New Year Celebrations Around the World

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Photo Sources: Canva Stock, TIME, Smithsonian, Child Nutrition Recipe Box

Around the world, New Year celebrations involve traditions around local foods, history, and cultural artifacts, ideas, experiences, and beliefs. Many of these annual traditions are rooted in overcoming adversity, healing trauma, and celebrating resilience.

In Haiti, each new year is celebrated with **soup joumou** (*pumpkin* in Haitian Creole). Originally, **this pumpkin soup** was seen as **a status symbol for the French colonists in Haiti**, while enslaved Haitians were banned from eating it as a way of control and dehumanization. Eventually, enslaved Haitians revolted against the French and 13 years later, **Haitians declared freedom** on January 1, 1804, making **Haiti the world's first free Black republic**. Soup joumou on New Year's Day became **a tradition to honor and celebrate Haitian freedom**.

In the United States, **black-eyed peas**, **Hoppin' John**, and **collard greens** are traditionally eaten on New Year's Day. Traditionally, Hoppin' John consists of **black-eyed peas**, **rice**, **red peppers**, and **salt pork**, and it is believed to bring **good fortune** to those who eat it. Like many other foods, black-eyed peas were brought to the U.S. in the pockets of **Africans** who were enslaved by European colonists. This food tradition began the night of December 31, 1862, the night the **Emancipation Proclamation** was to take effect at midnight. African Americans who were enslaved gathered for what is still known as **Watch Night**, a night to watch the clock and await freedom. Today, as before, Watch Night practices are rooted in **African American religious traditions and foods** from diverse culinary traditions connected to **West Africa** and **the U.S. South**.

Chinese New Year or Lunar New Year

Food plays an important role in Chinese New Year celebrations, symbolizing **good fortune, wealth**, and **happiness**.

- Dumplings symbolize wealth and prosperity.
- Nian Gao (a sticky rice cake) symbolizes growth, progress, and hope for a better year.
- Fish symbolizes the wish for surplus or wealth.
- Mandarin oranges symbolize wealth and good fortune.

Check out this article to learn more about food traditions for the Lunar New Year.

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Global New Year Traditions

- In **Brazil**, people may go to the beach, wearing white, to jump over seven waves. This practice is part of the tradition of making offerings to Yemanja, an Afro-Brazilian ocean goddess.
- In **Japan**, Buddhist temples will ring bells 108 times on New Year's Eve. Buddhists believe there are 108 types of earthly desires, and ringing the bells removes them.
- In **Greece**, they hang onions for good health.
- Households in **the Philippines** select 12 round fruits, one for each month, as round items symbolize prosperity. They also wear polka dots and fill pockets with coins.

Celebrate by introducing your class to these...

Activities

Check out this **Haitian Heroes Hub** to download free materials, such as coloring pages and activities about the Haitian Revolution.

Books

Check out these culturally relevant and celebratory children's books.

"Shanté Keys and the New Year's Peas" by Gail Pernas-Davenport

"Freedom Soup" by Tami Charles

"Five Black-Eyed Peas" by Jessica Ann Mitchell Aiwuyor

Recipes

Celebrate global foods by serving this North African greens and beans soup to your **childcare center**, **school**, or **family home**.

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