

A Southern, Jewish Tradition - Revisited

by Rev. Joe Dirt - Friday, December 30, 2022

<https://curmudgeon-alley.com/a-southern-jewish-tradition-revisited/>

I originally published the article below in 2014, and since it is about to be the first of the year, I thought that it would be a good time to revisit it. One thing that has changed is that instead of *Señora* doing the cooking on New Year's Day, it is yours truly. And just for the record my collard greens are to die for... if I say so myself.

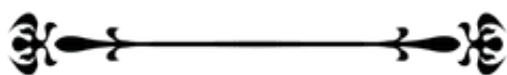
I performed this tradition when I was single, but then it consisted of the opening up a can of black-eye peas and a package of frozen turnip greens and nuking them both until an acceptable temperature of consumption was achieved. I probably did this New Year's Day ritual before my second bachelorhood, but it was sporadic, at least in my memory.

So I have been doing this New Year Day's observance for more than a few rotations around the sun, all the while in the expectation that this magical food ritual of black-eye peas and greens would bring good luck and wealth for the coming year. Reflecting on only the last four years, being more than a little afraid to go back further than that, I am not so sure the Sacrament has been functioning as advertised.

2019 was challenging with *Señora*'s health issues. Then we had two years of a global pandemic that, that for all the world, now feels like an atrocious, semi-conscious dream, like we were just going through the motions of living while trying to stay safe while the idiots were fighting against all precautions, mask by mask. 2022, for various reasons, has been more challenging than I would have hoped for in the Weinhaus-Rush household.

So perhaps the tradition does not work, or perhaps I have not held my mouth right and balanced on one leg while stirring the collard greens left handed. Or even scarier, perhaps if I had not observed the ceremony, those years could have been worse.

Y'all will find me in the kitchen on New Year's Day.



A Southern, Jewish Tradition

My Yankee wife has cooked me another traditional Southern meal to bring in the New Year. We had black-eye peas, turnip greens, rice and corn bread. It took a while to get her to cook cornbread the "right" way. First time she served me cornbread I thought it was cake. Now she makes it in a cast iron skillet



with yellow cornmeal, and it is not sugary sweet.

Traditionally, black-eye peas are for good luck and greens are to bring wealth. There are more than a few theories about why this combination. The one I like best is “Eat poor on New Year’s, and eat fat the rest of the year.”

One I did not know about is the tradition of black-eye peas dates back 500 years to the Talmud:

“According to a portion of the Talmud written around 500 A.D., it was Jewish custom at the time to eat black-eyed peas in celebration of Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year. It’s possible that the tradition arrived in America with Sephardic Jews, who first arrived in Georgia in the 1730s.”

And as Tevye would say, “Tradition.” Southern, Jewish or otherwise, tradition makes the world go round and helps to keep us grounded.

[New Year’s Day Tradition – Black-Eyed Peas and Greens](#)

And so it goes.

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