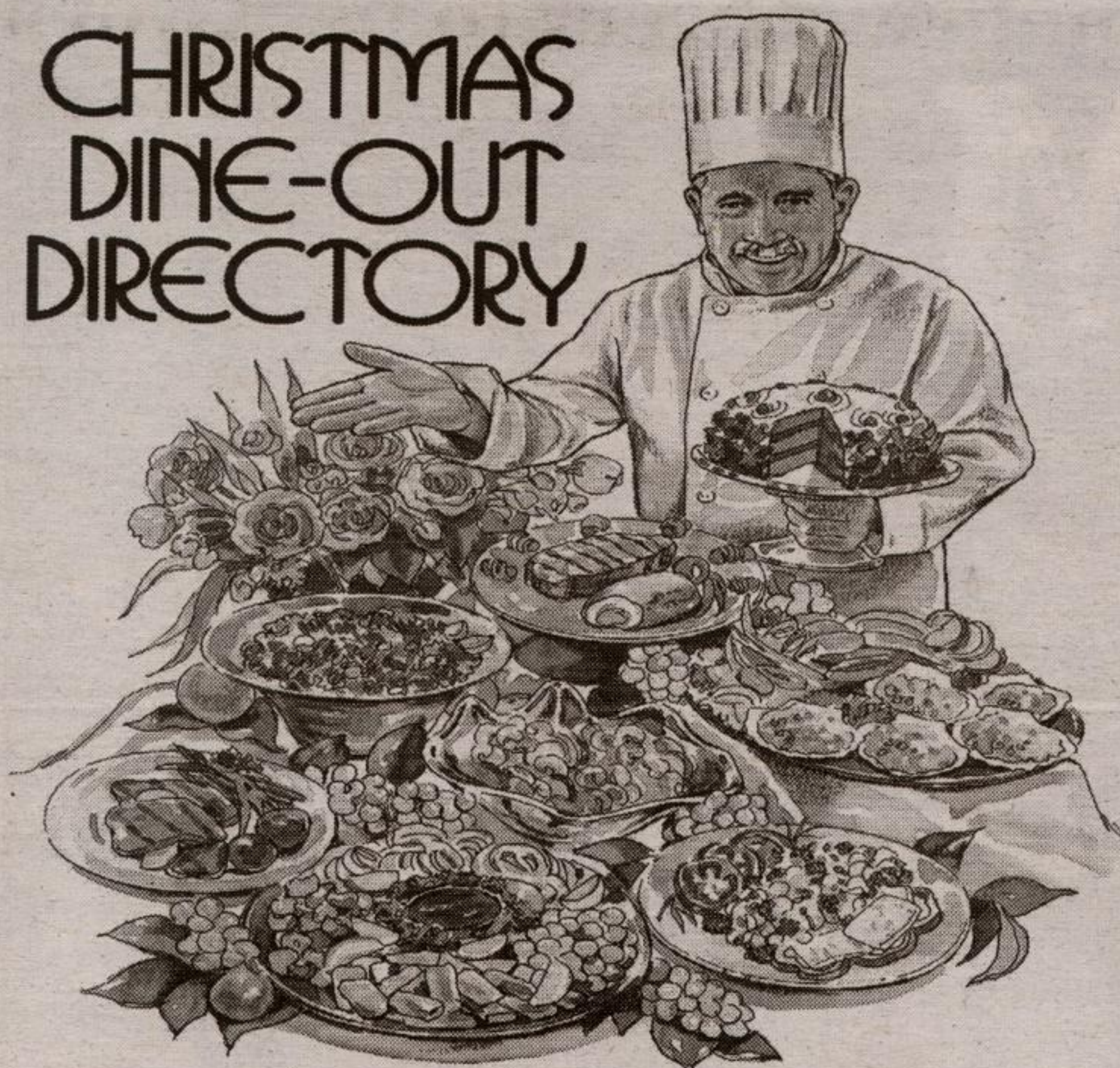


CHRISTMAS DINE-OUT DIRECTORY



Christmas trees are traced back to Alsace in France

Most Canadian homes have a Christmas tree in their home during Christmas and New Year's usually evergreens that can withstand the heat for a few weeks. Growing and selling the trees has become an industry and artificial trees are also popular.

The Christmas tree is a mandala, a bundle of symbols showing what creation has to offer: light and the movement of angels, the gifts of orchard and field, forest and sea, all topped off by the star that pointed to the end of the journey, the place of peace.

During Advent in the 11th century, scenes called mysteries, including one about Paradise, were very popular. A tree decorated with red apples symbolized the tree of Paradise.

During the 15th century, Christians began to put up trees in their own houses on December 24, the feast day of Adam and Eve.

However, the first Christmas tree as we know it, appeared in Alsace in 1521. It was introduced to France by the Princess Helene de Mecklembourg, who brought one to Paris, after her marriage to the Duke of Orleans.

In the 18th century, the custom of decorating a Christmas tree was well established in Germany, France and Austria.

In 1841, Prince Albert (originally from Germany), husband of Queen Victoria,



a table covered with a white damask tablecloth. It was decorated with garlands, candies and paper flowers.

The Christmas tree was introduced to Canada around the end of the 18th century before it became a common practice in England. The various ornaments in which it was decorated were first made at home before being commercially produced.

In the middle of the 17th century, Christmas trees were illuminated with little candles. These were replaced at the beginning of the 20th century by electric bulbs, much safer than lighted candles. Other variations like outdoor and artificial Christmas trees started to appear around the beginning of the 20th century and the custom is gaining acceptance in other parts of the world.

set up a Christmas tree at Windsor Castle in England. From the royal court, the custom of Christmas trees spread quickly to the middle class and then to working people.

For Victorians, a good Christmas tree had to be six branches tall and be placed on

Poinsettia were discovered in Mexico

The tradition of decorating homes for Christmas actually dates back to c1860 when merchants sold holly leaves and mistletoe balls to their wealthy customers as house decorations.

Garlands woven with flowers were also made to hang on mirror frames, over doors and mantelpieces. Baskets of dried, wax or paper flowers decorated tables.

Later, these decorations would be replaced by poinsettias, introduced to North America by American botanist Joel Robert Poinsett. He saw the plant in Mexico in 1825 when he was the American ambassador to that country, and it's been a popular Christmas flower since.



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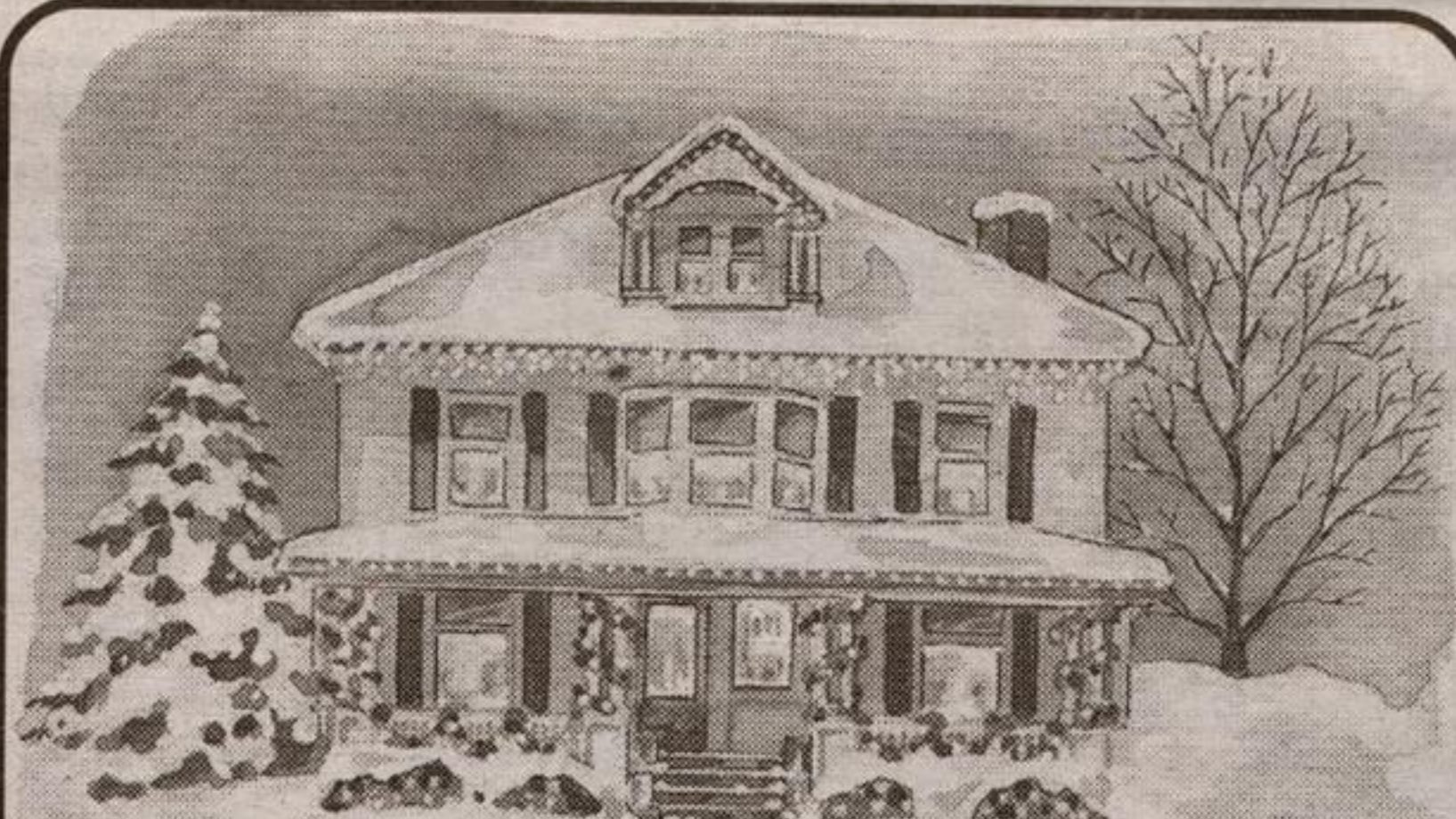
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STRAW STARS: Christine Wenger displays straw stars for decorating Christmas trees or Christmas gifts. Wenger made the ornaments and sold them at the Lioness' Club Christmas bazaar Saturday in Rockmosa. - Maggie Petrushevsky photo

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