

## POST CHRISTMAS SEASON / NACHWEIHNACHTZEIT

New Year's Eve: Silvesterabend (der 31. Dezember)

New Year Eve belief: Silvesterabendglaube

lead-pouring: das Bleigiessen

**Bleigiessen Tradition for New Year's Eve****BLEIGIESSEN – LET LEAD LEAD THE WAY INTO THE NEW YEAR**

Get the lead out this New Year's Eve and see what takes shape for the coming year.

**Bleigiessen – Let Lead Lead the Way Into the New Year**

What does the New Year hold? A tradition of divination by melted lead could hold the answers.



ONE OF THE BLEIGIESSEN LEAD SHAPES IS MELTED OVER AN OPEN CANDLE FLAME USING A SPOON.

It is New Year's Eve in Berlin, an hour before midnight. Tens of thousands of people are pulling thick sweaters over their heads, grabbing parkas, knit hats and warm gloves, and set out to attend the huge street festival to greet the New Year together. It centers around the Brandenburg Gate and the Reichstag (Parliament Building), and every year more than a million spectators peacefully enjoy the great party after the countdown to the spectacular fireworks at midnight. As the old year ends with the collective counting of the last seconds, a tremendous cheer from the crowds greets the new; people pop bottles of Sekt (sparkling wine) or champagne, soon to be used as bases for sparklers and firecrackers. They toast to strangers, hug their friends and relatives and wish everyone a

Happy New Year. When the twenty minutes or so of formal fireworks have ended, part of the crowd begins dancing to the music from several huge stands. The others head back to party at a friend's house until the wee hours of the morning. Most of these, however, will not go to bed unless they have dedicated an hour or so to an old but still much practiced custom: Bleigiessen – divination by melted lead.

Naturally, mankind's eternal wish to get a glimpse of the future culminates at this focal point of the last night of the year.

This simple but still very popular form of an oracle, scientifically known as "molybdomancy" (from Greek molybdos "lead"), forms a consistent part of German New Year's Eve customs. Preparations are easy: for a few euros, any toy store will sell a little box with six or more small hollow lead objects, usually in shapes ranging from animals, soccer balls, bells, or top hats, together with a shallow metal spoon with a wooden or coated handle. Now all you need is a bowl

of cold water, a candle, and friends and family around the table. Taking turns, everyone now puts an object on the spoon and holds it above the flame of the candle, until the lead melts and becomes a glittering silvery liquid. The spoon, held a little above the water level, is then tilted, so that the grey liquid drops into the water with a hissing sound and a splash. It immediately freezes into a solid, often quite bizarre form, which is then handed around to be identified.