

New Year Quotations

Youth is when you're allowed to stay up late on New Year's Eve. Middle age is when you're forced to. ~Bill Vaughn

An optimist stays up until midnight to see the new year in. A pessimist stays up to make sure the old year leaves. ~Bill Vaughan

Many people look forward to the new year for a new start on old habits. ~Author Unknown

A New Year's resolution is something that goes in one year and out the other. ~Author Unknown

Be always at war with your vices, at peace with your neighbors, and let each new year find you a better man. ~Benjamin Franklin

No one ever regarded the First of January with indifference. It is that from which all date their time, and count upon what is left. It is the nativity of our common Adam. ~Charles Lamb

New Year's Day is every man's birthday. ~Charles Lamb

Never tell your resolution beforehand, or it's twice as onerous a duty. ~John Selden

Year's end is neither an end nor a beginning but a going on, with all the wisdom that experience can instill in us. ~Hal Borland

The merry year is born
Like the bright berry from the naked thorn.
~Hartley Coleridge

New Year's eve is like every other night; there is no pause in the march of the universe, no breathless moment of silence among created things that the passage of another twelve months may be noted; and yet no man has quite the same thoughts this evening that come with the coming of darkness on other nights. ~Hamilton Wright Mabie

The Old Year has gone. Let the dead past bury its own dead. The New Year has taken possession of the clock of time. All hail the duties and possibilities of the coming twelve months! ~Edward Payson Powell

Cheers to a new year and another chance for us to get it right. ~Oprah Winfrey

Ring out the old, ring in the new,
Ring, happy bells, across the snow:
The year is going, let him go;
Ring out the false, ring in the true.
~Alfred, Lord Tennyson, 1850

The proper behavior all through the holiday season is to be drunk. This drunkenness culminates on New Year's Eve, when you get so drunk you kiss the person you're married to. ~P.J. O'Rourke

Every man should be born again on the first day of January. Start with a fresh page. Take up one hole more in the buckle if necessary, or let down one, according to circumstances; but on the first of January let every man gird himself once more, with his face to the front, and take no interest in the things that were and are past.
~Henry Ward Beecher

New Year's Day: Now is the accepted time to make your regular annual good resolutions. Next week you can begin paving hell with them as usual. ~Mark Twain

The new year begins in a snow-storm of white vows. ~George William Curtis

For last year's words belong to last year's language
And next year's words await another voice.
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
~T.S. Eliot, "Little Gidding"

We will open the book. Its pages are blank. We are going to put words on them ourselves. The book is called Opportunity and its first chapter is New Year's Day. ~Edith Lovejoy Pierce

Yesterday, everybody smoked his last cigar, took his last drink and swore his last oath. Today, we are a pious and exemplary community. Thirty days from now, we shall have cast our reformation to the winds and gone to cutting our ancient shortcomings considerably shorter than ever. ~Mark Twain

People are so worried about what they eat between Christmas and the New Year, but they really should be worried about what they eat between the New Year and Christmas. ~Author Unknown

And ye, who have met with Adversity's blast,
And been bow'd to the earth by its fury;
To whom the Twelve Months, that have recently pass'd
Were as harsh as a prejudiced jury -
Still, fill to the Future! and join in our chime,
The regrets of remembrance to cozen,
And having obtained a New Trial of Time,
Shout in hopes of a kindlier dozen.
~Thomas Hood

Drop the last year into the silent limbo of the past. Let it go, for it was imperfect, and thank God that it can go.
~Brooks Atkinson

Each age has deemed the new-born year
The fittest time for festal cheer.
~Walter Scott

Good resolutions are simply checks that men draw on a bank where they have no account. ~Oscar Wilde

Glory to God in highest heaven,
Who unto man His Son hath given;
While angels sing with tender mirth,
A glad new year to all the earth.
~Martin Luther

A new oath holds pretty well; but... when it is become old, and frayed out, and damaged by a dozen annual retyrings of its remains, it ceases to be serviceable; any little strain will snap it. ~Mark Twain, speech in New York City, 31 March 1885

But can one still make resolutions when one is over forty? I live according to twenty-year-old habits. ~Andre Gide

When then is lost, as time is by,
we look upon the yearly wine
to see our substance in the lees.
Did tribe and purse most pleasing leave?
To look for clear and faithful sense,
that gives a bodied stance bouquet,
then see the vat at mirror's face
and find in it, the yearly pace.
~E. Marshall, Vintner Epilogue (Happy Old Year)

Many years ago I resolved never to bother with New Year's resolutions, and I've stuck with it ever since. ~Dave Beard

I do think New Year's resolutions can't technically be expected to begin on New Year's Day, don't you? Since, because it's an extension of New Year's Eve, smokers are already on a smoking roll and cannot be expected to stop abruptly on the stroke of midnight with so much nicotine in the system. Also dieting on New Year's Day isn't a good idea as you can't eat rationally but really need to be free to consume whatever is necessary, moment by moment, in order to ease your hangover. I think it would be much more sensible if resolutions began generally on January the second. ~Helen Fielding, *Bridget Jones's Diary*

New Year's Eve, where auld acquaintance be forgot. Unless, of course, those tests come back positive. ~Jay Leno

We meet today
To thank Thee for the era done,
And Thee for the opening one.
~John Greenleaf Whittier

One resolution I have made, and try always to keep, is this: To rise above the little things. ~John Burroughs

Of all sound of all bells... most solemn and touching is the peal which rings out the Old Year. ~Charles Lamb

A happy New Year! Grant that I
May bring no tear to any eye
When this New Year in time shall end
Let it be said I've played the friend,
Have lived and loved and labored here,
And made of it a happy year.
~Edgar Guest

It wouldn't be New Year's if I didn't have regrets. ~William Thomas

We spend January 1 walking through our lives, room by room, drawing up a list of work to be done, cracks to be patched. Maybe this year, to balance the list, we ought to walk through the rooms of our lives... not looking for flaws, but for potential. ~Ellen Goodman

May all your troubles last as long as your New Year's resolutions. ~Joey Adams

He who breaks a resolution is a weakling;
He who makes one is a fool.
~F.M. Knowles

The object of a New Year is not that we should have a new year. It is that we should have a new soul and a new nose; new feet, a new backbone, new ears, and new eyes. Unless a particular man made New Year resolutions, he would make no resolutions. Unless a man starts afresh about things, he will certainly do nothing effective.
~G.K. Chesterton

I think in terms of the day's resolutions, not the year's. ~Henry Moore

Time has no divisions to mark its passage, there is never a thunder-storm or blare of trumpets to announce the beginning of a new month or year. Even when a new century begins it is only we mortals who ring bells and fire off pistols. ~Thomas Mann

I made no resolutions for the New Year. The habit of making plans, of criticizing, sanctioning and molding my life, is too much of a daily event for me. ~Anaïs Nin

Why won't they let a year die without bringing in a new one on the instant, can't they use birth control on time? I want an interregnum. The stupid years patter on with unrelenting feet, never stopping - rising to little monotonous peaks in our imaginations at festivals like New Year's and Easter and Christmas - But, goodness, why need they do it? ~John Dos Passos, 1917

New Year's is a harmless annual institution, of no particular use to anybody save as a scapegoat for promiscuous drunks, and friendly calls and humbug resolutions. ~Mark Twain

Every man regards his own life as the New Year's Eve of time. ~Jean Paul Richter

The only way to spend New Year's Eve is either quietly with friends or in a brothel. Otherwise when the evening ends and people pair off, someone is bound to be left in tears. ~W.H. Auden

New Year Traditions

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

Armenian New Year

The ancient Armenians had been celebrating the coming of the New Year on the 21st of March. That date is not only the first day of the spring, but also the birthday of the mythical God **Vahagn**, in whom believed the pagan Armenians about 10 thousand years ago. On this day the Armenians prepared huge feasts to welcome and celebrate the zenith of the nature.

During the 18th Century, January 1st was accepted as a beginning of the New Year. In spite of this change, Armenians in many regions of the country, like Suni, Artzah and Udik, continued to celebrate New Year on **Navasard**. Gradually at the end of the 20th century all Armenians adopted the 1st of January as the official first day of the New Year.

In Armenia it was a custom that on New Year's Eve, children gathered in-groups and went around their village, singing songs and greeting the New Year by singing to their neighbors. They usually received lots of fruit as present. Decorating a New Year's tree was not one of the customs in the past.

Within the family, it was a custom for the family members to exchange presents, but, a wife never received a present from her husband, as this was considered a disgrace. Children in the family, the youngest ones following the elderly, would go to their father, who had the presents hidden in his coat, and after kissing their father's hand everyone would receive their present.

Parts of the traditional New Year's meal like various dried fruits, raisins, different kinds of nuts, **gahin** and others would have been previously prepared, but the pastries, cakes and **harisan** would have been prepared on the 30th of December.

The most important among the pastries was the **Darin**, which was presenting the New Year. Darin is a big flat bread, which has a coin hidden in it. The person who found the piece with the coin in it was considered the 'lucky' member of the family for the New Year. But the most remarkable meal is the **dolma**, which is prepared with rice and grape leaves.

Armenian women cook Darin for their family. The bread is kneaded with luck and good wishes pressed into the dough before it is cooked.

And there was no New Year celebrated without **Kata**, which is made of wheat flour, butter, milk and sugar. As well as the **Anush Abur** which is a sweet soup which is made of wheat, kernels and dried fruits.

Australian New Year

In Australia they celebrate the New Year on January 1. This day is a public holiday and many people have picnics and camp out on the beach.

They have parties that start on December 31 and at midnight they start to make noise with whistles and rattles, car horns and church bells. To ring in the New Year.

In Australia New Year is a day for outdoor activities such as rodeos, picnic races and surf carnivals.

Austrian New Year

In Austria 1691 Pope Innocent XII declared January 1 to be New Year's Day.

In Austria, New Year's Eve is called **Sylvesterabend** which is the Eve of Saint Sylvester. They make a punch made of cinnamon, sugar, and red wine in honor of him. Taverns and inns are decorated with evergreen wreaths. Confetti, streamers, and champagne are also part of New Year's Eve. Evil spirits of the old year are chased away by the firing of mortars called **böller**. Midnight mass is attended and trumpets are blown from church towers at midnight. People exchange kisses.

There are fireworks in larger cities. In Vienna, the Straus operetta *Die Fledermaus* is performed every New Year's Day and New Year's Eve at the Vienna State Opera, and an all Strauss concert is performed by the Vienna Philharmonic.

Dinner in Austria is a big occasion on New Year's Day. This is the day they eat suckling pig. The pig symbolizes good luck. Often the table is decorated with little miniature pigs made of marzipan, maple sugar, fudge, cookie dough or chocolate. The four leaf clover is also another symbol used. Sometimes green peppermint ice cream is served in the shape of a four leaf clover after the roast pig course.

New Year's Eve begins with the Carnival season called **Fasching** that lasts until Lent. Balls and parties are thrown. On New Year's morning mass is attended and children sing carols door to door. They pour molten lead into a bucket of water. Soothsayers read the lead shapes, **bleigessen**, and make predictions. It is a bad omen to see an old woman.

Pork and carp are the favorite foods for celebrations. They are considered good luck. **Faschingkrapfen** which are Carnival jelly donuts are eaten. Good luck symbols called **Glücksbringer** are exchanged. Glücksbringer's are chocolate and marzipan candies shaped like pigs, gold coins, chimney sweeps, four-leaf clovers, and horseshoes.

Babylonian New Year - Mesopotamia

The people of Mesopotamia celebrate the New Year festival known as **Akitu** in the springtime. At this time they celebrate the arrival of the spring rains and the renewal of nature, as well as the renewal of the community.

At the festival the story of the creation is read out to remind people of the order of the universe and how it had risen out of the struggle between Marduk the god of heaven and Tiamut goddess of the powers of chaos.

On day three the king is put through the ritual of humiliation. All of his powers are removed and he is hit in the face by a priest, who tells him he must go and pray for forgiveness of his sins. Three days later he reappears and is absolved. His royal insignia is restored, ceremonies are performed to ensure that nature will support him during the coming year and then he takes part in a procession. After the procession the next three days are full of chaotic activities of all sorts.

On the very last day, that is the tenth day of the festival, a banquet was held to celebrate the restoration of order to the society or the community.

Bahai New Year - Part of Iran

The Bahai people have their own calendar consisting of nineteen months of nineteen days plus a couple of extra days between the eighteenth and nineteenth months. They have however adopted the Iranian custom of beginning the New Year in the spring equinox. The day begins at sunset rather than midnight, and the New Year celebrations are held during the evening of March 20th.

Belgian New Year

In Belgium New Year's Eve is called **Sint Sylvester Vooravond** or **Saint Sylvester Eve**. The **réveillon** or New Year's Eve family parties are thrown. At midnight everyone kisses, exchanges good luck greetings, and drinks toasts to absent relatives and friends. The cities, cafés, and restaurants are crowded with people who bid farewell to the Old Year.

New Year's Day is called **Nieuwjaarsdag** at this time of the year the children save money to buy decorated paper for writing holiday greetings to parents and god parents. Motifs are golden cherubs and angels, colored roses, and ribbon tied garlands. On New Year's morning the children read what they have written to their parents and god parents.

Belgium farmers wish their animals a Happy New Year for blessi

Bengali New Year - Indian State

In Bengali they celebrate New Year on the 13th or 14th April, which is the first day of the month that they call *Baisakh*.

They clean and decorate their houses in preparation for the New Year. They use flour to paint patterns on the ground out the front of their houses, in the middle of the design they place an earthenware pot, decorated with a red and white *swastika* which is a religious symbol, and filled with holy water and vermilion. Also inside the pot they place a mango tree branch which must consist of five twigs and a number of leaves. The pot symbolizes good fortune for the family.

On New Year's they offer special prayers to the goddess of wealth, because they hoped for greater wealth in the coming year. They wore a garland of flowers around their wrists and neck during the ceremonies. More commonly the flowers used are red oleanders, white daisies, pink roses, purple hibiscus and yellow marigolds. Each of these flowers is of religious significance such as pink, red and purple are for the Hindu goddesses, white and yellow are for the gods.

Brazilian New Year

In Brazil the lentil is believed to signify wealth, so on the first day of the New Year they serve lentil soup or lentils and rice.

In Brazil on New Year's Eve priestesses of the local **macumba voodoo** cult dress in blue skirts and white blouses for a ceremony dedicated to the goddess of water, Yemanjá. A sacrificial boat laden with flowers, candles and jewelry is pushed out to sea from Brazil's famous Ipanema beach in Rio de Janeiro.

British New Year

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.

Buddhist New Year

The Celebration of the Buddhist New Year is an occasion of great joy. People squirt water on whomever they meet in the streets, regardless of whether it is a friend or a stranger. Homage is paid to the various statues of the Buddha, which are ceremonially bathed.

Bulgarian New Year

This is another New Year's custom, expressing young girls' eagerness to get married and enjoy a happy family life. **Ladouvane** is a maidens' rite performed on the day before New Year only in Western Bulgaria, the Central Balkan Range and in some regions along the Danube River. In the rest of the country, it is celebrated on **Midsummer Day**. Preparations would start early in the morning. All lasses in the village would drop their rings, as well as oats and barley, the symbols of fertility, into a caldron full of spring water, all the rings fastened with a red thread to a bunch of perennial plants, such as ivy, crane's bill, or basil. The cauldron was left overnight in the open, under the stars, and on New Year's Eve, following a ritual dance around it, the girls' fortunes were told.

In Bulgaria bells also ring in the new year.

A traditional Bulgarian New Year's dish **banica** which is a flaky cheese pie.

Burmese New Year

In Burma there is a three day New Year festival called **Maha Thingyan**, which is celebrated with prayers, fasting and fun. During the festivities, buildings and temples are washed, and people throw water over each other. This is partly to welcome the heavy rains of the coming monsoon season.

The Burmese New Year festival is held to celebrate the New Year, by performing meritorious deeds and spraying one another with Thingyan water.

The Burmese New Year, which is based on the Fixed Zodiac system, falls on or around April 16. Thingyan means change. Cula thingyan (or small change) occurs every month. Maha thingyan (or big change) occurs once a year. The Burmese consider it to occur in Meiktha on or around April 13 and lasting three or four days.

Thingyan is the traditional Burmese New Year's festival. It lasts for three days and during that time everyone must get wet in order to welcome in the New Year. The Burmese believe that water acts as a soul purifier. Getting wet means that one can start the New Year with a cleansed soul.

Cambodian New Year

The people of Cambodia use the Indian Calendar to calculate the start of the New Year festival. The festival starts on the 12, 13 or 14 April according to the Gregorian calendar and lasts for three days. Cambodian New Year's Eve is the day before whichever date it is and it lasts three days. It is called **Chaul Chnam Thmey** which means entering the New Year.

People clean and decorate their houses, as well as set up an altar to welcome the New Year Spirit *Tevada Chhnam Thmey* who is said to come down to earth at this time. A statue of the Buddha is put on the altar, also flowers, candles, incense, a bowl of scented water, food and drink, and banana leaves shaped into different figures.

People douse each other with water as a blessing. Water can be colored red, pink, or yellow to symbolize a colorful future. New Clothing is worn. Children give money to their parents, aunts, uncles as a sign of respect. They may also give food or fruit in addition.

Day one of the festival people visit their local monastery and offer food to the monks. A special sand mound is built in the grounds of the monasteries on this day. The mound is decorated with five religious flags, one on top of the mound and four around the sides. Special games such as the Tug-Of-War, Angkunh and Boh Choong are played at the monasteries on each day of the festival.

Day two people gather with their families to wish each other a happy New Year and exchange gifts. They might also visit the monastery again to ask the monks to say a special prayer for their ancestors.

Day three the Buddha statues of their homes and the monasteries are washed. It is said this ensures good rains during the coming year. Children wash the feet of their parents as sign of respect on this day as well.

Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year "*Yuan Tan*" takes place between January 21 and February 20. The exact date is fixed by the lunar calendar, in which a new moon marks the beginning of each new month.

For many families, it is a time for feasting, visiting relatives and friends, but in the city a spectacular procession takes place. The celebrations are based on bringing luck, health, happiness, and wealth till the next year. They clean their houses to rid them of last year's bad luck before the celebrations begin.

There are street parades where thousands of people line the streets to watch the procession of floats in the New Year parade. Dancing dragons and lions weave their way through the crowded streets. The dragon is associated with longevity and wealth. Inside the costumes are 50 dancers, twisting and turning the dragon's long silk body and blinking eyes.

Chinese people believe that evil spirits dislike loud noises so they decorate their houses with plastic firecrackers. The loud noises are intended to frighten away evil spirits and bad luck that the spirits might bring.

They also go to the markets to buy plants and flowers that will bring them good luck for the New Year. The Kumquat tree is considered to be the luckiest because its name is a play on the word lucky.

The peach blossom is also considered to be lucky and the markets are decorated with the delicate blossoms wrapped in tissue paper that stops them getting damaged.

The Tangerine is lucky because of its bright color, but, odd numbers are unlucky, so the tangerines are always given in pairs.

The people in Hong Kong are not allowed to set off real firecrackers so instead they use plastic firecrackers as decorations. Red is the color for clothes and all decorations because it is associated with joy and happiness.

Lucky money is given out in red envelopes with the family name and good-luck message written on them in gold. They are given on New Year by relatives, but, only to the unmarried as well as the children of the family.

The feast on New Year is always big for the first day of the year. If the New Year falls on the year of any particular animal the Chinese try not to eat that animal's meat.

The first thing people do on Chinese New Year is offering ritual homage to one's ancestors. It is then paid to the gods, followed by younger family members paying their respects to their living relatives.

New clothes are worn, and visits are made to friends, neighbors, and relatives to exchange good wishes of **kung-hsi fa-tsai**, which means "congratulations and prosperity." As an occasion for reconciliation, it's a time when old grudges are cast aside amidst an atmosphere of warmth and friendliness.

One of the most spectacular sights during the Chinese New Year Festival is the dragon and lion dance. The heads of these fearsome beasts are supposed to ward off evil, and the nimble movements of the dancers provide a grand spectacle enjoyable to everyone.

The second day of the Festival is the day that married daughters return to their parents' home. If she is a newlywed, her husband must accompany her and bring gifts for her family.

The third day of the lunar New Year is the day when mice marry off their daughters. Thus, on that night, people are supposed to go to bed early so that the mice can perform their wedding ceremonies.

On the fourth day, the fervor begins to ebb. In the afternoon, people prepare offerings of food to welcome the return of the Kitchen God and his retinue from their trip to the Jade Emperor's court. The Kitchen God's return signifies the end of freedom from spiritual surveillance, "It's never too early to send off the gods, and never too late to invite them back."

Day five almost brings the Chinese New Year festivities to a close. All offerings are removed from the altars and life returns to normal.

Finally, on the ninth day, numerous offerings are set out in the forecourt or central courtyard of temples to celebrate the birthday of the Jade Emperor, who was believed to have been born immediately after midnight on the ninth day.

Danish New Year

In Denmark it is a good sign to find your door heaped with a pile of broken dishes at New Years. Old dishes are saved year around to throw them at the homes where their friends live on New Years Eve. Many broken dishes were a symbol that you have many friends.

New Year's Eve is framed by two important items broadcast on television and radio, respectively the monarch's New Year Speech at 6pm and the striking of midnight by the Town Hall Clock in Copenhagen, which marks the start of the new year.

Many Danes party with various kinds of good food followed by champagne and marzipan ring cake at midnight. The New Year is greeted with fireworks after midnight; they include both noisy bangs and rockets, which light up the night sky in many different colors. In many parts of the country, the traditional New Year's Eve menu is boiled cod, or stewed kale and cured saddle of pork.

Diwalian New Year - Gujarat-Indian State

North-western Indian state of Gujarat celebrates its New Year festival of *Diwali* in the months of October or November.

Diwali is one of the most ancient Hindu festivals, which symbolizes the triumph of good over evil. It is only in Gujarat that it is considered as the New Year festival. In fact the second day of the festival is actually the New Year's Day of Gujarati.

This festival is said to have started after Rama returned to the kingdom to become king and the people lit lamps to welcome him. Another story is that it was because Rama had defeated the demon-king of Sri Lanka and released, his wife from captivity.

On the night of the Diwali festival everything is decorated with lights and lamps. Bottles of colored water may also be placed in front of the lamps to give them color and there are also fireworks displays.

The children receive sweets, ice cream and toys in the shapes of houses, boats, people and animals.

Ancient Egyptian New Year

The main New Year event seems to have been the Feast of Opet, which took place in the first month of the year. This was the best time to hold the festival as the Nile was flooded and people were unable to work as a result of this, so they were free to take part in the celebrations.

The Feast was held in honor of Amon and marked the god's annual journey down the Nile from Karnak to Luxor, where he stayed for twenty-four days before returning to the main temple.

There is a procession where the Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt then the god Amon, his wife and his son are carried to the quayside by attendants in panther-skins and led by a temple priest, a trumpeter and a drummer.

Each god is placed in a makeshift temple. These are then dragged out into the mainstream of the river, here they are joined by small boats which accompany them to Luxor.

When they arrive at Luxor they are presented with offerings of food and drink. This feasting goes on throughout the whole of the festival. They are then returned to the temple of Karnak and the year's normal activities can begin.

Egyptian New Year

In Egypt the New Year is a public holiday and has a very festive atmosphere. Although they know in advance when the New Year begins they still observe the custom of the new crescent moon must be seen before the official announcement is made. The sighting is carried out at the *Muhammad Ali* mosque which is at the top of the hill in Cairo. The message is then passed on to the religious leader known as the *Grand Mufti* and he proclaims the New Year.

The men who have been waiting outside the mosque wish each other a happy New Year by saying "***Kol Sana We Enta Tayeb!***" and then go home to tell their families. Then all families sit down for a special New Year dinner. On this day even the poorest of family serves some meat. No alcohol is served because Muslims do not drink.

On this day everyone dresses up in special clothes even the girls are allowed to wear bright colored dresses. Usually they are only allowed to wear black.

The children are given sweets. Boys are given a sweet molded into the shape of a boy on horseback. Girls are given one in the shape of a girl wearing a dress. The sweets are surrounded by colored paper shaped like an accordion.

The New Year for the adults is a day for visiting friends. In some villages the father or the head of the family goes from house to house wishing each family a happy New Year collecting people as they go, until they end up at the Mayor's house.

English New Year

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 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.

European New Year

In Europe the custom of first-footing is practiced. This is where the first person to enter the house after midnight must be male and is supposed to bring good luck to the household. The visitor is also supposed to bring a gift such as money, bread, or coal, this are suppose to ensure the family will have plenty of these in the coming year.

Throughout the world the custom of making noise to ring in the New Year has not gone untouched as this was supposed to scare off any evil spirits. Today any noise is used such as clackers, toy trumpets, whistles, and bells are party favors given to guests to use when the New Year has rung in.

In Macedonia bells ring in the New Year.

In Europe the New Year was a time for superstition and fortune-telling.

Far Eastern New Year

In the Far East New Year is celebrated by people by first washing their statues of Buddha with scented water.

People throw water over each other at New Year Festivals. They do this in the hope that this will bring them a good rainy season. The reason being so that they have good crops.

One New Year custom celebrated in the Far East is to let pet animals go free. Sometimes people buy a turtle for New Year. They decorate the shell with gold paper. Then they let it go. They are kind to animals as they believe it will bring them good luck in the year to come.

French New Year

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.

German New Year

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 New Year

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 of 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 Year's 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, their 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.

Hindu New Year

Most people in India are followers of the Hindu faith although most of the modern calendar is used for normal everyday business there are various versions of the ancient Hindu calendar are still used to govern the religious festivals.

The Hindu New Year is celebrated differently in the different parts of the country. The customs of the New Year vary from region to region.

Celebration of the Hindu New Year varies based on geographic location. Most Hindus live in India, but many have different traditions. The Hindus of Gujarat, in western India, celebrate the New Year at the end of October, at the same time as the Indian festival of Diwali. For the Diwali celebration, small oil lights are lit all along the rooftops.

In northern India, people wear flowers to celebrate the New Year, commonly in pink, red, purple, or white hues. Hindus in central India display orange flags, flying them from the top of buildings. In southern India, mothers put food, flowers, and small gifts on a special tray. On New Year's morning, children must keep their eyes shut until they have been led to the tray.

There is the Tamil New Year, Bengali New Year, Maharashtra New Year and the Diwalian New Year

Hungarian New Year

In Hungary they burn effigies or a scapegoat known as "*Jack Straw*" which represented the evils and misfortunes of the past year to burn on New Year's Eve. Jack Straw is carried around the village before being burnt.

Indian New Year

The Indian New Year festival is called **Diwali** and is a festival of lights. The festival is celebrated differently in the various districts of India.

The Hindus of the north, **Diwali** is the end of the old year and the start of the new. For three days in late October early November every town and village shines and glows with thousands of lights. Their homes are decorated with little oil lamps known as *diwa*. These little lights are found in temples, houses, along window ledges and along garden paths. In cities electrical lights are used to light up buildings. These are used to drive out evil and is replace evil with goodness.

People try to finish of any uncompleted work as Diwali marks the end of the year. Businesses pay of all debts and new account books are blessed before the New Year. It is a time for new beginnings. People buy new things such as things for their homes or new tools, or even new clothes those who can afford to.

People give cards and gifts are exchanged. They make new years resolutions and forget all quarrels for this time of year is a time to be happy and generous. Even the animals who have been worked are washed, groomed and decorated for the festival.

Diwali is also a religious festival. Hindus believed in the god Prince Rama. He lost his kingdom and his wife was stolen away by a demon named Ravana. After many battles with the demon helped by the monkey warrior *Hanuman*, overcame Ravana and rescued his wife. The Hindus celebrate the happy ending of this story. They recall the sadness and triumph of Rama, and of him being crowned King. Good winning over evil, light over darkness.

Lakshmi the goddess of wealth and good fortune is also honored at this time. The lit lamps show her the way to homes, so that she can bless and grant them success through the year.

In temples and shrines of people's homes, images of the gods are decorated in flowers and fruit is placed at the feet of the statues of the gods as offerings and a prayer is said. This is known as offering *puja*.

In temples there are also ceremonies where the story of Rama and his wife is read a month before the New Year festival. *Bhajans* sacred songs are sung and dancers perform a ceremony called *arti* which is where a lamp is swung before the images of the gods.

Other parts of India also Punjab New Year also have a festival known as Baisakhi.

In Kerala, Southern India, mothers put food, flowers and little gifts on a special tray. On New Year's morning, the children must keep their eyes closed until they have been led to the tray.

In Gujarat lights are a sign of the beginning of a new year.

Iranian New Year

Iranians are mostly Muslims and celebrate the New Year on the first day of their spring.

There festivals known as **Noruz** or **Nowruz** and falls on the 21 March according to the Gregorian calendar. The first month is known as Favaridin and Noruz falls on this day.

They know when the New Year is upon them as in each town and village a cannon is sounded at the precise moment until it is heard they don't start their celebrations. They prepare for several weeks before hand.

In preparing they have to grow grains of wheat, barley or lentils to use as decorations for their houses. This decoration is a symbol for growth and prosperity and must be kept in the house for thirteen day after which it is thrown into the river.

They clean their houses during the days leading up to the New Year and they either make or buy new clothes for themselves and their family. If they cannot afford to much they try to have at least one piece of new clothing often a pair of shoes.

A special table is set up with seven articles which all must begin with the letter "s" for **Haft-sin**. They are:

Sonbul - hyacinth

Sabzeh - green shoots grown from grain

Samanoo - a sweet pudding made of green wheat

Serkeh - vinegar

Sumac - a herb

Seeb - an apple

Senjed - bohemian olives.

Other objects are a bowl of colored eggs, candles, a mirror and a bowl of rose water.

They also must have a copy of their holy book the Koran, on the New Year table.

After the cannon have sounded people visit their relatives to wish them a happy New Year. The elders give the younger ones a silver or gold coin this is known as **aidi**. Everyone then gathers around the New Year table for a special feast, which includes traditional dishes such as Baklava, Nune Shekari which is a sugar biscuits and Badam Choragi which is are almond biscuits.

In Persia now Iran people used to exchange eggs as gifts on New Year's Day, to suggest the idea of new life beginning.

A few weeks before the Iran New Year, people put grains of wheat or barley in a little dish to grow. By the time New Year arrives the grains have produced shoots. This is done to remind people of spring and a new year of life.

Some people in Iran light fires at New Year and jump over them. This is done in hope that they receive good luck.

Irish (Celtic) New Year

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.

Islamic New Year

The Muslims have their own calendar which is based on the cycles of the moon. The calendar consists of twelve months but, only has 354 days unlike other calendars such as the Gregorian or Jewish calendar etc. For this reason the Islamic New Year moves eleven days backwards through the seasons each year.

Muharram is the first month of the Muslim year its first day is celebrated as New Year's Day.

The Islamic New Year throughout the world is held quietly, without the festive atmosphere of other New Year celebrations.

The appearance of the new moon is recorded in the mosques and special prayers are said. The most important part of the New Year is the telling of the story of the Flight of Medina. The story goes over the radio for everyone to hear.

Islamic New Year celebrations in Egypt has a much more festive atmosphere.

Japanese New Year

The Japanese New Year **Oshogatsu** is an important time for family celebrations, when all the shops, factories and offices are closed.

The Japanese celebrate the New Year on January 1, but they also keep their beliefs from Shinto their religion.

To keep out evil spirits, they hang a rope of straw across the front of their houses, which stands for happiness and good luck.

When the New Year begins, the Japanese people begin to laugh, and this is supposed to bring them good luck in the New Year.

In Japan temple bells usher out the old year, and then comes the **joyano-kane** which is the "night-watch bell", this is a series of exactly 108 peals. These, it is said, free the faithful from the 108 "earthly desires" lambasted in the Buddhist canon.

The ringing of the bell 108 times is done to free the year from evil. For those who follow the Shinto religion the house is decorated with evergreen s which are the symbol for eternal life and bamboo which is the symbol for honesty.

The Japanese New year begins on January 1 and lasts for two weeks. These two weeks are full of **hatsu**, portentous "firsts", all to be favored with acute awareness and a sense of the bittersweet nature of first-time-ness.

Hatsu-dori is the year's first cockcrow, **Hatsu-mode** the year's first shrine or temple visit, **goyohajime** the year's first day of business.

The 2nd of January is set down for **kakizome**, "first writing". Each member of the family takes a turn dipping a brush into freshly mixed ink and inscribing a favorite poem or proverb onto a long strip of paper.

Paper lobsters are used as decorations in many Japanese houses at New Year. The reason is that the lobster's curved back resembles an elderly person and every New Year's greeting includes a wish for longevity.

There are two festivals to mark the New Year in Japan these are the Greater and the Lesser. The Greater Festival prayers are offered to the dead and friends exchange ritual gifts and visits. The Lesser Festival prayers for good crops are offered to the god of the rice paddy and a bird-scaring ritual takes place.

Jewish New Year

The Jewish New Year Festival is called **Rosh Hashanah**. The date varies each year, as they have their own calendar which is lunisolar in nature.

The New Year is on the first two days of the seventh month, this was done so that the farmers could visit Jerusalem before the winter rains came. The first ten days of this month are the most holiest.

Tradition speaks of a symbolic book in heaven which was said to have records of those who did good and bad deeds and on **Rosh Hashanah** all people must account to God for their behavior during the past year. However, all people are given ten days before the **New Year** and the **Day of Atonement** or **Yom Kippur** to show they are sorry for any wrong doings they may have done.

They undo all wrong doings by performing good deeds and by thinking about how to live a better life in the future. If they are sincere, God was suppose to forgive them and on **Yom Kippur** he sets down and foretells each person's fate for the next year in the book. He will write them down for a good year.

They send each other cards with the traditional message "May you be written down for a good year." They exchange the same greetings the day before **Rosh Hashanah**, when they attend prayers at the synagogue before returning to their homes for a special New Year Eve meal.

The New Years Eve dinner has, festival candles which are lit and the table is decorated with fresh fruit of the season, especially grapes. Other foods that are served are bread known as **Challah**, honey cake and honey jar as well as fresh fruits. Fish is also served as it symbolizes fruitfulness and plenty.

A special service is held on New Year, which ends in the blowing of the **shofar**. During the service, 100 separate notes may be blown on the shofar. This is the most important ritual to the people who are too ill to attend the service try to find someone to come to their place and blow the shofar for them.

At the end of the ten days the period ends with a repentance culminating on **Yom Kippur** with a 24 hour fast which ends at sunset with a final note on the shofar, signifying the closing of the Book of Life.

Korean New Year

The first day of the lunar New Year is called Sol-nal. This is for families to renew ties and prepare for the new year.

New Year's Eve: People place straw scoopers, rakes or sieves on their doors and walls to protect their families from evil spirit sin the new year.

Everyone dresses in new clothes, the following morning, symbolizing a fresh beginning, and gathers at the home of the eldest male family member. Ancestral memorial rites are held, then the younger generation bows to elders in the family. They wish them good health and prosperity in the coming year. The elders often then give newly minted money or gifts afterwards.

New Year's Day food includes: a bowl of rice cake soup *ttokkuk*. Koreans believe eating this soup will add an extra year of age to your life. Korean age is actually calculated at the New Year. Everyone becomes a year older on New Year's Day!

Favorite games: yut nori, a stick game, and see-sawing on large see-saws setup in the courtyard or in parks.

Mayan New Year

They Mayan people celebrate their New Year during the month of July in the Gregorian calendar.

The Mayans have a number of gods which were worshipped. Each year at New Year a different god was the focus of the New Year. New idols were made, the entrances and implements of the temple were deconsecrated with blue paint which was a sacred color. When everything was ready, the god would enter from the compass direction associated with them.

They would also perform domestic renewal rituals for the New Year such as destroying all their old pottery and fiber mats and putting on new clothes.

Persian New Year

At the announcement of Persian New Year or **Noruz** which is the exact moment of spring, all family members sit around haft-sin table and may read a prayer for health and happiness.

At the announcement of New Year, all members of the family kiss each other. There is also special meal that is prepared for the first day of New Year. The main part of meal includes special rice made with herbs called **sabzi polo**, special fish, and **kuku sabzi**, a quiche made with herbs.

From the first day of New Year to 12th day, people visit each other, usually younger people visit the older family members and relatives first. Children receive **Eidi** which is money given by adults as their New Year's present.

On the 13th day of the New Year called **Sizdeh bedar**, everyone goes to picnics as it is considered unlucky to stay indoors on 13th day. You throw the **Sabzeh** which is a wheat or lentil seeds you grew for haft-sin table in

running water, to remove the bad luck from your home of the previous year. It is common to eat a special noodle soup for **Sizdeh bedar**.

Roman New Year

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.

Russian New Year

In the Soviet Union Santa is replaced with Grandfather Frost. He looks much like Santa Claus but arrives on New Year's Eve with his bag of toys. He wears blue instead of red. Father Frost can punish any evil doer by freezing them. Often kids dance around the tree, tell rhymes to Father Frost then receive their presents.

They have large decorated trees in the centers of the major cities. The most formal New Year's celebration is party held at the Kremlin. As many as 50,000 attendance tickets are sold in the weeks before the annual event.

The Russian meal on New Year's is primarily meat and potato dishes

South African New Year

In South Africa they ring in the New Year with church bells ringing and gunshots being fired.

For those in the Cape Province New Year's Day and Second New Year's Day are full of a carnival atmosphere as there are carnivals where people dress in colorful costumes and dance in streets to the sound of drums.

South Pacific New Year

In the South Pacific region, great importance is attached to the appearance of the group of stars called the Pleiades in mid-October. The reason is that this marks the end of the harvesting season and the end of the year. The festival of **Makahki** is held to celebrate. It is a time for feasting, sports and truce-making.

Spanish New Year

When the clock strikes midnight they eat 12 grapes one with every toll to bring good luck for the next 12 months of the New Year. Sometimes the grapes are washed down with wine. Theater productions and movies are interrupted to carry out this custom.

Swaziland New Year

In Swaziland the harvest festival is called **Newala** or "first fruits" ceremony and takes place at the end of the year. It is a celebration of kingship, traditional has it that the king of Swaziland, the Ngwenyama or "Lion", has powers that are mystical and is believed to embody the Swaziland prosperity and fertility, and therefore it is said that he must have many wives and father many children.

The ceremony consists of many events, which last for up to a month, these include the gathering of foam from the tops of waves, the collection of water from the major rivers by a group of **Bemanti** or Swazi water officials. The day before they leave to collect the water and foam the king goes into seclusion.

Boys who have reached puberty gather lusekwane which is a type of acacia that is considered sacred, and bring it to the cattle pen.

The end of **Newala** occurs when warriors, chanting sacred songs, dance around the **nhlambelo**, the king's sacred enclosure, persuading him to rejoin his people. Eventually the king emerges with a face blackened with medicines, he wears a headdress of large black plumes, and a silver monkey skin belt, bright green grass covers his body. He does a dance that is improvised before his people, and at a point in the dance he eats part of a special pumpkin called **Luselwa** and then he throws the rest of it the warriors. This is supposed to mean that it is time for the new crops to be eaten. A bonfire is held at the end of **Newala** which is suppose to represent the burning of the previous year. It is also believed that rain will fall to quench the flames.

Swiss New Year

In Switzerland people celebrate Old Sylvester's Day on 13 January according to the Julian calendar. People go through the streets dressed in costumes and hats representing good and evil spirits.

In Switzerland people believe good luck comes from letting a drop of cream land on the floor New Years Day. This was said to bring a year of overflowing abundance.

Taiwanese New Year

New Year's Eve is spent bidding farewell to the old year and thanking one's ancestors and the gods for their blessing and protection. Children who have left their homes return on this day to share New Year's Eve Dinner with their families, and for those unable to make the journey, a table setting is placed to symbolize their presence in spirit if not in body. At the end of dinner, the parents and older generation give New Year's money to the children, who have been waiting with growing anticipation for this moment to arrive. Finally, to watch the old year out and bring in the New Year, families stay up until the early hours of New Year's Day.

With the arrival of New Year's Day, life is renewed and the New Year begins to unfold amidst the noise of firecrackers. The Taiwanese begin the day by worshipping their ancestors, following which the streets become filled with people making New Year's visits to friends and relatives and with the lively display of dragon dancing, lion dancing, and other folk activities.

To insure the arrival of luck and wealth in the New Year, several taboos must be heeded. Floors may not be swept and garbage may not be disposed for fear of casting riches out the door, cussing and quarreling is to be avoided at all costs, and anyone who breaks a dish on this day must quickly say **Peace for all time**, to avoid incurring misfortune.

On the second day of the New Year, married women return to their parents home to visit family, on the fourth day, the gods return to the world of the living, and on the fifth day, many new stores and old businesses open their doors for the first time due to the auspiciousness of the day. The festive air of celebration continues in this manner all the way up to the Lantern Festival on the fifteenth day of the New Year before slowly ebbing back to normal life again.

Lantern Festival, also known as **Shang Yuan** Festival, takes place on the fifteenth day of the first moon. Last in a series of springtime celebrations, this **second New Year** is widely celebrated by families all around Taiwan.

On the night of the festival, decorative lanterns depicting birds, beasts, historical figures, and any one of a number of different themes are carried by children or adorn temples. To highlight these glowing works of art, competitions are held.

The night sky on **Lantern Festival** is also illuminated by the **Tainan Yanshui** Fireworks Display and Taipei Pinghsi Sky Lanterns known together as **Fireworks in the South, Sky Lanterns in the North**, as well as many other regional folk activities.

Thai New Year

The Thai New Year festival is called **Songkran** and lasts for three days from 13 to 15 April according to the Gregorian calendar. The customs are many such as people throw water over one another, under the guise of that it will bring good rains in the coming year and all the Buddha statues or images are washed. They visit the monastery to pray and offer gifts of rice, fruit, sweets and other foods for the monks.

Another custom to bring good luck, was to release birds from their cages or fish from their bowls. They carry a fish bowl to the river to release their fish all at the same time as one another.

They might also play the game known as **Saba** which is a game rather like skittles.

The New Year celebrations start by people chasing each other down the street with buckets of water.

This is also a day for good deeds for **karama-polishing** acts.

Along the riverbanks, people gather to build pyramids of sand, called **chedis**, into which they stick tiny colored flags.

Tibetan New Year

The Tibetan New year is known as **Losar**. The Tibetan people are followers of the Buddhist faith. Their leader is the Dalai Lama and when he dies his soul passes into a new-born baby. Care is taken to find a boy at approximately the same time as the death of the lama. The boy is educated and takes up religious duties when he is old enough.

The New Year is celebrated in late January or early February at the time of the new moon.

The last two days of the old year are called Gutor and is spent preparing for the New Year. The first day of Gutor is spent cleaning the house from top to bottom. The kitchen is especially cleaned as it is the heart of the house and is the most important room in the house. The chimney is also cleared of soot. There are special dishes cooked ready for the New Year. One dish is the nine soup which is made from meat, wheat, rice, sweet potatoes, cheese, peas, green peppers, vermicelli and radishes. This dish is served with small dumplings. These dumplings contain such things as scraps of wood, paper or pebbles. These are to foretell the future ahead with it being good or bad. Charcoal meant a black heart.

The second day of Gutor was spent on religious ceremonies. They would go visit the monasteries to give gifts to the monks. They let off firecrackers and torches are used to rid the homes of evil spirits which may be lurking.

On New Year's Day they rise early and bath, put their clothes on. They then honor the gods in their household shrines and place offerings before them. The offerings may consist of an animal and demons from a kind of dough and are known as *torma*. This day is also kept as a family day where gifts are exchanged and meals shared. The foods may consist of a cake called a *Kapse* and also an alcoholic drink called chang which is served warm.

The second day of Losar is a day for visiting friends and going to entertainments.

Vietnamese New Year

The more popular name for the Vietnamese New Year is **Tet**, where as the formal name is **Nguyen-dan**. Tet is a very important festival because it provides one of the few breaks in the agricultural year, as it falls between the harvesting of the crops and the sowing of the new crops.

The Vietnamese prepare well in advance for the New Year by cleaning their houses, polishing their copper and silverware and paying off all their debts.

They observe the custom of the kitchen god **tao** for a week before the New Year, they believe there are three gods represented by the three legs of the cooking equipment used in the kitchen. The middle god is a woman the other two are her husbands. It was once customary to provide the gods with a carp on which to travel. The carp represents the second last stage in the process by which animals are gradually transformed into dragons. They buy the carp from the market, bring it home and place it in a bucket of water to place at the altar of the house before it is later set free.

A special rice pudding is eaten at New Year which must be prepared beforehand. The rice pudding is known as **banh Chung** or **banh Tet**. The pudding contains mung beans and pork. New Year foods such as preserved sweets, beef, chicken, fish, oranges, coconuts, grapefruits and other seasonal fruits, especially watermelon. Watermelon is considered lucky because the flesh is red, so the choice of the melon must be taken carefully so as to find one rich in color. The seeds are often dyed red also and served as delicacies.

The last day of the year a plant such as the bamboo tree is planted in the courtyard of their homes. They decorate the tree with bells, flowers, and red streamers. The decorations are not for decorative purposes but are to guard the family against evil spirits.

During the middle of the day an offering is placed on the altar of the household for the ancestor's of the family. This is done every day throughout the New Year Festival and along with that incense is burnt at the altar.

They believed in the custom of the first person through the door in the New Year will reflect the family's future luck and wealth.

On the first day of the New Year they visit all their closest friends, teachers and their parents. The second day they visit their in-laws and other friends who are not as close. Third day they visit the family of their teacher and their more distant relatives.

On the fourth day the spirits return to heaven and business returns to normal.

They also visit their local temple and they bring back flowers or greenery as a gift from the celestial spirits. This gift will be kept in the house all year.

Welsh New Year

In Wales the boys of the village at around 3 or 4 am on New Year's morning. They would go from house to house using an evergreen twig to sprinkle over the people and then each room of their house. This was believed to bring good luck.

On New Year's Day children from Wales 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.

