Black-eyed peas and cabbage for the New Year

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Leah Sarris, executive chef and program director at the Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine, front, cooks up black-eyed peas and cabbage with the help of culinary nutrition interns Kim Turner, left, and Savannah Cass. Sarris says these traditional New Year's Day dishes are good for your heart. (Photo by Paula Burch-Celentano)

Black-eyed peas and cabbage are traditional fare for New Year's Day in Louisiana. Cabbage is green like money, so this humble vegetable holds promise for wealth in the New Year. Little beans — yes, black-eyed peas are actually beans — are considered lucky. Perhaps they symbolize good things to come: The promise of germination when planted, and increasing significantly in size when cooked. We wish all Tulanians a bountiful New Year. Why not try these recipes from Leah Sarris, executive chef and program director at the Goldring Center for Culinary Medicine and clinical instructor at the Tulane University School of Medicine?

Sarris is originally from Middletown, Ohio, and she was not familiar with cooking black-eyed peas. When she moved to New Orleans four years ago, she started enjoying them on New Year's Day with her friend and her friend's grandfather.

"Black-eyed peas are a powerhouse of nutrition," Sarris says. "As we say at the Goldring Center, we love our legumes!"

Sarris advises that black-eyed peas are a great source of protein without the saturated fat found in meat.

"They have tons of fiber, which is good for your heart, and can actually reverse the effects of saturated fat. They help us feel full longer, without being high in calories, and help us keep up our energy longer. So perhaps they mean an energetic New Year."

Sarris' cabbage recipe has a bit of ham to provide "a smoky, meaty note in the background." And, even with a little bit of ham for seasoning, the dish is high in heart-healthy fiber and "extremely low" in calories.

Eat up for a healthy, happy New Year.