

# Mid-Autumn Festival is Coming Around

By Dong Na

The 15th day of the eighth lunar month is China's Mid-Autumn Festival, a celebration of the full moon. This year's Mid-Autumn Festival falls on Sep 21.

Since ancient times, it has been customary for the Chinese to reunite with family members and eat sweet mooncakes while gazing at the beautiful full moon on Mid-Autumn Festival.

## The Mythology of Chang'e

The Chinese people's celebration of the full moon has its origins in the myth of Chang'e, the moon goddess.

According to legend, in ancient times, there were ten suns in the sky. The extremely hot temperature made people's lives miserable. A hero, Houyi the archer, shot down nine suns. To reward his bravery, the gods gave him an elixir. Chang'e, Houyi's wife, drank the elixir by accident and became immortal. Since immortals could not remain in the realm of mortals, she had to leave the earth and fly to the moon, watching the human world from afar.

China's Lunar Exploration Program, the "Chang'e Project", is named after the goddess. In 2019, the Chang'e 4 Lander touched down successfully on the moon, sending back the world's first close-range image of the dark side of the moon.

The Mid-Autumn Festival is one of the most important Chinese festivals symbolizing reunion. The roundness of the full moon represents people's desire for a happy, undivided family.

## The 'Mooncake War' Begins

Eating mooncakes is an important custom of the Mid-Autumn Festival. Different parts of China have widely varying diets and therefore countless mooncake flavors. Traditional fillings include nuts and seeds, salted egg yolk, jujube paste, and bean paste. Now, there are modern flavors such as ice cream and durian.



Children learn to make mooncakes to celebrate the Festival.

[Photo by Tang Yan, Tang Yue]

This year, a number of museums across the country have introduced mooncakes that incorporate traditional Chinese visual elements in their design.

At a Haagen-Dazs store in Yinzhou, a large display advertises ice cream mooncakes that the brand created in collaboration with the Louvre Museum.

"We launched seven collaboration mooncakes with Louvre Museum this year, priced at 288 to 998 yuan. The mooncakes are crispy ice-cream sandwiches with flavors including vanilla, toffee, and berry. Each one features a piece of artwork from the Louvre, such as the Mona Lisa. They are popular with young consumers," the shop staff said.

In the meanwhile, Pizza Hut teamed up with the Summer Palace in Beijing to launch mooncakes that cleverly integrate iconic design elements from the Palace.

This year, Sanxingdui Museum, Shanghai Museum, Na-

tional Museum, Suzhou Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art and many other cultural institutions are collaborating with restaurant franchises, hotels, and food brands to launch museum-themed mooncake gift boxes, which have proven successful with young shoppers.

"I haven't bought mooncakes for many years. This year's creative museum-collaboration mooncakes all appear to be of high quality and look appealing. I'm going to buy one for a try," Ms. Lin said, "As long as they taste good!"

Although the flavors of mooncake are evolving, the symbolic meaning of the full moon remains unchanged, as will the Chinese custom of eating mooncake and reuniting with family during the Festival.

## Fruit Boxes Sell Well

Just like mooncake sets, fruit boxes are also popular Mid-Autumn Festival gifts.

Autumn weather is dry, thus pears, apples, pomelos, and other water-rich fruits are favored by people. A popular pear variety of this season is the *qiuyue* (autumn moon), which has high water content and is round in shape, like the full moon. A box of eight sells for 70 yuan.

Chinese people often make sweet pear soup by boiling pear slices with rock sugar. It is believed that the soup could repel "heat" from the body and cure phlegmy coughs.

In a large fruit retail chain in Ningbo, the counters were piled high with apples, pears, grapes, pomegranates, persimmon, and other seasonal fruits, attracting many eager shoppers.

"Mid-Autumn Festival is coming. Fruits are in great demand. People buy them for home consumption and also as gifts. We have received many orders for gift-packaged fruit boxes," Ms. Chen, the owner of the fruit chain, said, "A lot of my regular customers drove

over to our store and filled their trunks with fruits boxes."

The pitaya is a widely-consumed fruit in China. Common varieties either have red flesh or white flesh. But with the rise of new breeding techniques, yellow-flesh pitayas, such as "bird's nest fruit", are appearing on the market. Their flesh is sweet in taste and silky in texture. Look for them in Ningbo's fruit stores around Mid-Autumn Festival, but be warned—the price is not low!

Expensive fruit boxes are many people's first-choice gifts when visiting family and friends during the Festival. According to some dealers, in the run-up to the Festival, the most popular types of fruit boxes are 100-300 yuan in price, with 100-yuan boxes selling the best. Consumers like to personally choose the types of fruits that go into the boxes, adding a personal touch to their seasonal presents.

## SPOTLIGHT

### Heart-warming Moments During Typhoon Chanthu

By Gou Wen

Chanthu, the 14th typhoon this year, brought strong winds and downpours to Ningbo. The city's reservoirs were drained to a safe level and many residents were evacuated to temporary shelters in advance. As Typhoon Chanthu brushed past, many citizens extended a helping hand to those around them.

In Dongliufang community, Yinzhou District, a makeshift bridge, 100 meters long and 60 centimeters wide, was built for the convenience of residents.

Storm shelter workers, volunteers, property management employees, and community workers toiled overnight to put up the bridge, which served 86 families.

During Typhoon In-Fa's landfall in July, parts of the community were flooded, with over 60 centimeters of water in certain areas. To prevent such a situation, this makeshift bridge was constructed before the most recent typhoon.

In Qinglin village, Beilun District, residents from flood-prone areas were evacuated to a temporary shelter. Volunteers were assigned to visit the shelter regularly to check on the safety of the residents.

To the residents' surprise, volunteers also brought Mid-Autumn Festival gifts to the shelter. "I didn't expect to eat this year's first piece of mooncake at the shelter. I am grateful to the community workers for keeping us safe from the typhoon and celebrating an early Mid-Autumn Festival with us," said Wang Peng, a migrant worker and resident of Tazhi'ao community.

Wang Shancai, another resident at the shelter, actively participated in the community's typhoon preparedness efforts. He worked with the volunteers to check the water level of nearby rivers and make sure manhole covers were unblocked.

In Haishu District, Zhou Xiufeng, a 82-year-old resident delivered mooncakes late at night to thank community workers for their hard work. The community workers were touched—the support of residents motivates them to work harder!

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## 双语汇 Different Tongues

# Cicheng: Historical Town of Filial Piety

## 慈孝之城——宁波慈城古县城

By Jin Lu

Cicheng, a millennium town in Ningbo, is a famous tourist attraction. Originally planned and built during the Tang Dynasty (AD 618-907), Cicheng's style took after the once capital city Chang'an. 33 buildings in the town have been protected at national or district level status.

千年古县城——慈城是宁波著名旅游景区。该县城建筑风格源自唐代，与中国古代都城长安相似。城内文物古迹众多，拥有国家省市四级重点文物保护单位33家。

Cicheng, literally "Town of Filial Piety" in Chinese, derives its name from a moving

folk tale.

慈城，字面意思是“慈孝之城”，得名于一个动人的故事。

During the Han Dynasty (206 BC-220 AD), on the north bank of Cihu Lake lived a man named Dong An. His mother fell incurably ill and expressed her last wish on her deathbed: to drink the water from her hometown one last time.

汉代时，慈湖北岸住着一位名叫董黯的人。他的母亲身患重病，临终前表达了她想喝家乡水的愿望。

As an obedient son, Dong trekked dozens of miles every day to a stream in his mother's hometown to fetch water. After several days, his mother miraculously recovered. In honor of

the dutiful son, the local governor named the town Cicheng.

董孝子每天跋涉几十里到母亲家乡的一条小溪边，为母亲打水喝。几天后，他的母亲奇迹般地康复了。地方刺史将此地名命名为慈城，以纪念孝子。

This ancient town has given birth to many great scholars, including 519 *jinshi* (successful candidates of the highest imperial examinations in ancient China). World-renowned geneticist Tan Jiazhen and famous Chinese writer Feng Jicai are both Cicheng locals.

慈城还是一块人杰地灵的沃土，历代共出进士519人。世界著名遗传学家谭家桢和著名作家冯骥才，都来自慈城。



The historical town of Cicheng. / 慈城古县城。

[Photo by Wang Peng]王鹏 摄

