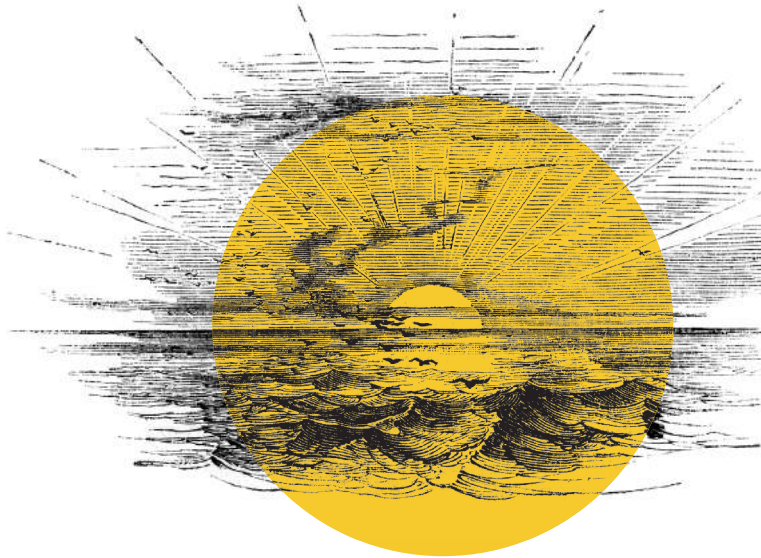


Very Superstitious!

The wives' tales, folklore and beliefs systems from old Bermuda and beyond. What's true, what's false, and what's just utterly ridiculous.

Nautical Nonsense? Maybe Not.

**Red Sky at Night, Sailors' Delight;
Red Sky in Morning, Sailors Take Warning** *True*



In the bible you'll find a verse in the book of Matthew (16:2-3) where Jesus says, "When it is evening, ye say, fair weather: for the heaven is red. And in the morning, foul weather today for the heaven is red and lowering."

Scientifically, it's all due to weather patterns. Weather systems travel from west to east in the mid latitudes and because the sun rises in the east, a rising sun will illuminate approaching mid-to high-level clouds, creating a red sky in the morning. Likewise, a setting sun (in the west) would illuminate a departing weather system, creating a red sky at night.

The reddish colour appears when sunlight is scattered by suspended particles and aerosols in the atmosphere by high pressure. A red sky at sunset means high pressure is moving in from the west, so therefore the next day will be dry and pleasant. Alternatively, a red sky at sunrise means that a high-pressure weather system has already moved east taking with it the good weather, and low-pressure windy and wet weather is on the way.

**For Good Luck, Always
Step onto a Boat with
Your Right Foot** *False*

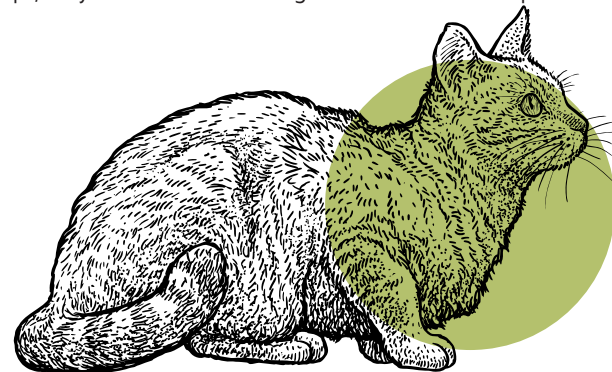
Why the right? Stepping aboard with the right foot is believed to mean that the journey will also start off on the right foot.

**Don't Say 'Goodbye'
When Departing** *False*

Ancient mariners believed that saying the word "goodbye" would bring immediate bad luck to the departing vessel and its crew.

Cats are Good Omens *True*

In past centuries, rodents were common on trading ships. Not only did they eat food stores onboard, they gnawed on ropes and carried diseases like the Black Death. Because cats helped control rodent problems on ships, they were believed to be good luck and act as a positive omen.



**Don't Set Sail on a Friday and
Especially Not Good Friday**

Biblical in its origin, this one gained traction with sailors who believed they shouldn't sail the day Jesus was crucified.

Other unlucky days for sailing include:

- The first Monday in April, which is when Cain killed his brother Abel
- The second Monday in August, which is when Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed
- December 31, which is when Judas Iscariot died by suicide

False



Never Rename a Ship

It has long been accepted that bad luck will follow those who rename a ship. This is because sailors believed that each ship's name was recorded in Neptune's ledger. If one should rename a vessel without first notifying Neptune (god of the sea), one would bear the brunt of Neptune's wrath.

Legend has it that if a ship must be renamed, one must perform a de-naming ceremony which includes writing the ship's name on a piece of paper and placing it into a box. The box is then burned and its ashes thrown into the ocean when the tide is going out. In addition to that, all traces of the boat's original name must be removed, including from logbooks, paperwork and from the boat's hull. After the de-naming ceremony is complete, the boat can be re-christened with its new moniker.

False



**No
Whistling**

Sailors once commonly believed that whistling on board a boat was a challenge to the wind and caused it to anger, increase and bring on a storm.

False

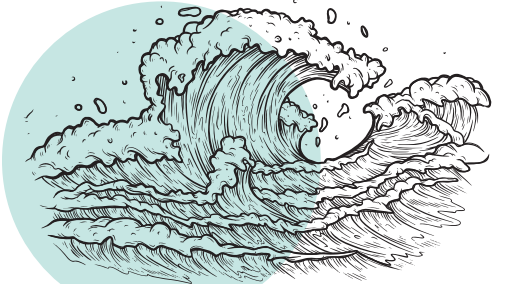


**Bananas on Board
Are Bad Luck** *False*

This long-held belief first came about during the 1700s, when ships would occasionally go missing between the Caribbean and Spain. While the ships appear to have vanished into thin air, their cargo of bananas was left floating on the surface of the Atlantic. In all likelihood, though, the ships in question didn't suffer the effects of aliens or the Bermuda Triangle, and certainly the bananas had nothing to do with their demise; it's probable that the ships sank and because bananas are less dense than water, they could be seen at the surface long after the ships reached the ocean floor.



**Salt Water
Can Cure
Anything**



From road rash to a headache, old time Bermudians believed that the secret to healing lay in the Atlantic. And here's the thing: they weren't wrong. Throughout history doctors have used salty seawater for medicinal purposes, with some doctors in eighteenth-century Britain writing prescriptions for patients detailing how often they should be in salt water.

Modern research suggests that thanks to significantly higher levels of minerals (including sodium, chloride, magnesium and calcium), salt water is good for skin conditions like psoriasis and eczema, musculoskeletal conditions like fibromyalgia and stress and anxiety disorders.

True **Bermudians
swear by it!**

Hurricanes and Other Weather Patterns

A Shark Oil Barometer Can Accurately Predict the Weather *True*

Though it is a somewhat simple device, a shark oil barometer acts in complex ways and gives those able to read it a couple of days' notice of inclement weather, most importantly a hurricane.

In 1973, trusted St. David's Islander Gilbert Lamb was interviewed for *The Bermudian* on the accuracy of his shark oil barometer. "About the only time I watch it closely is from the 15th of August to the 15th of October—that's hurricane season," he proudly told writer Eric Johnson. The liquid in a shark oil barometer is the oil gently extracted from the liver of a young shark, a puppy shark, as Bermudians call them. Sealed in a bottle, preferably a bulbous-bottomed wine bottle, the oil behaves in ways which do seem to herald changes in

the atmosphere. On clear days, the oil is as transparent as water, with a thin layer of sediment lining the bottom. If the winds increase from one direction, the sediment banks itself on that side of the bottle. Foul weather is forecast by the oil taking on a cloudy appearance as the sediment is stirred up. Experts can be even more specific in their forecasts by examining peaks and valleys in the sediment or crystals forming in the neck of the bottle.

The accuracy of Lamb's shark oil forecasts once won him a case of beer from a young pilot stationed at the US Naval Air Station. "The base commander brought this young flyer to see me," Lamb told Johnson. "He said the lieutenant and his crew had

just flown through a hurricane which would hit Bermuda in the morning of the following day. I laughed in their faces. I looked up my shark oil right there in front of them and said, 'If we have a hurricane within the next 48 hours, I'll drink that shark oil.'" Lamb's shark oil stayed in the bottle and visitors to Bermuda continued to frolic on the beaches under clear skies and an incredulous naval lieutenant brought Lamb the case of beer he owed him. "I'm not sayin' those navy aviators didn't fly through a hurricane," Lamb declared. "It's just that I knew and the shark oil knew that a hurricane wasn't coming here. If you study the oil right up, you can even tell when it's going to thunder and lightning. I won ice cream from a woman in Flatts



by predicting correctly when it would rain and end a drought." There is little data on why shark oil performs the way it does, but the phenomenon has been observed in Bermuda for years. Lamb learned to read the oil by listening to his father and grandfather, both firm believers in the oil's meteorological properties. And, although not all shark oil behaves the same—depending, most say, on how fresh the oil is and "during which phase of the moon it was caught"—observation of one particular specimen and how it behaves under a given set of circumstances is the key to successful forecasting.

More on Hurricanes

Longtime writer and friend of *The Bermudian*, Maude Godet was once given the following bit of doggerel as a weather prophecy:

"Whale bay roars for rain
Hungry bay for wind
That is the way
Hurricanes begin."

A good crop of avocado pears means a hurricane year, and the months of August through October in a "pear year" are viewed with suspicion.



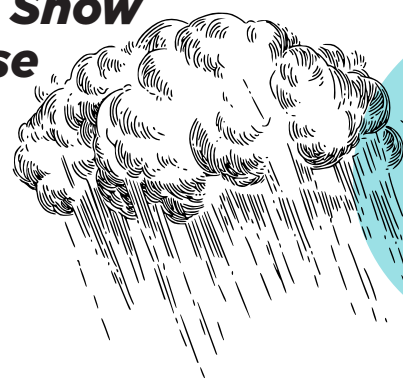
Cows Lie Down When It's About to Rain *False*

Though several theories exist to say that cows are sensitive to atmospheric pressure and that's why they lie down when rain is on the way, cow's lie down for many reasons and there's no proof that rain is a factor.



It Always Rains during the Ag Show Thanks to an Old Witch's Curse

Legend has it that when the first-ever Ag Show was being arranged, way back in the 1880s, an old vendor of peanuts and coconut cakes was refused permission to have a stall on the grounds for the sale of her goods. She stood up and solemnly laid the curse of rain on the Exhibition, and ever since, more often than not, the curse has come true. "Exhibition weather" has become a byword.



**Better if true!
Bermudians
will never
turn down a
shower.**

General Wives' Tales

Peeing on a Jellyfish Sting Eases the Pain

Listen up, because this one's important. Not only will urine not ease the pain of a jellyfish sting, it could actually make it worse. Urine contains sodium and it, together with the velocity of a urine stream could cause the jellyfish's stingers to move and release more venom. Wash tentacles off the body with salt water, instead of urine. If possible, use tweezers or a gloved hand to remove tentacles too stubborn to come off with water alone. Apply vinegar or rubbing alcohol to the affected area to stop the nematocysts from firing. (Note: This doesn't go for Portuguese man o' war—vinegar and alcohol will make those stings worse.) To help reduce the pain of a jellyfish sting, use an ice pack and take a pain reliever.

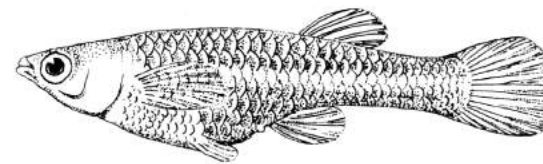
False



Sweeping in the Afternoon Brushes Away the Luck of the House *False*

Using a brush or broom after three o'clock in the afternoon will not sweep all the luck of the house away, just the dust bunnies.

Adding Guppies to Your Water Tank Will Help Keep It Fresher *True*



Surprisingly, this one is accurate. According to the Bermuda Government, *Gambusia affinis* fish (also known as guppies) will eat insect larvae inside your water tank, keeping it free of mosquitos and flies.



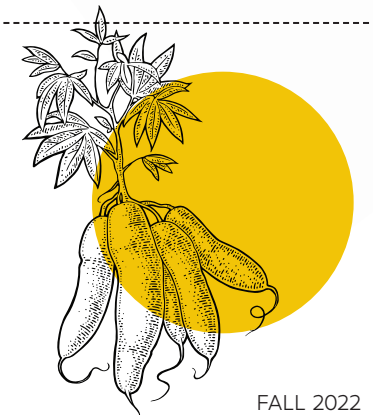
Swimming After Eating Will Cause You to Drown

There's no medical evidence to back this one up. However, if you've overindulged at a family barbecue, you may be more comfortable if you wait a little while before going overboard. If you just can't help yourself though, having a full stomach won't cause blood to drain from your extremities leading to muscle cramps and your eventual drowning.

False

Eating Raw Cassava Is Deadly *True*

Simply put, it's not Christmas without a homemade cassava pie but one should never eat one's cassava raw. According to the USDA, raw cassava contains significant amounts of cyanide which is why the root vegetable must be soaked, strained and cooked before it is consumed, a lengthy and painful process that our ancestors had no choice but to endure. Lucky for us, nowadays, farmer Tom Wadson does the hard work for us.



False



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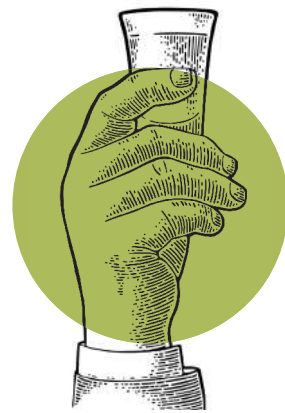


Food & Drink

Butter Will Only 'Come' When the Tide is Flowing

Legend has it that when stirring the cream for butter it's imperative to know the state of the tide, for the butter will only churn when the tide is flowing.

False



Hair of the Dog Cures a Hangover

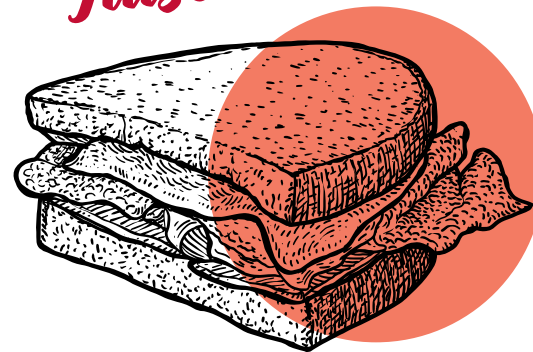
Many of us would like this one to be true, but alas, there's no scientific evidence that you can cure a hangover by drinking more of what made you feel bad.

False

Unrefrigerated Mayonnaise Will Make You Sick

Have no fear, your tuna sandwiches are safe. Most are unaware that mayonnaise is actually acidic, meaning that bacteria isn't attracted to it.

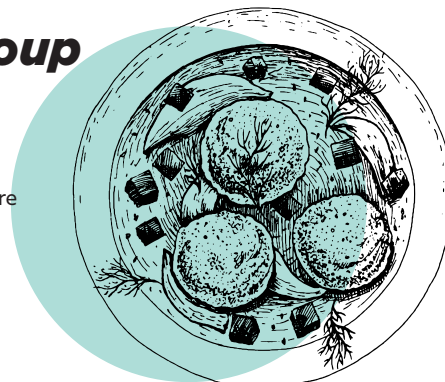
False



Eating Chicken Soup Can Cure a Cold

While the rich broth in a chicken soup can help hydrate a sick person and soothe a sore throat, the actual soup itself doesn't have any healing properties.

False



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