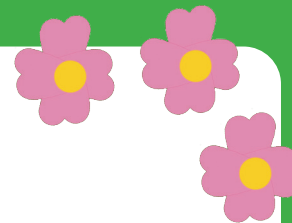


The Story of Norouz

Norouz (the New Day) is the first day of Spring and the Persian New Year. This beloved holiday originated in Persia over 3000 years ago. The exact beginning of the New Year occurs when the season changes from winter to spring and the festivities of Norouz reflect the renewal of the Earth that occurs with the coming of Spring.

In preparation of the New Year, you see people shopping for items of Sofreh Haft Seen (Haft Seen table) and for new clothes to wear on the day of Norouz. Or maybe you'll find them growing Sabzeh (sprouts), making pastries or doing a "Khouneh Tekouni" (shaking the house) or spring cleaning.





THEN THE CELEBRATIONS BEGIN

The first celebration is Chahar Shanbeh Suri (The fire jumping festival). Held on the last Tuesday night before Norouz, Iranians gather and jump over bonfire flames, symbolizing the burning away of anything bad that happened in the past year while saying the words: “Zardi-e man az to, sorkhi-e to az man” meaning, “May my paleness be yours and your red glow be mine.”

THEN COMES NOROUZ, THE NEW DAY

On Norouz, it's customary to wear new clothes to ring in the new year while celebrating by the sofreh Haft Seen. Friends and family will travel to visit each other, beginning with younger family members visiting the elderly. In return, the elders will give Eidi (Norouz gifts) to family and friends who visit them. Homes are well stocked with tea and assorted sweets and nuts to serve guests. This is the beginning of a twelve-day celebration when all worries from the past year are washed away and friendships are renewed.

NOROUZ HOLIDAY CONCLUDES WITH SIZDAH BEDAR

On the 13th day, Iranians will end the Norouz holiday by celebrating Sizdah Bedar, meaning the passing of the 13th day. Family and friends come together for picnics and outdoor activities in the park or green areas. Younger members of the family tie the Sabzeh from the sofreh Haft Seen and make a wish! The Sabzeh is then thrown into a river or stream for the wish to come true. Metaphorically, people return back to their everyday routines and life, as the Sabzeh was returned back to nature.