

under the sun

THE BRUNSWICK BEACON
THURSDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1994

B INSIDE THIS SECTION:
Plant Doctor, 5
TV Listings, 6-7

Best Of Luck In '95

New Year's Foods, Rituals Are Said To Bring Good Fortune, Prosperity

BY LYNN CARLSON

Even people who don't think twice about walking under a ladder or opening an umbrella indoors know better than to trifle with the fickle finger of fate on New Year's Day.

If you're in the South, that means you'd better sit down to a bowl of black-eyed peas, a mess of collard greens and some variety of pork on New Year's Day to get yourself a shot at riches and good luck for the next 364 days.

That goes double this year—in a few weeks it will be Chinese New Year and, you guessed it, 1995 is the Year of the Pig.

The peas represent coins and the greens, folding money—everyone knows that. But how did pork come to be associated with good fortune, wealth and prosperity?

Dietician Robin Kline with the Pork Information Bureau (yes, there really is such a thing) says it makes sense for the pig to symbolize good luck because you can eat, as the old saying goes, everything but the oink.

"For many cultures," Kline said, "having a pig guaranteed you would eat well. What could be better luck?"

As a result, many New Year's traditions involve pork and pigs.

In Austria the new year begins with a meal of roast suckling pig, and the family decorates the table with little edible pigs made of marzipan, chocolate, cookie dough or fudge.

In German bakeries, pig-shaped breads are common for New Year's. In Sweden (but not, alas, at the home of the Swedish-descended Carlsons) good luck comes from a New Year's Day breakfast-in-bed of sausage on a bun and an apple.

As for the Year of the Pig, that's been good luck since the Chinese first domesticated swine seven thousand years ago. Having a pig in Chinese culture was so important that the Chinese were often buried with their herd, so hogs were with them in the afterlife. The Chinese still consider the pig to be an essential part of life, and the meal at Chinese New Year usually includes a healthy helping of pork dumplings which, if you've ever tasted them, are even more taste-tempting than a helping of collards spiked with pepper vinegar.

If you're a Carolinian and a traditionalist, you'll probably get your black-eyed peas in one steaming, hearty pot of Hoppin' John, a simple but delicious and deeply revered entree of black-eyed peas and rice, often, but not always, combined with sausage, hog jowl, neckbone or some more uptown variety of pork such as loin or tenderloin.

If you're a South Carolinian, you wouldn't dream of eating legumes without rice; according to an ages-old joke, South Carolinians have two things in common with the Chinese—eating a lot of rice and worshipping their ancestors.

Rice having first entered the colonies from Asia via Low Country South Carolina, it's no wonder that rice dishes (and ancestor-worshipping) are often associated with Charleston.

If you're ready for a beans, rice or pork dish that's a little more exotic than Hoppin' John, here are some



FEIJOADA, Brazil's most famous regional dish, combines beans and pork, both foods traditionally associated with luck and prosperity

recipes supplied by the aforementioned pork experts. The first recipe is for feijoada, Brazil's most famous regional dish.

FEIJOADA

1 pound dried black beans
Water, enough to cover beans
6 cups water
1 pound boneless ham, cut into ½-inch cubes
1 pound boneless pork loin, cut into ½-inch cubes
¾ pound hot Italian sausage, sliced into 1-inch pieces
¾ pound smoked sausage, sliced into 1-inch pieces
1 pint cherry tomatoes, stemmed
1 onion, peeled and chopped
1 tsp. red pepper flakes
6 cloves garlic, peeled and minced
¼ tsp. orange zest
Cover the beans with water and

soak overnight OR cover them with boiling water and let stand two hours. Drain.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. In a large Dutch oven, combine beans, the 6 cups of water and remaining ingredients. Bring to a boil, skimming if necessary. Cover and transfer to oven. Bake 1½ hours; remove cover and bake another 30 minutes, stirring occasionally.

Serve immediately, with cornbread, if desired. Or allow to cool slightly, then cover and refrigerate overnight. Remove any fat from surface. Reheat feijoada slowly. Serves 12.

CHINATOWN RED-COOKED PORK TREASURES

2 pounds boneless pork loin, cut into ½ inch cubes
2 Tbsp. brown sugar

2 Tbsp. hoisin sauce
2 Tbsp. soy sauce
1 Tbsp. Worcestershire sauce
1 Tbsp. toasted sesame oil
1 shallot, chopped
2 tsp. five-spice powder
2 tsp. grated ginger root
2 cloves garlic, minced

In a 1-gallon self-sealing plastic bag, combine all ingredients and mix well. Seal bag and marinate in the refrigerator 8-12 hours or overnight. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Remove pork cubes from marinade, discarding marinade. Pat pork dry with paper towel; place cubes in a single layer, not touching, in a shallow baking pan and bake at 350 degrees for 25-30 minutes, until pork is just tender and lightly browned. Remove to serving platter or chaffing dish and serve hot as an appetizer.

Makes 16 servings with 97 calories and 4 fat grams each.

JERK RIBS

2 pounds pork back ribs
2 Tbsp. dried minced onion
1 Tbsp. onion powder
4 tsp. ground thyme
2 tsp. salt
2 tsp. ground allspice
½ tsp. ground nutmeg
½ tsp. ground cinnamon
1 Tbsp. sugar
2 tsp. black pepper
1 tsp. cayenne

In a small jar with tight-fitting lid, shake together all dry ingredients until well-blended. Rub dry mixture onto all surfaces or ribs.

Grill ribs over indirect heat in covered grill, turning occasionally, until ribs are very tender, about 1½ hours (or roast ribs on rack in shallow pan in 350 degree oven for 1½ hours). Cut into 1- or 2-rib portions to serve.

Makes 10 servings.

SPICY BEAN PATE

15 ounce can chick peas, drained
¼ cup water
1 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice
1 cup sour cream
1 garlic clove, minced
2 tsp. chicken bouillon granules
1 tsp. chili powder
½ tsp. hot pepper sauce
½ tsp. cumin
½ tsp. cayenne
Fresh parsley, small red pepper for garnish

Blend together all ingredients in a

blender or food processor. Pour mixture into a small bowl, cover and refrigerate 2-4 hours. Garnish with parsley and red pepper; serve with crackers and vegetable relish tray.

Makes 2 cups, about 16 appetizer servings. Calories per serving: 60. Fat grams: 3 (less if you use fat-free sour cream).

Just for good luck, here's a meatless Hoppin' John recipe for you newcomers to the Carolinas. It makes a lot but is easily halved if a dozen or so servings exceeds your needs.

HOPPIN' JOHN

1 pound dried black-eyed peas
1 large onion, peeled and finely chopped
2 Tbsp. vegetable oil
1 tsp. garlic salt
1 tsp. oregano
5 cups chicken stock
8 cups hot cooked rice

Soak peas overnight with water to cover by 2 inches. Drain peas and set aside. In large Dutch oven, saute onion in oil until transparent; add peas, seasonings and chicken stock. Cover and cook slowly until peas are tender, about 30-40 minutes. Either stir in the rice and heat through or serve the peas over rice. Serve with hot sauce—Durkee Red Hot or Green Tabasco are highly recommended—and garnish with finely chopped green onions.

With one-half cup peas and one-half cup rice, a serving has 182 calories, 2 fat grams and no cholesterol if chicken stock is defatted.

When In Spain, Eat Grapes At Midnight; In Sicily, It's Lasagna

Foods and rituals throughout the world are associated with good luck in the new year. In Spain, for example, it is traditional to eat 12 grapes at midnight, one at each chime, to usher in the new year. (Somebody ought to tell those folks about kisses and champagne.)

Here are some others:

- **Austria:** The suckling pig is the symbol of 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.
- **England:** The British place their fortunes for the coming year in the hands of their first guest. They believe the first visitor of each year should be male and bearing gifts. Traditional gifts are coal for the fire, a loaf for the table and a drink for the master. For good luck, the guest should enter through the front door and leave through the back. Guests who are empty-handed or unwanted are not allowed to enter first.
- **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 12th 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.
- **Greece:** A special New Year's bread is baked with a coin buried in the dough. The first slice is for the Christ child, the second for the father of the household and the third slice is for the house. If the third slice holds the coin, spring will come early that year.
- **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.
- **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 luck almond.

Winter Wanderings Reveal Birds' Habits

BY BILL FAVER

Now that the winter solstice has passed and days will gradually lengthen in relation to darkness, we can expect to see our usual birds in our winter wanderings.

Long shadows caused by vivid evening sunsets may reveal herons or egrets or pelicans resting after a day of feeding activity. Or dull gray skies can almost camouflage the small gatherings of dull gray birds along the surf.

Such wanderings might reveal a lone hawk high atop a leafless tree or a utility pole, watching carefully for some slight movement in the grass below.

Now that leaves have fallen, we can find bird nests gently placed along a branch or in the forks of a tree and even

tell from the shape and the size who might have put it there.

Overhead activity is easy to observe, too, as we can watch a flock of geese, or ducks, or white ibis as they move from rookery or staging grounds to places they find to feed.

And there are still some terns searching for minnows in almost any body of water. Gulls and grackles can dot the sand as they wait for the tide to recede to once again resume their feeding.

Winter wanderings are a good activity for us as we begin the New Year and once again try to spend some time in the great out-of-doors. We can learn to appreciate those birds we find and note their winter behavior. And we can look forward, with them, to longer days and the promises of another year.



FAVER



LONG SHADOWS of winter can lead us to pelicans in the sunset.

PHOTO BY BILL FAVER