



Celebrate! Holidays In The U.S.A.

New Year's Day

(January 1)

The beginning of the new year has been welcomed on different dates throughout history. Great Britain and its colonies in America adopted the Gregorian calendar in 1752, in which January 1st was restored as New Year's Day. Ways of celebrating differ as well, according to customs and religions of the world. People in Moslem societies, for example, celebrate the new year by wearing new clothes. Southeast Asians release birds and turtles to assure themselves good luck in the twelve months ahead. Jewish people consider the day holy, and hold a religious ceremony at a meal with special foods. Hindus of India leave shrines next to their beds, so they can see beautiful objects at the start of the new year. Japanese prepare rice cakes at a social event the week before the new year.

Whatever the custom, most of people feel the same sentiment. With a new year, we can expect a new life. We wish each other good luck and promise ourselves to do better in the following year.

New Year's Eve (December 31)

In the United States, the federal holiday is January first, but Americans begin celebrating on December 31. Sometimes people have masquerade balls, where guests dress up in costumes and cover their faces with masks. According to an old tradition, guests unmask at midnight.

At New Year's Eve parties across the United States on December 31, many guests watch television as part of the festivities. Most of the television channels show Times Square in the heart of New York City. At one minute before midnight, a lighted ball drops slowly from the top to the bottom of a pole on one of the buildings. People count down at the same time as the ball drops. When it reaches the bottom, the new year sign is lighted. People hug and kiss, and wish each other "Happy New Year!"

New Year's Day

On January first, Americans visit friends, relatives and neighbors. There is plenty to eat and drink when you just drop in to wish your loved ones and friends the best for the year ahead. Many families and friends watch television together enjoying the Tournament of Roses parade preceding the Rose Bowl football game in Pasadena California. The parade was started in 1887, when a zoologist who had seen one in France suggested to the Valley Hunt Club in Pasadena, California that they sponsor "an artistic celebration of the ripening of the oranges" at the beginning of the year. At first the parade was a line of decorated horse-drawn private carriages. Athletic events were held in the afternoon, and in the evening, a ball where winners of the events of the day and the most beautiful float were announced. In later years colleges began to compete in football games on New Year's Day, and these gradually replaced other athletic competitions. The parade of floats grew longer from year to year, and flower decorations grew more elaborate.

The theme of the Tournament of Roses varies from year to year. Today the parade is usually more than five miles long with thousands of participants in the marching bands and on the floats. City officials ride in the cars pulling the floats. A celebrity is chosen to be the grand marshal, or official master of ceremonies. The queen of the tournament rides on a special float which is always the most elaborate one of the parade, being made from more than 250,000 flowers. Spectators and participants alike enjoy the pageantry associated with the occasion. Preparation for next year's Tournament of Roses begins on January 2.

In the warmer regions all around the country there are other games whose names are characteristic of

the state. People watch the Orange Bowl game in Florida, the Cotton Bowl in Texas, and the Sugar Bowl in Louisiana. In most cultures, people promise to better themselves in the following year. Americans have inherited the tradition and even write down their New Year's resolutions. Whatever the resolution, most of them are broken or forgotten by February!

Embassy of the United States of America