

The Estherville Daily News is proud to bring you the Food page every Tuesday. If you know anyone who should be featured on this page, please send their names and why you think they should be featured to: Managing editor, 10 N. Seventh St., Estherville, 51334 or editor@esthervilledailynews.com

FOOD

New Year

Traditions '10

Southern friends embrace black-eyed peas for good luck

By MARY ANN MENENDEZ

We are at that point in time where reflections of the past and visions of the future force us to study the angle we have traveled and what direction we are headed in all facets of our lives. Many aspects are factored in to this thought process due to the spastic economy, personal health, current relationships, and how well we have prepared for retirement years (It's is never too early to start preparing!).

With all due respect, to good times, hard situations and luke-warm occasions of the past 365 days, it is time to welcome a NEW YEAR! I hope 2010 is a kinder and gentler 12 months to us all.

Folks tend to look at a new year with the half-full/half-empty concept. While most enjoy the idea of embracing the newness of another year because it is a chance to start over, do better, not repeat bad mistakes and expand boundaries, some would rather stay right where they are as life is good when it fits like a comfy slipper; so why change?

But there is no choice to stand still as time marches on and we are all moving with it. We may as well look to new adventures and encounters as we replace the last page of the 2009 calendar with 12 new 2010 ones. Each new day is a gift to do better, be better and consider others and the future of this planet as we live our lives.

Let's look at some traditions when reveling around a new year. Many cultures embrace the circle at New Years to symbolize "coming full circle." That is why the Dutch enjoy many doughnuts at New Year's. I grew up with a New Year's Day menu highlighting sauerkraut. Folks back East believe that this German fare will bring luck in the next 12 months. My mother-in-law's family believed eating 12 grapes at the stroke of midnight on New Year's Eve would ensure 12 good and happy months. My maternal side of the family would enjoy cutting into the Vasilopita, a Greek New Year bread. The person who received the slice containing the shiny coin supposedly would have a great year ahead (My mother being very health- and safety-conscious, would always wrap the coin in foil before dropping it into the bread dough!).

Today we will center our focus on our friends in the Southern part of the country. Their idea of ensuring good luck and prosperity is to include black-eyed peas on the New Year menu. The most famous recipe is Hoppin John. In researching BEP and its association to good luck, this tradition of enjoying this bean originated in Babylonia.

I have never tasted black-eyed peas and that is going to change. This week there will be something featuring "BEPs" at the Menendez New Year celebration.

Before we get to the BEP recipes, let me tell you about some of the health benefits of the black-eyed pea. One cup of cooked peas contains 11 grams of fiber and 13 grams of protein and less than one gram of fat. Black-eyed peas are an excellent source of calcium, vitamin A and folate. They are low in sodium and contain no cholesterol.

So as we toast in 2010, be safe and smart. The cardinal rule spoken by my dad a long, long time ago before the term "designated driver" was coined was this:

If you drink, don't drive.
If you drive, don't drink.

Let's all make it a HAPPY NEW YEAR!

Hoppin' John

1 cup dry black-eyed peas
4 thick slices bacon, cut into half-inch pieces
1 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup chopped green pepper
2 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon salt
1 bay leaf
1 dash each of cayenne and black pepper
3 cups cooked rice



Wash black-eye peas. Add boiling water to peas, boil 3 minutes, cover and set aside for about 4 hours. Rinse and drain thoroughly. Cook bacon in heavy pan until browned. Add onion, green pepper and garlic. Saute until onion is tender. Add beans, 2 cups water and seasonings. Cover and simmer 40 to 50 minutes or until peas are tender. Remove bay leaf; stir in rice. Continue simmering about 10 minutes until all liquid has been absorbed. Serves 4 to 6 people.

Saucy BEPs

1 pound dried black-eyed peas
2 pound smoked turkey, cut into bite-sized pieces
2 ribs celery, chopped
2 medium onions, chopped
1 (15 ounces) can tomato puree
2 tablespoons chili sauce
2 red pepper pods, chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 bay leaf
1/2 teaspoon dried basil leaves
Soak black-eyed peas for 1 hour and drain. Place turkey in large saucepan. Cover with water. Boil 30 minutes. Add celery, onions, tomato puree, ketchup, pepper pods, garlic, bay leaf and basil and black-eyed peas. Cover. Simmer 3 to 4 hours or until peas are tender. Remove bay leaf before serving. 4 to 6 servings.

BEP Salad

2 (15 ounce) cans black eyed peas, drained
1/2 cup red onion, chopped
3/4 teaspoon garlic salt
1/4 cup sugar
1/2 cup jalapenos, chopped
1/4 cup vinegar
1/4 cup oil
Mix all ingredients and refrigerate at least 12 hours before serving.

BEP Dip

4 cup black-eyed peas, cooked and drained
1 jalapeno pepper
1 tablespoon jalapeno juice
1/2 medium onion, chopped
1 (4 ounces) can green chilies
2 cloves garlic
Mix above ingredients in blender. Melt in microwave 1/2 pound sharp cheese and add to above. Serve in chafing dish with tortilla chips.

BEP Cornbread

1 pound bulk pork sausage
1 onion, chopped
1 cup white cornmeal
1/2 cup flour
1 teaspoon salt
1/2 teaspoon baking soda
2 eggs, slightly beaten
1 cup buttermilk
1/2 cup vegetable oil
1 (4 ounces) can chopped green chilies, drained
3/4 cup cream-style corn
2 cups (8 ounces) grated Cheddar cheese
1 (15 oz.) can black-eyed peas, drained
Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Grease a 13x9x2-inch pan. Cook sausage and onion in a large skillet until sausage is browned. Drain and set aside. Combine cornmeal,



flour, salt and soda in a large bowl. In another bowl, beat eggs, butter-milk, and oil together. Combine with dry ingredients using a few quick strokes (batter does not need to be blended until smooth). Add sausage, onion, chilies, corn, cheese, and black-eyed peas. Pour into prepared pan and bake at 350 degrees for 50 to 55 minutes or until knife inserted in center comes out clean. Serves 8 to 12.

BEP and Rice

3 slices bacon
1 small onion, chopped
1 (16 ounces) can black-eyed peas, drained
1 (14.5 ounces) can tomatoes with green chilies
2 cups cooked rice
1/3 teaspoon hot sauce
1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1/4 teaspoon pepper
Cook bacon in a large skillet until crisp; remove bacon, reserving drippings in skillet. Crumble bacon and set aside. Saute onion in drippings until tender. Drain onion and discard drippings; return onion to skillet. Add peas and remaining ingredients; cover and cook over low heat 8 to 10 minutes. Spoon into a serving dish; sprinkle crumbled bacon over top. Makes 6 servings.

Simmered BEP and Lentils

1/2 pound black-eyed peas
1/2 pound lentils
2 large onions, chopped
1 large can crushed tomatoes
2 cloves garlic
Salt and pepper to taste
Crushed basil leaves
Soak peas and lentils overnight or for several hours. Combine all ingredients in large pot, and cover with water. Cook for approximately 1 hour, seasoning to taste.

BEP Soup

7 cups water
12 ounces dried black eyed peas
3 potatoes, cubed
2 stalks celery, sliced
2 carrots, sliced
1 large onion, sliced
3 cloves garlic, minced
1 teaspoon basil
1 teaspoon dill weed
Soy sauce
Rinse peas and soak overnight. Mix all ingredients except soy sauce, bring to a boil. Boil 2 minutes. Reduce heat; simmer for about 2 hours. Stir occasionally, mashing some on sides of pan to thicken. Add soy sauce to taste.

BEP Salad, Greek Style

1 pound dried black eyed peas
2 medium onions, coarsely chopped
1 teaspoon pepper
1 bay leaf
1 teaspoon salt
1/4 cup fresh lemon juice
1/2 cup olive oil
1 tablespoon minced garlic
1/2 teaspoon oregano
Grated zest of 1 lemon
Soak peas, if required, after washing and picking them over. In a large saucepan, place peas, onion, pepper and bay leaf. Add 6 cups water and bring to a boil over high heat, then turn heat down to simmer. Cook, uncovered, until peas are tender but still firm, about 30 minutes. Add the salt and cook 2 more minutes. Drain peas; discard liquid. Place peas in a bowl. In another bowl, whisk the lemon juice, olive oil, garlic, and oregano together. Pour over the peas and toss gently to coat evenly. Season with additional pepper to taste; add more salt, if needed, and lemon zest. Serve at room temperature or chill, covered, until 20 minutes before serving. Leftovers are delicious in pita bread. Serves 8-12.