

Scots celebrate Hogmanay, day of first-footing

What's Hogmanay? It's the Scottish name for New Year's Eve — and first footing is what they call the tradition that dictates Scottish hospitality

for the New Year celebration.

The first person to cross the threshold of any house on that occasion is supposed to do so

bringing gifts to his or her host — gifts of food or coal, both tokens of warmth and friendliness. In return, the first-footer receives a drink. But that's not all.

People used to compete vigorously for the honor of being a first-footer, and ran races from door to door. Their hosts might or might not be happy to welcome the

visitors. If the first-footer were a woman, it meant bad luck for the year. But it was good luck if the first person across the threshold were a man, especially one known to have been born feet foremost — still better if he happened to be dark rather than fair.

Turkey leftovers can be frozen

Turkey leftovers are as traditional as Christmas Day turkey itself. They're great to have on hand for quick and tasty meals. But food specialists at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food remind us how important it is to take proper care of leftover turkey to ensure good quality and safety.

To maintain food safety, timing is important. Do not leave the cooked turkey and stuffing at room temperature for more than two hours. Before storing the

turkey, first remove all of the stuffing. Then remove the meat from the carcass in as large pieces as possible. The carcass can then be used for making soup stock. Store the stuffing and turkey separately. Wrap both tightly to prevent drying. Store in the refrigerator for up to two days. If you can't use the turkey and stuffing within this time, then freeze them.

To freeze turkey, wrap the meat in freezer packaging or, if desired, slice and place in a freezer container and

cover with gravy, sauce or broth. To freeze stuffing, package it tightly in its own container and freeze.

Plan to use the plain turkey meat within one month and the turkey covered with gravy within three months. Stuffing should be used

within two months.

When it comes time to use the turkey leftovers, thaw them in the refrigerator, and use them in sandwiches, soups, casseroles, turkey pies and salads. Plan for lots of good eating from Ontario turkey at Christmas and afterwards too.

Why the word Hogmanay? That's a mystery still — similar words occur elsewhere, but origins are uncertain, at best.

Holiday foods entertaining ideas

Holiday season entertaining is on many people's minds. To help you meet the challenge and get organized for your guests, food specialists at the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food offer a few helpful suggestions.

Keep it simple. Plan to serve foods that can be prepared ahead and stored at room temperature or in the freezer. For example, make up regular size and or individual quiches with different fillings such as

cheese and onion, mushroom and ham. They can be stored in the refrigerator for up to three days or frozen for about one month and used for main courses, appetizers or party snacks. Crepes are another great idea. Crepes can be made in large batches and frozen. Some of the crepe fillings can also be frozen, or prepared the day before and refrigerated.

Savories such as meatballs and sausage rolls can be made and frozen until needed. You can also prepare batches of mini pastry shells and store tightly covered or freeze. Just before serving, prepare some fillings, such as chopped pork, chicken, roast beef or egg.

If you have a favorite casserole dish, such as beef bourguignon, veal or pork goulash or lasagna, that you like to serve to guests, prepare them now and store in the freezer. It's easy to reheat these prepared dishes when guests arrive.

Remember to keep on hand a good supply of staples such as canned vegetables, fruit and juices. They'll come in handy for those unexpected occasions.

Plan ahead, keep it simple, and you'll be ready for the holiday season.

Pinata fun gets break

A joyous Christmas tradition for Mexican boys and girls is the breaking of the pinata, a decorated earthen jar.

Sometimes, the pinata may be a caricature of people or animals.

When it's broken, the pinata releases a bounty of delicious fruits, sweets, nuts and toys.

The children scramble to claim as many goodies as possible.

The pinata is suspended by a rope that can raise or lower it.

SYLLABUB, ANYONE?

That popular holiday-party drink known as Eggnog is a modern version of an old English drink called syllabub, which was a spiced mixture of wine and milk.



and everything good for Christmas!

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Let us remember the message brought by the One whose birth we celebrate and apply to those challenges and may the season represent a renewal for us all.

Best wishes from

*Julian, Deanna
Christopher, Robert & Melanie Reed*