

## Did you ring in the New Year right?

Our new year's celebrations are behind us, but now one question remains. What will the rest of the year be like? Will we be lucky, will we be successful at work, will we find love?

The truth is in North America people mainly hope for a good year ahead, but our customs do little to encourage this. Our tradition is to share a kiss with someone at midnight, but most people don't know the symbolism behind it. Along with bringing love, the kiss is said to help rid people of bad memories from their past. Mostly though, it's just about another night to party.

In other countries around the world, the new year's celebrations are more important to their way of life, their actions that night setting the stage for the year to come. Oh sure, many places still throw large parties as well, but their traditions, like our midnight kisses, are sometimes taken very seriously.

In the Philippines, a big celebration is very important. In fact, the louder the better with them, as the noise of firecrackers and celebrations are thought to drive away any bad spirits. There is also a long standing tradition of wearing polka dots, which are said to bring good luck financially.

In Mexico, what's underneath is more important. Wearing yellow underwear is said to attract luck, while red underwear will attract love in the new year. Some also sweep towards the outside of their houses to sweep out bad things from the year before.

Starting the new year with a mouthful of grapes is not uncommon in Spain, where at midnight people eat 12 grapes, one for each stroke of the clock at midnight. This is a tradition that began in the early 1900s. If a person can finish eating their 12 grapes by the time the clock stops chiming, it is said they will have 12 months of good luck.

Although it is less common now, Denmark doorsteps could once be quite a mess on New Year's Day. Friends and neighbours traditionally throw dishes at each other's doors and the bigger the mess, the better. It meant you had more friends.

Starting fresh is of big importance in Ireland, where it is traditional to scour their homes clean before the new year. At midnight it is also considered lucky for people to enter a home through the front door and exit through the back door, while single women go to sleep with mistletoe under their pillows to bring dreams of their future husbands.

Whatever your tradition, old or new, Happy New Year!

**By Emily Wood**