
This book is dedicated to my grandsons.

In the beginning this was to be just a short, hopefully interesting, booklet for you. I began collecting Santas or Gift Givers dolls (pictured at end of book) 15 years ago at an art show in Pennsylvania. The first ones I chose were the ones representing the countries of our closest ancestors; Germany, Wales, England and the Netherlands. Having run out of countries with ties to our heritage, and still interested in acquiring more, I next bought ones from the countries we visited for Gramps' overseas conferences.

Each Gift Giver came with a single paragraph describing his or her role in the distribution of gifts. The artist told me she was writing a more comprehensive book and it was almost complete (around 1998). So I waited. Almost every year, I added another Gift Giver. No book. Then, in 2002, the artist suffered a major fire, destroying everything, including her book and gift givers. And, no, she did not computerize let alone use a back-up! I encouraged her to start the book again. Two years later, she told me that she had given up that project, and she also had stopped making Gift Givers and went in a different artistic direction.

Okay. I could do this. I could expand the information of the Gift Givers I have, throw in some extra countries, and give the finished copy to you kids. It evolved into a far more ambitious project as one subject led to another, a strange word or tradition had me looking that up wondering how it came to be, leading to yet another oddity of Christmas.

Now I was in trouble! The more I researched, the more I felt the information belonged in the book. So I added more categories. Originally, it was supposed to be just the country, the name of the Gift Giver of that country, how that country said "Merry Christmas" ... and where possible, include the pronunciations of both. And a few paragraphs about what the Gift Giver did at Christmas.

But the historical background of most of these characters made it impossible to stop there. I expanded it to include a carol with origins in that country, some familiar, most not. As I read about the traditions and how food played such a major role, I thought I'd list the most popular dishes from that country, some sounding tasty, some sounding totally disgusting (rotting fish for one)...and then, oh what the heck...include some recipes if I could find them. And most recently, I wondered about how we got Christmas Carols, and other traditions. ENOUGH!!! I could be doing this for the next 10 years! And I have another idea for a book in mind, so I *have* to finish this one!

Santa Claus, as we know him, was not always the “right jolly old elf” we see today. In fact, many traditions we have at Christmas, pre-date Christianity and go back to pagan roots.

Santa is new to the scene as well...the 1800's is the first time a Santa Claus appears in the United States...before that, the figure was a “gift giver”, and some were **NOT** so friendly! Bad children certainly did not enjoy Christmas with the thought that they could be boiled and eaten, have their necks slit, or be whipped with sticks. True! There were some **reecally** bad gift givers out there that you will read about...don't worry boys...they don't live in the USA...phew!

So.....where in the world *is* Santa? Turn the page, and start reading how kids around the world celebrate this time of year...and it's not always on December 25...

Whereas the aggregate idea is mine, much information is taken directly from internet and book resources. In other words, I “copied” stuff.....

Within this book are diacritical marks (strange marks, usually above the letters in a word) that are unique to each country's language as well as “funny” letters...I have NOT made a typo! ☺

Love, Nana

December, 2011

“The winter nights were long and dark. Oil lamps, candles, torches, and the fireplace were the only sources of light to keep back the shifting shadows. In many parts of Europe, those shadows were believed to include malicious spirits, demons, and other threatening beings. These figures had to be appeased by gifts, and precautions had to be taken to drive them off—ringing of church bells, sprinkling holy water in the corners of the house, burning logs in the fireplace all night, and making loud noises. Venturing out into the night was scary and was to be avoided at all cost, since folk lore in parts of northern Europe claimed that bears, werewolves, and trolls were out and about.” In Norway, brooms were put away so witches could not ride off on them. The sign of the cross was painted in tar over doorways to protect the house and barn.”

“The old pagan gods seemed never far. During the winter solstice, it was believed that the Norse god Thor rode through the skies in a chariot pulled by two goats, distributing gifts to the Vikings. His father, Odin, rode a white eight-legged steed, escorting slain heroes into Valhalla. Some of the gods’ aspects are thought to have become incorporated into the folk figures of various gift bringers, including Santa Claus.”

from *Christmas Curiosities*, by John Grossman

Scholars speculate that the origins of the bogeymen, alter-egos, bad Santas, can be traced back to ancient times, to pagan deities, fertility spirits, and otherwise dark spirits who were associated with the winter solstice celebrations. They were said to prowl the countryside during the long, cold, dark nights because they were so enraged by the celebration of Christ’s birth. Others suggest that Christians had an obsession with the Devil and all his evil. They thought he was a malevolent physical being to be constantly reckoned with and assigned him to St. Nicholas in a position of submission and subservience. This confirmed God’s power over evil. Also during the medieval period, it is surmised that these dark figures reappeared into public awareness. Many of our traditions today began in Medieval Europe. It was only in the fourth century that the Church officially decided to observe Christmas on December 25.

When Martin Luther declared freedom from the Catholic Church in 1517, **ALL** manifestations of Catholicism were declared papist idol worship. This declaration included **all** the Catholic saints...even St. Nicholas. And thus began the Protestant reformation and the subsequent ban on Christmas.

Bruce Colin Daniels wrote that “Christmas occupied a special place in the ideological religious warfare of Reformation Europe. Most Baptists, Quakers, Congregationalists, and Presbyterian Puritans, regarded Christmas day as an abomination while Anglicans, Lutherans, the Dutch Reformed and other denominations celebrated the day as did Roman Catholics. When the Church of England promoted the Feast of the Nativity as a major religious holiday, the Puritans attacked it again as “residual Papist idolatry”. So they advocated greater “purity” of worship and doctrine and adopted a reformed theology (Calvinists).”

Puritans had nothing but contempt for Christmas and called it “Foolstide”. They banned any attempts to celebrate it for several reasons. First, no holy days except the Sabbath were sanctioned in Scripture and that if God had intended for the anniversary of the Nativity to be observed, He would surely have given some indication as to when that anniversary occurred. They also argued that the weather in Judea during late December was simply too cold for shepherds to be living outdoors tending their sheep. Second, the worst behaviors were in the rowdy celebrations “borrowed from pagan celebrations”, and third, December 25 was a direct hijacking of a Roman festival and that Christians should not be participating in pagan customs. This Puritan view lasted over 200 years...long after they made their way across the Atlantic to the New World.

Puritanism was basically anti-Catholic. Puritans felt that the Church of England was still too close to Catholicism and needed to be reformed further. There were many different groups believing various doctrinal parts of the Church of England and also of the Episcopal churches that were compatible with the Presbyterian model. Some separatist Puritans were Presbyterian, but most were early Congregationalists. The separating Congregationalists did not believe in the divine right of kings, but in another group were many royalist Presbyterians, in terms of allegiance in the political struggle.

Another reason for suppressing Christmas was that it was not the Christmas we know and love. It involved behavior most of us would find offensive and even shocking today—rowdy public displays of excessive eating and drinking, the mockery of established authority, aggressive begging, often involving the threat of doing harm, and even the invasion of wealthy homes. And all this crazy behavior stemmed directly from winter solstice practices preparing for the deep freeze of winter by enjoying the fruits of recent harvests.

Migration also brought out differences. It brought together Puritan communities with their own regional customs and beliefs. As soon as there were New World Puritans (America), their views on church governance diverged from those remaining in the British Isles, who faced different issues.

Gift Giver:

Consider that the three wise men or the three kings, Melchior, Caspar, and Balthazar, were the original Christian gift givers as they brought gold, frankincense and myrrh to the baby Jesus. Gift giving also occurred in pagan rituals as something that was considered a sacrifice.

Golden Rings and maids-a-milking...

On the first day of Christmas, my true love sent to me, a:

First day:	1 partridge in a pear tree.
Second day:	2 turtle doves
Third day:	3 French hens
Forth day:	4 calling birds
Fifth day:	5 golden rings
Sixth day:	6 geese a-laying
Seventh day:	7 swans a-swimming
Eighth day:	8 maids a-milking
Ninth day:	9 ladies dancing
Tenth day:	10 lords a-leaping
Eleventh day:	11 pipers piping
Twelfth day:	12 drummers drumming

When you sing *The Twelve Days of Christmas* every year, do you ever think about the symbolism of the gifts or just take them literally? Would you even have any of these 12 items on your wish list? It's hard to imagine they were ever popular presents. Do you "double, triple, quadruple-count" all the gifts...for example...on the second day, you already have one partridge from the first day, do you get 2 turtle doves AND another partridge, etc. Counting that way, I'd wind up with 12 partridges, 22 turtle doves, 30 French hens and so on until I had enough feathered fowl to compete with Perdue! Never knew how to count this song...

They typically and predictably trot out the annual index of economic inflation if you purchased all the critters, birds, and fair maidens...whoa! Purchasing maidens? Yikes! This is a family book! As of Christmas 2010, purchasing all the gifts from "Twelve Days" would cost about \$23,400, an increase of more than 9% from 2009. That's assuming a straight count of gifts...with no duplications. (see above)

The song has French origins and was published in an English children's book called "Mirth without Mischief" around 1780. (you'll find out later how Christmas was celebrated back then) Most people believe it began as a memory game sung at Twelfth Night parties.

The twelve days of Christmas in Western Christianity refer to the time between Christ's birth on December 25 and the arrival of the Magi to honor the newborn, known as Epiphany, on January 6.

In recent times, the song has been searched for coded references to Catholic doctrine, ancient Egyptian holidays, Roman myths or the menu down at ye old local medieval castle. In the 1990's, a story began floating around the Internet that "The Twelve Days" was used as a secret catechism by Catholics persecuted after the Reformation in England.

The "true love" who offers the gifts refers to God, according to this theory. "To me" (as in my true love gave to me) refers to any baptized Christian.

The partridge is Jesus, the two turtle doves are the Old and New Testaments, the Three French hens represent the virtues of faith, hope and charity, or some say it's the Trinity; Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Four colly birds (colly meaning black as coal) - the 4 Gospels
Five golden rings - the first 5 books of the Old Testament or the Pentateuch (or ring-necked pheasants)
Six geese - days to create the world
Seven - gifts of the Holy Spirit (the sacraments)
Eight - Beatitudes
Nine - Fruits of the Holy Spirit
Ten - commandments
Eleven - faithful apostles
Twelve - 12 points of doctrine in the Apostles' Creed

And although it looks and sounds nice, all these symbols are considered a bunch of *hooyey*! They were more than likely secular symbols...partridges and pears, for instance, were considered

emblems of fertility during the Renaissance. Likewise, geese and swans were seen as intermediaries between the earth and the sky, and thus humans and heaven.

It possibly began as a Twelfth Night "memories-and-forfeits" game, in which a leader recited a verse, each of the players repeated the verse, the leader added another verse, and so on until one of the players made a mistake, with the player who erred having to pay a penalty, such as offering up a kiss or a sweet. This is how the game is offered up in its earliest known printed version.

France

In the west of France the piece is known as a song, "La foi de la loi," and is sung "avec solennite," the sequence being: a good stuffing without bones, two breasts of veal, three joints of beef, four pigs' trotters, five legs of mutton, six partridges with cabbage, seven spitted rabbits, eight plates of salad, nine dishes for a chapter of canons, ten full casks, eleven beautiful full-breasted maidens, and twelve musketeers with their swords.

Scotland

In Scotland, early in the 19th century, the recitation began: "The king sent his lady on the first Yule day, | A popingo-aye [parrot]; | Wha learns my carol and carries it away?" The succeeding gifts were two partridges, three plovers, a goose that was grey, three starlings, three goldspinks, a bull that was brown, three ducks a-merry laying, three swans a-merry swimming, an Arabian baboon, three hinds a-merry hunting, three maids a-merry dancing, three stalks o' merry corn.

Australia

In Australia, a number of versions are sung, all of which replace the traditional gifts with items (mainly native animals) more likely to be found in that country.

THE MEANING AND SIGNIFICANCE OF “YULE”

Yule or Yuletide is a winter festival that was initially celebrated by the ancient Germanic people as a pagan religious festival, usually involving a sacrificial feast. It was later absorbed into, and equated with, the Christian festival of Christmas. The festival was originally celebrated from late December to early January on a date determined by the lunar Germanic calendar. The festival was placed on December 25 when the Christian calendar (Julian calendar) was adopted.

In the pre-Christian Nordic countries, it was a custom to celebrate the "return of the light" in time of the winter solstice in December, which marked the beginning of longer days. Vikings — the Swedes, the Norwegians, the Danes and the Icelanders — celebrated the coming of the sun by sacrificing for their gods, eating and drinking well, playing games, burning bonfires and exchanging gifts during a three-day feast.

Terms equivalent to “Yule” are still used in the Nordic Countries for the Christian Christmas, but also for other religious holidays of the season. In modern times this has gradually led to a more secular tradition under the same name as Christmas. Customs in English-speaking countries such as the Yule log, Yule goat, Yule boar, Yule singing, and others, stem from Yule.

The celebrations had many elements that are still common in the modern Nordic Christmas celebration. The Germans, *jey la*, the Swedish, Norwegian and Danish word for Christmas, *jul* or *ýlir*, the Icelandic *jól*, (Old Norse) the Finnish *joulu* and the Estonian *jõul* all have their origin in the old Viking word *hjul*, meaning "sun wheel".

YULE LOG

This is a tradition going back to pagan and medieval times, involving many superstitions. The Yule log was to be kept burning during the Twelve Days of Christmas, lit from a fragment of the previous year's log. If the fire went out, the household would have bad luck during the coming year. In order to keep the log burning for so many days, some used actual tree trunks, with one end sticking out into the room. As fireplaces shrank in size, so did the logs, until the custom disappeared altogether.

CAROLS:

As defined by Webster:

1. A joyful religious song celebrating the birth of Christ, or
2. A traditional or religious song that people sing at Christmas

I differentiate between religious *carols* and popular secular Christmas *songs* only when I discuss the United States.

Carols were first sung in Europe thousands of years ago, but these were not Christmas Carols. They were pagan songs, sung at the Winter Solstice celebrations as people danced around stone circles. The Winter Solstice is the shortest day of the year, usually taking place around the 22nd of December. The word “carol” comes from the French, “carole/carola”, the Latin, “choraula” actually means a circular dance usually holding hands or a song of praise and joy. According to an internet source, “Carols used to be written and sung during all four seasons but only the tradition of singing them at Christmas has really survived”. However, the practice of singing and dancing in circles (caroling) is still in evidence today. Consider the Jewish celebration circle dance, the Hava Nagila, the Balkans and the Hora, the Finnish dance celebrating the summer solstice, Johannus, also danced in groups of circles, the Greek circle dancing in costume, the choreia, and, loosely, our folk “circle”, the Square Dance, and dancing and singing around the Maypole. Many other cultures still enjoy circle dancing at various times during the year. African, Serbian, and Irish all have circle dances. The Catalans have their Sardana. North American Indians dance in circles to honor certain seasons, and Islamic countries have the Hadra dances.

Early Christians took over the pagan solstice celebrations for Christmas and gave people Christian songs to sing instead of pagan ones. In 129 AD, a Roman Bishop said that a song called “Angel’s Hymn” should be sung at a Christmas service in Rome. Another famous early Christmas Hymn was written, in 760 AD, by Comas of Jerusalem for the Greek Orthodox Church. Soon carols were being written and performed throughout Europe. Not many people liked them because they were written in Latin and they couldn’t

understand them. By the Middle Ages (the 1200s), most people had lost interest in celebrating Christmas altogether.

This was changed by St. Francis of Assisi when, in 1223, he started his Nativity Plays in Italy. Canticles that told the Nativity story during the plays were performed. Most of the time these new canticles were in native languages of the people listening to them.

The earliest carol was written in 1410. Only a very small fragment of it still exists. The carol was about Mary and Jesus meeting different people in Bethlehem. Most carols from this time and the Elizabethan period are untrue stories, very loosely based on the Christmas story, and served more as entertainment rather than religious instruction. They were usually sung in homes rather than in churches. Traveling singers or minstrels started singing these carols and the words were changed for the local people wherever they were traveling.

When Oliver Cromwell and the Puritans came to power in England in 1647, the celebration of Christmas and singing carols was stopped. However, the carols survived as people sang them in secret. Carols remained mainly unsung until Victorian times, when two men called William Sands and Davis Gilbert collected lots of old Christmas music from villages in England.

Before carol singing in public became popular, and in some cases, legal, there were sometimes official carol singers called “Waits” who strolled the streets. They were called “Waits” because they only sang on Christmas Eve, sometimes known as “Watchnight” or “Waitnight” because of the shepherds were watching their sheep when the angels appeared to them.

Also, during this period, many orchestras and choirs were being set up in the cities of England and people wanted Christmas songs to sing, so carols once again became popular.

TURKEY



St. Nicholas

Origins in Turkey from an early Christian bishop from Myra “the protector of children and sailors”.

Gift Giver:

St. Nicholas: patron saint of children and sailors

Noel Baba (Father Noel)

Merry Christmas:

Turkey is a Muslim country, but **Mutlus Noeller ve Yeni Yilliniz**

Kutlu Olsun (Merry Christmas and Happy New Year) would be the way to say it.

Christmas Carol:

None that I could find

Turkish Cuisine: *they celebrate the New Year, not Christmas

Pork

Lamb

Kebobs

Octopus

Stuffed zucchini with cheese

Milk pudding with strawberry sauce

Fig and date dessert

Carrot cake with cream

Ashura or Noah’s Pudding-a sweet fruit dessert (recipe included)

Tradition holds that ashura is the meal Noah made from all the stored fruits and grains on the Ark after the Great Flood subsided. The multitude of ingredients symbolize gratitude and sharing of life’s bounty. Cook Noah’s Pudding dessert in large quantities and enjoy with loved ones, neighbors, and acquaintances during the holiday season.

History:

Although Turkey is a Muslim country I include it here (and first) for one very good reason...St. Nicholas, upon whom centuries later, our Santa Claus was roughly based, was born and lived here. The evolution of Santa Claus is an entire book in and of itself, as is the figure of St. Nicholas. I will attempt to condense it so you can get a feel for the historical significance.

According to the story that has come down through the ages (almost 17 centuries!) Nicholas's very wealthy parents had tried for a long time to have a baby. As was the case with Hannah in Scripture, the mother (Ona or Johane) and the father (Theopannes or Epiphanes) promised God that if He would grant them a child, and if it was a boy, the parents would dedicate his life to God's service. Late in life, around 260 AD, their prayers were finally answered and Nicholas (meaning "People's Victor") was born. True to their promise, his wealthy parents dedicated him to God.

The story continues when the baby Nicholas was placed in a bath right after birth, he immediately stood up by himself. Also, he apparently was granted religious knowledge not usually given to babies. He would refuse his mother's breast on Wednesdays and Fridays (the traditional days of fasting). These abilities were equated with God's special favor by early Christians.

When his parents died during the plague, he went to live in a monastery with an uncle who was a Bishop. He was in charge of Nicholas's upbringing and education. Even within the walls of such an austere environment, Nicholas thrived and decided to devote his time, energies, and wealth to God and to the suffering poor.

Little by little, he began to give his wealth away, but in secret. The most beloved Nicholas story coming out of his early years is that of the Three Dowerless Daughters.

In those days, men did not marry women who were poor. Unless the father offered the suitor a dowry, the poor daughter was doomed. The alternatives were equally grim: she was sold as a slave or became a woman of the streets.

A wealthy father with three daughters lost his fortune and after much thought and sadness decided to sacrifice his oldest daughter by having her become a slave so that the other two might have some time to save a small dowry. This story reached Nicholas and he secretly put gold coins in a sack and dropped the sack down the chimney. The eldest daughter could now marry because she had enough for a dowry. When the next daughter came of age to be married, there was still no money, and again, Nicholas secretly

dropped more gold coins down the chimney. This was repeated for the third daughter as well. Many years later, Nicholas became a Bishop of the Catholic Church. That is why early pictures of St. Nicholas (later, Santa Claus) had him in Bishop's robes with a miter, and staff. He is usually depicted holding three golden orbs which represent the three daughters. He was considered the secret "gift-giver" as well.

He began his quest as a young man, first traveling to the Holy Land on board a ship. The ship encountered a fierce storm and the sailors begged Nicholas to pray for them. As the storm subsided, one of the sailors slipped on the mast and fell to his death. Again the sailors begged Nicholas to pray for him. The sailor woke as if he had been asleep. After these two miracles, when he was made a saint, he was made the patron saint of sailors as well as the patron saint of children (as an aside, the Catholic Church has over 10,000 saints!)

In his lifetime, he was severely tortured by the Romans for his faith. He died in 343 AD.

Noah's Pudding or Ashura: Turkey

8 oz coarse wheat bulgur
2 oz dried cranberry beans (substitute Great Northern beans)
2 oz dried lima beans
2 oz dried garbanzo beans
2 oz short grain rice

4 oz dried, chopped unsulfured apricots
4 oz large golden raisins
2 oz currants
2 oz dried, chopped cherries

1 lb sugar
2 T corn flour or rice flour
4 oz rose water

Garnish:

2 oz diced dried figs
2 oz chopped walnuts or pistachios
1 T pine nuts
1 T currants
1 T pomegranate seeds

Combine all dried beans, bulgur and chickpeas.

Cover with water in large saucepan with room for water at least 1/3 volume above beans.

In the morning, add rice and bring to a boil over medium heat adding additional water when necessary. Substitute milk for creamier version.

Simmer 10-15 minutes.

While heating beans, rice, and bulgur, soak apricots, raisins, and currants in hot water for 5 minutes and then drain.

Add soaked fruits to cooking porridge and cook another 10 minutes or until fruit and beans soften. Add garbanzos now if using canned variety.

Slowly add sugar while stirring. Add a few teaspoons of warm water to cornmeal, stir to dissolve, and then add to pudding. Bring to slow boil and then remove from heat. Stir in rose water and garnish.



ENGLAND



Old Father Christmas.

Father Christmas

Gift Giver:

Father Christmas

Merry Christmas:

Merry Christmas

Merry is from Old English, *myrige*, meaning “pleasant or agreeable”

English Origin Carols:

The Boar’s Head Carol

Coventry Carol

We Wish You a Merry Christmas

12 Days of Christmas

O Come All Ye Faithful (Adeste Fidelis), John of Reading, 13th cent.

English Cuisine:

Roast turkey and roasted potatoes, parsnips, other vegetables

Christmas Pudding: heavy steamed pudding made with dried fruit, suet, and very little flour

Roast goose

Christmas Cake

Apple Crème Christmas Cake

Coins (sixpences) were also occasionally added to Christmas cakes and Christmas puddings as good luck pieces.

In Northern England, Christmas cake, as with other types of fruit cake, is often eaten with cheese, such as Wensleydale, a sweet cheese imbedded with cranberries.

Queen Elizabeth I is credited with creating the gingerbread man so popular in many countries at Christmas. They represented male guests of the palace.

History:

Though Christmas has been observed since the 4th century AD, the first known usage of any Christmastime greeting, dates back to 1565, when it appeared in *The Hereford Manuscript*: "And thus I comytt you to God, who send you a mery Christmas." *Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year*" (thus incorporating two greetings) was in an

informal letter written by an English admiral in 1699. The same phrase is contained in the sixteenth century secular English carol “We wish you a merry Christmas” and the first commercial Christmas card produced in England in 1843.

English children know Santa Claus by the name “Father Christmas”. Traditionally, Father Christmas was usually portrayed with long flowing robes of green or scarlet and sprigs of holly and mistletoe stuck in his long white hair. He may also appear as a giant who carries a yule log or bowl of Christmas punch.

Father Christmas today looks much like our Santa Claus, but he is still often associated with the ancient gods Saturn and Odin. English children write letters to Father Christmas and ask him for toys and other gifts, but they do not mail them in the usual way. Instead, they toss the letters into the fireplace, where the draft of air carries the letters up the chimney to the realm of Father Christmas. At least this is what children hope, for if the letter is not carried up the chimney, then their wishes can not be fulfilled. Hopefully, Father Christmas will see these smoky messages and bring many gifts to be opened on Christmas afternoon.

It is due to Father Christmas that we hang stockings by the fireplace. He once dropped some gold coins while he was coming down the chimney. English fireplaces are big and usually filled with ashes. If anything were to drop into these ashes, then they would be completely lost. Fortunately, some stockings had been hung up to dry in front of the fire, and they caught the loose coins. Even if people don't hang stockings to catch Father Christmas's lost change, they do hope to find small gifts in their stockings!

In parts of Great Britain, on the day after Christmas (St. Stephen's Day or Boxing Day) many engage in “hunting the wren”. This old tradition called for the killing of a wren to symbolize the death of the old year and the birth of the new. The dead wren was put on a stick so the hunters could parade with it from house to house, singing carols. The homeowner would give the hunters some goodies for their troubles, and they would give him or her a feather for good luck. Areas that still observe this custom today use a fake stuffed wren.

The exact source of the term “boxing” is unclear and there are several competing theories, none of which is definitive. The tradition has long included giving money and other gifts to those who were needy or servants. The European tradition has been dated to the Middle Ages, but the exact origin is unknown and there are some claims that it goes back to the late Roman/early Christian era; metal boxes placed outside churches were used to collect special offerings tied to the Feast of Saint Stephen.

In England, it is a custom for tradesmen to collect “Christmas boxes” of money or presents on the first weekday after Christmas as thanks for good service throughout the year. This is mentioned in 1663 and is related to an older English tradition: in exchange for ensuring that wealthy landowners’ Christmases ran smoothly, their servants were allowed to take the 26th of December off to visit their families. The employers gave each servant a box containing gifts and bonuses.

Victorian England firmly believed fur-clad elves and fairies existed in a frozen fairyland. At Christmas time these wee folk were thought to roast a Christmas rat over a spit and celebrated the season just like humans.

Mrs. Beeton's Christmas Cake

Mrs. Beeton was a popular cookbook author in the British Isles at the turn of the last century.

5 teacupfuls of flour	1 teacupful of melted butter
1 teacupful cream	1 teacupful treacle
1 teacupful moist sugar	2 eggs
½ oz ginger	½# raisins
1 t baking soda	1 T vinegar

Make the butter sufficiently warm to melt it, but do not allow it to oil. Put the flour into a basin; add sugar, ginger, raisins (chopped). When mixed, stir in the butter, cream, treacle, and well-whisked eggs, and beat the mixture for a few minutes.

Dissolve soda in the vinegar, add it to the dough, and be particular that these latter ingredients are well incorporated with the others; put the cake into a buttered mould or tin, place it in a moderate oven immediately, and bake it from 1 ¾ - 2 ¼ hours.

Treacle= Lyle's Golden Syrup

Teacupful=1 C

Moist sugar=who knows

Moderate oven= 350⁰

WALES

Sergeant with Mari Lwyd



Our branch of the Marsh clan arrived from Wales in the 1700's.

Gift Giver:

Mari Lwyd (Mah-ree Loyd)/Sion Corn (shaan-con)(the Grey Mare)

Merry Christmas:

Nadolig Llawen (naDOLLig HLAwen)

Welsh Origin Carol:

Deck the Halls- at least 200 years old

All Through the Night

Welsh cuisine:

Goose is the traditional “bird” of Wales. Turkey was not introduced until the mid-20th century. Geese were easy to breed, feed, and often used as gifts. Geese would typically feed on the grains left behind following the harvest and were easy to catch for Christmas dinner.

Goose blood tart:

When farmers would kill a large number of geese at Christmastime, it was customary to make this. Only several districts still make this; Trefeglwys, Staylitttle, Llanbryn Mair, and Llangurig. The blood of about three geese would be put in a greased basin and boiled in a saucepan half full of water. Then the blood would be allowed to cool and set solid before it was rubbed between the fingers to make fine crumbs. Mixed with currants, flour suet, salt, spice and golden syrup, it would be baked between two layers of crust on a plate in the oven. This is not unlike the mincemeat in mince pies, which originally included real meat as an ingredient.

Plum Pudding:

This pudding is well fruited and spiced, and has been associated with Christmas since the early 18th century. It would be boiled in one large lump in a linen pudding cloth, a custom that gave it the names lump pudding, rag pudding or bag pudding. The mixture was then bunched together and tied securely with strong cord to form a bag. The bag was then suspended from a stick placed across the top of the cauldron or boiler and immersed in boiling water. It was served with a sweet butter sauce.

Toffee Evenings/Taffy

Noson Gyflaith (Toffee Evening) was a traditional part of Christmas or New Year festivities in some areas of north Wales earlier this century and was a festive, social gathering.

Loaf Cake:

Loaf cake was synonymous with Christmas celebrations in the industrial valleys of south Wales. The dough, prepared in large quantities, would be carried to the local bakehouse where the baker would be responsible for baking the cakes for a penny or two per loaf. Neighbors were invited to taste each other's cake, and tradition has it that if a young maid was given the opportunity to taste thirteen different cakes in one season, she would marry before the following Christmas.

Christmas Cake:

A fruitcake with candied peel mounded on top.

History:

The Mari Lwyd is one the strangest and most ancient of a number of customs with which people in Glamorgan and Gwent used to mark the passing of the darkest days of midwinter. A Welsh new year celebration perhaps deriving from an ancient rite for the Celtic goddess Rhiannon, the Horse Goddess. She has her own very lengthy story that has nothing whatsoever to do with Christmas! She may have been the original Mother Goddess of the Celtic people. She brings sleep, dreams, and sometimes nightmares. Her name translates as "divine" or "Great Queen". She may have been the Sun Goddess. She comforts in times of crisis, loss, and illness. She gives us gifts of tears, forgetfulness (to promote healing, and humor to ease our sufferings in this life. She is also accompanied by golden birds whose singing can call the dead or grant peaceful sleep to the living. The Mari Lwyd consists of a mare's skull fixed to the end of a wooden pole; white sheets are fastened to the base of the skull concealing the pole and the person carrying the Mari. The eye sockets are often filled with green bottle ends, or other colored material. The lower jaw is sometimes spring-loaded so the Mari's operator can snap it at passersby. Colored ribbons are usually fixed to the skull and to the reins.

It's no accident that Christmas, with its emphasis on fire, lights and decorations, is celebrated at this time of year. Before the arrival of Christianity, the Romans used to hold similar festivities at the same time (Saturnalia). And before the Romans, these long, cold nights were the time of fire festivals in Wales and across the Celtic World.

From Christmastime on, the days get longer as spring approaches. All these festivals and customs reflect man's awe at nature's annual miracle of death and rebirth. That's why evergreens like the holly and the ivy are such a feature of the season...and why a dead horse mysteriously comes back to life.

Customs involving animal skulls are widely known across the world. The native Americans of Alaska use them, as do the Indonesian people of Java...and variations crop up at most points of the globes in between.

But the Mari Lwyd is unique to this part of Wales. In its purest form (still to be seen at Llangynwyd, near Maesteg, every New Year's Day), the tradition involves the arrival of the horse and its party at the door of the house or pub, where they sing several introductory verses. Then comes a battle of wits known as *pwnco* (rhyme contest), in which the people inside the door and Mari party outside exchange challenges and insults in rhyme. At the end of the battle, which can be as long as the creativity of the two parties holds out, the Mari party enters with another song in exchange for food and drink.

One source states that "carol singing in Wales has become an art form". Every village has a trained choir and great gatherings for group singing. This emphasis was more than likely an outgrowth of the Mari Lwyd singing.

The advent of the industrial revolution and the rise of fire-and-brimstone chapel preaching, had a serious effect on the Mari Lwyd. The parties had gained a bad reputation for drunkenness and vandalism as they roamed the villages. Many a sermon was preached against the continuance of such a pagan and barbaric practice and the participants were urged to do something useful instead-such as taking part in *Eisteddfodau* (loosely translated as "to be sitting together"), a

tradition dating back to at least the 12th century, when a festival of poetry and music was held...and akin to the rhyming banter of the Mari Lwyd parties.

The Mari party then started singing only their arrival verses, adding Christmas carols to the repertoire and in other areas of Wales they interspersed English-language verses with Welsh ones.

The Christmas service is called Plygain and goes from 4:00 am until sunrise on Christmas morning. Pulling taffy is one way to spend the day. In Wales, taffy is as much a part of Christmas fare as candy canes are in America.

The Welsh Christmas Cake was traditionally a fruitcake with candied peel piled up in a mound on the top, at least in Montgomeryshire. The favorite item to be found in the stocking was a pink sugar mouse! And village groups were very fond of the Christmas play. Because of their temperament, the Welsh remained largely unspoiled and their customs lived long into the 20th century, a few still being observed in pockets of the country today. The 'Christmas Extravaganza' was all important. Whether it was a biblical performance in the church, or a fine Christmas display in a shop window, it was often called 'The Christmas Show'.

Today's Extravaganza is just as likely to be a glittering Santa Grotto deep in the depths of a unused coalmine, or a carol concert sung by male voice choirs.

The Welsh people maintain most of the traditional customs associated with England such as holly, mistletoe, pudding, carols, Christmas stockings, gifts, oranges, crackers and lots of snow.

'Noson Gyflaith' - Welsh toffee making

Early on Christmas morning Welsh Protestants held a carol service known as “plygain” (as opposed to the Catholic Mass). This service could take place as early as 4 a.m. and might well last several hours. Plygain means 'before cock-crow'. In order to stay awake until it was time to go to church/chapel, one activity that was traditionally practiced was toffee making. Noson Gylfaith means Toffee Evening.

As an aside, the word toffee is comparatively new (19th century), and in Wales the sweet would have been known as cyflaith, ffanni, and most commonly taffi (taffy). American-English uses the word 'taffy'. Taffy is generally pulled, whereas toffee (as the English make it) is generally poured out and left to set. In Britain the word toffee now appears to be used to describe both forms.

8 C dark brown sugar
2/3 C boiling water
3 T fresh lemon juice, pulp strained out
16 T salted butter, softened (2 sticks)

Using an enameled or stainless steel saucepan over low heat, gradually dissolve the sugar in the boiling water. Stir it continuously with a wooden spoon until the sugar is thoroughly dissolved. This usually takes from 20 to 30 minutes. Remove the saucepan from the heat, add the lemon juice and the softened butter, and stir them into the sugar. Boil this mixture fairly briskly, **WITHOUT STIRRING** it, for 15 minutes. Gently drop a teaspoonful of the mixture into a cupful of cold water; if it hardens at once, it has reached the required consistency (soft-crack stage).

Pour the mixture slowly onto a buttered marble slab or large flat dish. Do not scrape the saucepan clean as the scraping might turn the toffee back into sugar.

Use extra butter to butter your hands. Pull the taffy into long golden strands while it is still hot. Cut the taffy in smaller pieces. To make about 3 pounds.

SCOTLAND



Sunty Clas

Gift Giver:

Santa Clause

Sunty Clas (NE of Scotland, near Aberdeen)

Merry Christmas:

Merry Christmas

Nollaig Chridheil (noll egg kreed hile)

Scottish Origin Carol:

Auld lang syne (Robert Burns)

Scottish Cuisine:

Black Bun

Whiskey Dundee Cake

Crannachan

Shortbread

History:

Christmas and New Year were equally welcomed by Scots before the Reformation of the 16th and 17th centuries. All the customs of both festivals stem from that time.

The Vikings came to Scotland at the end of the 8th century and along with their well-documented thirst for conquest and plunder they left behind an early version of a festival which they celebrate today. This mid-winter festival was given the name of “Yultid” and went on and on and on and on for 24 days! This celebrated the great fire festival of the winter solstice. At the solstice, the sun was reborn, with light and warmth emanating once more from this golden sphere of life and eternal energy. This, plus the Druids, the Germanic influence, and other conquerors, established a Christmas celebration.

When William of Normandy conquered England in 1066, the English Princess Margaret fled north and was shipwrecked on the Scottish coast. Her Christian influence helped turn the previously pagan Yuletide season into a celebration of the birth of Jesus. It was celebrated at the twelfth month, being the twelfth name of Odin, who was supposed to come to earth in December, disguised in a hooded cloak. He would sit awhile at the firesides listening to the people,

and where there was poverty, he left a gift of bread or coins. (Father Christmas's coins dropping into stockings) Mistletoe and evergreens were meant to ward off evil spirits to the Vikings, and to the Druids of England, these were said to have the ability to heal wounds and increase fertility.

Christmas was known as *Nollaig Beag*, Little Christmas. The custom as to celebrate the Birth of Christ with all solemnity, the festivities began few days later, and spilled into New Year and Twelfth Night.

The Reformation hit Scotland as hard as everywhere else. By 1583 during Cromwell's reign, bakers who made the yulebreads were fined, their punishment could be lessened if they gave the names of their customers! Soldiers were chosen especially for their noses because a long nose was thought to be able to sniff out the spices in the Christmas baking better. In Scotland the bakers were encouraged to "bake inform" on their customers. In their attempts to stamp out frivolity, they prescribed that Christmas would be a working day. So it became the custom to work over Christmas. In 1638 the General Assembly in Edinburgh tried to abolish Yuletide, while high church in England and the Catholics, took the day off. It's amazing that these joy-crushing rules were imposed for over 400 years!

In Scotland, the religious beliefs of the people have largely prevented the survival of a Christmas tradition. Christmas was not celebrated in Scotland until the 1960s; the once-outlawed holiday was long seen as just another workday. In the Middle Ages, the Scots did celebrate a great festival at Christmas time. This festival was dominated by a person called the "Abbot of Unreason." He dressed in clerical robes and supervised the celebrations. Unfortunately, the Abbot of Unreason often became unruly and was finally banned in the 16th century.

The Victorians re-established Christmas—they gathered remnants of many of the traditions from the past such as stocking hanging.

The Scottish people celebrate Christmas in a rather somber way today, but they celebrate New Year's Eve with great enthusiasm. They call New Year's Eve "Hogmanay," which is a word that may

derive from a special cake that was traditionally given to children on that day. The Scots have a New Year's tradition that is similar to some English Christmas traditions. It is called "first-footing" and is a ritual that foretells good luck during the following year. The first-footer is the first person to step into a house in the new year. The first-footer can bring good fortune to the home depending on his or her hair color. Often the first-footer is given treats and gifts to ensure this good fortune. A popular first-footing carol reveals some of the gifts that might be brought:

I wish you a merry Christmas
And a happy New Year'
A pocket full of money
And a cellar full of beer,
And a great fat pig
To last you all the year.

The first-footer must be a dark-haired man, carrying a lump of coal for good luck to follow. If the first-footer is a woman, or fair-haired or a red-head, then bad luck may follow.

Scottish Whisky Dundee Cake

3 T whisky
6 oz each currants, sultanas
4 oz candied cherries
3 oz mixed candied peel, finely chopped
Grated rind 1 small orange and 1 small lemon
5 oz butter, softened
5 oz soft brown sugar
3 large eggs
8 oz flour
1 t baking powder
Milk
2 T ground almonds
4 oz whole blanched almonds
1 miniature bottle (3 ½ T) single malt Scotch whisky
7" square or 8" round cake tin, greased and lined with silicone paper

Method

Begin the night before by weighing the fruit and peel into a bowl and sprinkling it with the 3 tablespoons of whisky. Mix well, cover and leave overnight.

Pre-heat the oven to gas mark 3, 325°F (170°C). Put the butter and sugar in a mixing bowl and beat with a wooden spoon until light and fluffy – or use an electric mixer for more speed. Whisk the eggs separately, then, a little at a time, beat them into the creamed butter and sugar. Next, using a large tablespoon, carefully fold in the sifted flour and baking powder. Your mixture needs to be of a soft, dropping consistency so, if it seems too dry, add a dessertspoon of milk.

Now, carefully fold in the ground almonds and then the currants, sultanas, cherries, mixed peel and orange and lemon zest. Then spoon the mixture into the prepared cake tin, smoothing it out evenly with the back of the spoon. If you don't intend to ice the cake, arrange the whole blanched almonds in circles on top of the mixture, but do this carefully and lightly; if they are pressed in they will sink

during the baking. Place the cake in the center of the oven and bake for 2-2½ hours or until the center is firm and springy to the touch.

Let the cake cool in the tin for 30 minutes before taking it out to finish cooling on a wire rack. Then 'feed' it – make small holes in the top and base of the cake with a cocktail stick or small [skewer](#), then spoon over a few teaspoons of malt whisky – wrap it in double silicone paper and store it in foil or an airtight container till needed. If you like you can feed it again before icing or eating.

A particular favorite of many is the traditional Scottish Christmas cake, the Whisky Dundee. As the name implies, the cake originated in Dundee and is made with Scotch Whiskey. It is a light and crumbly cake, and light on fruit and candied peel—only currants, raisins, sultanas and cherries are used. This Christmas cake is particularly good for people who don't like very rich and moist cakes. As with all fruitcakes, the almonds (or other nuts) can be omitted by people who don't like them or those with severe nut allergies.

Crannachan

Ingredients

1lb/500g raspberries
6 T whisky
3oz/75g pinhead oatmeal
6 T malt whisky
3 T Heather Honey
1pt/600 ml Double cream

Method

Leave cool.

Whip the cream until it is thick but not stiff.

Spread oatmeal on a baking sheet and toast in a medium oven until crisp for 3-6 minutes.

Be careful they don't burn.

Blend all the raspberries (except 2 which are for decoration) until they form a smooth purée.

Combine oatmeal, whisky, honey and cream and raspberries.

Spoon the mixture into tall glasses

Chill for an hour or two before serving.

Just before serving, decorate with freshly whipped cream, a few fresh raspberries and drizzled with a wee bit honey.

IRELAND



Santy/Father Christmas

Gift Giver:

Santa Claus/ Santy/Father Christmas

Merry Christmas:

Nollaig Shona dhuit (Irish Gaelic)

Irish Origin Carol:

The Wexford Carol (Good People All, This Christmastide)

Irish Cuisine:

Irish soda bread

Spiced beef

Irish potatoes

Braised cabbage

Christmas cake (like a fruitcake)

Chocolate Guinness cake

History:

Christmas in Ireland is more religious and less festive than in other parts of Europe. Lit candles are left in the windows on Christmas Eve to light the Holy Family's way, but there are seldom many other decorations. The door to the home is left open on Christmas Eve so that the Holy Family may partake of the bread and milk left out on the table. Father Christmas or Santy is the gift giver here, and some presents are given out. For a treat, three special puddings are made during this season; one for Christmas, one for New Year's, and one for Twelfth Night. Scotland's emphasis is on the New Year festivities, whereas midnight Mass is the important celebration in Ireland. Christmas lasts from Christmas Eve to the feast of Epiphany on January 6th, which some Irish people call "Little Christmas".

Most homes have fireplaces with mantelpieces and these are often decorated with holly and ornaments. It is common to hang mistletoe in a doorway. Many children are given Advent calendars, and each day in December they open one of the slots for a chocolate treat. People also clean their houses thoroughly and in the past, it was common to whitewash as well, as a means of purification.

During December, people bake Christmas cakes, puddings and mince pies. Hospitality is a way of life in Ireland, and anyone who visits the house, is entertained with tea and cakes, especially during the holidays. Trees are decorated with a star or an angel on top. Children put a stocking (or a pillowcase!) at the bottom of their beds for Santy. Gifts usually include an apple, an orange or tangerine, and chocolate coins. During lean years, children may have received a piece of coal or peat (used as fuel in fireplaces). This was not given for bad behavior but simply because there was nothing else.

In many areas, on Christmas Eve, a lit candle is placed in a window. This goes back to traditions of hospitality in ancient times. The idea is to help light the way of the Holy Family or any other poor traveler who is out on that night. There can be a White Christmas, but snowfalls are rarely heavy. As in many countries, it is very important for family members to be together for Christmas Eve and Christmas Day.

People often have Christmas dinner in the afternoon, any time between 1 and 3 p.m. You could be served more than one 'fowl' for Christmas dinner - usually a goose and sometimes chicken, duck or pheasant as well, along with stuffing, roast potatoes and gravy. Now turkey is much more common along with a ham, and sometimes spiced beef. Dessert is Christmas pudding with rum sauce or brandy butter and cream or Guinness Cake. Sometimes a trifle is served as well. Christmas poppers are on the table, and everyone pulls one with the person next to them. Whoever ends up with the longer end gets the contents, which include a party hat, a small toy and a riddle.

December 26th (Boxing Day in England) is celebrated as St. Stephen's Day in Ireland and is a public holiday. A wren supposedly betrayed the presence of St. Stephen when he was in hiding. He was then caught and executed. Wren boys go from door to door with a wren on a stick (today the wren is not a real one), singing a traditional song and begging for treats. Pantomimes, such as Babes in the Wood or Puss in Boots, are performed at this time also.

Chocolate Guinness Cake

Yield: One 9-inch cake (12 servings)

For the cake:

1 cup Guinness stout
10 tablespoons (1 stick plus 2 tablespoons) unsalted butter
3/8 C unsweetened cocoa
2 C sugar
3/8 cup sour cream 2 large eggs
1 T vanilla 2 C flour
2 1/2 t. baking soda

For the topping:

1 1/4 C confectioners' sugar
8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
1/2 C heavy cream

For the cake: Heat oven to 350 degrees. Butter a 9-inch springform pan and line with parchment paper. In a large saucepan, combine Guinness and butter. Place over medium-low heat until butter melts, then remove from heat. Add cocoa and superfine sugar, and whisk to blend.

In a small bowl, combine sour cream, eggs and vanilla; mix well. Add to Guinness mixture. Add flour and baking soda, and whisk again until smooth. Pour into buttered pan, and bake until risen and firm, 45 minutes to one hour. Place pan on a wire rack and cool completely in pan.

For the topping: Using a food processor or by hand, mix confectioners' sugar to break up lumps. Add cream cheese and blend until smooth. Add heavy cream, and mix until smooth and spreadable.

Remove cake from pan and place on a platter or cake stand. Ice top of cake only, so that it resembles a frothy pint of Guinness.

NETHERLANDS (HOLLAND)



St. Nicholas and Zwarte Pieten

The Wanthouses arrived from Holland in the mid-1800's. We may have been Van Thuis or something that "sounds like" Wan...tuus...whatever! Still researching....

Gift Giver:

St. Nicholas/Sinterklaas
Zwarte Pieten/Black Peter

Merry Christmas:

Prettige Kerstdagen(preh-teh-geh kehrst dah-gen) Vrolijk Kerstfeest
(Merry Christmas)

Dutch Origin Carols:

Bright December Moon is Beaming
Look How the Moon Shines Through the Trees
Glory to God

Dutch Cuisine:

Boiled chestnuts eaten with butter and salt
Marzipan
Kerstkrans (Dutch Christmas cookies)
On Christmas Eve, after the kids have been tucked into bed, adults enjoy tea and speculaas (hard cookies).
Roast turkey, venison, rabbit are typically served on Christmas Day.

History:

Christmas traditions revolve around the celebration of Saint Nicholas, which takes place on December fifth. On December sixth, presents have been left and are opened. Several legends are added to this information of a bishop in Myra, Turkey, in the 4th century, called Nicholas, who was very good and helpful to children. Therefore he became the protector of the children. So St. Nicholas moved from Myra to Spain.

It is said that his first black servant was the devil himself, who subjugated himself to St. Nicholas. Other people tell that St. Nicholas is the same person as Wodan, one of the Teutonic gods. In former days Wodan, with a long white beard and long white hair,

rode on a white horse in the air, and his servant strewed nuts and peas, symbols of fertility.

In the Netherlands, Saint Nicholas, nicknamed Sinter Klass is depicted as a tall, slender man wearing a red bishop's robe and a tall bishop's hat. He carries a bishop's miter and rides a white horse. His helper, Black Peter, who is garbed in the Renaissance fashion of puffed velvet breeches, rides alongside St. Nicholas on a mule, his face covered in soot. Black Peter's 16th Century clothing is a reminder of the Spanish dominion over the Netherlands, which finally ended in 1570. Black Peter was often depicted with horns and red eyes. Dutch children were told he was the devil, who Saint Nicholas had captured and made his servant. Since they believe that Saint Nicholas moved from Turkey to Spain, Black Peter may be a result of the Moorish influence (dark skinned)

Children in the Netherlands believe that Saint Nicholas arrives on December 5th (the eve of his saint day) along with Black Peter. Black Peter would jump from roof to roof, sliding up and down chimneys, leaving gifts in the little wooden shoes left by the hearth. (stockings). Children would fill their shoes with hay and carrots for St. Nicholas' horse and Black Peter's mule (cookies and milk). Or in our house, beer and chips! ☺

The idea of good fortune coming via the chimney goes back to pagan days, when people thought good spirits could travel as swiftly as smoke. This is similar to children's wish lists being thrown into the fire and carried up the chimney. And it was very similar to the German holiday tradition of *Heartha*, Goddess of the Home. Mothers reinforced the idea of Saint Nicholas and Black Peter by cleaning out their hearths just before December 6th. They told children that cleaning it out would make it easier for Black Peter to deliver presents.

Saint Nicholas parties are held on the last Saturday in November, with children crowding into the harbor in Amsterdam for a glimpse of the ship from Spain carrying Saint Nicholas and their gifts. (We adopt many different customs in this country and thus our customs reflect the melting pot that makes the United States. Santa may arrive in the last float in the Macy's parade. In Morristown, NJ in the

50's, Santa arrived on the roof of Bambergers Department Store and came down to the square on a ladder.) Christmas Day, December 6th is reserved for going to church, with a dinner served around seven in the evening. Music is a strong tradition in many Dutch churches, where groups play for the congregation on Christmas Day. December 26th is referred to as "Second Christmas Day", and is a time for visiting family and is also a National holiday.

Kerstkrans:

(Pastry Mix)

8oz plain flour

pinch of salt

1oz butter or lard

1/2oz fresh yeast

or

1 1/2 teaspoons dried yeast

1/2oz caster sugar

5 tablespoons warm water

1 egg, beaten

5oz butter

1 egg, beaten

(Filling)

4 1/2oz ground almonds

4 1/2oz caster sugar

finely grated rind of 1 lemon

1 small egg, beaten

6 glacé cherries, halved

(To Decorate)

3-4 tablespoons apricot jam

1 tablespoon water

4oz thin Lemon glaze Icing

6 glacé cherries, halved

To make the Pastry: Sift the flour and salt into a warm mixing bowl and rub in the fat. Blend the yeast with the sugar and water. Leave for 10 minutes to froth if using dried yeast. Stir into the flour with the beaten egg and mix to a soft dough. Turn on to a floured board and knead lightly for about 5 minutes until smooth. Put in an oiled polythene bag and refrigerate for 10 minutes. (Or you can use pre-made/frozen puff pastry!)

To make the Ring: Mix the almonds and sugar with the grated lemon rind. Work in sufficient beaten egg to make a soft but not sticky paste. Knead into a ball.

Roll out the pastry into a strip 4 x 21 inches and 1/8 inch thick. Roll the almond paste into a thin roll 19 inches long. Press the cherry halves deep into it at equal intervals. Place the almond paste roll over the pastry strip, just above center. Fold the upper edge of the pastry down over the roll. Damp the lower edge with water, curl it up over the roll to just overlap the first pastry flap and press the edges firmly together.

Place a 6 inch saucepan lid on a baking sheet. Lift the pastry on to it with the join underneath and curl it round the lid. Remove the lid. Damp one end of the pastry roll with water and insert it in the other end. Press the join firmly and neatly together. Cover and leave to rise for 15 to 20 minutes.

Glaze with beaten egg and bake in a preheated hot oven at 450°F 20 to 25 minutes or until well risen and golden brown. Meanwhile, heat the apricot jam with the water and sieve it. Brush the pastry with it and arrange the cherry halves in pairs in the middle, round the ring. Coat while hot, with very thin Lemon glacé Icing.

Lemon Glace Icing:

This simple lemon icing recipe can be used for many baked goods, such as cookies, cakes, sweet breads, and pastries.

Makes About 1/2 Cup Lemon Icing

Prep Time: 5 minutes

Total Time: 5 minutes

1 cup powdered sugar
1 tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 tsp grated lemon zest
1 tbsp milk
1 small drop food coloring, optional

Preparation:

Combine ingredients in a small bowl and stir until smooth.

GERMANY



Kris Kringle

My Grandmothers' ancestors date back to Germany; Pinky's side of the family, Ulrich, was from Bavaria/Bayerne, Germany. Nana's (my Nana, your grandmother, or great grandmother.) Her maiden name was Holm.

Gift Giver:

Christkindl/Kris Kringle/St Nick/Belznickle

Merry Christmas:

Frohliche Weihnachten ("Froy-lick-eh Vi-nak-ten")

German Origin Carols:

O Tannenbaum

O Come, Little Children

German cuisine:

Stollen (Pinky's) recipe

Lebkuchen (gingerbread, Pfefferkuchen-pepper cake)

Glühwein (hot mulled wine)

Siebenbrugische Plätzchen (spiced cookies)

History:

Perhaps more than any other country, Germany has influenced the way Christmas is celebrated around the world. It is from Germany that we get some of the most popular ideas associated with the Christmas season and the Christmas spirit, as well as such welcome innovations as the Christmas cookie and the Christmas tree. The tree is usually trimmed by the mother who decorates with balls, tinsel, stars, cookies, marzipan, and so on. No one else is allowed to see the tree until Christmas eve. After Mass or church on Christmas Eve, the Christkindl or Kris Kringle—not St. Nicholas—brings the gifts. At first the Christkindl was meant to be the Baby Jesus; later the name came to stand for a more angelic figure that embodies the spirit of the Christ Child. The Christkindl wears a flowing white robe, a white veil, and gold wings. He often enters by an open window and rings a bell when gifts have been left. The name later evolved into Kris Kringle; it is in no way a pseudonym for Santa Claus. Like St. Nicholas, Kris Kringle is accompanied by a nasty, frightening

traveling companion who carried wooden branches to scare children who acted badly or did not know their prayers during the year. This companion was most commonly known as Knecht Rupprecht or “Servant Rupprecht”. He was also known by other names such as Belznickle, which means “Furry Nicholas,” and Ru-Klas, which means “Rough Nicholas”. These names hint that Knecht Rupprecht was more than just a companion for St. Nicholas. He was probably viewed as a meaner version of the kindly saint or his “alter-ego”.

Belznickle traces his roots back to the Protestant Reformation. Children were given presents for good behavior and punished for poor behavior. He wore a long dark coat and had a flowing white beard. He visited every home on Christmas Eve and would talk to children about their behavior and ask them to recall a poem or Bible verse. To good children he appeared very kind; however, the naughty children were afraid of him because he knew which ones misbehaved. Belznickle always brought with him a bag of treats and switches. At the end of his visit, he would toss the candy and nuts on the floor. As the children bent over to pick up the treats, he would pull out his switch and spank the naughty ones.

Religious changes in Germany have changed the relationship between the German people and St. Nicholas. As a result, St. Nicholas has come to resemble an American Santa Claus of the 20th century. He now often wears a red suit and white beard. Moreover, he is increasingly known as Father Christmas and appears more often on Christmas Eve rather than on his traditional feast day.

But the old traditions still remain in different parts of Germany. There are many names that are still used to refer to St. Nicholas and his companion, Knecht Rupprecht. In many areas one can still hear the names of Krampus, (more about him later!) Pelzebock, or Gumphinkel used interchangeably for Knecht Rupprecht.

Saint Nicholas traditionally brings gifts on the eve of his feast day, December 6th.

German Lebkuchen:

Nuremberg gingerbread was not baked in the home. It was the exclusive production of a Guild of master bakers known as the *Lebkuchler*. Their creations known as *lebuucken*, called for all of the flavorings and ingredients available at the time. These included cardamom, cloves, cinnamon, white pepper, anise and ginger. Larger pieces of gingerbread even today are used to build *hexenhaeusle* (witches' houses) and are also referred to as *Knusperhaeuschen* (houses for nibbling at).

Original Recipe Yield 2 dozen

Ingredients

- 1 $\frac{1}{3}$ C honey
- $\frac{1}{3}$ C packed brown sugar
- 2 C flour
- 1 t baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ t baking soda
- 1 C candied mixed fruit
- 1 T light sesame oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ t cardamom
- 2 t cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{4}$ t each cloves, allspice, nutmeg, ginger
- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C flour

Directions

1. Spray bottom and sides of a 10 x15 inch glass pan with a non-stick spray. Preheat oven to 325 degrees
2. In a 2 cup glass measuring cup, heat the honey and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup sugar in a microwave for 1 minute. Pour this mixture into a medium bowl.
3. Sift together the flour, baking powder, and baking soda. Add to the honey mixture. Stir well.
4. Add and mix in by hand the candied fruit, oil, and spices.
5. Add 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ to 2 cups more flour. Knead dough to mix (dough will be stiff). Spread into pan. Bake for 20 minutes until inserted toothpick comes out clean.
6. Cut into squares. May be frosted with sugar glaze or eaten plain. Best if stored for 2 weeks.

Spieenburgische Plätzchen

This recipe calls for Treacle...it is also known as Lyle's Golden Syrup. It is the main ingredient in the Treacle Tart which we all know is Harry Potter's favorite dessert! It was also featured in Chitty Chitty Bang Bang back in the 60's!

4 oz butter	1 lb flour
2 oz of Treacle (Lyle's Golden Syrup)	8 oz brown sugar
2 t cinnamon	½ oz cloves
2 oz Crisco	1 large egg
2 t baking soda	¼ t salt
½ t ginger	½ t allspice

Preheat oven to 350°. Cream together butter, lard, sugar and blend in the egg and treacle. Sift together flour and all remaining ingredients. Stir into creamed butter mixture to form a dough.

Shape dough into about 50 slightly flattened balls. Place balls 2" apart on well-greased baking sheets. Sprinkle with granulated sugar and bake for 15 minutes. The balls will spread. Cool on racks and store in containers.

Each locality had their own way of baking these cookies from Germany, to Austria, to Transylvania.

Pinky's Christmas Stolen: Sophia Ulrich Wanthouse

2 C scaled milk	½ C butter
⅔ C sugar	¼ t cardamom
1 t cinnamon	2 pkgs yeast
¼ C lukewarm water	2 beaten eggs
4 C flour	1 C raisins
1 C citron	1 C chopped cherries
OR 3 C mixed dried fruit	

Combine milk, butter, sugar, spices. Cool to lukewarm. Add yeast to water. Mix well, add 4 C flour, beat well, add fruits and remaining 4 C flour. Let rise until doubled, punch down, knead lightly. Form into 2 loaves or stolen. Let rise until double in bulk again. Bake at 350⁰ for 45 minutes or until done.

SWEDEN



Jultomten

Gift Giver:

Jultomten

Merry Christmas:

God Jul (gooo d jool)

Swedish Origin Carols:

Mary the Virgin to Bethlehem Went

Dance Carol

Saint Stephen Was Riding

Swedish Cuisine:

Swedish meatballs

Smorgasbord

History:

The holiday season begins in Sweden with St. Lucia's Day on December 13th and is observed as in other Scandinavian countries, but it is celebrated on a grand scale in Sweden. It comes to end with St. Knut's Day on January 13th.

St. Lucia was a young Christian girl who was martyred and killed for her faith, in 304 A.D. The most common story told about St. Lucia is that she would secretly bring food to the persecuted Christians in Rome, who lived in hiding in the catacombs under the city. She would wear candles on her head so she had both her hands free to carry more things like food, water and clothing. Lucy means "light" so this is a very appropriate name. December 13th is also the Winter Solstice, the shortest day of the year, in the old Julian calendar and a pagan festival of lights in Sweden was turned into St. Lucia's Day.

In Sweden, the legend has it that Lucia also brought food to Sweden during a time of famine. Young girls dressed in white robes, acting the part of St. Lucia, serve pastry and coffee to their parents while they are in bed. Some adorn their white dresses with red sashes, and wear evergreen wreaths with 7 lighted candles on their heads. Special buns are made with an "X" on them to symbolize Christ. (from the Greek symbol for Chi = Christ = X) There is also an official St. Lucia parade in Stockholm.

On Christmas Eve Day the family gathers in the kitchen for a ritual known as *doppa i grytan* (dipping in the kettle). A kettle is filled

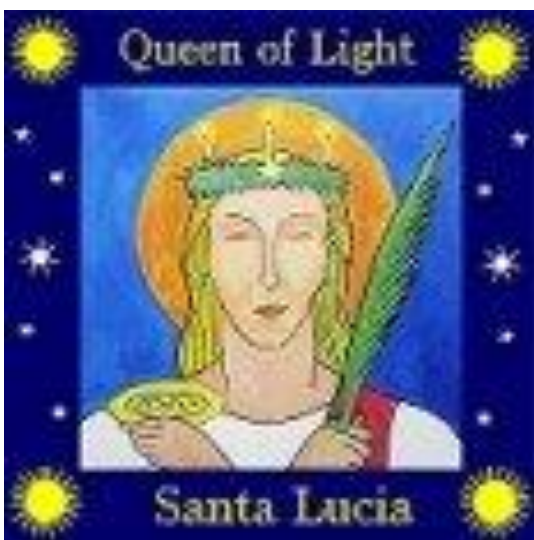
with drippings—corned beef, pork, and sausage. Each person dips a piece of dark bread in the kettle until it is soaked through, then eats it. This ritual is meant to remind each family member of those who are less fortunate, and to encourage thankfulness.

The Swedish also have the Scandinavian tradition of the rice pudding with the hidden almond, only here the finder of the almond is destined to be married within a year. And like other Scandinavians, the Swedes have their gnome, known as Jultomten, who must be appeased. The Jultomten is an ancient creature in Sweden and has long lived under the floors of homes and barns. Jultomten carries a huge sack on his back and is the one to put presents under the tree on Christmas Eve. These presents come with funny poems that hint at what is inside. Jultomten rides the Julbock, a straw goat modeled after the one Thor had.

On December 25th, the first of two Christmas Days, there is an early-morning church service. The day is filled with visiting and other religious observances. On December 26th, the Second Day of Christmas, men ride through the villages to waken all early, and animals are given extra food.

Twelfth Night (Epiphany) is observed on January 6 when villagers dress up as Biblical characters and go from home to home singing hymns. In addition, the Star Boys come out, carrying long poles with lighted stars. They sing Christmas carols as they stroll from house to house, and their Swedish neighbors give them many treats. At any time during the Christmas season, a Swede may receive a Julklapp, or “Christmas box.” There will be a loud knock at the door, and a present will be thrown in. The giver hurries away without being recognized. The present will also be mysterious because it may be hidden in many boxes and fancy papers, or it may just contain instructions which tell where the real present can be found.

As King Knut had once declared that the Christmas should be celebrated for 20 days, the season doesn’t officially end until Jan. 13, Saint Knut’s Day. (King Knut IV ruled from 1080-1086 and is honored as a saint for his virtue and generosity.) The days between Christmas and Saint Knut’s Day are filled with parties for children and adults. After this day, trees are taken down to mark the official close of the season.



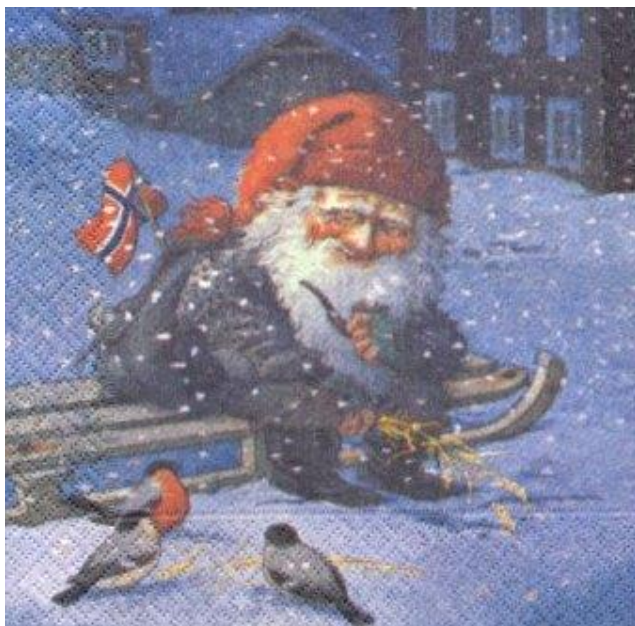
Swedish Meatballs:

Swedish meatballs are absolutely necessary for Christmas. In fact, a Swede online goes so far as to say that it's the **ONLY** necessity!

2 pounds, ground meat
1 yellow onion, very finely chopped
1-2 small cloves of garlic, minced
1 egg
salt
white pepper
pinch of cinnamon
pinch of ground ginger
pinch of cardamom
pinch of allspice

Mix everything to an even batter, and form small, round balls. Put in a large roasting pan, and bake for about 15 minutes at 350°F. (I'm using a convection oven, if you're not, add a few minutes.) Shake the pan a few times to ensure an even crispy surface on your meatballs.

NORWAY



Julevenn

Gift Giver:

Pa norsk, “Julenissen”, Julesvenn...

Merry Christmas:

Gledelig Jul (good joy)

Norwegian Origin Carol:

Jeg synger julkevad

Norwegian Cuisine:

Rice pudding

Pinnekjøtt-salted lamb ribs

Mashed rutabagas

History:

Like other Scandinavian countries, Norway believes in sharing Christmas with the animals. On Christmas Eve day, a sheaf of grain or “Bird Tree” is hung out in the yard so that the birds may feast, too. Norwegians did not simply adopt the modern figure of Santa Claus. It already had a centuries-old gift-giver tradition to draw upon.

It is Julesvenn who brings Christmas gifts to Norwegian children. In the past, Julesvenn always appeared as a friendly gnome or elf that brought barley stalks to homes during mid-winter feasts. He would hide these stalks in unlikely places, which forced children to find them in fun games of discovery. Julesvenn now brings many kinds of gifts to Norwegian children. He brings toys and treats, chocolates and sweets, and the children look forward to his coming just as children elsewhere look forward to Santa Claus.

Julesvenn is an old Christmas character in Norway, but so too are the many barn elves and julebuk, the “Christmas buck.”

The barn elves of Norway are like those of Denmark and the Yule Lads of Iceland. They must be fed rice pudding or else they will play practical jokes and cause many problems. Rice pudding is also a traditional food where whoever finds the magic almond is given a treat. Leftovers are given to the barnyard elves so as to appease their inclination toward pranks.

Julebuk, an ancient goat character, is a little gnome or elf who brings gifts. He comes from the distant past when the Norwegians worshipped the god Thor and his goat. Today, they include a potpourri of ancient customs and modern traditions. Modern Norwegian children “play” julebuk as a game like trick-or-treat. They dress up in costumes and go from door to door asking for gifts of candy and chocolate. A hybrid of Christmas and Halloween!

Julesvenn arrives on Christmas Eve--like the Danish Julnisse, who is a holdover from an ancient Jul feast. Between Christmas and the season’s end on Jan 13, there are many parties for children and adults, including the Julebuk, a Halloween-like celebration named after Thor’s goat.



The Yule Goat

NORWEGIAN CUSTARD RICE PUDDING

$\frac{3}{4}$ C rice, cooked without salt

11 eggs, slightly beaten

1 $\frac{1}{2}$ qts whole milk

$\frac{1}{3}$ C sugar to taste

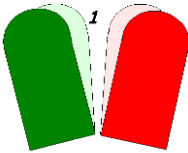
1 t. vanilla

Slightly beat eggs. Add milk, sugar and vanilla. Add cooked rice; mix well. Pour into a large casserole. Sprinkle ground cardamom on top. Dot with butter. Bake 350 degrees for at least an hour. After 40 minutes, sprinkle top with cinnamon. Top jiggles when done.

How to make Norwegian Christmas baskets

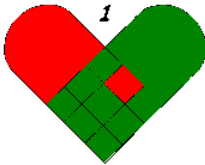
STEP 1)

Take two pieces of colored paper about 8x12 cm and fold them in half (where the scissor is) before rounding the edge on the top. Cut several slots 2/3 of the way up from the bottom on both halves.



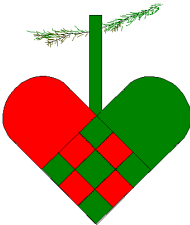
STEP 2)

Weave the two sides together as shown. This isn't as difficult as it seems. Weave the strips through each other by "opening" and "closing" them.- Take a green strip and "open" the first loop. Then pull a red strip through. Now open the same red strip and pull the next green strip (closed) through.



STEP 3)

Make a handle and glue it to the insides of the basket.



STEP 4)

Hang the basket on your Christmas tree and fill it up with nuts and candy !

ICELAND



Gift Givers:

Jólasveinar (Yule Lads) (this is the plural form of the word, Jólasveinn)

Grýla and Leppalúði (Gree-la, Lep-a-loo-dee)

Merry Christmas:

Gleðileg Jól (glaydy jowl)

Icelandic Origin Carol:

Jólasveinn Kæri

Icelandic Cuisine:

Skate (fish)

Smoked, cured pork roast

Gamebird in the grouse family

Hangikjöt (a smoked, brined, and pickled lamb or mutton)

Oven roasted turkey

History:

Iceland? Why include Iceland...it's not a major country, not well-known, but their Christmas traditions are so unusual and previously scary to children, that I had to include it.

Christmas is Iceland's longest holiday. Everything is closed from noon on Christmas Eve until December 27th. The major difference between Iceland and the United States is that Icelanders celebrate on Christmas Eve. This is when the family exchanges gifts and then for the next two days everyone goes to parties and visits relatives and friends.

Long before Christianity arrived in Iceland (and most northern European countries), they celebrated winter solstice which ushers in gradually lengthening days. Landowners would invite many people to their house and people would feast and dine extravagantly. After the adoption of Christianity in the year 1000 in Iceland, this celebration was integrated with the Christian Christmas Celebration. Thus, Icelandic Christmas is historically two celebrations; one to celebrate the birth of Christ, the other to celebrate the lengthening of days. The Icelandic word for Christmas, Jól, contains no reference to Christ or to the church. It is a Norse word and also is known in Old English as Yule.

Icelanders celebrate 13 days of Christmas. The period starts on December 24 and ends on January 6, which is when all Christmas decorations are removed from streets and houses. January 6 celebrates the Three Wise Men. Children leave a shoe in the window. Santa leaves a gift, bad children receive a potato.

Live pine trees are standard in Iceland, decorated with candles, apples, oranges, popcorn and cranberry garlands, and small gifts, wrapped and hung from the boughs.

Þorláksmessa or St. Þorlákur's (St. Thórlakur) Mass is the day before Christmas, or December 23rd. It is generally the biggest shopping day in Iceland as people run to the stores in a frenzy to get the last Christmas presents.

Þorláksmessa is named after Þorlákur Þórhallsson, a priest in Iceland in the 12th century who died on December 23, 1193. He was canonized in 1198 by the Icelandic parliament, although I absolutely cannot find why he was honored at all other than just being a good priest, then a Bishop. Miracles are attributed to him, but again, no particulars. He was not recognized by the Vatican as the patron saint of Iceland until 1984.

On this day it is tradition to eat a fish called skate and boiled potatoes. Now, skate, in and of itself is pretty scary! It contains enzymes that can be harmful when consumed fresh. Therefore, it is pickled and putrefied, giving off a very strong odor of ammonia that comes from the pickling and putrefication process. Given their tradition, and the stink that is a result, many go out to eat so as not to introduce the odor into the house.

Now for the really scary part!

The Christmas Cat: Jólakötturinn



The Icelandic folklore states that everyone has to get one new piece of clothing at Christmas. Anyone who was left out was in danger of being eaten by a malicious beast called the Christmas Cat. The Christmas Cat is Grýlas' cat and every effort was made to ensure that no one would "go to the Christmas Cat". Thus, everyone worked very hard to make a new piece of clothing for each member of the household. The first stories about the cat appeared in the 19th century and were probably aimed at lazy children. It seems to have worked because to this day, everyone gets a new piece of clothing either before or at Christmas.

The Yule Lads



Icelanders have not one, but thirteen Santas; Jólasveinar or The Yule Lads. These lads are not related to Santa Claus in any way. They are descendants of trolls and were originally used to scare children. In the last century, however, they have become a lot friendlier and more mischievous rather than scary, child-eating thieves.

They live in the mountains with their parents, Grýla and the bedridden Leppalúði. They come to town, one by one, in the days

preceding Christmas. Formerly, they tried to pilfer their favorite things or play tricks on people but now their main role is to give children small gifts. Every child puts their best shoe on the bedroom window sill on December 12 (some try to put their boot, in the hope that they may get more), but so far the Yule Lads haven't been fooled and they get a small gift from each lad when he arrives in town. But if you are naughty the lad might just leave a rotten potato in your shoe!

Grýla is in Icelandic mythology, a horrifying, sometimes depicted as a three-headed monster and an ogress living in the mountains of Iceland. She is said to come down from the mountains at Christmas in search of naughty children. The Grýla legend has been frightening to the people of Iceland since the 13th century. Most of the stories told about Grýla were to frighten children – her favorite dish was a stew of naughty kids and she had an insatiable appetite. Grýla was not directly linked to Christmas until in the 17th century. By that time she had become the mother of the Yule Lads, who became her henchmen. She sent *them* out to collect naughty children and bring them back to her in the mountains. A public decree was issued in 1746 prohibiting the use of Grýla and the Yule Lads to terrify children. According to folklore Grýla has been married three times. The first husband she ate. The second fathered 12 children but mysteriously disappeared without a trace, and her third husband Leppalúði is said to be living with her in their cave in the mountains with that big black Yule Cat and their sons. He is said to be crippled or infirm. They supposedly had 20 children together. As Christmas approaches, the Lads and Grýla set off looking for naughty boys and girls. The Grýla legend has appeared in many stories, poems, songs and plays in Iceland and sometimes Grýla dies in the end of the story.

The number of Yule Lads has varied throughout the centuries but now they are consistently thirteen. The number 13 was first seen in a poem in the 17th century and the names that they carry today, was published in Jón Árnason's folklore collection of 1862.

Their current names based on the type of mischief they get into, are listed in order of their appearance: (from *Iceland Dreams*)

Stekkjastaur (Sheepfold Stick) December 12

The first of them was **Sheep-Cote Clod**. He came stiff as wood with a peg leg. He would pray upon the farmer's sheep because he wanted to drink the ewe's milk. It was difficult however, because he couldn't bend his knees.

Giljagaur (Gully Gawk) December 13

The second was **Gully Gawk**, who stalked around in the gullies waiting for the best moment to sneak into cattle sheds. The pails were full of fresh milk, left unattended. Froth milk is what he liked most..

Stúfur (Itty-bitty) December 14

Stubby was the third called, a stunted little man, who watched for every chance to whisk off a pan. And scurrying away with it, he scraped off the bits that stuck to the bottom and brims – his favorites.

Pvörusleikir (Spoon-licker) December 15

The fourth was **Spoon Licker**, like spindle he was thin. He loved stealing the wooden spoons that had all sorts of foods stuck to it. He too was a glutton.

Pottaskeikir (Pot-licker) December 16

Pot Scraper, the fifth one, was a funny sort of chap. When kids were given scrapings, he'd come to the door and tap. And they would rush to see if there really was a guest. Then he hurried to the pot and had a scrapingfest.

Askasleikir (Bowl-licker) December 17

Bowl Licker, the sixth one, was shockingly ill bred. From underneath the bedsteads he stuck his ugly head. And when the bowls were left to be licked by dog or cat, he snatched them for himself – he was sure good at that!

Hurðaskellir (Door-slammer) December 18

The seventh was **Door Slammer**, a sorry, vulgar chap: When people in the twilight would take a little nap, he was happy as a lark with the havoc he could wreak, slamming doors and hearing the hinges on them squeak.

Skýrgámur (Skyr-glutton) (skyr is a cultured dairy product similar to yogurt) **December 19**

Skyr Gobbler, the eighth, was an awful stupid bloke. He lambasted the skyr tub till the lid on it broke. Then he stood there gobbling – his greed was well known – until, about to burst, he would bleat, howl and groan.

Bjúgnakrækir (Sausage-pilfer) **December 20**

The ninth was **Sausage Swiper**, a shiftily pilferer. He climbed up to the rafters and raided food from there. Sitting on a crossbeam in soot and in smoke, he fed himself on sausage fit for gentlefolk.

Gluggagægir (Peeper) **December 21**

The tenth was **Window Peeper**, a weird little twit, who stepped up to the window and stole a peek through it. And whatever was inside to which his eye was drawn, he most likely attempted to take later on.

Gattaþefur (Sniffer) **December 22**

Eleventh was **Door Sniffer**, a doltish lad and gross. He never got a cold, yet had a huge, sensitive nose. He caught the scent of lace bread while leagues away still and ran toward it weightless as wind over dale and hill.

Ketkrókur (Meat-hook) **December 23**

Meat Hook, the twelfth one, his talent would display as soon as he arrived on Saint Thorlak's Day. He snagged himself a morsel of meat of any sort, although his hook at times was a tiny bit short.

Kertasnikir (Candle-begger) **December 24**

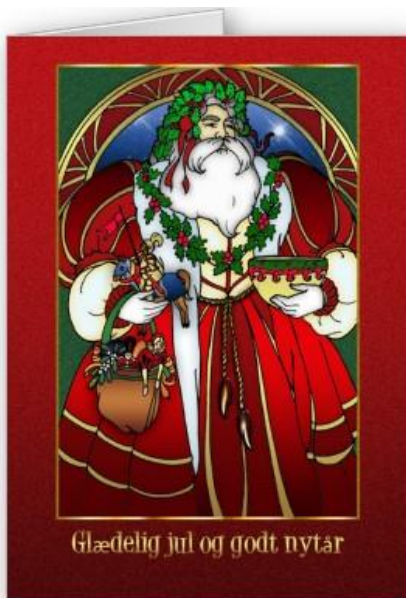
The thirteenth was **Candle Beggar** – 'twas cold, I believe, if he was not the last of the lot on Christmas Eve. He trailed after the little ones who, like happy sprites, ran about the farm with their fine tallow lights.

Icelandic Christmas Cocktail: Jólabland

“This mix is, as far as I know, purely an Icelandic invention. In the first half of this century not many people could afford to buy ale and fizzy drinks, and they were therefore something to be enjoyed at festive occasions, such as Christmas and birthdays. Mixing the drinks together was probably believed to make it even more enjoyable to drink. The taste is sweet, malty and mellow. This is a comforting drink that always makes me think of Christmas.”

Take equal measures of an orange flavoured fizzy drink (Fanta will do) and brown ale (Guinness is supposed to be good) and mix together. Be careful to pour the orange drink first, and pour the ale carefully to avoid it getting too frothy. Drink with the Christmas meal. To get an authentic flavour, the orange drink should be the Icelandic *Egils Appelsín*, and the brown ale *Egils Malt*. Some people (like my family) like to add some cola, usually Coke.

DENMARK



Julemanden

Julenissen



Julenisse

Gift Giver:

Julemanden, and his servant Julenisse

Merry Christmas:

Glædelig Jul (glay yee ool)

Danish Origin Carol:

Selskabssang (party song) This is very special to Denmark. They are sung to traditional tunes and have specially written lyrics that fit the occasion.

Danish Cuisine:

Julefrokost-Christmas lunch

Rice pudding (ris ala mande)

Potatoes

Pebber nodder (Christmas cookies with cinnamon and cardamom)

Red cabbage

Danish Pastries

History:

Danes celebrate on December 24, which is called Juleaftensday (literally, Yule Eve Day), or simply Jul. An elaborate dinner is eaten with the family in the evening, consisting of roast pork, roast duck or roast goose with plain potatoes, caramelized potatoes, red cabbage and gravy. Dessert is rice pudding with a cherry sauce, traditionally with an almond hidden inside. The lucky finder of this almond is entitled to a small gift. After the meal is complete, the family gathers around the Juletræ to sing carols and dance. Then the children often hand out the presents which are opened immediately. This is followed by candy, chips, various nuts, clementines, and sometimes a mulled and spiced wine with almonds and raisins called Gløgg is served hot in small cups. The holiday continues for the next two days, Første Juledag (first day after Christmas) and Anden Juledag (second day after Christmas). This is filled with relaxation and time with family.

Throughout December it's a tradition to send a serialized "julekalender" (Christmas calendar) with one episode of a story each

day for 24 days. It's such a big tradition, that every child knows that one of the two major television channels sends an episode at 6:00 pm, and the other send one at 8:00 pm, and then there's the "julekalendar" episodes for teenagers and adults at late night, that is more fun and satirical and/or violent.

In Denmark, Santa or Julemanden is not alone. There is a mysterious creature lurking about during the Christmas season, the mischievous Julenisse, who shows up in writings dating back to the 13th century. He is dressed in gray with a red bonnet, red socks, and white clogs and hides in farmhouse lofts or in barnyards. He may punish naughty children. Unless appeased with a treat he may play tricks, but if properly taken care of, he'll watch over the family's animals for the upcoming year. The figure is quite popular, and is often featured on collector's plates. This tradition of collecting such plates began years ago, when rich families would give their servants' plates of goodies for the Christmas holiday. These plates were considered far better than the servants' everyday dishes, and were set aside by servants.

Pebber Nodder: Danish Christmas Cookies

1 C butter
1 C sugar
2 eggs
2 ½ C flour
1 t cardamom
1 t cinnamon

1. Preheat the oven to 350 degrees
2. In a large bowl, mix together the butter and sugar until smooth. Beat in the eggs one at a time, stirring until light and fluffy. Combine the flour, cardamom and cinnamon; stir into the sugar mixture just until blended.
3. Separate the dough into 6 balls, and roll each ball into a rope about as big around as your finger on a lightly floured surface. Cut into ½ -inch pieces, and place them on an ungreased baking sheet.
4. Bake for 10 minutes in the preheated oven, or until lightly browned. Cool on baking sheets for a few minutes, then transfer to wire racks to cool completely.

GREENLAND



Julemanden

Gift Giver:

Julemanden: The Yule-Man or the Christmas Man
Father Christmas

Merry Christmas:

Juullimi Ukiortaassamilu Pilluarit (Inuit/Greenlandic)
Glædelig Jul (Danish)

Greenlandic Carol:

None that I could find

Greenlandic Cuisine:

Mattak: whale skin with a strip of blubber inside. It is supposed to taste like fresh coconut, but is often too tough to chew and is usually swallowed whole.

KiviakSuaasat: a soup/stew

Barbecued caribou

Fish either as raw sushi or cooked

Berries and Apples with Crisp Topping

Lots of Danish pastries

History:

In Greenland, there are two main languages spoken:

Inuit/Greenlandic and Danish. The traditions are more Danish oriented as is Father Christmas. The Danes/Greenlanders firmly believe that father Christmas lives in Greenland and not the North Pole. He loves rice pudding with cinnamon sugar and a pat of butter on top. His assistant is either a nisse or a tomte. A tomte is a mythical creature of Scandinavian folklore originating from Norse paganism. Tomte or Nisse were believe to take care of a farmer's home and children and protect them from misfortune, in particular at night, when everyone was asleep. The Swedish name tomte is derived from a place of residence and area of influence; the house lot or tomt. The Finnish name is tonttu. Nisse is the common name in Norwegian, Danish and southernmost Sweden.

Throughout Norse mythology and other pagan celebrations, goats were featured prominently. Thor, the god of thunder, had his chariot pulled across the sky by two goats, Tanngrinir (teeth barer) and Tanngnijóstr (teeth grinder). Thor eats the goats and then resurrects

them with his hammer (which also is the instrument that creates lightning). As an aside, Thursday is named after Thor. Thor is the son of Odin and he protects children from evil. Wicca, Mithra, the Wild Hunt, all feature goats. There were Satanic goats as well as goats mentioned frequently in the Bible. A goat was considered a “clean” animal by Jewish dietary laws and was slaughtered for an honored guest. On Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, two goats were chosen and one was sacrificed and the other allowed to escape into the wilderness, hence the word, “Scapegoat” was born. Jesus likened true followers of himself to sheep and false followers to goats. Christianity has associated Satan with imagery of goats, probably because of the Norse pagan roots. The devil was that of a goat-like face with horns and a small beard (a goatee). Refer to KRAMPUS of Austria, the KALIKANZARI of Greece, CAPRA of Romania, JOLUUPUKKI of Finland (Yule Goat) and the JULEBUKK (Yule goat) of Scandanavian countries! Other references to goats are in the zodiac (Capricorns and are predicted to be shy, introverted, creative, and perfectionist), and fauns and satyrs are mythological creatures that are part goat and part human. Many of the rituals concerning goats were absorbed into the Christian Christmas. I put this in Greenland, but it applies in many countries of Europe.

In the villages of Polar Inuits, families like to visit each other and have parties. They drink coffee and eat cakes and exchange brightly wrapped presents. Traditional presents are model sledges, pairs of walrus tusks, or sealskin mitts. Everyone in the village gets a gift and children go from hut to hut, singing songs.

On Christmas Eve, church services are held and most people go to them, many in national costume. Some men wear the white anoraks which are worn on special occasions.

Christmas trees have to imported, because no trees grow as far north as Greenland. The trees are imported from Denmark. Iceland has had a long historical connection with Denmark, and import many trees from there as well. The trees are decorated, with candles, bright ornaments and sometimes small versions of sealskin breeches known as kamiks. People who don't use an imported tree might have a traditional driftwood tree decorated with heather.

Go buy a Danish pastry! The food they eat sounds so gross and it is considered one of the stinkiest foods of the world!

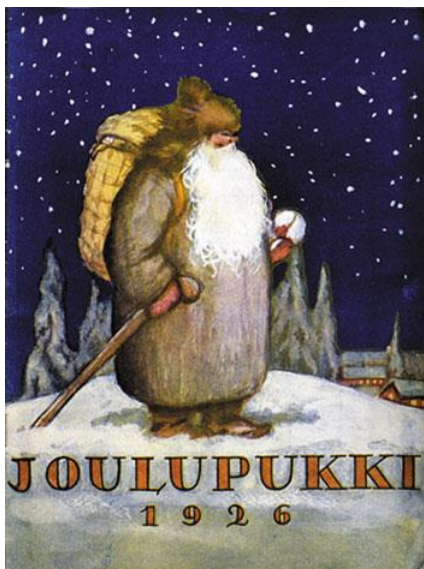
Kiviak

This Greenland Christmas delicacy is made by wrapping whole small sea birds (auk), feathers and all (after having removed the entrails), in sealskin, sewing it back up, and burying it for several months to ferment. When it is dug up, the insides are decayed to the point of near-liquification (and putrification and advanced decomposition) are reportedly sucked out after creating an opening by breaking off the head or some other means. Enough said.



Thor and Tanngrisnir and Tannnijóstr

FINLAND



Joulupukki



Gift Giver:

Joulupukki (meaning Yule Goat)

Merry Christmas:

Hyvää Joulua/Hauskaa Joulua (Hoova yo'-lou-a...accent is always on the first syllable in Finnish)

Finnish Origin Carols:

Joululaulu (A Christmas Carol)

Joulukirkkoon (A Sleigh Ride to Christmas Mass)

Tuntureilla tuiskuttaa (It's Snowing Hard in the Mountains)

Joulupukki Laula

Peteir Punakuono (Rudolph)

Finnish Cuisine:

Porridge (Joulupuuro, Ham, rutabaga casserole, beetroot salad (these are the “essentials” in their meal), liver casserole and pates, meat aspics,

Gravlax or smoked salmon, fish roe and herring.

Glögi (mulled wine)

History:

Again we see the term yule (-tide) in the terms relating to Christmas in Finland. It comes from an old Germanic midwinter festival (involving a sacrificial feast) that has been absorbed into Christmas. As with the other northern European countries that all use the term for “yule” in their Christmas greetings, Finland is no exception. (Sweden, Norway...god jul, Denmark...glædelig jul, Iceland...gledileg jol)

An ancient Finnish version of such festivals was *kekri*, a festival that was held after the harvest was over for the year.(around November) The festival included banquets, sauna and a *kekripukki*, the Finnish cattle protector and fertility god, also a man, who was disguised as an animal – usually as a goat, as goats were seen as a symbol of fertility – and went from house to house, collecting offerings for the spirits of the deceased. Many of the traditions of *kekri* have been applied to modern-day Christmas. When Christianity began to take over in the 4th century, these old pagan traditions and beliefs were slowly

replaced with Christian ones. Also pagan festivals, such as *Saturnalia* and *kekri* were replaced. By the decision of Pope Liberius the birthday of Jesus was placed on the 25th of December. This happened in the year 354 A.D, only a few years after the death of Saint Nicholas. The birthday of Jesus was supposed to replace the old pagan celebrations that took place around the same time. However, what happened was that many pagan festival traditions, such as decorations and gift-giving, were assimilated to the new Christian tradition, thus over the years forming the new festival, Christmas.

Out of all the Christmas-related traditions, the tradition of Saint Nicholas, which evolved in the Netherlands, was by far closest to the Finnish Joulupukki of today. According to this tradition Saint Nicholas sailed from Spain at Christmas, bringing presents to children. This Saint Nicholas was pictured as a bearded old man who wore a dress typical to a priest and rode a white horse. It should be noted that while Saint Nicholas brought presents to children, not all children were given presents. Should a child have been disobedient, he or she would be given a bundle of twigs instead of presents. Therefore, the modern-day question of the Finnish Joulupukki — “*Onko täällä kilttejä lapsia?*” (“Are there any well-behaved children here?”) — is actually derived from the Netherland tradition of Saint Nicholas.

Many Finnish Christmas traditions have contributed to the beliefs about Santa Claus that are shared by other cultures. In Finland, Santa Claus is known as Joulupukki, which means “Yule Buck” or “Yule Goat”. Joulupukki has presided over the Christmas season in Finland for many centuries. This season is celebrated by a popular tradition called the Feast of the End of Darkness, which marks the winter solstice and the very beginnings of spring and summer. Joulupukki began as a creature that did not give presents; instead, he demanded them. If he did not receive them, then he caused all sorts of mischievous problems. He might curdle milk or blow out cooking fires.

Joulupukki later changed into a friendly figure much more like the English Father Christmas and has now come to resemble a modern Santa Claus. But many of the old traditions still remain. Finnish

children still believe that Joulupukki lives on Korvatunturi, which means “Mt. Ear.” From there, he can hear the wishes of all Finnish children for Christmas treats and gifts. Joulupukki also needed many helpers to do all his work. There are many gnomes, or *tontut* as they are called in Finnish, that help Joulupukki make all the gifts and deliver them to the many children. Originally, these gnomes were very active throughout the year. Now they work mostly at Christmas time, but they still watch children from behind doors and under beds all year round to see if they misbehave.

Joulupukki arrives from Lapland with his reindeer on the evening of Christmas Day. He enters the home through the front door and distributes his presents to the entire family.

Finnish people also visit their saunas before Christmas Eve, before Mass and to get squeaky clean for the holiday. They also sprinkle straw around the Christmas tree—and sometimes on the dinner table—to remind all of the circumstances of Jesus’ birth.

The first Sunday in December (also called the First Advent) starts the Christmas season. Many children have advent calendars that count down the remaining days to Christmas eve. December 13 is the day of Saint Lucia, (Sweden) who is celebrated with lots of candles and formal celebrations in every town with candle-crowned young girl. The time for Scandinavian Christmas tree shopping and decorating is coming and the Christmas cards are being exchanged.

Christmas in Finland officially ends 13 days after Christmas Day. After Christianity arrived in Finland the traditions and habits of kekri began to assimilate with Christian Christmas celebration.

These preserved habits include ancient pagan food traditions, such as eating ham and lutefisk, during fast days from the Roman Catholic time.

The reformation started by Martin Luther (1483-1546) also affected Sweden and Finland from *c* 1520 on, and the Christmas traditions changed once more. Many Catholic religious symbols, like nativity scenes, were banned. However, nowadays they have become increasingly popular again among the Finnish Lutherans.

Finnish Rice Pudding: Joulupuuro

This is the main dish for lunch after a visit to cemeteries to remember the dead. This porridge is baked with a hidden almond in it and the finder has to sing a song.

Cook 1 $\frac{1}{4}$ C of rice in boiling water till just tender. Strain and add rice to 5 C of very hot whole milk. Boil slowly for 10 minutes and add the following mixture:

1 whole almond	1 egg well beaten
$\frac{1}{3}$ C of cream	$\frac{2}{3}$ C sugar
3 T flour	$\frac{1}{2}$ t salt

Cook as a slow boil for a few more minutes. Serve hot with a dusting of cinnamon, sugar, cardamom and milk.

Red Christmas Glögi

"White" glögis made with white wine, cider, white grape, apple, pear, or other light fruit juices are also popular nowadays.

375 ml ($\frac{1}{2}$ bottle) fruity red wine
375 ml good blackcurrant juice or red grape juice (or both mixed)
1 stick of cinnamon
3 - 5 cloves
3 - 5 allspice berries
Small piece of dried Seville orange peel
100 ml sugar, or to taste

Per Serving:

Dark raisins

Almonds

Vodka

Scald the almonds and peel them. If you cannot find dried Seville orange peel, substitute it with a couple of thin strips of the zest of a fresh regular orange. Pour the wine and the juice(s) in a saucepan and heat the mixture up. Do not let it boil. Add some sugar and the spices, mix thoroughly until the sugar has dissolved and let steep on a low heat for 5 - 10 minutes (or longer) without boiling. Strain the glögi and spike it up with a dash of vodka, if you like. Reheat the mixture, if necessary. Drop a few blanched almonds and raisins in serving mugs or tea-glasses with a spoon in them and pour the hot glögi over. Serve immediately with cookies.

BELGIUM



St. Niklaas/Père Noël

Gift Giver:

St. Niklaas *and* Père Noël

Merry Christmas:

Zalig Kerstfeest

Joyeux Noël

Belgian Origin Carol:

Called a “noël” Belgium borrows its carols from the French and Dutch

Belgian Cuisine:

Chocolates

Christmas cake

Cougnon (a sweet bread in the form of the infant Jesus)

Aarappel Krokettjes (fried potato croquettes)

Speculoos, cookies made with cinnamon, ginger, and cloves

History:

Belgium has two Santa Claus figures; St. Niklaas and Père Noël. St. Niklaas visits all the children of Belgian families who speak the Walloon language. (a dialect of the French language) In fact, St. Niklaas visits these home twice, but this is not always as good as it sounds! He first comes on December 4 so he can find out which child has been good and which has been bad. Then St. Niklaas returns on December 6 bringing sweet candies and small toys. The children leave out hay, water, and carrots for his horse or donkey along with their shoes as an added measure of goodness. To the bad, he brings bunches of twigs. He leaves these in the children’s shoes or in small baskets that are left just inside the doorway.

The other Santa figure is Père Noël who visits the homes of French-speaking Belgians. When he visits, he usually brings his companion, Père Fouettard, who inquires about the behavior of each child.

Obviously, Belgian children must behave well in order to receive the chocolates and candies that good children deserve. If not, they too, are likely to get a handful of sticks and twigs.

Both of these gift-givers visit on December 6, the feast of St. Nicholas. Christmas is a religious holiday in Belgium, and is

observed with services in churches and quiet family gatherings. Special Christmas cakes are baked and served during the holiday season.

An area in Belgium known as Flanders is famous for its Nativity plays, which are performed with great care and attention to tradition, dating back to the 16th century. In smaller villages, three men who are chosen for their good behavior during the year dress as Magi and walk through the town. They sing songs at each house and are rewarded with snacks.

Everywhere in Belgium there are extensive processions on Christmas Eve. Each procession winds through the town, picking up members as it winds its way to the church for midnight mass.

Christmas trees are a recent addition to Belgian Christmas traditions. Families who choose to decorate trees for the holidays use a variety of ornaments. Many families hang spiced cookies from the branches of their tree, while the Museum of Science and Industry's is covered with fruit that represents the rich agricultural bounty of Belgium.

Speculoos: Belgian Spice Cookies

Yield: Makes 4 dozen

Speculoos, a specialty of Belgium in which flat gingerbread cakes are cut into different shapes, are the inspiration for this recipe.

2 cups all-purpose flour	1 T cinnamon
1 ½ t ground ginger	½ t baking powder
½ t ground cloves	½ t salt
1 ¼ C (packed) dark brown sugar	½ C unsalted butter, softened
1 large egg	
2 ounces good-quality white chocolate, melted	
Red colored sugar	

Combine first 6 ingredients in medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat brown sugar and butter in large bowl until light. Add egg and beat until fluffy. Gradually add dry ingredients and beat just until combined. Divide dough in half. Flatten each half into rectangle. Wrap with plastic; chill 1 hour.

Preheat oven to 350°F. Lightly butter 2 large baking sheets. Roll out 1 dough piece on lightly floured work surface to 13 x 9-inch rectangle. Trim edges to form 12x8-inch rectangle. Cut into 24 4x1-inch rectangles. Lightly press miniature cookie cutter into each rectangle to make imprints (do not cut through dough). Arrange cookies on prepared baking sheets, spacing 1 inch apart. Bake until edges begin to darken, about 8 minutes. Transfer cookies to rack and cool. Repeat with remaining dough piece.

Working with 1 cookie at a time, brush imprints with melted white chocolate. Sprinkle colored sugar generously over chocolate. Let stand until chocolate sets, about 2 hours. Shake off excess colored sugar. (Can be made ahead. Store in airtight container at room temperature up to 1 week, or freeze up to 1 month.)

SWITZERLAND



Samichlaus and Schmutzli

Gift Givers:

Samichlaus and his sinister sidekick, Schmutzli (Swiss-German names)

Christkindli

Père Noël

Father Christmas

Merry Christmas:

There are 4 neighboring countries, each region of Switzerland takes on the traditions of the nearest country: Germany, France, Italy, and Romansh (close to French but is a descendant of Latin dating back to the Roman occupation)... Frohli Wiehnacht, Joyeux Noël, Buon Natale, Schöni Fäschtäg, Bung Nadal,

Swiss Origin Carol:

Because each region is influenced by their closest neighbor, there are few, if any, original Swiss Carols.

Vive le vent (close to Jingle Bells)

Chanson de Noël (French)

Zimetschtärn-hari gärn (a Jingle Bells tune) – German

Swiss Cuisine:

Apfelküchlein (deep fried apple cookie)

Pastetli (meat pie)

Chräbeli (anise cookies)

Zimtsterne (cinnamon cookie)

Brunsli (Swiss brownies)

Fondue

Zopf (bread)

History:

Because Switzerland has the four distinct groups of people, it has no dominant holiday tradition. The French region emphasizes the religious significance. Children may not open their gifts until all have gathered around the Christmas tree and the story of the Nativity is read. Presents are also brought by the Christkindli (Christ Child); the angelic figure with a bright, warm light shining all around it. It has golden wings, and the Swiss often leave a window open so the Christkindli can enter the home. As the identity of the Christkindli

has changed over time from the infant Jesus to this angelic helper, its name has also changed to Kris Kringle. The crossover to the states was immortalized in the movie “Miracle on 34th Street” featuring the character named Kris Kringle. He arrives in town on a sleigh loaded with goodies and pulled by six reindeer. Churches are famous for their bells, and bell-ringing competitions are held in some areas. St. Stephen’s Day, December 26, has become an extension of the Christmas celebration.

The Germanic influence has St. Nicholas as a bringer of both gifts and prosperity. The French influence is noted with Father Christmas resembling Père Noël, but he is accompanied by his friendly wife, not the unpleasant Père Fouettard who punishes unruly children in France. Elsewhere in Switzerland, children are visited by Father Christmas and his wife Lucy. A married Santa figure is still rather unusual, but the Swiss seem to be very happy with this gift-giving couple.

And then there’s Schmutzli, (the little dirty one) Samichlaus’s alter ego. He is a very ugly and strange-looking individual with a blacked out or concealed face, has red eyes and a black cap or cowl, who usually carries a broom of twigs for administering punishment to bad children. He is derived from the Perchtenalufen festivals of driving out demons that are held in Germany and alpine countries.

Over the years Schmutzli has evolved into a more kindly figure. In recent times, teenage boys would terrorize children, beating them with sticks and banging on their buses and have come to be known as “the teenage Schmutzlis”. This is because it was originally a custom observed by groups of boys, who wanted to defend the local girls from boys outside their village. Later, when the Catholic Church tried to civilize this rowdy custom, they did so by introducing St. Nicholas the Bishop. And Schmutzli became his companion.

The celebration of St. Nicholas Day goes back centuries. St. Nicholas of Myra was said to have shown particular kindness to children and became associated with the giving of gifts. (see Turkey). The St. Nicholas custom in Switzerland became interwoven with a festival of noise and masks dating back to pre-Christian times. Schmutzli was a symbol of the evil spirits which

these ancient festivals sought to drive out with a combination of noise and light. Winter processions involving loud noise and lanterns continue to this day in many parts of Switzerland.

In 1486 an illustration of Schmutzli depicts a demon who abducts children, just as Grýla of Iceland had. And there is yet one more alter-ego of Samichlaus...that of Sträggele, another child-stealing figure who is a native Swiss demon.

Chrabeli (Swiss Anise Crescent Cookies)

3 eggs	1 dash salt
1 ½ C sugar	1 ½ t anise seed
1 T kirsch (cherry brandy)	1 ⅓ C flour

In a large bowl, beat the eggs and sugar together with an electric mixer until thick and pale, about 10 minutes. Stir in the kirsch, salt, and anise seed. Use a sturdy spoon to stir in the flour. Add additional flour if needed to form a soft dough. Cover the dough with plastic wrap, and refrigerate overnight.

Divide the dough into two ½” thick ropes, and cut each rope into 2” long pieces. Place the pieces onto the prepared baking sheet, and cut three diagonal slits into one side of each piece. Bend the cookies to open the slits, flaring out the cuts. Cover loosely with a tea towel and allow to dry in a cool area for 24 hours.

Bake cookies at 325⁰ for 15 minutes on a greased baking sheet. They should not turn brown on top, and be only lightly colored on the bottom. Remove from oven, and let stand in cool place for 3 or 4 days. They will be rock hard at first, but will soften over time. Place the cookies in a cookie tin separated by sheets of waxed paper. Age 2-3 weeks to allow the flavor to mature.

Brunli

Makes about 50 cookies

5 oz sugar	1 pinch of salt
9 oz ground almonds	¼ t cinnamon
1 pinch of cloves	2 T cocoa powder
2 T flour	2 egg whites
3.5 oz bitter chocolate	2 t kirsch

Mix sugar, salt, almonds, cinnamon, cloves, cocoa powder and flour in a bowl. Add whites and stir until ingredients are evenly distributed. Cut chocolate in small pieces, pour hot water over the chocolate, let rest for about 5 minutes, then pour off all water except about half a tablespoon, stir until even. Now immediately proceed with the next step.

Add melted chocolate and kirsch, knead to a soft dough. Roll out dough on a flat surface (it may be slightly covered with sugar), approximately ½” thick. Put out different shapes and put them on a baking sheet covered with parchment.

Let them rest for about 5-6 hours or overnight in a dry place.

Bake for about 4-6 minutes in the center of 475° oven.

Swiss Fondue

This amount of sauce will serve 4 people **as the main course**. If you only intend to have fondue as part of a bigger meal, adjust the amounts accordingly.

1 clove garlic

¼ C kirsch

2 t cornstarch
shredded

about 1# Gruyère cheese,

About 1# Emmenthaler or Vacherin Fribourgeois cheese, shredded

1 piece of “spreadable” cheese, e.g. Laughing Cow

1 ¼ C Sauvignon Blanc

Rub the inside of the fondue pot with the garlic clove. Discard the garlic. (This optional step adds a little extra flavor to the sauce.)

Dissolve the cornstarch in the kirsch. Set aside.

Put the fondue pot on a medium-heat. Add the wine and cheeses.

Heat while stirring, until the cheeses melt. Add the kirsch and keep stirring until the sauce is smooth and bubbly. This takes about 20 minutes.

Now, set up your fondue pot stand and burner and transfer the pot to the stand. The burner flame (or tabletop cooker) should just be hot enough that the sauce stays how and just sort of seething on the surface. Any hotter and the cheese will burn on the bottom.

Only bread should be used for dipping!

FRANCE



Bonhomme Noël et le Père Fouettard

Père Noël, appears in a long red hooded robe edged with white fur. He carries gifts for the children of France in a basket or *hote* on his back. His mean-spirited alter-ego, **Père Fouettard**, left only switches for bad boys and girls.



Gift Giver:

Père Noël (Father Christmas)

Petit Noël (The Christ Child)

Père Fouettard (The Whipping Father)

Merry Christmas:

Joyeux Noel

French Origin Carol:

Angels We Have Heard on High

Il est né, le Divin Enfant (Born is Jesus, the Infant King)

French Cuisine:

Fois gras en cocotte

Oysters

Quince cheese

Dinde aux marrons (chestnut-stuffed turkey), Chapon (chicken)

Ganzeltopf (goose)

Bûche de Noël

Kouglof

Fougasse (Provençal bread)

Nougat noir au miel (honey)

Berauwecka (dried-fruit cake)

Thirteen Desserts. The thirteen desserts are the traditional Christmas dessert in the French region of Provence. The Christmas supper ends with 13 dessert items, representing Jesus Christ and the 12 apostles. The desserts are traditionally set out Christmas Eve and remain on the table three days until December 27.

History:

The word “Noël” comes from an expression meaning “day of birth,” and begins for most French on December 6, St. Nicholas’s Day. St. Nicholas’s Day is celebrated mostly in the provinces, particularly in Lorraine, as it is believed that the Virgin Mary gave Lorraine to Nicholas as a gift; he is their patron saint. He is also, of course, the patron saint of children. In Lorraine there is a procession honoring the saint in which the figures of three boys in salt barrels are carted through the streets. These figures stand as a reminder of one of the

Saint's more lurid miracles: bringing three murdered boys back to life.

Père Noël, or Father Christmas appears sometime after the late supper that follows Midnight Mass on December 25. Once this meal is finished, all the children line their shoes up near the fireplace. They hope that Père Noël can easily find them and fill them with candies and other treats. Traditionally, these shoes were "sabots", the wooden shoes of rural peasants. Today, however, any shoe will do as a convenient holder of sweets. In many provinces he can be seen walking in a long red robe with a basket of goodies on his back, accompanied by Père Fouettard who dresses in an ugly black or red robe and takes care of bad children by whipping them.

But Père Noël is only one of two gift givers in France. There is also Petit Noël. This is the Christ Child, and this figure is similar to the Christkind found in Austria. Petit Noël brings gifts to the children that live in the parts of France that Père Noël does not usually visit. In present day France, most children believe Jesus sends Père Noël in his place.

The religious symbols of Christmas have always been very important in France which is predominantly Catholic. The crèche, a nativity display which usually includes figures of the baby Jesus, Mary, Joseph, shepherds, and wise men in a stable, became popular hundreds of years ago. Some crèches contain santons (little saints) representing people in the Nativity. The santons came to France in the 1800s from Italy from Italian merchants. Parties are also held on the "Feast of the Kings," or Epiphany, in January, which ends the holiday season.

Christmas trees are present and decorated with glass, paper, or crocheted ornaments; a star, angel, or Père Noël is placed on top. Some families still use candles on their trees.

Flowers are also a must in French homes and adorn fireplaces, tables, and probably every other flat surface!

Reveillon (awakening) is the grand Christmas eve feast that takes place after midnight Mass. The feast may have as many as fifteen courses, ranging from soups, fruits, salads, meats, fish, and chicken to cheese, breads, nuts, pastry, candy—all with plenty of wine!

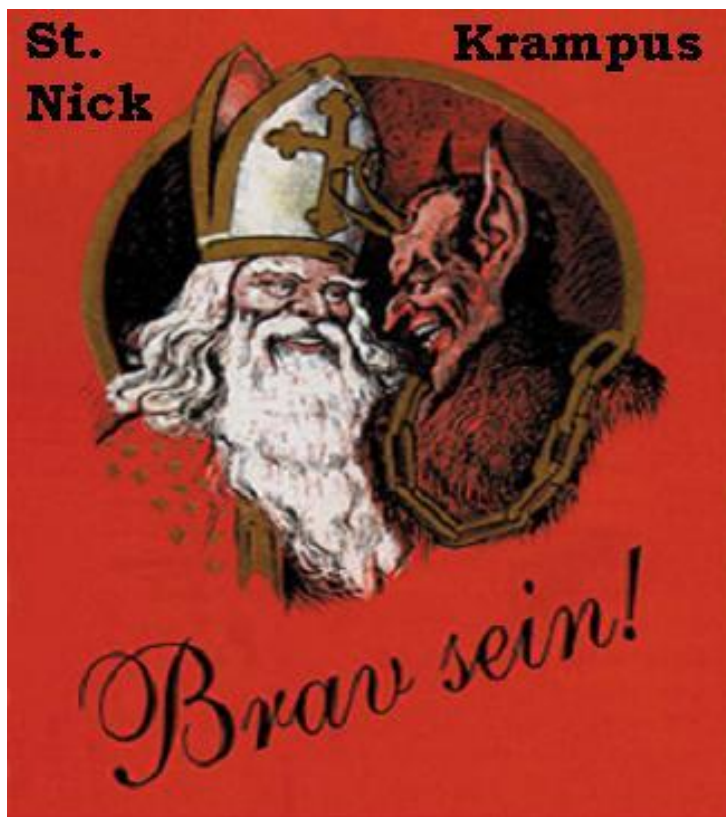
Bûche de Noël

Bûche de Noël is the French name for a Christmas cake shaped like a log. This one is a heavenly flourless chocolate cake rolled with chocolate whipped cream. Traditionally, it is decorated with confectioners' sugar to resemble snow on a Yule log.

2 cups heavy cream
½ C confectioners' sugar
½ C unsweetened cocoa powder
1 t vanilla
6 egg yolks
½ C white sugar
⅓ C unsweetened cocoa powder
1 ½ t vanilla
⅛ t salt
6 egg whites
¼ C white sugar
confectioners' sugar for dusting

1. Preheat oven to 375 degrees F. Line a 10x15 inch jellyroll pan with parchment paper. In a large bowl, whip cream, ½ C confectioners' sugar, ½ C cocoa, and 1 t vanilla until thick and stiff. Refrigerate.
2. In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat egg yolks with ½ C sugar until thick and pale. Blend in ⅓ C cocoa, 1 ½ t vanilla, and salt. In large glass bowl, using clean beaters, whip egg whites to soft peaks. Gradually add ¼ C sugar, and beat until whites form stiff peaks. Immediately fold the yolk mixture into the whites. Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan.
3. Bake for 12 to 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until the cake springs back when lightly touched. Dust a clean dishtowel with confectioners' sugar. Run a knife around the edge of the pan, and turn the warm cake out onto the towel. Remove and discard parchment paper. Starting at the short edge of the cake, roll the cake up with the towel. Cool for 30 minutes.
4. Unroll the cake, and spread the filling to within 1 inch of the edge. Roll the cake up with the filling inside. Place seam side down onto a serving plate, and refrigerate until serving. Dust with confectioners' sugar before serving.

AUSTRIA



SanterKlausen and Krampus

Gift Giver:

SanterKlausen/Heiliger Nikolaus
The Devil Himself (!) aka Krampus

Merry Christmas:

Froliche Weihnachten

Austrian Origin Carol:

Silent Night
Who's Knocking There? (Wer klopfet an?)
Shepherds, Up! (Hirten, auf um Mitternacht!)
Carol of the Children of Bethlehem

Austrian Cuisine:

Baked carp
Ham
Goose
Pastries
Boiled potatoes, carrots, cauliflower, cabbage
Rotkraut (red cabbage)
Servietten-knodel (dumplings)
Krapfen (donuts)
Povitica (sweet bread)
Sachertorte (chocolate-apricot cake)
Weihnachtsbaeckerei (Christmas sugar cookies)
Gluhwein (mulled wine)

The streets of Salzburg at Christmastime are filled with the scents of roasted almonds and chestnuts, hot spiced punch, baked apples, and gingerbread.

Heart-shaped Lebkuchen (gingerbread cookies) are popular in Germany and Austria, but they're not your usual gingerbread. Vary the spices in these cookies with ginger, anise, cloves, pimento, coriander, and cardamom.

History:

Silent Night (*Stille Nacht, heilige Nacht*) is a popular Austrian Christmas carol. The original lyrics of the song *Stille Nacht* were written in Oberndorf by the priest Father Joseph Mohr and the melody was composed by the Austrian headmaster Franz Xaver Gruber. In 1859, John Freeman Young (second Bishop, Episcopal Diocese of Florida) published the English translation that is most frequently sung today. The version of the melody that is generally sung today differs slightly (particularly in the final strain) from Gruber's original, which was a sprightly, dance-like tune, as opposed to the slow, meditative lullaby version generally sung today. The carol was first sung in the Nikolaus-Kirche (Church of St. Nicholas) in 1818. Mohr had composed the words two years earlier, in 1816, but on Christmas Eve had brought them to Gruber and asked him to compose a melody and guitar accompaniment for the church service.

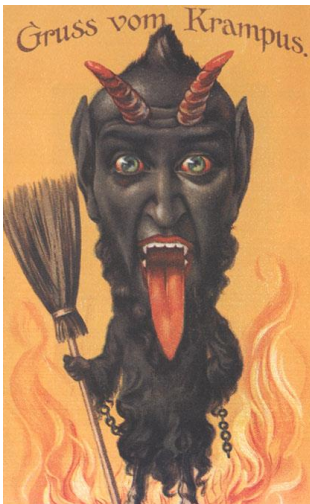
In his written account regarding the composition of the carols, Gruber gives no mention of the specific inspiration for creating the song. According to the song's history provided by Austria's Silent Night Society, one supposition is that the church organ was no longer working because the leather bellows used to pump the air through the pipes were riddled with holes, so Mohr and Gruber therefore created a song for accompaniment by guitar.

On December 6, the feast of St. Nicholas (Heiliger Nikolaus) marks the beginning of Christmas in Austria. The saint is accompanied by the devil aka Krampus, and asks children for a list of their good and bad deeds. Good children are given sweets, toys and nuts. Gifts that are placed under the tree are opened after dinner on Christmas Eve. On December 24, the Christ Child or Christkind brings presents and the Christmas tree for the children. The children wait until they hear a bell tinkling. Then they enter a special room where the Christmas tree is waiting all decorated with candles, ornaments and candies. The first Christmas tree is believed to have been put up in Austria in the eighth century by English monks.

Ahh Krampus! Entire books have been written about him and his alter egos known as Knecht Ruprecht, Père Fouettard, Hans Trapp, Black Peter, Klaubauf, Hans Muff, Butz and the bogeyman. He

appeared in the earliest legends as a demon from the dark and wooded areas of Austria. He has been traced back to ancient times, to pagan deities and fertility spirits who were associated with the winter solstice celebrations and who were said to prowl the countryside during the long, cold, dark nights. Later, it is believed that Protestants assigned him to St. Nickolas to be constantly reckoned with. They put him in a position of submission and subservience, confirming God's power over evil. Or maybe it all boils down to parents of olden times simply wanting to find a surrogate figure to scare the bejesus out of their ungovernable children. He is a goat-headed and legged creature who carries a wooden stick to whip and punish children who have been bad or do not do their homework. But St. Nicholas has never let Krampus use his awful stick. Instead, children who quickly promise to be good and to study hard receive a reward from St. Nicholas and be spared the wrath of Krampus.

On Christmas Eve, many enjoy music from the Turmblasen, a brass band that plays carols from church steeples or building towers. Both December 25 and 26 are legal holidays.



Springerle:

These cookies are traditional in Austria and in Southern Germany (Bavaria)

4 eggs
1 pound confectioners' sugar
2 teaspoons anise extract
4 1/4 cups sifted all-purpose flour
2 teaspoons baking powder

Directions

1. In a large bowl, beat eggs until light with an electric mixer on high speed. Reduce speed and add the anise extract and confectioners' sugar. Continue beating at medium speed until well combined. Sift together the flour and baking powder; stir into the egg mixture, dough will be quite stiff.
2. Roll out dough to 3/8 inch thickness. Imprint with a springerle board and cut apart. Place cookies onto a cookie sheet and let rest uncovered overnight.
3. Preheat oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Bake cookies for 7 to 10 minutes.

La Befana**ITALY****Babbo Natale**

Gift Giver:

La Befana/Babbo Natale

Merry Christmas:

Buon Natale

Italian Origin Carol:

From Starry Skies Descending

Carol of the Bagpipers

Herod Dead

Italian Cuisine:

Panettone

Tortellini

Pandoro

Panforte

Prosecco

Spumante

Ravioli

History:

Italy is the birthplace of the manger scene, or *presepio*, and it rightfully holds a place of distinction in the Italian Christmas. The *presepio* is filled with clay figures called *pastori* (which the French, as we have seen, call *santons*) All who come to the home kneel to pray or sing before the *presepio*.

In the days before Christmas, children visit homes and read Christmas selections, receiving a money reward. Over the twenty-four hours prior to Christmas Eve a strict fast is observed, followed by a great meal. A unique feature of this evening is the “urn of Fate,” a bowl filled with both presents and empty boxes. Each person picks to see whether he or she is “fated” to receive a gift—although no one ever really goes away empty-handed.

Italian children receive gifts twice during this season. The Christ Child is said to bring small gifts on Christmas Eve, but the more anticipated gift giving is from La Befana, who comes down the chimney of Epiphany Eve, on January 6.

Befana is an old woman who delivers gifts to children throughout Italy on Epiphany Eve in a similar way to St. Nicholas or Santa Claus. This Italian gift-giving spirit is also known as Saint Befana, La Vecchia (the Old Woman), and La Strega (The Witch). Some think the name comes from The Feast of Epiphany (La Festa dell'Epifania). There is also historical evidence to suggest that Befana is descended from the Roman goddess named Strina or the heathen goddess Strenia, who presided over the new-year's gifts. Her presents were the same as Befana's; honey, figs, and dates. Early Christians opposed her because those who worshipped her were noisy, riotous, and licentious. Befana predates Christianity and may originally be a goddess of ancestral spirits and forests. Also, she is identified with the wandering and nocturnal crone, Hekate.

Some believe that Befana is a custom from pagan worship, and that the word "Bastrina" refers to the offerings which used to be made to the goddess Strenia. According to Macaulay, "Christianity conquered paganism, but paganism infected Christianity; the rites of the Pantheon passed into her worship." Many pagan customs were adopted by the new church. The Saturnalia rituals were continued in both the Carnival and the Festival with offerings to the goddess Strenia.

Rather than the Three Wise Men as in Spain, it is La Befana who brings presents. According to legend, the three wise men stopped on their long journey to Bethlehem. They asked an old woman for food to eat and shelter in which to rest themselves before they continued their journey. But the old woman refused because she was too busy with her housework. So the wise men went on their way, both tired and hungry. A few hours later, the old woman had a change of heart. She tried to find the wise men but could not. The old woman is now called La Befana, which means Epiphany. She roams the earth searching for the Christ Child and carries presents in her apron. She wishes to make amends for turning away the wise men who were traveling to see the baby Jesus. This is why, dressed as a fairy queen, La Befana brings gifts to good children and also brings bags of ashes or coal for bad children. She is also depicted as an old witch. Another legend is a bit more dark. Befana was an ordinary woman with a child whom she greatly loved. However, her child died, and

her grief drove her mad. Upon hearing news of Jesus being born, she set out to see him, delusional that he was her son. She eventually met Jesus and presented him with gifts to make him happy. The infant was delighted, and he gave La Befana a gift in return; she would be the mother of every child in Italy.

Also, a popular tradition tells that if one sees La Befana one will receive a thump from her broomstick, as she doesn't wish to be seen. This aspect of the tradition may be designed to keep children in their beds while parents are distributing candy or coal and sweeping the floor on Epiphany Eve.

Befana Day falls on January 6 and it is a day of airs all over the country, especially in Rome.

The ceppo is an Italian version of the Christmas tree. Made of wood, the ceppo gives the appearance of a ladder, with shelves linking two sides. The bottom shelf always contains a presepio; other shelves contain gifts and decorations.

As part of an older tradition, shepherds often come in from neighboring villages to play their horns and bagpipes before all the holy shrines, and before carpenter's shops, in honor of Joseph. Women dress as La Befana to collect for charities like the Red Cross.

Babbo Natale, or Father Christmas is gaining popularity in Italy. Babbo Natale, Italy's version of Santa Claus, is becoming more popular and gift giving on Christmas day is becoming more common. La Befana who delivers gifts on Epiphany, January 6 is still the more popular Christmas figure. He is a regal looking version of Santa Claus. They both wear red cloaks with white trim. Historically, Christmas has been more reserved in Italy than in other European countries and certainly more reserved than the raucous month long Christmas season enjoyed in the US. Many Italians now hang Christmas stockings for Babbo Natale to fill.

Panforte:

Traditionally Panforte is baked in a round pan that has been lined with communion wafers which seems to indicate a religious connection. History does tell us that Panforte dates from the 12th century and although stories differ, most agree that Nuns were the first to make this delicious bread (hence the use of wafers) Now we can use a good substitute...edible rice paper, which is available at most Asian markets.

3 oz chocolate

1 C each toasted and coarsely chopped hazelnuts and almonds

1 C candied citrus (citron, lemon, orange peel)

1 t cinnamon ¼ t allspice

½ C flour 1 T cocoa powder

⅔ C sugar ⅔ C honey

Butter and line with parchment paper an 8" tart pan or edible rice paper.

Melt chocolate in stainless steel bowl placed over a pan of simmering water. Set aside. Then in a large bowl combine the nuts, candied fruit, spices, flour, and cocoa powder.

In a saucepan, stir together sugar and honey. Place saucepan over medium heat and bring to a boil, stirring until sugar has dissolved. Continue to boil mixture without stirring, until thermometer reaches soft ball stage, 240°.

Remove from heat and stir the sugar/honey syrup and the melted chocolate in nut and fruit mix. The mixture will stiffen quickly so once combined, transfer to the prepared pan. With damp hands, or the back of spoon or offset spatula, evenly spread Panforte, smoothing the top.

Bake in 300° for about 30-35 minutes until top has blisters.

Remove from oven and place on wire rack. While still warm, remove the sides of pan and heavily dust the top of the cake with powdered sugar. Gently rub the sugar into the cake.

Once cooled, wrap tightly in plastic wrap and store in cool, dry place...will keep for several months.

SPAIN



Olentzero



Los Reyes Magos

Gift Givers:

Los Reyes Magos: Melchior, Gaspar, Balthasar
 Papa Noel
 Olentzero
 Morocco/Liberia: Black Peter...

Merry Christmas:

Feliz Navidad

Spanish Origin Carols:

Fum, Fum, Fum (“fum” imitates the sound of a drum or the strumming of a guitar)
 A La Nanita Nana

Spanish Cuisine:

La Noche Buena (“The Good Night” - Christmas Eve)
 Ham, cheese, chorizo sausages
 Roast lamb
 Large Prawns
 Fish Soup
 White asparagus with oil and vinegar
 Home fried potatoes – a *must!*
 Turrón – Spanish almond candy
 Mantecados – Spanish crumble cookies

History:

Olentzero is a Basque Christmas tradition that has many variations. One common version is that Olentzero is one of a mythological race of Basque giants living in the Pyrenees. These giants observed a glowing cloud in the sky one day. None of them could look at this bright cloud except for a very old, nearly blind man. When asked to examine it, he confirmed their fears and told them that it was a sign that Jesus will be born soon. According to some stories, the old man asked the giants to throw him off a cliff to avoid having to live through Christianization. Having obliged him, the giants tripped on the way down and died themselves except Olentzero. Other versions have the giants simply leaving, with only Olentzero remaining

behind to embrace Christianity. Parts of Olentzero legend remind one of prehistoric cult rituals surrounding the winter solstice, such as the involvement of ritual "last meals" and sacrifices of rebirth. (Refer to Romania).

Another version has Olentzero being adopted by a fairy who gave him his name. It is said that he died one day saving children from a burning house and that when he died, the fairy granted him eternal life to continue to bring joy to children and people. In different areas of northern Spain one can find slightly different accounts of what Olentzero does. According to Basque traditions Olentzero comes to town late at night on December 24th to drop off presents for children. One has children coming home early. An adult would then dress up as Olentzero and scare the children still out on the streets with a sickle. Another has him suspended from a rope from a window, dressed in a straw mantle like a scarecrow. If children did not want to go to bed, a sickle would be thrown down the chimney and the children told that Olentzero would come to cut their throats if they didn't go to bed. Sickles and throat cutting were the main themes.

The name Olentzero appears in a number of variations: Onenzaro, Onentzaro, Olentzaro, Ononzaro, Orentzago and others. The earliest records give the name as Onentzaro and the name is most likely composed of two elements, on "good" plus a -zaro which in Basque denotes a season (compare words like *haurtzaro* "childhood"), so "time of the good ones" literally.

The origin of Onentzaro corresponds to the old feast of the winter solstice and is older than that of Christmas (which historically replaced the festival of Sol Invictus in 380 under Theodosius in the Roman Empire).

Other theories of derivation exist but are not generally accepted. Around 1952, after the darkest years of the Franco dictatorship a revival of the Olentzero traditions began. Only this time some of the more gruesome elements were removed to make Olentzero more suitable for young children and to remove elements were deemed too pagan. He is now depicted as a loveable character, widely attributed to being overweight, having a huge appetite and thirst. He is depicted as a Basque peasant wearing a Basque beret, a farmer's

attire with traditional abarketa (leather) shoes and smoking a pipe. In areas near the sea, he takes on more marine attributes. On Christmas Eve they parade his effigy around on a chair through the streets, singing carols and collecting food or sweets...kind of like our “treat or treat”...

Spain is one of the countries that traditionally does not recognize Santa Claus as a jolly elf who bears gifts, although children do look forward to receiving gifts. They have several religious festivals that have been part of the tradition for hundreds of years. They include the Feast of the Immaculate Conception (December 8), Feast of the Holy Innocents (December 28), and the Feast of the Epiphany (January 6).

They also consider one of the most important stories to be that of the Wise Men’s arrival on Epiphany (Melchior, Gaspar, Balthasar). Food is left for the horses or donkeys in their shoes and in the morning the straw and carrots is replaced with gifts.

Papa Noel arrives by sleigh on December 24 and leaves treats and gifts, followed by the three wise men (or kings).

Many of the Spanish-speaking cultures follow these traditions with slight variations.

Mantecados:

These cookies crumble very easily and will literally melt in your mouth! Light and with a delicate anise flavor, it's easy to see why no Spanish home is without them at Christmas!

2 ¼ C shortening	1 C oil
1 ⅔ C sugar	4 egg yolks
2 shots of anise liqueur	1 lemon peel, grated
Juice from one lemon	½ t cinnamon
7 ¼ C flour	½ t baking soda
1 egg white, beaten for glaze	

In large mixing bowl, use mixer to whip the shortening with the oil. Add sugar and mix 'til smooth. Add yolks, anise, peel, juice and cinnamon and mix together. Add flour and baking soda to mix, a cup at a time. Mix very well. Dough should be very smooth and soft.

Preheat oven 325°. Using a teaspoon, scoop out a dollop of dough. Form balls about the size of walnuts using your hands. If dough is too sticky to roll into balls, mix in additional flour (¼ - ½ C). place balls onto ungreased cookie sheet. Lightly press balls down slightly. Using beaten egg white, brush on top of each cookie. Bake cookies until they begin to turn light brown on the bottom edges for 15-20 minutes.

Let the cookies cool 5 minutes before removing from the cookie sheet, as they are very delicate.

PORTUGAL:



Portuguese Christmas Card

Gift Giver:

Pai Natal (Father Christmas)
 Baby Jesus as Pai Natal's helper

Merry Christmas:

Feliz Natal/Boas Festas

Portuguese Origin Carol:

Cantor Dos Reis

The **Janeiras**, *Janeiras sing* or chant the Kings "is a tradition in Portugal which is the singing of songs in the streets by groups of people announcing the birth of Jesus, and wishing a happy new year. These groups go door to door, asking residents for the remains of the Christmas festivities. Today, these 'leftovers' often translate into money. Janeiras typically occurs in January, starting on day 1 and lasting until day 6, Epiphany. Today, many groups (especially city dwellers) prolong the Cantar de Janeiro during the entire month.

Portuguese Cuisine:

Boiled cod fish

Turkey for lunch

Portuguese sprouts (in olive oil)

Rice pudding with cinnamon

Rabanadas (similar to French toast)

Filhoses (fried desserts)

Broas de Mel (pastries made with honey)

Sonhos (pumpkin fritters)

Azevias (round cakes made of a crust filled with a mixture of chickpeas, orange peel, sugar)

Aletria (a sweet vermicelli with eggs)

Bolo Rei (King's Cake) a wreath-like very rich fruit cake laced with crystallized fruits and pine nuts. There is a little present inside the cake and a broadbean. Whoever finds the broadbean must pay for the next King's Cake.

The have a feast known as the consoada which is the reunion of family and takes place on December 24 as they wait for the coming of Father Christmas at midnight. There are families who reserve an empty place for the persons who died, but it doesn't happen very often.

The Portuguese “Christmas log,” or cepto de Natal, is a piece of oak that burns on the hearth all through the day while people enjoy a lingering consoada, the traditional Christmas dinner.

History:

There are discrepancies in Portugal as to when Christmas is celebrated and from whom the gifts are received. Some, as in Spain, believe the Three Kings bring the gifts and don’t recognize a “Santa Claus”. Others say that there is a Pai Natal, a Father Christmas in a red suit, who brings the gifts. Regardless, as with all Spanish speaking countries, as well as in Italy, the holiday revolves around the religious significance...presents are a modern bonus!

Children put their shoes near the fireplace as a receptacle for the presents or at a window, depending on whose rendition you are reading. Some families will open the presents (that are displayed around the Christmas tree) on Christmas Eve around midnight. Others open them in the morning of the 25th, Christmas Day. Some families put one shoe ("sapatinho") of each child next to the chimney (since most of the kitchens in Portugal have one) or next to the fireplace instead of a stocking.

Parents tell the children that it is the baby Jesus who helps Santa with presents, not the Three Wise Men...again...depends on the writer! The Christmas Feast of the Immaculate Conception and the Feast of the Holy Innocents do not involve the sharing of gifts.

As in Italy, the family sets up a nativity scene called Presépio, with Mary, Joseph, the cow and the donkey, the three wise men, and many other figures. The figure of the Christ Child is added to the scene after the family attends Midnight Mass or after midnight. At midnight, there are also families who attend church for a special Midnight Mass called Missa do Galo or Rooster’s Mass. It is believed that the only time a rooster crowed at midnight is when Jesus was born.

Everyone has a Christmas tree as well; the typical colors are gold, red and green.

Portuguese Aletria:

8 cups of milk (1/2 gallon)	6 eggs
1 1/2 C sugar	1 t salt
1, 12 oz pkg fine egg noodles	1 t vanilla

Pour milk into a large pan. Bring it to a boil, stirring constantly. Add 1/2 of the sugar and the salt to the milk. Beat the eggs then add the rest of the sugar and all the vanilla to the egg mixture. Slowly blend some heated milk into the eggs to make them thin enough to pour easily. Break the noodles up and add them to the boiling milk. Stir constantly until the noodles are cooked. Remove from the heat. Slowly add egg mixture into the cooked noodles mixture. Pour onto platters to cool. Sprinkle with cinnamon.

Portuguese Christmas Sweet Chickpea Pockets: (Azevias)

They melt in your mouth makes 25-28 pockets

Dough:

2 C flour	1/2 C cold butter
1 egg	pinch of salt
a bit of water, if needed to knead the dough	

Filling:

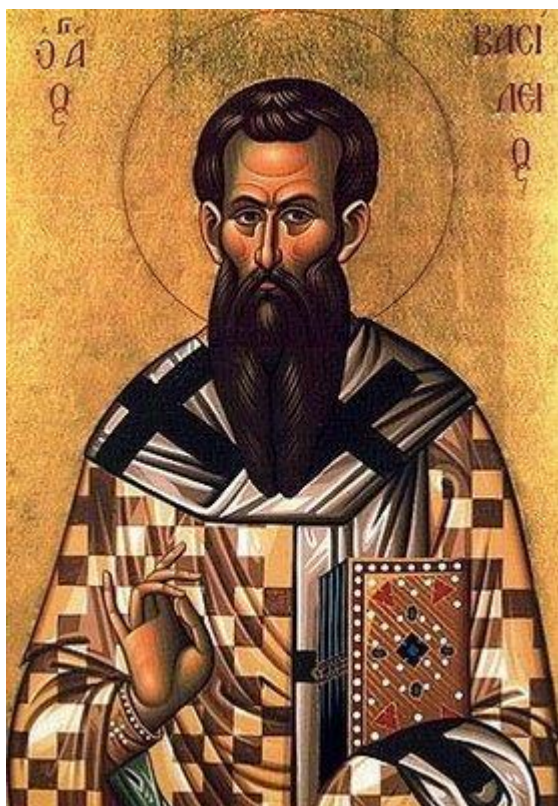
1 C chickpeas (canned)	1/2 C sugar
zest from 1 lemon or 1/2 orange	pinch of cinnamon
2 egg yolks	1 handful ground almonds
oil to fry	powdered sugar to sprinkle

Peel chickpeas and throw away the fine film.

Knead all the dough ingredients together. You may need a little bit of water to make your dough elastic but it is optional.. Some recipes require the use of lard. If you have nothing against this kind of fat you should do your azevias with lard exactly, because it is the most traditional and typical way. Set the dough in the fridge until you are finished with the filling.

Blend "naked" chickpeas with lemon zest, sugar, cinnamon (and optional almonds) and yolks. If needed, add some water. If you want to taste chickpeas and not necessarily cinnamon, add two times more lemon zest.

GREECE



Agios Vassilis

Gift Giver:
Agios Vassilis

Merry Christmas:

Eftihismena Christougenna

Kala Xristouyenna (kah-LA kree-STOU-yeh-na)

Greek Origin Carol:

Kalin Esperan Arhontes (Good Evening Noble Men)

Kalandas, or calandas, are traditional Greek Christmas carols, sung by wandering groups of children who go from house to house hoping for a coin or something to eat in exchange for their holiday song.

The word *calanda* stems from the Latin *calenda*, which translates as "the beginning of the month." It is believed that the history of caroling goes deep into the past and connects with ancient Greece. In fact, they have even found carols written in those distant past days which are similar to the ones sung today. In ancient times the word for carols was *Eiresioni*, and children of that era held an effigy of a ship which depicted the arrival of the god Dionysus. Other times they held an olive or laurel branch decorated with red and white threads, on which they would tie the offerings of the homeowners.

Greek Cuisine:

Roast Pork

Turkey stuffed with chestnuts

Lamb and pork are roasted in ovens and open spits

Loaves of 'christopsomo' ('Christ bread'). This bread is usually made in large sweet loaves of various shapes and the crusts are engraved and decorated in some way that reflects the family's profession.

Melomakarona Cookies

Karythopita Walnut spice Cake

Baklava

History:

Santa Claus in Greece is not the same person. According to the Greek tradition, the equivalent of the Western Santa Claus is either Agios Vassilis or Vassilios, (St. Basil), who comes from Caesarea in Asia Minor. The story of St. Basil is quite similar to the one of St. Nicholas; he was a kind-hearted and helpful man who was aiding the needy and poor while he was a bishop in Caesarea.

Agios Vassilis was far from chubby though; he was a tall, thin man with a black beard and black piercing eyes. He died on January 1st 379

AD and the Greek Orthodox Church celebrates his memory on this day. This is why in Greece Agios Vassilis brings gifts on New Year's Eve and not at Christmas, as it happens elsewhere in the world.

According to the Greek tradition, the Greek Santa Claus was associated with bringing practical aid to the poor, so he was considered as someone who brings "gifts". For the Greeks in Asia Minor, Agios Vassilis was something like the European Santa Claus.

It is not exactly clear how St Basil became the Greek Santa Claus, but the predominant version of the story is that the Greeks of Turkey and Asia Minor brought the legend with them when forced to leave their homeland and move to Greece. This is why the main sweet bread of the New Year's Eve in Greece bears his name: Vassilopita.

Since then, the Greek name of Santa Claus is Agios Vassilis, and all Greeks, children and adults, expect him to come on New Year's Eve and leave gifts under the Christmas Tree.

Goblins (*kallikantzari* in Greek) are creatures like small devils (Yule Lads), are half-animal, half-human monsters, black, hairy, with huge heads, glaring red eyes, goats' or asses' ears, blood-red tongues hanging out, ferocious tusks, monkeys' arms, long curved nails and usually have the foot of some kind of animal. They live in a cave in the earth and chop down the tree which supports the earth so that the world disappears. Every Christmas they get to the earth's surface to tease people and play havoc by slipping into people's home through the chimney. During this time the tree "recovers". The goblins break into homes and steal food, candies and cause messes all around the house by turning over furniture, and ruin the food and water. In order to prevent them from entering, people leave the fireplace full of wood or a Yule Log or *skakantzalos* so that the fire doesn't stop burning...goblins are very afraid of fire. The Greeks might also burn old shoes because the goblins don't like the odor or they may give a peace offering by leaving sausages or pork-bones. This fire will burn until January 6th, or Epiphany ("Blessing of the Waters"), the goblins move back to their dwellings.

They are believed to become vampires temporarily during their lifetime. Children born on Christmas are thought to have this objectionable characteristic of *Kallikantzaroi* because their mothers had them at a time sacred to the Mother of God.

They are connected to the winter festival of Dionysus and are still to be found in Greece at Christmastide. They are also thought to have a connection with the departed; they appear to be related to the Greek and Slavonic vampire. However, they are more closely related to the werewolf. “Man-wolves” is the name given to the Kallikantzaroi in southern Greece, derived from two Turkish words meaning “black” and “werewolf.” The connection between Christmas and werewolves is not confined to Greece. North and east of Germany and in Livonia and Poland werewolves are believed to be stalking during this season.

Christians take precautions against the Kallikantzaroi by marking the house-door with a black cross on Christmas Eve, burning of incense and calling out to the Trinity.



Mama Katy's Melomakarona (Honey-Spice Cookies)

Orange and lemon zest provide subtle perfume and flavor for these honey-soaked cookies, pronounced mel-oh-muh-KAIR-roh-nah.

MAKE AHEAD: The cookies can be stored for several weeks, preferably placed in small paper baking cups, in an airtight container. Makes about 80 cookies

Ingredients:

For the dough

- 2 cups vegetable oil
- 1 cup sugar
- 1/2 cup cognac
- 1/4 cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon finely grated orange zest
- 1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
- 6 to 7 cups flour, or as needed
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- Pinch ground cloves

For the syrup

- 2 cups honey
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups water

For assembly

- 1 1/2 cups finely crushed walnuts
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon

Directions:

For the dough: Position oven racks in the upper and lower thirds of the oven; preheat to 350 degrees. Line 2 or 3 large baking sheets with parchment paper.

For the dough: Combine the oil, sugar, cognac, orange juice and citrus zests in the bowl of a stand mixer or hand-held electric mixer; beat on medium speed to dissolve the sugar.

Sift together the flour, baking soda, baking powder, cinnamon and cloves on a large piece of wax paper. Reduce the mixer speed to low and slowly add the flour mixture to the bowl until a very soft dough forms.

Remove the bowl from the mixer. Use a wooden spoon or spatula to mix in flour as needed until the dough is quite stiff; you should be able to take pinches of it and roll them into walnut-size balls. The balls can be smooth or coarsely shaped. Place them 1 inch apart on the baking sheets.

Bake 2 sheets at a time for a total of 25 minutes; about halfway through the baking, rotate the sheets top to bottom and front to back. The cookies will be barely browned and firm to the touch. Keep them on their baking sheets. Repeat to use all the dough.

For the syrup: Combine the honey, sugar and water in a large saucepan over high heat. Bring to a boil, stirring until the sugar has dissolved, then cook for 5 minutes, using a slotted spoon to skim off and discard the foam that forms on the top. Cook for a few minutes; the syrup will thicken slightly and deepen in color. Reduce the heat to the lowest possible setting to keep the syrup warm.

For assembly: Place a wire rack on a baking sheet. Lay a large piece of wax paper on the counter for the finished cookies. Spread the crushed walnuts on a large shallow plate and sprinkle with the cinnamon, stirring to combine.

Place 6 or 7 of the cookies at a time in the saucepan; allow them to sit long enough (2 to 3 minutes) to absorb some of the syrup, turning them as needed to coat evenly. Use a slotted spoon to transfer the cookies to the rack for a minute or two, then transfer them to the walnut mixture; roll to coat evenly, then transfer to the wax paper to cool completely. Repeat to coat all the cookies; place the cookies in small paper baking cups. If desired, sprinkle any remaining nut mixture on top of the cookies.

POLAND



Swiety Mikolaj

Gift Giver:

Święty Mikołaj (SHFYEN-tih mee-KAW-why)
Gwiazdor (Gvyaz-dor)

Merry Christmas:

Boże Narodzenie (BAW-zeh nah-raw-DZEH-nyeh) literally
means God's birth or divine birth

Polish Origin Carol:

Kolędy (Christmas songs)
W Złobie Leży (Infant Holy, Infant Lowly)
Przybieżeli do Betleem Pasterze (Shepherds, Come A-Running)

Polish Cuisine:

Potatoes
Fish (carp)
Dumplings
Oats
Sauerkraut
Cider

History:

Christmas traditions developed slowly over the centuries, beginning in ancient times; combining old pagan customs with the religious one introduced after the Christianization of Poland by the Catholic Church. Local traditions, various folk cultures were woven into the holiday as well.

Gwiazdor is the name of the Christmas gift-giver especially in the western region of Wielkopolska, patterned on Germany's Weihnachtsmann, a secularized Father Christmas. Gwiazdor comes on December 24th with the first star in the sky. It is also known as the Star of Bethlehem. Its sighting—or, at any rate, the sighting of the first star seen on Christmas Eve--marks the end of Advent and of fasting.

Święty Mikołaj or St. Nicholas, the kindly bishop who visits kids on his feast day, December 6, quizzes them on their prayers and good

deeds and rewards them with treats and toys. They also receive gifts on Christmas Day.

During the Christmas season, the letters C, M, and B are the most important in Poland. (but are these the letters in Polish???) Representing the initials of the Three Wise Men (Casper, Melchior, and Balthazar), the letters are painted on the doors of homes along with three crosses in hopes of insuring a good year.

Although Christmas is officially known as Boze Narodzenie, it is commonly referred to as Gwiazdory, meaning “little star” and during Advent, Gwiazdory, or star carriers, walk through the streets singing carols.

The midnight mass in Poland is called Pasterka, the Mass of the Shepherds. It is believed that on this night the animals bow in reverence and receive the power to speak.

On Christmas Eve, known as Wigilia, the feast begins, and celebratory rice wafers called oplatki (into which a holy picture is pressed) are shared among family and friends. The Wigilia supper consists of 12 courses, one for each Apostle, but there is no meat, and an extra place at the table is always set in case a Holy visitor should appear. The meal is served on a table covered in white cloth and spread with hay and a lit candle is left at the place of absent family members. Leftovers are left on the table until morning to make the home welcome to any visiting souls. Lithuania also shares this tradition. Later, the Star Man arrives at each house and leaves gifts for everyone.

Swiety Mikolaj comes calling on homes on December 5 in **Czechoslovakia**. He has two assistants—an angel and a devil. The angel leaves fruit and sweets for the well-behaved children, while the devil hands out coal and potatoes for those who have been naughty.

As in both Poland and Lithuania there is no meat. They also serve two staple sweets called vanocka, a sweetbread containing raisins, and vosi hnizda, or wasps’ nests, which are biscuits made with nut-filled dough and rum.

Czech Carol: Come All Ye Shepherds: Nesem vám noviny

Yugoslavia: Deda Mraz...Cestitamo Bozic

Croatia: Bozicnjak...Sretan Bozic

Bulgaria: Diado Coleda...Vessela Koleda

Estonia: Jouluvana...Haid Joule, Rôômsaid Jôule



Gwiazdor, The Star Man

Piernik - Honey Cake

Set oven temperature to 350°F and preheat.

Grease three loaf pans.

Pour into saucepan:

1 C honey	1 C strong coffee
1 C canola oil	1 t cinnamon
1 teaspoon ground cloves	1 teaspoon ground nutmeg

Mix together and bring to a boil. Then set aside and allow to cool down to a warm temperature.

In a mixing bowl, beat 3 large eggs with 1 cup (240ml) of brown sugar and 3 teaspoons (15ml) of baking powder.

Slowly add the warm liquid to the beaten eggs, mixing at slow speed. Add 4 cups (950ml) of plain white flour (NOT self-raising), and mix thoroughly.

Pour the final mixture into the loaf pans and bake for 45 to 55 minutes, until an inserted toothpick comes out clean.

Remove pans from oven and allow to cool for 15 minutes.

Cut each loaf into 3 layers, spread jam (strawberry, raspberry or apricot) and then reassemble.

Prepare **chocolate frosting** as follows:

Place into saucepan

2½ oz semi-sweet chocolate	3 oz unsalted butter
½ C water	1 C sugar
½ teaspoon vanilla	

Stir the chocolate, butter, vanilla and water together, gradually adding sugar. Bring it slowly to a boil, stirring constantly. Let it boil for 5 minutes.

Let it cool until it becomes a thick mass, easily spreadable with a knife.

Place cakes with flat side down and spread chocolate frosting evenly on top and sides.

Cool completely in refrigerator, until the frosting is hard.

Wrap in aluminum foil, then in plastic. May be stored in refrigerator, or cold place for four weeks before serving.

ROMANIA



Mos Craciun

Gift Giver:

Mos Craciun

Merry Christmas:

Crăciun Fericit (kra-choon ferri cheet)

Sarbatori vesele

Romanian Origin Carol:

Star Carol

Oh, What Wondrous Tidings (O, ce veste minunata)

Three Wise Men Coming from the East (Trei Crai de la rasarit)

Romanian Cuisine:

In general, pork is most popular along with animal's organs, fat and blood. Nothing is wasted!

Tuica (plum brandy), Red Wine

Cozonac (sweet bread)

Colaci de Craciun (knot-shaped Christmas bread)

Baked apples

Sarmale-cabbage rolls with pork

Peasant soup with smoked pork

Sour soup with meatballs

History:

In Romania, Christmas and mid-winter celebrations last from December 20th to January 7th. The 20th is when people in Romania celebrate St. Ignatius's Day. It is traditional that if the family keeps pigs, one is killed on this day. The meat from the pig is used in the Christmas meals.

The Christmas celebrations really begin on Christmas Eve, 24th, when it's time to decorate the Christmas tree. This is done in the evening of Christmas Eve. It is called Ajunul Craciunului. Carol singing is known as Colindatul and is a very popular part of Christmas. On Christmas Eve children go out carol singing from house to house performing to the adults in the houses. They normally dance as well. The children get sweets, fruit, traditional cakes called "cozonaci" and sometimes money for singing well.

A traditional Romanian Carol is the Star Carol. The star is on a pole and made of colored paper, often decorated with tinsel, silver foil and sometimes bells. (the Polish Star Man). In the middle of the star is a picture of baby Jesus or a nativity scene. Carol singers take the star with them when they go carol singing.

In many parts of Romania, it's also traditional that someone dresses up as a goat, (there's that goat again!) with a multicolored mask, and goes around with the carol singers. The goat is known as the "Capra" and it jumps and dances around getting up to lots of mischief! The goat has much symbolism in the Slavic, Eastern Bloc of countries as well as the northern tier of Europe and Scandinavia. (Refer to Greenland.)

There were two brothers who dwell in a pastoral village in Romania, Santa Eve (Mos Ajun) and Santa Claus (Mos Craciun). In Romanian culture, Old Christmas (Mos Craciun) appears as a character with two kinds of features; he has miraculous powers as the heroes and gods from the fairy-tales, but he also has typically human qualities. He is old, rich, and has a long beard – as long as he is generous. "He was born before all Saints", being "greater above shepherds from the village where Jesus was born". In Romania, **Mos Craciun appears on a white horse**, as a sign of the first snow, and he protects the Sun, so the people won't be deprived of light and warmth. (pagan belief) He brings the presents. Mos Ajun was the alter-ego figure, the stingy one, the heartless one. Santa Claus is identified with the pagan Roman god, Saturn, and the Iranian god, Mithra, both having miraculous powers. Smaller villages in Romania differentiate between ancient pagan rituals with Christian beliefs without trying to blend or merge the two. These ancient pagan rituals are meant to purify the space through lighting a fire and putting on the lights and having a log burnt on the hearth of December 24th. These rituals symbolize the Divinity's death and rebirth of the year to come.

New Year's Eve is also an important celebration. It is sometimes called Little Christmas. Traditionally a small, decorated plough called a "Plugusorul" is paraded through the streets on New Year's Eve. It is meant to help have good crops for the following year.

Romanian Sour Soup with Meatballs

3 liters water	3 carrots
2 parsley roots	¼ celery root
2 onions	2 T tomato paste
Salt	200 ml sour cream
2 egg yolks	fresh parsley
Celery leaves	lemon juice
2 T white rice	½ kg ground meat
1 egg	salt and pepper
Parsley	Breadcrumbs

Mix last 6 ingredients for meatballs...on the small side.

Fry chopped onion in oil. Add the chopped, onion, carrot, parsley and celery root. Add the water, salt and leave to boil for 15 minutes. Then add the meatballs to the soup, one by one, and simmer until the meatballs rise – about 30-45 minutes.

This step is optional: in a separate bowl, mix 2 egg yolks with the sour cream. Add the egg/sour cream mix into the soup. To season the soup add fresh lemon juice, adjusting to taste. Add the chopped parsley and celery. Serve with sour cream.

RUSSIA



Ded Moroz or Grandfather Frost

Gift Giver:

Grandfather Frost or Ded Moroz (Дед Мороз) (pronounced dead morose)

Babouschka

Snow Maiden (Snegoorochka) (Kolyada)

Merry Christmas:

Hristos Razdajetsja (Cristos vos diet see-yah)

Russian Origin Carol:

Carol of the Little Russian Children (based on a 16th century Russian Carol)

Father Frost (Moroz-Moroz) Carol

Snow Maiden (Snegoorochka) Carol

Russian Cuisine:

Christmas dinner is meatless.

Kutya: porridge made from wheatberries

Sauerkraut soup

Bowl of honey

Baked cod

Apricots, oranges, figs, dates

Nuts

Kidney beans

Parsley potatoes

Bobal'ki (small biscuits combined with sauerkraut or poppyseeds with honey)

History:

St. Nicholas has long been a very popular figure in Russia during the Christmas season. A legend exists about Prince Vladimir who went to Constantinople in the 11th century to be baptized. He was impressed by the deeds of St. Nicholas of Myra and brought many stories of the saint's miracles and teachings back to Russia. St. Nicholas was well loved in Russia, and many people have traditionally named their sons Nicholas after the saint.

After the Russian Revolution of 1917, all religious figures were suppressed, including St. Nicholay. (Nikolay), however his character

went underground and re-emerged as Grandfather Frost. He often resembles Santa Claus, although he tends to be thin and a little somber. The Communist regime also wanted to distance this gift giver from the western image so they typically portrayed him wearing a coat of blue rather than red, a rounded Russian cap trimmed with fur, and his blue coat was heavily embroidered. He carries a staff and has a long white beard. He arrives with three horses on New Year's Eve, not on Christmas Eve. He is accompanied by the Snow Maiden, his granddaughter.

Ded Moroz (Дед Мороз), whose origins come from pagan beliefs, was a wicked and cruel sorcerer who would kidnap children in exchange for a ransom, and freeze people who annoyed him. To circumvent the Communist law, Russians re-invented a New Year Новый Год (Novyi god) holiday tradition, with a decorated Christmas tree and Дед Мороз, who took the appearance close to the western Santa Claus. He changed his bad habits to become a decent grandfather that brings presents to children.

Another figure is Kolyada, a name that means "Christmas". She wears a white robe and went from house to house in a sleigh on Christmas Eve. She and her attendants would sing Christmas carols and receive small gifts and treats.

Yet another gift-giver was called Babouschka who is much like the Italian La Befana. Babouschka means simply "grandmother". She is an old woman who refused food and shelter to the three wise men while they were on their way to Bethlehem. Babouschka now travels the countryside looking for the wise men and brings gifts of food and treats to Russian children on January 5, the Eve of the Epiphany. Babouschka was also forgotten after the Russian Revolution, but since the politics have changed, she is making a comeback.

Kolyada is a Slavic holiday. It is both a person and the name of the holiday, "Christmas". According to the pagan tradition, Christmas-tide, that is two weeks of winter folk feast, comes the day after Christmas and lasts till January, 6, the day of Epiphany. In these 12 days, people, being afraid of any calamity or misfortune, used to not work at all. During the Christmas-tide period Slavs greet so-called Kolyada, the celebration of a new-born Son. On the night of Kolyada,

people organize bonfires, do special folk dancing, sing traditional and holiday songs - "Yule-songs", slip down snow slopes in trays, on sledges and skates. But most of all they like to disguise themselves. Evenings and nights mummers visit houses and wish good luck to hosts. According to this ancient tradition, those who meet Kolyada will be happy in the New Year.

The most cheerful part of this holiday is presenting gifts. A very long time ago in Russia gifts were brought by the beautiful girl in white - "Коляда", "Kolyada", later this mission was entrusted to Saint Nikolay who then turned into Grandfather Frost.

Girls and young women eagerly anticipate Christmas-tide because this is the best time to tell fortunes! The most mysterious one is fortune-telling with mirrors. In a dark room with only one lit candle, a girl who wants to know her fortune places two mirrors on the table, one in front of the other (a smaller one and a bigger one). It is believed that at midnight she is sure to see the face of her future husband in the mirror. As soon as this happens, she should cry out "Keep away from this place!" and cover the mirror to keep the luck.



Snegoorochka, Snow Maiden

Babouschka



Sauerkraut Soup

15 oz can sauerkraut, drained	5-6 potatoes, chopped
½ onion, chopped	1 t caraway seed
Salt and pepper	2 T sour cream
½ Polish kielbasa, cut in small pieces	1 T vinegar

Put onions into saucepan with a little bit of oil and cook over low heat until lightly yellowed. Do not brown. Add water and potatoes with salt, pepper, caraway. Let it cook for a few minutes then add sauerkraut and polish kielbasa. Let it cook for at least 20 minutes or until potatoes are soft. Then add sour cream, pepper and vinegar to taste.

ARMENIA



Gaghan Baba

Gift Giver:

Gaghand Baba

Merry Christmas:

Shnorhavor Sourp Dzunount

Աստուածաշունչ (pronounced Asdvadzashoonch or Astvadz-a-haytnnotyoon) (haha! Good luck with THAT one!!) meaning revelation or breathed by God

Armenian Origin Carol:

Gaghand Baban Eench Perav- What Has New Year's Father Brought?

Momer Varenk-Let's Light the Candles

Donadzar-Holiday Tree

Dzuhnoontee Oror- Christmas Lullaby

Armenian Cuisine:**ODAR- Christmas Dinner**

Anooshaboor (Christmas Pudding)

Khozee bood (glazed ham)

Dried fruits

Many different sweets for all visitors

Cheese boregs

Madzoon soup

Roast lamb

Candied pecans and yams

History:

Because the Church (Russian Orthodox) in Armenia still uses the old Julian Calendar, Christmas is celebrated on January 6th. The Christmas holiday season starts on New Year's Eve (December 31st) and continues until the old Julian calendar's New Year's Eve on January 13th. January 6th is called "The Theophany" which commemorates God's revelation as God to His followers.

Some people do celebrate December 25th, but not as Christmas but as Saint Stepanos Day (St Steven's day). In most other countries St Stephen's day is on December 26th or Boxing Day.

Santa Claus is known as Gagant Baba. He traditionally comes on New Year's Eve (December 31st) because Christmas Day itself is thought of as more of a religious holiday in Armenia.

In Armenia Happy/Merry Christmas is Shnorhavor Sourp Dzunount or 'Shenorhavor Dzenount' (which means 'Congratulations for the Holy Birth')

At the beginning of December, a big Christmas Tree is put up in Republic Square in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia. Recently there has also been a new event called 'Winterfest' which starts on December 21st. Gagant Baba comes and takes part in a parade.

ARMENIAN BOREG

1 lb. muenster cheese, grated
½ lb cottage cheese
1/3 C chopped parsley
2 eggs
1 pkg filo dough
Butter, melted

Mix first 4 ingredients in large bowl. Take filo dough from package, lay flat on counter and cover with damp cotton towel to keep from drying out. Cut one sheet of filo into 4 lengths. Put teaspoon of cheese mix on each strip and fold into triangle shapes as you would fold a flag. Place onto cookie sheet and dab with melted butter. Bake at 350 until golden brown.

SOUTH AFRICA



Vader Kersfees

Gift Giver:

Santa Claus or Father Christmas

Vader Kersfees

Krismis Vader (pronounced just like Christmas Father)

Merry Christmas:

In Afrikaans (South Africa) Geseënde Kersfees

South African Carol:

Sing Noel (drum accompaniment)

South African Cuisine:

Fufu: a doughy food that accompanies most meats and is made of rice, plantain, cassava, corn or yam (sounds suspiciously like poi, an Hawaiian gloppy, foul-tasting mess. Furthermore, it is swallowed not chewed.

Braais (barbecue)

Goat meat

Okra soup

Lekker Pudding (recipe included)

History:

The following information is from at least 3 sources, all written by black scholars, lest you think I'm a racist...

I include Kwanzaa here because; 1. It is widely assumed that this holiday is somehow associated with Africa. It is NOT! It is a totally contrived, made-up, nothing-holiday conceived by a sick, twisted ex-con. It has absolutely no roots in antiquity, in paganism, in Christianity, in Christmas, or in Africa itself. In fact, it is not now, nor has it ever been celebrated in Africa. And 2. That it is some kind of harvest festival akin to Christmas. Kwanzaa is a scam! Its origins are rooted in a violent black-power group, United Slaves Organization, which was a rival "gang" to the Black Panthers. (to "clean" up its image, it has been changed to the US Organization). Its founder, Maulana Karenga was a ghetto street thug who was convicted of the torture of two of his female members and served over 3 years in prison. He is now...what else, and *where* else...a professor at a University of California institution. He has said that

Jesus was psychotic and that Christmas is only for the white man. He created Kwanzaa in 1966 to detract **FROM** Christmas, rather than enhance it as its apologists are now trying to claim. This holiday is no more a holy day than is Festivus from the old Seinfeld show!

Even Kwanzaa's ceremonies make no sense. For the day of muhindi, for example, ears of corn are set aside for each child in the family, but corn is not indigenous to Africa. Corn was first cultivated by Mexican Indians; it was brought to Africa by the evil *white* folks. The day of muhindi looks more like a Mayan festival than anything African. And where else on this planet does anyone celebrate a harvest ritual in December? This incongruity springs from Karenga's desire to make Kwanzaa the black anti-Christmas. Why not have Kwanzaa in October when crops are actually harvested? And that's all the space I will give this topic!

I know, I know...tell me how you really feel.....! ☺

I am referencing Africa in general, but am focusing more on South Africa which is heavily Dutch/European. The rest of Africa celebrate it more as a religious holiday, the exchanging of gifts being practically non-existent...either by faith or by poverty. The history of Christianity in Africa dates back to the 1st century AD when missionaries first appeared. Christmas celebrations followed the evolving celebrations throughout Europe.

Christmas in Africa is a summer holiday with many people heading to the beaches or going camping. They typically eat Christmas dinner as more of a picnic outdoors. In some areas, young people go door to door to perform dances and Christmas songs dressed in skirts made of leaves and using homemade instruments. They receive small gifts of money in return. In many countries, the procession after the Christmas Eve service is a joyous occasion of music and dance. In the Gambia, for example, people parade with large intricately made lanterns called *fanals* in the shape of boats or houses. Every country has their own unique celebrations no matter how small their Christian population.

Homes are decorated with pine branches, and all have the decorated Christmas fir in a corner, with presents for the children. Children may also hang stockings for presents from Father Christmas

As in England Boxing Day where the church alms “boxes” contents are distributed among the poor.

Decorating shop fronts, mango trees, churches and homes is common throughout African Christian communities. You may see fake snow decorating store fronts in Nairobi, palm trees laden with candles in Ghana or oil palms loaded with bells in Liberia. Otherwise, refer to Holland, to see how Christmas is typically celebrated.

FUFU:

To eat fufu: use your right hand* to tear off a bite-sized piece of the fufu, shape it into a ball, make an indentation in it, and use it to scoop up the soup or stew or sauce, or whatever you're eating.

Fufu is usually made from yams, sometimes combined with plantains. Fufu can also be made from semolina, rice, or even instant potato flakes (2C) or Bisquick. Making fufu involves boiling, pounding, and vigorous stirring until the fufu is thick and smooth.

2-4 pounds of large white or yellow yams (not Louisiana yams or sweet potatoes!). or equal parts of yams and plantains.

1 t butter

Place yams in large pot and cover with cold water. Bring to a boil and cook until the yams are soft. Remove pot from heat and cool yams with running water. Drain. Remove peels from yams. Add butter. Put yams in a bowl and mash with a potato masher, then beat and stir with a wooden spoon until completely smooth. This might take two people: one to stir, the other to hold the bowl!

Shape the fufu into balls and serve immediately with meat stew or any dish with a sauce or gravy. To eat it, tear off a small handful with your fingers and use it to scoop up your meat and sauce.

*In some cultures, the use of the left hand is for anything below the waist (bathroom, etc.), whereas the use of the right hand is for anything above the waist, including hand-shaking and eating.

BRAZIL/PERU:



Papai Noel

Gift Giver:
Papai Noel**Merry Christmas:**
Feliz Natal**Brazilian Carol:**

Like Brazil's other Christmas traditions, the music associated with Christmas is mostly imported. "Noite Feliz" ("Silent Night") is probably the song most associated with Christmas in Brazil. There are some Brazilian Christmas songs (pastorils and others), but they are not very well known.

Brazilian Cuisine:

Farofa
Rabanada
Brazil nuts
Roast pork loin

History:

Brazilians are a mix of people from many parts of the world, and as a former Portuguese colony, they have many Christmas customs which originate from that heritage.

The people of Northern Brazil, as in Mexico, enjoy a version of the folk play *Los Pastores* or "The Shepherds." In the Brazilian version, there are shepherdesses rather than shepherds and a gypsy who attempts to kidnap the Christ Child.

Papai Noel (Father Noel) is the gift-bringer in Brazil. According to legend, he lives in Greenland. The idea of this Santa-type character was imported from North America in the 50's. It only became popular due to the commercial appeal in the late 60's and 70's. There is no explanation or longer tradition about him. When Papai Noel arrives in Brazil, he usually wears silk clothing due to the summer heat.

There is a very common tradition among friends and families, called *amigo secreto* (secret friend). At the beginning of December, participants in the game write their name on a piece of paper. Each

participant takes a paper (but does not reveal the name of the person on it). During the month there are exchanges of correspondence among the participants who use apelidos (fake names). On Christmas, family and friends gather to reveal their secret friends and offer them a special gift.

In the old days, devout Catholics would attend Midnight Mass or Missa do Galo. (A galo is a rooster.) The Mass has this name because the rooster announces the coming day and the Missa do Galo finishes at 1 AM on Christmas morning! This tradition has faded away in most places due to the high crime rate in the cities. In addition, many families prefer to gather for a special supper (ceia) at midnight. Masses are celebrated December 24 later in the afternoon, or early evening. December 25 there are masses in the morning and later afternoon. Many prefer the late afternoon Christmas Mass so that they can enjoy sleeping in after the midnight meal or going to the beach on Christmas morning.

One tradition is to create a nativity scene or Presépio. The word origins from the word "presepium" which means the bed of straw upon which Jesus first slept in Bethlehem. The Presépio is common in northeastern Brazil (Bahia, Sergipe, Rio Grande do Norte, Paraíba, Maranhão, Ceará, Pernambuco, Piauí and Alagoas). The Presépio was introduced in the 17th century, in the city of Olinda in the state of Pernambuco by a Franciscan friar named Gaspar de Santo Agostinho. Nowadays presépios are set up in December and displayed in churches, homes, and stores.

At the end of 19th and beginning of 20th century many immigrants came from Europe and other parts of the world. They brought their traditions and adapted them to Brazilian conditions. So, the food they eat, especially in the South states, during Christmas came from Germany, Italy, Portugal, Spain and other countries. A huge Christmas dinner, unusual in the hot summertime, includes turkey, ham, colored rice, and wonderful fresh vegetable and fruit dishes.

Decorations include fresh flowers picked from the garden. Huge Christmas "trees" of electric lights can be seen against the night skies in major cities such as Brasília, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro throughout the season. Fireworks displays go off to welcome the new year.

Rabanada (French Toast): Brazil

This is a Christmas time dessert in Portugal and Brazil and an Easter dessert in Spain. Where French toast is served as a sweet dish, milk, sugar, or cinnamon are also commonly added before frying, and it may be then topped with sugar, butter, fruit, syrup, or other items. Where it is a savory dish, it is generally fried with a pinch of salt, and then served with a sauce such as ketchup or mayonnaise.

1 baguette	3 large eggs
$\frac{3}{4}$ C sweetened condensed milk	6 T whole milk
$\frac{1}{2}$ t vanilla	$\frac{1}{4}$ t salt
$\frac{1}{2}$ C sugar	1 T cocoa powder
$\frac{1}{4}$ t cinnamon	vegetable oil

Cut baguette on the bias into 1-inch-thick slices (you should have about 16 slices).

Place eggs, condensed milk, whole milk, vanilla extract, and salt in a medium bowl and whisk until evenly combined. Pour mixture into a shallow dish that will snugly hold all of the bread (such as a glass baking dish or a large pie plate) and add baguette slices. Turn slices to coat well in the mixture. Cover with plastic wrap and refrigerate until egg mixture is almost completely absorbed, at least 4 hours or up to overnight.

Place sugar, cocoa powder, and cinnamon in a small bowl and mix until evenly distributed; set aside.

When the bread has finished soaking, fill a medium pot with oil to a depth of 2 inches. Heat over medium heat until the oil registers 330°F on a deep-fat thermometer. Place reserved cinnamon-cocoa mixture on a plate and set aside. Line another plate with paper towels and set aside.

Remove bread slices from the egg mixture, allowing any excess to drip off. Place 4 to 6 pieces of bread in the hot oil (being sure not to overcrowd the pot). Fry until bread slices are dark golden brown on one side, about 4 to 5 minutes. (You'll want the oil to maintain a temperature of 325°F while the bread is frying; adjust the heat as necessary to achieve this.) Flip and fry another 4 to 5 minutes.

Remove to the paper-towel-lined plate to drain.

While still hot, dredge French toast in the cinnamon-cocoa mixture and shake off any excess. Repeat the frying process with the remaining bread slices and serve.

AUSTRALIA



Father Christmas and his Six Boomers

Gift Givers:

Santa Claus (American influence)

Father Christmas (originally English settlement)

Merry Christmas:

Happy Christmas

Australian Christmas Carol:

Carol of the Birds

Dinki Di Christmas

Australian Cuisine:

Christmas dinner in Australia is based on the traditional English version. However, due to Christmas falling in the heat of the Southern Hemisphere's summer, meats such as ham, turkey and chicken are sometimes served cold.

Barbecues

Seafood (prawns)

Pavlova (fruit on top of baked meringue)

Mangoes and cherries

History:

The first official Christmas Down Under service was celebrated on the 25th December, 1788 at Sydney Cove by Reverend Johnson. After the service, Governor Arthur Phillips and his officers dined heartily, toasting the King of England and his family. But for the majority of the first white inhabitants...the convicts....there was no change to their regular menu... bread rations only. The only goodwill which seemed to have been displayed was to Michael Dennison. He was a convict who stole a pound of flour from Martha Pugh. He was sentenced to 200 lashes by the whip. But since it was Christmas, only 150 were delivered.

According to the records of Christmas History in Australia the Christmas tree is termed as Pohutukawa. The European immigrants became fascinated to their brilliant red flowers that resemble our Bottle Brush and bright green leaves. Other well-known Christmas plants that are used in the Christmas decorations include Christmas Bells, Christmas Bush and the Christmas Orchid.

Christmas is always the most exciting time of the year. School children get six weeks holiday, (remember! It's summer down there!) and many professionals close their office from Christmas Eve to the Australia Day Public Holiday on 26th January, so many families are in a holiday season over this period. Since it is summer in December, most activities are outdoors. There are barbecues, traditional sporting events such as the Sydney-to-Hobart Yacht Race beginning on Boxing Day and the "Boxing Day Test" between the Australian Cricket Team and an international tourist team, picnics, swimming, surfing and fishing are all enjoyed. Boxing Day is a great Australian tradition at Christmas time. Boxing Day is the day after Christmas day. "It's a commemoration day that we inherited from the British for a reason we have forgotten about and never cared about anyway. It's a big day out. It's always a public holiday and always much cherished. It is a sports day, but we don't fight."

Businesses and shops close on Christmas day and Boxing Day. Most Australian Christmas traditions have come from its British beginnings, European influences and later the American commercial influences. Typical Christmas traditions include: From December they decorate their homes with Christmas table ornaments, ribbons and bows. They set up the Christmas tree and decorate with a collection of hanging Christmas ornaments. Some people also put up house and yard lights. On Christmas Eve, children hang a stocking, families attend church services, and Santa arrives down the chimney and eats a piece of cake. He travels by sleigh pulled by "Six White Boomers" or kangaroos. Some believe Santa arrives through a window and rings a bell when he has left.

Over 100 million Christmas cards are posted within Australia each year which is a high portion of the 450 million articles handled by Australia Post during December. The first printed Christmas card was in England by Sir Henry Cole in 1843. The first Australian Christmas card was produced in 1881 by John Sands. In 1957, the first Christmas stamp was issued by Australia Post which has since issued more than 100 Christmas designs. Also, the postage on Christmas cards is at a reduced rate!

Public celebrations include the **Carols by Candlelight Concert**, on Christmas Eve, held at the Myer Music Bowl in Melbourne and

Carols in the Domain, Australia's largest annual community Christmas celebration. It dates back to 1937 when Norman Banks directed the first concert. The event is free to attend. It is always held on the last Saturday before Christmas in Sydney's Domain Gardens, a short distance away from the Sydney Opera House. These events are broadcast live on television and radio throughout the country and viewed through Southeast Asia and New Zealand.

For international visitors who are in Sydney at Christmas time, it has almost become a tradition to go to Bondi Beach which is visited by a large number of people on Christmas Day. The warm weather enables the Australians to take part in the traditional Australian Christmas Eve carol service held in Melbourne every year.

There has been a suggestion that "Swag Man" take over for Santa Down Under!!! There is a lot of concern about Santa Claus perhaps suffering heat stroke whilst Down Under. "Swag Man" wears a brown Akubra, a blue singlet and long baggy shorts. He spends all winter under Uluru with his merry dingoes and then at Christmas time, he gets in his huge four-wheel drive and sets off through the red dust to deliver his presents.



Swag Man

Pavlova: Australia

4-6 egg whites
pinch salt
8oz castor sugar/sugar (equal parts)
1 teaspoon white vinegar
1/2 teaspoon vanilla
2 level teaspoons cornstarch

(Please note the following equivalents:
castor sugar or fine/super fine sugar
corn flour or cornstarch)

Preheat oven to 400F
Lightly grease oven tray, line with baking paper or use non-stick cooking spray.

Beat the whites of eggs with a pinch of salt until stiff (until peaks form).
Continue beating, gradually adding sugar, vinegar and vanilla, until of thick consistency.
Lightly fold in cornstarch.

Pile mixture into circular shape, making hollow in center for filling.
(Mixture will swell during cooking)

Preheat oven to 250⁰ and bake undisturbed for 1 ½ hours.
Turn oven off, leave pavlova in oven until cool.

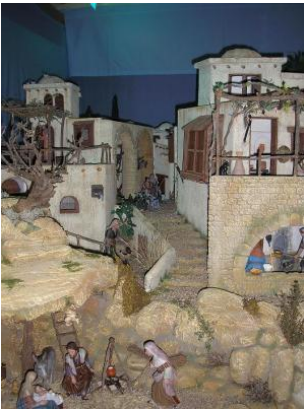
Top with whipped cream and decorate with fruit as desired.

MEXICO

Las Posados



Poinsettia



Nacimientos



Piñatas

Gift Givers:

Papá Noe- Mexico

El Niño Jesus

Santa Claus (pronounced Santa Clos)- Mexico

Papá Noel

El Niño Dios- Argentina/Colombia/Ecuador (God Child)

Papai Noel- Brazil

Viejito Pascuero (Old Man Christmas)- Chile

Niño Jesus/San Nicolás

Merry Christmas: Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Puerto Rico

Feliz Navidad

Mexican Christmas Carol:

El Noi De La Mare

Mexican Cuisine:

Hot chocolate: Champurrado/Atole

Tamales/Rellenos

Menudo

History:

Though Christmas is celebrated almost all over the world, Mexico does so at great length and with its own special style in a variety of activities that span the period from December 16th to January 6th.

Perhaps the best known manifestation of the Christmas spirit in Mexico are the traditional *Posadas* which means “the inns” or “the shelters” in Spanish.. One is held each night on the nine days between December 16th and Christmas Eve. The *Posadas* are a re-enactment of Saint Joseph and the Virgin Mary's pilgrimage seeking a place to stay and give birth to the baby Jesus. In olden times, a boy and girl were chosen to represent the Virgin and Joseph, but nowadays a group of people carrying candles visits several houses asking for lodging with a traditional question/response song. The people inside the first two houses refuse them, and at the third one the group is invited inside. The more religious festivities may include

prayer, but most often the event now becomes a party. The adults are given a thick fruit punch with a little alcohol to ward off the cold.

The origin of the *Posadas* is said to date back to 1587, when Friar Diego de Soria, in the monastery of Acolman, obtained a Papal Bull from Pope Sixtus V to celebrate "*Aguinaldo*" or Christmas gift masses from December 16th through the 24th in New Spain. As part of the evangelization process, these masses, held in the church atriums, were interspersed with scenes alluding to Christmas. To attract a crowd, the Augustinian missionaries used sparklers, fireworks, Christmas carols and piñatas.



The Piñata is a must at *Posada* time. There are several stories regarding its origin. Many people say that it is derived from the Italian custom of giving out clay pots of gifts during lent or carnival - *pignatta* means pot in Italian. Probably the name is derived from this, but there are also similar Pre-Hispanic customs. A clay pot was decorated to look like a cloud for some of the rites honoring Tlaloc, the Rain God. When it was broken, it would shower down food and good things to the ground, much as the rain brought crops and flowers to the people.

In any case, the missionaries, determined to convert the Indians to Catholicism, adopted the *piñata* as a teaching tool. The decorated pot was said to represent the devil, who tempts mankind with a glittering exterior. And the blindfold was used to show that blind faith is the path to achieving the good things hidden from view. Thus the converts and curious were asked to strike the devil, following the new faith, and were rewarded with good things to eat. Nowadays, the *piñata* is a game enjoyed by children and grownups alike. It is usually filled with fruits, nuts and candies; sometimes small toys are added. The *piñata* has become another wonderful expression of Mexican folk art. Figures ranging from the traditional Star of

Bethlehem to action figures based on hit international films are hand crafted with great skill and ingenuity.

Pastorelas are another way that the missionaries used to teach religious knowledge to the native peoples of Mexico. These may have been based on the auto (short allegory plays) sacramental performances which became popular about the time of the conquest and reached their peak during Spain's Golden Age. These plays compared good and evil. This theatrical form was probably based on the Passion Plays which were popular throughout Medieval Europe, but later included the Devil and were more relevant to Mexico. The *Pastorelas* in Mexico followed this tradition; starting as simple parables of the struggle of good against evil, ending with the triumph of good represented by the birth of Christ, these plays became increasingly more fun. Nowadays, the *Pastorelas*, performed in various forms in church atriums, town squares and theaters, range from political satire, commentary on the evils of modernity, or even bawdy scenes, to school plays of naïve simplicity.

Poinsettias are beautiful red flowers which have become a symbol of Christmas and are native to Mexico. In *Náhuatl* they were called *Cuitlaxochitl* or star flowers, and in Spanish they are known as *Noche Buena* or Christmas Eve. The English name of Poinsettia was adopted in honor of a US diplomat named Joel Poinsett, who took cuttings back to North Carolina with him after his stay in Mexico, and began cultivating them in the United States. They come in several colors, white, yellow, though the most well-known is a bright red. Pre-Hispanic Mexicans also used the flower for medicinal purposes: the red blossoms were believed to stimulate circulation to the heart if placed on the chest, and were also crushed and applied to skin infections.

The birth of Jesus is also commemorated with nativity scenes, called *nacimientos*, which means births. Although this tradition comes from Europe, where it is still widespread, in Mexico it has also become a thriving source of handicrafts; nativity scenes in wood, clay, metal, glass, wax, straw and almost any material you can think of, are another rich expression of popular art. Although the scene is set in advance, the baby Jesus is placed in the manger on Christmas eve. It

was considered an honor for one of the children to be selected to place the main figure in the manger.

Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve in Mexico with a midnight mass and a late dinner. More modern influences have introduced the Christmas tree and Santa Claus along with the traditional crèche. The New Year is welcomed in with a big party, and tradition calls for each guest to eat a grape with each tolling of the church bell at midnight to sweeten the twelve months to come.

There are many names for the festival which arrives on the Twelfth Day of Christmas (actually after Christmas), Twelfth Night, Epiphany, Three Kings Day, January 6th. The tradition in Mexico for *Dia de Reyes*, Kings Day, is for children to leave their shoes outside the door so they can be filled with gifts from the Magi (Three Kings). This is also the day the nativity scene is taken down. *Rosca de Reyes* is a special bread made for the occasion in the form of a crown, decorated with dried fruits and hiding in its midst one or several little dolls (now usually plastic). At this fiesta each guest cuts his own piece of this coffee cake because tradition demands that the guest who finds the doll (representing the infant Jesus) in their slice of Rosca give a party on February 2nd, Candlemas, with tamales and atole for all.

The Pre-Hispanic peoples learned the cultivation of wheat from the Spaniards and quickly acquired quite a taste for bread. Combining the Arabian, Jewish and Christian recipes used by the conquerors with indigenous ingredients and methods produced a rich variety of local breads. The nuns not only baked breads to accompany hot chocolate --cacao (pure chocolate) being native to Mexico and a favorite drink of the Mexicans-- but invented breads to aid in evangelization by commemorating religious holidays. Thus they developed the famous bread for the dead and the Rosca de Reyes.

Ensalada de Noche Buena: Mexico

Head of lettuce

1 pound small beets, cooked, peeled and thinly sliced

1 jicama, cut into matchsticks

4 oranges, peeled and sliced into rounds

4 apples, sliced into thin wedges

½ C olive oil

¼ C white wine vinegar (pear infused white balsamic is good)

A cup of dry roasted peanuts

Line a large platter with the lettuce, either torn or separated into leaves, as desired. Arrange the beets, jicama, oranges and apples on the lettuce. Sprinkle with the lime juice.

Bring the platter to the table, dress with a mixture of the olive oil and vinegar and toss lightly. Serve on salad dishes, topping each serving with a sprinkling of peanuts. Serves 8.

Champurrado:

6 cups whole milk

1 cup masa harina--corn flour

2 cups water

1 cup brown sugar, firmly packed

3 oz. unsweetened chocolate, grated

1 cinnamon stick

Heat the milk and chocolate in a saucepan, stirring to dissolve the chocolate. When chocolate is completely dissolved, remove from the heat and set aside to keep warm. Mix the masa harina with the water in another saucepan; place over low heat, add the cinnamon stick, and cook until the mixture has thickened and the masa becomes translucent. Add the chocolate milk and sugar. Stir to dissolve the sugar and simmer for a few minutes. Remove the cinnamon stick and serve the champurrado hot in cups or mugs.

Canada:

In English Canada, Christmas dinner is similar to that of its colonial ancestor, England. Traditional Christmas dinner features turkey with stuffing, mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, vegetables and raisin pudding for dessert. Eggnog, a milk-based punch that is often infused with alcohol, is also very popular around the holiday season. Other Christmas items include butter tarts and shortbreads, which are traditionally baked before the holidays and served to visiting friends, at various Christmas and New Year parties, as well as on Christmas Day. In French Canada, traditions may be more like those of France. (Quebec/Montreal)

Philippines:

The Parol or star lantern is an essential Christmas decoration and is unique to the Philippines, representing the guiding light, the star of Bethlehem. Christmas is the most anticipated fiesta of the year and they go all out for it. Flowers, feasting, and devotion to family predominate. There is no winter or snow. There are very few pine trees. There is no traditional Yule Log. Santa Claus, even though you can see him in displays and believed by most Filipino children to exist, seldom comes with presents.

In general, the center of a family's Christmas gathering is always the *lola*, the family grandmother, who is deeply respected, highly revered, and always present. Filipinos remember how their *lola* had their children form a line and step up to receive a small gift of some coins. The older the child, the more coins he or she receives.

The Christmas dinner in the Philippines is called Noche Buena, and is held towards midnight of December 24. This usually comes after the entire family has attended the late evening Mass called the Miso de Gallo ("Mass of the Rooster"). The centerpiece of the *Noche Buena* is often the *hamón* or Christmas ham, which is usually a cured leg of pork ham. This is usually served with *Queso de Bola*, literally a ball of edam cheese, covered in a red wax. Other ubiquitous dishes are pasta and for dessert, fruit salad. The dinner would usually be

accompanied with *tsokolate* or hot cocoa, which is made with pure, locally-grown cacao beans. Some families prefer *tsokolate* prepared from *tablea* or tablets of pressed cocoa powder that is either pure or slightly sweetened.

Middle-class and affluent families tend to prepare sumptuous feasts which sometimes includes any of the following: lechon or spit-roasted pig; lumpia, escabeche; adobo; *rellenong manok* or stuffed chicken; roast turkey; *mechado* (beef stew); *kaldereta* (spicy beef stew); paella; and other traditional fiesta dishes. Families that are not as affluent would opt for a more economical *Noche Buena*; the organizing of even a simple gathering despite financial difficulties reflects the importance in Filipino culture of familial (and by extension communal) unity over most other concerns.

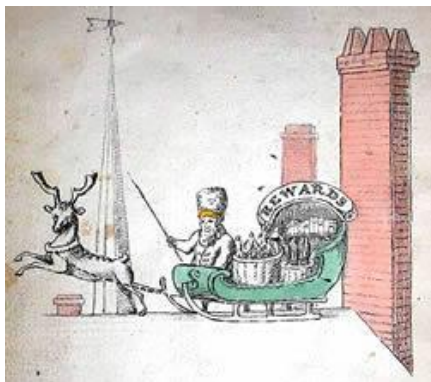
This importance placed on the family is also found in all socio-economic classes and ethnic groups in the Philippines in that during the Noche Buena, most if not all members from branch or extended families in a clan are always expected to appear at the celebrations. Relatives living abroad, are highly encouraged to return home for the occasion, as it is the most important holiday of the year for many Filipinos. Most families prefer to exchange Christmas presents right after the dinner, in contrast to the Western custom of opening presents on Christmas morning.

Maligayang Pasko-Merry Christmas



Parols

UNITED STATES



Sante Claus: 1821



Norman Rockwell Santas

Gift Giver:

Santa Claus, St. Nick, Kanakaloka (Hawaii)
The Grinch

Merry Christmas:

Merry Christmas
Mele Kalikimaka (Hawaiian) (meh-leh kah-lee-kee-mah-kah)

American Carols:

Joy to the World
It Came Upon the Midnight Clear
O Little town of Bethlehem
We Three Kings of Orient Are
Away in a Manger

Popular Secular Christmas Songs:

Walkin' in a Winter Wonderland
Elvis': Blue Christmas
Grama Got Run Over By a Reindeer
Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer
Jingle Bell Rock
Frosty the Snowman
I'm Dreaming of a White Christmas

American Cuisine:

Turkey, ham, beef roast, stuffing
Pumpkin/apple/mincemeat pies
Fruitcake
Virginia: oysters
Upper Midwest: lutefisk, rutabaga, turnip
Rural areas: elk, opossum, quail
Sugar cookies
Gingerbread men
Candy canes

**And in our house: Chinese take-out on Christmas Eve with
Cham-chams! ☺**

History:

The Plymouth Pilgrims in Massachusetts put their hatred of Christmas into practice in 1620 when they spent their first Christmas Day in the New World by working! A year later on December 25, 1621, Governor William Bradford led a work detail into the forest but discovered that many of them wanted to honor the day and not work. He sent them home, supposedly to pray and worship. When he returned home he found them playing stool-ball, pitching the bar, and pursuing other sports rather than worshipping. He took away their “toys”, and forbade any further reveling in the streets.

Massachusetts and Connecticut followed the Plymouth colony in refusing to condone any observance of the day. When the Puritans came to power they passed a series of laws making any observance of Christmas illegal. A Massachusetts law of 1659 punished offenders with a hefty five shilling fine. The average income was about 4 pounds per year back then. So based on the few facts I have, adjusted for inflation, and based on an average income today of \$50,000, the fine would be about \$3,100 give or take, just to be caught celebrating Christmas! However, according to records, there was never anyone fined under this law which was repealed in 1681. December 25th continued to be a work day well into the second half of the 1800s, and as late as 1870, public schools in Boston held classes on that date.

While Christmas wasn't a holiday in the New England colonies, it was always celebrated in the other colonies, and later, in 1831, Louisiana and Arkansas would become the first states to decree Christmas a legal holiday, Georgia followed in 1850, and by 1890 all the states and territories would do so.

By the early 1800's the following was occurring in much the same way that immigrants had witnessed and engaged in over in Europe.

“Drunken rowdies roaming the streets at night in NY and Philadelphia, banging pots, pans, and drums, blowing horns and whistles, making raucous noised, and creating as much racket as possible. In the South, there was gunfire and firecrackers, all-day drinking by all classes, more horn-blowing and hell-raising.

Home invasion—masked people, most of them young men, poor or from the working class, entering houses with impunity, doing little skits, demanding gifts of food, drink, or money, threatening broken windows or worse unless they got it.”

“Public feasting, gluttony, and drunkenness were everywhere. This was the Christmas season in early America around 1800, before Santa Claus, before decorating Christmas trees, Christmas shopping family gift giving and all the other familiar activities now associated with Christmas. The holiday season was then more of a public celebration to the streets and alehouses rather than one quietly observed at home around the family hearth.”

from *Christmas Curiosities*, by John Grossman

It is enough to say that Christmas was not celebrated in Protestant churches until the mid-1800s, and Presbyterians did not celebrate Christmas, at least in the church or in services until 1921 and was not officially in the Presbyterian calendar until 1950. Some Presbyterians to this day, do not celebrate it!

Santa Comes to America:

Santa Claus was born in the US in the 1860's once the 200 year old Puritan laws were repealed. He came over to this new country with Dutch immigrants just about the same time the *Wanhouses* arrived from Holland!! The name Santa Claus comes from the Dutch word for St. Nicholas, Sintaklaas. Although the Dutch brought him with them in the 17th century, he did not become an important person at Christmas until the novelist Washington Irving put him in a poem that he wrote in 1809.

One of Irving's most lasting contributions to American culture is in the way Americans perceive and celebrate Christmas. In his 1812 revisions to *A History of New York*, Irving inserted a dream sequence featuring St. Nicholas soaring over treetops in a flying wagon—a creation others would later dress up as Santa Claus, sleigh, and reindeer. (sounds a lot like Thor and his chariot) In his five Christmas stories in *The Sketch Book*, Irving portrayed an idealized celebration of old-fashioned Christmas customs at a quaint English manor, that depicted harmonious warm-hearted English Christmas

festivities he remembered from his youth in England. This book contributed to the revival and reinterpretation of the Christmas holiday in the United States. Even Charles Dickens said that he had gotten inspiration for his story, *A Christmas Carol*, from Irving's work.

1821 brought some new elements with publication of the first lithographed book in America, the *Children's Friend*. This "**Sante Claus**" (as seen on page 211), arrived from the North in a sleigh with one flying reindeer. The anonymous poem and illustrations proved pivotal in shifting imagery away from a saintly bishop. *Sante Claus* fills a dual role, rewarding good behavior and punishing bad, leaving a "long, black birchen rod . . . directs a Parent's hand to use when virtue's path his sons refuse." Gifts were safe toys, "pretty doll . . . peg-top, or a ball; no crackers, cannons, squibs, or rockets to blow their eyes up, or their pockets. No drums to stun their Mother's ear, nor swords to make their sisters fear; but pretty books to store their mind with knowledge of each various kind." The sleigh itself even sported a bookshelf for the "pretty books." The book also notably marked S. Claus' first appearance on Christmas Eve, rather than December 6th.

In 1823, Clement Moore wrote "A Visit from Saint Nicholas" later known as "'Twas The Night Before Christmas". This first Santa Claus was still known as St. Nicholas, he did smoke a pipe, flew around in a wagon without any reindeer, but did not yet have his red suit or live at the North Pole. He did, however, bring presents to children every year. Even later, in 1863 Thomas Nast, a political cartoonist, created a different illustration of Santa for the cover of Harper's Weekly. His Santa was a plump, jolly old fellow with a white beard and smoking a long-stemmed pipe. Even Abraham Lincoln used this newly minted image in a political ad where Santa was shown with the Union troops. This was considered one of the most demoralizing moments for the Confederate Army...seeing Santa side with the North.

It wasn't until 1863 that he was given the name Santa Claus and wore the red suit, pipe, and his reindeer and sleigh. Christmas celebrations vary greatly between regions of the US because of the variety of nationalities who have settled in those areas.

In Pennsylvania, the Moravians build a landscape, called a putz-under the Christmas tree, while in the same state the Germans are given gifts by Belsnickle, who taps them with his switch if they have misbehaved.

Many European settlers migrated to the South. These settlers would send Christmas greetings to their distant neighbors by shooting firearms and setting off fireworks.

In Hawaii, Santa Claus arrives by boat and Christmas dinner is eaten outdoors. Traditionally, the ancient Hawaiian festival of Makahiki coincided with the European time set apart for Christmas. Makahiki was a four month long time of peace and rest in which the Hawaiian people gave thanks to the earth for keeping them alive with its produce. In Hawaii Christmas starts with the coming of the Christmas Tree Ship, which is a ship bringing a great load of Christmas fare. Santa Claus also arrives by boat.

In Alaska, a star on a pole is taken from door to door, followed by Herod's Men, who try to capture the star. Boys and girls with lanterns on poles carry a large figure of a star from door to door. They sing carols and are invited in for supper. Notice also that the Star Man of Poland and Romania has a star on the pole as well.

In Washington, D.C., a huge, spectacular tree is lit ceremoniously when the President presses a button and turns on the tree's lights. In Boston, carol singing festivities are famous. The singers are accompanied by handbells. In New Orleans, a huge ox is paraded around the streets decorated with holly and with ribbons tied to its horns.

In California, Santa Claus sweeps in on a surf board. In Colorado, an enormous star is placed on the mountain, it can be seen for many miles. Mummers, who got their start in Medieval Europe, strut their stuff in Philadelphia.

Because we are a "melting pot" of cultures, so too, are Christmas celebrations and traditions. Placing a wreath on the front door is a custom brought to America by the Scandinavians who settled in

Delaware. To them it was a sign of welcome as well as a good luck symbol.

Displaying a lighted candle in the window as a sign of welcome was brought by the Irish. From this custom is derived the custom of decorating our homes, both inside and out with lights. The Germans who settled Pennsylvania contributed the tradition of trimming the Christmas tree, lighting the advent wreath, making and displaying the crèche or Nativity scene.

Caroling, hanging mistletoe, holly, and stockings, as well as a more recent custom, sending Christmas cards, are only a few of a long list of customs from England. Many of our Christmas foods, including the infamous fruitcake, are from there.

The President Ulysses S. Grant and the U.S Congress made Christmas a federal holiday on June 26, 1870 in an attempt to unite north and south. The Puritan hostility to Christmas was gradually relaxed. In the late nineteenth century, authors praised the holiday for its liberality, family togetherness, and joyful observance. In 1887, for example, *St. Nicholas Magazine* published a story about a sickly Puritan boy of 1635 being restored to health when his mother brings him a bough of Christmas greenery.

Santa Claus lives in the North Pole and delivers his gifts on Christmas Eve. He travels by sleigh driven by eight reindeer; Dasher, Dancer, Prancer, Vixen, Comet, Cupid, Donner (or Donder) Blitzen. Rudolph the Red Nose Reindeer has frequently been added on as the ninth reindeer due to the popularity of the song. Santa fills stockings that have been “hung by the chimney with care”, as children typically leave him cookies and milk...or beer and pretzels. They do not leave anything for the reindeer.

Santa Claus does not have an evil alter-ego as do some other countries. As close as we can get to a Krampus, or a Gryla is The Grinch, a fictional character created by Dr. Seuss (Theodor Seuss Geisel) in his book called, “How the Grinch Stole Christmas” in 1957.

The Grinch lives in a cave, looks kind of like a cat and has a heart two sizes too small. He lives on snowy Mount Crumpit, a steep

3,000 foot mountain just north of Whoville, home of the merry and warm-hearted Whos. His companion is his dog Max. He steals all the presents, holiday ham and decorations and prevents Christmas from coming. Despite his success in stealing all the Christmas “things” Christmas comes anyway and he realizes that Christmas is more than just gifts and presents.



Today, we hang stockings, decorate trees with garlands of popcorn and cranberries, tinsel and candy canes, exchange many gifts, festoon our homes from top to bottom with Christmas tchotchkes, put wreaths on our front doors, adorn the outside of our homes with displays of lights, and put candles in our windows to await the Christ child. Who among us actually knows why candles are put in the windows? And *why* on earth do people put more than one? We send Christmas cards, E-cards, Christmas letters, and fruitcakes! We start shopping, in some cases, in the summer. Stores put up Christmas decorations before Halloween, let alone Thanksgiving. We forget to give thanks on Thanksgiving because we are plotting our store itineraries the next day on Black Friday and Cyber Monday. Catalogs begin to pour into our mailboxes by August! Ahhhh Christmas! Six months of shopping of Bacchanalian proportions, all to celebrate a humble birth in a barn! How many of us actually go to church *on* Christmas Day, or Christmas Eve?

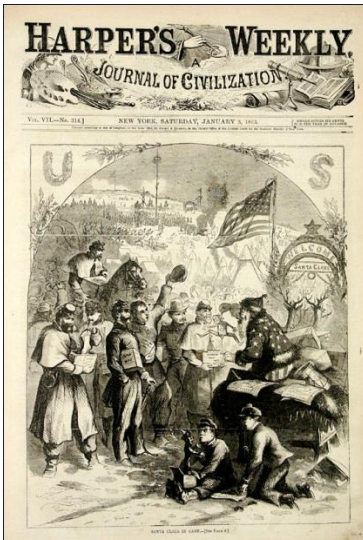
We've come a long way, Baby, from those Puritan roots.....or have we just simply lost our way?



First known Thomas Nast version of a Civil War Santa Claus: 1865



1881 Thomas Nast illustrating “‘Twas the Night Before Christmas”



Santa supports the Union Army troops



J. C. Leyendecker-1925



And what would Christmas be without a commercial.....?

Christmas Sugar Cookies:

$\frac{3}{4}$ C shortening (part butter)	1 C sugar
2 eggs	1 t vanilla
2 $\frac{1}{2}$ C flour	1 t baking powder
1 t salt	

Mix shortening, sugar, eggs, and vanilla. Stir flour, baking powder, salt together; blend in. Chill at least an hour. Roll dough $\frac{1}{8}$ " thick on lightly floured board. Cut with 3" cutter. Place on ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 400⁰ for 6-8 minutes until golden.

Icing:

2 $\frac{1}{2}$ T soft butter
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ C sifted confectioner's sugar
1 $\frac{1}{2}$ T cream
 $\frac{3}{4}$ t vanilla

Blend butter and sugar together. Stir in cream and vanilla until smooth. Makes icing for 4 dozen cookies.

Original Gift Givers

