

To your fortune

Lucky food for your New Year's bounty

If money is a chief goal of yours in this one-way journey we know as life, and if you also like to eat, then you're in luck. For, as we approach the new year, the superstitious wisdom of ancient cultures lights our way toward success and prosperity with—as luck would have it—food. Many believe that eating the right things on or around New Year's Eve will bring you good fortune—even money—in the year 2020. So what's for dinner? Here is a selection of items long believed—if not scientifically proven—to generate good fortune, and cash, in the 12 months ahead.

Pig: These clever and personable mammals can make wonderful pets. But if you eat one, good fortune will befall you. That's because pigs move in a forward direction as they nose through soft soils for edibles—which indicates forward motion and progress. Also, because pigs tend to be plump, those who eat them will be, too.

This is better than it sounds, because fatness indicates success, wealth and smart investments in the stock market—the important things in life. Well, at least, being fat symbolized such virtues in centuries past. Unfortunately for the pig, the superstition persists: Eat pork, and your assets will grow.

Leafy greens: Kale has been one of the world's trendiest foods—after bacon—in recent years. It also brings good luck. That's because greens look remarkably like cash, in case you haven't noticed. Thus, eating greens—collard, kale, spinach, whatever—generates money, even if you live in Europe and your national currency isn't green. Since leafy veggies are a relatively low-cost food, they represent an excellent investment strategy. Even if your savings account doesn't begin to grow after your next kale salad, you will at least be gaining high levels of nutrients per calorie ingested—and without the massive water costs of animal husbandry. Greens are good for you and the environment.

Whole fish: Fish scales look like coins. Thus, eating a whole fish will bring good luck and wealth. While most fish are cooked after the scales are removed, we will assume this won't change the intended effects on acquiring new properties or logging capital gains. And there is another luck-related reason to eat fish: They swim in schools (some do, at



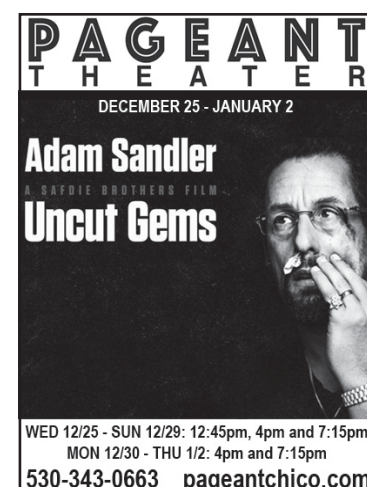
Pickled herring

least—just go with it). While this may actually be a behavioral adaptation indicating a dangerous world fraught with predators, to the ancients, such gathering indicated community—and prosperity. How best to cook a whole fish? Try a salt crust. Literally bury the cleaned (and scaled) fish in coarse sea salt. Bake at 400 degrees for 30 minutes. The salt will hold in the moisture of the fish—and will break apart in large pieces as you serve it. (Throw some of the salt over your left shoulder if you've got any household poltergeist problems. That will shoo the specters away.)

Cornbread: One of America's most heartening comfort foods, cornbread is also associated with prosperity. The color is gold—like the most coveted element in the universe—and when whole corn kernels are scattered through the batter, the intended effect is that of gold nuggets.

Lentils: These high-fiber, high-protein legumes are virtuous in many dietary ways. Since they also look like coins—I know; it seems like a stretch—they are considered especially good to eat. Lentils are disk-shaped and (sometimes) green. Better, you just add water and they grow bigger. If only financial management was so easy; we'd all retire early, and we wouldn't even need to slaughter the pig. In Brazil, Hungary and Italy, lentils are eaten for good luck. In the American South, another legume, the black-eyed pea, serves the same purpose.

Pickled herring: In parts of northern Europe, pickled herring is eaten at the stroke of midnight to secure good fortune in the coming year. Though this might significantly lessen your chances of getting a kiss, the tradition just might get you some cash. The science underlying this theory is that, to hopeful, imaginative folks, herring look like glittering coins. Just hope these high-protein, high omega-3 morsels indicate silver dollars, not nickels.



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