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Good Luck Foods for 2009

By Chef Otto Hirzel
Hirzel Canning Company

Foods that are known for their good luck qualities include sauerkraut, black-eyed peas, ham, short ribs, little pink pig cookies and coin-filled cakes, just to name a few. Greens, representing money, are commonly used in dishes with the hope of having an amenable New Year. That said, collard greens, mustard greens, kale and any type of cabbage or sauerkraut are commonly consumed on New Year's Eve or New Year's Day. Black-eyed peas, due to their sheer numbers, are viewed as coins, and as the tradition goes, eating the coins symbolizes gaining wealth and prosperity in the year to come.

Generally, across the U.S., pork and sauerkraut are considered the most popular "lucky foods" typically enjoyed on New Year's Day. With origins dating back to the Pennsylvania Dutch community, eating sauerkraut has long been associated with luck and prosperity. Sauerkraut can be prepared from cabbage, but it's often easier to go with a prepackaged variety that is low in fat, such as Silver Fleece Sauerkraut. When preserved properly, prepackaged sauerkraut tastes just as fresh and flavorful as sauerkraut made from scratch. Interestingly enough, the reason that pork, especially the pig, is considered lucky is because it always roots forward. In some cultures, it is considered unlucky to eat an animal that moves backwards, like a lobster or other crustacean.

The South is deeply rooted in many of its food traditions, and many of the foods we eat around the New Year are often associated with that region. In the Low Country, South Carolina and Georgia, Hoppin' John is probably the most popular New Year's Day meal. Hoppin' John is the southern United States' version of the rice and beans dish traditionally served throughout the Caribbean. It consists of field peas or black-eyed peas and rice, chopped onion, sliced bacon and is seasoned with a bit of salt.

Throughout the coastal South, eating Hoppin' John on New Year's Day is thought to bring a year filled with luck. On the day after New Year's Day, leftover "Hoppin' John" is called "Skippin' Jenny," and further demonstrates one's frugality, bringing an even better chance of prosperity in the New Year.

In Italian communities, lentils take center stage as a New Year's Eve good luck food. While pork and peas are still considered positive, lentils, like the black eyed peas, symbolize money - and are also green. And, the pork sausage loved in and outside of the Italian community signifies prosperity and good fortune in the coming year.

If you want to ensure all the good luck you possibly could for the coming year, you might plan a dinner that will at least

contain sauerkraut and pork - just to be on the safe side. Here's one recipe that will help get your New Year off on the right foot:

Make no mistake. On New Year's Day tables around the country will be adorned with good luck dishes like black-eyed peas, pork and lentils. However, it is a safe assumption that most Americans who use "cabbage" as a slang term for money will opt for some sauerkraut throughout the New Year's holiday.

Sauerkraut Recipes

Baked Chicken Reuben

1 can 27oz. Silver Fleece sauerkraut (drained)

Whole boneless skinless chicken breasts (halved)

1/4 tsp Pepper

6 slices Low fat swiss cheese

1 3/4 cup Low calorie Russian dressing

1 1/2 Tbsp Parsley, chopped (optional)

Directions

Place chicken in a non-stick baking pan. Sprinkle with pepper and cover chicken with sauerkraut. Pour dressing evenly over all and top with swiss cheese. Cover with foil and bake at 325 degrees for about 1 hour or until fork can be inserted in chicken easily. Optional: Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve. Makes 6 to 8 servings.

Sauerkraut Salad

1 can 27oz. Silver Fleece sauerkraut

1/2 cup Green pepper, diced

1/3 cup Onion, diced

1/3 cup Vinegar

3 Tbsp Salad oil

2/3 cup Sugar

Directions

Wash sauerkraut quickly. Drain and combine with remaining ingredients. Chill at least 2 hours and serve.

Pork Chops & Sauerkraut

1 can 27oz. Silver Fleece sauerkraut (drained)

4 Pork chops, 1/2 inch thick

2 Tbsp Oil

2 Medium onions, chopped

1 Garlic clove, minced

1/4 cup Caraway seeds

1/2 cup Dry white wine or water

2 tsp Brown sugar

Directions

Trim excess fat from pork chops. Brown both sides in skillet with the oil. Remove and set aside. Sauté onions and garlic in same skillet until soft. Stir in caraway seeds, wine or water, mixing well. Add brown sugar then sauerkraut. Top with pork chops and cover. Simmer 30-35 minutes. Serves 4.

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