

# A leap month — eat pig's knuckle for good luck

## 閏五月 吃豬腳補運

With an extra fifth lunar month this year, have you given a pig's knuckle to your wife's parents yet? **Folklore** academics and fortune tellers call the fifth lunar month the "toxic month" because of **inclement** seasonal weather and negative miasma. Based on folklore tradition, married daughters will buy pig's knuckle and noodles for their parents because it promotes long life. Anyone can also eat the dish on the 15th day of the intercalary fifth month (June 7) to improve their luck.

Folklore academic Lin Mao-hsien explains that a lunar year with an intercalary month has 13 months, and because that is an uneven number, it is seen as inauspicious. In addition, the fifth lunar month is generally seen as a "toxic month" during which disease often occurs. These two factors mean that an intercalary fifth month is particularly unwelcome. This is also the reason for the tradition that married daughters should bring their parents pig's knuckle and noodles prior to the extra month to promote long life. Another tradition says that the dish should be given either prior to the extra month or prior to their parents' birthday during a year with an extra month. These days, the dish no longer has to be given prior to the month. Any day during the extra month — which ends on July 21 — is OK. The main point is instead to show concern.

Master Huitzu at Fazi Shengtian Temple in Bali, Taipei County, adds that we can all improve our luck by ourselves on the 15th day of the intercalary

month, regardless of whether we are married or eat pork. Non-vegetarians can eat pig's knuckle and noodles, while vegetarians can replace that with sesame oil noodles and remembering to pray to have their bad luck **dispelled** and to succeed in their undertakings.

It is preferable to buy a freshly cooked pig's knuckle rather than buying a fresh one and cooking it at home because that will bring on luck and help dispel disaster by spending money in addition to promoting long life for one's parents. Apart from pig's knuckle and noodles or sesame oil noodles, one can also give a birthday peach.

But why married daughters? Master Hui-tzu says that people struggled to **make ends meet** in the past and women had to eat leftovers. Married daughters could thus bring the dish to their mothers to give them something to eat. Another explanation is that according to folk tradition, a daughter married into another family is **superfluous** in the same way as an intercalary month is superfluous. Folklore therefore dictates that this tradition should be carried out by married daughters. Hsu Fu-chuan, another academic of folklore, says that this is a longstanding tradition in southern Taiwan, and that pig's knuckle can be replaced by a red envelope or gold.

Pig's knuckle vendors say more and more people have been taking out pig's knuckle lately, and that this is probably a result of this tradition.

(LIBERTY TIMES, TRANSLATED BY PERRY SVENSSON)



A road side pig's knuckle vendor picks a particularly tasty piece in this photo taken on July 30, 2008.

PHOTO: GUO JING-HUI, LIBERTY TIMES

這張攝於去年七月三十日的照片中，路邊賣豬腳的小販挑切美味無比的豬腳。

照片：自由時報記者郭靜慧

「閏五月到了，妳送豬腳給娘家爸媽了沒？」農曆時序進入閏五月，民俗學者及命理老師指出，五月是傳統所謂的「毒月」，節氣酸、煞氣重，習俗中不只是嫁出去的女兒會買豬腳麵線幫父母添壽，每個人都都可以在閏五月十五日（國曆七月七日），節氣小暑這一天吃豬腳，為自己補運。

民俗學者林茂賢指出，閏年會有十三個月，由於多出一個月讓總月數成單數，被視為不吉利，再加上農曆五月被視為「毒月」，易滋生疾病，這雙重影響讓閏五月格外不受歡迎，也因此，民間有嫁出去的女兒在農曆五月前送豬腳麵線給父母添壽的習俗。另一說法是閏年父母生日前或閏五月前送就可以了。近來則已不拘泥於時間前後，閏月當月（最遲國曆七月二十一日）買豬腳麵線給娘家父母也可以，重點在於子女心意。

北縣八里法旨聖天宮慧慈老師補充，閏月補運也可以自己來，不論有無出嫁的女兒、吃不吃豬腳，都可把握閏月十五日這一天，為自己補運。吃葷的人，可以選擇豬腳麵線；吃素的人，則可以麻油麵線替代，同時記得在心中祈求上蒼將不好運勢化解、讓自己心想事成。

至於豬腳最好買現成煮好的，不要買生的回家自己滷，原因是透過買熟豬腳的過程達到轉運與花錢消災的效果，此外，幫父母添壽，除了豬腳或麻油麵線，還可以外加壽桃。

至於為何是嫁出去的女兒送豬腳？慧慈老師說，早期經濟不富裕，女人多半吃剩菜剩飯，出嫁女兒藉此機會帶豬腳回家，可以幫母親補補身體；另一種說法則是民間習俗認為嫁出去的女兒能回娘家孝敬父母是多出來的，就如同閏月是多出來的月份一樣，也因此，習俗中這個添壽的行為必須由嫁出去的女兒來做。民俗學者徐福全說，閏年送豬腳為父母添壽的習俗在南台灣由來已久，除送豬腳，也可以包紅包或打金子替代。

豬腳業者表示，近來外帶豬腳的人明顯變多，應與此習俗有關。（自由時報記者楊久瑩）

### TODAY'S WORDS 今日單字



#### 1. folklore /'fɒk,lɔːr/ n.

民間傳說 (min2 jian1 chuan2 shuo1)

例: Many of Taylor's exploits at university became part of university folklore.  
(泰勒在大學的許多事蹟已經成為校園的傳說了。)

#### 2. inclement /ɪn'kleɪmənt/ adj.

天氣險惡的 (tian1 qi4 xian3 e4 de5)

例: The sailing contest was cancelled due to inclement weather.  
(帆船比賽因天氣惡劣取消了。)

#### 3. dispel /dr'spel/ v.

消除 (xiao1 chu2)

例: I dispelled any doubts about Georgina's integrity when I finally met her.  
(我和喬吉娜碰面後，原先對她正直的懷疑完全煙消雲散。)

### IDIOM POINT 重要片語



#### make ends meet 勉強打平生活開銷

If you manage to survive with very little money, then you **make ends meet**. The article mentions that in the past people often struggled to survive.

Examples: "Steve often talks about his time in art college as the most difficult of his life — he struggled to **make ends meet**, and seldom had enough money for vacations."

若你靠很微薄的收入維持生計，就可以說是「make ends meet」。文章中提到，以前的人往往是勉強維生。

例如：「史提夫常說他一生中最大最艱困的時期就是唸藝校時——他得想盡辦法才能勉強維持開銷，而且幾乎沒有足夠的錢去度假。」