New Year's Eve holds many traditions throughout the world with what we eat, how we celebrate and ring in the new year. Here are some of those traditions that you may want to incorporate into your plans tonight!

**Herring and Pickled Herring -- Germany, Poland and Scandinavia**  German and Scandinavian folklore says that eating herring at the stroke of midnight will bring luck for the next year. Likewise folks of Polish descent eat Pickled Herring as their first bite of food for the New year to bring luck. Eating the herring at the start of the year is said to insure a bountiful catch for fishermen throughout the New Year, and thereby lots of food for everyone.

**Cod -- Denmark, Italy**  Cod is considered a lucky New Year's food for the same reason herring is -- eating it at the start of the year is said to help insure a bountiful catch throughout the upcoming 365 days. In Denmark, they like to serve their cod boiled. In Italy baccala, or dried salted cod, is the fish of choice for New Year's eve. Germans also enjoy carp and have been known to place a few fish scales in their wallets for good luck. The Swedish New Year feast is usually a smorgasbord with a variety of fish dishes such as seafood salad. In Japan, herring roe is consumed for fertility, shrimp for long life, and dried sardines for a good harvest (sardines were once used to fertilize rice fields).

**Grapes at Midnight -- Spain and Cuba**  In Spain and Cuba it is traditional for each person to eat exactly 12 grapes at midnight, one grape for each strike of the clock. The round shape of the grapes signifies the completion of a cycle -- in this case the completion of the previous year -- a theme that resonates through many cultures' New Year's traditions. The number 12 symbolizes the 12 months of the previous year.

**Round Fruits -- The Philippines**  From the Philippines, tradition is to collect 7 different types of round fruits. The round shape of the fruits symbolizes money and seven is believed to be a lucky number. Set on the dinner table on New Year's eve, the fruits are believed to bring prosperity and sound financial status for the coming year.

In a more general sense, Filipinos believe it is important to have an abundance of food on the table at midnight in order to insure an abundance of food in the upcoming year.

In Greece, Vasilopita -- a cake baked with a coin inside -- is traditionally consumed at New Year's. The cake commemorates a miracle said to have occurred back in the Ottoman Empire. Legend has it that a Bishop of Greece recovered a large portion of the country's riches back from the Ottomans, but when he tried to redistribute them, the people fought over which property belonged to which person. Saint Basil is said to have asked the women of Greece to bake a cake with the riches inside. When he sliced the cake, the goods miraculously found their way to their proper owners.

Today, the cake is still a popular New Year's tradition in homage to the legend. At midnight or after the New Year's Day meal, the cake is cut, with the first piece going to St. Basil and the rest being distributed to guests in order of age.
NEW YEAR'S EVE FOOD TRADITIONS FROM AROUND THE WORLD

Cakes and other baked goods are commonly served from Christmas to New Year’s around the world, with a special emphasis placed on round or ring-shaped items. Italy has chiacchiere, which are honey-drenched balls of pasta dough fried and dusted with powdered sugar. Poland, Hungary, and the Netherlands also eat donuts, and Holland has ollie bollen, puffy, donut-like pastries filled with apples, raisins, and currants.

Mexico’s rosca de reyes is a ring-shaped cake decorated with candied fruit and baked with one or more surprises inside. Cakes aren’t always round. In Scotland, where New Year’s is called Hogmanay, there is a tradition called "first footing," in which the first person to enter a home after the new year determines what kind of year the residents will have. The "first footer" often brings symbolic gifts like coal to keep the house warm or baked goods such as shortbread, oat cakes, and a fruit caked called black bun, to make sure the household always has food.

Some more notes from traditions around the world on New Year’s Eve:

The French call New Year’s Eve "la Saint-Sylvestre". It is usually celebrated with a feast called le Réveillon de la Saint-Sylvestre. This feast customarily includes special dishes like foie gras and drinks like champagne. The celebration can be a simple, intimate dinner with friends and family or a much fancier ball (une soirée dansante).

Filipinos usually celebrate New Year’s Eve with the company of family and close friends. Traditionally, most households stage a dinner party named Media Noche in their homes. Typical dishes include pancit, Hamon and Lechón (roasted pig), which is usually considered as the centerpiece of the dinner table. Barbecued food is also an integral part of the menu. Most Filipinos follow a set of traditions that are typically observed during New Year’s Eve. Included among these traditions is the customary habit of wearing clothes with circular patterns like polka dots, this signifies the belief that circles attract money and fortune or other colorful clothing to show enthusiasm for the coming year. Throwing coins at the stroke of midnight is said to increase wealth that year.

Spanish New Year's Eve (Nochevieja or Fin de Año in Spanish, Cap d'Any in Catalan, Cabo d'Anyo in Aragonese) celebrations usually begin with a family dinner, traditionally including shrimp and lamb or turkey. Spanish tradition says that wearing red underwear on New Year’s Eve brings good luck.

In Mexico, those who want to find love in the new year wear red underwear and yellow if they want money.

Back in Italy, dinner on New Year’s eve is often eaten with parents and friends. It often includes zampone or cotechino (a kind of spiced Italian sausage) and lentils.

At midnight, fireworks are displayed across Italy. Fireworks are big in almost all New Year’s Eve celebrations. Except in Ireland, the beginning of 2009 was heralded only by the ringing of church bells. This was due to a ban on fireworks. Many cultures also welcome the new year in prayer.

In Turkey, large family dinners are organized with family and friends, featuring a special Zante currant-pimento-dill iç pilav dish, dolma, hot börek, baklava and various other eggplant dishes, topped with warm pide, salep and boza.