

## Shmanners 242: New Year's Eve Traditions

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**Travis:** Three... two... one! Happy podcast!

**Teresa:** It's *Shmanners*!

[theme music plays]

**Travis:** Hello, internet! I'm your husband host, Travis McElroy.

**Teresa:** And I'm your wife host, Teresa McElroy.

**Travis:** And you're listening to *Shmanners*!

**Teresa:** It's extraordinary etiquette...

**Travis:** For ordinary occasions! Hello, my dove.

**Teresa:** Hello, dear.

**Travis:** How are you?

**Teresa:** You know, uh, this—this time between—time between Christmas and New Years for our family—you know, sometimes I feel like it goes very slowly, but it has been going quite fast. Is that because every time I turn around I have to put together a new toy?

**Travis:** That might be it. That might be it. Uh, it might also just be... you know?

**Teresa:** Time is a construct.

**Travis:** Time is a construct, and relative.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm.

**Travis:** And we... you know, the days are getting shorter. Um, the nights growing longer and colder.

**Teresa:** But that's not true, because we're past—

**Travis:** And, you know, the stars are dying out.

**Teresa:** —we're past the winter solstice, so actually the days are getting longer.

**Travis:** I know, tell me about it, am I right? [fake laughter] 2021's gotta be better. You know what I mean? [fake laughter]

**Teresa:** Well, okay. I have a statement I've prepared—

**Travis:** Oh boy.

**Teresa:** —about 2021.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** [clears throat]

**Travis:** I'm horri—what is about to happen?

**Teresa:** Though—

**Travis:** "To whom it may concern."

**Teresa:** *Listen.*

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Though like a ship tossed upon the waves we were in 2020, here in 21, we still will be in the ocean, but at last we can see the shore.

**Travis:** Powerful!

**Teresa:** Thanks!

**Travis:** So—well, what does it mean? [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** Well, I mean—so, inevitably when a new year rolls around people are like, "Oh, this one's gonna be better. Last one was really terrible."

But, like, it's not about the number we attach to a year. I mean, we're still kind of, like, in the middle of things not being awesome. And—

**Travis:** I think we've crested, though.

**Teresa:** Like I said, we can see the shore, though we still be tossed by the waves.

**Travis:** Yarr.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Yarr. Can I ask you a question?

**Teresa:** Sure!

**Travis:** Uh—

**Teresa:** You just did. On with the show!

**Travis:** Aww!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Then let me make a statement: I'm going to ask you a question.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** For you... I was thinking about this. One, it occurred to me today, we're recording this on Wednesday, and so when you hear this, it will be a new year. But it occurred to me today, like, "Aw, man, do we have to stay up till midnight tomorrow?"

**Teresa:** [laughs] Absolutely not.

**Travis:** Oh boy. But is—is New Years a big deal for you? Like, in your family did you guys do, like, New Years events? Did you make a big deal out of it growing up?

**Teresa:** No, not really. Um, as kids I remember my parents having a little New Year's Eve party, a small thing.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** Um, you know, with hors d'oeuvres and, like, the ball drop on in the background, mostly just friends talking. Um, and there would be a toast at midnight, um, and I would be asleep! [laughs]

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** And then as I got older, I think that I went to maybe two or three New Year's parties. The one that I have the most vivid memories is when both my younger sister and I went out together with a few friends. We went a pub and celebrated there. But then—

**Travis:** Back when we could do that, yes.

**Teresa:** Back when we could do that. But then very quickly came back home and got in our hot tub with our friends to do a little toast there. So, like, it's never really been super, you know, important that there be plans. I guess the important part is, uh, the people I'm with.

**Travis:** That's beautiful. Now, let's talk about the plans that people have.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** We're gonna talk about New Year's celebrations.

**Teresa:** No, I wanted to know about you!

**Travis:** Oh. Uh, yeah, I mean, very similar. I have lots—my parents—I always kind of felt growing up like Christmas, which is what our family celebrated growing up, was very much about family and, like, "Oh, we're gonna go visit grandma and grandpa and see the cousins," and stuff like that. But then New Year's was more for, like, friends, to my parents.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** So, like, they had a group of friends that, like, they went to, in my dad's case high school and college with, and that kind of thing, where they would get together for New Year's. And so, like, we'd see the same people for New Year's every year. Uh, and we do it at, like, a rotation of their houses.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Um, so that was always a big deal. And so then when I became an adult, I spent many years, and I think probably a lot of people can relate to this, trying to plan perfect things or make sure I was—like, I would get invited to four different New Year's parties and I'd be like, "Well, I have to go to all of 'em!" You know what I mean?

**Teresa:** Right.

**Travis:** And, like, trying to make that work and everything. And now I'm much more of the, like, uh, it's bedtime now.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** And, uh, when I wake up tomorrow it'll be a new year! How exciting.

**Teresa:** Um, can you think of any maybe, like, good luck things your family did? I think that we ate black-eyed peas and [hesitantly] sauerkraut? Is that right?

**Travis:** I don't know. That sounds very Germanic, though.

**Teresa:** Yeah. I think that those are both supposed to be good luck.

**Travis:** For me, New Year's Eve—the kiss, made a toast, pretty standard stuff, really. I can't remember anything—I think you'd take a step? I remember something about, like, stepping with your right foot at midnight so you're starting off on the right foot.

**Teresa:** Okay!

**Travis:** That might be completely made up. I mean, they're all made up, right? [laughs]

**Teresa:** Yeah. [laughs]

**Travis:** All traditions are made up, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Well, so, here are a few of the things people around the world do to celebrate the new year.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, in Madrid, Spain, you're probably going to be seeing a lot about grapes.

**Travis:** Oh! You know what? I could've guessed a hundred words that I thought you were going to say—

**Teresa:** [laughs] And not of it.

**Travis:** —and I wouldn't expect grape. Now that you say it, though, I mean, wine? Is it a wine thing?

**Teresa:** Sort of.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, um, at the stroke of midnight it is Spanish tradition to eat exactly 12 grapes, one for each ringing of the church bell at midnight, in hopes that it will bring a year of good fortune and prosperity.

**Travis:** Ah. Fruitful, you might say.

**Teresa:** Indeed. This goes back to the 1800's, when vineyard owners created this tradition in attempt—

**Travis:** To sell more grapes.

**Teresa:** [holding back laughter] Yes, to boost year-end grape sales.

**Travis:** Uh-huh, okay, cool.

**Teresa:** And it totally worked. [laughs]

**Travis:** I didn't know you could just do that! Like, "Oh, you know what's a tradition? [through laughter] You listen to 12 podcasts every year!"

**Teresa:** You said yourself that traditions are made up.

**Travis:** I guess that's true. I mean, we talked about this when we talked about wedding anniversary presents, right? That it's made up by the people who make those things. Like, "You know what you need? Plates."

**Teresa:** Yep. [laughs]

**Travis:** "Oh, and I just happen to have some plates, here!"

**Teresa:** Okay. Uh, here comes another one, Scotland.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, there's—

**Travis:** It's shortbread. Everybody has to eat a bunch of shortbread.

**Teresa:** No. Okay, the most famous one is probably Hogmanay.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, which means holy month, or the Scandinavian Huguenot, which means Yule. So, like, it's another wintry celebration, right? People throw parties, they eat haggis and parsnip and potatoes—

**Travis:** I miss haggis.

**Teresa:** —but here's the thing. The most famous part is called the first footing.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** And it's an old Gaelic practice that means the first person who enters your home on New Year determines your fate.

**Travis:** [gasps] Oh boy!

**Teresa:** Here's what you want.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** You want a person to be a dark-haired man, bearing prosperous gifts of salt, coal, shortbread, or whiskey.

**Travis:** So what happens, like, if a blond shows up?

**Teresa:** Okay—

**Travis:** You just don't open the door?

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** "Come back tomorrow, Bill!"

**Teresa:** Well, you'll learn, you'll learn. But it kind of has a historic undertone, because ancient Scots typically had darker features, like dark hair. But if a light-haired person showed up at your door, it was probably a Viking.

**Travis:** [gasps] I've been playing a lot of *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla*, and I know about these folks!

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Um, and so if you let in that person, you were probably being robbed.

**Travis:** Oh.

**Teresa:** So, uh—[laughs quietly]

**Travis:** And that's bad, right? You don't wanna be robbed.

**Teresa:** Right, right, right, right, right.

**Travis:** Okay, great, great, great. Just establishing a baseline.

**Teresa:** Here's something that you can do to stack the odds in your favor: you have one guest leave just before midnight, so they can knock on the door right as



the new year begins. So, you invite someone who fits the bill, uh, and then make sure that they give you a dram of whiskey as they come in. [laughs]

**Travis:** Oh, okay. Is my hair dark enough, do you think?

**Teresa:** Uh, yeah, I think so.

**Travis:** Okay. Even with the purple?

**Teresa:** Even with the purple.

**Travis:** Okay, great.

**Teresa:** And the grey.

**Travis:** The—what?!

**Teresa:** But it looks great.

**Travis:** You say what now? Grey hair?!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Don't worry, I got a few wiry grey ones poking out too.

**Travis:** [holding back laughter] But I'll be young forever!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I made that deal!

**Teresa:** We need to get one of those paintings to age for you.

**Travis:** Thank you, I've been saying this for years, but where do you even get 'em? Is it a commission thing? Do I just have to find one? Man, I should've read that book.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Okay, let's move on. The Netherlands.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um—

**Travis:** You fly with Peter Pan.

**Teresa:** No. There is a Dutch tradition known as oliebollen.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** It is a treat of the New Year. Looks yummy, right? It's like a beignet. Right? So, like, a fluffy donut type thing.

**Travis:** I like how—what people at home can't see is Teresa was doing, like, a hand motion, but it kind of looked like she was squeezin' a clown nose.

**Teresa:** [laughs] No, that was the fluffiness of the beignet.

**Travis:** I know, but it did just look like a "Honk, honk!" [laughs]

**Teresa:** Uh, and here is why the deep fried doughs. Ancient Germanic tribes believed in a woman named Perchta. Uh, she was a powerful goddess, um, and—

**Travis:** Just like you.

**Teresa:** —her full name—

**Travis:** Just like you [crosstalk].

**Teresa:** Thank you, thank you. Was, uh, Perchta the Belly-Slitter.

**Travis:** [holding back laughter] Okay! Huh?

**Teresa:** Uh, this may sound familiar to you. We were talking about it last night. If someone wasn't partaking in enough yuletide cheer, she would cut your stomach open and fill you with trash. So, the idea—

**Travis:** What?!

**Teresa:** —was that you ate fried dough so the fat from it would grease her sword to slide off you, [holding back laughter] resulting in your ability to continue living your peaceful Germanic life without trash inside you.

**Travis:** We were talking about this?!

**Teresa:** No, remember? You were talking about the little birds and the skin?

**Travis:** Oh yeah, okay. That's much—okay, cool, gotcha. A trash witch, alright.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Nesting witch is what I was talking about.

**Teresa:** Yes.

**Travis:** Okay, great.

**Teresa:** It seems very similar to me.

**Travis:** I guess. I like that the—I do really enjoy that the grease and stuff from the fried treat isn't to convince her that you're having enough yuletide joy to make her not do it, it's just so that if she tries [holding back laughter] to cut you open, the sword will glance off—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —'cause you're all greasy from the dessert you ate!

**Teresa:** Indeed.

**Travis:** "Ah, you—oh, your greasy bellies. Ah, get outta here. Go have fun at the party."

**Teresa:** Alright. Moving on.

**Travis:** I do wanna move on. I do. I really do. But first... I would like to write a thank-you note for our sponsor.

[theme music plays]

**Teresa:** *Shmanners* is sponsored this week by Zola. Zola is dedicated to making wedding planning easier and less stressful by creating everything couples need all in one place.

**Travis:** That's good, because if they were trying to make weddings more complicated and more stressful—

**Teresa:** That would be rough!

**Travis:** You know what? We wouldn't agree... to advertise for them.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** I'm—I'm gonna take a stand. Any company who's like, "We wanna make your special day more stressful."

Go somewhere else, my friend! Not on *Shmanners*!

**Teresa:** So if you are looking for wedding vendors, save-the-dates, invitations, websites, registry, everything that you need, uh, you can find it all, personalized recommendations based on your style, your budget, and, you know, what you want things to... look like!

**Travis:** Yeah, make your wedding your own! That's what it's there for!

**Teresa:** Uh, you can explore hundreds of beautiful designs for different save-the-dates and invitations and, you know, everything comes with, just-in-case, a free change-the-date guarantee.

**Travis:** That's great.

**Teresa:** And you can also use Zola to create your own wedding website. That was... I can't tell you how great it was when we were getting married to just direct people to RSVP on the website. [laughs] No—

**Travis:** With the information there—

**Teresa:** It's right there!

**Travis:** —and, like, we're not answering questions for you, just go there. We have enough on our plate, thank you very much.

So, if you want to check it out, go to [zola.com/shmanners](http://zola.com/shmanners) today, and use promo code "save 50," that's "save 50," to get 50% off your save-the-dates. You can also get free personalized paper samples before you purchase. That's [zola.com/shmanners](http://zola.com/shmanners) with promo code "save 50."

[music plays]

**Dave:** Hi, it's me, Dave Hill, from before, here to tell you about my brand new show on Maximum Fun, the *Dave Hill Goodtime Hour*, which combines my old Maximum Fun show, *Dave Hill's Podcasting Incident*, with my old radio show, *The [censor bleep] Damn Dave Hill Show*, into one new futuristic program from the future.

If you like delightful conversation with incredible guests, technical difficulties, and actual phone calls from real life listeners, you've just hit a street called Easy.

I'm also joined by my incredible cohost, the boy criminal Chris Gersbeck. Say hi, Chris.

**Chris:** Hey Dave, it's really great to—

**Dave:** That's enough, Chris. And New Jersey chicken rancher Dez. Say hi, Dez.

**Dez:** Hey, Dave! [chicken squawk]

**Dave:** The *Dave Hill Goodtime Hour*. Brand new episodes every Friday on Maximum Fun.

**Chris:** Plus, the show's not even an hour. It's 90 minutes.

**Dez:** Take that! Stupid rules.

**Dave:** We nailed it.

[music and advertisement end]

**Teresa:** On... to Russia.

**Travis:** Of course!

**Teresa:** Indeed. In Russia, New Year's is a big deal. Uh, in fact there are two New Year's holidays in Russia.

**Travis:** What?! Get outta the town.

**Teresa:** So, there's the old New Year, which is celebrated on January 14th, according to the Julian Orthodox calendar.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And then there's the regular New Year's of the Gregorian calendar.

**Travis:** Got it, yes, I know that guy, yeah.

**Teresa:** The old New Year's is typically a smaller celebration spent with family, right? But on the 31st and January 1st, they party down.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and this is probably because Russian history with holidays is kind of... cloudy. Right? So... way back when, in the 1700's, Peter I moved their new year from September 1st, which was the end of the tax season, to January 1st, in order to kind of, like, update the calendar and westernize the country.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Uh, but then, again, between 1919 and 1937, the Bolsheviks decided that it was too bougie to celebrate New Year's Day, so they banned public celebrations. And it didn't actually become a holiday again until 1947.

**Travis:** Man, it sounds a lot—that reminds me of the Puritans and prohibition.

**Teresa:** Yeah. But now, starting in about, like, 1970's, mid-70's, it became tradition for Russia's leader to give a speech, and now they have fireworks, and concerts, and, you know, a really great celebration, most of which actually take place at the Red Square.

**Travis:** Okay. I know that place.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Um, and their traditional foods have become salad, herrings, and champagne, of course.

**Travis:** Yes, of cou—yes.

**Teresa:** Um, here's the thing about the champagne, though. It's very particular.

**Travis:** Hmm?

**Teresa:** Because there's a tradition to write your wishes for the coming year on a piece of paper, then burn that paper—

**Travis:** I've done that, yes.

**Teresa:** —and drink the ashes of the paper—

**Travis:** Oh!

**Teresa:** —mixed in your champagne.

**Travis:** Now, that part I haven't done.

**Teresa:** That way you are literally embodying your goals.

**Travis:** Okay, listen. I can get down with that.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** I'm not gonna *do* it.

**Teresa:** Oh, no! Why—

**Travis:** Are we gonna do it? Are we gonna drink our ashes?!

**Teresa:** That actually sounds like a really fun thing to do.

**Travis:** Okay. We'll drink—we'll do it.

**Teresa:** I would like to.

**Travis:** We'll take some photos, and we'll post 'em.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Um, just a side note as well, there's another tradition. So, there's a giant lake in Siberia, um, and it's more than 5000 feet deep. Lake Baikal, I think it's called.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and so for the past few years, two divers, usually naming themselves Father Frost and The Ice Maiden—

**Travis:** [gasps]

**Teresa:** —which are Russian folk characters—

**Travis:** Okay. Also they sound like cool superheroes.

**Teresa:** Also, yes. So, they go into the frozen lake with a decorated New Year tree, kind of like a Christmas tree but... Cyrillic characters and stuff. And they leave the tree more than a hundred feet below the surface, and even though the temperature is well below freezing during that time of year, people travel from all over to watch them do it. And, uh—

**Travis:** Just to—wait.

**Teresa:** —last year, they incorporated some trash cleanup as well, which is great.

**Travis:** People come to watch 'em swim a tree down into the lake?

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Okay. Sure!

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** Do you have any—now, listen. I ask you this every year, and I know what you're gonna say, but I want you to really think about it before you do. Do you have a resolution in mind for 2021?

**Teresa:** Of course I do.



**Travis:** [sighs] Is it to floss more?

**Teresa:** Yeah!

**Travis:** That's what you say every year, though! Go bigger!

**Teresa:** It works every year! Did I floss more last year? Hm, I suppose so. But can I try to floss more this year? I can. I definitely can. I can try and do that.

**Travis:** Oh, cool. See, I come up with, like, pithy slogan resolutions. Resolutions I've had in the past: look good, feel good, do good. That was about caring more about my appearance, [under his breath] if that was even possible—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —uh, being healthier in my life choices, and helping people more. That was one. Another one? Uh, for her, for them, for us, which was to think more about the choices I was making for Bebe's future, to think more about the choices I was making for our future as a couple, and to think more about the choices I was making for our family. And so, for her, for them, for us, right? I don't have one yet for this year, but it's gonna be pithy and clever, that's for sure! And yours is...

**Teresa:** Floss more!

**Travis:** [sighs] Okay.

**Teresa:** Let's move on to Brazil.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, if you're walking around the shores of the beaches of Brazil on New Year's Eve, here are the things that you will find: white flowers and candles.

**Travis:** Because...

**Teresa:** Because there are a lot of African roots in Brazil, because of the trans-Atlantic slave trade. Um, and so many peoples who were enslaved came from West Africa, western Nigeria area. Um, and there was a tribe called the Yoruba

tribe that believed the beautiful goddess named Yemoja, uh, I think that's how you pronounce it—it was kind of like Poseidon, right? So, like, the sea goddess in charge of water everywhere, and also the deity of pregnant women.

Legend has it that the goddess traveled with the members of her tribe when they were kidnapped and forced into slavery, and it is tradition to throw flowers and candles in the water to her as an offering to bless your new year.

**Travis:** Okay. That's—I like that one. That's pretty.

**Teresa:** I do too. It does sound pretty.

**Travis:** I assume you're probably putting the candle in a thing so it floats, right? You're not just, like—

**Teresa:** I think so.

**Travis:** —chucking an unlit candle into the water, right?

**Teresa:** [laughs] I don't think that would... I mean, you wouldn't be able to see it. It would sink.

**Travis:** Yeah, it wouldn't be as pretty.

**Teresa:** Also, I hope that there's a cleanup day.

**Travis:** I mean, the flower petals probably [crosstalk]

**Teresa:** Yeah. Fish are probably goin' to town on those flower petals.

**Travis:** Yes. The candles, though—

**Teresa:** Not so much.

**Travis:** —the fish are like, "Ew, gross."

**Teresa:** "Ew, gross." Maybe they're just real tiny.

**Travis:** Hmm. Maybe.

**Teresa:** Anyway, let's go to Italy!

**Travis:** Okay! Wheeee!

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** Ah, here we are in Italy.

**Teresa:** Uh, in Italy, a common tradition is to wear red underwear.

**Travis:** Okay!

**Teresa:** It is a—

**Travis:** On New Year's—on New Year's.

**Teresa:** On New Year's.

**Travis:** Not just, like, all the time.

**Teresa:** Not—I mean, you could.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Because it's a symbol of fertility, and, you know... gettin' together. Romantically.

**Travis:** Oh, I see. Amour.

**Teresa:** Amore.

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Indeed. You also are probably going to dine on white risotto, 'cause rice is in abundance, and it symbolizes coins.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Uh, lentils, again, the same deal, right? You can hold a lot of lentils in your pot. And—

**Travis:** Why does rice symbolize coi—okay, sure.

**Teresa:** It's—so, it's about the abundance in one place, right? Lots of little things being like lots of money.

**Travis:** Prosperity, got it.

**Teresa:** Indeed. Same thing with raisins. I guess. [laughs]

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** I don't—I'm—it's a little harder for me to stretch that one, but it sounds yummy.

**Travis:** If someone said "Hey, here's a bunch of raisins instead of money," I don't know how I'd feel about that. Don't get me wrong, I guess raisins are just fine. I'd rather have money. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** [laughs] Here's a tradition that's started to fall a little bit out of favor.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, so in southern Italy, [holding back laughter] it used to be a tradition to throw appliances—pots, pans, and even furniture—out your window to symbolize that you are letting go of the negative energy, and bringing in the new positive energy.

**Travis:** I can see where that would start to fall out of favor.

**Teresa:** Right, yes.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** So, if you go to Naples, maybe wear a helmet?

**Travis:** Hmm. You're real pleased at that.

**Teresa:** [laughs] That was Alex's joke, not mine.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** But I really like it, she's great. Denmark.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** This again, throwing things. It is a well-held tradition in Denmark that on New Year's you break a bunch of plates.

**Travis:** Once again, was this invented by the plate industry?

**Teresa:** I don't—I don't know.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** But you—okay, [holding back laughter] so, you... are encouraged to wing the plates at the doors of your friends and neighbors, and it's thought that the more shattered plates you find on your doorstep, the more luck you'll have in the new year.

**Travis:** Man, that really does seem like a lemonade out of lemons thing, huh? Like, "There's a bunch of broken plates at my door... but, gonna be pretty lucky!"

**Teresa:** I mean, it sounds like a fun way to party.

**Travis:** Sure, as long as everybody's consenting to this game.

**Teresa:** I think they are.

**Travis:** It'd be fine. But, like, if I'm trying to sleep and people are chuckin' bowls and, I don't know, platters and stuff at my door, I might be a little frustrated.

**Teresa:** It doesn't say you have to do it at night.

**Travis:** Oh, okay, then it's fine. Now I'm down with it, yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Let's do it. Let's go right now! We'll drive around town, throw the plates from our car, socially distanced.

**Teresa:** [laughs] Uh, how will we get there, though?

**Travis:** We're gonna drive in the car.

**Teresa:** Across... the oceans?

**Travis:** Oh no, I just meant drive around to our friends here.

**Teresa:** Ohh, I thought you meant go to Denmark! [laughs]

**Travis:** No, we don't have to go to Denmark to throw plates. We can throw plates right here in our own hometown! Be the plate-flinging you wish to see in the world, you know?

**Teresa:** I would have to buy plates to throw, 'cause I like our plates.

**Travis:** Mmm, mmm, this is a good point. We'll steal some plates from someone else—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —and then break 'em.

**Teresa:** This is becoming too convoluted for me.

**Travis:** Oh, you're right.

**Teresa:** I can't get behind it.

**Travis:** We'll just drink the ash.

**Teresa:** Japan is next. Remember we had a noodle episode a while back?

**Travis:** Yes.

**Teresa:** Yes. And noodles have a lot to do with the new year in Japan.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, they have a soba noodle ritual known as Toshikoshi Soba.

**Travis:** Okay, what is it?

**Teresa:** Um, it is called Year Crossing Noodles. So, it's believed that the thin shape and the long length of the noodles is meant to symbolize a long and healthy life, and that the buckwheat plant which noodles are made from is a symbol for strength, since the plant is very resilient.

**Travis:** Okay, that tracks.

**Teresa:** Yeah.

**Travis:** Why the year crossing? Is it like you start eating it before midnight, and you finish it after midnight?

**Teresa:** Yes. You welcome in the new year with a bowl of noodles. So, I suppose you *could* start it at midnight.

**Travis:** I'm just saying, I'm picturing, like, a *Lady and the Tramp* kind of thing—

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** —where it's, like, 2020 on one side and 2021 on the other, and the noodles crossing... time! And space! It is a time traveling noodle, if you think—we're all time traveling, if you think about it, just slowly forward one minute at a time?

**Teresa:** [laughs] Indeed.

**Travis:** But that noodle is stretching across space and time, like... a TARDIS, if you think about it.

**Teresa:** Again, I don't know if you have to do it right at midnight. Just like the plate throwing, I think—

**Travis:** You don't have to, but why wouldn't you?

**Teresa:** —since it's symbolic, I think you can just... do it.

**Travis:** Okay, but you could have time traveling noodles. Why wouldn't you do that?

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Okay, thank you.

**Teresa:** Also, Buddhist temples in Japan will ring their bells 107 times on New Year's Eve, and then one more time when the clock strikes midnight. So, this tradition is meant to dispel the 108 evil desires in each and every person, and cleanse everyone's sins from the previous year.

**Travis:** Okay, I like it.

**Teresa:** Here's one in Ecuador that I think that I've seen, like, YouTube videos of this? It is customary to hold a parade in the streets, full of effigies.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Now, these effigies can be pop culture icons, public figures—

**Travis:** Oh, yes, I've seen this too! Yes.

**Teresa:** Exactly, right? And then at the end, they throw all the effigies on a fire.

**Travis:** Huh!

**Teresa:** Um, and not because they hate these people that they represent. It's because you're to remove the old year, right? And cleanse the world of the bad from the past 12 months so there's room for more good stuff.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** It sounds a little scary to me.

**Travis:** Not me! I'm down with this.

**Teresa:** Burning effigies?



**Travis:** Listen, you know, it's not real—things like that are—it's all in what you imbue it with, and if you're imbuing that with positive energy and you're saying, like, "This is good, this is clearing out the old and in with the new. We're making room for new positive energy." I like that, you know what I mean? It's intention-based. This is what I mean, the intention to me.

**Teresa:** Is it maybe because I'm asthmatic and I can't be around fire?

**Travis:** That might also be it, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Teresa:** Yeah. Yeah? Yeah. Here's one from the Czech Republic.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** And it is all about the apples.

**Travis:** Go on?

**Teresa:** Apples are very important, because your fate is thought to be determined by what the core of the apple you eat looks like.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Like—you know, kind of like tea leaves or something, right?

**Travis:** Sure.

**Teresa:** Um, so you cut an apple in half right before the new year comes. If the core resembles a star, then everyone will soon meet again in happiness and health, but if it looks like a cross, someone at the New Year's party should expect to get sick.

**Travis:** And if it looks like a heart, then... look out behind you!

**Teresa:** Oh no!

**Travis:** It's a monkey! [holding back laughter] With a knife!

**Teresa:** Here's the thing, though, right? I could cut an apple in a way to make it look like a star in the core.

**Travis:** Okay. Are you bragging?

**Teresa:** How do you—no, how do you cut it—how does it look like a cross when you cut it? Is it just if you don't cut it quite in the middle, the cross happens? I don't know. I...

**Travis:** I don't know either. To the kitchen!

**Teresa:** [laughs] Anyway, if you cut your apple so that there's half a stem on each side, you get the star. So, everybody cut your apples into... star halves.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Here's a few more. Um, and gosh, Alex, you did a great job. There are so many on here I hardly knew! Here's Estonia.

Um, in Estonia, people believe in eating 7, 9, or 12 meals to bring good tidings.

**Travis:** Okay!

**Teresa:** Well, those are lucky numbers. Um, and that sounds great. I love to eat, but if you don't want to eat 12 meals, it's okay, because if you can't finish every meal, it's traditional to leave a little food on your plate as an offering to your ancestors.

**Travis:** Okay, great. I love this. Let's have 12 meals.

**Teresa:** Okay.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** How big—

**Travis:** Big.

**Teresa:** —are the 12 meals? Because—

**Travis:** Big.

**Teresa:** —I think I could do that. Like, 12 little snacky-size meals?

**Travis:** No. We're goin' full size—12 meals with 12 courses each.

**Teresa:** Oh no!

**Travis:** 144 courses.

**Teresa:** Well, it's—

**Travis:** A gross of courses.

**Teresa:** —it's a good thing that I have a lot of ancestors.

**Travis:** Mm-hmm. And two very hungry dogs.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. In Ireland, it is a custom for single ladies—woot woot! To sleep with mistletoe—

**Travis:** You're not sing—why did you say it like that?

**Teresa:** No—just because I like the song. [singing] All the single ladies—

**Travis:** It sounded like you were self-identifying as a single lady, and that gave me pause.

**Teresa:** No, because I'm twisting—you can't see at home. I'm twisting my right hand, and I wear my wedding ring on the left, so...

**Travis:** Indeed. Okay, then our marriage continues to be secure for another year.

**Teresa:** Just dancing. Um, single ladies sleep with mistletoe underneath their pillow, so that they may dream of their future spouse. But here's the one that is really cool.

**Travis:** Okay. Take that, all the rest of them.

**Teresa:** Uh, one person in the house... throws bread at the wall. It's an—

**Travis:** 'Cause they're mad?

**Teresa:** [laughs] No. It's an Irish superstition that involves taking Christmas bread and banging it on all the doors and walls of your home, and it's thought that this would chase bad luck out of your house and invite in good spirits for the new year.

**Travis:** Okay. I'll chuck some bread at the wall.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Well, Christmas bread. We do have bread. We have, uhh... uh, Yorkshire puddings—

**Travis:** We do have leftover Yorkshire pudding. I'll save it and throw it at the wall.

**Teresa:** Yes, indeed. Let's—

**Travis:** So we're drinkin' ash.

**Teresa:** Uh-huh.

**Travis:** We're throwin' bed—bread. [laughs quietly]

**Teresa:** Bread. [laughs]

**Travis:** We're smashing plates. We're throwin' the dishwasher out the window.

**Teresa:** Can we eat grapes too?

**Travis:** Yeah! We got grapes.

**Teresa:** Okay, grapes.

**Travis:** We'll eat some grapes.

**Teresa:** Perfect.

**Travis:** Uh, we'll wear red underpants.

**Teresa:** Yes, I have red underpants. I can do that.

**Travis:** We're doing great so far. How about let's do one more.

**Teresa:** Alright. In China, we want to talk about the two different celebrations. So, there's the Lunar New Year—

**Travis:** Yeah, there's Chinese New Year too, right?

**Teresa:** Chinese New Year isn't just celebrated in China. Uh, several Asian countries like Korea, Vietnam, Laos, and Singapore, and others, also celebrate it. Um, it is a lunar new year.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Um, and then there's also the December 31st new year.

**Travis:** The Gregorian.

**Teresa:** Indeed. Like I said, this has to do with Asian calendars. Um, so a normal year in that calendar lasts [holding back laughter] 353 to 355 days, so the new year falls in, you know, in a different spot every year, and this year it's February 12th.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** Or at least it starts on February 12th, 'cause it's, like, a two week celebration.

**Travis:** Oh boy!

**Teresa:** With performances, and parties, and family reunions, and light shows, and fireworks, and all of that stuff, which I hope people will be able to partake in safely this year, with the pandemic.

**Travis:** And I'm pretty sure Peppa Pig taught me that you wear red during Chinese New Year, 'cause it's good luck.

**Teresa:** Mm-hmm. Um—

**Travis:** Thanks, Peppa Pig!

**Teresa:** And you may be familiar with Chinese astrology being linked to both animals and elements. Um, for example, 2020 was the year of the metal rat.

**Travis:** That's—okay.

**Teresa:** Yeah. So—

**Travis:** I almost made a joke there, but rats are much maligned, and I'm not going to speak ill of rats. They're fine. Great pets. Um, they're wonderful animals, and I won't besmirch their honor.

**Teresa:** Okay. Uh, there are lots of different things. People toss out their old clothes and buy new ones for the new year. Uh, there are parades and fireworks, like I said, but the thing that seems the most fun to me is called lucky money.

**Travis:** Okay?

**Teresa:** Which you get from people in red envelopes. Um, and so widespread is this that there's even an app for that!

**Travis:** You can send people red envelopes with, like, e-monies?!

**Teresa:** Totally. Uh, you can receive New Year's cash from your relatives like you would from Venmo.

**Travis:** Okay, cool!

**Teresa:** Pretty cool. Um, here are some things, though. Some do-not-do's.

**Travis:** Okay.

**Teresa:** One is, don't wash your hair on the first day of the new year. I think probably because it's traditionally, like, around the wintertime, and a long time ago, if you had wet hair and it was cold, people thought that you would get sick.

**Travis:** Yeah.

**Teresa:** You don't. Listen to *Sawbones*. But it's not comfortable!

**Travis:** That's true.

**Teresa:** Doesn't feel good. And also, you shouldn't use sharp objects like scissors, knives, or needles, because you cut up your luck that way.

**Travis:** Hm! Mm-hmm.

**Teresa:** Um, and also, don't sweep the floor, because you'll sweep away luck and wealth. I recommend just chillin' with your fam.

**Travis:** Just hang out on that day.

**Teresa:** It sounds like hangin' out, best way to get—and hang out with your phone so you can swipe yes on all of that lucky money.

**Travis:** Indeed. Alright, that's gonna do it. Thank you so much for joining us here again, and happy New Year.

**Teresa:** Happy New Year!

**Travis:** Um, I hope that everybody is safe and healthy in the new year, and that we all find prosperity and luck, and that we care for one another, and do everything we can to protect one another. Uh, thank you for joining *Sawbones*—[stammers]—us—

**Teresa:** What?!

**Travis:** Well, them too.

**Teresa:** [laughs]

**Travis:** But thank you for joining *Shmanners* in 2020, and sticking with us, and hopefully we brought you some information, and a little bit of smiles in there, maybe.

**Teresa:** And thank you to Alex, of course.

**Travis:** Of course.

**Teresa:** And thank you to you. This year, our listeners, through the Max Fun Drive, really helped us. They helped out all of the Max Fun shows, and it's

because of your membership in the Max Fun family that we can pay Alex for her time and help!

**Travis:** Indeed. Um, also thank you for telling your friends about this show. Word of mouth is always the most important thing, and the best way to help our show grow. So, if you found this show interesting, or any episode particularly interesting, please share it with a friend. Uh, you can find all the McElroy programs at [mcelroy.family](http://mcelroy.family). Also, check out [Maximumfun.org](http://Maximumfun.org) for all the Max Fun shows there. Who else do we thank, Teresa?

**Teresa:** We always thank Brent "brentalfloss" Black for writing our theme music, which is available as a ringtone where those are found. Thank you to Kayla M. Wasil for our Twitter thumbnail art, and when we take questions for a particular topic, we get them from Twitter @shmannerscast.

And thank you to Bruja Betty Pinup Photography for the cover of our fan-run Facebook group, *Shmanners* Fanners. If you love to give and get excellent advice from other fans, join that group today! And we're always looking for topics, we're always looking for idioms, so send us an email. Alex reads every one. [Shmannerscast@gmail.com](mailto:Shmannerscast@gmail.com).

**Travis:** And that's gonna do it for us, so join us again next week!

**Teresa:** No RSVP required!

**Travis:** You've been listening to *Shmanners*...

**Teresa:** Manners, *Shmanners*. Get it!

[theme music plays]

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