



Name _____

New Year's Traditions

Every family, region and country has its own New Year's tradition. The New Year is a time for fresh starts and beginnings. In the United States, some common traditions include fireworks at midnight on New Year's Eve, and the dropping of the ball in Time Square in New York City. Some families eat pork and cabbage for dinner on New Year's Day. Following are some traditions with which you may not be familiar.

Bear dance in Romania

Romanians usher in the new year by wearing brightly colored costumes or animal furs to ward off evil. This year was no different as Romanian dancers performed the "bear" dance, a ritual for good luck in the New Year, during a traditional parade in Comanesti. In pre-Christian rural traditions, dancers used to tour from house to house in villages while singing and dancing to ward off evil.

Night in the Cemetery in Chile

Thousands of Chileans spend the New Year in the company of their loved ones (be it deceased or alive) ... at the cemetery! Although many foreigners find this tradition too ghoulish and brings bad luck, it is seen as a wonderful, happy way for families to get together and preserve the memory of loved ones who have gone to a better place.

Possum drop in North Carolina

Every Dec. 31 in Brasstown, N.C. a possum is captured and lowered in a cage to ring in the New Year, aka the "Possum Drop." This year's unusual tradition was in jeopardy after a PETA lawyer argued in court that the lights, noise and crowd of people can wreck a possum's nerves and health. However, a judge ruled Monday that the annual New Year's Eve show can go on.

Pickle drop in Pennsylvania

He draws smaller crowds than the ball in Times Square does, but Mr. Pickle is a New Year's Eve star in his own right. Each year, thousands of people gather in Dillsburg, Pa. to watch the lighted 3-foot-tall, papier-mache pickle drop from a 45-foot flagpole into - you guessed it - a pickle tank to mark the start of the new year.

“Reading” the lead in Germany and Austria

Much like reading the future in tealeaves or cigarette ashes, Germans and Austrians try to divine their future for the new year by pouring molten lead into a bowl of water. The lead is melted in a spoon held over a flame. As the lead cools in the water, it is said that the figure that forms will predict what will come in the new year. For example, a bee would predict marriage, while a ball would signify luck rolling your way. There is a great list of meanings on Mrshea.com.

Peach drop in Atlanta

In Atlanta, an 800-pound fiberglass peach is dropped from the top of a 138-foot tower of lights in what has been billed as the Southeast's largest New Year's Eve celebration. The celebration, staged by Underground Atlanta, is a 16-hour affair, starting at noon with children's activities and culminating with fireworks after the peach drop.

Carp drop in Wisconsin

The carp drop in Prairie du Chien, Wis., attracts people from afar, creating business for motels and shops. The carp is a real - but dead - fish weighing between 25 and 30 pounds and caught locally. It's frozen, then partially thawed and prepared for the big day. Nicknamed "Lucky," the carp is lowered onto a throne as the new year arrives. Fireworks follow, courtesy of the Chamber of Commerce.

Animal Costumes in Japan

On New Year, the Japanese wear a costume that represents the forthcoming year's zodiac animal (horse in the case of 2014).

Leaping off chairs and Smashing dishes on neighbor's door in Denmark

Some Danes celebrate New Year's by leaping off chairs at midnight, literally "jumping into the new year." Jumping off furniture is believed to bring good luck in the year to come and chase away bad luck. In another unusual New Year's ritual, some Danes also smash plates against their friends' and neighbors' front door at the stroke of midnight. Breaking plates is meant to symbolize good luck. In a kind of neighborhood popularity contest, the family with the most broken china piled on their front door can boast having the most friends.

12 lucky grapes in Spain

In Spain, revelers clutch a dozen green grapes and when the clock strikes midnight, they eat one grape for each bell toll (each chime not only symbolizes the hour, but also each month of the year). Eat all 12 by the clock's last toll and you will have good luck for the rest of the year.

Banging bread on the walls in Ireland

Many cultures believe that making a lot of noise at the stroke of midnight scares away evil spirits and bad luck. An unusual way to ring in the New Year is the Irish tradition of banging Christmas bread on the walls and doors of the family house at midnight. The banging is said to frighten away bad spirits and bring good luck into the house. The bread is said to bring abundance and ensure that the households has plenty of bread and food during the coming year.

Circles and all things round in the Philippines

In the Philippines, circles are invoked in clothes and food during New Year's celebrations. Circles are meant to represent the roundness of coins, wealth, and prosperity. People wear clothing with circular patterns and polka dots at the stroke of midnight to bring affluence into their lives in the year to come. Special circular foods are also prepared for New Year's celebrations, and many walk around their house at the stroke of midnight. Coins are jingled and strewn around the house as everyone makes a lot of noise to scare away evil spirits. Finally, many turn on all of their house lights to signify a bright new year.

Mistletoe under pillow in Ireland

Mistletoe is used after the Christmas holiday in another great Irish tradition. According to custom, an unmarried woman puts a bit of mistletoe under her pillow before going to bed on New Year's Eve. This was said to bring true love and marriage in the new year. Some also believe that sleeping with mistletoe under your pillow on New Year's Eve helps to get rid of bad luck.

A suitcase around the block in Mexico, Colombia

Hungry for a little adventure? In Colombia, Mexico, and other Latin American countries, many believe that if they carry a suitcase around the block at the stroke of midnight, they will travel and have adventures during the next year. This is hilarious to see. Some families do it together, and it is also popular with lovers and newlyweds. Fortunately, the suitcases do not need to be packed and you can get away with racing around the block with empty luggage in tow.

"First footing" in Northern England, Ireland, Scotland

According to the tradition of "first footing," the first person to cross a family's threshold in the new year determines the family's luck for the year to come. If a tall, dark and handsome man walks through the door, the family will have luck throughout the new year; in many places, if a red-haired woman or girl enter first the family will have grief to look forward to. A blond will bring bad luck and a female "first footer" spells disaster. An additional rule warns that the first-footer should not be cross-eyed or have a unibrow. To bring good luck through first footing in Worcestershire, the first caroler is stopped and led through the house. While a family member can be the first-foot, they must be out of the house at the stroke of midnight.

Listening to Animals Talk in Romania

Particularly popular with farmers, this custom involves trying to hear animals speaking. If they succeed, it's a bad omen; if they fail, it's good luck.

Games of skill to find a mate in Belarus

Unmarried women in Belarus participate in several games during New Year's Eve to predict which one will get married first and who will marry during the new year. For example, some women hide different items around their houses while the other participants search. The woman who finds a ring will marry a handsome man; the woman who finds bread will marry a rich man. In another game, piles of corn are placed in front of each unmarried woman. A rooster is brought in and released. The first woman approached by the rooster will be the first to marry in the new year.

Vasilopita in Greece

Vasilópita is a Greek cake made on New Year's Eve to bless the household and bring luck in the new year. It is associated with the St. Basil's day (January 1). The cake is baked with a coin or other small object in the dough. After cutting the sign of the cross on the center of the cake with a knife, it is then sliced and distributed among family members and friends at midnight. The cake is distributed according to age, the oldest first. The family member who finds the coin in their slice is predicted to have luck throughout the coming year.

Waltzing in Austria

Austrians waltz into the New Year. In Austria, it has become a tradition that all radio and television stations operated by ORF ("Austrian Broadcasting") air the sound of the bells at St. Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna striking midnight. The bells are immediately followed by "The Blue Danube" by Johann Strauss II. Austrians at parties, in their homes, and on the streets welcome the new year with a collective waltz.

Other Customs and Traditions

America

Most American's are familiar with the kiss at midnight on New Years. The reason behind the midnight kiss is to bring good luck to the relationship for the next year. If you do not kiss the one you love at midnight, superstition says your upcoming year will lack affection.

Many people follow traditions of prosperity for the New Year. Pork is a lucky food for New Year's day because pigs root forward when they eat. On the other hand, eating poultry brings poverty, suggesting the diner will have to scratch in the dirt like chicken for money all year. Southerners believe eating black-eyed peas on New Year's Day brings fortune, while others believe lentil soup is lucky. A full pantry on New Year's Day invites prosperity, while carrying debt into the New Year means poverty.

There are contradictory beliefs about work. On the one hand, it is lucky to accomplish something related to your career on New Year's Day, to set the stage for the rest of the year. On the other hand, too much work on the first of the year is unlucky. Washing, including dishes or clothes, could lead to the death of a family member in the new year.

Nothing is to leave the house on New Year's Day, according to some traditions. People can come and go, but possessions cannot leave the house. Even garbage must remain inside until the second day of the year. An adjustment to this tradition is allowing things to leave the house only when another item comes into the house.

Some families list regrets from the previous year and burn them at midnight to erase them forever. They also write wishes for the next year on a piece of paper and "plant" them in the ground so they will grow.

Other Countries/Regions

Every family, region and country has its own tradition. Brazilians often wear blue skirts and white blouses and launch a boat laden with flowers to celebrate the goddess of water; Buddhists squirt water on each other as ceremonial cleansing; Dutch burn Christmas trees to drive out spirits of the old year; South Africans ring bells and fire guns; in Taiwan, they thank ancestors for blessings and protection.

Directions:

1. Choose one of the traditions we've learned about that really interested you, and draw and color a picture to illustrate it. Do not use any words. Communicate information about the tradition nonverbally through your pictures. Be sure to use good detail.
2. At the bottom of the page, verbally explain the tradition.



Name of tradition: _____

Country where the tradition is celebrated: _____

What people hope to get from doing the tradition: _____

Describe the tradition (grammatically correct sentence): _____

What I find interesting about it: _____
