



PERSIAN NEW YEAR “**NOROOZ**” (New Day)

Persian empire founder Cyrus the great 530 B.C. ordered the “first bill on human rights”, the cuneiform inscriptions to encourage freedom of worship, liberation of Jews and respect for diverse cultures throughout the empire. In the center of the Norooz painting above is Zoroastrian symbol “Farvahar” that signifies three sacred believes, Good Thoughts, Good Words and Good Deeds.

Norooz is a national holiday celebrated by Iranians of virtually all ethnicities and religions. Celebrations may date back to Cyrus the Great’s reign in the sixth century B.C. Many of the season’s traditions have roots in Zoroastrianism, an ancient monotheistic faith still practiced by some 25,000 in Iran.

Today old Persia, called Iran is a large country the size of United Kingdom, Spain, France and Germany, combined. The population is over 80 million.

The country’s official language is Farsi, but almost half the population speaks another language. Most people belong to the Shia branch of the Islamic faith, but other religions are represented as well. Whatever their ethnic or religious backgrounds, most Iranians celebrate a common holiday, Norooz, the Persian New Year.

The first day of spring or the vernal equinox is barely noticed by most of us, but for the people of Iran, this day (when the sun is directly overhead at the equator) has special significance. It marks the beginning of the Persian New Year, and is the most important day in the Persian calendar.



A relief from Persepolis metaphorically depicts the Spring Equinox in the form of a bull (the Earth) and lion (the Sun) fighting. Neither is stronger than the other.

A time of clearing mind, cleaning house, renew wardrobe , refresh and celebrate the nature as spring begins with fresh flowers and budding new life.

This ancient holiday is called Norooz (sometimes spelled Norouz, Nawruz, Newroz, Nauruz, Nawroz, Noruz, Novruz, Nauroz, Navroz, Naw-Rúz, or Nevruz), and it begins sometime between March 20th and March 22nd. In Farsi, Norooz means “new day,” and most of the traditions that surround the holiday are connected with rebirth and renewal, befitting the first day of spring.

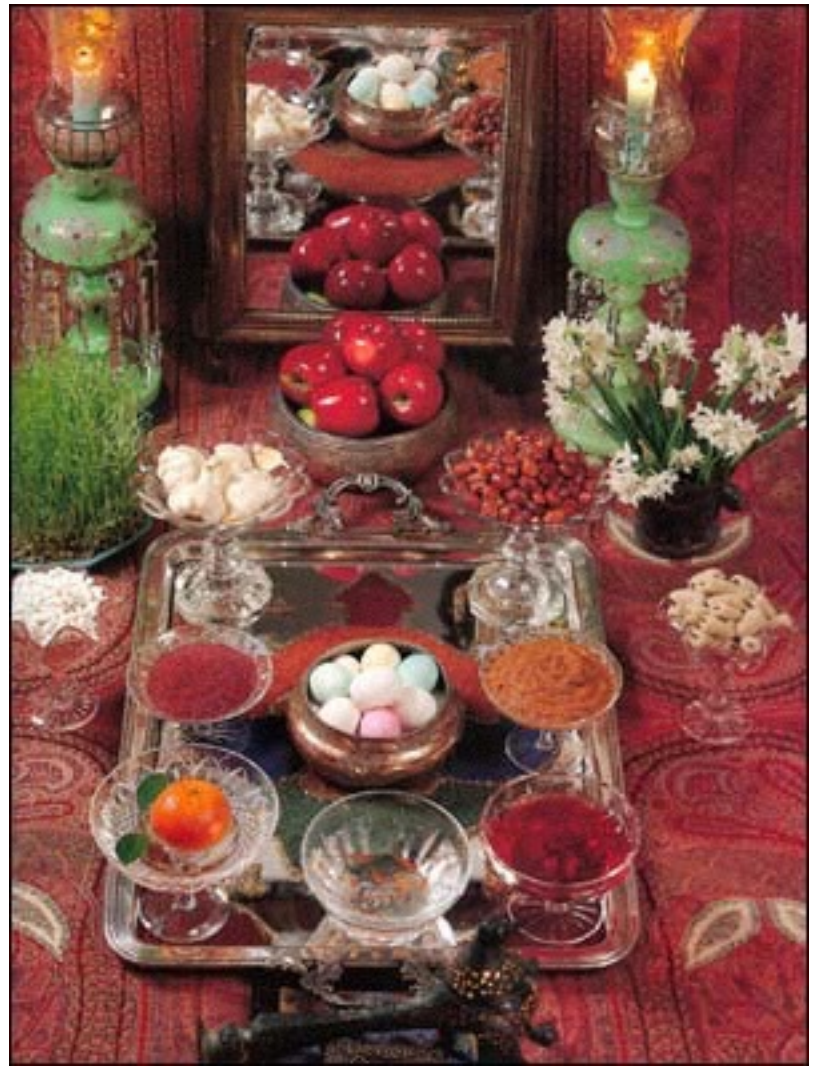
Most Persians begin to prepare for Norooz by spring cleaning their houses. Shopping is part of the preparation, and people will buy new clothes for the special day. On the night before the last Wednesday of the year, Persians celebrate Chahârshanbe Sûrî, the festival of fire. People make fires – usually in their backyards – and friends and family leap over the flames. As they do so, the tradition is to recite “Zardî-ye man az to, sorkhî-ye to az man,” which literally means “My yellowness to you; your redness to me.” Yellow is symbolic of sickness, and red symbolizes strength and health.

Persians prepare a Haft Sin table. Haft means seven, and Sin is the letter S. So the Haft Sin table includes seven items starting with the letter S in Farsi. These items are:

- Sabzeh (sprouted wheat grass): For rebirth and renewal
- Samanu (sweet pudding): For affluence and fertility
- Senjed (sweet, dried lotus tree fruit): For love
- Serkeh (vinegar): For patience and wisdom gained through aging
- Sir (garlic): For medicine and maintaining good health
- Sib (apples): For health and beauty

- Sumac (crushed spice made from reddish berries): For recalling the sunrise
- Additional items on the table include:
- Mirror: To reflect on the past year
 - Live goldfish in a bowl: To represent new life
 - Orange in a bowl of water: To symbolize the Earth
 - Decorated eggs: For fertility
 - Coins: For future prosperity
 - Books of classical poetry and/or of a religion : For spirituality

Although most Iranians are Muslims, there are other religions in Iran too. So depending on your religion, the book on the Haft Sin table may be the Qur'an, the Bible, the Torah, the Avesta, the book of Zoroastrian texts, or the Kitab-i-Aqdas. Finally, a poetry book honors the literary traditions of the Persian people.



During the twelve-day holiday, people visit friends and relatives. On the thirteenth day, everyone celebrates Sizdah bedar by leaving their houses to have a picnic in the open air. After the picnic, they take the sabzeh (the sprouting lentils) and throw them into flowing water. The idea is that the sabzeh have collected all the sickness and bad luck of the household, and it is now thrown away.

Norooz is typically associated with Iran. However, the holiday is celebrated in other countries in the Middle East and Central Asia too, including Iran, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Iraq, Albania, Turkey, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Turkmenistan.



**HAPPY
NOROOZ**

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Google images from Persian New Year Norooz