LUNAR NEW YEAR

Make your own luck

How to have a prosperous 2018

Laura Trieste

DESPITE having many beliefs that centre around luck and fate, the Chinese culture’s approach to having a happy new year is anything but passive.

The longstanding customs around celebrating the Lunar New Year, which begins this Friday, are all about taking steps to bring good fortune your way and deter the evil spirits.

Here are some ways that you can increase your chances of having a prosperous 2018, according to Chinese superstitions.

BE WELL PREPARED
Starting the year in a good place is an important step to determining your fortune for the rest of the year.

The University of Sydney’s Confucius Institute executive director Xing Jin says this means taking care of old problems — such as paying off any debts — and making room for a fresh start.

“In the lead-up to Chinese New Year, people will have a very thorough clean of the house and remove the old,” she says.

ADORN WITH JOY
Decorating the house with symbols of good luck is the next step, such as paper cuttings and lanterns, which are usually in red and gold.

“Red in Chinese culture represents happiness, joy and fortune, so this is the time people use the red to bring good luck and scare off the evil spirits,” Jin says.

BEWARE OF THE DOG
It is considered unlucky for it to be your Chinese zodiac year according to Chinese astrology, so people born in the Year of the Dog should be extra cautious.

Jin says wearing red during your zodiac year is considered to help ward off the bad luck.

“The boys might wear a red T-shirt or red socks or underwear and the girls might wear a red dress,” she says.

FEAST OF FORTUNE
Jin says the night before the new year is considered the most important family dinner of the year.

“In northern China, people eat dumplings, they signify prosperity. In southern China, people eat fish. Fish means fortune,” she says.

LET SPARKS FLY
Families will typically stay up all night after dinner to witness the midnight fireworks, which are believed to scare off the mythical beast named the Year, who comes out to harm people, animals and properties.

POCKET MONEY
Children receive an extra dose of good fortune on the first day of the year, when it is tradition for family members to give them red envelopes with money in them to bring them good health, prosperity and a long life.