



Laba Porridge Sweetens Run-up to Chinese New Year

By stewing a mixture of such grain as rice, millet, and glutinous rice with red beans, kidney beans, red dates, peanuts, lotus seeds, and other dried fruits, one can make a bowl of steamy, savory *Laba* porridge. In the traditional Chinese lunar calendar, the eighth day of the twelfth lunar month (or *layue chuba*) is called *Laba*. This day is also





known as the *Laba* Festival. It is a tradition to eat a bowl of warm *Laba* porridge on this day to warm up the body while enjoying the upcoming Chinese New Year's festivities.

In ancient times, the Chinese used game meat to make sacrifices to their ancestors and gods at the end of each year. This practice is known as “hunting sacrifices”. In ancient Chinese, the word for “hunting” can be used in a similar way to the word *la*. As a result, the last month of the year is called *layue*. This tradition was later incorporated into celebrations held on the day Sakyamuni became the Buddha thousands of years ago, which was set at the eighth day of *layue* during the Northern and Southern Dynasties. In this way, the *Laba* Festival came into being.





In addition to the variety of dishes made from grain, other unique foods are popular during this time throughout China. For example, in northern China people marinate fresh garlic cloves in vinegar to make *Laba* garlic which is eaten with *jiaozi* on the eve of the Spring Festival.



The eighth day of the twelfth lunar month coincides with the coldest period of winter in northern China. The arrival of *Laba* also indicates that the Spring Festival is just around the corner. For many Chinese people, *Laba* marks the start of the festive period that culminates in the Spring Festival. After finishing a bowl of warm *Laba* porridge and looking outside, one might notice the streets and alleyways are also warm and festive. As one popular folk children rhyme goes, “Kids, kids, don’t let your mouth water, for the Spring Festival comes shortly after *Laba*.”





là bā guò le là bā jiù shì nián
腊八：过了腊八就是年

dà mǐ xiǎo mǐ nuò mǐ děng gè zhǒng gǔ
 大 米、小 米、糯 米 等 各 种 谷
 lèi dā pèi hóng dòu yún dòu děng dòu lèi zài jiā
 类，搭 配 红 豆、芸 豆 等 豆 类，再 加
 shàng hóng zǎo huā shēng lián zǐ děng gān guǒ kě yǐ
 上 红 枣、花 生、莲 子 等 干 果，可 以
 áo zhì chū yì wǎn rè qì téng téng xiāng qì sì yì de
 熬 制 出 一 碗 热 气 腾 腾、香 气 四 溢 的





“腊^{là}月^{yuè}”。猎^{liè}祭^{jì}的^{de}习^{xí}俗^{sú}后^{hòu}来^{lái}与^{yǔ}佛^{fó}教^{jiào}
的^{de}“法^{fǎ}宝^{bǎo}节^{jié}”相^{xiāng}融^{róng}合^{hé}，最^{zuì}终^{zhōng}在^{zài}南^{nán}北^{běi}
朝^{cháo}时^{shí}期^{qī}固^{gù}定^{dìng}在^{zài}了^{le}腊^{là}月^{yuè}的^{de}初^{chū}八^{bā}，形^{xíng}成^{chéng}
了^{le}中^{zhōng}国^{guó}传^{chuán}统^{tǒng}的^{de}腊^{là}八^{bā}节^{jié}。

中^{zhōng}国^{guó}幅^{fú}员^{yuán}辽^{liáo}阔^{kuò}，物^{wù}产^{chǎn}丰^{fēng}饶^{ráo}，
腊^{là}八^{bā}时^{shí}节^{jié}除^{chú}了^{le}腊^{là}八^{bā}粥^{zhōu}之^{zhī}外^{wài}，各^{gè}地^{dì}还^{hái}
有^{yǒu}各^{gè}具^{jù}特^{tè}色^{sè}的^{de}节^{jié}令^{lìng}食^{shí}品^{pǐn}。在^{zài}安^{ān}徽^{huī}地^{dì}
区^{qū}，人^{rén}们^{men}会^{huì}吃^{chī}腊^{là}八^{bā}豆^{dòu}腐^{fu}；在^{zài}青^{qīng}海^{hǎi}地^{dì}





qū rén men huì bǎ mài rén yǔ niú yáng ròu yì qǐ
区，人们会把麦仁与牛羊肉一起
zhǔ zuò chéng mài rén fàn ér zài xǐ huan chī miàn tiáo
煮，做成麦仁饭；而在喜欢吃面条
de guān zhōng dì qū là bā miàn zé qǔ dài là bā zhōu
的关中地区，腊八面则取代腊八粥
chéng wéi cān zhuō shàng de zhǔ shí zhè xiē shí wù suī rán
成为餐桌上的主食。这些食物虽然
yǒu zhe nóng hòu de dì yù tè zhēng dàn xiāng tóng de shì
有着浓厚的地域特征，但相同的是
dōu xuǎn yòng gè dì zuì pǔ sù zuì cháng jiàn de shí cái
都选用各地最朴素、最常见的食材
wéi yuán liào tiān nán dì běi de rén men dōu néng zài zhè
为原料，天南地北的人们都能在这
yì wǎn là bā měi shí dāng zhōng pǐn chū xīn kǔ guò hòu
一碗腊八美食当中，品出辛苦过后
fēng shōu de zī wèi
丰收的滋味。

chú le liáng shí zuò chéng de gè sè měi shí bù
除了粮食做成的各色美食，不
shǎo dì fang hái liú xíng zhe yì xiē dú tè de shí wù
少地方还流行着一些独特的食物。
bǐ rú zài huá běi dì qū rén men huì jiāng xīn xiān de
比如在华北地区，人们会将新鲜的
suàn bàn fàng rù cù zhōng yān zhì chéng là bā suàn dài dào
蒜瓣放入醋中腌制成腊八蒜，待到
chú xī zhè tiān hé jiǎo zi yì qǐ shí yòng
除夕这天和饺子一起食用。

là yuè bā rì shì zhōng guó běi fāng dōng jì zuì
腊月八日是中国北方冬季最
lěng de shí jié là bā de dào lái yě yù shì zhe chūn
冷的时节。腊八的到来也预示着春
jié de lín jìn zài zhōng guó rén de xīn mù zhōng
节的临近。在中国人的心目中，



là bā yí dào , jiù jìn rù le xǐ qīng tuán yuán de chūn
腊八一到，就进入了喜庆团圆的春
jié zhōu qī , hē wán yì wǎn chōng mǎn nuǎn yì de là
节周期，喝完一碗充满暖意的腊
bā zhōu , dà jiē xiǎo xiàng fǎng fú dōu kāi shǐ jiàn jiàn yǒu
八粥，大街小巷仿佛都开始渐渐有
le jié rì fēn wéi 。 mǐn jiān miáo shù chūn jié xí sú de
了节日氛围。民间描述春节习俗的
tóng yáo jiù yǐ “ xiǎo hái er xiǎo hái er nǐ bié chán
童谣就以“小孩儿小孩儿你别馋，



guò le là bā jiù shì nián ” yí jù kāi piān 。 kě yǐ
过了腊八就是年”一句开篇。可以
shuō là bā jiù shì xīn chūn jiā jié de yí mù xù qǔ 。
说腊八就是新春佳节的一幕序曲。
là bā guò hòu , rén men kāi shǐ shā nián zhū , bàn nián
腊八过后，人们开始杀年猪，办年