SHOPPING

The preparation for Lunar New Year is as—if not more—exhausting as the day itself. Lots of money goes into the planning of the event. Some of the most distinct parts of Vietnamese New Year are the importance of decorations and ornaments, as well as the abundance of fruits and flowers.

Traditional flowers to have for New Years includes peach blossoms, apricot blossoms, and mickey-mouse blossoms.

Despite the lack of wealth in Vietnam, families will spend a great amount on New Years. Outside on the streets, vendors will line up the sidewalks with tons of decorations, fruits, and flower trees.

Some people will spend upwards to hundreds of dollars on a single flower tree for this very occasion.

MIDNIGHT

One of the most important rituals on this day is being the first person to enter a home, which is called xông nhà. Traditions say that the first visitor a family receives in the New Year determines their fortune for the rest of the year. On this day, people never enter other houses until being invited inside.

Usually someone of success and good morality will be the first one invited into a house.

Just to be safe, the owner of the house will leave just before midnight and come back in to prevent any unlucky guests from bringing them unwanted misfortune.

Traditionally, people will set up food, flowers, and fruits at the family altar as an offering to Buddha, ancestors, and deceased family members.

MORNING

In addition to praying at midnight, it is also customary to visit a local Buddhist temple to pray, donate money, and get one’s fortune told. People will light an incense stick, pray for wishes for the New Year, and place it in a large urn.

Some temples have very elaborate decorations and displays of Buddha. These can be giant statues many feet taller than the people below them praying.

Much like the ones at home, the altars at these temples are adorned with flowers and fruits.

AFTERNOON

As the rest of the day goes on, the festivities continue. People wish each other luck and prosperity, and exchange red envelopes. They attend shows, watch lion dances, and light firecrackers. Some will put on the traditional áo dài, or choose to dress in regular clothes, usually in red.

EVENING

Among the most important parts of Tết is dinner with family. Food is such an essential part of Vietnamese New Year that “celebrate New Year” in Vietnamese, *ăn Tết,* literally translates to “eat New Year.”