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What to Expect From The Year of The Horse

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Many Russians love to honor the animal that symbolizes the coming year, based on the Chinese astrological calendar, believing — half-jokingly but many would insist – that it brings them luck for the next 12 months.

"Whose year is the next one?" Russians ask each other around December. The question may seem puzzling, but it refers to the Chinese zodiac symbol of the coming year.

The inquiry will often be followed up by two others: "What should we wear, and what should we eat?" That, of course, refers to the supposedly lucky colors to put on for New Year's Eve party and the lucky items on the menu.

The coming year is the year of the horse – or, more precisely, the year of the blue wooden horse, as many Russians would tell you. Green, blue and yellow are all supposed to be lucky

colors to wear, and lucky foods include fish and caviar — which may be particularly fortuitous, since these are traditional Russian New Year's Eve foods anyway.

"Herring in a fur coat" will be on nearly every holiday table, along with red caviar and jellied fish.

Technically, the Chinese New Year doesn't start until Jan. 31, 2014. But Russians like to welcome the coming year's animal a bit earlier, during their Dec. 31 New Year's Eve party, adapting the Chinese tradition to the Russian style.

The year of the wooden horse is supposed to be a temperamental one, so if you feel like horsing around during the upcoming festivities, that may be particularly fitting this year. Just be careful with the fireworks: Setting something on fire or upsetting a police officer would be backing the wrong horse.

Since 2014 is meant to be a tempestuous year, prepare for a thrill ride ahead, some Russian holiday website warn. Many astrologers and party-goers insist that they have from the horse's mouth that there may be changes and challenges to come.

Do those astrological holiday predictions ever come true? Nobody seems to know for sure. That question is a horse of a completely different color.

Visit our photo gallery for more about the year of the horse.

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