

NEW YEAR'S EVE
FOOD TRADITIONS

Guess what the dish is and where it came from!



Hoppin' John

- This Southern menu staple, usually a mix of black-eyed peas, rice and pork, originated with enslaved Africans in the United States in the 19th century, most notably in the South Carolina Low Country.
- The dish was likely linked to New Year's celebrations because enslaved Africans prepared and ate it during a period when they had some rare time off from harvesting and planting. The dish may have then have developed into a good-luck meal, according to the [*Washington Post*](#).



King Cake

- Louisianans and Mardis Gras fans know to start their year off with a sweet ringed king cake topped with colorful icing and sprinkles and baked with a trinket, such as a plastic baby, hidden inside. The lucky person who finds the trinket is named "king" or "queen" for the day.
- These cakes are traditionally eaten on January 6, known as Twelfth Night or Epiphany, the Catholic celebration of the Magi's gifts to baby Jesus on the 12th night after his birth.
- According [to NPR](#), simple oval cakes eaten on Twelfth Night date back to Old World Europe, and the tradition was eventually brought to America.



Tamales

- Tamales, those bundles of masa stuffed with meat, wrapped in corn husks and steamed, have come to symbolize family, as generations often gather in the kitchen to make the labor-intensive food that will be eaten all holiday season long. In Mexico, that spans from December 12, the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, to January 6, Three Kings' Day.
- Tamales date to 8000 to 5000 B.C. and Mesoamerican cultures including the Mayans and Aztecs, and, according to [*The New York Times*](#), they arrived in U.S. points of entry, such as Los Angeles and San Antonio, and were sold by street vendors in the 1870s. Migrant Mexican workers helped the dish spread to other areas of the country.



Pickled Herring

- Fish, symbolic of fertility, long life and bounty (plus the color silver represents fortune), is a popular New Year's Eve dish in many cultures, and especially so for those of Scandinavian, German and Polish descent. Pickled herring, a small oily fish, is often served at New Year's Eve smorgasbords.
- Herring has been a standard Scandinavian, Dutch and Northern European dish since the Middle Ages, due in part to its abundance—which it has become symbolic of, making it a popular, lucky New Year tradition. It's especially carried on in the U.S. in states such as Minnesota, Wisconsin and Iowa, which have large Norwegian populations.



Sweet Pretzels

- German-Americans who aren't eating pork and sauerkraut on January 1 are probably enjoying a special New Year's pretzel instead. The German good-luck symbol, which some say dates back to the early 20th century in [Sandusky, Ohio](#), is more sweet than savory, topped with a glaze rather than salt and often served at breakfast or brunch. [Pittsburgh magazine](#) says the pretzel, which can also be punctuated with nuts and candied fruit, is said to bring good luck for the coming year.