



## From the Editor's desk...

Dear colleagues,

New Year 2020 is around the corner.

An attractive number.

A new beginning. Writing new/ fresh chapters in our book of life.

New resolutions. Renewed and new hopes.

Fresh experiences.

Opportunities to put behind our misses and failures.

Learning from the past – both our successes and mistakes and making sure we do not repeat them!

Hoping to find ways to alleviate pain and sorrow and grow stronger.

Surging ahead, treading tough paths and overcoming bottlenecks.

Finding new ways of doing things. Looking for improvements all the time.

Not getting bogged down when knocked out – to stand up! To run!

Turning dreams into reality.

Taking some 'me' time, at least once in a while, and rejuvenating.

Making a difference!

Playing the various roles, we don, well!

Taking every day and every minute as an opportunity that should not be missed!

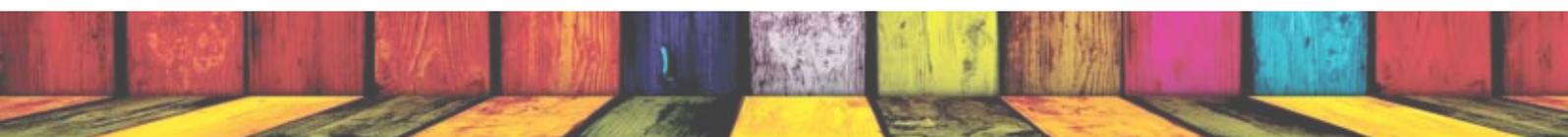
Treading towards success!

All of these and more are my wishes for you and your families for 2020.

Enjoy our New Year Special with information on Christmas and New Year celebrations around the world.

God Bless!

*Aaneda Jagan*





## Christmas isn't a season. It's a feeling.



Come December and what comes to one's mind is the figure of Santa and Christmas!

Christmas symbolises the spirit of generosity, unselfish love, charity and forgiveness.

All of us know that Christmas falls on the 25th of December every year to commemorate the birth of Lord Jesus Christ, the central figure of Christianity. While celebrations begin on the eve of Christmas on the 24th of December, they continue till the New Year's Day on the 1st of January.

During this period, people across the world make merry, party and exchange season's greetings and gifts.

And what is Christmas without the star, Christmas tree, cakes

and carols and the jolly old Santa Claus—the mystical character who distributes gifts for children?

While historians claim that the first Christmas was celebrated in Rome circa 336 AD, there is still controversy on the exact date of Christ's birth. But, it was decided to celebrate Christmas on the 25th December after a consensus was reached by Christian leaders and this was gradually accepted by the Western World and the Eastern churches as well.

The history of Christmas can be traced to some popular festivals celebrated by early civilisation – Mesopotamian New Year, Persian and Babylonian Sacaea, Solstice winter by the Europeans, Yuletide of Scandinavia and the Roman Saturnalia.



## The story of Christmas

The story dates back to some 4000 years ago to the Roman era, with Augustus Caesar as the ruler and Israel, governed by King Herod.

In the small village of Galilee in Nazareth, Israel lived Mary a young virgin, engaged to be married to Joseph, a Jewish carpenter. Story goes that an angel visited Mary in her dreams and told her that she was chosen to bear the Son of God and his name was to be Jesus. And thus Mary miraculously became pregnant through the Holy Spirit. An angel also visited Joseph in his dream and verified that Mary had conceived miraculously and he took Mary to be his wife.

When Augustus Caesar declared that every person in the entire Roman empire should register at the place to which they belonged, Mary and Joseph had to go to Bethlehem to register and Mary was close to giving birth. They travelled many days and nights, were turned away from many places and finally reached an inn, when the inn-keeper directed them to the nearby caves where shepherds would stay with their cows and sheep. Mary gave birth



to a son. They named him Jesus, as the angel had said.

When Jesus was born, there appeared a shining star over Bethlehem and an angel appeared before the shepherds and said, “Fear not. For I bring you tidings of great joy. For unto you is born this day in Bethlehem – a Saviour who is Christ the Lord.”

## Christmas traditions

Decorating the Christmas tree is one of the most popular traditions of Christmas. The fragrance and essence of the Christmas trees have been an integral part of the

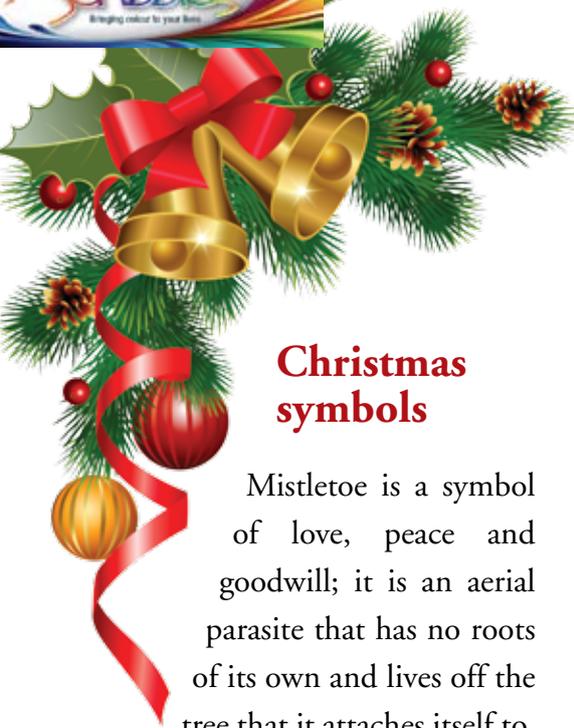
celebrations as well as of the family unit since time immemorial. The celebrations usually begin with the selection of the tree, and proceed with the decorations till

the day of Christmas. Gifts are placed under the tree, as family and friends gather around to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Fir trees play a symbolic part because they stay green and alive when other plants appear dead and bare during winter. They represent everlasting life and hope for the return of spring.

The Christmas star has traditionally been associated with the spirit of the celebration and the significance of the star can be found in the story related to the birth of Jesus Christ. The Christmas star symbolises high hopes and high ideals.





## Christmas symbols

Mistletoe is a symbol of love, peace and goodwill; it is an aerial parasite that has no roots of its own and lives off the tree that it attaches itself to.

It is believed that the plant has special healing powers for everything from female infertility to poison ingestion.



## Christmas tree, Santa and gifts

Children all over the world continue the tradition of hanging Christmas stockings. Originally, children simply used one of their everyday socks, but eventually special Christmas stockings were created for this purpose.

This plays an important role as it is believed to bring good luck. The Christmas symbol of ivy stands for the eternal life in pagan religions, whereas Romans believed laurel was sacred to the Sun God Apollo. Rosemary was used during the Middle Ages by housewives to spread on the floor at Christmas.

The evergreen Holly symbolises eternal life. Druids believed the Holly or Ilex was sacred. They thought this plant stayed green year round because it was especially favoured by the Sun. Christian legend says one winter night, the Holly miraculously

grew leaves out of season in order to hide the Holy Family from Herod's soldiers. Since then, it has been evergreen as a token of Christ's gratitude.

The Poinsettia flower is small, green or yellow and situated in the middle of the bracts. The Poinsettia is named after Joel R. Poinsettia, who served as USA's first minister to Mexico, from 1825-1829.

The Glastonbury thorn legends ties in Christ's death as well as the celebration of his birth.

Widely known, the customs of Christmas wreath come from the traditional celebration of the birth of Christ, which was later on combined with the harvest and winter solstice festivals in ancient Rome.

Children anywhere in the world are excited and joyous on receiving Christmas toys as a gift. Available in almost infinite variety of choices, Christmas toys are for every age of childhood, and there are many different kinds for each age.

And who else can bring gifts to children but Santa Claus – whose personality is well etched out and is a very attractive icon of children. Christmas is a festivity most awaited by children and this has immensely helped in the survival of the legends of Saint Nicholas or Santa Claus and particularly his reputation as a bringer of gifts. The American version of St. Nicholas, or Santa Claus originally came from the Dutch version called Sinterklaas. The Dutch settlers in New York brought this fun and lively tradition to America.





## Christmas cake

The story of the plum cake begins in medieval England, where it was a popular tradition to observe a period of self-denial, fasting, and abstinence from every kind of indulgence in the weeks leading to Christmas. The abstinence and occasional fasting was supposed to prepare the body for the overindulgence and excesses of Christmas. With the passage of time, and as more ingredients made their way into the porridge, it started to resemble its current form.

It is not clear, however, how it came to be called the plum pudding, or plum cake. Some believe that raisins, or currants, were also referred to as plums (or plumb) in England. The recipe

was abundant in raisins, hence the name. The cake has come to stay, even though it was very close to being lost in the reformation period of the late 19th century when Queen Victoria banned the feast of the twelfth night. In the last two centuries since it first travelled out of England, the plum cake has reached every corner of the world.

Christians actively participate in midnight Christmas Mass and the joyous Christmas carnival. Christmas evening is the time to relish some traditional Christmas food especially the Christmas Cake. Tradition of singing Christmas carols and songs is also practised with faith and dedication.

## Christmas Feast

'Christmas' is said to be a shortened form of 'Christ's mass' and is often associated with festivity right from Christmas Eve to the end of Christmas Day. The meals are often particularly rich and substantial, in the tradition of the Christian feast day celebration, and form a significant part of gatherings held to celebrate the arrival of Christmas. Turkey is a must add dish in many of the western countries for the Christmas feast.

The actual meal consumed varies in different parts of the world with regional cuisines and local traditions. In many parts of the world, particularly in former British colonies, the meal shares

some connection with the English Christmas dinner involving roasted meat and pudding. The Christmas pudding and Christmas cake evolved from this tradition.

In India, we cook a variety of non-vegetarian foods, including Biryani with chicken or mutton, chicken and mutton curry, followed by cake or sweets like Kheer. Long established Christian communities

such as Goan Catholics have pork and beef dishes as part of their main course. These include Pork Vindaloo and Sorpotel. For dessert, a dish called Bebinca is popular.





**What is Christmas? It is tenderness for the past, courage for the present, hope for the future.**

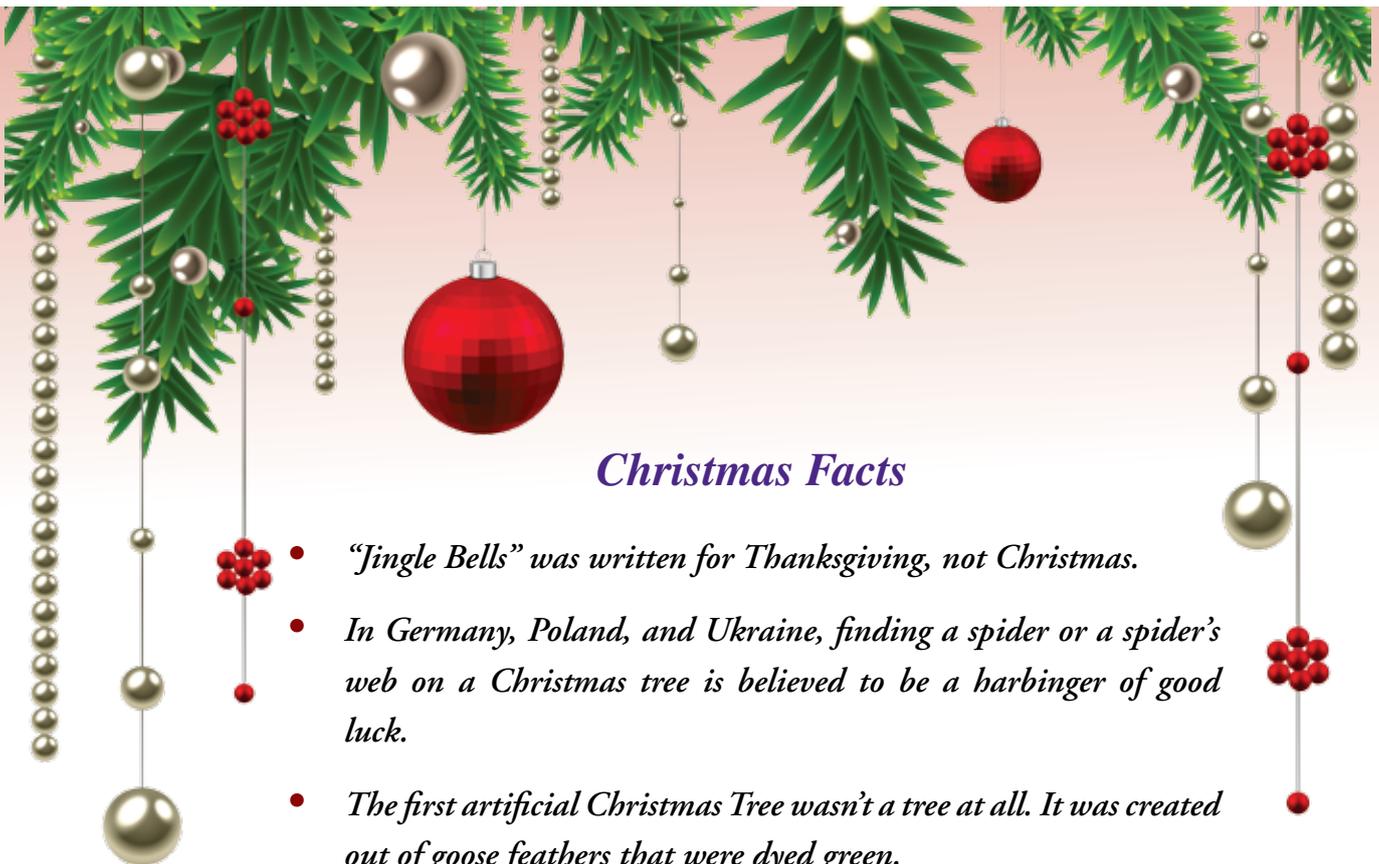
## Message of Christmas

The crucifixion of Jesus Christ and His resurrection are the two most important events in Christianity. Jesus died on the Cross and His suffering and redemptive death by crucifixion are the central aspects of Christian theology concerning the doctrines of salvation and atonement.

Hence, let's remember that this is a time for giving and sharing. It can also be a time of healing and renewed strength. Charities play a pivotal role in ensuring that no one is left out of

Christmas festivities by providing presents, food and shelter for the homeless.

And Christmas can be a season of great joy too. By far, the most important aspect of Christmas is that it unites family and friends, even if it means travelling from the other side of the world to be with their nearest and dearest. The goodwill of the Christmas celebration unites loved ones and enables everyone to gather in one room at the same time to enjoy a traditional Christmas dinner.



## Christmas Facts

- *"Jingle Bells" was written for Thanksgiving, not Christmas.*
- *In Germany, Poland, and Ukraine, finding a spider or a spider's web on a Christmas tree is believed to be a harbinger of good luck.*
- *The first artificial Christmas Tree wasn't a tree at all. It was created out of goose feathers that were dyed green.*
- *In Germany, Heiligabend, or Christmas Eve, is said to be a magical time when the pure at heart can hear animals talking.*
- *Though Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, there is no mention of December 25 in the Bible.*

## 'Our Lady of Guadalupe' Celebration at Acerlan-Matrix Metals

'Our Lady of Guadalupe' is a Catholic title of the Blessed Virgin Mary associated with a Marian apparition and a venerated image enshrined within the Minor Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico City. The Basilica is the most visited Catholic pilgrimage site in the



world, and the world's third most-visited sacred site.

On 14 December 2019, Acerlan Matrix Metals employees celebrated Guadalupe. Like every year, the event started with a mass at the plant's facility, and a breakfast sponsored by the Union members with *tamales* and *atole*.

### Christmas Celebration

On 12 December 2019 Matrix Metals LLC employees celebrated the Christmas Holiday with a staff luncheon. Stefan Drambarean led the prayer over a blessing of the food, which contained many different delicacies.





## Different kinds of New Year celebrated across the globe

**A** new year is another chance for you to get it right.

The beginning of a new year cannot come and go without some sort of celebration. Many calendars have religious foundations; some calendars are based on the lunar cycle, some on the solar cycle. The celebrations differ across cultures. The Balinese welcome the New Year by spending the entire day in absolute silence. That's much different from the Burmese, who

celebrate the New Year with a three - to - four - day - long water festival. The Thais have a custom of pouring water on the elders of the society in order to receive blessings for the New Year. Likewise different countries have different ways of celebrating their New Year. Here is a compilation of few of the celebrations and traditions.

### Korean New Year

Sōllal marks the first day of the year based on the Korean Lunar calendar. It is one of the most important traditional Korean holidays. During the celebration, adults wear traditional clothes. Koreans also have Tteokguk, a traditional soup eaten for the New Year. A more recent ritual is the ringing of the Boshingak Bell, which was constructed in 1396. In modern times it is only rung on midnight of New Years.

The celebration usually lasts three days: the day before Korean New Year, the new year's day, and the day after. During this time, many Koreans visit family, perform ancestral rites, wear hanbok, eat traditional food, and play

folk games. Additionally, children often receive money from their elders after performing a formal bow.





Chaitya, the stupa at Tavatimsa where Buddha's hair and diadem are buried. There is another tradition called Sraung Preah where youngsters pour water or liquid plaster on elder relatives.

This new year is also a time to prepare special dishes. One of these is a 'kralan' which is a cake made from steamed rice mixed with beans or peas, grated coconut and coconut milk. The mixture is stuffed inside a bamboo stick and slowly roasted.



## Cambodian New Year

Choul Chnam Thmey, meaning "Enter New Year" is the name of the Cambodian holiday that celebrates the traditional Lunar New Year. The holiday lasts for three days beginning on New Year's Day, which usually falls on April 13 or 14th, which is the end

of the harvesting season, when farmers enjoy the fruits of their labour before the rainy season begins. In temples, people erect a sand hillock on the grounds. They mound up a big pointed hill of sand or dome in the centre which represents Valuka

## Sri Lankan New Year

Usually, Sinhala and Hindu New Year (Avurudu) falls on April 13th and 14th, symbolising the ending of the old year, and the beginning of the New Year. The first signs of spring remind Sri Lankans that it is time for a spectrum of festivities, which encompass rhythmic beats on the rabana (a one-sided traditional drum), sweet delicacies, and the melodies of the koel, a stringed instrument played during the New Year.

A day before the New Year, as the Sun sets, people take their final bath of the year. This is often infused with herbs and oils like gingelly and mustard, which are thought to purify the body. It is also important to view the moon on this evening.

On New Year, the women of each household light the hearth facing the designated direction which varies every year. Over its flames they boil milk in a new earthen pot, allowing it to bubble over as a symbol of prosperity. After this, the traditional

New Year dish, Kiribath—a rice pudding of sorts—is prepared.

Once the rituals are over, celebrations spill out into the streets. These traditional games and are the highlight of the day for many, and include havari hengima (hiding the wig), kotta pora (pillow fighting), Lissana gaha nageema (climbing the greasy pole) and kamba adeema (tug of war).





## Ethiopian New Year

September 11 marks the day of the New Year in Ethiopia. By this time, the lengthy rainy season comes to a close, leaving behind a countryside flourishing in yellow daisies. That's fitting because Enkutatash in Amharic, the native language of Ethiopia, translates to

'gift of jewels'. To celebrate New Year's, Ethiopians sing songs unique to the day and exchange bouquets of flowers. Of course, there is plenty of eating and drinking, too.

New Years in Ethiopia are bound to make most people feel a pinch in their pockets, because of the feast. Slaughtering animals is mostly done at people's homes, and men usually assume the traditional role. The national dish Doro wot (chicken stew), which takes at least half a day to prepare, is rarely missed from the holiday menu, and is served along with local alcoholic drinks such as tej (honey wine) and tela. The doro wot is served with injera (a flatbread) on a large platter; everyone can dine together, and it is common to see people feeding each other as a way of showing affection and love. When visiting families, neighbours and friends, savouring every holiday dish is the order of the day.



## Vietnamese New Year

Considered the first day of spring and most important of the national holidays in Vietnam, Tet is the Vietnamese New Year celebration, coinciding with the Lunar New Year celebrated throughout the world in January or February.

Altho ugh Tet can be a very exciting time to travel to Vietnam, it is also the busiest time of the year to be there. Millions of people travel through the country to share reunions

with friends and family. Lion dance performances, a lot of bells, drums and gongs are sounded. The locals dress in beautiful outfits in colours of red and yellow, which signifies prosperity and success. Moreover, there will be a lot of traditional Vietnamese New Year food that

you can taste, like xio (sticky rice), thit ga (steamed chicken), gio cha (Vietnamese sausages) and a lot more.

Tet is typically celebrated for three days with some traditions observed for up to a week. The first day of Tet is usually spent with immediate family, the second day is for visiting friends, and the third day is dedicated to teachers and visiting temples.

One of the most important traditions observed during Tet is the emphasis put on who is the first to enter a house in the new year. The first person brings the luck (good or bad) for the year! The head of the house — or someone considered successful — leaves and returns a few minutes after midnight just to ensure they are the first to come in.



## Iranian New Year

Nowruz, the Iranian New Year, is a combination of two Persian words that mean “new day.” Before the celebration, members of the household prepare the “haft-seen” table of seven items that start with the letter S. These items can be fruits or spices.

Traditional food for Nowruz includes sweets such as baklava and a special noodle soup. Among other traditions, Iranians place a mirror on the table as a symbol for people to reflect on the past year. Growing wheatgrass is one of the most common traditional preparations for Nowruz.

Nowruz is the day of the vernal equinox, and marks the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. It marks the first day of the first month (Farvardin) of the Iranian calendar. It usually occurs on March 21 or the previous or following day, depending on where it is observed. The moment the Sun crosses the celestial equator and equalises night and day is calculated exactly every year, and families gather together to observe the rituals.

## Balinese New Year

In Indonesia, on the day of Nyepi, instead of shuffling around hung over from the previous night’s adventures, the Balinese spend the day in utter silence. Those who follow the religious traditions in full stay home, don’t work, and avoid engaging in any pleasurable activities. Nyepi, a public holiday in Indonesia, is a day of silence, fasting and meditation for the Balinese. The objective is to spend the entire day reflecting, meditating, and fasting.

Balinese ‘Day of Silence’ is commemorated every Isakawarsa (Saka New Year) according to the Balinese calendar (in 2020, it falls on March 25). It is a Hindu celebration mainly celebrated in Bali, Indonesia. Observed from 6 am until 6 am the next morning,

Nyepi is a day reserved for self-reflection, and as such, anything that might interfere with that purpose is restricted. The main restrictions are no lighting fires (and lights must be kept low); no working; no entertainment or pleasure; no traveling; and, for some, no talking or eating at all.

The day following Nyepi is celebrated as New Year’s Day. On this day, the youth of Bali in the village of Sesetan in South Bali practise the ceremony of Omed-omedan or ‘The Kissing Ritual’ to celebrate the New Year. The same day is celebrated in India as Ugadi.





## Thai New Year

Songkran, the Thai New Year, means ‘passing’ or ‘approaching’ in Sanskrit. And the traditions of the day make for one truly refreshing experience. One New Year’s tradition involves the gentle pouring of water on elders of the community. Doing so is a way of paying respect and, in return, they bestow their blessing. Sprinkling water onto images of Buddha is also a custom to receive blessings for the New Year.

In Thailand, New Year is now officially celebrated on 1 January. Songkran was the official New Year until 1888, when it was switched to a fixed date of 1 April. Then in 1940, this date was shifted to 1 January. The traditional Thai New Year Songkran was transformed into a national holiday. Songkran is on

the 13 April every year, but the holiday period extends from 14 to 15 April.

The word ‘Songkran’ is also known as transformation or change. The term was borrowed from Makar Sankranti, the name of a Hindu harvest festival celebrated in India in January to mark the arrival of spring. It coincides with the rising of Aries on the astrological chart and with the New Year of many calendars of South and Southeast Asia, in keeping with the Buddhist calendar. The New Year takes place at virtually the same time as the New Year celebrations of many countries in South Asia like China (Dai People of Yunnan Province), Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia,

Nepal, Bangladesh, India, and Sri Lanka.

The Songkran celebration is rich with symbolic traditions. Mornings begin with merit-making. Visiting local temples and offering food to the Buddhist monks is commonly practised. On this specific occasion, performing water pouring on Buddha statues and the young and elderly is a traditional ritual. It represents purification and the washing away of one’s sins and bad luck. As a festival of unity, people who have moved away usually return home to their loved ones and elders. Paying reverence to ancestors is an important part of Songkran tradition.

The holiday is known for its water festival. Major streets are closed to traffic, and are used as arenas for water fights. Celebrants, young and old, participate in this tradition by splashing water on each other. Traditional parades are held and in some venues “Miss Songkran” is crowned, where contestants are clothed in traditional Thai dress.





when the main High Street of the northern town fills up at midnight with a procession of around 45 fireball swingers, holding chains encased in flickering balls of fire. Afterwards, the burning ‘wire cages’ are taken to the harbour and thrown into the water, prompting the beginning of a stunning New Year firework display.

Kirkwall’s Ba’, a mass game of football played in the streets of the Orcadian capital on New Year’s Day, is a sporting tradition hailing from the 1800s. The aim of the many participants who get involved in the Ba’ is to keep hold of the elusive leather ball, with two teams competing for ultimate victory – the Uppies and the Donnies – with the team you join historically being based on what part of the island you’re from. The Ba’ is thrown into the crowd of several hundred, and the game finishes when it reaches the goal of either team.

## Scotland

Hogmanay in Scotland is a sight to behold – and an exhilarating celebration if you’re a tourist attending one of the traditional New Year fire festivals, or a local bundled up in all your thermals at Edinburgh’s famous street party, waiting for the midnight fireworks to go off with a bang alongside 80,000 other revellers. Definitely one of the most famous Hogmanay traditions, first-footing sees friends and family heading over to each other’s homes just after midnight on New Year’s Eve. The first person to cross a house’s threshold in the New Year is known as a first-foot, and must bestow a Hogmanay offering, or else the homeowner is at risk of bad luck for the rest of the year. Popular gifts that

cross hands at the midnight hour include shortbread, black bun (a traditional Hogmanay fruit cake topped with pastry) and whisky. One of the more bonkers Scottish traditions to mark the year ahead is the frankly shiver-inducing practice of sprinting into the waters of the Firth of Forth on 1st January, to take part in the annual Loony Dook. Alongside the stunning backdrop of the Forth Bridge, hundreds of Scots take a quick dip in the sea, with the sound of celebratory bagpipes as they test their resistance to the chilly temperatures. Traditionally performed to symbolise the casting away of evil spirits for the year, Stonehaven is renowned for its dazzling Hogmanay fireball ceremony,

**N**ew Year - a new chapter, a new verse, or just the same old story? Ultimately we write it. The choice is ours.





## China

Chinese New Year, also known as Lunar New Year or Spring Festival, is China's most important festival. It is also the most important celebration for families and a week of an official public holiday.

The date of the Chinese New Year is determined by the lunar calendar: the holiday falls on the second new moon after the winter solstice on December 21. Thus, each time the New Year in China falls on different dates of the usual Gregorian calendar, between January 21 and February 20.

In many Chinese cities, from New Year's Day, traditional performances can be seen: dragon dances, lion dances, and imperial performances like an emperor's wedding. A great variety of traditional Chinese products are on offer. City parks and temple fairs are the places to go for this.

Every street, building, and house where Spring Festival is celebrated is decorated in red. Red is the main colour of the festival, as red is believed to be auspicious. Red Chinese lanterns hang in streets; red couplets are pasted on doors; banks and official buildings are decorated with red depicting images of prosperity.

The New Year's Eve dinner is called 'reunion dinner', and is believed to be the most important meal of the year. Food for the New Year emphasises lucky symbols such as fish, which sounds like the Chinese word for 'surplus'. These foods are eaten during the 16 day festive season, and particularly for the New Year's Eve family reunion dinner.

The luckiest Chinese New Year foods (and their symbolic meanings) are:

1. Fish  
(an increase in prosperity)
2. Chinese dumplings  
(great wealth)
3. Glutinous rice cake  
(a higher income or position)

Billions of fireworks go up in China at 12 am on New Year, the most anywhere at any time of year. The most common New Year gifts are red envelopes. Red envelopes have money inside, and are believed to bring good luck because they are red. They are given to children and retirees. Customarily only employers give red envelopes to working adults.

Each new year is marked by the characteristics of one of the 12 zodiac animals: the rat, ox, tiger, rabbit, dragon, snake, horse, sheep, monkey, rooster, dog and pig. 2020 is the year of the rat.



## Denmark

The Queen Margrethe's New Year's Eve speech at 6 pm signals the beginning of a long and festive night. It is a live broadcast from Fredensborg Castle, an annual essential that first started with King Christian XI in the 1880s. The Queen takes this opportunity to summarise the year's main political events, both global and local. The speech always concludes with a salute to the nation with the words "Gud behave Danmark" (God preserve Denmark), which signals that it is time to begin the meal.

New Year's Eve menu consists of boiled cod, served with homemade mustard sauce and all the trimmings. However, Danes are less traditionally bound to the food when it comes to New Year. So, many Danes prepare exotic and alternative specialities for their New Year's dinner.

For dessert, they make the famous Kransefagen, a Danish invention from the 1700s. Like champagne, it is one of the regulars on New Year's Eve. It is a towering cake made with layer-upon-layer of marzipan rings. The cake's turret-like shape promises happiness and wealth for the coming year.

At the midnight countdown, it is a tradition for everyone celebrating indoors to stand on a sofa or a chair and jump into the new year. It symbolises the hope for better time, eases the transition and then everyone wishes each other a Happy New Year. At this point, a choir performs the Danish anthem and the Danish Monarch song.

The biggest tradition involves smashing plates against your friends' front doors. It is a measure of popularity to find a heap of broken china on your doorstep at midnight. According to the

tradition, this brings good luck, so the more smashed plates, the more luck you'll get.

Shortly afterwards, people gather in the streets to set off fireworks. Danes traditionally celebrate New Year with lots of fireworks. It was only around 1900 that fireworks began to become something that ordinary people could buy. Before that, New Year was celebrated by using guns to fire shots into the air. It was done because of an old belief that loud noises and fireworks keep spirits and negative energies away.



# Indian New Years



Clockwise from top left: Poila Boishakh, Gudi Padwa, Vishu, Baisakhi, Bihu, Losoong, Thamizh Puthandu, Ugadi.

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