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**New Year's Eve in Cuba: Tons of Kisses and Hugs**

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Different from other nations, we Cubans are prone to showing affection. This New Year's Eve will not be the exception.

A recent research carried out in Europe showed that people regret not having said how much they love their couples, families, and friends once they feel they are dying.

Cubans are not as discreet as the Europeans and we waste no time to freely express our positive or negative feelings; or gesticulate, or tap another person's shoulder.

That is why there will be tons of love affection this New Year's Eve in Cuba. There will be hugs and kisses.

More than one event darkened our daily life in 2017. Nonetheless, we keep trying to do make the best of everything, as it reads the popular saying.

Those affected by hurricane Irma can prove me right.

With sustained winds of up to 185 mph, the devastating hurricane caused

considerable damages equivalent to more than 13 billion CUP (Cuban Pesos). It caused the death of ten of our citizens. It affected more than 179,000 houses, among other damages. Besides, it paralyzed the national electrical grid after hitting 12 Cuban provinces.

PhD in Atmospheric Science, Miriam Teresita Llanes —worker at the Forecasting Center at the Meteorology Institute of Cuba— recalled that, regarded as the greatest hydro-meteorological phenomenon recorded in the Atlantic Basin, this hurricane generated more accumulated cyclonic energy than eighteen cyclonic seasons at once.

But our country recovered very fast. This month, the President of the Council of State and Ministers Army General Raul Castro recalled in his speech at the National Assembly how “the spirit of resistance and victory of our people, who confronted the event and the recovery period with organization, unity, discipline, and solidarity, was evident once again.”

Thus, the power and water supply were fixed in 20 days. Tourist resorts were restored in 62 days and were immediately ready for Cuba's tourist high season.

Afterwards, Cubans voted with the same enthusiasm we see in good causes. 7,610,183 voters headlined a quality electoral process: 91,79% of valid ballot papers —more than 2015.

The year 2017 is coming to an end and Cuban citizens are showing love once again.

This time Cubans show love by loving the family, friends, and our couple. And we will do it by organizing, the best we can, the New Year's Eve.

The most important Cuban tradition is being around family on New Year's Eve.

Sociologist Adriana Ricardo Diaz, from the International Cooperation Bureau of the Havana Historian's Office stated “New Year's Eve is a code that relates all Cubans and the rest of the world as well. All of us celebrate the New Year's Eve.”

To this special gathering, the popular New Year's Eve dinner is always present. The “main guest” is the roast pork, which not necessarily means the entire piece.

The magical fragrant garlic, oregano, cumin, lemon or bitter orange merge with the pork's fat as the special signature of dinners in Cuba on December 31.

That is, of course, the most usual, as there are people who prefer Italian or Chinese food, or just sea food.

Some will continue the old traditions of splashing water to ward off evil spirits and walking around the block with a suitcase, or burning down a rag doll symbolizing the old year.

But everything we Cubans love is to kiss, hug, and shake everyone hands.

Cubans wish happiness, harmony, health, and success. And we will work hard together to achieve all these.

**Translated by Sergio A. Paneque Diaz / CubaSi Translation Staff**

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