

## Tết

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Tết, short for Tết Nguyên Đán, Spring Festival, Lunar New Year, or Vietnamese Lunar New Year is one of the most important celebrations in Vietnamese culture. The colloquial term “Tết” is a shortened form of Tết Nguyên Đán, with Old Vietnamese origins meaning “Festival of the First Morning of the First Day”. Tết celebrates the arrival of spring based on the Vietnamese calendar, which usually has the date falling in January or February in the Gregorian calendar.

Tết Nguyên Đán (Spring Festival or Lunar New Year) is not to be confused with Tết Trung Thu (or Mid-Autumn Festival), which is also known as Children's Festival in Vietnam. Tết itself only means festival, but is often nominally known as “Lunar New Year Festival” in Vietnamese, as it is often seen as the most important festival amongst the Vietnamese diaspora, with Children's Festival (Mid-Autumn Festival) often regarded as the second-most important.

Vietnamese people celebrate Tết annually, which is based on a lunisolar calendar (calculating both the motions of Earth around the Sun and of the Moon around Earth). Tết is generally celebrated on the same day as Chinese New Year (also called Spring Festival), except when the one-hour time difference between Vietnam and China results in the new moon occurring on different days. It takes place from the first day of the first month of the Vietnamese lunar calendar (around late January or early February) until at least the third day. Many Vietnamese and Hoa people prepare for Tết by cooking special holiday food and doing house cleaning. These foods include bánh tét, bánh chưng, bánh dày, canh khổ qua, thịt kho hột vịt, dried young bamboo soup (canh măng), giò, and xôi (sticky rice). Many customs and traditions are practiced during Tết, such as visiting a person's house on the first day of the new year (xông nhà), ancestor worship, exchanging New Year's greetings, giving lucky money to children and elderly people, opening a shop, visiting relatives, friends and neighbors.

Tết is also an occasion for pilgrims and family reunions. They start forgetting about trouble of the past year and hoping for a better and happier upcoming year. This festival can also be referred to as Hội xuân in vernacular Vietnamese, (festival - lễ hội, spring - mùa xuân).

### Customs

Vietnamese people usually return to their families during Tết. Some return to worship at the family altar or visit graves of their ancestors in their homeland. They also clear up graves of their families as a sign of respect. Although Tết is a national holiday among all Vietnamese, each region and religion has its own customs.

Tết can be divided into three periods, known as Tất Niên (penultimate New Year's Eve), Giao Thừa (New Year's Eve), and Tân Niên (the New Year), representing the preparation before Tết, the eve of Tết, and the days of and following Tết, respectively.

### The New Year in Tet

The first day of Tết is reserved for the nuclear family. Children receive red envelopes containing money from their elders. This tradition is called mừng tuổi (happy new age)[2] in the North region and lì xì in the South region. Usually, children wear their new clothes and give their elders the traditional Tết greetings before receiving money. Since the Vietnamese believe that the first visitor who a family receives in the year determines their fortune for the entire year, people never enter any house on the first day without being invited first. The action of being the first person to enter a house at Tết is called xông đất, xông nhà, or đạp đất, which is one of the most important rituals during Tết. According to Vietnamese tradition, if good things come to a family on the first day of the lunar New Year, the entire following year will also be full of blessings. Usually, a person of good temper, morality, and success will be a lucky sign for the host family and be first invited into his house. However, just to be safe, the owner of the house will leave the house a few minutes before midnight and come back just as the clock strikes midnight to prevent anyone else entering the house first who might potentially bring any unfortunate events in the new year, to the household.

Sweeping during Tết is taboo, or xui (unlucky), since it symbolizes sweeping the luck away; that is why they clean before the new year. It is also taboo for anyone who experienced a recent loss of a family member to visit anyone else during Tết.

During subsequent days, people visit relatives and friends. Traditionally but not strictly, the second day of Tết is usually reserved for friends, while the third day is for teachers, who command respect in Vietnam. Local Buddhist temples are popular spots because people like to give donations and get their fortunes told during Tết. Children are free to spend their new money on toys or on gambling games such as bầu cua cá cọp, which can be found in the streets. Prosperous families can pay for dragon dancers to perform at their house. Also, public performances are given for everyone to watch.

### Traditional celebrations

These celebrations can last from a day up to the entire week, and the New Year is filled with people in the streets trying to make as much noise as possible using firecrackers, drums, bells, gongs, and anything they can think of to ward off evil spirits. This parade will also include different masks and dancers hidden under the guise of what is known as the múa lân or lion dancing. The lân is an animal between a lion and a dragon and is the symbol of strength in the Vietnamese culture that is used to scare away evil spirits. After the parade, families, and friends come together to have a feast of traditional Vietnamese dishes and share the happiness and joy of

the New Year with one another. This is also the time when the elders will hand out red envelopes with money to the children for good luck in exchange for Tết greetings.

It is also a tradition to pay off your debts before the Vietnamese New Year for some Vietnamese families.

## Decorations

Traditionally, each family displays cây nêu, an artificial New Year tree consisting of a bamboo pole 5–6 m (16–20 ft) long. The top end is usually decorated with many objects, depending on the locality, including good luck charms, origami fish, cactus branches, etc.

At Tết, every house is usually decorated by Yellow Apricot blossoms (hoa mai) in the central and southern parts of Vietnam, peach blossoms (hoa đào) in the northern part of Vietnam, or St. John's wort (hoa ban) in the mountain areas. In the north, some people (especially the elite in the past[citation needed]) also decorate their house with plum blossoms (also called hoa mơn in Vietnamese but referring to a totally different species from mickey-mouse blossoms[citation needed]). In the north or central, the kumquat tree is a popular decoration for the living room during Tết. Its many fruits symbolize the fertility and fruitfulness for which the family hopes in the coming year.

Vietnamese people also decorate their homes with bonsai and flowers such as chrysanthemums (hoa cúc), marigolds (vạn thọ) symbolizing longevity, cockscombs (mào gà) in southern Vietnam, and paperwhites (thủy tiên) and pansies (hoa lan) in northern Vietnam. In the past, there was a tradition where people tried to make their paperwhites bloom on the day of the observance.

They also hung up Dong Ho paintings and thư pháp calligraphy pictures.

Mâm ngũ quả (five fruits tray) are made for Tết, here is a ngũ quả consisting of bananas, oranges, tangerines, a pomelo, and a pineapple

Peach blossoms (hoa đào)

Yellow Apricot blossoms (hoa mai)

Chúc mừng năm mới translates to “Happy New Year”

## Greetings

The traditional greetings are “Chúc Mừng Năm Mới” and “Cung Chúc Tân Xuân”, (gracious wishes of the new spring). People also wish each other prosperity and luck. Common wishes for Tết include the following:

1. Sống lâu trăm tuổi (long life of 100 years|): used by children for elders. Traditionally, everyone is considered one year older on Tết, so children would wish their grandparents health and longevity in exchange for mừng tuổi or lì xì.
2. An khang thịnh vượng (security, good health, and prosperity)
3. Vạn sự như ý (may things go your way)
4. Sức khỏe dồi dào (plenty of health)
5. Làm ăn tấn tới: Be successful at work
6. Tiền vô như nước (may money flow in like water). Used informally.
7. Cung hỉ phát tài (Congratulations and be prosperous)
8. Năm mới thắng lợi mới: New year, new triumphs (often heard in political speech)
9. Chúc hay ăn chóng lớn: Eat well, grow quick (aimed at children)
10. Năm mới thăng quan tiến chức: I wish for you to be promoted in the new year
11. Năm mới toàn gia bình an: I wish that the new year will bring health and peace to your family