

Recipes for the New Year

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By Miriam Rubin /

Maybe you don't yet know what you're doing New Year's Eve, but on New Year's Day, many of us will be in the warm company of a platter of roasted pork and sauerkraut. Our own tasty Pennsylvania tradition, adopted from German and Eastern European forefathers. Hearty, robust and for those who enjoyed NYE a little too much, dare I say, an effective hangover remedy. Besides being a special meal, this classic combo is primed to bring diners good luck, prosperity and a long, healthy life in a year bearing an unlucky number. The recipe comes from a new collection of James Beard's iconic recipes.

For insurance, absolutely add more good luck symbols to your meal. In the south, Hoppin' John is imperative. A savory mixture of black-eyed peas and rice, it's enforced with the unctuous goodness of cured pork and said to bring good luck all the year round. For a profitable New Year, you also need something green, symbolizing folding cash. These deliciously braised greens from Lidia Bastianich, heady with garlic and crushed red pepper flakes, will fill out that need nicely. They're the money.

For even more health, harvest your dinner from local sources. Visit year-round farmers markets, the Pittsburgh Public Market and local purveyors to buy fresh-grown greens, local potatoes and score some succulent locally-raised pork and Burgh-cured kraut. Make it a lucky day for everyone. Pour a few Pennsylvania-brewed craft beers and raise a shot of Wigle whiskey to toast the New Year Pittsburgh-style.

Baked Spareribs with Sauerkraut, Apples and Potatoes

PG tested

This classic is the star of your New Year's Day feast.

- 4 pounds county-style spareribs, trimmed of excess fat and cut in half, if you like
- 3 to 4 pounds fresh sauerkraut, well rinsed, drained and squeezed to remove excess water (I used 3 pounds)
- 2 large, tart apples, cored and sliced (Beard peels them; I didn't)

- 3 medium thin-skinned potatoes, peeled and thinly sliced (I used 5 medium Yukon Golds, 4 cups sliced)
- 1 to 2 teaspoons caraway seeds
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly butter a large roasting pan.

Place half the ribs in pan. Layer sauerkraut, apples and potatoes on top, sprinkling layers with caraway seeds. Season with pepper. Top with remaining ribs and press down onto sauerkraut mixture. Cover pan with foil. Bake 1 hour.

Uncover; raise oven to 375 degrees. Bake 1 hour more, until top ribs are browned and tender.

Makes 6 hearty servings, more if part of a buffet dinner.

-- Adapted from "The Essential James Beard Cookbook: 450 Recipes That Shaped The Tradition of American Cooking" by James Beard, edited by Rick Rogers with John Ferrone (St. Martin's, 2012, \$35.)

Hoppin' John Bake

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- Half a 16-ounce bag black-eyed peas (1 cup), picked over and rinsed
- 6 cups chicken broth, divided
- 1 cup uncooked rice
- 3 or more slices bacon
- 1 red bell pepper, finely chopped
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- 1/2 teaspoon fine table salt
- 1/4 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper
- 8 ounces Monterey Jack cheese, coarsely shredded

Put black-eyed peas in large pot and add cold water to cover by 3 inches. Let stand, covered, at least 8 hours or overnight. Drain and rinse well.

Return peas to pot; add 4 cups broth. Bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to low, cover and simmer 1 to 1 1/2 hours, until very tender but not falling apart. Remove from heat. Drain.

Meanwhile, in heavy, medium saucepan, stir rice with remaining 2 cups broth. Bring to boil over high heat. Reduce heat to very low, cover and simmer 18 to 22 minutes, or according to package directions, until rice is tender. Fluff with fork, cover.

In large, heavy skillet, cook bacon over medium heat, turning once, until crisp. Remove to paper towels, reserving 2 tablespoons drippings in skillet. Crumble bacon. To drippings, add bell pepper, onion and garlic. Cook over medium heat, stirring often, about 8 minutes, until tender. Transfer to large bowl; stir in salt and pepper.

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Lightly grease 6 10-ounce ramekins, or 7-by-11-inch glass baking dish.

Add black-eyed peas, rice, crumbled bacon and 1 cup shredded cheese to vegetables. Stir gently to combine. Transfer to prepared ramekins or baking dish. Top with remaining cheese. Bake 15 to 20 minutes, until cheese has melted. Serve hot.

Makes 6 servings.

-- Adapted from "Southern Living, Around the Southern Table: Coming Home to Comforting Meals and Treasured Memories" by Rebecca Lang (Oxmoor, 2012, \$29.95).

Helen Evans Brown's Corn Chili Bread

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Mr. Beard writes: "The late Helen Evans Brown was a specialist in California's traditional foods. This recipe is extremely moist" -- yes, delightfully so. ... "It is one of my oldest bread recipes, and one of my very favorites. I have often served it for large parties, doubling the recipe, which is very simple."

- 3 ears corn, husks and silk removed (I used 1 1/2 cups frozen corn kernels)
- 1 cup yellow cornmeal
- 1 cup sour cream
- 12 tablespoons (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter, melted
- 2 large eggs, well beaten
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon kosher salt

- 1 cup very finely diced Gruyere or Monterey Jack cheese
- 4-ounce can diced green chiles, drained

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Generously butter 9-by-9-inch glass baking dish or 2 1/2-quart soufflé dish.

If using fresh corn, scrape kernels from cobs. Put (fresh or frozen) corn in large bowl. Add cornmeal, sour cream, melted butter, eggs, baking powder and salt; stir to mix. Fold in cheese and chiles.

Pour into prepared baking dish. Bake about 45 minutes, until lightly browned and firm. Serve warm. "With melted butter," wrote Mr. Beard.

Makes 9 to 10 servings.

-- Adapted from "The Essential James Beard Cook Book: 450 Recipes that Shaped the Tradition of American Cooking" by James Beard, edited by Rick Rodgers with John Ferrone (St. Martin's, 2012, \$35).

Jeanne's Hot Pepper Mustard

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Jeanne Williams and her husband, Llew, were part of a group of friends I invited over for a test-run of James Beard's Baked Spareribs With Sauerkraut, Apples and Potatoes. With it I served Jeanne's hot pepper mustard, adding a punchy complement to the rich pork. She sent the recipe that she got from a friend, but it made way more than I was interested in. I just wanted enough for this meal, with a little left over. And the 108 chile peppers she called for had me coughing! Jeanne made it with her favorite homegrown chilipeno chiles. She's upset that they've been discontinued. I mixed hot Hungarian peppers and jalapenos, because here, the chile growing season is over. Use gloves when handling them and avoid rubbing your eyes or breathing in the fumes while processing them.

- 2 to 3 long, hot Hungarian peppers, halved, stemmed, most of seeds removed, cut up (1 heaping cup)
- 2 to 3 large jalapeno peppers, halved, stemmed, most of seeds removed, cut up (1/2 cup)
- 1/4 cup cider vinegar
- 1/4 cup water
- 3/4 cup granulated sugar
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour

- 1 1/4 teaspoons kosher salt
- 1 teaspoon turmeric

1/4 cup yellow ball-park style mustard

Put peppers and vinegar in food processor and pulse until very finely chopped. Scrape into large, heavy saucepan. Rinse processor with the 1/4 cup water and add to saucepan. Add sugar, flour, salt and turmeric; whisk until well blended. Bring just to bubbly over medium-high heat, whisking often.

Whisk in mustard. Reduce heat to low and simmer, whisking or stirring often, until thickened, 4 to 5 minutes. Transfer to jar or bowl, cover and refrigerate.

Makes 1 1/2 cups.

-- *Jeanne Williams*

Swiss Chard Braised with Olive Oil and Garlic

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This recipe comes from Lidia Bastianich. She notes that it's adaptable to other greens. For kale, trim the bases of the stems, and slice the leaves crosswise into 1-inch strips. If using escarole, pull off any wilted outer leaves, cut the head in half through the core, remove the core and slice the leaves crosswise into 2-inch strips. Start with about 2 1/2 pounds of kale or escarole; kale may take a bit longer to cook.

Wash all greens well before cooking (unless they've been prewashed). Fill a sink with water, add the greens, swish them around, then lift from the water to a colander. Continue rinsing until there is no grit at the bottom of the sink. Gritty greens would not be a good start to 2013. Double the recipe if serving more than 4 people (or for greens lovers) and make in a wide Dutch oven.

- 1 large bunch Swiss chard (about 2 1/2 pounds)
- 3 tablespoons extra-virgin olive oil
- 4 garlic gloves, peeled
- Kosher salt
- 1/4 teaspoon crushed hot red pepper, or more to taste

Strip stems from chard and coarsely chop. Leave them separate. Chop leaves coarsely. Rinse as directed above and drain.

Heat oil in wide, heavy skillet over medium heat. Whack garlic cloves with side of chef's knife and toss into pan. Cook, shaking pan, until golden, about 2 minutes. Add chard stems and cook for a couple minutes, stirring as needed. Carefully stir in as much of the leaves -- with water that clings to them -- as will comfortably fit in pan. Cook stirring, until leaves begin to wilt. Continue adding more chard, a handful at a time, until all the chard is in the pan. Season lightly with salt and 1/4 teaspoon crushed red pepper.

Lower heat to medium-low, cover and cook, stirring occasionally, until chard is tender, about 8 minutes. If all the liquid evaporates and greens begin to stick, sprinkle a tablespoon or 2 of water over them. Check seasoning; add more red pepper and salt if necessary. Serve immediately.

Makes 4 servings.

-- Adapted from "*Lidia's Italian-American Kitchen*" by Lidia Mattichio Bastianich (Knopf, 2001).

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