How to prepare for Chinese New Year

BY WESLEY RADEZ

Planning for Chinese New Year involves two main themes. First, clearing away all of the previous year’s bad luck. Second, preparing the home to receive the next year’s good luck.

Many businesses close for the two-week duration of the Chinese New Year festival and you’re not supposed to cook or clean in the days after New Year’s Eve, so there’s also an element of “stocking up” prior to the holiday.

Back in ancient China, major holidays like Chinese New Year were typically the only times all year when a family would enjoy a feeling of abundance. This provides the context for why a typical Chinese New Year shopping list overflowed with food and clothes, and symbolic items like incense and candles, firecrackers and new clothes.

With shopping complete and the pantry full, the second stage of Chinese New Year planning involves preparing everything you’ve bought. There are red envelopes to stuff, a family dinner to cook and a house to thoroughly clean. All of this planning and preparation culminates on New Year’s Eve. With a clean home, a clear mind and a delicious meal on the table, you can welcome the New Year with a crescendo of firecrackers at midnight.

Here’s a step-by-step guide to help you get ready for a joyous Chinese New Year celebration.

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One week before

1. Send off the Kitchen God

The Kitchen God is believed to look after a family’s nourishment and well-being. About a week before Chinese New Year, on the 23rd or 24th day of the 12th lunar month, the Kitchen God ascends to the heavens to report on the family’s behavior from the previous year to the Jade Emperor. In most homes, the Kitchen God is honored in the form of a paper image hung above the family’s stove. On the appointed day, take down this image, shower the Kitchen God’s mouth with honey (to sweeten the spirit) and then burn it to send the spirit off.

2. Stock your pantry

The streets of Chinatown are jammed during the week before Chinese New Year, as everyone stocks up before businesses close on New Year’s Eve. Most of your shopping will focus on food and decorations. Common items in your shopping list will include ingredients for your reunion dinner, flowering plants and paper decorations like spring couplets for the home, red envelopes for gifts and the makings of a Tray of Togetherness for visitors. The Chinese believe that abundance at Chinese New Year will carry forward into the next year, so make sure your nice bins are full.

Wang Y and partners give local children presents

BY THE WANG YMCA OF CHINATOWN

The Wang YMCA of Chinatown partnered with local charities to give back this holiday season with a giveaway Dec. 20. It joined forces with Operation Warm to provide 150 coats, 300 books and presents to children participating in the YMCA Early Education Center and After school program.

Staff of the Boston Public Library handed out books. Each child received beautifully wrapped gifts donated by Toys for Tots and the Highland Street Foundation.

IATSE Local 11 members volunteered their time in the spirit of giving back.

This year, Operation Warm chose the Wang YMCA of Chinatown to be a recipient with the Boston Public Library.

Operation Warm, a national nonprofit dedicated to providing brand new winter coats to children in need, is helping alleviate the financial burden of a brand-new coat for hundreds of families in Boston. The generous nonprofit teamed up with libraries and service organizations across the country to give a new coat and two new books to each child of the program.

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Event Calendar

Free meditation class
Sundays, Thursdays
10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.
101 Mystic Avenue
Medford, MA 02155
Free meditation classes will take place Sundays and Thursdays (7 a.m. to 8:30 a.m., 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.) at Boston Bodhi Meditation. People with limited mobility are welcome to join. For more information, call (781) 874-1023.

English for college or job training
Monday, Jan. 6
8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
Attend testing for the Asian American Civic Association’s English classes for college or job training. For more information, call (617) 426-9492 x 250 or email intake@aaca-boston.org.

Advanced English for jobs
Monday, Jan. 6
8:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
The AACAs Career Advance- ment for Professionals program is for people with a degree from their native country who needs more English and job readiness skills to attain a job related to their field of study.

Free legal clinic
Every Monday
10 a.m. to noon
11 Dartmouth Street
Boston, MA 02129
Greater Boston Legal Services provides free legal counseling at ACD’s Malden office at Room L-4-L. If you have legal questions on immigration, work, housing and more, you can meet a lawyer. For more information, call (781) 851-4620.

Financial aid assistance
Wednesday, Jan. 8
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
Get free assistance on college planning and applying for financial aid towards higher education. Service offered in Mandarin, Cantonese and English. To make an appointment, call (617) 426-9492 x 0.

The Chinatown Coalition meeting
Thursday, Jan. 9
9:30 a.m.
38 Ash Street
Boston, MA 02111
The Chinatown Coalition meeting will take place at the Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center. The public is welcome to attend. For more information, visit tccboston.org.

First-time homebuyer classes
Jan. 11 to 12
9 a.m.
38 Oak Street
Boston, MA 02111
ADOC offers H1B101 classes in English and Chinese. Each session is a nine-hour class over the course of a two-day weekend. Tuition is $50. Sign up for a workshop, graduate and receive a certificate, and become eligible for discounted mortgage products. Registration required, by calling (617) 482-2380 x 208 or 202, emailing CHOP@asiandc.org or visiting https://asiandc.org/hb101.

Community meeting
Monday, Jan. 13
6:30 p.m.
89 Medford Street
Boston, MA 02129
A community meeting about redesigning the Charlestown Sprouts Community Garden will take place at the Charles-New town community room.

Free immigration clinic
Wednesday, Jan. 15
Noon to 2 p.m.
1 City Hall Square
Boston, MA 02001
The Mayor’s Office for Immigrant Advancement offers free private immigration clinics at the Boston City Hall Room 106.

Job fair
Thursday, Jan. 16
1 p.m. to 4 p.m.
87 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111

Lunar New Year flower market
Friday, Jan. 24
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.
440 E Squantum Street
Quincy, MA 02171

New Year flower market
Jan. 18 to Jan. 24
9 a.m. to 5 p.m.
681 Huntington Street
Boston, MA 02116
A Chinese New Year flower market will take place, selling traditional goods to celebrate the Lunar New Year.

Chinatown/South Cove Neighborhood Committee meeting
Tuesday, Jan. 28
7 p.m.
90 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111

Chinese New Year celebration
Jan. 24 to Jan. 26
Friday 8 a.m. to 10 p.m.
American Civic Association.

Event Calendar

WINTER VALLEY RESIDENCES FOR THE ELDERLY, INC.
NOW ACCEPTING APPLICATIONS
A 160 apartment Senior Housing Community financed by HUD for those 62 and older or physically disabled. Includes 16 Affordable Private Assisted Living Apartments with services for an additional fee. Qualifications apply.

Experience the Year of the Rat at the Peabody Essex Museum. Free with admission at pem.org/newyear.

CCBA meeting
Tuesday, Jan. 28
7 p.m.
90 Tyler Street
Boston, MA 02111
The Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association will hold its bimonthly meeting.

Breakfast seminar
Thursday, Jan. 30
9:30 a.m. to 11 a.m.
120 Shawmut Street
Boston, MA 02118
All are welcome to attend at the BCEC auditorium, the former South Cove Manor location.

Phone: (617) 426-9492 x 206
www.sampan.org
www.mreinc.org
www.pem.org/
www.asiancdc.org/hb101
www.asiancdc.org
www.asiancdc.org/newyear
Chinatown older adults celebrate Christmas

BY SOUTH COVE MANOR


Pedestrian safety affects elders and children in Chinatown

BY YANXUAN LI

A map of Chinatown’s zone for Neighborhood Slow Streets. (Image courtesy of the Boston Transportation Department.)

Chinatown is one of the neighbor- hoods that sees the highest number of pedestrian injuries. While Boston has a relatively good record on traffic safety compared to cities nationwide, there are still more than 20 fatalities and more than 200 serious injuries on the streets every year.

Two crashes took place in 2016: a pedestrian who was dragged by a car into Dorchester from Chinatown, and a 2-year-old girl killed on Nassau Street by a pedestrian who was dragging by a car.

The city has launched traffic calming and road traffic safety programs to help prevent fatal crashes. In 2015, Boston adopted the Vision Zero program, a road traffic safety program adopted by cities across the country. In 2017, Chinatown was chosen for the Neighborhood Slow Streets pilot, a traffic calming program under the Boston’s Vision Zero initiative. With the introduction of the program, the citywide speed limit was lowered to 25 mph. The city also added speed bumps on residential streets in Chinatown.

However, some parents of preschool- ers feel unsafe when they walk through downtown streets. “I walk my children to Little Panda from Bay Village and find the crosswalk on Charles Street South coming from Melrose Street very unsafe. I’ve always thought there should be a traffic light there,” said Carrie Cook, a Bay Vil- lage resident whose child attends Little Panda Daycare Center. “The problem is cars don’t stop for the crosswalk, and of- ten cars park on the left side of the road on Charles Street South right before the crosswalk. It’s extremely difficult to even see the cars coming up Charles Street South from Tremont Street.”

Pedestrian injuries are one of the leading causes of unintentional injury death among Massachusetts children. Cindy Liao, director of Little Panda, believed more automated speed enforce- ment is needed for traffic calming. “I was driving here every day without even knowing that the speed limit is 25 mph,” she said. “I believe every car on Tremont Street goes faster than 25 mph. There are no signs reminding the drivers, neither are there any speed cameras to detect the offenses. I think the city needs to imple- ment the programs with more supervi- sion and enforcement.”

Limited funding and staffing has de- layed the progress of the Vision Zero program. According to Vision Zero Co- allition, a group to advocate for the im- plementation of Vision Zero in Boston, the city of New York spends about $20 per person on Vision Zero program an- nually, and San Francisco spends $75 per person annually. In comparison, Boston is spending less than $5 per person.

Besides funding and staffing, the twisting roadways and heavy traffic caused engineering issues for construc- tion. “You know Chinatown is a busy neighborhood,” said Stefanie Seskin, ac- tive transportation director for the Bos- ton Transportation Department. “And the streets are old.”

Urban renewal reshaped Chinatown, making the streets crowded and increas- ing danger. Highway construction, in- cluding the construction of the Central Artery in the 1950s, the Massachusetts Turnpike extension in the 1950s and the Big Dig in the 1990s, razed row houses in Chinatown and turned residential streets into commercial areas.

The population of downtown Bos- ton’s including Chinatown, the Finan- cial District and the Leather District increased by 25 percent in 2010 from the 2000 Census. As streets become crowded, dangers at intersections and crosswalks also increase. Older adults, the disabled and parents with children are people most affected by streetscapes changes.

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In November 2019, the Vision Zero Coalition held a memorial vigil, calling on elected officials to pass traffic safety legislation.

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BOSTON

The Career Advancement for Professionals students graduated Dec. 16 at Chinatown agency Asian American Civic Association. The adult learners sampled dishes from their classmates’ countries. They gave presentations to improve their Eng- lish for business settings.

The Career Advancement for Professionals students graduated Dec. 16 at the Asian American Civic Association. (Image courtesy of Ling-Mei Wong.)

CAP is an English for speakers of oth- er languages program, designed to meet the educational and employment needs of immigrants with college degrees and professional backgrounds from their na- tive countries so they can reclaim their careers. It blends distance learning, class- room instruction and job search activities.

BY LING-MEI WONG

The Career Advancement for Pro- fessionals students graduated Dec. 16 at Chinatown agency Asian American Civic Association. The adult learners sampled dishes from their classmates’ countries. They gave presentations to improve their Eng- lish for business settings.
A hearing on naming a cultural district Little Saigon took place Dec. 5 at St. Ambrose Church. From left) Councilors Frank Baker, Kim Janey, Michelle Wu. (Image courtesy of Jingfei Cui.)

Community voices support for Little Saigon in Fields Corner

BY JINGFEI CUI

About 100 people gathered at St. Ambrose Church on Dec. 5 for a public hearing on naming a cultural district Little Saigon. Boston City Hall officials and local organization representatives spoke about designating the Fields Corner neighborhood in Dorchester. More than 20 attendees gave testimony, largely in favor.

“We want to celebrate and acknowledge the immigrant Vietnamese as well as their impact on the Dorchester community,” said Annie Le, president of Next Generation Vietnamese Americans and a board member of Fields Corner Main Street. The Boston City Council voted to approve the resolution Dec. 11. Next for the advocates is to go before the state’s gram manager of Massachusetts Cultural Distinct Initiative in Massachusetts started in 2011, with a focus to augment economic growth in certain communities, said Lisa Simmons, program manager of Massachusetts Cultural Council. Currently, there are 48 cultural districts nationwide, while Boston accommodates four of them: Fenway, Roxbury, the Latin Quarter and the Boston Literary Cultural District.

The conversation around the Little Saigon initiative has been ongoing, said Boston Councilor-at-large Michelle Wu. “It is certainly something that I’ve heard about since I ran for office the first time in 2013, the strong desire of the community to have formal recognition of the contributions and the important role of the Vietnamese American community in Fields Corner and in Dorchester.”

“For us,” said Kara Elliott-Ortega, chief of Arts and Culture for the City of Boston, “this is really about investing in the local culture where it’s happening, and ways that are accessible and relevant to the people who live there.”

BY THE BOSTON POLICE DEPARTMENT

All reports are submitted by the Boston Police Department. The time period is from Dec. 6, 2019, to Jan. 3, 2020 for District A-1, which includes Chinatown.

To report a crime or suspicious activity, call 911. Interpreters are available for Chinese speakers.

Investigate property

Dec. 7, 3:08 a.m.: The officers responded to the area of Hudson Street for a report of shots fired. Upon arrival, the officers discovered several rounds. No victim was located.

Affray

Dec. 8, 8:27 p.m.: The officers responded to Essex Street on a report of a fight in progress. Upon arrival, the officers observed the victim unconscious outside the T Station. Emergency Medical Service responded to the scene and transported the victim to the hospital. The suspect(s) had fled the scene prior to the officers’ arrival.

Chinatown crime blotter for Dec. 6, 2019 to Jan. 3, 2020

Threats

Dec. 11, 11:26 p.m.: The victim reported an unknown male knocked on the window of the establishment on Washington Street and threatened to shoot him. The suspect fled in an unknown direction.

Larceny

Dec. 12, 2019, 8:38 a.m.: The victim reported he attempted to buy some crack cocaine from the suspect on Essex Street. He gave him $40 and the suspect failed to give him the drugs. The suspect then began to assault the victim. The victim was transported to the hospital.

NEW YEAR: Get ready for Lunar New Year

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

The 10th annual Chinese New Year Flower Market hosted by Mayor Martin J. Walsh and Chinatown Main Street will be a great place to get up for the last approaching New Year. Taking place on 681 Washington Street, the market will open Jan. 18 to Lunar New Year’s Eve on Jan. 24 from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Three days before

1. Clean your home top to bottom

Cleaning rids your home of last year’s troubles and puts on your best face forward for the next year. This is the time to tackle all of the items on your to-do list. Paint your home, mend your clothes, make repairs, sweep and scrub every nook and cranny. Get your kids in on the act by having them clean their rooms. Remember: there’s no cleaning allowed on New Year’s Day, as this sweeps away good luck, so break out your sponges and get to work now.

2. Settle your debts

The notion of spring cleaning extends to financial affairs and personal squabbles. Make sure to pay off your credit cards, settle any outstanding debts and make peace with that troublesome person in your life. Sage folks will say that getting your mind and body ready for the new year is important, as well. Go for a walk to clear your head, visit the barber for a fresh haircut, buy a new set of clothes (red for good luck!) and generally substitute bad thoughts with a renewed sense of hope.

One day before

5. Start cooking

If you’re planning a traditional reunion dinner with eight or more courses, then you’ll want to start cooking the day before. Focus on dishes that are served cold, require marinating overnight or which don’t require cooking immediately prior to being brought to the table. This is also your last chance to make sure that you have everything you need in case, a last-minute shopping trip is necessary in the morning on New Year’s Eve.

6. Stuff your red envelopes

You’ll have many opportunities to give and receive red envelopes during Chinese New Year. Stop by the bank early to request crisp bills, make sure you have all the necessary denominations and even request money with auspicious serial numbers with eights.

New Year’s Eve

7. Prepare your reunion dinner

If you have family arriving for a traditional reunion dinner later in the day, most of New Year’s Eve will be dedicated to cooking in the kitchen. The menu should be filled with lots of auspicious foods intended to shower wealth, luck and success on the family. The Chinese New Year celebration generally starts with this delicious multi-generational family meal in the evening.

8. Pass the time until midnight

Families pass the time between dinner and midnight in many different ways. Sometimes the parents play mahjong and drink tea, while the kids dressed in new pajamas watch television and play games. These hours are a good opportunity to make dumplings, hang decorations or recount family stories.

9. Celebrate at midnight!

Welcome the new year by lighting firecrackers at midnight and opening all of your windows and doors. You’ll send off the old year, scare off evil spirits and welcome good luck into your home. At the stroke of midnight, the new year’s zodiac animal enters, takes its throne and ushers in the year. Sage folks will say that getting your mind and body ready for the new year is important, as well. Go for a walk to clear your head, visit the barber for a fresh haircut, buy a new set of clothes (red for good luck!) and generally substitute bad thoughts with optimism.

New Year’s Day

10. Softly enter the New Year

New Year’s Day is generally a quiet affair. People emerge quietly from their homes, dressed in new clothes and acting on their best behavior. No one works, cooks or cleans and foul language, negativity or unluckly words are avoided at all costs. Give red envelopes, eat left overs, greet neighbors with messages of good luck and remember that New Year’s Day is the time for the rest of the year.

About the author

Wesley Rader is the founder of the cultural parenting website Chinese American Family. The site is a supportive community of American families proudly sharing our Chinese heritage with future generations. Wes sends good health and happiness for the New Year to Sampan readers from Oakland, California.
St. James the Greater Church youth group members prepared for a Dec. 22, 2019, bake sale to benefit St. Francis House. (Image courtesy of St. James the Greater Church.)

St. James the Greater Church youth group members prepared for a Dec. 22, 2019, bake sale to benefit St. Francis House. (Image courtesy of St. James the Greater Church.)

The St. James the Greater Church choir sang carols at South Cove Manor at Quincy Point Rehabilitation Center. (Image courtesy of Paul Lei.)

St. James the Greater Church choir sang carols at South Cove Manor at Quincy Point Rehabilitation Center. (Image courtesy of Paul Lei.)

BY LING-MEI WONG

St. James the Greater Church in Boston’s Chinatown celebrated Dec. 22, 2019, the fourth Sunday of Advent, with a Rite of Acceptance and a bake sale by youth group members for St. Francis House. Members also collected winter clothes for the fourth Sunday of Advent, with a Rite of Acceptance and a bake sale by youth group members for St. Francis House.

Carolyn is an annual tradition of the St. James the Greater Church choir. The Yuanji Dance Group brought music, dance and joy to neighbors at South Cove Manor at Quincy Point Rehabilitation Center.

BY VENERABLE MASTER Hsin Yun, Founder of Fo Guang Shan Temple

In the dining hall of a Buddhist temple there are a few round tables that seat 10 people each. They are made of wood, nicely painted and trimmed with a gold-en-colored aluminum strip. Upon seeing the tables, one devotee criticized, “Temples should practice simplicity. How can they use such luxurious dinner tables to treat their guests?” Those who heard his words considered the criticism to be true, but actually this devotee’s views are extremely ignorant and crude!

Though Buddhism does not consider materialism as important, it still recognizes the need for material goods in this world for adornment. In a temple, if the Buddha Hall were not magnificent and auspicious, who would come to worship? If statues of the Buddha were not gilded with gold, who would come to pay homage? The verandas and gazebos in the Western Pure Land of Ultimate Bliss are adorned with the seven jewels for those who wish to be reborn there. If only crude furnishings were used to receive dinner guests, would you like to come?

Simple living is a demand we make of ourselves, but should not impose on others. So if after enjoying a delicious meal in a beautiful setting, we still criticize the temple for its standards, are we displaying our Buddha Nature? When most people only understand half of what they see and fail to comprehend what the other half is about, their views are often shallow and crude.

In another example, if after a meal is served, the attendants remove and dispose of the leftovers, the devotee mentioned above might have criticized the temple for being wasteful; the leftovers could have been used for the next meal. Even if disposing of the leftovers sounds reasonable, those who hear the criticism might agree with the speaker. But if, for the sake of cherishing what you have, you were invited to use the leftovers from the previous guests, would you share the same view? If anyone were to get sick from eating leftovers in a temple, the media would blow the incident out of proportion and accuse the temple of spreading disease. Would you consider it fair and reasonable then?

Therefore, before we make demands of others, we should first make demands of ourselves. If we fall short, we should not impose our standards on others. Instead, we should reproach ourselves the way we would ourselves. Otherwise the fault of such speech karma would offset any merit previously cultivated. In this regard, can we afford not to be cautious?

A gilded dinner table

**NEXT ISSUE WILL BE PUBLISHED ON JAN. 17!**

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CCBA · 90 Tyler Street

**Thursday, 11 AM - 1 PM**

January 9 & February 13

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980 Harbor Avenue · Boston, MA 02119
Prevent the spread of the flu and keep your mouth healthy, too

BY THE MASSACHUSETTS DENTAL SOCIETY

January 3, 2020

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reported in November 2019 the United States is seeing more cases of the flu than is typical for this time of year, with 30 states already seeing flu activity — including Massachusetts. According to experts, when influenza is off to an early start, it can sometimes mean a more severe flu season.

While the CDC recommends a yearly flu vaccine as the first and most crucial step in protecting against influenza and its potentially serious complications, it’s also important to take everyday preventive actions to stop the spread of germs.

“For following some basic precautions, you and your family can stay physically healthy this season, while also maintaining good oral health,” said Massachusetts Dental Society (MDS) President Janis Moriarty.

Washing your hands frequently during any time of the year is important. But the MDS recommends that you also practice good hand hygiene when it comes to brushing and flossing your teeth.

“Germs on your hands can easily be transmitted to your toothbrush and then to your mouth,” Dr. Moriarty said. “It’s important to wash your hands before and after brushing your teeth and flossing. Most people don’t realize that viruses and bacteria can live on your toothbrush.”

According to the CDC, the flu virus can live on moist surfaces for 72 hours.

“Since toothbrushes are breeding grounds for bacteria, they should be kept isolated from other brushes, as well as surfaces that touch other brushes, like toothbrush holders and bathroom cups,” Dr. Moriarty added. “And, of course, you should never share your toothbrush, but this is especially true when you are sick.”

The chances of reinfecting yourself after an illness are low, unless your immune system is severely compromised.

“You should be replacing your toothbrush about every three months,” Dr. Moriarty said. “But, if you have any doubts, you may want to consider tossing your brush and getting a new one after you’ve been sick.”

If you do get sick this cold and flu season, the MDS encourages three simple ways to care for your mouth.

1) Avoid cough drops with sugar or ingredients such as fructose or corn syrup. Sugar helps fuel cavity-causing bacteria, so sucking on sugar-filled cough drops can be as bad as sucking on candy.

2) Drink plenty of water. When it comes to staying hydrated, water is best. It will help keep your saliva flowing and prevent dry mouth. Drinks such as coffee, tea, or alcohol can reduce saliva production. Sugar helps fuel cavity-causing bacteria, so sucking on sugar-filled cough drops can be as bad as sucking on candy.

3) If you have a stomach flu that leads to vomiting, consider waiting to brush your teeth. Brushing right away leads to vomiting, consider waiting to brush about every three months, Dr. Moriarty said. “But, if you have any doubts, you may want to consider tossing your brush and getting a new one after you’ve been sick.”

For more oral health tips, visit massdental.org/oral-health.

For your New Year’s resolutions, quit nicotine entirely, instead of switching from cigarettes to vaping, (Image courtesy of the American Lung Association.)

Ready to quit smoking? ‘Quit, don’t switch’ to e-cigarettes

BY THE AMERICAN LUNG ASSOCIATION

Along with hitting the gym more often and starting a diet, quitting smoking tops many New Year’s resolution lists. There are currently 715,500 smokers in Massachusetts and nearly 60 percent tried to quit last year. New ads from e-cigarettes companies would have those smokers falsely believe that switching to vaping is quitting smoking. The American Lung Association is reminding Massachusetts residents that the Food and Drug Administration has not found any e-cigarette to be safe and effective in helping smokers quit.

This year, the Lung Association is encouraging smokers to “Quit, Don’t Switch.” You can achieve complete smokefree freedom with resources from the proven-effective Freedom From Smoking Plus program at Lung.org/quit-dont-switch.

Amber Pelletier, division director for health promotions for the American Lung Association in Massachusetts said, “Misinformation about the health risks of vaping is rampant and e-cigarette use, especially among youth has been declared an ‘epidemic’ by the U.S. Surgeon General. The simple truth is that e-cigarettes are tobacco products, and the Lung Association has been helping people avoid and quit using tobacco for decades. As New Year’s inspires a new resolve, we hope to direct them to proven-effective strategies and FDA-approved medications, while helping them understand that e-cigarettes are not the answer.”

Pelletier also offered these facts about e-cigarettes:

- E-cigarettes are tobacco products.
- No tobacco product is safe, and that includes e-cigarettes. Recent hospitalizations and deaths related to vaping underscore the fact that vaping is in fact harmful.
- Switching to e-cigarettes does not mean quitting. Quitting means ending your addiction to nicotine, which can be very difficult.
- Research shows that e-cigarettes contain dangerous metals and toxic chemicals that can cause irreversible lung disease.
- Get the facts at Lung.org/ecigs

“One of the biggest problems with e-cigarettes is that many times people become dual users, meaning they smoke cigarettes when they can and use vaping devices at other times,” said Albert A. Rizzo, American Lung Association chief medical officer. “Using e-cigarettes is not safe: a new study released in December found adults who currently or ever used e-cigarettes are 30 percent more likely to develop chronic lung disease, including asthma, bronchitis and emphysma.”

For years, the American Lung Association has been urging the FDA to crack down on these Unproven Quit smoking claims made by the e-cigarette industry. These ongoing claims have made it more confusing for smokers to know what to do when they’re ready to quit.
A food aficionado: Dakzen

BY ANNA ING

Last year hailed the entry of Dakzen into the Davis Square food scene. “Dak” means the enjoyment of eating and “zen” stands for noodles in Thai, as the restaurant serves authentic, affordable Thai street food. It was recognized as Best Thai Restaurant in 2019 by Boston Magazine.

We got the December dish of the month pad cha tay lai ($11.95). Pad cha in Thai roughly translates to “wok hay” in Cantonese, meaning the wok’s high temperature cooks food quickly with a distinctive char. The “wok hay” here is amazing, which you can taste in the food’s deeper flavors. This dish is seafood stir fried at high heat, sealing in the delicious flavors. It has a peppery kick, studded with mussels, squid rings, shrimp, red pepper, onions and baby corn, all served over a bed of white rice.

The yen ta fo ($8.95) is a famous Thai noodle soup with your choice of noodles: Rice sticks, flat altar noodles, thin noodles and egg noodles. We opted for the egg noodles, which were chewy.

The noodles were served in a pink broth that was surprisingly tangy and sweet. It was served with shrimp, crispy wonton skins, slices of fish cake, fish balls, squid and morning glory.

Still hungry, we tore into the khao soy ($11.95) with ground pork. The wok heat elevated the ground pork to spoon-licking good, stir fried with fragrant garlic, grapew sauce and holy basil over white rice. We wanted more!

Pad kee mow ($8.95) is spicy stir-fried noodles with your choice of meat. We chose chicken served with holy basil, red peppers, baby peppers and onions with flat rice noodles, stir fried in the yummy drunken sauce. The peppery flavors come through, with holy basil, chilies, fish sauce, soy sauce, oyster sauce and fresh black pepper.

We shared the appetizer rook chin tod ($6) comprising three kinds of meatballs made of pork, beef and fish. The simple flavors were enhanced with a sweet dipping sauce.

We got the must-drink Thai iced tea ($3.95) and lime Thai iced tea ($3.95). The lime in the latter gave a tартness I enjoyed.

Dakzen’s diners can sign up for their place in line on the tablet for table service. Dining is mainly self serve. Food comes out quickly. This neighborhood spot serves more authentic Thai fare without breaking the bank.

Local artist Maddu Huacuja illustrates migrant journeys

BY ISAAC WANG

Maddu Huacuja spoke about the inspiration for her paintings Dec. 3, 2019, at an artists and scholars dinner. (Image courtesy of Ling Mei Wong.)

When we travel, we never travel alone. We always bring our myths, symbols and icons. Together they make us who we culturally are. The jaguar-human figure in Maddu Huacuja’s paintings is a guardian figure in Latin America shaman tradition. They appear in the form of jaguars, but they embody something more abstract, ancient, and mysterious — a force of divine protection. Every figure in Huacuja’s painting is in between reality and myth, human and animal, earthly and divine. They are figurative manifestations representing the forces of nature.

Whenever there is a force, there is movement. “Open the way” is Huacuja’s meditation on the interplay of natural and artificial forces and the movements they created, on display at Bunker Hill Community College until Feb. 21. The centerpiece “Jakelin headed North, but arrived in heaven” was inspired by the story of a 7-year-old Guatemalan girl named Jakelin, who fled her homeland and died in a Border Patrol station.

The entry of Dakzen into the Davis Square food scene. “Dak” means the enjoyment of eating and “zen” stands for noodles in Thai, as the restaurant serves authentic, affordable Thai street food. It was recognized as Best Thai Restaurant in 2019 by Boston Magazine.

Maddu Huacuja spoke about the inspiration for her paintings Dec. 3, 2019, at an artists and scholars dinner. (Image courtesy of Ling Mei Wong.)

Maddu Huacuja said. Her parents were organizers and her grandmother was murdered for defending the land.

“Painting her was very emotional for me, it was painful,” Huacuja said. “I would feel sick to my stomach. She crossed the border with her dad, was checked for health. The next day, she died of cardiac arrest or a heart attack, at [age] 7.”

Two trajectories of Huacuja’s exploration intersect at this exhibition. There is a series of environmental and displacement-themed paintings named Green Blood Bank emerged from the artist’s early interest in the Amazon jungle. The figure in “Cornered Tiger” represents the resilient force of Aztec warrior, who is standing firm in an intense scene, without a trace of fear. There is a series of emotional paintings named Love Letters that explore the forces of human vitality and their subjective meanings.

“I Ask Permission to Be Born” is painted with the messiness of human struggle, yet conveys a feeling of vitality and warmth.

Huacuja spoke with several classes. Students came to the Mary L. Fitfield Blood Bank on Dec. 3, 2019. “Now is a crucial moment. It’s time to act.”

“I asked the students point blank, what are you going to do?” Huacuja said at an artists and scholars dinner held at the Thomas Crane Public Library. With reporting by Ling Mei Wong.

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