



A farmer with tasty strawberries at Dengta Village, which is famous for not using pesticides and chemical fertilizers.

Walking in a winter wonderland

Zi Sha

Winter doesn't mean that there is nothing to do in Jiading District. Enjoying picturesque countryside scenery, admiring wintersweets, visiting ancient gardens and even picking strawberries are all good choices for you.

Delicious strawberries

Strawberries grown in Dengta Village in Jiading District mature before the Spring Festival.

Dengta Village's strawberries are famous because farmers don't use agricultural pesticides and chemical fertilizers. The berries are big, sweet and smell wonderful. Visitors can pick strawberries until their hearts are content.

Potted strawberry plants are sold for 20 yuan (US\$3.2) for those who want to grown their own. Some farmers also offer visitors a chance to dine in their homes.

Address: Dengta Village, Jiading Industrial Zone

(Driver's guide: Drive northward along Chengbei Road from Jiading Town and turn left to Shuangzhu Road, Dengta Village is at the end of Shuangzhu Road.)

Cost: 40 yuan per kilo of strawberries

Fragrant wintersweet

Wintersweet in Waigang Wintersweet Garden are now in full bloom. The flowers, which look like a golden bell, are exquisite and have a wonderful aroma.

Wintersweet has inspired many Chinese poets through the centuries including Su Dongpo, one of the Chinese greatest poets in the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Visitors can also buy a wintersweet bonsai tree.

The garden's wintersweet flowers are big and fragrant with dense petals. The wintersweet of this garden, together with the narcissus flowers in Chongming County and the white willow flowers in Fengxian District are known as Shanghai's three treasured objects in winter.

Address: 2700 Moyu Rd N., Waigang Town

Cost: 80-500 yuan

Flower show

Guyi Garden plans to offer a variety of activities to celebrate the Spring Festival which starts from February 10 this year. A flower exhibition featuring wintersweet, narcissus and orchid blooms will offer a colorful scene to visitors and photographers will likely find many wonderful scenes to capture.

The garden has teamed with Jiading Waigang Wintersweet Research Institute to display 10 rare wintersweet products including bonsai trees, combinatorial potting and traditional flower arrangement.

Narcissus flowers from Chongming County will be displayed at this year's fair, too. The garden has cooperated with the Shi family whose members have cultivated the flower for more than 100 years.

Address: 218 Hui Rd, Nanxiang Town
Cost: 12 yuan

(Translated by Catherine Hong)

The A to Z of the Spring Festival

Catherine Hong

THE Spring Festival has many customs and foreigners new to China can learn a great deal about Chinese people through the Lunar New Year holiday

The Spring Festival is the beginning of the Chinese Lunar New Year. The Chinese character in ancient seal style for year has 禾 on the top and 千 at the bottom. 禾 means grain, while 千 means many. Therefore, all activities in the Spring Festival are a celebration of the harvest and to pray for a good harvest in the upcoming year. Even today, the Spring Festival still carries this meaning.

The most important event of the Spring Festival is New Year's Eve dinner. According to tradition, all family members are supposed to present and indulge in a big feast. Many Chinese will travel across the country to ensure they are home for the New Year's Eve dinner.

Families are considered the cornerstone of society and unity is the basic requirement for the creation of wealth and well-being.

Other customs include putting up Spring Festival scrolls and setting off firecrackers. The scrolls are made with red paper and feature propitious sentences for the New Year. These are the special forms of couplets when people put them on the door during the New Year for happiness. Putting on the Spring Festival scrolls has a history of over 1,000 years while setting off firecrackers has been a Spring Festival tradition for over 2,000 years. According to an ancient legend, people lit firecrackers to scare evil monsters.

Elders prepare *hong bao* for younger members in the family. *Hong bao*, literally "red envelopes," is New Year lucky money given in red envelopes.



Children display scrolls wishing a Happy New Year.



Visitors learn about the culture and history of Malu Town through exhibits at the Folk Custom Exhibition Hall.

Exhibition hall preserves culture and customs

Zi Sha and Catherine Hong

THE history of Malu Town is being preserved at the Folk Custom Exhibition Hall in the Cultural Activity Center of Malu Town.

In the center there are also two other exhibition halls. One is displaying personal collections by Xu Zhenbao and the other showing bamboo carvings of Jiang Yuming and his wife Su Yurong.

The three halls are open to the public all day long and tour guides are available.

In the Folk Custom Exhibition Hall visitors can view old

photos to learn more about the food, clothes, housing and modes of transport common in the area.

Old furniture, agricultural tools and textile machines represent how time has changed. Some old ladies are showing their skills in weaving the cloth. If you are interested, you can even ask them to teach you how to make it.

Xu's collection includes coins from past dynasties, porcelain, silverware, embroidery, tiger shoes, smoking pipes, farming instruments and other miscellaneous items. The coin collection is impressive with more

than 1,000 pieces dating back hundreds of years.

Xu said the past 100 years was a period of great change in China, when people longed for a modern style of life. But, he said when people become well-off, they would lose interest in traditional things. He said the history needs something to carry, and the articles he collected are not only the articles themselves, but also the history, the culture.

Jiang and Su's bamboo carvings integrate calligraphy, paintings, poems, articles and seals. The couple has won many national prizes.