

# MOCAKIDS Celebrate Lunar New Year Craft Pack

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- MOCA Lunar New Year Top Ten Celebration Ideas
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- Legend of the 12 Zodiac Animals
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- Auntie Tina's Delicious Vegetable Dumplings Recipe

## Crafts

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- Rattle Drum Craft

## MOCA Lunar New Year Top Ten Celebration Ideas

### 1. **Make a fresh start.**

Begin the New Year with a clean slate. Some ways to do this are to: clean your apartment or house, buy a new outfit, get a haircut, and settle your debts, which includes returning any objects that you have borrowed. Be sure to do all these things before the New Year has started!

### 2. **Decorate your home.**

Chinese people often decorate their homes and businesses with New Year wishes and poems expressing luck, good fortune, longevity, happiness, and good wishes for the New Year. People hang up **spring couplets**, two line poems written with black ink on red paper. People also hang a square character, **fu**, the Chinese character for good luck. Many people hang it upside down for extra luck. In Mandarin, the phrase “fu is upside down” sounds the same as “luck has arrived.”

Practice writing messages in Chinese on banners of red with gold decorations. Put these up in your home. You can also purchase banners in Chinatown.

**Why do you see the color red so often for the New Year?** According a popular Chinese legend, a monster named *Nian* appeared at the end of every year. It was a fierce monster and would attack villagers and their animals. Though the villagers could not destroy it, they found three weaknesses that could banish the mighty creature. *Nian* disliked sunshine, loud

noises, and was scared of the color red. When the villagers built a great bonfire, set off thousands of firecrackers and painted their doors red, *Nian* was truly terrified and fled, never to be seen again. Thus the bright red became the color of the New Year.

### 3. **Create positive energy.**

Think only good thoughts and be especially kind to people around you, so that your New Year begins on a happy note. Mean words should not be spoken for they are said to bring bad luck.

### 4. **Eat traditional New Year's foods.**

Share gifts of candies and fruit with family and friends. Many Chinese people feast on *jai*, a vegetarian dish, which is eaten on the New Year to purify the body.

Families also eat ***Nian Gao***, a sweet pudding made of sticky rice flour. *Nian* means year. *Gao* means pudding, but also means high. The significance of this dish is that one must strive and work hard to reach a higher level.

The Chinese word for fish *yu* also sounds like the written character meaning “more than enough” or “plenty.” Having fish prepared on this day symbolizes having so much that one will have plenty left for the future.

**Tray of Togetherness-** For the first few days of the New Year, family and friends visit each

other's homes and serve delicious meals. Before guests eat the main dishes, a variety of candies and snacks are offered. These sweets are presented in an eight-sided tray called the "Tray of Togetherness."

**5. Give or receive lucky money.**

Pronounced *hong bao* in Mandarin or *lai see* in Cantonese, a red envelope is stuffed with "lucky money" and given to a child by an older relative. The purpose of the gift is to chase away evil spirits and bad luck on behalf of the giver. The receiver of the red envelope takes this as a sign that the New Year will be peaceful, happy, and prosperous.

**6. Watch the local New Year festivities.**

Lion and dragon dances and parades take place in the Chinatowns of New York City, Flushing, and Sunset Park. Firecrackers, which are now outlawed, are said to scare away lazy and evil spirits.

**Dragon Dance**-The dragon appears once each year to wish everyone peace, prosperity, and good luck. Sometimes, the dragon is seen chasing around object. If the object is a red ball, the dragon is said to be chasing a fiery sun. When the object is a white ball, the dragon is said to be chasing a great pearl.

**Lion Dance**- The lion symbolizes purity and protection. According to legend, the lion would save villagers from harm by scaring away evil spirits.

During parades, the monk *Mi To Fu* might lead the lion to stores along the parade path. The

lion then dances to drive away the evil spirits and promise good luck for the New Year. Merchants thank the lion for its services by feeding it red envelopes.

**7. Be nice to your elders!**

Children wish their parents and grandparents a Happy New Year. This may include bowing to paying respect to your parents and elders.

**8. Say "Happy New Year" in Chinese.**

Wish others "Happy New Year" in Chinese: *Gung Hay Fat Choy* (Cantonese) or *Gong Xi Fa Cai* (Mandarin).

**9. Stay up late.**

Children stay up as late as they can on the eve of New Year. It is said that the longer one stays up, the longer one's parents will live.

**10. Find out what animal you are.**

The Chinese calendar consists of a cycle of twelve years, each named after an animal. People born during a particular animal year are supposed to have specific characteristics. Use the zodiac calendar to match your birth year with your animal. *What does your animal say about you?*



# Legend of Nian

The origins of the Chinese Lunar New Year trace back to a very ancient belief about a monster named “Nian,” who emerged from the ocean to destroy and devour villagers.

**Once, a long, long time ago, there was a monster named Nian who was big, ugly, and fierce.** It lived in the water and looked like a dragon with sharp horns on its head. Every New Year’s Eve, Nian would emerge from the ocean and eat the villagers. People were frightened, so they locked their doors or hid in the mountains. One wise old man with a long beard who lived in the village saw the panic that Nian caused. People warned him to hide in the mountains, but he wasn’t worried and decided to stay behind to fight off Nian.

“Don’t worry,” he said. “Tonight, I will drive away Nian!” At midnight on a moonless and freezing cold night, Nian appeared, searching the village for people to eat. When it came to the old man’s house, it found red paper on the door and every room brightly lit. Seeing this, Nian trembled with fear. Suddenly, there was the sound of crashing thunder from the

courtyard. Wherever the monster went, it was forced to back off by the loud noises. Then, the wise old man walked out, dressed completely in red. At that sight, Nian fled and disappeared.

The villagers returned and were happy to see that Nian had run away. They asked the old man, “What magic did you use to drive away the monster?” The old man replied, “I didn’t use any magic. I just know that Nian is afraid of red, light, and thunder. So when it saw the red paper and the lights and heard the firecrackers, it ran away. Next year, when it comes again, you can use these things to drive it away.” Everybody in the village agreed upon it.

Since then, people have kept the tradition by beating drums, lighting firecrackers, wearing red clothes and putting red couplets on the door. They also keep their houses lit up all night long. “Nian” means “year” in Chinese. Today, the word “Nian” refers to New Year’s Day. *Guo Nian* means “New Year,” but it literally means, “pass over” or “survive the Nian.” People often greet each other by saying *Xin Nian Hao*, which means “Happy New Year!” *Xin* means new and *Hao* means good.



# Legend of the 12 Zodiac Animals

The Chinese zodiac follows a cycle of 12 years. Each year is represented by a real or mythical animal, whose characteristics determine the personality and fate of every person born that year.

According to ancient Chinese legend, many centuries ago the Jade Emperor called all the animals of the kingdom to him. Only twelve obedient animals responded to his call, so the Jade Emperor decided to reward them for listening. He assigned each of the animals to one of the twelve lunar years. “But which order would the animals be in?” he thought. To solve this problem, he decided to hold a race to see which of the animals would reach the other side of the river first. The animals would receive their place in the twelve lunar years according to the order they reached the finish line.

The ox was worried about the race because he was nearly blind, and the rat was worried that he was too small compared to the other animals. So the ox made a deal with the rat: the rat would ride on the ox’s back and act as his guide. That way, the ox would be able to “see” and the rat would be “faster.”

Then the race started. All the animals gathered at one side of the river’s bank and jumped in. As the ox pulled ahead of all the animals and was about to reach the finish line, the rat jumped off the ox’s back and reached the opposite side of the bank first. Therefore, the rat became the first animal in the zodiac, followed by the ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog, and boar. Today, these twelve animals have become symbolic in different ways to different people.

According to another story, the cat was also in the race. The cat and rat were known to be the worst swimmers, so they decided that the best and fastest way to cross the river was for both of them to ride on the back of the ox. The good-natured ox agreed to carry the cat and the rat across. During the race, however, the rat pushed the cat into the river and the rat jumped ahead of the ox to win the race. That's why the cat is not part of the Chinese zodiac, and it's also the reason why the cat and the rat don't get along.

**What animal year were you born in? What personality traits describe you?**

### Happy Year of the Tiger!

If you were born in the years 1938, 1950, 1962, 1974, 1986, 1998, 2010 or 2022  
you were born in the Year of the Tiger.

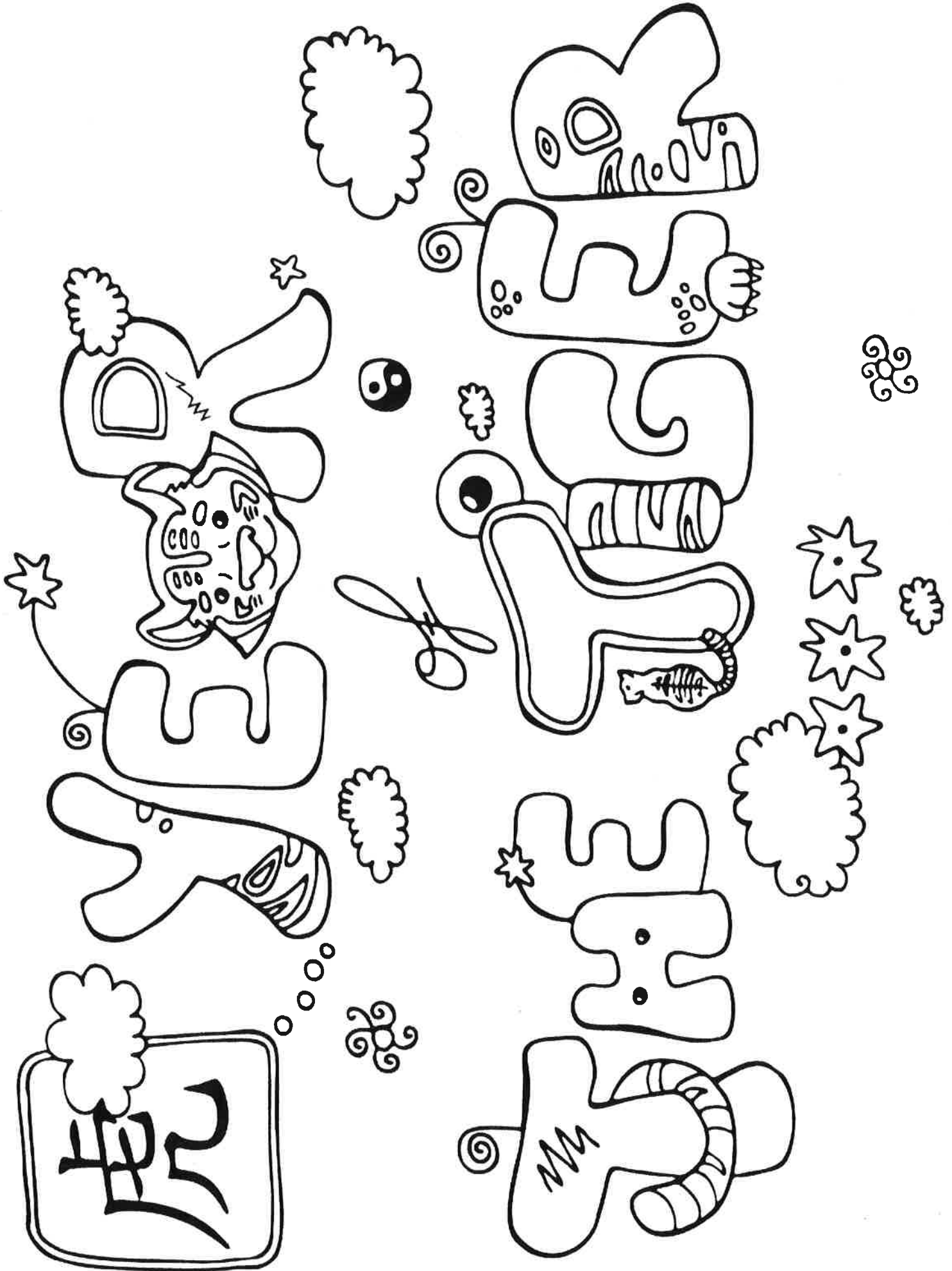
#### **Characteristics:**

The tiger is the third animal in the Chinese Zodiac. According to the Chinese Zodiac, people born in the Year of Tiger are courageous, cheerful, and determined. They are often known for their bold personalities, fierce independence, and adventurous spirit. However, sometimes tigers can be rebellious or stubborn, refusing to admit when they've made a mistake. This may leave them isolated or alone. Tigers tend to take their responsibilities seriously and will often shine as leaders.

#### **Famous Tigers:**

Amanda Gorman, Harper Lee, John Steinbeck, Beethoven, Shawn Mendes, Dahyun, Soyeon, Lady Gaga, Drake, Bon Jovi, Sheryl Crow, Stevie Wonder, Miles Davis, Marilyn Monroe, Steve Carell, Wang He Di/Dylan Wang, Randall Park, Lena Dunham, Michelle Yeoh, Daniel Wu, Mahershala Ali, Tom Cruise, Joaquin Phoenix, Leonardo DiCaprio, Rafael Nadal, Steve Wozniak, Ralph Abernathy, Kofi Annan, Queen Elizabeth II, Marco Polo







**Gordon & Li Li**  
**Learn Animals in Mandarin**  
by Michele Wong McSween  
[www.gordonandlili.com](http://www.gordonandlili.com)

tiger



lǎo hǔ

老虎

(laow who)

# Auntie Tina's Delicious Pork Dumplings Recipe

## *Dumpling Skins*

- 4 cups All Purpose Flour
- Warm water, approximately 8 oz
- Knead until smooth for 20 to 30 minutes. Rest for 30 minutes.

## *Filling*

- 1 head napa cabbage, cut lengthwise, very thin, boiled until soft
- 1 lb ground pork
- 2 scallions, thinly sliced
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 2 tablespoons cooking wine



## Instructions

- 1- Finely chop the cabbage and place in a pot. Cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and allow to cook until stalks are softened. 5 to 10 minutes. Drain excess water.
- 2- In a large bowl, mix cabbage with all other ingredients. Mix until fully combined.
- 3- To assemble: Flour your workspace and two sheet pans. Roll the dough out into a large log and cut into four equal pieces. Cover the three pieces you are not using. Roll out a fourth of the log until it is about an inch in diameter. Pinch off tablespoon sized pieces and flatten with the palm of your hand.
- 4- Roll out the edges of the dough with the end of the rolling pin (a short thin rolling pin is best). Fill and fold over. Then pinch up along the sides until fully sealed.
- 5- To serve, boil large pot of water and drop in ten to 15 dumplings in at a time. Allow to them to cook until they rise to the top and cook through, about 4 to 5 minutes. Serve with soy sauce and hot chili oil to taste.

# Auntie Tina's Delicious Vegetable Dumplings Recipe

## *Dumpling Skins*

- 4 cups All Purpose Flour
- Warm water, approximately 8 oz
- Knead until smooth for 20 to 30 minutes. Rest for 30 minutes.

## *Filling*

- 1 head napa cabbage, cut lengthwise, very thin, boiled until soft
- 1 cup minced dried shitake mushrooms (10 minutes in hot water)
- 1 cup minced dried lily flowers (10 minutes in hot water)
- 1 cup minced black fungus (10 minutes in hot water)
- 1 tablespoon soy sauce
- 1 tablespoon sesame oil



## Instructions

- 1- Finely chop the cabbage and place in a pot. Cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and allow to cook until stalks are softened. 5 to 10 minutes. Drain excess water.
- 2- In a large bowl, mix cabbage with all other ingredients. Mix until fully combined.
- 3- To assemble: Flour your workspace and two sheet pans. Roll the dough out into a large log and cut into four equal pieces. Cover the three pieces you are not using. Roll out a fourth of the log until it is about an inch in diameter. Pinch off tablespoon sized pieces and flatten with the palm of your hand.
- 4- Roll out the edges of the dough with the end of the rolling pin (a short thin rolling pin is best). Fill and fold over. Then pinch up along the sides until fully sealed.
- 5- To serve, boil large pot of water and drop in ten to 15 dumplings in at a time. Allow to them to cook until they rise to the top and cook through, about 4 to 5 minutes. Serve with soy sauce and hot chili oil to taste.

# SCARE AWAY THE NIAN MONSTER WITH RATTLE DRUMS!

The Nian (年) Monster is said to be scared of three things: loud noises, bright lights, and the color red. Craft your own rattle drum and then make some noise to scare away Nian!

## What You'll Need:

- Paper plate with chopstick attached
- The other paper plate
- Yarn, 2 pieces
- A few beads
- Stapler
- Hole puncher
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers, etc.
- Washi tape, collage paper (optional)



## Directions:

1. Decorate the outside of your paper plates. The more festive, the better!
2. Place one paper plate on top of the other (so that the chopstick is on the inside).
3. Staple the edges shut. Make sure the chopstick is secure.
4. Punch two holes through the plates, one on the left and one on the right. Holes should be halfway up the paper plate on each side.
5. Knot 2-3 beads onto each piece of yarn. (You'll do this twice.)
6. Tie yarn to each side using the holes you punched earlier.

# Year of the Tiger Paper Lantern

## What You'll Need:

- MOCA's Year of the Tiger Paper Lantern template (either colored or black & white)
- Scissors
- Tape (or stapler)
- Colored pencils, crayons, markers, etc.
- String
- Hole puncher (optional)



## Directions:

1. If you're using the black and white template, color it in!
2. Fold the template in half lengthwise (hot dog style) with the picture on the outside.
3. Cut along the dotted lines up to the solid line only (not to the end).
4. Unfold the template.
5. Roll and match the opposite short edges together and tape (or staple) them together.
6. Punch (or poke) two holes on the top of the lantern, on opposite sides.
7. Thread the string through each hole and tie.
8. Gently press lantern like an accordion to give it its shape. Now, hang it up for the new year!

