

# ARTICLE 1

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On Saturday, August 23rd, over 300 people lined up outside Smithsonian's National Zoo in Washington D.C., to participate in the first birthday celebration of one of its cutest and most precious residents - America's favourite giant panda cub, Bao Bao.

While first birthdays are always special, this one was even more so, given that only one other giant panda born at the National Zoo, Bao Bao's brother Tai Shan, has survived to celebrate this all-important milestone. Both, are offspring of Mei Xiang and Tian Tian - giant pandas on loan from China as part of the conservation effort to revive the dwindling population of these beautiful animals. The zoo's first panda couple, Ling-Ling and Hsing-Hsing that were a gift from the government of China, bore five cubs. Unfortunately, all of them perished within a few days!

It was therefore no wonder that the zookeepers went all out to celebrate the momentous occasion. In keeping with ancient Chinese tradition, the party commenced with the young panda being offered a choice of three honey-dipped bamboo shoots. Next to each, was a colourful hand-painted poster labeled 'Long Life,' 'Good Health' and 'Many Cubs'. Given that the panda's first choice is believed to predict its future, it was fortunate that Bao Bao immediately gravitated to the 'Long Life' bamboo.

Of course, bamboo sticks were not the only treats in store for this cutie-pie whose name means 'precious' or 'treasure'. The zoo's nutrition department had also made a delectable cake that was crafted from frozen diluted apple juice and dyed various shades of pink, with beet juice. Frozen in between, were slices of Bao Bao's favourite fruits - apples and pears. The giant panda was not the only one to receive treats. The visitors also got to enjoy a special chocolate and vanilla cake.

Bao Bao reportedly had a wonderful day celebrating his first birthday and the zoo is hoping there will be many more to come.