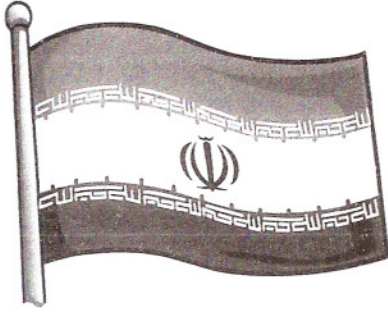


# Iran



Iran is one of the largest countries in the Middle East. Its total land area is more than 630,000 square miles (1.6 million km). Until 1935, it was known as Persia. Persia established a mighty empire in ancient times, and it once posed a threat to Greece. Persia's great empire ended when it was conquered by Alexander the Great in 33 B.C.

In modern times, Iran was a constitutional monarchy ruled by a *shah*. In 1979, however, a revolution removed the shah from power and established an Islamic Republic. This meant that the nation was governed according to strict Muslim laws. Since the revolution, the head of state is the *ayatollah*, the supreme religious leader. Beneath him is a president who is elected to a four-year term. The president appoints members of the cabinet. There is a national legislature called the National Assembly.

Iran's economy is based on oil. The country also exports such products as carpets, nuts, fruits, and iron and steel, but oil is its principal resource. Although personal incomes are low, Iran is not a poor country. Its standard of living is higher than many other countries of the Middle East.

Iranians celebrate many festivals and holidays. One of these is *Now Ruz*, the Iranian new year. It begins on the first day of spring each year, which is usually March 21. It marks the end of winter and it is a joyful time when people look forward to a new year of prosperity and good fortune. Just as we decorate a Christmas tree before Christmas and the new year, Iranians prepare a table covered with seven dishes they hope will make the new year a happy one for all concerned. This is the ritual of *haft seen*. Haft means "seven" and seen is the letter corresponding to our "s." The seven dishes beginning with "s" represent rebirth, health, happiness, prosperity, joy, patience, and beauty.



## Project #1

Think about the foods in a haft seen ceremony.

### Materials

- pencil
- paper

### Directions

1. Think of a food that, in your mind, might represent each of the seven qualities previously mentioned. Try to think of dishes that begin with the letter "s."
2. Work together with a partner to come up with ideas.
3. Share your list with your classmates.

