

HAPPY NEW YEAR

The origins of NYE traditions

Traditions are the glue that hold many celebrations together. Individuals and families embrace many customs that serve as the script for commemorating year-end holidays.

Some celebrants may adhere to traditions without really knowing how they began or why they continue. Here is a closer look at some of the most popular traditions tied to New Year's Eve, both domestically and around the world.

Drinking champagne

The use of champagne for celebrations is rooted in the Christian ritual of consuming wine during the Eucharist. In the year 496, a wine from the Champagne region of France was offered during the baptism of the Frankish warrior Clovis, according to the Champagne Committee of France. It then became customary for champagne to be used at religious events like consecrations and at coronations or soirees. Eventually the tradition became associated with secular rituals, such as celebrating the new year.

Food

People of Japanese her-

itage might eat soba noodles on New Year's Eve. The Toshikoshi Soba, which means "year crossing buckwheat noodle," denotes the crossing from one year to the next. Nibbling the noodles represent traveling from one year to the next as well as letting go of the previous year's regrets.

In Spain, people gobble grapes to bring good luck in the coming year. The goal is to eat 12 green grapes during the 12 remaining seconds until the New Year. Those able to do so will have 12 months of good fortune.

Dropping the ball

Revelers have long watched the giant ball drop in New York City's Times Square in person and on television. This tradition may be rooted in the custom of sailors using "time balls" to set their own timepieces while at sea. These chronometers were employed by using a spyglass to scan the harbor looking for balls that were dropped into the water at certain times, PBS reports. The first ball was installed in 1829 in Portsmouth, England. The Times Square ball was first used in 1907, according to



the Times Square Alliance.

Making resolutions

Historians trace the making of resolutions to the Ancient Babylonians. Citizens made spoken resolutions during their new year festival known as "Akitu." This ritual required making an oath to the sitting or new king. Romans also swore oaths of loyalty to the emperor when the New Year started.

Fireworks and noisemakers

Fireworks are a big part of celebrations and are not to be outdone on New Year's Eve. Fireworks were

invented in the seventh century in China. According to Anthony Aveni, an astronomer and anthropologist at Colgate University, the fireworks were designed to ward off evil spirits. In cultures around the world, fireworks, banging drums and other efforts were used to chase away spooky creatures, especially during the transitional period that is the passing of the new year. Today fireworks and noisemakers are employed not for scaring away spirits, but rather to add to the revelry. New Year's Eve traditions abound, and many of these annual customs have interesting origin stories.

6 popular health-based resolutions

Resolutions that focus on health and fitness are made each year. Numerous people are eager to lose weight, improve their physical fitness levels or even stop habits that can hinder their mental or physical wellness. As the new year ticks closer, individuals can explore these popular resolutions as they get on the path to better health.

1. Commit to quit. The American Cancer Society says about half of all Americans who keep smoking will die due to the habit. Smoking kills more Americans than alcohol, car accidents, guns, HIV, and illegal drugs combined. Smoking not only causes cancer, it also damages nearly every part the body, including the bones, reproductive organs, mouth, skin, eyes, and blood vessels. Quitting can help reverse the effects of years of smoking.

2. Limit alcohol intake. The phrase "everything in moderation" applies to alcohol consumption. Excessive consumption of alcohol can lead to liver and

kidney damage. When these organs are not functioning properly, they cannot filter toxins out of the body, resulting in potentially irreparable damage. Resolve to cut down on alcohol consumption if you are drinking more than two drinks per day.

3. Address stress. It's easy to underestimate the effects of stress on the mind and body. Left unchecked, stress can contribute to heart disease, obesity, diabetes, and high blood pressure, says the Mayo Clinic. Resolving to reduce stress by adopting certain techniques can improve self-esteem and mood.

4. Exercise more readily. Physician Partners of America states that exercise can improve mood and sleep, help people control their weight, reduce the risk of heart disease, improve bone and muscle strength, and potentially extend their lives. Resolving to exer-



cise doesn't require drastic changes. Small steps can add up to big results.

5. Visit the doctor. Too often people put off going to the doctor until something is wrong with their health. It is much better to be proactive and avoid illness through testing and conversations with a physician. Doctors may be able to recognize symptoms and risk factors that could be indicative of future illness. Routine physical exams also will check cholesterol

and glucose levels, monitor blood pressure and include other preventive care options.

6. Improve your diet. Eating more meals made at home and incorporating more fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grains and lean protein into your meals can improve overall health.

Healthy changes top the list of New Year's resolutions each year. Certain resolutions can greatly improve overall health.

IT'S NEW YEAR'S TIME!

There's no time like the present, to let you know how much we appreciate your past support. Happy New Year and many thanks!



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