

Have a Safe and Happy New Year!

*Creator of all things, God of love,
You have brought us safely to a new year.
Thank you for the many blessings of this past year.
Your bounty and love know no bounds.
Keep us all strong in faith and love of You, that we may be open to
the unknown gifts of wisdom from You.*



The celebration of the new year appears to be the oldest of world celebrations. Some of the earliest known celebrations were in **Babylon** about 4000 years ago and in **Mesopotamia**, c. 2000 B.C. It was a celebration of the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring). A variety of other dates tied to the seasons were also used by various ancient cultures. The Egyptians, Phoenicians, and Persians began their new year with the fall equinox, and the Greeks celebrated it on the winter solstice.



Which makes sense when you think about it - it was the beginning of spring, the season of rebirth, of planting new crops and of blossoming new life. Today's January 1 date is purely arbitrary; it has no astronomical or agricultural significance.



Bulgarian Solar Calendar

The **Babylonian** new year celebration lasted for eleven days. The **Romans** observe the new year in late March for quite some time, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun.



325-425 A.D.
List of month names for the Sumerian (Lunar) calendar, including the extra 12th month.
Babylonia, 2000-1600 B.C.

Babylonian

The early Roman calendar designated March 1 as the new year. The calendar had just ten months, beginning with March. That the new year once began with the month of March is still reflected in some of the names of the months. September through December, our ninth through twelfth months, were originally positioned as the seventh through tenth months (septem is Latin for "seven," octo is "eight," novem is "nine," and decem is "ten").



The first time the new year was celebrated on January 1st was in Rome in 153 B.C. (In fact, the month of January did not even exist until around 700 B.C., when the second king of Rome, Numa Pontilius, added the months of January and February.) The new year was moved from March to January because that was the beginning of the civil year, the month that the two newly elected Roman consuls—the highest officials in the Roman republic—began their one-year tenure. But this new year date was not always strictly and widely observed, and the new year was still sometimes celebrated on March 1.



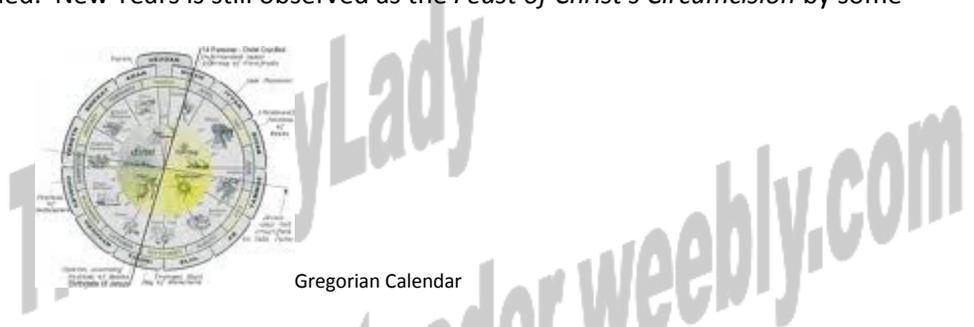
Roman Calendar

In order to set the calendar right, the **Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1** to be the beginning of the new year, within its new Julian, solar based Calendar. 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.



Julian Calendar

The early Catholic Church condemned the festivities as paganism, thru the Middle Ages. However as Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the "pagan" celebrations, New Year's included. New Years is still observed as the *Feast of Christ's Circumcision* by some denominations.



Gregorian Calendar

In 1582, the Gregorian calendar reform restored January 1 as new year's day. Although most Catholic countries adopted the Gregorian calendar almost immediately, it was only gradually adopted among Protestant countries. **In 1752 the British (and it's colonies) adopted the new Gregorian calendar and January 1 as the beginning of the year.** But many Puritans in New England felt Janus was an offensive pagan god and chose to simply ignore January 1 as a New Years Day. Instead they just made the entire month of January as "The First Month" of the months.

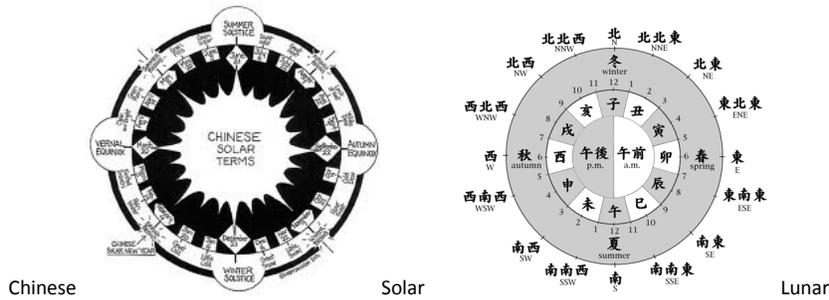
Germany did adopt the Gregorian calendar in 1700 and **Sweden** in 1753. It was then necessary to drop 11 days from the calendar because 1700 had been a leap year.

The Oriental countries through the influence of religious groups such as the Hindus, Taoists, Buddhists and Moslems, considered the new Calendar as the Christian Calendar, but also adopted it as their official one. **Japan** welcomed it in 1873 and **China** in 1912.

The **Eastern Orthodox** adopted it even later, in 1924 and 1927, **Russia** took it twice - first in 1918 and after trying out its own calendars, again in 1924.

The Jewish New Year is called Rosh Hashanah. It is a holy time when people reflect on the things done wrong in the past, with a promise to do better in the future. Religious services are held in synagogues, and an instrument called a Shofar, which is made from a ram's horn is played. Children are given new clothes, and New Year loaves are baked and fruit is eaten to remind people of harvest time.

The Chinese Calendar and New Year



Except for a very few number of people who can keep track of when the Chinese New Year should be, the majority of the Chinese today have to rely on a typical Chinese calendar to tell it. Therefore, you cannot talk of the Chinese New Year without mentioning the Chinese calendar at first.

A Chinese calendar consists of both the Gregorian and lunar-solar systems, with the latter dividing a year into twelve month, each of which is in turn equally divided into thirty- nine and a half days. The well-coordinated dual system calendar reflects the Chinese ingenuity.

There is also a system that marks the years in a twelve-year cycle, naming each of them after an animal such as Rat, Ox, Tiger, Hare, Dragon, Snake, Horse, Sheep, Monkey, Rooster, Dog and Boar. People born in a particular year are believed to share some of the personalities of that particular animal.

January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

As New Year's traditions go, the early Babylonians apparently brought us the **New Year's resolution**, which for them was usually returning borrowed farm equipment.



The Puritans of the U.S. British Colonies never did approve of all this New Year's hoopla. They went for the religious renewal of cleanse, purge, fast, confess and encouraged young people not to waste the new year on foolish things, but to use it as an opportunity to make a good change in their lives for the good. Their New Year's resolutions or vows or pledges, focused on overcoming their own weaknesses, to enhance their god-given talents and to make them better citizens to others.

The custom of making **New Year's Resolutions** came into vogue in the 20th century. The resolutions today are more a secular version of the religious vows made in the past toward spiritual perfection. They are often made with good intentions and broken with a sense of humor and renewed annually.

The tradition of using a **baby to signify the new year** was begun in *Greece* around 600 BC 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. Early *Christians* denounced the practice as "pagan" yet is held such popularity as a symbol of rebirth that it 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.



Father Time is the symbol of the year that is coming to a close and a baby then becomes the symbol for the new year ahead. The image or symbol of a baby with a New Years banner was brought to early America by the *Germans*. They had used the effigy since the fourteenth century.



Using noise to welcome in a new year goes back to ancient times when it was felt that noise scared off evil spirits. In *Denmark*, they "smash in the new year" by banging on the doors of their friends' homes and throwing pieces of broken pottery against the sides of the houses. In *Japan*, dancers go from house to house at *Oshogatsu* making strange noises and rattling and pounding bamboo sticks and banging on drums. In many parts of the *U.S.*, firecrackers are set off at midnight to mark the new year.



Early on in human history 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. This is why it has become common for folks to celebrate the first few minutes of a brand new year in the company of family and friends. 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.

Many cultures felt that *certain foods and or their shape on New Year foods would bring good luck.* For instance the shape of a ring is good luck, because it symbolizes "coming full circle," completing a year's cycle. This is why the *Dutch* believe that eating donuts on New Year's Day will bring good fortune.

In some parts of the *U.S.*, *as well as other cultures*, black-eyed peas and other legumes have been considered good luck. These legumes are typically accompanied by either hog jowls or ham. The hog, and thus its 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.



Toasting can be traced back to the ancient *Romans and Greeks* who would pour wine, to be shared among those attending a religious function, from a common pitcher. The host would drink first, to assure his guests that the wine was not poisoned. (Poisoning the wine was a fairly common practice in ancient times, designed to do away with one's enemies.) The wine back then was not as refined as it is today, so a square of burned bread (toast) would be floated in the wine bowl and then eaten by the last person to drink. (The bread was put there to absorb the extra acidity of the wine in order to make it more palatable.) Eventually, the act of drinking in unison came to be called a toast, from the act of "toasting" or putting toast into the wine.



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. The comes from an old *Scottish tune*, "Auld Lang Syne" literally means "old long ago," or simply, "the good old days" and its early variations were sung prior to 1700 and eventually inspired Robert Burns in the 1700's to at least partially write the version we know today. It was first published in 1796 after Burns' death.

In the Scottish dialect, auld lang syne is "old long since" -- aka "the good old days." The traditional lyrics begin with, "Should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind..." And the entire song's message merely means to just forget about the past and look ahead to the new year with hope.

Auld Lang Syne-Traditional lyrics

*Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And never brought to mind
Should auld acquaintance be forgot,
And auld lang syne.*

CHORUS:

*For auld lang syne, my dear,
For auld lang syne,
We'll tak a cup of kindness yet,
For auld lang syne!*

And surely ye'll be your pint-stowp,

*And surely I'll be mine,
And we'll tak a cup o' kindness yet,
For auld lang syne!*

*We twa hae run about the braes,
And pou'd the gowans fine,
But we've wander'd monie a weary fit,
Sin auld lang syne.*

*We twa hae paidl'd in the burn,
Frae morning sun till dine,
But seas between us braid hae roar'd
Sin auld lang syne.*

*And there's a hand my trusty fiere,
And gie's a hand o' thine,
And we'll tak a right guid-willie waught,
For auld lang syne.*

In the **U.S. the Tournament of Roses Parade dates back to 1886** when members of the Valley Hunt Club decorated their carriages with flowers. It celebrated the ripening of the orange crop in California. 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.



Also in the U.S. in the 18th century, New Year's Eve revelry in cities like Philadelphia, New York, and Baltimore often ended with street demonstrations, violence, and vandalism. Groups of men and boys were known to toot tin horns, shout, scream, yell, set off firecrackers, knock down barricades such as fences and gates, break windows and (in a few cases) burglarize the homes of some wealthy citizens in the area.



To help curb the problem of over-zealous celebrators on December 31 and to protect those who want to bring in the New Year quietly, many cities in the United States started a popular trend called "*The First Night*" celebrations. *The first "First Night" was held in Boston in 1976* to replace the boisterous partying with cultural events, performances, and non-alcoholic beverages with food in an outdoor setting.



Various **Native American** peoples have festivals that celebrate their version of the new year which is usually based on a lunar or moon calendar.



The **Hopi Powamu Festival** is a mid-winter ceremony and also called the *Bean Planting Festival*. It is observed in late January or early February.



The **Iroquois** mid-winter ceremony is also held in January or February when the dipper constellation appears in the sky directly overhead and you wait for the new moon to be seen, which signals the beginning of the spiritual year. Five days after the new moon is when the ceremony begins.



Many **Native American** peoples also celebrate and name Full Moons. The **Wolf Moon**, is the full moon of January. Amid the cold and deep snows of midwinter, the wolf packs howled hungrily outside Indian villages, thus, the name for

January's full Moon. Sometimes it was also referred to as the "Old Moon", or the "Moon After Yule". Some called it the "Full Snow Moon", but most tribes applied that name to the next Moon.



Times Square - New York in 1904 was a city on the verge of tremendous changes - and, not surprisingly, many of those changes had their genesis in the bustling energy and thronged streets of Times Square. Two innovations that would completely transform the Crossroads of the World debuted in 1904: the opening of the city's first subway line, and the first-ever celebration of New Year's Eve in Times Square.



This inaugural bash commemorated the official opening of the new headquarters of *The New York Times*. The newspaper's owner, German Jewish immigrant Alfred Ochs, had successfully lobbied the city to rename Longacre Square, the district surrounding his paper's new home, in honor of the famous publication (a contemporary article in *The New York Times* credited Interborough Rapid Transit Company President August Belmont for suggesting the change to the Rapid Transit Commission). The impressive Times Tower, marooned on a tiny triangle of land at the intersection of 7th Avenue, Broadway and 42nd Street, was at the time Manhattan's second-tallest building -- the tallest if measured from the bottom of its three massive sub-basements, built to handle the heavy weight demands of *The Times*' up-to-date printing equipment.



The building was the focus of an unprecedented New Year's Eve celebration. Ochs spared no expense to ensure a party for the ages. An all-day street festival culminated in a fireworks display set off from the base of the tower, and at

midnight the joyful sound of cheering, rattles and noisemakers from the over 200,000 attendees could be heard, it was said, from as far away as Croton-on-Hudson, thirty miles north along the Hudson River.



The New York Times' description of the occasion paints a rapturous picture: "From base to dome the giant structure was alight - a torch to usher in the newborn year..."

The night was such a rousing success that Times Square instantly replaced Lower Manhattan's Trinity Church as "the" place in New York City to ring in the new year. Before long, this party of parties would capture the imagination of the nation, and the world.



Two years later, the city banned the fireworks display - but Ochs was undaunted. He arranged to have a large, illuminated seven-hundred-pound iron and wood ball lowered from the tower flagpole precisely at midnight to signal the end of 1907 and the beginning of 1908.

On that occasion, and for almost a century thereafter, Times Square signmaker Artkraft Strauss was responsible for the ball-lowering. (For more information on the past and present of the New Year's Eve Ball itself, please [click here](#).) In 1914, *The New York Times* outgrew Times Tower and relocated to 229 West 43rd Street. By then, New Year's Eve in Times Square was already a permanent part of our cultural fabric.

In 1942 and 1943, the glowing Ball was temporarily retired due to the wartime "dimout" of lights in New York City. The crowds who still gathered in Times Square in those years greeted the New Year with a minute of silence followed by chimes ringing out from sound trucks parked at the base of the Times Tower.



The New York Times retained ownership of the Tower until 1961, when it was sold to developer Douglas Leigh, who was also the designer and deal-maker behind many of the spectacular signs in Times Square, including the famous Camel

billboard that blew water-vapor "smoke rings" over the street. Mr. Leigh stripped the building down to its steel frame, then re-clad it in white marble as the headquarters for Allied Chemical Corporation.

Today, New Year's Eve in Times Square is a bona fide international phenomenon. Each year, hundreds of thousands of people still gather around the Tower, now known as One Times Square, and wait for hours in the cold of a New York winter for the famous Ball-lowering ceremony. Thanks to satellite technology, a worldwide audience estimated at over one billion people watches the ceremony each year. The lowering of the Ball has become the world's symbolic welcome to the New Year.



How New Year is said around the world

Arabic: Kul 'aam u antum salimoun

Brazilian: Boas Festas e Feliz Ano Novo means "Good Parties and Happy New Year"

Chinese: Chu Shen Tan

Czechoslovakia: Scastny Novy Rok

Dutch: Gullukkig Niuw Jaar

Finnish: Onnellista Uutta Vuotta

French: Bonne Annee

German: Prosit Neujahr

Greek: Eftecheezmaenos o Kaenooryos hronos

Hebrew: L'Shannah Tovah Tikatevu

Hindi: Niya Saa Moobaarak

Irish (Gaelic): Bliain nua fe mhaise dhuit

Italian: Buon Capodanno

Khmer: Sua Sdei tfnam tmei

Laotian: Sabai dee pee mai

Polish: Szczesliwego Nowego Roku

Portuguese: Feliz Ano Novo

Russian: S Novim Godom

Serbo-Croatian: Scecna nova godina

Spanish: Feliz Ano Neuvo

Prospero Ano Nuevo

Turkish: Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun

Vietnamese: Cung-Chuc Tan-Xuan

Some other New Year's Traditions are:

A great site for learning about new year celebrations and traditions around the world is:

<http://www.FatherTimes.net/traditions.htm>

Austria - The suckling pig is the symbol for good luck for the new year. It's served on a table decorated with tiny edible pigs. Dessert often consists of green peppermint ice cream in the shape of a four-leaf clover.

British - In Britain the custom of first footing is practiced. The first male visitor to the house after midnight is usually supposed to bring good luck. Usually they bring a gift like money, bread, or coal, which is done to ensure the family, will have plenty of these things all the year to come. The first person must not be blond, red-haired or women as these people are supposedly bad luck.

The Druids gave a gift of twigs from the mistletoe, as this was a plant that was sacred to them as a magic source of fertility. It would bestow on the recipient a fruitful year in the number of children, as well as the amount of cattle and the amount of crop.

English - In England crowds of people gather in Trafalgar square, and Piccadilly Circus as well as stand around to hear the chimes of London's Big Ben announces the arrival of the New Year. Everyone stands around with arms linked to sing Auld Lang Syne.

In England the custom of *first-footing* is important. The reason is that it is supposed to ensure good luck for the inhabitants of the house. The first-footer must be male, young, healthy and good looking. He must be dark-haired and he should be carrying a small piece of coal, money, bread, and salt. These are the symbols of wealth.

The custom of exchanging gifts was transferred to Christmas though it was originally done at New Year, when the Lord of the Manor was given samples of produce by his tenants and peasants, while he gave a valuable gift to the Queen or King. The Englishman gave their wives money to buy pins for the coming year. This Tradition died, but, the expression "pin money" is still used to describe the money set aside for personal use, especially if given to a woman by her husband.

On New Year's Day children from England and Great Britain rise early to make the rounds to their neighbors singing songs. They are given coins, mince pies, apples and other sweets for singing. This must be done by noon or the singer will be called fools.

The **Burning Bush** is a nineteenth century custom carried into the early years of this century. In Radnorshire and Herefordshire farmhand would get up early before dawn on New Year's Day and carry a hawthorn bush to the field. They were burnt in straw on the wheat field. It was a symbol of good luck for the farmers. The bushes sometimes hung in the kitchen until the next year.

In England girls would drop egg whites into water. They thought it would form the first letter of the name of the man they would marry.

Irish (Celtic) - The Irish New Year festival is known as Samhain which meant summer ends and was celebrated on 31 October. The festival has survived as Halloween.

It was at this time they hold their General Assembly. This was held in the out in the air parliament where the laws were renewed and accounts of events, details of births, deaths and marriages, were recorded.

This day was considered of great danger for it was when the spirits of the dead returned to earth. It was believed the spirits could do harm unless precautions were taken. The Celtic priests go into the woods on New Year's Eve to gather bunches of mistletoe which they handed out to people to protect them from any harm. Also bonfires were lit to drive away evil forces. They also believed that it was safer to stay indoors as fairies were abroad on New Year's Eve.

In Ireland the girls would go to bed with sprigs of mistletoe, or holly and ivy leaves under their pillows so they would go to bed dreaming of their future husbands. They might also chant:

*"Oh, ivy green and holly red,
Tell me, tell me whom I shall wed!"*

In Ireland in the west the direction of the wind blowing at New Year would indicate the trend of politics in the coming year. If it blew from the west it would flourish, if from the east the English would have upper hand.

Also on New Year's Eve if they ate a very large supper they would have plenty of food for the coming year.

One custom that was practiced on New Year's Eve was to take a large loaf of Christmas bread or cake outside the house and hammer it against the closed doors and windows, this was done so as to drive out any misfortune and let happiness in.

The Druids gave a gift of twigs from the mistletoe, as this was a plant that was sacred to them as a magic source of fertility. It would bestow on the recipient a fruitful year in the number of children, as well as the amount of cattle and the amount of crop.

Scottish - The Scottish New Year is known as Hogmanay and both New Year's Eve and New Year's Day were also known as Daft Days. The first Monday in January is a holiday and is referred to as Handsel Monday.

In Scotland New Year's Eve is called Hogmanay or Night of the Candle. Foods such as three cornered biscuits called Hogmanays are eaten. Other foods that are special at this time of year are wine, cordials, cheese, bread, shortbread, oatcake, currant loaf and scones. After sunset people are known to collect juniper and water to purify the home.

The Scots prepare for the New Year by cleaning their houses. This was believed to have been a purification ritual.

They would perform a ritual of burning juniper branches which they carried throughout the house so as to remove any lurking germs and diseases.

The food they would eat at New Year was Haggis, shortbread, scones, oatmeal cakes, cheese, whisky and wine as well as traditional New Year black buns.

The first person to rise in the morning used to take Het Pint spiced ale to those members who were still in bed.

In Scotland an old tradition that still is relevant today is that of the first footer which is said, that whoever the first person to set foot into your home on New Year's day decided the family's luck for the rest of the year. This was based on the belief in the magic power of beginnings. The start of the New Year controlled its future course.

The person most welcome on new year's morning was a tall, dark haired man and especially if he bought a gift as this was considered magical as his handsome features would make the year a pleasant one and his gift of a loaf of bread, or a shovel of coal would ensure that there would be no lack of food or warmth in the household.

Any other type of person who was to set foot in your home on New Year's morning would spell disaster. Therefore people would subtly arrange for the right person to arrive.

They would light bonfires so as to dispose of the old year and sometimes a straw figure known as "the Auld Wife" which represented the old year would be thrown onto the bonfire.

One method used in the old days to remove evil spirits was to banish the evil to a cat or dog and scare them away.

On New Year's Eve they all link arms in a circle and sing the traditional New Year song Auld Lang Syne. After welcoming the New Year, all the people of the household would wait to see who the first person to enter the house after midnight will be, as this person would indicate whether they would have good luck or bad luck for the coming year. The first person must be a dark haired male, young virile, good natured and prosperous. He should not be empty handed and was supposed to bring with him a small gift such as a piece of coal, bread, salt as they were symbols of life.

On New Year's Day children from Scotland rise early to make the rounds to their neighbors singing songs. They are given coins, mince pies, apples and other sweets for singing. This must be done by noon or the singer will be called fools.

In some Scottish villages barrels of tar are set on fire and rolled through the streets. This is done to burn up the old year and to allow the New Year in.

Wales - At the first toll of midnight, the back door is opened and then shut to release the old year and lock out all of its bad luck. Then at the twelfth stroke of the clock, the front door is opened and the New Year is welcomed with all of its luck.

Haiti - In Haiti, New Year's Day is a sign of the year to come. Haitians wear new clothing and exchange gifts in the hope that it will bode well for the new year.

SICILY - An old Sicilian tradition says good luck will come to those who eat lasagna on New Year's Day, but woe if you dine on macaroni, for any other noodle will bring bad luck.

Roman - Romans prepare for the New Year festival which is known as January Kalends by decorating their houses with lights and greenery. The festival lasts for three days, during this time they hold feasts and exchange gifts which were carefully chosen for their luck-bringing properties these include such things as sweets or honey to ensure sweetness and peace as well as Gold, Silver or money for prosperity. Lamps for a year filled with light.

They might also go to the Roman emperor and present him with a gift and wish him good fortune for the year ahead. Other politicians received gifts as well.

Normal rules of the society went on hold during the New Year festivities.

Spain - In Spain, when the clock strikes midnight, the Spanish eat 12 grapes, one with every toll, to bring good luck for the 12 months ahead. Theater productions and movies are interrupted to carry out this custom.

German - In Germany people would drop molten lead into cold water and try to tell the future from the shape it made. A heart or ring shape meant a wedding, a ship a journey, and a pig plenty of food in the year ahead.

People also would leave a bit of every food eaten on New Year's Eve on their plate until after Midnight as a way of ensuring a well-stocked larder. Carp was included as it was thought to bring wealth.

Greek - January 1st is an important date in Greece because it is not only the first day of the New Year but it is also St. Basil's Day. St Basil was one the forefathers of the Greek Orthodox Church. He is remembered for his kindness and generosity to the poor. He is thought to have died on this date so this is how they honor him.

New Year is perhaps even more festive and important than Christmas as it is the main day for gift-giving and for stories of St Basil's kindness to children and the stories of how he would come in the night and leave gifts for the children in their shoes.

Greeks have a Christian name that is the name of a religious figure or a saint. On the religious calendar each day has a different feast and people celebrate their name-day accordingly. January 1 is St Basil's Day which is the day for those named Vassilios and Vassiliki. On name-days and St Basil's day people visit their friends and relatives and exchange gifts, not just for those whose name-day it was but also for those whose name day it isn't. On these visits they have a big feast of food, drinks and music.

There are many special dishes that are prepared at New Year but the most important dish is Vassilopitta or St Basil's cake, inside the cake is placed a silver or gold coin.

The cake is distributed in accordance to a strict order. First piece is for St Basil, the second for the house, the next for the most senior member of the household down to the youngest member and also including absent members. There may also be a piece of cake for the cattle and a large piece for the poor. Whoever finds the coin in their piece of cake will be lucky for the next year.

As well as the St Basil's cake there is usually an abundance of food on the table including Kourabiedes Shortbread and thiples, there is always honey on the table and olive-branches, nuts, fresh fruit and other symbols of happiness and wealth.

On New Year's Eve the children sing carols and also on New Years Day. The first person across the threshold of the house on New Year's Day is said to bring the family good luck throughout the coming year. The father, son or a lucky child was meant to be the first person across the threshold. A lucky child was someone who has both parents still alive.

Greek New Year's Day too many is still September 1 for it is this date that they start of the Greek sowing season, a time of hope and promise.

To start the New Year off right farmers' families take plates of seeds to church for the priest to bless.

In Kos people make first-of-the-year wreaths of pomegranates, grapes, quinces, garlic bulbs, and plane-tree leaves. Just before dawn on September 1 the children carry their households' wreaths down to the shore, the old year's wreaths and the new ones, and they throw the old ones out to sea and immerse the New Year wreaths for good luck. Then they carry seawater and pebbles home in a jar, to serve with the wreaths as protective devices. Tradition calls for exactly 40 pebbles and water collected from the tops of exactly 40 waves.

In Rhodes the first-of-the-year wreaths are made of walnuts, onions, garlic, grapes, tufts of cotton, and cloth bags full of grain from the fields. The year's sowing, it is said, can begin only after the wreath has been hung up.

Girls in Greece once ate something salty before going to bed. They did this because they believed it would help them to dream about their future husband.

The New Year Cake came from the story about Saint Basil who it is said told how he helped the poor people to pay their taxes. The story goes that he took some jewelry from each person and gave it to the Governor. The Governor was sorry for the poor people and so he gave the jewelry back, they only problem was Basil did not know who owned each piece of jewelry. This is when it is told the miracle occurred. He baked each piece inside a loaf and when the loaves were given out, everyone had their own jewelry in the piece of loaf.

French - French New Year or Jour des Étrennes or Day of New Year's Presents.

In France dinner parties are thrown for the entire family. People exchange presents and greeting cards. People began sending fake gifts on April first which originally culminated in the New Year feast of course these gifts were only as a joke on those who previously had received their étrennes or New Year's gifts, on that day.

Poisson d'avril or April fish is the name the French apply to one who is fooled or mocked on April first. Confectioners' windows display chocolate fish on this day and many friends anonymously send each other humorous postcards imprinted with pictures of fish.

The French adopted the reformed calendar in 1582 which changed the beginning of the New Year from March 25 to January first.

Norway - Norwegians make rice pudding at New Year's and hide one whole almond within. Guaranteed wealth goes to the person whose serving holds the lucky almond.

South America - In South America **Ano Viejo** the New Year festival is celebrated by creating a fake person or dummy. The scarecrow looking person is completely dressed and stuffed with old newspapers and firecrackers. The dummy is usually placed outside the home. The scarecrow represents something that has happened during the last year. At midnight each family lights the dummy on fire. As the dummy goes up in smoke the firecrackers also go off to add to the festivities. The old year is forgotten and the New Year begins.

Peru - The Peruvian New Year's custom is a spin on the Spanish tradition of eating 12 grapes at the turn of the year. But in Peru, a 13th grape must be eaten to assure good luck.

Puerto Rico - In Puerto Rico South America children enjoy throwing pails of water out the window at midnight. Some believe that this rids their home of any evil spirits.

Bolivia - In Bolivia families make beautiful little wood or straw dolls to hang outside their homes to bring good luck.

Japan - The Japanese decorate their homes in tribute to lucky gods. One tradition, kadomatsu, consists of a pine branch symbolizing longevity, a bamboo stalk symbolizing prosperity, and a plum blossom showing nobility.

China - For the Chinese New Year, every front door is adorned with a fresh coat of red paint, red being a symbol of good luck and happiness. Although the whole family prepares a feast for the New Year, all knives are put away for 24 hours to keep anyone from cutting themselves, which is thought to cut the family's good luck for the next year.

United States - The kiss shared at the stroke of midnight in the United States is derived from masked balls that have been common throughout history. As tradition has it, the masks symbolize evil spirits from the old year and the kiss is the purification into the new year.

American New Years Customs such as Dance parties are thrown on New Year's Eve to see in the year. Times Square in New York City has a ball drop hosted by the television celebrity Dick Clark. This is broadcast all over the United States. At the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve people will kiss or honk car horns. Paper blowers and whistles are blown. A soul food of black-eyed peas and rice called Hoppin' John is eaten by some. Other foods that are eaten at New Year are cake and champagne.

No matter how you celebrate the New Year may it be a safe and joyful one for you and yours ;-}

*Loving God, thank you for the gift of life in this new year.
Bless and keep me, my loved ones and special friends that we may
continue to grow
in body, mind, and spirit, this New Year and always.*

*Let us know peace.
For as long as the moon shall rise,
For as long as the rivers shall flow,
For as long as the sun will shine,
For as long as the grass shall grow,
Let us know peace.*

TNT