



Microbial painting for celebrating the Chinese New Year

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Received: 24 January 2019; Accepted: 24 January 2019; Published: 26 January 2019.

doi: 10.21037/jecm.2019.01.07

View this article at: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21037/jecm.2019.01.07>

Chinese New Year, which is also known as Spring Festival, is the grandest festival in China, with a 7-day long holiday. As the most colorful annual event, the traditional celebration lasts about two weeks, and the climax arrives until the Lunar New Year's Evening comes around. Massive banquets, red lanterns and loud fireworks are essential elements of the festival. Different from the universal New Year celebrated on January 1st, Chinese New Year is never on a fixed date. In 2019, this festival falls on February 5th. It is the Year of pig according to the Chinese zodiac, which features a 12-year cycle with each year represented by a specific animal. Having a reunion dinner, eating dumplings, exchanging red envelopes, setting off firecrackers and pasting Spring Festival couplets are the top 5 Chinese New

Year activities which represent "Chinese characteristics".

The colorful world of microbes is really gorgeous and amazing. If you don't think microorganism are beautiful, think again. Microbe masterpieces are always exhibited in the Agar Art Contest of American Society for Microbiology every year. What do the painting "eating dumplings, setting off firecrackers and pasting Spring Festival couplets" have in common? Perhaps not much, but all of these images can be re-created by growing colorful microbes in agar or envisioning the pictures from microscope. During the Spring Festival approaching, our microbiologists proudly display our culture and heritage of Chinese New Year by microbial painting and wish everyone a happy new year (*Figures 1,2*).

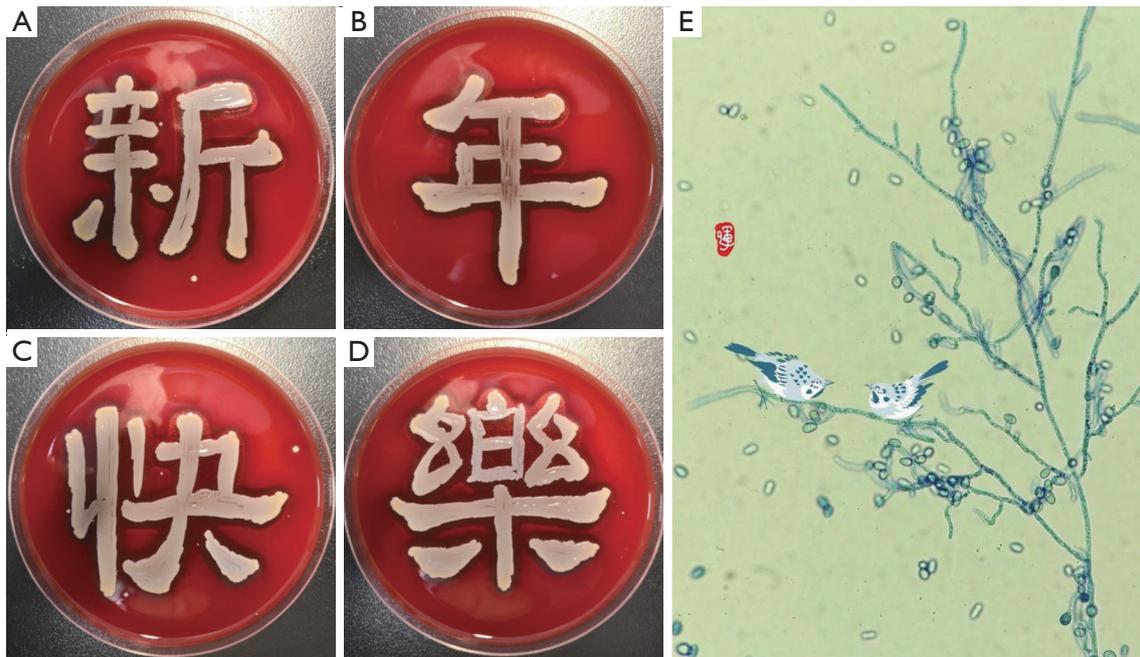


Figure 1 New year paintings. (A,B,C,D) “Happy new year” written in Chinese (*Staphylococcus aureus* in blood agar plate, 37 °C, 20 h); (E) happiness has been quietly approaching. (*Scedosporium apiospermum*, lactate gossypol blue staining, 400×).

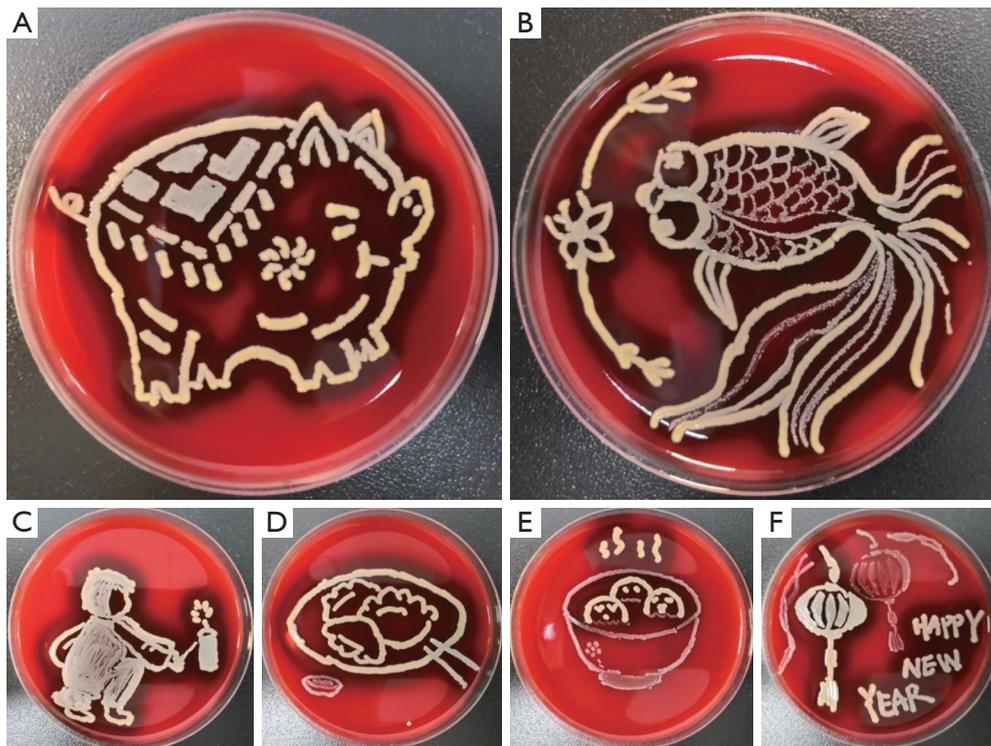


Figure 2 Characteristics of the Chinese New Year. (A) The year of pig; (B) koi which represents abundance; (C) setting off firecrackers; (D) boiled dumplings; (E) dumpling balls; (F) red lanterns with “Happy New Year” (*Staphylococcus aureus* and *Enterococcus faecalis* in blood agar plate, 37 °C, 20 h).

Acknowledgements

Funding: This work was supported by the Scientific Research Project of Shanghai Municipal Health Bureau (201840006).

Footnote

Conflicts of Interest: The authors have no conflicts of interest to declare.

doi: 10.21037/jeccm.2019.01.07

Cite this article as: Xu C, Li S, Wu X, Zhou M, Zhu C, Zhang Z, Yu Y. Microbial painting for celebrating the Chinese New Year. *J Emerg Crit Care Med* 2019;3:7.