



Holiday Traditions



photo by Carlos Lowry

What kinds of Christmas traditions does your family follow? While you're baking cookies or opening flaps on an Advent calendar, kids in other countries around the world are carrying out their own holiday rituals. Let's visit a few countries to find out what they're up to.

The Netherlands

The Dutch call their Santa **Sinterklaas**, or St. Nicholas. He spends the year before Christmas writing in a big red book about the behavior of all the children.

St. Nicholas arrives on Dec. 5 on a big ship from Spain and parades through the streets of Amsterdam. He is dressed as a bishop and rides a white horse. He has a helper called Sooty Peter.



Sinterklaas

photo by Alex Proimos

On the eve of St. Nicholas Day, children put out their shoes filled with hay and carrots for St. Nicholas' horse. Sooty Peter takes the horse's food and leaves behind candies and small gifts.

On Dec. 6, kids wake up and find their presents. The Dutch love to disguise their gifts or to hide them in funny places.

France

The French set up their Christmas trees on Christmas Eve. They also go to church, after which they have a late supper. They usually

serve a special log-shaped pastry.

Small children place their shoes by the fireplace for **Père Noël**, or Father Christmas, to fill with candies and gifts.

The French also give each other some gifts on New Year's Day. On Jan. 6, they celebrate **Epiphany**, the arrival of the Three Kings who visited the baby Jesus.

Iceland

Iceland's celebrations begin on Dec. 23, when Icelanders remember **St. Thorlakur**. They shop and decorate a Christmas tree on this day.



The Jólíde Lads

From Dec. 12 to Christmas Eve, magical **Jólíde Lads** are said to come down from Iceland's mountains to leave little gifts in children's shoes and play tricks on people. And legend says that if you don't wear at least one piece of new clothing on Christmas Day, the Christmas cat will eat you!



Mexico

The Mexican celebration starts on Dec. 16 when the **posadas**, or family celebrations, begin. "Posada" means "inn" in Spanish. Families usually meet together for the nine nights before Christmas.

The first part of each night is religious. The families march around the house, pretending they are Mary and Joseph looking for a room in the inn. A manger scene is in the last room they enter.

The second part of each night's celebration is fun. Families move onto the patio for the breaking of **piñatas**. When somebody finally breaks open the piñata, everyone scrambles for the goodies inside.



photo by Ivan2010

Mexican kids scramble for candy after a piñata is broken open.

On the last night of the celebration, people in Mexico go to midnight church services. They come home for parties that last long into the night.

Children receive most of their gifts on Jan. 6. The night before, they put out shoes with straw for the camels of the three wise men, who bring the gifts.

Resources



On the Web:

- bit.ly/MPtraditions

At the library:

- "Christmas: Festivals Around the World" by Grace Jones

Try 'n' Find

Words that remind us of traditions are hidden in this puzzle. Some words are hidden backward or diagonally, and some letters are used twice. See if you can find:



CELEBRATE,
CHRISTMAS, CHURCH,
EPIPHANY, FATHER,
GIFTS, HOLIDAY,
JOLTIDE, KINGS, NOEL,
PINATA, POSADA,
RITUAL, SANTA, SHOES,
SINTERKLAAS, SPAIN,
THREE, TRADITION.

C H R I S T M A S A D A S O P
S R P O T R A D I T I O N K M
T E N R I T U A L S A N T A K
F H L E O N S E O H S R U U I
I T E X E C J O L T I D E Y N
G A T A N I P S C H C R U H C
U F W M S I N T E R K L A A S
E T A R B E L E C E S P S V S
K S H O L I D A Y E S H Z L S
L B S K M E P I P H A N Y A E

Cook's Corner

Jingle Bell Bars

You'll need:

- 1/4 cup butter, melted
- 1 cup graham cracker crumbs
- 1 cup shredded coconut
- 1 cup semisweet chocolate chips
- 1 cup butterscotch chips

What to do:

1. Pour butter or margarine in a 13-by-9-inch baking pan.
2. Sprinkle graham cracker crumbs evenly on top. Sprinkle coconut, chocolate chips and butterscotch chips evenly on top. Pour sweetened condensed milk evenly over all.
3. Sprinkle pecans evenly on top.
4. Bake in a preheated 350-degree oven for 30 minutes. Cut into squares when cool. Makes about 24 bars.



* You'll need an adult's help with this recipe.

7 Little Words for Kids

Use the letters in the boxes to make a word with the same meaning as the clue. The numbers in parentheses represent the number of letters in the solution. Each letter combination can be used only once, but all letter combinations will be necessary to complete the puzzle.

1. threatening animal noise (5) _____
2. one-fourth (7) _____
3. spoiled (6) _____
4. big winner (8) _____
5. brass instrument (7) _____
6. you weigh things on it (5) _____
7. airport building (8) _____

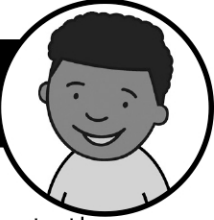
PET	OWL	AL	ROT
CHA	QUAR	TER	ALE
SC	ION	GR	MP
MI	TEN	TRUM	TER

Answers: growl, quarter, rotten, trumpet, scale, terminal.



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Mini Jokes



Chris: What does a unicorn use to decorate the Christmas tree?

Nick: Hornaments!

Eco Note



Have a "green" Christmas! Be sure to recycle your wrapping paper and catalogs. You can also save wrapping paper and ribbon and use them again. Gift bags and cloth ribbons are especially easy to use over and over. If you use store gift wrap or holiday cards, make sure the label says they are made of recycled paper. Check to see if sparkly or shiny paper can be recycled.

A note from The Mini Page:

On Nov. 1, Betty Debnam Hunt, the founder of The Mini Page, passed away. She was 91. As a first-grade teacher, Betty had the idea to write a children's newspaper, and The Mini Page was born in 1969. She continued in its weekly production until 2007.

We are grateful to Betty for her inspiring work and will miss her thoughtful contributions and spirit.

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