

Old Traditions for a New Year

- Morgan Hardwick

People of all culture and creed celebrate New Years Eve all over the world. From eating and drinking with friends to observing time-honored traditions, everyone celebrates the ending of one year and arrival of another. It may be the excitement of counting down the last ten seconds until midnight or making irrational resolutions too difficult to keep, but New Years is exhilarating like no other holiday.

According to record, the Babylonians were the first to celebrate New Years around 4,000 years ago. Differing from today though, the Babylonians had their New Year on a day late in March or April, following the first new moon after the vernal equinox. Once that day hit, the Babylonians had a massive celebration, much like we do today.

All around the world fireworks are going off and songs are sung to welcome the New Year. The tradition of making resolutions can even be tracked back to the Babylonians, who made promises to earn the favor of their gods and start the New Year off well. Although nowadays New Years Eve isn't as religious as the Babylonians celebrated it, the enthusiasm of festivities is still there and thriving.

In the United States we celebrate with one of the most iconic new years traditions, the dropping of the ball in Times Square. Millions of people around the world tune in to watch the 12,000 pound ball drop at the stroke of midnight. The tradition has taken place almost every year since 1907 and just as the scope of celebration has grow so has the size of the ball; initially 700 pounds, it's packed on 500 over the past 100 years. Up until recently, Dick Clark hosted the televised showing of New Years Eve in New York City. He became just as iconic to the holiday as the celebrations were. For 39 years, Dick Clark's New Years Rockin' Eve has been presenting the famous ball drop and showing of live musical performances from some of the year's best artists.

The excitement and thrill of New Years isn't in just New York; countries all around the world have their own traditions for the annual holiday. In Spain and other Spanish speaking countries, when midnight hits, people down twelve grapes to symbolize their hopes for a good year ahead. Food plays a big role in the holiday, representing the hope for wealth and prosperity. In Cuba, Austria, Hungary, Portugal and other countries, pork is featured as a meal for many families, because in their cultures pigs signify progress and prosperity. Legumes resemble coins and future financial success, and are eaten throughout the night. Dessert wise, circle cakes are eaten to round off the night in the Netherlands, Mexico and Greece. My personal favorite tradition is Scandinavian; an almond is hidden in one of many rice pudding cups served during the meal, and it is said that whoever finds the nut is granted with twelve months of good fortune.

New Years Eve is a joyous time all over the world, celebrated by so many different people. It's one of my personal favorite holidays as well. On behalf of everyone at Headlight, I wish all our readers another healthy and happy year!

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