



# Monthly Newsletter

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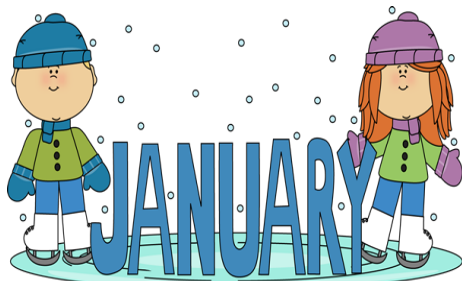
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**Monday-Friday**..... 8 AM - 4 PM

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## Resolutions are an Ancient Tradition

If you are joining millions of Americans in making New Year's resolutions, you are continuing an ancient tradition. begun 4,000 years ago in Babylon. Around 2000 BCE, the Babylonian new year (called Akitu) was celebrated in mid-March, coinciding with the barley harvest and the spring equinox. During the 12-day festival, people made promises to the gods—mostly practical ones like paying off debts, returning borrowed farm tools, or being better citizens. If they kept these promises, the gods would supposedly favor them in the coming year.



The Babylonians also crowned a new king or symbolically reaffirmed loyalty to the reigning king, so resolutions often included pledges of loyalty. The practice evolved after that. Ancient Romans adopted it when Julius Caesar moved the new year to January 1 in 46 BCE (to honor Janus, the two-faced god who looks backward into the past and suggested reflecting on the past year and planning improvements.

Early Christians initially rejected the custom as “pagan,” but by the Middle Ages many used New Year’s as a time for spiritual reflection. “Watch Night” services, still held in some churches, today trace back to this. But, the actual phrase “New Year’s resolutions” first appeared in print in a Boston newspaper in 1813.

About 40–50 percent of American adults say they make New Year’s resolutions each year, according to YouGov. Only 8–12 percent of people report successfully keeping their resolutions for the entire year.

In keeping with that reality, various days have been called "Quitters Day" -- with dates ranging from January 12 to 19, although some surveys suggest that people keep their resolutions until mid-February.

About 75 percent make it the first week, and 46 percent make it past six months, according to University of Scranton research).

## Writing a legacy letter: Send love forward

Who knows what the world will be like 50 or 100 years from now. Will robots do everything for us? Will work be optional? Whatever the future holds, human life will still have certain trials and triumphs. There will still be broken hearts. Still be bad decisions. There will still be good decisions and sudden successes. Struggles, humor, love.

We'll still ask ourselves what is important in life. After all your years of living, do you have an answer to that question? New Year's is a great time to write a legacy letter to your children or grandchildren, spouse, mentors, close friends, future generations. Write it, keep it where it will be found, and add to it next year.

Kathleen M. Rehl, writing for *Sixty and Me*, says the first step is to decide to whom you will write and address the letter specifically to that person. Tell them why you are writing to them. Next, adopt a thankful tone and tell the recipient what you are grateful about him or her. In the next paragraphs, tell what one big lesson you learned in life. Tell what you think matters most in life. What do you value most? Tell something about yourself. You might consider what you wish you knew about people in your family tree. Answer those questions about yourself. Tell some stories about the ancestor you knew about. Tell the family stories. In your closing, give your readers your love. Tell them what your hope for them. Offer encouragement.

You can write more than one legacy letter and write to more than one person. You might even want to record a video. The key is to search your heart and try to send your thoughts and wisdom to the next generation. If you like crafts, buy a box to hold your letter, or letters, and decorate it. Put in some family items.



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# Tamales Ring in New Year luck!

Tamales date back over 8,000 years to Mesoamerica (Aztec, Maya, and earlier cultures). They were portable, calorie-dense food for hunters, warriors, and travelers. Steamed in corn husks or banana leaves, they became sacred offerings as well as holiday food. Today in Mexico, Central America, and the U.S. Southwest, making tamales is the ultimate New Year's Eve and Christmas tradition—families gather, music plays, and hundreds are made for good luck in the coming year.

**Easy New Year's Tamales** (Makes about 3–4 dozen – 90 minutes active time thanks to shortcuts)

### Ingredients

- 6–7 lbs prepared masa for tamales (from a Mexican market or tortillería – already seasoned with lard and salt)
- 30–40 dried corn husks (soaked 30 min in hot water)
- Filling shortcut #1: 2 large rotisserie chickens, meat shredded + 2 jars (16–20 oz each) good red or green chile sauce (La Victoria, Las Palmas, or Hatch)
- Filling shortcut #2 (even faster): 5–6 lbs seasoned carnitas or barbacoa from Costco or your local taquería
- Optional: 1 lb Oaxaca or Monterey Jack cheese cut into strips (for cheese & chile verde tamales)

### Quick Assembly

Drain husks, pat dry. Spread 1/3 cup masa on the smooth side of a husk in a thin rectangle (about 4x5 inches), leaving the top 2 inches empty. Spoon 2–3 Tbsp filling down the center. Add a strip of cheese if you want. Fold the left side over, then the right, then fold the bottom up. (No need to tie if you stand them upright in the pot.) Stand tamales upright in a steamer pot with a few coins in the water (the rattling tells you when water is low). Steam 60–75 minutes. They're done when the masa peels easily from the husk.

Serve with extra sauce, Mexican crema, and a sprinkle of cotija. Ring in the New Year with the easiest, most authentic tamales you've ever made—because the ancestors would totally approve of rotisserie chicken and store-bought masa.



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