

Korean New Year's Day

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October 10th, 2009

Every culture has many special holidays with different events and ways. Of course, they have similar holidays that are really important and popular — Thanksgiving Day, Christmas, and New Year's Day. Especially, New Year's Day is the most significant day, and it is filled with a lot of events. Most Americans just regards it as the first day of the year. However, Korean people consider New Year's Day to be the most important holiday of the year (Korea.net, 2008). According to Nguyen (2007), the day is the first day of the new lunar year, which falls sometime in late January to late February by the solar calendar. There are three days around New Year's Day which can be a chance for gathering all relatives and spending time with them in Korea.

On the first day, all families and relatives arrive in the house of their eldest brother. Because Korea has been a paternal society so far, they have to come back to their father, who is supported by the eldest brother. For preparing for the next day, all members clean the house and the women cook a lot of traditional Korean food like a flat cake. And then, they cut the sticks of rice-cake which is shaped like a cylinder. By cutting this together, they ask after each other's health.

On the next day, they spend the day getting the core events ready for congratulating the first day of the year and offering their condolences and the aged people. First, they wear traditional clothes to bow to elders in the morning. This is a formal one of respect to their elders on New Year's Day. Children should bow to adults, and they don't deny bowing to others because the elders give them gifts of money. Then, the family and relatives start a religious ceremony, but it depends on their religion. The most interesting step is eating rice-cake soup that includes the cutting sticks of rice-cake. If you eat this soup one time, it refers to aging one more year, so this step is momentous to juniors and elders. At night, they join in a traditional game together. This is called 'yut'. Yut is four wooden sticks that each have a point, and playing yut is similar to play with dice.

The last day is the day for finishing all the meetings and going back home. Until visitors depart, they are with their family playing yut or talking with others. They share lots of food that is left over, and

finally greet elders again. You can visit your mother's maiden home on the third day. If you go to your mother's maiden home, you also have to bow to relatives, and inform them of your news, too.

Korean New Year's Day has unfamiliar ways if you are not from Korea or Asian, but it has many interesting processes including preparing foods, eating rice-cake soup, bowing, playing yut, and being together always. Traditionally these events have been done in Korea because it is not only for congratulating the day, but also meeting one's family and relatives on the day. It has been difficult for all relatives to gather in a same place, but the meaning of New Year's Day has never faded away.

Korea.net. (2008). *Korea's Lunar New Year's Day colorfully blended in cultural scent*. Retrieved October 8, 2009, from http://www.korea.net/news/news/newsView.asp?serial_no=20080205028

Nguyen, A. (2007, February). Korean New Year. *Uatrav.com*. Retrieved October 8, 2009, from <http://www.uatrav.com/2007/02/12/koreannewyear/>