

**NEW YEAR'S RITUALS AROUND THE WORLD:** Depending on your religion and cultural heritage, the New Year may be celebrated anytime between January and December. Often tied to the reaping of the harvest and the planting of new crops, plant-based foods play a significant role in the celebrations.

### **HIDE AND SEEK**

In many cultures, it's custom to conceal a token inside bread or pastry, blessing the one who finds it with prosperity in the coming year. Armenians bake a coin into their traditional flat bread; Italians hide a bean in their *Torta della Befana*; Greeks serve *Vassilopitta*, with a coin tucked inside; Scandinavians hide an almond in their rice pudding; and Mexicans hide a doll inside their *King's Cake*, the recipient of which becomes king for the day!

### **AND THEN THERE WERE NONE**

The Spanish "good luck" ritual to eat twelve grapes at midnight — one each time the clock chimes — is shared by the people of Portugal, Mexico, the Philippines, and Peru, the latter of which add a thirteenth grape for good measure.

### **SPLISH SPLASH**

The Water Festival is a common New Year custom in such countries as Thailand, Burma, Cambodia, and Laos. Symbolizing renewal, the water in Cambodia is colored pink, red, or yellow to symbolize the hope for a "colorful future."

### **SPILL THE BEANS**

The legume serves as good luck sign in many countries' festivities. In many regions of Italy, it's believed that eating lentils will bring good fortune all year. Argentineans believe that eating beans signifies that you will keep your job or find a better one. In the southern U.S., it's traditional to eat black-eyed peas and turnip greens, the peas representing coins and the greens dollars.

### **FOR THE ANIMALS**

Though the Buddhist custom of releasing captive animals in East and Southeast Asia is problematic because of unintended consequences, it's a New Year ritual borne out of compassion. Polish people also celebrate animals by baking bread shaped into different animals and giving them as gifts along with good wishes.

### **IT'S VEGAN!**

Traditional foods served on the New Year just so happen to be vegan or can easily be made such.

Armenia: Dolmas

Japan: Zouni (vegetable soup), Soba Noodles, and Mochi

Ukraine: Kutya (boiled wheat, with raisins and poppy seeds)

Denmark: Marzipan Ring Cake

Ireland: Christmas Bread

Jewish New Year (Rosh Hashanah): Challah Bread

Iran: Baklava

Scotland: Bannock (oat cake) and whiskey

Everywhere: Champagne!

*Colleen Patrick-Goudreau is the founder of Compassionate Cooks ([compassionatecooks.com](http://compassionatecooks.com)), has appeared on the Food Network, and is the author of [The Joy of Vegan Baking: Compassionate Cooks' Traditional Treats and Sinful Sweets](#).*