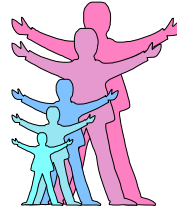


Helpline



**January 2011
 Newsletter**

The History of New Years

Happy New Year

Happy 2011!!

It's Another New Year . . .
 . . .but for what reason?

“Happy New Year!” That greeting will be said and heard for at least the first couple of weeks as a new year gets under way. But the day celebrated as New Year’s Day in modern American was not always January 1.

Ancient New Years

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming.

January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical nor agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary. The

Babylonian new year celebration lasted for eleven days. Each day had its own particular mode of celebration, but it is safe to say that modern New Year’s Eve festivities pale in comparison.

The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.

In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year. But tampering continued until Julius Caesar, in 46 BC, established what has come to be known as the Julian Calendar. It again established January 1 as the new year. But in order to synchronize the calendar with the sun, Caesar had to let the previous year drag on for 445 days.

The Church’s View of New Year Celebrations

Although in the first centuries AD the Romans continued celebrating the new year, the early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism. But as Christianity became more widespread, the early church

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**Kathie Roberts
 4-H Extension Faculty
 Family & Consumer Sciences**

began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and New Year's Day was no different.

During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for over 400 years, only about the past 400 years.

New Year Traditions

Other traditions of the season include the making of New Year's resolutions. That tradition also dates back to the early Babylonians. Popular modern resolutions might include the promise to lose weight or quit smoking. The early Babylonian's most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment.

The tournament of Roses Parade dates back to 1886. In that year, members of the Valley Hunt Club decorated their carriages with flowers. It celebrated the ripening of the orange crop in California.



Although the Rose Bowl football game was first played as a part of the Tournament of Roses in 1902, it was replaced by Roman chariot races the following year. In 1916, the football game returned as the sports centerpiece of the festival.

The tradition of using a baby to signify the new year was begun in Greece around 600 BC. It was their tradition at that time to celebrate their god of wine, Dionysus, by parading a baby in a basket, representing the annual rebirth of that god as the spirit of fertility. Early Egyptians also used a baby as a symbol of rebirth.

Although the early Christians denounced the practice as pagan, the popularity of the baby as a symbol of rebirth forced the Church to reevaluate its position. The Church finally allowed its members to celebrate the new year with a baby, which was to symbolize the birth of the baby Jesus.

The use of an image of a baby with a New Years banner as a symbolic representation of the new year was brought to early America by the Germans. They had used the effigy since the fourteenth century.

For Luck in the New Year

Traditionally, it was thought that one could affect the luck they would have throughout the coming year by what they did or ate on the first day of the year. For that reason, it has become common for folks to celebrate the first few minutes of a brand new year in the company of family and friends. Parties often last into the middle of the night after the ringing in of a new year. It was once believed that the first visitor on New Year's Day would bring either good luck or bad luck the rest of the year. It was particularly lucky if that visitor happened to be a tall dark-haired man.

Traditional New Year foods are also thought to bring luck. Many cultures believe that anything in the shape of a ring is good luck, because it symbolizes "coming full circle," completing a year's cycle. For that reason, the Dutch believe that eating donuts on New Year's Day will bring good fortune.

Many parts of the U.S. celebrate the new year by consuming black-eyed peas. These legumes are typically accompanied by either hog jowls or ham. Black-eyed peas and other legumes have been considered good luck in many cultures. The hog, and thus it's meat, is considered lucky because it symbolizes prosperity. Cabbage is another "good luck" vegetable that is consumed on New Year's Day by many. Cabbage leaves are also considered a sign of prosperity, being representative of paper currency. In some regions, rice is a lucky food that is eaten on New Year's Day.



Auld Lang Syne

The song, "Auld Lang Syne," is sung at the stroke of midnight in almost every English-speaking country in the world to bring in the new year. At least partially written by Robert Burns in the 1700's, it was first published in 1796 after Burn's dath. Early variations of the song were sung prior to 1700 and inspired Burns to produce the modern rendition. An old Scotch tune, "Auld Lang Syne" literally means "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days."

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<http://wilstar.com/holidays/newyear.htm>.

Celebrate Good Health in the New Year with Black-eyed Peas

Many people believe that eating black-eyed peas on New Year's Eve will guarantee prosperity for the coming year. It's thought that each pea represents a gold or silver coin.



The more you eat, the more fortune you'll acquire. We don't know about the monetary value, but we do know that eating lots of black-eyed peas may help bring you lots of good health for the coming year!

They're good for you

Black-eyed peas are full of fiber, packed with protein and low in fat. They are an excellent source of folic acid and a good source of potassium, iron and thiamin. They even pack in a little phosphorus, zinc, niacin and B6.

They're versatile

Black-eyed peas are mild in taste, with a faintly nutty flavor. They can be steamed and served as a side dish, on their own, seasoned with pepper and a little garlic. Try steamed black-eyed peas seasoned with cumin and curry powder and some shredded kale for an Indian-style dish. Black-eyed peas cooked with collard greens and onions is a popular dish in Kenya. Add cooked, cooled black-eyed peas to chicken, turkey, tuna or tofu salads, as well as to macaroni or potato salad. One of the beans in four-bean chili should be the black-eyed pea.

Cooking success tips

Black-eyed peas are available fresh, frozen, dried and canned.

Fresh black-eyed peas are seasonal, usually available in the spring. Look for fresh black-eyed peas in the produce or refrigerated sections of the market. Fresh peas are moist and chewy and can be added to green, pasta or rice salads without cooking. To preserve their refreshing taste and texture, add fresh black-eyed peas to hot dishes, such as steamed rice or soups, about five minutes prior to the end of cooking.

Frozen black-eyed peas need only be steamed or microwaved for about five minutes. There is no need

to thaw them before cooking. Drain them quickly to maintain texture.

Dried black-eyed peas don't have to be soaked before cooking. Just rinse them and cook them slowly with lots of water, no salt needed; it should take only 20-30 minutes. Canned black-eyed peas require minimal heating. Add canned black-eyed peas to hot rice or soup right before serving.

Whichever style of peas you choose, be sure not to overcook them. Plan on serving black-eyed peas immediately after cooking, if possible. That will ensure maximum nutrition, taste and texture.

FYI

Hoppin' John

2 tsp vegetable oil
1 Tbsp minced garlic
1 cup chopped onion
1 lb dried black-eyed peas
1/2 lb diced turkey ham
1 bay leaf
Pinch red pepper flakes
6 cups water
1 cup brown rice
1/2 cup chopped parsley
Black pepper to taste



Directions:

1. Heat oil in Dutch oven or other large pot over medium-high heat. Add onion and garlic and sauté until golden.
2. Add black-eyed peas, diced turkey ham, seasonings and water and bring to boil.
3. Add rice and parsley and return to a boil. Lower heat, cover tightly and simmer until peas and rice are tender, about 30 minutes.
4. Season with pepper to taste and serve hot.

Serves 8. Each serving: 313 calories, 3 g fat, <1 g saturated fat, 8 mg cholesterol, 158 mg sodium, 53 g carbohydrate, 7 g fiber, 18 g protein.

Easy ideas & tips:

- Add black-eyed peas to cold dishes such as tossed salad, salsa, pasta salad and bean salad.
- Add them to hot dishes such as chili, pasta dishes, soups and casseroles to add flavor and texture plus many nutrients to your family meals.

Source: Communicatingfoodforhealth.com, Nancy Berkoff, RD, EdD



Best New Year's Resolution Make Fruits and Veggies a Priority

This year just do it - make a commitment to eat more fruits and veggies. The evidence continues to mount on the numerous health benefits of produce. The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition recently reported findings that higher fruit and vegetable intake reduced risk of cardiovascular disease, stroke and enhanced bone health. Regular fruit and veggie eaters were also less likely to be obese, according to another study in the American Journal of Clinical Nutrition. Among 7,356 adults - those who ate produce daily (4.5 cups) were less likely to be obese (BMI less than 30), even if their diets were higher in fat. That's good news - you can keep your heart healthy, bones strong and waist line smaller by eating enough fruits and veggies.

Remember, vegetables are more than just French fries, corn and peas - as the Centers for Disease Control found that to be 40 percent of the vegetables on the average American's plate.

New Year's Reminders to Getting More Fruits and Veggies:

- Tape **pictures of colorful fruits and vegetables** to your bathroom mirror;
- **Add a new fruit and vegetable** into your meal plan every day this week;
- Place a **fruit bowl** on your counter in arms reach;
- Arrange **vegetables and fruits front and center in the refrigerator**; consider making the deli drawer into the fruit drawer;
- Keep a **food log for only fruits and vegetables**. At the end of each day tally up your totals and marvel at your daily progress;

- **Order a green, orange or yellow vegetable in place of starch when dining out**;
- **Liven up salads** with red peppers, orange slices, yellow zucchini or red kidney beans;
- Add **cut-up fruits** to a morning smoothie;
- **Stir-fry** green, yellow and red vegetables for a nutritious lunch or dinner;
- Keep a **'produce' notebook or shopping list** with you to record new fruits and vegetables that you want to try.

How much do you need?

Most people need about 2 cups of fruit and 2.5 cups of vegetables each day. That is a total of 4.5 cups or about 1.5 cups per meal period. The federal dietary guidelines individualize produce recommendations based on age and daily activity level. Figure out your own produce needs today. Go to www.mypyramid.gov and start the New Year off the right way!

Variety

Did you know that there are 5 categories of vegetables? They include:

1. Leafy Greens
2. Orange/Yellow
3. Dry beans and peas
4. Starchy vegetables
5. Other vegetables



Try to work on getting a variety of these vegetables each week. Start your shopping in the produce section and plan your meals around seasonal produce and bargains. For example, if you see a great deal on broccoli, buy a big bunch and use it to stuff baked potatoes or to put in a stir fry dish or salad.

Source: Communicating for health.com, Victoria Shanta Reteln, RD, LD

Time to Start Saving For the Future!!

Now that the holiday season is over, it's time to get serious about getting your financial house in order. Every year millions of people promise to get their financial lives turned around and pointed in the right direction. But somehow never get going in

the right direction. Here are a few suggestions for getting your personal house of finance in order.

1. **Establish a Strong Savings Habit.**

Begin with an amount that you know you can live with - say, \$25 a week. Promise yourself that you will save that much every Friday.

2. **Make Sure You Are Part of A Retirement Plan.**

If you are not participating in a company-sponsored retirement plan, be sure to start a formal retirement plan by investing in an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). However, if your company has a 401(K) retirement plan or a Keough retirement plan, be sure to contribute up to the amount of the company match.

3. **Watch Your Bank Withdrawals.**

You must be very careful about how much you withdraw from your ATM account and/or savings account. Decide how much money you will take out each week and make it last. Make it a little tight.



And try to decrease that amount over time if possible.

4. **Pay Off All Credit Cards and Other Existing Loans.**

Make a list of all the credit cards you have, beginning with the one with the highest rate. Cut up all of them except the two with the lowest rates. Begin paying extra every month on the card with the highest rate. When it's paid off, move to the card with the next-highest rate. When you're finished, start adding \$50 a month to your savings account. By paying down debt, you get a return on whatever the interest rate happens to be. Pay off your car loan. The interest is not deductible. If you pay it off you will save money.

5. **Pay a Little More On Your Mortgage.**

You will add equity to your home, giving you extra flexibility when you decide to move or refinance.

You don't have to commit to paying a specific amount. Just roundup your payment to the nearest hundred.

6. **Evaluate Your Life Insurance Policies.**

If you've had the same life insurance policy for a long period of time - say, five years or more - you can probably cut your premium by updating or changing policies.



7. **Know Where Your Money Is Going.**

Keep a little notebook with you to record your small cash purchases. If you know where your money is going you'll spend less and be able to save more.

Remember, January is the perfect time to get your financial year off to a solid start, particularly if you put it in writing. The key is to develop a written plan that you can use over the course of the new year for your short-term goals and some longer-term goals.

Keeping Good Records Reduces Stress at Tax Time

You may not be thinking about your tax return right now, but January is a great time to start planning for April 15, and to make sure your records are organized. Maintaining good records now can make filling your return a lot easier and it will help you remember transactions you made during the year.



Here are a few things the IRS wants you to know about recordkeeping.

Keeping well-organized records also ensures you can answer questions if your return is selected for examination or prepare a response if you receive an IRS notice. In most cases, the IRS does not require you to keep records in any special manner. Generally speaking, you should keep any and all documents that may have an impact on your federal tax return.

Individual taxpayers should usually keep the following records supporting items on their tax returns for at least three years:

- Bills
- Credit card and other receipts
- Invoices
- Mileage logs
- Canceled, imaged or substitute checks or any other proof of payment
- Any other records to support deductions or credits you claim on your return

You should normally keep records relating to property until at least three years after you sell or otherwise dispose of the property. Examples include:

- A home purchase or improvement
- Stocks and other investments
- Individual Retirement Arrangement transactions
- Rental property records

If you are a small business owner, you must keep all your employment tax records for at least four years after the tax becomes due or is paid, whichever is later. Examples of important documents business owners should keep include:

- Gross receipts: Cash register tapes, bank deposit slips, receipt books, invoices, credit card charge slips and Forms 1099-MISC
- Proof of purchases: Canceled checks, cash register tape receipts, credit card sales slips and invoices
- Expense documents: Canceled checks, cash register tapes, account statements, credit card sales slips, invoices and petty cash slips for small cash payments
- Documents to verify your assets: Purchase and sales invoices, real estate closing statements and canceled checks

For more information about recordkeeping, check out IRS Publications 552, Recordkeeping for Individuals, 583, Starting a Business and Keeping Records, and Publication 463, Travel, Entertainment, Gift, and Car Expenses. These publications are available at IRS.gov or by calling 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

Favorite Ways to Celebrate 2011

Forecasting the Future



For the last 12 years, the Kipf family of Oklahoma City has made gazing into a figurative crystal ball a central part of their New Year's Eve festivities. Together, all five kids, now ages 14 to 20, decorate a cardboard box with markers, glued-on photos, and stickers. Then each family member comes up with one question about the next 12 months--a great way to get the whole clan thinking about the year ahead, says mom Sharon. Some past ones have included:

- How many A's will Traci get on her report card?
- Which child will change the most this year, and how?
- What will be the top news story of the year?

Once the topics are set, everyone writes down one prediction for each of the questions--keeping his or her answers secret from everyone else--and ceremoniously deposits the list into the box. When the last one drops in, they tape or tie it shut.

Then it's time for the second part of the celebration: breaking open last year's box. The group takes turns reading the prognostications aloud. "Some are just plain ridiculous, in hindsight, and others have absolutely come true. Either way, it really gets us laughing and reminiscing."

Annual Albums



Creating a family journal is a great way to capture everyone's most memorable moments and ensure they're never forgotten. All family members can design a page for the album on 8 1/2- by 11-inch paper. Even the babies can get involved, which usually means a traced hand or colorful scribbling. Adults can feature things such as poems, song lyrics, photos, and lists of special times from the past year. The children, can sit at the kitchen table cutting, pasting, drawing pictures, and writing about sleep-over's, school plays, bike rides, and more. Each mini work of art is put into a clear page protector with holes punched down the left margin, then it all goes in a

three-ring binder (the great-grandkids decorate the cover). These books, which are kept at her grandmother's house, are now priceless family heirlooms: journals are a living story of us.

Personal Place Mats

One family wanted a fun, inexpensive way to celebrate and reflect on our past year. So her family settled on scrapbook place mats last year. During the first week of January children decorate one side of an 8 1/2- by 14-inch piece of construction paper with handprints, photographs, ticket stubs, and drawings. The paper is laminated at a copy shop for about \$2 a page. One mom says "It's interesting to see what the kids remember and want to include on their mats," "We use them all of the time. And what great mementos! We'll keep them forever."



Source: Family Fun Magazine

Children can help you become more Organized in the New Year



Q My New Year's resolution is to get my family organized. I want to work out a way to keep track of games, events, car pools and the like. I want everyone to help with everyday chores, and I want clutter cleaned up. Do you have some tips for getting the New Year off to the right start and for staying organized?

A Does organization come easy to you? If it does, you'll probably succeed with your new plan. However, if you have a random, creative and "hang loose" approach to life, you may fail. Whatever you do, don't take on all these new organizational tasks on January 1. Develop a plan of action, and build on your successes.

You might start with a family calendar. Chores and clutter can slip, but if you forget car pool responsibilities and basketball practices, your stress level only rises. Get a big calendar for the refrigerator so all family members can easily see the daily schedule. You can find these at school supply stores.



Before you tackle chores and clutter, prepare yourself: The rest of your family may balk. If your kids typically leave towels and underwear lying on the bathroom floor, they're not going to adjust easily to your new clutter-free approach. It's unlikely they'll turn tidy overnight.

THE CHORES CHORE

If they've never emptied the dishwasher or set the table, they'll protest when you ask them to do chores. Let each child choose a chore they're capable of completing, but remember that for at least three weeks, you'll have to do chore patrol. Insist that the children complete their chosen tasks even if they whine, complain and call you a meanie. Keep your attitude businesslike and matter-of-fact.

Most important, make sure beforehand that you have the energy to pursue your new, more organized family life, and stay determined, focused and upbeat. Even though families run more smoothly when organized, your kids and spouse will try to pull you back to your old disorganized ways because that's what's familiar. Most of us resist change, even change that benefits us.

"To make the best better" Miami-Dade County Fair and Exposition

4-H members are gearing up for the County Fair by making holiday decorations, home decorations, practicing recipes and sewing garments in anticipation of those blue ribbons and premium money. The Miami-Dade 4-H participants would like to invite all of our readers to come see them on 4-H Day at the Fair, Saturday, March 19th.



4-H is the youth development program of the Miami-Dade Extension Service, a partnership between the University of Florida and Miami-Dade Consumer Services Department. This free, volunteer led, youth program is open to all children from ages 5 thru 18. Clubs meet a minimum of 6 times in the year in various locations like parks, homes, schools and churches. To learn more about 4-H visit: <http://miami-dade.ifas.ufl.edu> or call the 4-H office, 305-592-8044.