married. They were worried that having a Chinese wife might affect their son's career success. My parents didn't like the idea either, even if they didn't say anything.

This interracial marriage created the driving force that gave us the power to improve ourselves, apply our talents, and to prove that our decision was the right one. We dedicated ourselves to our family and our business.

James has always praised me for my strong work ethic, my drive and my energy. I was afraid that he was overestimating me, so I kept pushing myself to make sure I met his expectations. I grew up in a hard working family and it was they who instilled in me a strong work ethic. It is my nature to want to do my best at whatever I do.

How long have you been married and how did you meet?

We got married in 1968 while we were students living in the International House in New York City. James was at NYU and I was at Columbia University. He was not very interested in sitting still to study, so we started to study together. He was pleasantly surprised that he started getting straight A's for the first time.

James suggested that I seek an MBA to capitalize on my background in nutrition and be eligible to get a better job with a food company. After I began the program, the immigration office notified me that I had to leave the country and return in two years. It was then that James proposed.

You and your husband seem to complement each other very well. Tell us your secret?

We are very different in the roles and talents that we bring to our business. We divide the work. I let him choose the things he likes to do and I handle the rest.

James likes to focus on property refinancing, legal documents, accounting, landscaping, design, strategy, and renovations. He doesn't like personnel management, the day-to-day operations of the rental business, searching

for investment properties or customer relations, so I handle those. We share our ideas with each other and discuss the decisions we have each made in our respective areas. Notwithstanding disagreements, we support each other's decisions.

He prefers not to be in the limelight. That is why I get involved in the social and public relations aspects of the company.

My mother told me that the person you marry is going to bring you 90% of your happiness or 90% of your pain. Do you agree?

Yes, I do. Of course, it depends upon the person you choose. You need to marry the right person and be willing to make compromises. For example, I am very independent and was used to doing things on my own and making my own decisions. I had to learn to become more flexible and to compromise. If you marry someone who loves you and makes you happy most of the time, it is better not to try to change him but to adapt yourself. On the other hand, if you marry him you cannot expect to change by forcing him to change. So, the secret is not to change your spouse but to adapt to his ways. That is the key to happiness.

What qualities should we look for in future spouses?

Find someone who is trustworthy, a good person with a good heart who shares a similar value system. People tend to think that since Jim and I are from different cultures that we are different. But we are not, because we share common family values. Our parents were entrepreneurs. We both like classical music and we like working more than anything else. Common interests and goals are also very important. We enjoy the sense of accomplishment when we see the results of our efforts, and we don't interfere with each other's work habits. Money is not what drives us.

What are the challenges of working with your family?

When my husband joined me in the business I let him be a boss. In our business, each of us is the "boss" over our own area of expertise. We all have different characters and opinions. While we do have our disagreements about projects, we avoid conflict by allowing each "boss" to have the final say over his or her project or area of responsibility.

What are the positives of working with your family?

They never quit on you. You can always depend on them. And we always pitch in and help each other out when needed.

I trained my son in real estate. He witnessed first hand how I expanded from one property to many. I got my children involved from youth. I often took them with me to trade shows and meetings. They had a good time, especially at trade shows when they gave out the gifts! While at the same time they learned what was going on in the real business world. My son was involved in my family business since he was ten years of age.

What is your recommendation for other parents to encourage their children to be involved in the family business?

I think you have to start at a young age. We always told our children what we were doing and what we were planning, and we asked for their opinions. You also have to have a big enough portfolio to require the need of their attention and to keep their interest.

Is there a happy medium between business and family?

In life, there are different cycles and different generational trends and economic needs. These societal demands and practical aspects sometimes dictate your roles.

I was lucky. My maternal instinct to stay at home matched our economic situation, providing me the luxury to be a stay at home mother. I was so attached to my children that I wanted to put aside my career. That was normal for women of my generation. If you wanted a career, you stayed single. If you married, you stayed home to raise the kids.

I started my business once my youngest child turned four years old. Today, most women have a choice – one that is broader and more demanding because it is difficult to survive as a single income family. Mothers with professional careers are acceptable and more common, and now it's easier to maintain careers from home.

My advice, however, as an observer of life and children's needs, is if you can afford it, have your children when you are young and stay at home. There is no substitute for a mother. If I had not stayed at home to raise my children, I think I would be regretting it now. My children often tell me how lucky they were to be able to have hot lunches at home instead of eating cold ones at school. They were all great kids who have matured into great adults.

It is my nature
to want to do
my best at
whatever I do.

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