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VIEWPOINT

Chinese New Year and Valentine's Day

Audiey Kao, MD, PhD

- On February 5, 2000, the Chinese will celebrate the beginning of the Year 4698, the Year of the Dragon. According to the Chinese Zodiac, romance and business will dominate the Dragon's agenda this year. The Dragon, which is the most honored zodiac sign represents vitality and power and many Chinese couples will be trying to give birth to a child during this lunar calendar year.
- Until recently, fortune cookies were virtually unknown in China. Though fortune cookies originated in California, the inspiration may have come from 13th-century Chinese soldiers who slipped secret military messages in mooncakes.
- February 14 is the death anniversary of Valentine, a priest and physician, who was beheaded for aiding the Christian martyrs and secretly marrying couples against the wishes of the Roman Emperor in the 3rd century AD.
- Valentine's Day was once called Bird's Wedding Day because it was believed that birds selected their mates and began to breed on this date. Thus, the idea of "love birds" became romantically associated with this holiday.
- Ambergris, a gray, waxy substance, is formed in the intestines of sperm whales and often found floating at sea or washed ashore [1]. The Chinese call it *lung yen*, dragon's spittle, and their nobles drank it as an aphrodisiac to increase male potency. Ambergris was known to Middle Eastern cultures and was often used as medicine to treat ailments for the heart and brain. It was eaten with eggs for breakfast at the tables of English squires. In addition to being used as medicine and spice for foods, ambergris adds to the scent of essential flower oils when introduced into fine perfumes.
- The human vomeronasal organ [2-4] detects pheromones and in turn sends signals to the hypothalamus which regulates reproductive and ingestive behaviors. Not surprisingly, the perfume industry has spent millions of dollars exploring how pheromones could be added to fragrances and cosmetics to excite people's romantic instinct

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Audiey Kao, MD, PhD is editor in chief of *Virtual Mentor*

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