

Feasts Play Favourites Throughout the World

As much a part of Christmas as Santa Claus are the holiday dinner, the candies, cookies and cakes, the pies and puddings. Almost every country in the world has contributed its own culinary heritage to the celebration.

Turkey and all the trimmings have become traditional in America, and other countries have their own menus for the Christmas feast.

Belgium and Holland have special cake and sweets for St. Nicholas season. The Letterbaker is baked in the form of letters so that one may order his name in cake. Hrazilpan candies once made only in the shape of hearts, now come in many forms.

An Italian Christmas feast might include Capitelli — white meat or chicken and pork chopped and mixed with eggs and spices, encased in an inch-high dunce cap of noodle dough or Capitoni, made from fried eels.

What Austrians Eat

Characteristic foods of Austrians at Christmas, say Americana Encyclopedia researchers, are frucht-brod, a cake made of raisins, currants, chopped figs and dates and served hot; chopped and baked carps; beef, vegetables and beer.

On Christmas Day in Hungary the family sits down for a roast goose dinner.

Instead of turkey, Norwegians have Christmas porridge, codfish, roast ribs of pork, pickled pork, and sometimes a barbecued young pig, with an apple in its mouth, and paper frills upon its ears.

Mince pie is an old English custom. It represents a compound of the choicest products of the East and symbolizes the gifts of the Wise Men to the Christ Child. Another national Christmas dish in England is the famous plum pudding.

After the Portuguese return from the Missa do Galo, the Midnight Mass, the grownups gather at the table for a huge Christmas breakfast of hot chocolate, sweets and egg cakes.

The Finns serve a Christmas dessert made of rice, according to editors of The Book of Knowledge. The rice is boiled in milk and served with cream topped with sugar and cinnamon. An almond is put into the large dish of rice and the diner who is lucky enough to get this almond will, legend says, be especially favored in the coming year.

Hawaiian Feasting

Lavish feasts accompany Christ-

mas in Hawaii. Menu for a traditional dinner in a Polynesian family might be: roast pig, prepared in an imu, a covered rock oven; gray-brown poi; raw salmon, with vinegar and herbs; island spinach cooked in coconut milk; and pickled pineapple. Dessert might be passion-fruit pie — tangy-tart yet sweet, topped with macadamia-nut ice cream.

In Sweden as family, guests and household servants assemble, each person sticks a piece of bread on a fork and dips it into a kettle of pork and sausage drippings. According to tradition, this bread is eaten for luck before the feast begins.

Legends Tell Story Of 'Silent Night'

Stories and legends surround most of the modern ways of celebrating Christmas — and sometimes there is more than one version of a story — such as the story of "Silent Night" and how the song came to be written.

Joseph Mohr, village priest of Hallein, Austria, wrote the words, and his organist wrote the music, probably adapted from a melody by Michael Haydn. On this point, most sources seem to be agreed.

What inspired Father Mohr to write the words is another story — or another two stories.

One version, say researchers for The Book of Knowledge, is that Father Mohr was called out into the snow on Christmas Eve of 1818, to bless a newly born baby in the home of one of his poorest parishioners.

He was so filled with the spirit of the season and the simple beauty of the mother and infant that when he returned to his study he wrote the poem, "Silent Night." Before Christmas Day was over, his organist had written the music.

Other versions have it that the church organ had broken down (impaired by mice, one story says), and the people were saddened because there would be no music for Christmas Day. Shortly before Christmas, Father Mohr wrote his poem and Organist Gruber the music.

At midnight mass, the people sang "Silent Night" — with a guitar accompaniment.



IN THE PARK . . . In the midst of the bustling city, there's always a quiet and rustic spot. New York's Central Park, for instance, can become a magic wonderland when Christmas snow covers the trees and the icy lake, providing sharp contrast for buildings which raise their concrete towers to the sky.

Be Certain You Display A Safe Tree

What kind of a tree is best for you this Christmas?

A SAFE tree, of course.

Whatever variety of tree you choose this year, be sure that it is freshly-cut, with firmly attached needles. When you select the tree, strike the ground with the thick end. If a shower of needles fall, the tree has been cut too long and will not last for long.

Keep It Fresh

Do not buy your tree until you are ready to decorate it; if you do buy it early, keep it outside. It will stay fresher and will remain green longer after you have put it up. Keep it standing in water at all times.

Select the setting for your tree with safety in mind. Locate it in the coolest part of the room, well away from radiators, heaters, and the fireplace. This not only reduces the chances of fire, but a well assures longer life for the tree, as heat dries the tree quickly.

Use Tree Holder

A tree holder is a good investment if it has a bucket of water in which the trunk can rest. The ability of the tree to absorb water will surprise you, so be sure to check contents of the bucket often.

Do not use any kind of paper decorations on your tree. Use decorations made of glass, metal, or fire-resistant materials.

Use only electric lights on your tree—and check them thoroughly particularly if they have been stored since last Christmas. Sets with frayed wiring invite disaster.

Provide Switch

Provide a switch some distance from the tree for turning the tree lights on or off. If connection is located behind the tree, you may not be able to reach it in an emergency.

Inspect the tree frequently. If needles near lights start to turn brown, change position of the lights. When needles begin to fall freely, it's time to discard the tree.

Mount of Beatitudes Visited by Thousands

Thousands of visitors to Israel each year visit the chapel on the Mount of the Beatitudes in Lower Galilee.

This Holy Land monument is built on the site where Jesus pronounced the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor, blessed are the meek, blessed are the merciful . . ."

From the chapel, the visitor can retrace the footsteps of Jesus, downward from the Mount of Beatitudes to the Sea of Galilee, where He performed the miracle of the loaves and fishes, and where He preached on the "Bread of Life."

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