What is Nevruz (Newroz)?

Nevruz, also spelled Newroz, Nowruz and Noruz, is the Iranian New Year’s celebration. Nowruz means “new day.” It is celebrated in a number of countries, which include Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Pakistan, and Tajikistan. The celebration is thousands of years old, having begun in the reign of the Achaemenids, 550–330 B.C., but although it began as a Persian celebration, it has been adopted and embellished by many countries.

The celebration of Nowruz begins precisely with the vernal equinox, so it is celebrated on or around the twenty-first day of March, the first day of spring.

**Nowruz and the spring equinox**

*Main article: Equinox*

Illumination of the Earth by the Sun on the day of equinox, (ignoring twilight).
The first day on the Iranian calendar falls on the March equinox, the first day of spring. At the time of the equinox, the sun is observed to be directly over the equator, and the north and south poles of the Earth lie along the solar terminator; sunlight is evenly divided between the north and south hemispheres.

In ca. 11 century CE major reforms of Iranian calendars took place and whose principal purpose was to fix the beginning of the calendar year, i.e. Nowrūz, at the vernal equinox. Accordingly, the definition of Nowruz given by the Iranian scientist Ṭūsī was the following: "the first day of the official new year [Nowruz] was always the day on which the sun entered Aries before noon".[21]


Legend of Kawa

Once upon a time, there was a cruel commander whose name was Dehak (Zuhak), in Mesopotamia. Maybe he wasn't called cruel before, maybe he was a good man, but there was something which made him to do bad things. It was his illness. He was near death. A doctor said he could live longer if he would eat the brain of a young boy every day.

He was afraid of death, he wanted to live longer but didn't think that his victims might also want
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to live and was afraid. He began to execute them one-by-one everyday. He searched for new ones, and went on killing and living longer. Kawa a Kurd who was an ironworker, had a son too. He loved his son like every father but was brave. He decided to play a dangerous game. He preferred to be killed to seeing his son die at Dehak's hand. He shared his plan with the citizens. He said: "I'm taking my son to (Zuhak) Dehak's house. I will take my sledgehammer with me. I'm going to kill him and rescue my son. If I succeed, I will make a fire on the mountainside as a sign of victory, if I don't, you will know both of us are dead." Kawa and his dear son went to Dehak's house. Dehak (Zuhak) was grinning, a new victim came and would give his life for Dehak that day. Kawa, for the sake of his son's life, hit his sledgehammer on Dehak's head, hit many times until sparks flew and those sparks became a big fire that could be seen from the mountain. Newroz then became a celebration of a new day, coming after the dark. The powerful commander lost his life by the hand of an ordinary ironworker to give life to those young innocent people. It was a sign of victory and hope for many generations since then.

Celebrations

Though celebrations vary, people generally come together to welcome the coming of spring; by wearing coloured clothes and dancing together. Famous high jump over the fire is a part of the tradition of Newroz. People make a fire, gather around the fire and some of them jump over it.