

New Year's Traditions

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Hi, everyone! Welcome back and Happy New Year! I know many of you went to the shrine to pray. It's a Japanese New Year tradition! This week, I want to tell you about New Year's traditions from around the world.

Many Asian countries are the first to greet the New Year. In China, people paint their front door red as a symbol of happiness and good fortune. In Myanmar (ミャンマー), during the traditional Thingyan festival, people splash water (水をはねかける) on each other in order to start the new year with a purified soul. In Singapore, wishing spheres (願いを叶えてくれる球) containing people's hopes for the new year are released onto the Singapore River. The wishes are written on the white balloons.

In Europe, many traditions involve food. In Germany, people welcome in the new year by eating a donut filled with jam. As a joke, some donuts are filled with mustard instead, and it is bad luck to eat one of these. In Spain, people eat 12 grapes in time with the twelve chimes of the clock at midnight. It's believed that this will give them a happy year to come. In Scotland, there is the tradition of "first footing". The first person to enter a house after midnight brings luck with them. The luckiest guest is a dark-haired man with a gift of coal.

In Brazil, people throw white flowers into the ocean as an offering to the Goddess of the Sea in the hopes that she'll make their wishes for the new year come true. In Chile, some people go to the graveyards so that they can celebrate with their deceased relatives (亡くなっている親族). In Mexico, people decorate their homes with different colors. Red is for love, yellow is for work and green is for money.

In many English-speaking countries, there is a large ball that slowly drops at midnight or a clock that counts down the time. When the clock hits midnight, there are fireworks and the song "Auld Lang Syne" (「蛍の光」) will play, which means "Times Gone By". Also at midnight, many couples kiss and then kiss their friends and family on the cheek, wishing them a Happy New Year. So, which country would you want to celebrate the new year in? Well, that's all for this time! I'll be back next week!

happy new year