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## Tibetan New Year nears, bearing a sweet dish

By Vijaysree Venkatraman

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SOMERVILLE — Losar, the Tibetan New Year, begins with a spoonful of dessert. Dresyl, also known as deysee, is a warm dish of sweetened rice that women make for their families on the morning of this festive day. “In Tibet, we would add drama, which tastes like a chewy sweet potato. But here raisins work as a good substitute,” says Yeshi Lokyitsang, owner of the House of Tibet Kitchen. She pulls out a Ziploc stash of the miniature root vegetable with traces of Tibetan soil still sticking to it.

This year, Losar begins on Saturday, when Tibetan Buddhists celebrate the Year of the Iron Rabbit. This is one of the most important Tibetan holidays. On that morning, the Tibetan Association of Boston offers dresyl and buttered tea for members who gather to pray at the Kurukulla Center for Tibetan Studies in Medford. The group organizes a dinner and traditional dances at a rented hall. There are over 500 people of Tibetan origin in the Greater Boston area. At home in Tibet and India, Losar is celebrated with fireworks and feasting for three days in the cities, and for a fortnight in the villages. Modern lifestyles do not permit such prolonged festivities, Lokyitsang says, but Tibetans try to reconnect with the community on this day.

Dresyl is also made on another occasion: the Dalai Lama’s birthday on July 6. The rice dish is served year round at House of Tibet Kitchen, and at Martsa on Elm, Rangzen, and Tashi Delek, other Tibetan establishments.

At the Losar celebration, the members festoon the community center’s backyard with new prayer flags. The cloth flag has a series of rectangular panels representing the five natural elements: red is fire, green for water, blue for sky, yellow for the earth, and white for wind. Symbolically, the “wind horse,” as the prayer flag is known, carries the inscribed message of peace and goodwill in all directions. “But the world still waits for peace,” says Lokyitsang.

House of Tibet Kitchen, 235 Holland St., Somerville, 617-629-7567

Martsa on Elm, 233 Elm St., Somerville, 617-666-0660

Rangzen, 24 Pearl St., Cambridge, 617-354-8881

Tashi Delek, 236 Washington St., Brookline, 617-232-4200

Vijaysree Venkatraman can be reached at [v.vijaysree@yahoo.com](mailto:v.vijaysree@yahoo.com).

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