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# Raptors celebrate Year of the Rooster

Team adds Chinese New Year jersey to its lineup



Toronto Raptors jerseys celebrating Chinese New Year are on sale starting January 7. (CONTRIBUTED)

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Restaurants, entertainment venues, galleries and cultural centres are gearing up for this month's Chinese New Year celebrations. But the Toronto Raptors are way ahead of them.

The Raps recently added yet another uniform to their roster: bold red and white gear with Chinese characters that celebrates not only the start of the Year of the Rooster, but the support of the Raps' diverse fan base, many of whom are part of the city's large Chinese community.

The jerseys are expected to be big sellers when they hit the racks at Real Sports Apparel later this month. Known as the authentic store of the Raptors and Leafs, this game-day beacon welcomes fans at Gate 1 of the Air Canada Centre. Run by fans for fans, Real Sports Apparel has the largest selection of exclusive merchandise on the planet, in store and online at [shop.realsports.ca](http://shop.realsports.ca).

"It's like double happiness to be able to watch a Raptors game and celebrate Chinese New Year at the same time," says Dr. Ming-Tat Cheung, chairman and president of the Chinese Cultural Centre of Greater Toronto. "I think the jerseys will be very popular for all Raptors fans."

The Raptors are one of three teams, alongside Golden State and Sacramento, selected by the NBA to commemorate Chinese New Year with their uniforms. "That's pretty cool," says Cheung. "It fits well in the multicultural city of Toronto."

Cheung and his family — including his sons, daughters and grandchildren — are diehard fans of the Raptors. They've been following the team since its inception in 1995 and have seen the evolution of the Raps' uniforms. He commends the team, and their collaborators — NBA China — on the Chinese New Year uniform's design. "It looks beautiful," he says. "The designers did well to include the dragon symbol, the most common symbol of power in Chinese tradition. It also works because in Chinese, 'raptor' and 'dragon' are similarly powerful creatures. They could be in the same family."

The Raptors, says Cheung, have succeeded in connecting with their fans and inspiring young people in the city's Chinese community. "Their interest in the Raptors has grown exponentially year after year," he says. "And there are now many junior and senior teams in the Chinese community."

The new gear, plus a replica 70th-anniversary Toronto Huskies jersey, brings the Raptors' uniforms to six, including white for home games, red or black for the road, and the popular gold-trimmed home jerseys inspired by team ambassador Drake's OVO label.

As for his favourite team's chances this year, Cheung predicts they will come out on top of the division again and have another chance to battle the Cavaliers in the eastern conference finals. "I hope the Year of the Rooster will change the outcome this year," he says. And, just maybe, the new gear will help. "The colour red is used to celebrate festivities such as Chinese New Year, weddings, birthdays and more. It's a sign of happiness," he says. Like the kind of happiness that follows a championship?

The Raps' Chinese New Year jerseys launch at [Real Sports Apparel](http://Real Sports Apparel) in-store and online on January 7. The team will wear them on the court at the Air Canada Centre for Chinese New Year Nights, January 29 and 31.

