

# The How & When Of "Happy New Year!"

"Happy New Year!" This greeting will be exchanged many times in the first few days after a new year gets underway. Have you ever thought about how it originated? For starters, New Year's Day in modern America was not always January 1.

## THE NEW YEARS OF YORE

The celebration of the new year is the oldest of all holidays. It was first observed in ancient Babylon about 4000 years ago. In the years around 2000 BC, the Babylonian New Year began with the first New Moon (actually the first visible crescent) after the Vernal Equinox (first day of spring).

The beginning of spring is a logical time to start a new year. After all, it is the season of rebirth, of planting new crops, and of blossoming. January 1, on the other hand, has no astronomical nor agricultural significance. It is purely arbitrary.

The Romans continued to observe the new year in late March, but their calendar was continually tampered with by various emperors so that the calendar soon became out of synchronization with the sun. In order to set the calendar right, the Roman senate, in 153 BC, declared January 1 to be the beginning of the new year.

## THE RELIGIOUS VIEW

As Christianity became more widespread, the early church began having its own religious observances concurrently with many of the pagan celebrations, and New Year's Day was no different. During the Middle Ages, the Church remained opposed to celebrating New Years. January 1 has been celebrated as a holiday by Western nations for only about the past 400 years.

## NEW YEAR TRADITIONS

Other traditions of the season include the



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making of New Year's resolutions. That tradition also dates back to the early Babylonians. Popular modern resolutions might include the promise to lose weight or quit smoking. The early Babylonian's most popular resolution was to return borrowed farm equipment!

The Tournament of Roses Parade dates back to 1886. In that year, members of the Valley Hunt Club decorated their carriages with flowers. It celebrated the ripening of the orange crop in California. Although the Rose Bowl football game was first played as a part of the Tournament of Roses in

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The tradition of using a baby to signify the new year began in Greece around 600 BC. It was their tradition at that time to celebrate their God of wine, Dionysus, by parading a baby in a basket, representing the annual rebirth of that god as the spirit of fertility. Early Egyptians also used a baby as a symbol of rebirth.

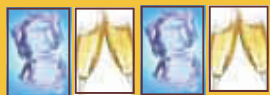
The popularity of the baby as a symbol of rebirth forced the Church to reevaluate its position. The Church finally allowed its members to celebrate the new year with a baby, which was to symbolize the birth of the baby Jesus.

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## FOR LUCK IN THE NEW YEAR

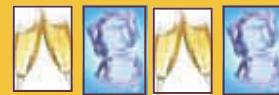
Traditionally, it was thought that one could affect the luck they would have throughout the coming year by what they did or ate on the first day of the year. For that reason, it has become common for folks to celebrate the first few minutes of a brand new year in the company of family and friends. It was once believed that the first visitor on New Year's Day would bring either good or bad luck the rest of the year. It was particularly lucky if that visitor happened to be a tall dark-haired man.

Now that we know how this phrase and day originated, HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL CITYMASALA READERS!



## Daru Ka Nasha

## Drinks And Cigars



By: Vish Vishwanathan

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### SCOTCH

Scotch, especially single-malt, is another good drink to have with cigars. Taken on the rocks, or straight up, scotch will not be overpowered by even a strong cigar, and unlike cognac, you can drink scotch at any time of the day. There are hundreds of different blends of scotch available today and you will never have time to taste every cigar with every scotch. In many cases, the differences are so subtle that it is difficult to recommend a particular pairing of cigar and scotch. The sheer variety available means that you will be able to continue experimenting for years to find an inspiring match for your chosen cigar.

### RUM

Traditionally, rum and cigars come from a similar geographical area. Whether we are talking Cuba or the Caribbean, the people who make cigars have also made rum. For this reason, the two comple-



ment each other very well. The cigar makers make their cigars to go with the drink they know. This has changed somewhat in the modern world. Cigar makers are not necessarily limited to only drinking rum, and thus the cigars they produce might be better suited to other drinks. Rum in its cheapest and most basic form can ruin even the best cigar, accentuating any roughness of the smoke until all pleasure is lost completely. However, if you buy carefully, the right rum can be a perfect complement to a good cigar.

### COCKTAILS

There are several types of cocktails that can accompany a cigar. A mixture of crème-de-menthe

and brandy is considered by some to be a classic. A variation of the recipe uses vodka instead of brandy. This cocktail is served with cigars at several hot spots in New York and elsewhere.

### NON-ALCOHOLIC DRINKS

Believe it or not, it is possible to drink non-alcoholic drinks with cigars. As long as you are careful about which drinks you choose, a non-alcoholic drink can be just as pleasurable as a good cognac or single-malt scotch. One of the best non-alcoholic choices is coffee, particularly espresso, as it has strong, complex flavors, which complement the taste of a good cigar.

Hopefully, the next time you light up a stogie, you will know what to drink and will enjoy both, the cigar and the drink.

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