

JEFFERSON PARISH EMPLOYEE DIVERSITY ADVISORY BOARD

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Ancient Akitu New Year—Every year countries around the world celebrate the beginning of a new year. In fact festivals and celebrations marking the beginning of the calendar have been around for thousands of years. Most festivities were simply a chance to drink and be merry and many other celebrations were linked to agricultural or astronomical events.



USA celebrates a new year every January 1st. We uncork champagne, feast on black-eyed peas, ham cabbage and many other family traditions for hope, luck and prosperity. Many of us enjoy fireworks and watching a football game with family and friends at home.



In **France** new year is known as *Jour des tennes*, and *le Jour de l'An* and the celebrations are referred to as "Reveillion". Families meet and greet, uncork champagne and have huge pompous parties and feasting that will bring prosperity and luck.



Rosh Hashanah is the Jewish New Year festival, which literally means the "beginning of the year." It is the first of the Jewish High Holy Days specified in Leviticus. This holiday marks a period of self-examination and repentance for observers. On this day, three books are opened (Book of Life, Book of Death, and Book in Doubt), in which all people are classified. Adherents have a ten-day respite of repentance before their fate is sealed on Yom Kippur.



The United Kingdom brings in a new year in accordance with the Gregorian calendar. They celebrate with family and friends feasting and drinking. A crowd gathers along the Thames River to enjoy the fireworks from the London Eye as Big Ben strikes midnight. A tradition of "First Footing" a tall, dark haired handsome male has to be the first visitor of a household after midnight. He carries a loaf of bread, a bottle of whiskey, some coal and salt. He enters from the front door and exits from the backdoor. This brings good luck and prosperity to the household.



Songkran Festival (Thailand) is the Thai New Year's festival. It is celebrated on April 13th of every year, but the holiday spans until April 15th. The holiday is in keeping with the Buddhist/Hindu solar calendar, literally meaning "astrological passage." The holiday is known for its water festival where major streets are closed for traffic to hold massive scaled water fights. Participants also pay homage to ancestors, dress in colorful clothing, and offer food to monks.



Chinese people celebrate the Winter solstice is related to the theory of Yin and Yang. According to the Chinese astrology, Yang symbolizes masculine and positive, Yin has the opposite meanings. The ancient people think from the winter solstice, the Yin is at its peak and will disappear gradually. While the Yang or positive things will become stronger and stronger from the day. So winter solstice is regarded as an auspicious day to celebrate.



Hijri New Year This day marks the first day of the Muslim calendar, which began in 622 AD and known as the Hijra. The Islamic lunar year is roughly 11 to 12 days shorter than the Gregorian year. This holiday is observed with fasting, prayer and reflection on the year to come.



Italian's celebrate the last 3 days by decorating their houses with greenery and colorful lights. They also choose gifts for their loved ones like gold, silver for prosperity and honey for sweetness.



Germans consider lead to be auspicious. They pour molten lead into cold water and the shape that is taken after predicts their future for the year.



In **Spain** they eat 12 grapes to every toll of the clock at midnight. It's believed that it will bring good luck and happiness for the coming year.



In **Denmark** people stand on chairs and jump from it as the clock strikes 12. Also, people collect dishes all the year around and throw them at the front door on new year's eve. The more broken plates the more friends one shall have in the new year.



In the **Philippines** they believe every round thing is auspicious. They consume grapes, have coins, wear polkas dotted dresses, as they have faith that circular thing attract more fortune and money.



In **Puerto Rico** the people throw buckets of water out of their window's and clean their homes. They believe this will clean the odds of the last year as well as get the spirits out of the home.