

NEW YEAR'S DAY MEAL

Posted on May 2, 2024 by admin



The Traditional Southern New Years Day Meal:

A New Year... a time for new beginnings. What is it about being able to start off a new year?

Maybe you had a great year and hate to see it end – or – maybe you just can't wait for New Years

Day to hopefully wipe the slate clean and just start all over again. Either way, there's just something special about New Years Day.

Here in the South, we try to start it off... with a plan. A plan that hopefully includes good health, good luck and good fortune. Oh yeah, and good times with family and friends.

Growing up, I always heard that it meant you would have "Good Luck" in the New Year if a MAN visited your house first on New Year's Day. I'm not sure where that came from. Maybe it was just a woman's way of thinking as she hoped the New Year might finally bring her a husband.

Secondly, you always had to serve up the Traditional Southern New Years Day Meal. What is that you ask?

Collard Greens

Black Eye Peas

Hog Jowl

Corn Bread

You can click on any of the links above to see the complete, step-by-step, photo illustrated recipe.

It's a simple meal, it's Southern, and it's really good.

There are many varied stories about each particular part of the plate above. Each is suppose to represent good luck and fortune going into the New Year. Just how and when it all started will always be up for debate I guess. Nonetheless, I'll give it a go.

Collard Greens:

The collard greens are supposed to represent folding money. Collards are green, so is our folding money. It's all about wealth, prosperity and good fortune as the New Year begins. Some folks say the more collards you eat on New Year's Day, the more prosperous you will become during the year ahead.

I've posted a recipe for collard greens here on Taste of Southern. If you've read that, you will already know that I just personally DO NOT like collards. It ain't a secret in any way or form. I hope

you'll read the post however, just to see how much I hate them and to learn why I made cooking collard greens the very FIRST post to start out our Taste of Southern website.

I will take a bite ever so often, mostly on New Year's Day, but as for eating a bunch of them... well, maybe that explains my life of prosperity. My mama loved them by the way.

Black Eye Peas:

The peas are also supposed to be a symbol of good luck. Again, the more of them you eat, the more prosperity you'll experience.

If you search the internet, you'll find various stories as to why this is supposed to be true. One of those is going back to Civil War times when the Union troops stripped the countryside of all stored food, crops, livestock and whatever else they could not carry away. Northerners it seems, considered black eye peas, field peas, and field corn to only be good for feeding animals... thus... they didn't steal it or destroy it.

As the story goes, this then was the only food, along with maybe some salt pork, that was available at the time and Southern soldiers lived off it for awhile. It was their good luck to have had it.

I've read that some people thought placing a coin in the pot of cooked peas was also part of the tradition. The person that found the coin in their plate was considered to be even more likely to prosper. Mama never did this at our house so I have nothing to go by in that respect.

Peas also swell when they cook. This again was a sign of increase.

Hog Jowl:

Hog Jowl is pork. You could use ham, bacon, tenderloin or fatback along with your meal.

The important thing is to include pork as the meat of the day as opposed to some other animal meat. Pigs it seems, root or forage in a forward direction. This moving forward is seen as a symbol of moving forward in the New Year. Serving chicken, or a winged animal that flies, would represent your fortune as possibly flying away from you. So, make it pork, whatever the cut of choice might be. Mostly, it adds good flavor as a seasoning for your collards or black eye peas.

Hog Jowl is usually smoked, salted and cured. It's like bacon, only it has more fat than it has meat. You can slice it up thin, fry it and just enjoy it as a meat addition to your meal. Or, cut it into larger portions and add it to a pot of vegetables for flavor as a seasoning.

You'll probably need to boil it some ahead of adding your peas to the pot to extract more of its flavor. After you're done, you can just remove it all together prior to serving. Or, you may want to cut the boiled piece up, removing most of the fat and keeping the meatier parts and tossing them back into the pot.

Corn Bread:

Corn bread is just a good addition to any Southern meal. Folks will argue over whether it should be white or yellow. The yellow corn bread is thought to represent gold... thus adding more of a chance of good fortune and prosperity to the New Year.

Baking your cornbread in a round skillet forms a circle, like a cake. It's a continuous circle of prosperity.

A Poor Man's Meal:

Many would consider this type of meal to be a "poor man's meal." It was often thought that if you "Eat poor on New Years, you'll eat fat the rest of the year."

Whatever your reasons, eating this traditional New Year's Day meal is a great way to start off any New Year. It's just the good thoughts behind starting off another year with a hope for prosperity and good fortune.

You'll find complete recipes for each part of your Traditional Southern New Years Day Meal right here on Taste of Southern. And of course, we'll provide full photo and step-by-step instructions to help you prepare it.

Why not make this the year you start some new traditions at your house. Cook up our New Years Day Meal for your family. Just don't forget the Sweet Tea.

Let's Get Cooking!

I'd love to hear your thoughts on our New Years Day Meal menu. Is it a part of your family traditions? Please share your comments below. Thank You.