

Five Festive Facts about New Year's Day

It's amazing how the beginning of a new year can bring such a newfound sense of responsibility, renewed hope in lost endeavors, and pledges to change the way we think, act and feel.

Of course, by mid-January those hopes and pledges usually dissolve into empty promises, leaving only a foggy memory of a really awesome New Year's Eve party.

That said, here are a few fun facts about celebrating a new year that might stay with you:

1. The first New Year's Eve ball was made because of a ban on fireworks.

In 1904, the owner of the New York Times threw a huge New Year's Eve party with an enormous fireworks display. This became a tradition—hence the Times Square party every year—until 1907, when NYC banned fireworks.

So that everyone would have something pretty to look at when midnight struck, a huge ball was made of wood and iron and illuminated with 100 light bulbs.

That first ball weighed in at 700 pounds, but that's nothing—the current Times Square ball tips the scales at 12,000 pounds and is made of Waterford Crystal.

2. The most popular New Year's resolution is to lose weight.

The biggest empty promise of the new year is to watch those empty calories. Which makes sense, when you consider that more than 60 percent of Americans are overweight or obese.

The other top five resolutions in no particular order are: to quit smoking, get a better job, go back to school, and save money.

3. Pork isn't the only traditional New Year's food.

Growing up in my house, January 1 meant a dinner of pork and sauerkraut. But if you grew up in the southern United States, it's a safe bet that black-eyed peas and ham were a part of the feast.

In Spain, people down a dozen grapes just before midnight, while in Sweden and Norway, they serve rice pudding with an almond hidden in it. Whomever finds the nut can expect 12 months of good fortune!

4. You know that song that plays every New Year's Eve, that no one really knows the lyrics to?

It's called "Auld Lang Syne," and it's actually a Scottish folk song. It was first published in 1796 when a poet named Robert Burns transcribed it for a book about Scottish music.

The song's title literally translates to "times gone by", and if you ever really listen to[or read] the lyrics, you'll see that the song promises to remember friends and times in the past with fondness.

5. Approximately one billion people watch the ball drop on New Year's Eve.

This means that people all over the world are watching as the ball in Times Square makes its 275-foot descent at midnight on December 31. Up to one million people pack themselves into Times Square to watch the ball drop in person, and to hear the announcer count down the seconds to the new year. It is often chilly or rainy or snowy—I recommend watching on the couch snuggled in a fleece blanket.

For one night, at least, revelers gather and hope for a better future, saying goodbye to a year of hurricanes, tsunamis, relentless heat, or economic turmoil that many would rather forget. They hope the stroke of midnight will change their fortunes.

We know God is watching us and we hope the next year will be better. We are starting off optimistic and praying it lasts. Those are words of Wisdom we all need to remember.

Have a safe and happy new year! God bless us every one!