

Winter celebrations: Diwali

Many holidays and festivals are celebrated in London by different communities. Take a quick look at Diwali then try an activity inspired by this winter celebration.



Diwali is a Festival of Light celebrated by the Hindu, Jain and Sikh communities. This celebration lasts for five days and usually takes place in October or November. It takes place on the darkest night after the end of the harvest. Some people also celebrate it as the start of the New Year.

Did you know that the largest Hindu temple outside of India is in London! The Shri Swaminarayan Temple is in Neasden, West London.

Nearly half of all Hindus living in the UK live in London.



A statue of the god Ganesh found in the Thames.



To prepare for Diwali, people clean and decorate their homes with oil lamps called divas. Oil lamps like divas have been used for thousands of years. Roman oil lamps have been found all over Londinium, the Roman city where London now stands.

The light from the divas guides the goddess Lakshmi to homes where she is welcome during this festival.

Colourful designs called rangolis are also placed near front doors to welcome people. Like the diva lamps, these designs also welcome the goddess Lakshmi.

Mithai

During Diwali, people wear their best clothes, give gifts and eat sweets called *mithai* with their families.

What are your favourite holiday treats?

In India, sugar has been made into sweets for over 2500 years. Diwali sweets are made with ingredients like cardamom, cashews, coconut, mango, condensed milk, rose water and even gold foil that you can eat!

There are many different types of *mithai*. Some include:

Barfi which is made with condensed milk and sugar. The name comes from the Persian word for snow.

Jalebi which is a batter that is deep fried in circles or spirals and then soaked in sugar syrup.

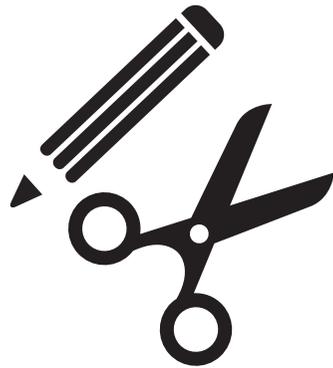
Kulfi which is a frozen treat made with condensed milk, sugar as well as fruit or nuts.

Can you discover more about other types of *mithai*?

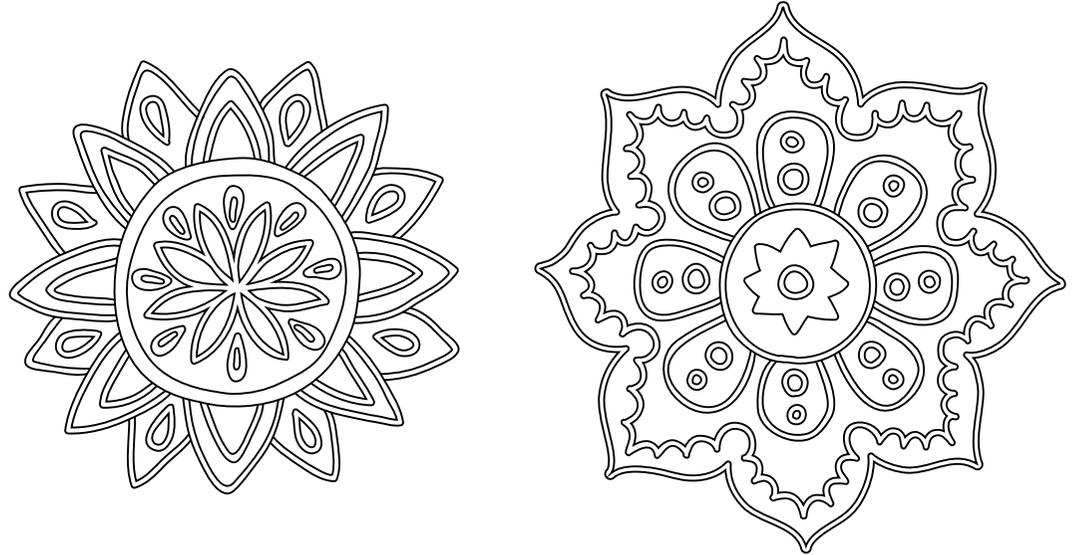
Try at home

Rangoli is an art pattern from countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bhutan, and the Maldives. These patterns are made on the floor or the ground using materials like coloured rice, sand or flower petals. They are always brightly coloured and can be passed down from parents to children.

Design your own *rangoli* pattern. You can include symbols like flowers, leaves, fruit, fish, and birds like swans and peacocks. Add shapes like circles, triangles and diamonds too.



Here is a design to help inspire you create your own.



Colour in your pattern or add pieces of coloured paper, foil, sequins, petals, pasta, glitter or anything else you have.

Just remember to make your rangoli bright to bring you good luck!