This unit study is a combined effort of several people.
Belinda Mooney - www.learningtreasures.com
Hanan Ammar - www.funsocialstudies.com
Sandra Harris - www.forachildsheart.com
Sally Murphy - www.aussiereview.com
Shelly Hazard
Michelle Jones
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Welcome to Christmas Around the World! This is a wonderful way to explore Christmas with your children or class! On this page there are some general activities that, rather than list over and over, we are including here because they go with any of the countries!

There are many ways you can use this unit study. As a family, homeschool co-op or classroom. A really fun thing to do is hold a Christmas Around the World night. Have each family represent a different country. In their display they could include a map, flag, food and craft. The ideas are endless.

Another way to use this is to have your children start a Christmas notebook. Let them decorate the cover any way they like. Include their coloring sheets, any info you give them, photos of the crafts they made and copies of the recipes they cooked! It will be a memory they and you will treasure.

We recommend that you use a world map and then individual maps if you like.

Add each country to your world map as you explore it.  
Cook food from that country.  
Draw or color the flag from that country.  
Read the material through and think of things you can do that goes along with the information.  
Sing traditional songs from that country.  
Learn how to say Merry Christmas in that language.  
Learn what Santa Claus is called in that country.  
But most of important of all - HAVE FUN!

You will find at least one recipe and craft idea for each country.  
We have also tried to include a coloring sheet for each one. In the back you will find puzzles and other general Christmas fun!
When is Christmas?

Most people probably think this is a silly question. They would be wrong, though. Christmas is not celebrated on December 25 everywhere in the world. The Christian religion can be divided into two main groups according to which calendar they follow. Most churches follow the Gregorian calendar and celebrate Christmas on December 25. Others, such as the Egyptian, Russian and Eastern Orthodox Churches, follow the Julian calendar and celebrate it on January 7. This is why:

In the eighth century BC the Romans introduced the Roman calendar. This started in March and only had ten months, December was the tenth, or last month. Eventually the Romans realized they had made a mistake, and added two more months before March, bringing the total to 12. They still hadn't got it right, though, and only had 355 days in the year. Gradually the days moved backwards and the seasons didn't fall in the same month.

Realizing this was wrong, Julius Caesar had a new calendar made in 46 BC. This one had 365 and one-quarter days per year, so a leap year was added every four years. This was still not quite right, and every 128 years there was an extra day. Over the next 1500 years, seasons again began to change.

Finally, the Gregorian calendar, or the one we use today, was introduced. This happened in 1528. Pope Gregory VIII made alterations to the leap years, so that they would not be celebrated every four years. Sometimes we skip a leap year. To get everything back on track, in the year 1582, ten days were dropped from the calendar (just for that year).

Now, if you are not confused enough already, here comes an even more confusing piece of the puzzle! Some churches decided to keep the Julian calendar, just for religious purposes, although they have the Gregorian calendar for everyday use. When the Gregorian calendar was introduced the people who followed it had December 25 ten days before the people who followed the Julian calendar. The ones following the Julian calendar would slowly have Christmas move back a day. To save confusion all round, they decided to celebrate Christmas on January 7 of the Gregorian calendar.

Who Decided When Christmas Was?

Although most people believe that Christmas has been celebrated on December 25, since the birth of Christ, this isn't true. The earliest known celebrations of Christmas happened in about 200 AD. At that time there was no fixed date for Christmas, and it was held on various dates throughout the year, depending on where you lived. In 354 AD, Bishop Liberus of Rome finally set the date for all Christians to celebrate Christmas, on December 25. Although it is said, and taught, that this is the day Christ was born, we don't actually know that for a fact. Besides which, because of all the calendar changes, December 25 now and then are completely different days. Before Christianity came to most places, there were pagan holidays. People were happy to become Christian and give up their pagan worship, but they were not as happy to give up their holidays. The Early Christian leaders understood this. In order to keep the people
happy they placed the Christian holidays on or about the same days as the pagan ones. If they had put them in between the pagan holidays, people may have continued to celebrate them. By placing the Christian holidays at the same time people gradually gave up the pagan holidays in favor of the Christian ones. This may seem like some sort of sneaky move, but it wasn't. For the church, the most important thing was to get people to give up their pagan holidays and celebrate the Christian ones; the exact dates didn't matter as much. There are many other examples of Christian holidays replacing pagan ones, including Easter and All Saints Day.

**What is Christmas Eve?**

Before International dates, time zones and the like were introduced, days used to begin at sunset. This meant that the evening was the beginning of the day. So Christmas Eve was actually Christmas day, national dates, time zones and the like. Now, because days begin at midnight, Christmas Eve falls on December 24. In some countries the main celebration of Christmas is still held on December 24, after sunset, following the old tradition.

**Who is Santa Claus?**

Most people think that Santa Claus has nothing to do with the religious side of Christmas. In some ways they are right. However, Santa Claus is actually supposed to be Saint Nicholas. Up until the 1930's he was shown in paintings to look like an ordinary person, dressed normally but wearing a red cloak. Then in the 1930's the Coca-Cola Company ran an advertisement showing Santa Claus the way we know him now; rather fat and jolly, with his red suit and long white whiskers. He was much more appealing to children this way, and so the image stuck. How St Nicholas got dragged into Christmas is another story.

**St Nicholas**

St. Nicholas is the patron Saint of Children. He was a fourth Century Bishop of the Turkish City of Myra. His parents died when he was a child and an Uncle encouraged him to become a priest. As an Archbishop he wore a red cloak, which is where the pictures of Santa wearing red come from.

There are many legends told about him, including the fact that he raised three boys from the dead. The raising of these boys is why he is the patron saint of children. That still doesn't really explain how he got involved in Christmas, though. Another legend told about him is that he helped three young girls to get married. In those days a girl had to have a dowry to be married. This meant that she had to offer her husband money. These girls were the daughters of a once-wealthy businessman. He had lost all his money, and could not afford to give his daughters a dowry. St Nicholas heard of the problem and is supposed to have thrown three bags of gold up through a window. The story continues to say that one landed in a stocking that was hung by the fireplace to dry.
The Dutch were the first nation to celebrate St Nicholas Day. St. Nicholas Day is celebrated on December 6, or more properly, on the evening of December 5. They call him Sinterklaas. Sinterklaas comes down through the chimney and leaves sweets and other goodies in the shoes of children who have been good. He is accompanied by his helper, Peter. Peter is said to take away children who have not been good. For some reason, which has never been understood, Saint Nicholas and Peter are said to live in Spain. Each year they arrive in the Netherlands by ship, and remove all the badly behaved children the same way. No one can ever remember anyone one being quite bad enough to be taken away, though!

Dutch settlers to America introduced the idea of Sinterklaas to all the other settlers, and that is how Santa Claus came about. Some European countries still celebrate St. Nicholas Day on December 6 and have Santa Claus come visiting again on Christmas Eve. In the UK Santa Claus is known as Father Christmas.

Where Do Christmas Trees Come From?

Christmas trees were originally part of the German Christmas celebrations. Like St. Nicholas, they have gradually been adopted and incorporated into Christmas tradition around the world. In Germany the tree is still one of the most important parts of the celebrations for children. Traditionally the tree held candles, fruit, nuts and cookies, but now it also has tinsel, glitter ornaments and toys hanging from it. It is put up during the afternoon of Christmas Eve, in a locked room, and children only get to see it after eating a special meal. In Germany children are told either Santa Klaus or the Kristkind (Christ child) put up the tree.

How Did Christmas Cards begin?

Christmas cards were introduced in Britain in 1840, with the postal service, and penny stamps. In those days a penny was a lot of money, and printed cards were very expensive and hard to come by. As the postal service improved, along with printing methods, cards became more popular. By about 1860 they were fairly common.

When they first began were very expensive and hard to find, Christmas cards showed religious scenes and often had religious text in them. Nowadays, they can have just about any picture on them, including winter scenes, and most do not contain any reference to religion.
How Christmas was Celebrated in Colonial America

The Pilgrims landed in Plymouth, Massachusetts in December of 1620. The only thing on their minds that year was survival. They had to work and work fast to get homes up and make it through the rest of the winter. But after that first year how did they celebrate? Or did they celebrate at all?

In the 1600’s there were two groups of people that had come to America, The Puritans and the Separatists. The Pilgrims were the latter but both frowned on the frivolous celebrations by the church on religious holidays. In England they had become very rowdy and excuse for all kinds of wild celebrating. The Separatists, while understanding the Meaning of Christmas, did not think it should be mixed with public celebration.

Here is what Governor Bradford had to say in 1621.

“The day called Christmas Day ye Govr cal’d them out to worke (as was used) but ye moste if this new company excused themselves, and said yt went against their consciences to work on yt day. So ye Gown’r tould them that if they made it a matter if conscience, he would spare them until they were better informed. So he led ye rest away and left them; but when they came home at noon from their work he found them in ye street at play openly, some pitching ye bar, and some at stoolball and such like sports. So he went to them and took away their implements and tould them it was against his conscience that they should play and others work. If they had made the keeping of it matter of devotion, let them keep it in their houses, but their should be no gameing or reveling in ye streets. Since which time nothing hath been attempted in that way, at least openly.”

In 1659 the General Court of Massuchusetts banned private celebrations as well as public of any holiday such as Christmas. The fine was five shillings. As more and more people arrived that were not Puritans it was hard to enforce and it was finally repealed in 1681. The New England dislike of celebrating Christmas continued well into the 1800’s.

But while things were being discouraged in the North it was a bit different further south. In Jamestown, VA Christmas was celebrated but it was a private, simple celebration. Often in was started off by the shooting of guns, hunting and parties by the wealthier citizens. They continued the simple but happy celebrations until January 6 or Twelfth Night. This was probably the most important day, even mores so then Christmas Day. A church service with dinner following was the norm. The tradition was to bake a cake and put a bean in it. If you got the bean you were King or Queen for a day. They were known to give gifts on New Years as well as Christmas. Gifts were given by parents to children, masters to servants, etc. Children, slaves or servants did not give gifts to their parents or masters.

In New Amsterdam they followed Dutch tradition and the children put out shoes filled with hay.
The first time a Christmas tree was probably seen was during 1776. George Washington crossed the Delaware and attacked the Hessian troops there who were celebrating. They decorated trees with paper flowers, candy and small treats. So over all Christmas was not celebrated in Colonial America and when it was, it was a quiet, private time. It was not until the 1900’s that celebrating Christmas became wide spread throughout America.

- Mark the date George Washington attacked the Hessians on your timeline.
- Write a letter to Governor Bradford telling why you either disagree or agree with his decision on celebrating Christmas.
- How can you celebrate Christmas simply this year?

Calico Potpourri Ornaments

1. Cut small round circles from calico.
2. Put a small amount of potpourri in the center.
3. Gather it up and fasten with yarn or ribbon.
4. Add a hanger.
5. The heat from the lights will help the potpourri give off a sent.

Tiny Christmas Fruitcakes

Makes 3 dozen

1/4 pound candied cherries (quartered)
3 candied pineapple slices, chopped
2-1/4 cups chopped ards and the seasons didn't fall nuts
1/2 cup flour
1 can Eagle Brand condensed milk
3 Tablespoons butter, melted
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
1 teaspoon orange extract
Grand Marnier for soaking baked cakes

Grease tiny muffin tins very well. Preheat oven to 300 degrees. Place pan of boiling water in oven (bottom rack) when baking. Chop candied fruits and toss with the flour. Mix in the rest of the ingredients and fill the muffin tins 3/4 full. Bake 30 to 35 minutes. Remove from tins when done and put on a rack to cool. Spoon Grand Marnier over each fruitcake (repeat each day for three days). Store in an airtight
How Christmas is Celebrated in Ireland

To the Irish, Christmas is a time for religious celebration rather than revelry. The manger scene is in most houses and there are a few Christmas trees. The best-known Christmas custom is that of putting a candle in the window, often decorated with some greenery, on Christmas Eve. The idea is to help light the way of the Holy Family or any other poor traveler out on such a night. After the evening meal, the table is also set with bread and milk and the door left unlocked as a symbol of hospitality that the family is offering to Mary and Joseph and the little one to come. The only festive note that is struck is in the pudding that caps the meal. Three puddings are made early in December, one each for Christmas, New Year’s, and Twelfth Night. The day after Christmas, St. Stephen's Day, witnesses the rowdy old custom of hunting the wren, when boys go from door to door with a wren on a stick (today the wren is not a real one), singing the traditional song and begging for treats.

According to Fntansh Christmas is like this in Ireland

Christmas in Ireland (An Nollaig) starts very early, with cards and decorations in the shops from October. Plum Pudding which is the traditional Christmas Day desert is made early as it takes a few weeks to mature. Christmas fruit cake is made and iced just before Christmas. Children often use advent calendars to count down the days to Christmas. Christmas trees are brought in anytime in December and decorated with colored lights, tinsel and baubles. Some people favor the angel on top others the star. The house is decorated with garlands, candles, holly, and ivy. Wreaths are hung on the door and some people hang mistletoe. Cribs (sets of figures representing the nativity) are also common, and churches have large versions which are put out at before Christmas. Christmas gifts (usually of money) are made to people who perform services throughout the year, milkman, dustbin men (garbage) etc. Christmas cakes, Plum puddings and mince pies are made. Mulled wine is often drunk around Christmas, especially after a cold evenings carol singing! People do sometimes go out carol singing to raise money for charity.

On Christmas eve children put out stockings or in some cases pillow cases, on the end of their bed for Father Christmas to fill. Adults often go to midnight Mass (Catholic) or midnight Service (Protestant) to see in Christmas day. Some people open their gifts then in the middle of the night! Children opening their stockings in the morning traditionally find an apple in the toe and an orange or tangerine in the heel. Many people include a bag of chocolate coins with the tiny toys. Some people sit down to Christmas dinner at lunchtime, often as late as 3 pm. There is no traditional appetizer, but its likely to be something like smoked salmon with brown soda bread, Prawn cocktail or something similar. The main course is fairly standard - turkey, a ham, stuffing, cranberry sauce, bread sauce, sausages, potatoes and vegetables. Dessert is Christmas Plum Pudding with brandy or rum sauce or brandy butter and cream. Mince pies are also eaten. The table will usually have crackers to be pulled during the meal. Christmas cake is usually cut in the afternoon on Christmas day. Some families eat their main meal in the evening, serving main dishes of spiced beef (another traditional Irish Christmas food). This is beef that has been spiced over several days and cooked and then pressed. It can be served hot but is usually served cold at some stage over the holiday period. Pantomimes traditionally
start on Saint Stephen’s Day and yes, men do play the women's parts and women the men's parts with a few exceptions. The handsome prince will be played by a girl, but so would Cinderella or Snow White. The step mother is always a man, as are the ugly sisters. Subjects include, Babes in the Wood, Cinderella, Sleeping Beauty, Puss in Boots. In Dublin each year, there are at least 2 pantomimes going on. The 6th of January is the official day when all the decorations are removed.

Some fun things the Irish do
• Place lighted candles in the windows. They are usually red and
decorated with Holly.
• Bake a seed cake for everyone on the house.
• Make 3 puddings. One for Christmas Day, Twelfth Night and one for New Years Eve.
• Sing carols
• Put out nativity scenes

Some fun things for you to do!
• Go caroling!
• Make Dixie cup candles and put them in your windows.

Irish Soda Scones

3 cups plain flour
1 teaspoon cream of tartar
1 cup of buttermilk
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon baking powder

Stir together dry ingredients and mix lightly with hands. Make a hollow in the centre and add enough buttermilk to make a soft dough. Turn onto floured board and knead quickly and lightly until the dough is free from cracks. Roll out until 1/4 inch thick and cut into rounds. Place on greased oven sheet and bake at 350 degrees till lightly browned.

Irish Spiced Beef

Ingredients
20 cloves
2 tsp ground allspice or cinnamon
6 Shallots
2 tsp Prague Powder (can be obtained from the Sausage Maker, 26 military Rd, Buffalo, N.Y. 14207)
1 Pound Kosher Salt (coarse)
1 tsp black pepper
three tsp. ground mace
7-8 lb. beef.
2-3 bay leaves
ground nutmeg

Instructions:
1. Grind all dry ingredients and mix.
2. Add finely chopped shallots.
3. Rinse beef and place in plastic or glass container (avoid iron).
4. Take 1 seventh of the spice/salt mixture and rub it all over the meat. Place meat back into container, cover and
set out on the back porch or in a cool spot - if too warm out place in fridge. Each day for seven days rub the meat with one seventh of the mixture, turn over and re-cover. Leave the liquid that forms with the meat.

5. At the end of seven days place meat and liquid into a big pot - add water to top up and cover the meat and boil until the meat is tender. (A fork should just barely be able to lift up strands of meat - don't over do it!) Change water adding clean water and boil for another 30 minutes.

6. Then add veg - large carrots, onions, and potatoes - cook until done. You can eat this hot or leave to cool over-night - place meat into colander with weight on it and plate or dish under it.

**Apple-Barley Pudding**

4 TBSP Pearl barley  
1 1/2 lb apples - Peeled, cored and sliced  
3 TBSP Sugar  
3/4 cup heavy cream  
1 TBSP lemon juice

Put the barley in the water and bring to the boil. Add the sliced apples and continue cooking gently until the barley and apples are soft. Press through a sieve, or put through the blender, and put back in the saucepan. Add the sugar and lemon juice and bring to the boil again. Remove from the heat, allow to cool, and then chill. Serve cool with the cream stirred.

**Make Paper Candles**

Let small children make these candles for their windows. Paint toilet paper tubes red, cut out yellow flames and glue to the inside. Glue onto a cardboard circle base painted green or paint it yellow and add a handle. Decorate with artificial greenery.

*Santa Claus is called Father Christmas in Ireland*
How Spain Celebrates Christmas  
by Sandra Harris

Spain is one of the largest countries in Europe. Although it shares land boundaries with France and Portugal, most of Spain is bordered by the Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Spain's nearest southern neighbors are Morocco and Algeria - their influence on Spain can especially be tasted in southern Spain's cuisine. The predominant religion of Spain is Catholicism, with the Virgin Mary being Spain's patron saint. So Christmas is quite understandably a major celebration!

For many people in Spain, the Christmas season begins on December 8 when the Immaculate Conception is celebrated. In the city of Seville, there is a costumed dance to celebrate the occasion. In some places, boys perform an elaborate dance on the cathedral steps.

During the weeks before Christmas, manger scenes called "nacimientos" are set up in the homes or courtyards. These are often very elaborate and much larger than the manger scenes typically found in the U.S. Families gather around their nacimientos to sing while the children dance and play tambourines.

On the winter solstice (the shortest day of the year), many people celebrate a very old tradition of lighting bonfires called "hogueras." Some people jump over the fire as a symbolic ritual of protection against illness. This tradition can primarily be found in Granada and Jaen.

It is common to hear carols being sung or played by hand bells by various groups throughout the city or village. Carolers are often accompanied by musicians playing mandolins, tambourines and guitars. Also common are the Christmas Markets, where shoppers are enticed by piles of fruits, flowers, marzipan and other sweets, candles, decorations and hand-crafted Christmas gifts.

On Christmas Eve as dusk falls, people return home from shopping, playing, visiting and working. Tiny oil lamps are lighted and placed in the windows, and preparations begin for the big family Christmas dinner. Before midnight, the church bells ring out and everyone stops what they are doing to attend "La Misa del Gallo," the Mass of the Rooster, a candlelight church service.

After midnight (and never before), the family Christmas dinner is eaten. The main dish is often "Pavo Trufado de Navidad," Christmas Turkey with Truffles. After dinner, families usually gather around the Christmas tree to sing carols and play through the wee hours of the morning. There is an old Spanish proverb that says, "Esta noche es Noche-Buena, Y no es noche de dormir" (rough translation: This night is the Good-Night, and it's not a night to sleep).

An old custom that nearly died out but is being revived in some places is that of Olentzero, a charcoal burner/coal miner who comes down from the mountains to tell the good news of Christ's birth. In some towns, Olentzero is carried throughout the town on the shoulders of various groups of men as he shouts out the good news.
Much of Christmas Day is spent at church, at feasts and at other general merry-making activities. Swings are set up in the courtyards and young people spend the day swinging to the accompaniment of singing and laughter. In some parts of Spain, Papa Noel delivers gifts to the children, but in most parts children must wait until Epiphany for their gifts.

Another interesting Christmas tradition occurs in Catalonia. A hollow tree trunk is filled with nuts, sweets and small gifts. Children hit at the tree trunk, trying to knock out the goodies.

**Epiphany**

On January 5, the Eve of Epiphany, children place their shoes on the doorstep. Sometimes the shoes are filled with straw, barley or carrots. Children hope that the Three Wise Men will pass by during the night and fill their shoes with gifts. Some children leave old shoes filled with hay in the windows for the Three Wise Men's horses. The Three Wise Men are seen everywhere throughout the Christmas season. They visit hospitals and orphanages and pretty much play the same role that Santa plays in other countries. Spanish children are very fond of the Three Wise Men, with Balthazar being a particular favorite. On January 6, Epiphany is celebrated with community parades where more candies and cakes are distributed to the children.

**Activities**

- Make tree trunk pinata and fill it with candy. Break it at your Christmas party.
- Make up your own special Christmas dance and perform it for someone.
- Set out a shoe full of grass for the wise men and their donkey.
- Read about the wise men in Matthew. How old do you think Jesus really was when the came?

**Marzipan Wreath**

Yield: 36 wreaths  
Ingredients:
- 1/2 pound of blanched almonds, chopped  
- 1/4 cup of granulated sugar  
- 1 large egg white  
- 1 cup of confectioner's sugar  
- 1 Tablespoon of water  
- 1 teaspoon of almond extract  

Orange Glaze:
- 1 cup of confectioner's sugar  
- 4 teaspoons of milk  
- 1/4 teaspoon of grated orange peel  
- colored sugar for decoration (green or red are the most obvious choices, but children might have other creative ideas!)

Directions:
Ø Process the almonds and granulated sugar in a food processor or a blender until the almonds are ground to fine crumbs (cornmeal consistency).
Ø Beat the egg white, confectioner's sugar, water and almond extract in a mixing bowl until well blended. Ø Add the almond mixture, stirring to make a thick paste.
Ø Sprinkle work surface with confectioner's sugar. Roll the dough by rounded teaspoons into 3 ½ -inch long
ropes about 3/8 of an inch thick. Shape the ropes into rings. Transfer them to a wire rack. Let stand uncovered at room temperature until dry, about 24 hours.
Ø Make the Orange Glaze: Whisk all ingredients in a small bowl until smooth. Put the colored sugar in a small, shallow bowl
Ø Place the rope rings and wire rack over a sheet of wax paper. Dip the top of each ring into the Orange Glaze, then in the colored sugar. Let them stand on the wire rack until the glaze is hardened. Store in covered container for up to 2 weeks.

**Three Wise Men's Crowns**

These crowns are made from felt so that they will withstand lots of play from year to year. The use of glittered fabric paint makes them washable (by hand in cold water).

**Materials:**
Felt, about 24” x 4” per crown (1/4 yard of 45” wide felt will make two crowns for young children; size of head and width of fabric will determine how much yardage is needed)
Velcro, about 3” per crown
Fabric paints in various colors
A variety of sequins and fake gems
Scissors
Needle and thread
Straight pins
Sewing machine (optional)  Paper and pencil

**Directions:**
Ø Have children sketch the crowns' shapes (front top) on 4-1/4” x 11” sheets of paper until they're satisfied with three different ones. They could be pointed, scalloped, or a variety of interesting lines and curves. Cut these out to use as patterns.
Ø Pin pattern to center of a felt strip. Cut the extending strips of felt (parts the paper doesn't cover) to a width of 2-3 inches. In the center, cut the crown's shape following the pattern, but do not cut the sides.
Ø Separate Velcro and sew one to each long end of crown, one on top side and one on back side - double-check this before sewing to make sure they're positioned correctly. Using Velcro allows you to adjust crowns to fit many head sizes and they can grow as your children grow
Ø Decorate crowns with fabric paints, sequins, fake gems and anything else you decide appropriate. Use the fabric paint as glue to adhere the objects unless you want to sew each on by hand. Allow paint to dry thoroughly before wearing crowns -- follow manufacturer's instructions. Some paints need to be heat-set with an iron.

**Game: Lucky Strike (or Lucky Hit)**

Preparation: Make a large cardboard tube from poster board or an old appliance box to represent a tree trunk.
Tape cardboard (duct tape works well) to the bottom. Fill with candy, nuts, fruit, small toys and wadded newspaper for filler. You might want to weight the bottom with something heavy, like a few old magazines, before filling the trunk. Tape more poster board or newspaper over the top. Set it in the center of a large open area.

To Play: Children take turns hitting the tree trunk with a broom handle or something similar. Older children can be blindfolded and twirled around a few times before trying to hit the trunk to make the fun last longer. Once the trunk is broken and things start to spill out, everyone gets to share the contents.
**How Christmas is Celebrated in Mexico**

La Posadas," the remarkable buildup to Christmas Eve, is perhaps the most delightful and unique Mexican tradition. Beginning December 16th, it commemorates the events in the journey of Mary and Joseph from Nazareth to Bethlehem. After dark, each night of the "Posada," a procession begins led by two children. The children carry a small pine-decorated platform bearing replicas of Joseph and Mary riding a burro. Other members of the company, all with lighted long slender candles, sing the "Litany of the Virgin" as they approach the door of the house assigned to the first "Posada." Together they chant an old traditional song and awaken the mast of the house to ask lodging for Mary. Those within the house threaten the company with beatings unless they move on. Again, the company pleads for admittance. When the owner of the house finally learns who his guests are, he jubilantly throws open the doors and bids them welcome. All kneel around the manger scene or "Nacimiento" and offer songs of welcome, Ave Marias and a prayer.

Now it's time of the "Pinata," refreshments and dancing. The "Pinata" is a pottery (or paper) container, brightly decorated and filled with candy and toys. It is hung from he ceiling or a tree. One by one, the children are blindfolded, turned around and instructed to strike the Pinata with a stick. Usually several attempts are made before the container is broken. Of course, when that happens, there is an explosion of goodies and a scattering of children.

On Christmas Eve another verse is added to the Ave Marias, telling the Virgin Mary that the desired night has come. Small children dressed as shepherds stand on either side of the nativity scene while members of the company kneel and sing a litany, after which the Christ Child is lulled to sleep with the cradle song, "El Rorro" (Babe in Arms). At midnight the birth of Christ is announced with fireworks, ringing bells and blowing whistles. Devout worshipers surge into churches to attend the famous "Misa de Gallo" or "Mass of the Rooster." Following Mass, families return home for a tremendous dinner of traditional Mexican foods. The dishes vary with the different regions. However, somewhat common are the ,"tamales," rice, rellenos, "atole" (a sweet traditional drink) and "menudo," which is said to be more sobering than strong coffee.

Christmas Day has no special celebration though many have adopted the American style of Christmas with a Christmas tree and Santa Claus.(According to www.californiamall.com all rights reserved)

C. Andrews tell us this about mexico:
The poinsettia is native to Mexico and is believed to have first been used in connection with Christmas in the 17th century when Mexican Franciscans included the flowers in their Christmas celebration. There is a legend connected with the flower. A little boy named Pablo was walking to the church in his village to visit the Nativity scene, when he realized he had nothing to offer the Christ Child. He saw some green branches growing along the roadside and gathered them up. Other children scoffed, but when he laid them by the manger, a brilliant red star-shaped flower appeared on each branch.
Fun things to do:

• Make a pinata
• Plan your own Posada - have a procession to a neighbor’s house.
• Make a nativity scene to set up.

Champurrado (Chocolate Atole)

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.

Arroz Dulce (Rice Sweet)

¾ cup rice
2/3 cup sugar
1 tsp. vanilla
4 cups milk
1 cup rich cream
¾ tsp. salt

Scald milk. Put the rice into a deep baking dish, cover with the hot milk, and bake in a moderate oven for 3 hours, or until the rice is soft. Stir occasionally during first hour to prevent sticking. If necessary, add more hot milk. When almost done, add vanilla, sugar, and cream, and finish baking.
**Poinsettia Napkin Rings**

Make rings of felt or green construction paper. Now use the pattern below or make your own out of felt and glue right on top the ring. If you print these out you might want to laminate them.

![Poinsettia Napkin Rings](image)

**Poinsettia Wreath**

You will need paper plates, poinsettia leaves of red and green or printouts of the pattern below. Cut the middle of the paper plate out leaving the rim. Glue your flowers around the rim. Add gold glitter or yellow beads to the center of the flowers for sparkle. You can also add red and green glitter to the outside of the leaves!

![Poinsettia Wreath](image)
How Christmas is Celebrated in Norway

At 4:00 p.m. all work comes to a halt on Christmas Eve in Norway. Everyone bathes and puts on new clothes to greet the season. The largest sheaf of grain is hung out for the birds to make their Christmas merry, too. Christmas dinner begins with rice pudding with a lucky almond hidden in it for someone, and a bowl is also set out for the barn elf so that he will continue to watch over the animals and not turn mischievous. A Christmas pig provides most of the meat dishes. Traditionally the Norwegians kept the season bright with a Yule log. It literally formed the center of the celebration since it was frequently an entire tree that could only partly fit into the fireplace and so extended well out into the middle of the living room. As it burned it would be pushed farther into the fire to provide continuous light and warmth through the whole Christmas season. The Christmas tree is taking the place of the Yule log today. The popularity of Santa Claus has resurrected an ancient Norse figure called Julesvenn. In ancient times he would come during the feast of Jul to hide lucky barley stalks around the house. Now he comes on Christmas Eve to bring gifts to good children.

After Christmas Day is past, children indulge in a custom much like trick or treat. It is called Julebukk and children wear costumes and go door to door asking for goodies. (according to C. Andrews all rights reserved)

Fun things to do
- Make a feast for the birds. See the activity below for a bagel bird feeder!
- Make a yule log and fireplace out of construction paper if you don't have a fireplace.

Julesvenn's Rice Pudding

3/4 cup old fashioned rice
4 cups milk
1 1/2 cups milk
1 cup raisins
2 eggs, beaten with an additional 1/2 c milk
1 tsp. salt
2 rounded tsp. cornstarch
1 tsp. vanilla
1 cup sugar

Bring rice and 4 cups milk to boil in double boiler, cover and reduce heat. Cook slowly 1 hour or more until soft. Stir occasionally. Put the 1 1/2 cups of milk in heavy pan and add cooked rice and raisins. Just before it comes to a boil, gradually add the rest of the ingredients which have been throughly mixed. Let come slowly to a boil, stirring to prevent curdling. Pour into a bowl and criss cross the top with sprinkled cinnamon. Don't forget to hide the surprise in one!

Bagel Bird Seed Feeders

You will need a bagel, peanut butter, bird seed and yarn.
Split your bagel in half. Spread both sides heavily with peanut butter. Place this bagel in a ziplock baggie with birdseed inside it. Shake to cover. remove bagel and tie a yarn around the top - through the hole. Leave a long piece to tie to the tree or your porch!
How Is Christmas Celebrated in Sweden?!

Sweden celebrates the feast of Santa Lucia on December 13th which is one of the shortest days of the year. The eldest daughter of each family dresses in a white gown and wears a wreath of light candles on her head to represent Santa Lucia.

Early in the morning, she prepares sweet cakes and coffee for each member of the family. She then wakes the rest of the family by singing the traditional song "Santa Lucia." On Christmas Eve, the children wait for Jultomten, also known as Father Christmas. Julskinka (Christmas ham) is usually the center of the table served with sweet and sour red cabbage together with other typical smörgåsbord dishes: meatballs § lutfisk (dried ling soaked in lye and then boiled) § prinskorv (small sausages) § gravad lax (salmon marinated in dill) § Janssons frestelse (type of potatoes gratin) § other types of sausages, cold meats, fish dishes and much more! § Glögg (mulled wine) is the main drink of the festive season.

The Jul gröt is a special Christmas porridge and contains one almond - the person who gets the almond is said to get good luck! Gifts often have a riddle attached to them to guess the contents. It is also traditional to dance around the Christmas tree singing songs. At midnight, the story of the first Christmas is read aloud and gifts are opened.

Christmas Day itself is very quiet. Its mainly for church services in the morning and quiet family time the remainder of the day. December 26 is St. Stephen's Day (Staffen) in honor of the patron saint of animals. An old tradition on this day was to give the farm animals extra food to eat.

The holiday season concludes on January 13 or the 20th day Knut. On this day the Christmas tree is taken down and Christmas is over for another year in Sweden. Though a famous song in Sweden says that "Christmas lasts until Easter - no, not true, we have the fast in between."

Who Was Santa Lucia?

According to legend, Lucia was a medieval saint who carried food and drink to hungry folk in the province of Värmland during a period of famine. She was seen across Lake Vänern with her white gown and crown of lights. Today's costume has the same gown and crown. The Lucia legend is said to have originated in Syracuse on the island of Sicily. A young girl, about to be a bride, gave her entire dowry to the poor of her village and admitted that she had become a Christian. She was accused of witchcraft and burned at the stake on December 13, 304 A.D.

Much later in history, the early Church made a saint out of her - Santa (Saint) Lucia. Italian artists sometimes picture her as a blind girl holding a lamp. She is a patron saint for Italian fishermen and she is said to help guide them home through the rough seas during a storm. There are many legends about her and in each one Lucia stands as a symbol of light and hope to all mankind. Santa Lucia's coming begins the feasting, merriment, singing and the spirit of friendliness and goodwill that lasts all through the holidays.
Another explanation is: Saint Lucia was a saint because of her kindness and her love. She was an Italian Christian who lived in Sicily in the 4th century. Some people believe she once visited Sweden. December 13th is also her feast day. The way she became a saint was that a man who loved her and Lucia didn't like him, Lucia's mother asked her to marry the man but she refused so the man heard about this and he said he would burn her. But Lucia prayed to God to have the power to survive the fire. Because of her kindness to others her wish was granted. The man tried to burn her but she had the power to withstand fire so the man got a sword and stuck it into Lucia's throat. Still Lucia survived for three more hours speaking beautiful words.

**Make a Lucia Wreath to Wear**

1. Cut out some green holly leaves and round red "berries" from construction paper or craft foam.
2. Cut out the center of a plain paper plate.
3. Cut out and color candles from construction paper. Fold the candles into tubes. Glue the candles to the BOTTOM of the paper plate. Space the candles equally around the plate. (You want the plate to form a hat.)
4. Glue the holly leaves and berries to the BOTTOM of the paper plate. Cover the plate well.
5. Enjoy your St. Lucia Wreath!! Be sure to wear it on December 13!!

**Recipes for a Swedish Christmas Celebration**

**Luciapepparkakor - Gingerbread Cookies**
1 cup corn syrup
1 1/2 cups light brown sugar
1 cup of butter or margarine
2 eggs
1 1/2 tbsp cloves
1 1/2 tbsp ginger
4 - 5 cups flour
1 tbsp baking soda

Warm in a big pot on low heat: syrup, sugar and butter until the butter melts, not longer. Put it aside to cool. Then mix in the eggs, spices, baking soda and flour (keeping some flour aside for rolling out the dough). Let the dough rest overnight at room temperature and cover with plastic or wax paper. The next day: roll the dough (quite thin) and cut out the cookies using a cookie cutter. Bake in an oven at 350-375° F for 6 minutes. This recipe makes about 150 cookies.

**Lussebullar or Lussekatter - (also known as Lucia Buns)**
1 tbsp saffron
3 tbsp yeast
1 cup butter or margarine
1/2 tsp salt
1 1/2 cups sugar
1/2 cup chopped almonds
1 cup raisins (optional)
6-7 cups flour

Topping:
1 beaten egg
coarse sugar
chopped almonds
raisins

Crush saffron and mix with a tbsp of sugar in a mortar. Warm the milk (not too hot) and melt the butter in the milk. Add the rest of the ingredients except for the yeast and flour. Mix the yeast in a separate bowl with a little of the flour. Add to mixture and mix well. Add the rest of the flour a little at a time. Knead and let rise in a warm place. Once risen, punch down and knead again. Roll the dough to whatever shape(s) you prefer. Place on a cookie sheet,
raise, brush with egg and sprinkle with coarse sugar, almonds, and raisins. Bake "small shapes" in a very hot oven at 375-400°F for 5 to 8 minutes and bake "larger shapes" at 350-375°F for 13 to 17 minutes.

**Julgrot**

| 1 cup regular long grain rice | 1 tablespoon butter | 1 cup water |
| 1 tablespoon sugar | 4 cups half-and-half | 1 teaspoon salt |
| 1 tablespoon butter | Cinnamon stick |
| 1 whole almond |

For garnish:

Warm cream  
Cinnamon  
Sugar

In a heavy saucepan combine rice, butter and water and salt. Bring to boil and cook covered for 10 minutes, or until water is just absorbed. Add half-and-half and cinnamon stick to above. Bring to boil, stirring continuously. Let simmer, covered, for about 45 minutes. The half-and-half should be almost absorbed. The results should be creamy and tender, not mushy. Add the extra butter, and some cream for extra richness.

Before serving, hide the almond in the porridge. Serve the porridge hot, with warm cream, cinnamon, and sugar. Whoever gets the almond will be married within the year!

"HAM A LA CAJSA WARG" (Swedish Ham)

7 to 9 lb. ham, slightly salted  
2 tsps. whole cloves  
2 tsps. Marjoram  
2 tsps. Allspice  
2 tsps. Rosemary  
6 bay leaves

Ham which is to be roasted in an oven must not be too salty and should be placed in plenty of cold water for approximately 12 hours. Remove the rind. Place the ham on a large piece of baking foil. Crush allspice, cloves, rosemary, marjoram and bay leaves in a mortar. Rub the spice mixture on all sides of the ham. Wrap the foil around the ham to make a tight package. Insert a meat thermometer through the foil so that the tip reaches the thickest and meatiest part of the ham. Place the ham in baking pan and bake it in the oven at 350F. The ham is ready when the thermometer shows 170F. "Ham a la Cajas Warg" can be served hot or cold with boiled potatoes, mustard, red cabbage or other vegetables.

**CABBAGE PUDDING**

(Casserole)

1 to 2 lb. head white cabbage  
4 1/2 T. Rice  
Salt  
approx one pound ground beef  
Butter for frying  
2/3 cup water  
1/4 tsp. Pepper  
1 cup milk

Cut off the bottom part of the stem of a head of white cabbage. Cut the cabbage into shreds or pieces. Brown them in butter in a frying pan. Boil rice in 2/3 cup water and 1/2 tsp. salt for approximately 20 minutes. Let the rice cool. Mix ground beef with 1 1/2 tsps. Salt and 1/4 tsp. pepper. Add the rice and 1 cup milk. Lay the cabbage and meat in alternate layers in a buttered oven-proof dish. The top and bottom layers should be cabbage. Bake in an oven at 350F. For ¾ to 1 hour. Serve with boiled potatoes.
How Christmas is Celebrated in Germany

The Christmas season begins early in Germany. On December 1 each child gets an advent calendar. The calendar is usually in the shape of a house, and has a window for each day from December 1 to December 24. Behind each window is some sort of goody; sometimes a small toy, but more often a sweet treat.

In some homes, on December 4, cherry tree or forsythia twigs are cut and placed in a vase in the sitting room so that they will blossom on Christmas Eve. This is supposed to represent the miracle of birth, since these plants should not blossom in winter.

One of the best days for children comes next. On December 6 St Nicholas comes to visit. The father of the house dresses up in a red cloak and brings with him a large book. In it is written whether or not the children have been good. Good children receive sweets and small toys. Children are threatened that if they are not good they will receive twigs instead, but of course it never happens. In some parts of the country St Nicholas is not seen by the children. Instead they leave their shoes out on the night of December 5 and awaken in the morning to find them full of goodies.

The next important event is Christmas Eve. Unlike children in other parts of the world, German children receive their gifts on Christmas Eve. All day they are locked out of the sitting room and forced to entertain themselves, or shipped off to grandparents. Usually the father prepares the tree while the mother prepares dinner. After dark, the whole family sits down to the specially prepared meal. After dinner a bell sounds and the sitting room is unlocked. This is the first glimpse the children have of the tree. The presents are arranged under the tree, but the children have to earn them first. Each child recites a poem or verse, and then the whole family joins in singing carols. When all of that is done, the children finally get to open their presents.

On Christmas Day there is another great meal, usually of fish or goose, and more presents are given out. This time to relatives and friends.

The Christmas Carol "Silent Night" originated in Germany. Here are the words to the first verse in German:
Stille Nacht! Hei'ge Nacht!
Alles schläft; einsam wacht
Nur das traut hoch heilige Paar.
Holder Knab' im lockigten Haar,
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!
Schlaf in himmlischer Ruh!

For those of you who have no idea of how to pronounce the words, here is a phonetic English version:
Shteal_lay Nahcht! Hi_lee_gay Nahcht!
Ah_lays shlayft; ine_sahm wachht
Noor dahs trou_tay hi_lee_gay Paar.
Hole_dare Knahb' eem low_kig_ten Haar,
Shtlah_fay in him_lish_air Roo!
Shtlah_fay in him_lish_air Roo!
Things to do:
• Bake some Lebkuchen and hang them on your tree (don't leave them too long!)
• Learn to sing "Silent Night" in German.
• Learn to say Merry Christmas in German: Fröhliche Weihnachten

The tradition of the Christmas tree comes from Germany.

Here is a cookie recipe that is very popular at Christmas time in Germany. The cookies can be cut into different shapes and decorated with white icing. Sometimes they are made in the shape of Christmas trees or bells and are hung on the tree.

**Lebkuchen (Spice Bars)**

- 2 cups honey
- 5 ½ cups flour
- ¾ cup grated unblanched almonds
- 1 tsp. Cinnamon
- ½ tsp. powdered cloves
- ¾ cup mixed candied fruits (orange, lemon and citron peel)
- ½ tsp. baking powder

Cooking Instructions:
Heat the honey, without boiling, until thin. Mix in all the other ingredients. Turn out onto a floured surface and knead until smooth. Place on a greased cookie sheet and bake in a preheated oven at 350 degrees for about 20 minutes, or until done. Ice them if you wish. You can spread the icing all over, or just pipe it in thin lines to make a design.
**How Christmas is Celebrated in England**

In England, the Christmas tree is usually put up the weekend before Christmas. The entire family helps with the decoration of it. Christmas celebrations don't really begin until Christmas Day itself. Before going to bed on Christmas Eve, children hang up a stocking. This gets filled with fruit and nuts and a small gift. The rest of the presents are placed under the tree.

Usually presents are distributed immediately on waking on Christmas Day. Most families attend some sort of religious celebration and then comes dinner. Dinner is traditionally turkey, roast and mashed potatoes and vegetables, one of which is always brussel sprouts. Along with the turkey is cranberry sauce. This is all followed by Christmas pudding, a steamed pudding made with fruit, served with a white sauce, like custard. Throughout the day there are various special foods available, including Christmas cake, a rich fruitcake, and mince pies. To people who do not live in England, mince pies come as something of a surprise. Ground beef is known as minced meat or mince in England. However, Christmas mince pies don't contain meat at all. Instead they are filled with a spicy fruit preserve called mincemeat!

After dinner many children then get a second round of gifts, from relatives, since the ones in the morning came from Father Christmas (Santa Claus). Although Christmas seems to begin a little late in England, it goes on for two days. The second day is known as Boxing Day.

Boxing Day is a Victorian tradition in England, and is celebrated in many countries that were colonized by the British. In Victorian times many families had servants who were expected to work on Christmas day. They were given the next day, Boxing Day, as a holiday instead. The servants weren't paid very much, so on Boxing Day they were given boxes of food and gifts to take to their families. It was also traditional for churches to have a collection box for the poor, and people gave generously on Christmas Day. This box was opened the day after Christmas and the contents distributed to the poor. It isn't quite clear where the name "Boxing Day" came from; the poor boxes in the churches, or the boxes of gifts the servants were given. These days few families have servants, but it is still traditional to give gifts to the poor on Boxing Day and it is a National holiday.

**Mince Pies**

- 12 oz. (350g) shortcrust pastry
- 1 lb. (450g) mincemeat
- icing sugar
- milk or egg for glazing

Cooking Instructions:
- Roll out the pastry to about one eighth of an inch in thickness.
- Using a 3 inch and a two and a quarter inch cutter, stamp out 20-22 larger and smaller rounds.
- Line two and a half inch patty pans with the large rounds.
- Fill the rounds with mincemeat.
- Damp the edges of the smaller pastry rounds and position on top of the larger, filled rounds.
- Make a slit in the top of each pie.
- Brush the tops of each pie with a little milk or egg to glaze.
- Bake in the top of a pre-heated oven at 425F, Gas mark 7, 210C for 15-20 minutes, until the mince pies are a golden brown in color.
- Cool on a wire rack then dust with icing sugar.
Christmas Santa Advent Calendar

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This is one of the cutest Christmas crafts my children have ever brought home from school. I'd like to share it with you quick, while there's still time to make one. Kids of any age will love this calendar, even big kids too. So get out those craft supplies and have some fun!

Materials needed:

Construction paper (White, Pink, Red, Green, Black)
Glue
Black Marker
25 Cotton Balls
Plastic bag or container
Tape

Sorry I can't provide a picture for you, but I will give you a description of it first to help you get the idea. The Santa calendar is approximately 12" high, and 9 1/2" wide. It is the face of a Santa, with the calendar numbers written on his beard in rows going from left to right. There are 3 rows of numbers, with the number 25 at the bottom of the beard by itself. It's just as cute as could be; I hope you will be able to make one.

The Beard: Cut a white piece of construction paper, about 7 1/2" long and 9 1/2" wide. It will be cut straight across on the top, but cut a scalloped edge all along the sides and bottom, shaping it into a beard. Be sure to leave it as wide as possible so the numbers will fit, you're really just shaping the edges and rounding the bottom corners. We will add the numbers after the Santa is finished.

The Face: Cut a pink piece of construction paper, 6 1/2" wide and 3 1/2" long, into an oval shape, making the bottom a little curvy for the cheeks. Glue the pink oval shaped face onto the top of the white beard, leaving an inch of the pink sticking out on the top, when you look at it from the back. This is where you put the child's name and the date. Next, cut 2 circles, 1 1/2" wide for the eyes and one slightly bigger for the nose. Glue these onto the pink face, leaving a little room at the top for the white rim of the hat which will slightly overlap.

The Hat: First cut a white piece of construction paper for the bottom band of the hat, this will be like a rectangle, but slightly curved, approximately 10" wide, and 2" long. Now glue this to the top of the face, just enough to cover the top edges of the beard. Then cut a piece of red construction paper for the main part of the hat. Ours is shaped similar to the top of an ice cream cone, but be creative and make it however you wish. The bottom is 8 1/2" wide, and total length is only 3", not including the corner tip, which is off to the side. Glue this to the top of the white band. Cut a 3" white circle for the cotton tip of the hat, and glue in place. Now cut 2 holly leaves from the green construction paper, approximately 1 1/2" wide, and 2 3/4" long. Glue these to the opposite corner of the hat from the white tip, just along the top of the white band. Now take a few paper punch dots from the red construction paper and glue these to the center of the holly leaves, where they meet.

Now, with a black marker, write the calendar numbers in 3 rows from left to right, going in a semi-circle under the pink face. The first row will be numbered 1 - 10, the second will be 11 - 19, the third will be further spaced and numbered 20 - 24, leaving the single number 25 to be centered at the bottom.

Place the cotton balls in a plastic container or baggie, each day your child will tape or glue a cotton ball onto the number for that day, by the time you get to Christmas, Santa’s beard will be full.
How Christmas is Celebrated in Egypt

Egypt is one of the countries that celebrates Christmas on January 7. Before Christmas, there is the advent period that lasts for forty days. During those forty days, there is a fast. The fast is very like the Catholic fast of Lent, when no meat is supposed to be eaten. The Egyptians do not eat dairy products during this time, either. Most Egyptians do not fast for the full forty days, but only the last week.

Church services are held on Christmas Eve just before midnight, and Christmas day is spent visiting family and friends. Following the Christmas mass, there is a meal of something known as Fatta. This is rice with garlic and boiled meat, on pieces of bread steeped in the stock from the meat. It is also traditional to eat a special kind of cookie, a sort of stuffed shortbread, known as Kahk. When visiting on Christmas day everyone takes a plate of homemade kahk with them, and there are great debates as to who has made the best ones. It is all in fun, though, and no one gets offended.

The majority of people in Egypt are Muslim and so Christmas is a little different there. For example, there is no specific term for saying "Merry Christmas". Instead, there is a more general term used by all religious groups, when celebrating religious holidays. They say "Kulloo Sanna wa inta tayeb" which literally means may you be healthy every year. There is a set response to this, which is "Wa inta tayeb", meaning and may you be healthy, too.

Another shared tradition is that of buying new clothes. On all religious holidays, everyone must have a complete set of new clothes, right down to underwear and shoes! It is traditional for all family members to attend the religious services wearing their new clothes. Although some families do have the tree and gifts, the religious aspect and visiting family takes priority over gifts and decorations.

Fatta

Ingredients:
- 2 kg neck of lamb, or 1 lb beef.
- 2 onions.
- 6 cardamom seeds.
- 6 mastic grains.
- 2 cups rice
- 20 garlic cloves, crushed.
- 2 tablespoons vinegar.
- 2 loaves crisp local bread (toasted pitta bread can be used instead).
- cooking oil.
- salt and pepper.

Cooking Instructions:
Procedure
- Boil water with onion, cardamom, mastic grain, and seasoning. Add neck or beef and cook until tender. Remove meat from broth and keep warm. Discard cardamom and pulverize onion completely. Cut up bread into small pieces, 2 cms square, and place in serving dish. Fry garlic until pale gold. Add vinegar and boil for 3-5 minutes. Pour over boiling broth and simmer for 7 minutes. To arrange the serving dish, completely moisten the bread with the boiling broth and cover with thick layer of rice. Wet the rice with the remaining broth. Arrange the meat or neck around the rice, in a ring.
How Christmas is Celebrated in Australia

In Australia, Christmas has much in common with other countries – shiny decorations, gifts, carols and time with family and friends. The big difference between Australia and countries in the northern hemisphere is that in Australia, Christmas falls in the summer. Summer in Australia runs from December to February. So, while much of the world spends Christmas rugged up against the cold, in Australia it is hot. Temperatures can vary between 30 and 40 degrees centigrade. In the north of Australia December is also cyclone season, so as well as heat, Australians may be affected by these severe storms. In 1975 Cyclone Tracy destroyed the city of Darwin in the early hours of Christmas day.

About seventy percent of Australians are Christians, so Christmas service is a common part of a Family Christmas, either on Christmas Eve or on Christmas morning, as families gather to celebrate the birth of Christ.

Another important Christmas tradition is Carols by Candlelight. Many towns and suburbs have their own outdoor carols services, usually in a local park. In Sydney and Melbourne these are massive events with thousands of people attending and top performers on stage leading the singing. These Carols events are broadcast on television on Christmas Eve.

Christmas decorations in Australian homes include traditional favorites such as tinsel and lights. Although some people choose gum trees as their Christmas tree, pine trees are still a favorite. Because these are not native to Australia these can be very expensive, as well as difficult to keep green in the heat, so fake trees made from plastic or tinsel are also popular. Australian children either put stockings or sacks under the Christmas tree or at the foot of their bed for Santa (also known as Father Christmas) to fill. Because of Australia’s temperate climate, not all houses have chimneys, but Santa manages to find a way in. There is some debate about Santa’s form of transport. There have been many reports that when he comes to Australia he gives his reindeer a rest and instead uses kangaroos to pull his sleigh. A popular Australian Christmas song is “Six White Boomers” (a boomer is a kangaroo).

Christmas food is wide and varied in Australia. This is a result of the many different nationalities and cultures who make up Australia’s population. Many families sit down to a traditional meal of turkey and pudding, but the hot weather means that many families prefer a cold leg of ham with salad or an outdoor barbecue. Hot pudding is often replaced with pavlova or an ice cream pudding, and egg nog by champagne or fruit punch.

Another favorite Australian past time is watching sport. After the festivities of Christmas Day, Boxing Day is often spent relaxing in front of the television watching two big Australian sporting events – the Sydney to Hobart Yacht race and the Boxing Day cricket test – both of which begin on Boxing Day.
Activities
1. The temperature in Australia at Christmas time is generally between 30 and 40 degrees Celsius. Find out what the equivalent temperature is in the Fahrenheit scale.

2. Santa Claus is always seen dressed in fur lined winter clothes. Design a new outfit more suitable for Australia’s heat.

3. December is also cyclone season in Australia. What is a cyclone? How does it differ from a hurricane?

4. Write a letter to an imaginary pen-friend in Australia, telling him/her how your Christmas differs from theirs.

True Christmas
This scrumptious snack is a favorite in Australian homes at Christmas. It is quick to make and looks very festive.

Ingredients
3 cups of rice bubbles (breakfast cereal)
1 cup glace cherries, chopped
1 cup dessicated coconut
1 cup instant powdered milk
¾ cup icing sugar
250 grams Copha (solid white vegetable shortening) (crisco in the US)

Method
1. Mix rice bubbles, cherries, coconut, powdered milk and icing sugar in a large bowl.
2. Melt copha over low heat. Add to dry ingredients and mix well.
3. Press mixture into a sandwich tin. Refrigerate to set. When set cut into small squares.

Variation
For a special treat, substitute 1 cup of M&Ms, silver cake decorating cachous or other small sweets for the cherries. Instead of pressing the mixture into a pan, place spoonfuls into patty cake papers. (cupcake liners)
Background Information
Japan is a long, island country in the North Pacific Ocean. Its nearest neighbors are South Korea, North Korea, Russia and China. Japan has one of the oldest cultures/histories known and it is steeped in tradition. Only one per cent of Japan’s population is Christian, yet in the last 50 years Christmas has become a significant celebration.

Catholic missionaries first introduced Christianity to Japan in the 16th century. Although many converts were initially made, rivalries amongst the missionaries and political conflicts between the countries that sent them quickly put an end to the growth of Christianity. By 1630, the Christian church in Japan was mostly forgotten. It wasn’t until the 20th century that Christian missionaries were once again sent to Japan. The conversion rate, however, has been slow.

Christmas would probably still be unheard of in Japan if it wasn’t for the U.S. toy industry and WWII. In the early 1900’s, several major U.S. toy companies decided to hire Japanese manufacturers to make toys and Christmas decorations. Japanese workers were thus introduced to traditional U.S. Christmas customs like tree ornaments and Santa and his sleigh. The presence of U.S. military personnel during and after WWII further exposed the Japanese people to Christmas customs in the U.S. Gradually, people began to adopt some of these customs as their own. But Christmas in Japan is a very secular observance, somewhat like Valentine’s Day is in the U.S.

Getting Ready
A few weeks before December 25, major department stores in Japan set up elaborate Christmas displays and nearly all shops set up displays of gift merchandise. However, Christmas is not the only reason for the gift displays. In Japan there is a custom of sending Oseibo (the end of the year gift) from business to business. Oseibo are specifically given to pay back favors received during the year.

A large Christmas tree (often artificial), decorated with origami ornaments as well as more traditional ornaments from the west, usually takes center stage in the big stores. Some store personnel are very imaginative in what they decide to use for a tree. One store once had an enormous tree made of champagne glasses with lights shining through the glasses.

Some families are beginning to buy very small artificial trees to decorate at home. Most families live in very small apartments or houses, so a tree that stands on the floor is very impractical.

One thing Japanese shoppers do not buy is gift wrap and other package decorations. There’s no need to because the stores all have free gift-wrapping services.

Another item missing from Japanese stores is the person dressed as Santa Claus. The concept of Santa has been adopted, but parents try hard to keep his magical qualities, so children never really see Santa. It’s not usual for children to believe in Santa until they’re age ten or older.

One of the most popular Christmas customs is the daiku (Great Nine) which is the Japanese name for Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony. It is performed in many places throughout the Christmas and on through New Years.
Christmas Eve

A person’s age often plays a factor in how Christmas Eve is celebrated. Teens and young adults often go on a special date with their boyfriend or girlfriend. Families with younger children often spend the evening at home where they eat a special dinner then prepare for Santa’s hoped-for visit. Some families rent a karaoke box and spend the evening singing.

Since most Japanese homes are not equipped with ovens for baking cakes or roasting turkeys, Christmas Eve dinner is frequently purchased at a deli or a fast-food chain. It usually consists of baked or fried chicken, not turkey, with soup and salad followed by Christmas Cake. If the chicken is purchased from Kentucky Fried Chicken, it usually comes with french fries rather than mashed potatoes.

Christmas Cake seems to be adopted from the French Yule log cake. The Japanese Christmas Cake is a round sponge cake frosted with whipped cream and decorated with fresh strawberries and a small Christmas decoration like a Santa figurine. Christmas Cake is usually purchased at a bakery. Many Japanese people are quite surprised to find out that Americans do not have Christmas Cake.

Christmas Day

After opening their gifts from Santa, Japanese children go to school and their parents go to work. December 25 is just a normal day. Store employees put away all the Christmas decorations and set up the New Years displays. In Japan, New Years is the big holiday.

Gold Fans

Materials:
- Gold origami paper or gold Christmas wrap cut into 4”, 6” or 8” squares
- Gold or red yard or narrow ribbon
- Hole punch

To Make:
1. Fold the paper in ¼” or ½” accordion pleats.
2. Punch hole through all folds at one end.
3. Cut a piece of yarn or string about 6-8” long.
4. Thread yarn or ribbon through all holes then tie a knot to hold the pleats together.
5. Tie a knot at the ends of yarn or ribbon to make a loop for hanging the fan.
6. Gently spread the fan out at the other end. Hang on tree.

Instructions for other origami projects can be found on the internet. Do a search on “origami instructions” and you’ll find a wealth of websites. The swan is a favorite tree decoration in Japan. Here’s one site (among many) with good instruction: http://www.folds.net/tutorial/

Music

Listen to Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony while doing origami projects.
**Christmas Cake**

Ingredients:
Note: If you don't want to bake a cake from scratch, you can use a purchased sponge cake or angel food cake.

**Cake:**
- 3 tablespoons sweet (unsalted) butter
- 4 large eggs, at room temperature
- 1/2 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- pinch salt
- 1/2 cup sifted cake flour
- 1/2 cup sifted cornstarch

**Frosting**
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- 6 tablespoons confectioners’ sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 pint fresh strawberries
- small plastic Christmas decoration, such as a Christmas tree or Santa Claus figurine (wash before using!)

Directions:

**Cake**
- Position rack in the lower third of the oven. Preheat oven to 350° F. Grease a 9” round cake pan. Line the bottom of the pan with parchment paper or two sheets of wax paper; grease and flour the paper.
- Melt butter in a small saucepan over low heat. Do not let it brown. Transfer to a small bowl and let cool to lukewarm while preparing the rest of the batter.
- Mix eggs, sugar, vanilla, and salt in a large bowl. Using an electric mixer, beat until mixture is extremely thick and has tripled in volume, about 5 minutes. It should fall in ribbons from the beaters.
- Sift flour and cornstarch together. Fold into eggs until just incorporated. Fold about 1 cup of the batter into the melted butter, then return the butter mixture to the cake batter and fold in lightly.
- Pour batter into prepared pan. Smooth the surface, and tap the pan on the counter to remove any air bubbles.
- Bake 25-30 minutes, until the cake is golden brown and begins to shrink from the sides of the pan.
- Let cool in pan 10 minutes, then invert cake onto a wire cake rack, peel off paper, and let cool completely.

**Whipped Cream Frosting and Filling**
- Whip cream until thick, adding confectioners' sugar and vanilla.

**Finishing the Christmas Cake:**
- Reserve 6 to 8 of the prettiest strawberries for garnishing the cake. Slice remaining strawberries.
- Split cake in half horizontally using a sharp serrated knife. Spread bottom layer with a 1/4” layer of whipped cream. Arrange sliced strawberries on top of the filling. Top with the top layer of the cake.
- Spread remaining whipped cream over the top and sides of the cake. Decorate the top with reserved whole strawberries. Place the Christmas decoration in the center of the cake.
**Christmas Math**

1. Sally’s mother bought a dozen candles for Christmas. On Christmas eve, they burned five of them. How many candles were left for Christmas day?

2. Barry got nine presents on Christmas morning. His brother, Tom, got four less and his sister, Jennifer, got three more. How many presents did Tom and Jennifer receive?

3. Paula was making Christmas pies for dessert on Christmas day. She wanted to make sure there were enough pies for everyone to have at least three pieces. She figured each pie would give her 8 pieces. She had 17 people coming to Christmas dinner. How many pies did she have to bake?

4. Timmy’s school choir sang four Christmas carols for the school play. They had five performances of the play during the weekend, how many times did Timmy sing the Christmas carols?

5. Chris has $20 to buy presents for his mom, dad, and brother for Christmas. He bought a tie for his dad which cost $5.00 and he spent $7.50 on his brother for a new game. Then he got hungry from all that shopping and spent $1.25 on an ice cream cone. How much does he have left to buy his mom’s present?

Answers: 1. 7 candles 2. Tom got 5 presents and Jennifer got 12 presents 3. she needs to make at least 7 pies 4. 5 times 5. $6.25
A Christmas Funny

Who was Santa's 10th reindeer?

Answer the clues below to find each word. Then place each letter on the lines below, by matching the numbers, to find out the answer to the riddle.

1. didn't tell the truth
   __ __ __ __
   1 2 3 4

2. where food is baked
   __ __ __ __
   4 5 3 6

3. Santa lives in this direction
   __ __ __ __ __
   6 4 7 8 9

   __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __ __
   4 1 2 5 3 8 9 3 4 8 9 3 7
   7 3 2 6 4 3 3 7
ANSWERS

1. LIED
1. OVEN
1. NORTH

Answer to the riddle: Olive, the other reindeer
Cut out two snowflake shapes using this guide.

Using a multi-color yarn, stitch each piece as shown. Overcast all edges with the same yarn.

Turn one piece a quarter turn and place over the other piece with the wrong sides together. Carefully push each corner of the top piece between the two corners of the bottom piece to create a three-dimensional snowflake. In one corner, sew in a loop for hanging.