

Nowruz is the Persian New Year celebration. It takes place in the spring. Read this article and find out how people celebrate this important day!

Nowruz is the Persian, or Iranian, spring celebration of the New Year. It's the most important festival of the year in Iran, and it's a public holiday there and in Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Afghanistan, Albania and other countries in South and Central Asia. It's a happy occasion, and there may be as many as 13 days' holiday from school!

When is it?

Nowruz begins at the exact day, hour and minute of the spring equinox, when night and day are of equal length. This is usually on 21 March. It's the day when winter changes into spring, and it feels like a new beginning.

Spring cleaning

People prepare for Nowruz by cleaning the whole house, and everyone in the family helps out. Carpets, windows and curtains are cleaned. Anything broken is repaired or replaced. Silverware is polished. The house is decorated with flowers. By doing this spring cleaning, people wash away the bad things from the previous year and prepare for better things to come in the new year. They also put on brand new clothes to symbolise a fresh start.

Fire jumping

In the evening of the last Wednesday before Nowruz, bonfires are lit and people jump over the flames. The flames burn away sickness and bad luck.

Nowruz and the seven Ss

It's important to start the year well: clean, smart, relaxed, happy and surrounded by loved ones. So, just before Nowruz, the whole family comes together. They celebrate around a special table in their house. It's called the *haftseen*, which means 'seven Ss'. On it, there are seven special objects, all of which begin with the 's' sound in the Farsi language and which symbolise something. There are actually more than seven, but here are some of the most common.

Persian name	What it is	What it symbolises
somaq	a bright red spice made from crushed berries	sunrise and the spice of life
sonbol	hyacinth	spring
sekeh	coins	prosperity

Persian name	What it is	What it symbolises
senjed	the sweet dry fruit of the lotus tree	love
seeb	apples	health and beauty
samanu	a sweet pudding made from wheat	the sweetness of life
sabzeh	sprouted wheat grass	rebirth and the renewal of nature

Some other symbolic objects are placed on the table, depending on the traditions of each family. These include a goldfish, painted eggs, candles and a mirror.

Nowruz in the UK

In the UK, Nowruz is celebrated by families from Iran and other countries. They set up a *haftseen* table in their homes too, but it's difficult to find some of the objects in British supermarkets so they usually have to go to special Iranian shops to buy them. They send greetings to other family members living far away by phone or message. Nowruz is a happy and exciting time, even though there aren't any school holidays for it in the UK.

Sometimes around Nowruz, events are organised to promote Iranian culture. These can include concerts, film screenings and museum exhibitions.