

**Dear valued member,**

Thank you for agreeing to host a Friends of Mongolia sponsored Tsagaan Sar event. We are very glad that you will share this important Mongolian holiday with your community in the USA!

We have developed this small “celebration kit” to help with your party planning. It includes:

1. A brief explanation of Tsagaan Sar.
2. A list of recipes of a few traditional Mongolian food to serve.
3. A FOM sign with which to take a group picture. Please send us a picture of your with this sign, and send it to [officers@friendsofmongolia.org](mailto:officers@friendsofmongolia.org).



### **What is Tsagaan Sar (Цараан сар)?**

Tsagaan Sar literally translates to “White Moon” in English, and is celebration of the first day of the Lunar calendar year. . It occurs one month after the first new moon of the winter solstice, and is usually held sometime in February in the Gregorian calendar. Tsagaan Sar is marked by visiting family , relatives, and friends (in this order), eating meat dumplings, called “buuz” Бүүз (pronounced like the English word “boats”) among other traditional foods, and exchanging gifts/money. It is one of the most significant Mongolian holidays, and is celebrated with gusto throughout the country and in Mongolian expat communities throughout the world.

The purpose of Tsagaan Sar is to greet the new year and send away the old year, to solidify the relationships between family and friends in the upcoming year and to start the year with a clean slate all around. In preparation for Tsagaan Sar many people repay debts and resolve disagreements, and essentially clean themselves both figuratively and literally in preparation for the upcoming new year so that the new year will start off ‘pure’ and white.

The celebration starts on the eve of Tsagaan Sar, which is called Bituun. It is the last day of the year and is spent sharing food and eating until everyone is full with family so that during the upcoming year, no one will go hungry. On the first day of Tsagaan Sar you start with greeting your immediate family, starting with the very oldest person first. People are greeted in the traditional manner, especially when greeting the oldest member of the family. We use the words “Amar baina uu?” to greet someone older than us, and the words “Amar sain uu?” to greet someone younger than us. Both phrases mean “Are you living peacefully?” in English. Usually the elder person has a hat on and is sitting, while the younger person does not have anything on their heads and is standing. To greet each other they both extend their hands and the younger persons’ arms hold up the older person’s hands. After this there are several other rituals, people ask each other about their herds, about the winter season, and how everyone’s Tsagaan Sar is going. This is also the time to learn from the experience of the elders and to teach the younger generation Mongolian customs.

Although, many Mongolians have discarded traditional clothing in favor of a more Western style of dress in everyday life in the city and towns, during Tsagaan Sar people wear their most ornate traditional clothing.

In addition to respecting and honoring your elders and solidifying relationships, Tsagaan Sar is the time to be eating. Before going straight to the buuz, people first ‘take a bite’ of tsagaalag, which means white-ing, it roughly translates to vegetarian. Before eating anything people take a bite or spoonful of rice or some vegetarian option, such as any dairy product (aaruul, byaslag, tos). Then on the table there is usually lamb, a tall build of boov, buuz, salad, various meats, candy, and other foods and of course an always ready hot Mongolian tea.

Tsagaan Sar is a holiday best celebrated with people you care about in a warm home and surrounded by food. It is an important holiday for Mongolian identity and culture, as it is a time to solidify ties with family and learn from your elders on what exactly being Mongolian means and the importance of tradition and nomadic/herder culture. We hope that you enjoy your celebration. Make a toast to Friends of Mongolia while you’re at it!

If you would like to celebrate this holiday and have questions about certain cultural aspects or would like to know more, please contact Tee Tsetsendelger at [ts.tselmeg@gmail.com](mailto:ts.tselmeg@gmail.com) and she will be happy to talk to you about making your Tsagaan Sar as authentic as possible! Her experience comes from helping plan and executing over 10 Tsagaan Sars in the US ☺



## **Mongolian Buuz recipe ( a smaller version of the buuz would be bansh):**

Dough:

2.5-3 cups of flour

1 cup water

Filling:

Minced meat

Chopped onion (can also add garlic, herbs)

Seasonings to flavor

1. Mix flour and water to make dough. Knead until smooth. Set aside as you prepare the filling. (note: should be smooth but not sticky)
2. Mix meat, onion and seasonings together thoroughly
3. Roll flour into balls about half the size of your palm. Roll out into a circle, leaving the middle slightly thicker than the edges.
4. Hold circle of dough in palm and fill with about one teaspoon of meat mixture.
5. Pinch shut. Make sure the seal is tight.
6. Steam for about 15 minutes depending on your pot and heat.

Note: You can fill buuz with nearly anything. So get creative with it!

## **Mongolian Potato Salad recipe (called the National Salad) imported from Russia:**

3 potatoes cooked with skin, peeled and diced (small)

2 carrots cooked and diced (small)

12 eggs hard boiled and diced

1.5 lbs of bologna diced (small)

10-12 small kosher dill pickles dice small

1/2 sweet onion finely chopped

1 can (15 oz) sweet peas, drained

3-4 tablespoons Mayonnaise

salt to taste

1. Mix together with Mayonnaise and season to taste. Garnish with dill (optional)

## **Mongolia Milk Tea recipe:**

Tea bag (black tea preferred)

Milk

Water

1. Make tea to desired strength
2. Add equal amounts of milk
3. Salt to taste

# Tsagaan Sar 2017

