

QINGMING FESTIVAL

Qingming, also known as the Ching Ming Festival, is a Chinese custom also found in other Asian cultures and celebrated around the world. Sometimes called Tomb Sweeping Day or Pure Brightness, which is the literal English translation of qingming, this celebration is held annually. Set aside to remember and honor ancestors who have passed away, it is the second of 24 solar terms on the Chinese solar calendar and falls between April 4 and April 6 each year.

Qingming traces its history back more than 2,500 years to ~636 B.C. to the time of Duke Wen, who declared a period of three days without fire resulting in only cold food being eaten to mourn his loyal servant, Jie Zitui.

Ching Ming Festival (Tomb Sweeping Day)

Modern day Ching Ming Festivals reflect reverence for those who have passed through weeding and sweeping the grave sites, presenting flowers and willow branches to ward off evil spirits and placing offerings on their graves.

Cooking is often still abstained from on Ching Ming so cold food is consumed and presented to deceased ancestors. Offerings may include favorite foods of the departed placed on their grave sites or joss paper (representing money) burned as a way to send it to loved ones for use in the afterlife. Depending on the family and the generation, some choose to burn papers with other images representing items of luxury that the deceased can use in the hereafter, including cars, technology devices and mansions. Incense may also be burned. Firecrackers are used to scare away evil spirits and alert ancestors of the mourners' presence.

Ching Ming is a celebration

But Ching Ming is more than honoring the dead. It falls at the beginning of spring and is a [celebration of life](#), beauty and a season of renewal. As part of the Qingming celebration, many fly kites at night with colored lanterns tied to the string. Participating in outdoor activities with the family, such as picnics, sports or planting are other common ways to celebrate the Asian cultural celebration. Time spent with generations of family and loved ones recalling tales of those who have gone before them is an integral piece of this tradition.

In the United States, many Asian-Americans continue the celebration of Ching Ming. Some will visit cemeteries that are the final resting places of loved ones who died in America. Others have gone so far as to move their loved one's remains from China or other foreign lands to be reinterred in the U.S. This allows the living to be closer to their departed loved ones.