

Around the Neighborhood, Around the World

by Cynthia Chin-Lee

(around 191 words)

Around the corner, down the street.

So many people we will meet!

Big and little, happy faces.

From near and far, so many places.

Time to go. Look at the clock.

Let's meet our neighbors down the block.

Cymbals crashing, crackers flashing.

Lions dance and dragons prance.

Bunnies hop, long ears flop.

Get in front, eggs to hunt!

Tacos frying, salsa trying.

Cinco de Mayo, oh-my-my-oh!

Food is gone at the break of dawn.

Dumplings shared show we care.

Pride parade in the shade.

Trumpets play, dancers sway.

Drummers drum, flags fly high.

See the fireworks in the sky!

Girls and boys kick and click.

Tasty gyros, eat them quick.

Fragrant flowers! Pour the sand.

Hold tight to sparklers in our hands.

Family, friends gather to eat.

Share their thanks with yummy treats.

Fry the latkes, light the flame.

Spin the dreidel. Win the game!

Black, red, green, count the candles.

How much stew can you handle?

Back at home, up the street.

How many people did we meet?

Big and little, happy faces

From near and far, so many places.

Time for bed. Stars take flight.

All tucked in. Kiss good night.

Holidays

- Lunar New Year (late Jan to early March). The Chinese and Vietnamese communities celebrate Lunar New Year with big feasts, firecrackers, and festive performances. The lion dance always has at least two people, one as the head and the other the tail. The dragon dance, on the other hand, often has nine people and could have more. Loud cymbals and pounding drums accompany the dances.

- Easter (around April). Christians and non-Christians celebrate this spring holiday with church services and Easter egg hunts. On Easter morning, the Easter bunny traditionally hides decorated eggs for children to find.
- Cinco de Mayo (May 5). This holiday commemorates the Mexican triumph over the French in the Battle of Puebla in 1862. A bigger event in the US, it celebrates Mexican culture with colorful dances, mariachi bands, and parades.
- Ramadan (May to June). During this month, Muslims (who are able, not young children, pregnant or nursing women) fast from sunrise to dusk and then break the fast. On the last night of Ramadan, friends and family celebrate Eid al-Fitr. They may have special foods such as dumplings, stew, chicken biryani, and many sweet dishes like candies, cookies and cakes.
- Pride parade (usually June). The LGBTQ community celebrates the pride movement in June with parades and festivals. The parade often has floats, marching bands, fanciful costumes, dancing and music.
- Fourth of July (July 4). Independence Day marks the signing of the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the United States. Fife, drum and bugle corps sometimes start the parade. Waving flags, neighbors enjoy picnics and fireworks.
- Greek festival (can be any time except orthodox Easter, May to Aug). Festivals held throughout the summer celebrate Greek heritage. They include tasty foods like gyros (seasoned lamb and beef wrapped in pita bread) and moussaka (a dish made of eggplant and cheese). People also perform folk dances with large circles of boys and girls wearing traditional costumes.
- Divali (late Oct to mid Nov). During the festival of lights, observed by Hindus, Jains, and Sikhs, people decorate their houses with candles, electric lights, and fragrant flowers like jasmine. They may draw rangoli, beautiful patterns created on the floor using colored rice, flour, sand, or flower petals. At night, neighbors may set off fireworks and kids will light sparklers.
- Thanksgiving (fourth Thursday of November) In the US, people celebrate Thanksgiving with family reunions and big dinners. They put aside differences and say prayers of thanks.
- Hanukkah (late Nov to late December). This Jewish festival remembers the dedication of the Temple during the Maccabean Revolt against the Syrians. People eat fried foods like latkes and doughnuts, play the dreidel, and light candles for the eight nights of the holiday.
- Kwanzaa (Dec 26 to Jan 1). This festival is observed by many Africans in the US and other places. Families get together to light candles, exchange gifts, dance, and feast. Favorite foods may be groundnut stew, Cajun catfish, and jerk chicken.