

Hoppin' John

JOHN TAYLOR spoons up a New Year's tradition.

Hoppin' John

1 cup small black-eyed peas
 1 cup long-grain white rice
 5 cups to 6 cups water
 1 dried hot pepper
 (optional)
 1 smoked ham hock
 1 medium onion, chopped
 (about $\frac{3}{4}$ cup)

Wash and sort peas. Place them in a saucepan, add the water, and discard any peas that float. Gently boil peas uncovered with pepper, ham hock, and onion until tender but not mushy—about $1\frac{1}{2}$ hours—or until 2 cups of liquid remain. Add rice to pot, cover, and simmer over low heat for about 20 minutes, never lifting the lid. Remove from heat and allow to steam, covered, for another 10 minutes. Remove the cover, fluff with a fork, and serve the dish immediately.

New Year's Day means parades, college bowl games, resolutions—and black-eyed peas. No Jan. 1 meal is complete without the bean, since tradition holds that eating it brings good luck the rest of the year. True fans pair peas with rice to create Hoppin' John, a Southern staple. No one knows the exact history of the dish—the recipe first appeared in an 1847 book by Sarah Rutledge called *The Carolina Housewife*. But John Martin Taylor, author of *Hoppin' John's Low-country Cooking* (Houghton Mifflin), says the dish came over with slaves from West Africa. Still, you can chow down on Hoppin' John when 2008 makes its debut. Here, Taylor offers a classic recipe to keep your new year charmed.

