

Lhosar: Lhosar marks the New Year for Sherpas and Tibetans, celebrated with feasts, family gatherings, music, and dance. Monasteries host ritual ceremonies to usher in auspiciousness, and stupas and houses are adorned with colorful decorations.

Tibetan New Year, called Losar, is celebrated every year in February, coinciding with the New Moon. The date is calculated by the Tibetan lunar calendar and is the first day of the first month of the year and does not occur on exactly the same date every year. It is good timing here in the northeast of North America. February is the last winter month and somehow spring is always in the air after Losar. This is definitely the biggest holiday in Tibetan culture.

Losar can be traced back to pre-Buddhist Tibetan ceremonies that celebrated the arts of cultivating, irrigation, and bridge building. Many customs and traditions are followed, both at the monasteries and in people's homes. Losar was formerly celebrated for fifteen days but now the festivities range between three and seven days depending on the country. In monasteries, protector pujas are begun on the 29th day of the twelfth month in preparation for Losar ceremonies. Depending on where you live you might be able to attend a fire purification puja and have the opportunity to cast out your negativity from the old year.

On that day, gu tuk, the traditional soup with nine surprise ingredients, is served by the household elder. Made of mashed and boiled grains, and flavored with dried yak cheese, the soup contains dumplings with messages or small objects. It is a kind of divination soup, where everyone has fun sharing their message, as people all over the globe now do with fortune cookies. The last day of the year everything is cleaned. People clean their homes or apartments especially well, dusting on top of high furniture and under cabinets, and prepare their dress clothes for the coming occasion. Most Tibetans in exile wear traditional dress on Losar. In monasteries, elaborate shrine room decorations are made with special ceremonial cakes called torma and huge offerings of food, all artistically arranged and consecrated in the early morning puja. These are given to all the people who attend the ceremonies.