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***NEWS***

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **THE YEAR OF THE OX STARTS WITH A BANG AS PANDA EXPRESS LAUNCHES FIRECRACKER CHICKEN**

**ROSEMEAD, Calif.** – Panda Express shares the history, good fortune and delicious dining traditions of Chinese New Year and kicks off the 2009 holiday by bringing back a special menu item for a limited time only - spicy Firecracker Chicken. The Chinese New Year entrée features strips of marinated chicken breast, crisp red, green and yellow bell peppers, succulent sliced onions and red chili peppers all cooked to perfection in a wok with Panda's original zesty firecracker sauce.

Firecracker Chicken will be available in all Panda Express locations nationwide from Jan. 21 – Feb. 24, and will be on the restaurant's catering menu for hosting Chinese New Year festivities. The Year of the Ox, a 15-day-long celebration following the Chinese lunar calendar will begin on Jan. 26 and end on Feb. 9.

"Chinese New Year is a 15-day celebration that begins with a New Year's Eve feast in which the ingredients carry special symbolic meaning," explains Executive Chef Andy Kao. "Firecracker Chicken is created with chicken because it represents prosperity and happiness while firecrackers are a traditional part of New Year's celebrations. According to Chinese folklore, Nian, a man-eating beast came into towns in search of people to feast upon. People used bright red decorations and firecrackers to scare Nian away to have a safe new year."

**-more-**

## **Chinese New Year 2009**

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Highly skilled Panda Express chefs will demonstrate “wokking,” the ancient Chinese art of wok cooking, teach chopsticks mastering and share Chinese culture and New Year’s traditions to television outlets across the nation. Viewers will learn how to take part in the festivities and make Firecracker Chicken at home.

Panda Express will implement a nationwide elementary school program for grades second through fourth with a lesson curriculum designed to teach children about the rich cultural history and modern customs surrounding Chinese New Year. Lesson plans will include: Visiting the Village Market Activity, Year of the Ox Fact Sheet, Tangram (7-piece puzzle) Activity, Lai See (or monetary gift in a red envelope) Fact Sheet and other free goodies from Panda Express.

### **About Panda Restaurant Group (PRG)**

Founded 35 years ago, by Andrew and Peggy Cherng, Panda Restaurant Group ([www.pandarg.com](http://www.pandarg.com)) has more than 1,100 locations in 36 states and remains privately-held, as the world’s leader in Asian restaurants. The successful chain of concepts includes Panda Express, Panda Inn and Hibachi-San. Placing an emphasis on philanthropy, Panda Restaurant Group has donated over \$1.5 million to charitable efforts in 2008.

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