

How to Get Lucky on New Years

BY LAURA ZAVELSON

What are your New Year's traditions? If you are American, odds are you celebrate the countdown with the dropping of the ball in Times Square, toast your friends with champagne at midnight and cap the whole thing off by singing Auld Lang Syne. That kiss you share at midnight is actually derived from masked balls of yore. The masks supposedly symbolize evil spirits from the old year and the kiss is purification into the new year.

But who wants to be pure? I want to be lucky! And I'm pretty sure we could all use a little extra good fortune this year. So I scoured the globe—ok, the internet—to find some New Year's traditions that will help us all stack the deck a little bit for 2009.

The Spanish tradition is to eat 12 grapes in time with the twelve chimes of the clock at midnight—one for luck each month of the year. To follow the Peruvians, you'll need to add a 13th grape to the procession to lock it up. But, heck, if you've already stuffed 12 grapes in there, what's one more? Additionally, several Latin cultures say that wearing red underwear will bring good luck, but the source was unclear whether that one is for men, women or both. I'd go ahead and deck everyone

out just to be sure.

In Scotland, luck comes if the first visitor to your home after midnight is a tall handsome man with dark hair bearing gifts. Frankly, I fail to see how that would be unlucky at any time of year.

I have some friends from the south who put a coin in the Hoppin' John. Merely eating it is said to bring luck and whoever gets the coin is supposedly even luckier. This hiding the money in food thing must have some merit, providing the winner doesn't choke, as the Greeks share a traditional sweet bread with a



coin baked inside. The bread is sliced at midnight and whoever gets the coin is believed to have good luck for the year.

In Italy, it's all about the food of course. Eating lentils in combination with sausage (zampone) is believed to bring good fortune as is eating a sweet bread like panetonne. If you can wait until January 6 for your luck, the Italians serve a large cake with a

bean inside. Whoever gets the bean, gets the good fortune. If you ask me, I'd rather have the cash.

For whatever reason, front doors seem to come into play when seeking luck. To

follow the Welsh tradition, open and shut the back door at the first stroke of midnight, locking out the bad luck and then open the front door on the last stroke of midnight to welcome the new year, with all its good luck, inside. In addition, consider painting that front door red like the Chinese do, red being a symbol of good luck and happiness. And as long as you're out there, why not hang up some bamboo sticks? The Japanese believe they are symbols of growth and prosperity.

Of course, if you're going to follow through with all of the Japanese rituals you're going to have to thoroughly clean your house prior to New Year's Eve to get rid of all the evil spirits. Then at sunrise, you'll need to consume a traditional meal of vegetables, seafood and dessert—all served in one dish. The different types of food symbolize prosperity. Uh, I think I'll just stick with the bamboo.

So there you have it. Pick one or try them all. Personally, I'll be standing at my open red door at midnight with my mouth full of grapes waiting for a tall dark-haired man wearing red underwear. This may be shaping up to be the best New Year's Eve yet! ■

Hang Your Stockings with us this Season.

- December 1st-5th, 3pm-5pm
Gingerbread House Contest
- Saturday, December 6th, 8pm
Nutcracker Pre Theater Dinner
- Sunday, December 7th, 2pm
Nutcracker Pre Theater Brunch
- Thursday, December 11th, 5:30pm-7:30pm
Italian Wine Tasting with Il Palio Sommelier Susannah Smith
- Friday, December 19th, 3pm-4pm
Storytime with Santa Sponsored by *southern* NEIGHBOR
- Monday, December 22nd-Monday, December 29th, 5:30pm-10pm
8 Days of Hanukkah Dinner Specials
- Monday, December 22nd-Tuesday, December 23rd, 10:00am-2:00pm
Shop and Drop Kids Camp
- Wednesday, December 31st
Roaring 20s New year's Eve Celebration



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