

# KFOR CHRONICLE



December 24, 2005

Christmas Edition

*Merry Christmas and  
Happy New Year*



# COMKFOR letter for Christmas 2005

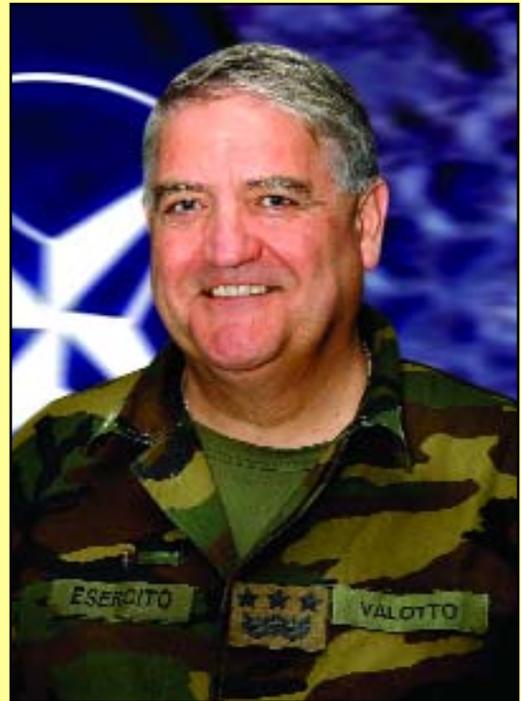
*Dear KFOR members, dear friends,*

*In almost any of our home-countries, whatever our faith may be, Christmas time is always a period of serenity, joy, hope and of family reunions.*

*I truly believe that you, KFOR soldiers, are fully successful in helping all Kosovo people to spend these holidays in that serene, peaceful and joyous way they deserve.*

*But I also understand what it means for you to be away from your families during this special time. I know well because, in 40 years of military service, it has happened to me so many times. Therefore, remember that, here in Kosovo, the whole KFOR is now your large family, and we will spend these days sharing the same feelings that families share.*

*Finally, please pass my best wishes to your families and all loved ones. While it is hard for us to be away from home, it is even harder for them to bear our absence, although I am sure they all know how valuable your tour of duty in Kosovo is, as a member of a Peacekeeping force, giving to people the greatest of the gifts: the opportunity for Kosovo families to gather in security, peace and hope.*



*Very Happy Christmas to all of you!*

*Happy New Year 2006!*

**Lieutenant-General Giuseppe VALOTTO  
Commander KFOR**

# KFOR Theatre Chaplain

*My dear friends,*

*As your chaplain, in these days of celebration I could not make you miss my word of hope and friendship. Even if, you are not of my same religion, listen to me. In this Saint Christmas I would like so much to invite you to find again and to dream the most beautiful and truest things, as when you were child. Do you remember?*

*Allow me, so, to take in my hand the Gospel and to read together, with the eyes of the heart, the first page of the Prologue of St. John "In the beginning was the Word." In the beginning there is a mind, there is God.*

*Things were not born by chance, things are not senseless, but rather they have a deep meaning. The incarnation is not really the despoliation or the "kenosis" of God but the revelation of his presence in everything. At the origin of the being there is a divine sense and all has been done in him and for him. Everything is soaked with the presence of God. The Christmas is the revelation to us of this presence, of this mystery.*

*Our life therefore, is soaked with the presence of God. As S.Paul says "Either we live, or die, we belong to the Lord."*

*Jesus has come to tell me that I am called for high and beautiful realty, for great signs, for a life that having inside the germ of God, cannot die.*

*In a society not made to give hope but to steal it, to let us hear the inconsistency of our love, of our dreams; a society that has the tendency to take our soul, to leave us bitter and cynics with a long education to the indifference; the Christmas becomes an invitation to find again and to dream the most beautiful things, to take off every mask and veil, and to leave transpire whatever suffered and sacred there is in our heart.*

*To love each other, to be better at Christmas, it must have this sense: hold tight each other's hands fearless, to walk together for a new country.*

*We are called to live in the light and to testify it in the history.*

*The danger of being darkness who refuses the light is always present.*

*The light has to shine in the obscurity of the darkness to let the men learn not to step on each other feet but to respect themselves and to love the others like your brothers.*

*To celebrate the Christmas means to believe that the life is sacred, that inside every creature there is the seed of God, that life can not be profaned by the egoism and thrown in the "mud."*

*Everybody is summoned, over the proper believe, so that everybody is committed to defend the life, to consecrate it and not to desecrate it.*

*So, let's make the small things great, let's be satisfied by small hope to turn on ...the HOPE!*

*"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us". Best wishes!*



**Merry Christmas**

**p. Gianluigi AROFFO  
KFOR THEATRE CHAPLAIN**

# Christmas

**Christmas** (literally, the Mass of Christ) is a Christian holiday, which celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ (Jesus of Nazareth) observed on December 25. According to the Christian gospels, Jesus was born to Mary in Bethlehem, where she and her husband Joseph had traveled to register in the Roman census. Christians believe that Jesus's birth, or nativity, fulfills the prophecies of Judaism that a messiah would come, from the house of David, to redeem the world from sin and bridge the separation between God and mankind.

In predominantly Christian countries, Christmas has become the most economically significant holiday of the year. It is also celebrated as a secular holiday in many countries with small Christian populations. It is largely characterized by exchanging gifts within families, and by gifts brought by Father Christmas or Santa Claus, or other folk figures.

The word Christmas is a contraction of Christ's Mass, derived from the Old English Cristes mæsse and referring to the religious ceremony of mass. It is often abbreviated Xmas, probably because X or Xt have often been used as a contraction for Christ. The English letter X resembles the Greek letter X (chi), the first letter of Christ in Greek (transliterated as [Christos]). Xmas is pronounced the same as Christmas, but most people just say X-Mas.

Local and regional Christmas traditions are still rich and varied. Let's have a look on this.

**Christmas Eve**, December 24, the day before Christmas Day, is treated to a greater or a lesser extent in most Christian societies as part of the Christmas festivities. Christmas Eve is the traditional day to set up the Christmas tree. Protestants set up the tree at the latest until January 06, Catholics until February 02.

In the Roman Catholic Church, the Christmas season liturgically begins on Christmas Eve. Unless it be a Sunday, the Mass of the Vigil is said on the morning of December 24. The Christmas season continues through until January 04, or if that is a Saturday, until January 05, when the Vigil of the Epiphany is celebrated.

Many Christians traditionally celebrate a midnight mass at midnight on Christmas Eve, which is held in churches throughout the world, marking the beginning of

**Christmas Day**. It is forbidden, however, to anticipate the Mass of Christmas before midnight. Other churches hold a candlelight service which is typically held earlier in the evening. These often feature dramatizations of the Nativity. Large meals are common, often with turkey or ham as the main item. A traditional dish in Germany is roast

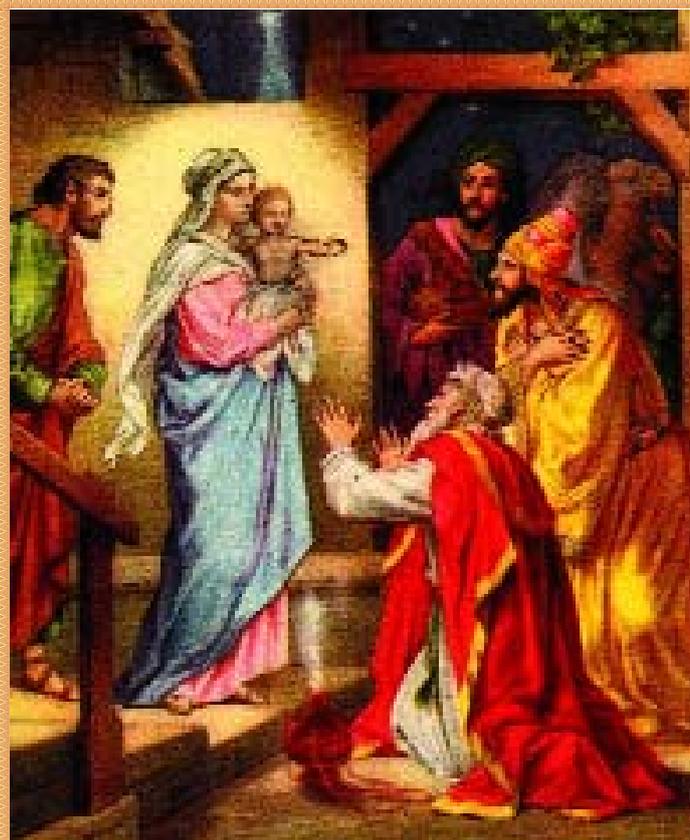


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It is also seen as the night when Santa Claus or his international variants, make their rounds giving gifts to good children. In Italy presents are opened on the morning of Christmas Eve, while in Denmark, Finland, Ireland, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Sweden and the United Kingdom, Christmas presents are opened on that evening or on the morning of Christmas Day. In Austria, most parts of Germany, Liechtenstein and Switzerland Christmas presents are opened in the evening of December 24 ("Bescherung"). In Iceland Christmas starts at 6:00 p.m. on Christmas Eve. Church bells ring at that time and people either sit down for holiday dinner at home or with closest family. After that they open gifts and spend the evening together. In North America, there is a mixture of families opening gifts in the evening and, more commonly, on Christmas Day morning. In families where a divorce has occurred, children may spend one day with one part of the family, and the next with the other. In extended families where two branches of the family reside within a

reasonable driving distance, many families may choose to spend Christmas Eve with the maternal side of the family and Christmas Day with the paternal side, or vice-versa. In Spain gifts are opened on the morning of January 06, Epiphany day ("Día de reyes").

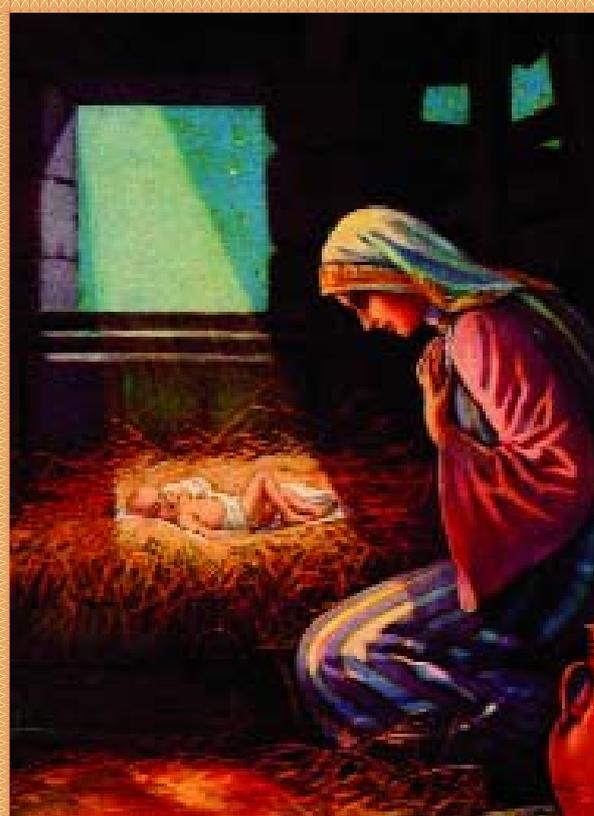
Most Christmas stories start or take place on December 24.



### Letter writing

Writing letters to Santa Claus has been a Christmas tradition for children for many years. These letters normally contain wishlists of toys and assertions of good behavior. Interestingly, some social scientists have found that boys and girls write different types of letters. Girls generally write more polite, longer (although they do not request more), and express more expressions of the nature of Christmas in their letters than in letters written by boys. Girls also request gifts for other people on a more frequent basis.

Many postal services allow children to send letters to Santa Claus pleading their good behavior and requesting gifts; these letters may be answered by postal workers or other volunteers. Canada Post has a special postal code for routing letters to Santa Claus at the North Pole: H0H 0H0, and since 1982 over 13,000 Canadian postal workers have volunteered to write responses. Sometimes children's charities answer letters in poorer communities or from children's hospitals in order to give them presents that they would not otherwise receive.

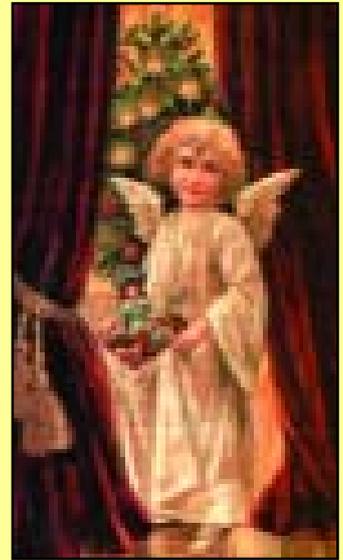


Throughout Europe and North America, Santa Claus is generally known as such, but in some countries the gift-giver's name, attributes, date of arrival, and even identity varies.

**AUSTRIA: Christkind ("Christ child")**

The Christkind ("Christ Child") is the traditional Christmas giftbringer in Austria, Liechtenstein, Southern Germany and Switzerland. Originally invented by Martin Luther, it was adopted in catholic areas during the 19th century, while it began to be gradually replaced by the secular Weihnachtsmann ("Christmas Man") in protestant regions.

The Christkind is a sprite-like child, usually depicted with blond hair and angelic wings. It is presumed by some to be the incarnation of Jesus as an infant, but seems to be rooted in the Alsatian-born myth of a child bringing gifts to the baby Jesus. Children never see the Christkind, as parents will always tell them that the Christkind just disappeared before they came. Since the 1990s, the Christkind is facing increasing competition from the Weihnachtsmann in the American version of Santa Claus, simply for the reason that adults dressing up as Santa Claus can be hired to stand in front of department stores, other than the Christkind, which is supposed to be a child and very elusive.



**BELGIUM: Sinterklaas**

Originally Sinterklaas or Sint-Nikolaas was only celebrated in Flanders and the Netherlands the way described below, but now he is celebrated in Wallonia in the same way. The celebrating of Saint-Nicholas is mostly the same as in the Netherlands, but in Belgium the children receive their presents on December 06. Children have to put their shoes at the stove the evening of December 05 and the next morning, they find their presents. This tradition was still alive thirty years ago in the catholic south of The Netherlands.

Note that Saint Nicholas has been celebrated in Belgium for centuries - there is even a city called St. Niklaas but, like every folkloristic thing in Belgium, there might be small differences, and generally in the eastern part of the provinces West-Flanders and East-Flanders Saint Nicholas is not celebrated, but instead children receive presents from Sint Maarten (Saint Martin) on November 11.



**CANADA: Santa Claus (among English speakers); Le Père Noël ("Father Christmas", among French speakers) (see NORTH AMERICA and FRANCE)**





**CZECH REPUBLIC: Svatý Mikuláš**

("Saint Nicholas"); *Je íšek* (diminutive form of *Je íš* ["Jesus"])

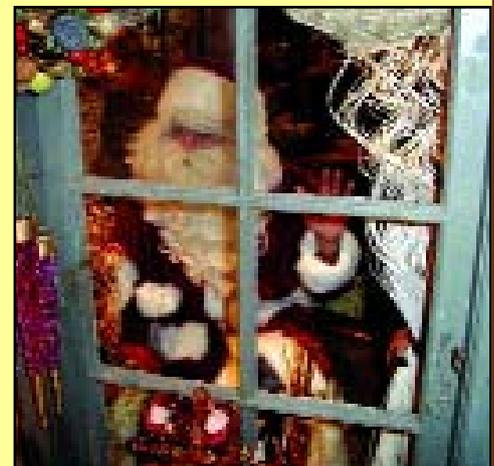
On December 06 St. Nicholas (Svaty Mikulas) visits Czech children in that evening alongside with an Angel and the Devil (Cert). Sv. Mikulas carries a big book with him and reads out which children were good and who wasn't. As a child we would have to sing a song or tell some short or poem. If we were in the good books we got a bag full of fruits, nuts, sweets and other goodies. If we were bad, we got a coal. (Basically in practice all kids got their goodie bag with the few pieces of coal on the bottom.) Also we usually got our Advent calendar with chocolates as well on that day.

However in the Czech Republic the main day for getting your presents is always December 24 (Christmas Eve - "Stedry vecer"). First you eat your Christmas dinner and then you have to wait for "Jezisek" (Infant Jesus) to come and lit the candles of the tree. You have to wait for the bell, which is the sign that he was here. Then you run into the main room to enjoy the special magic atmosphere - the Christmas tree with the lit candles and presents underneath it.



**DENMARK: Julemanden**

Julemanden is a mythical character who is said to bring Christmas presents to children in Denmark. Julemanden is assisted by gnome-like elf beasts called the "Juul Nisse." The elves supposedly come from the attic, where they live, to help Julemanden. On Christmas eve Danish children put a saucer of milk or other snack for them in the attic, in the hopes that the the Juul Nisse will feast upon it.



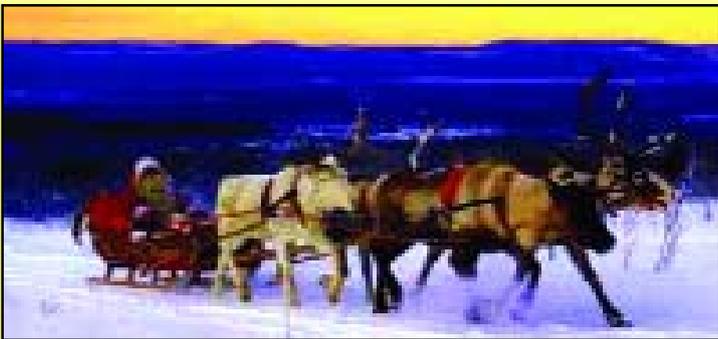
**ESTONIA:  
Jõuluvana**



**FINLAND: Joulupukki**

Joulupukki is the Finnish name for Santa Claus. The name Joulupukki literally means Yule Goat or Christmas Goat. This name is likely to come from an old Finnish tradition, where people dressed in goat hides, the apparition being called a nuuttipukki, used to go around from house to house after Christmas eating leftover food.

Today Joulupukki looks and behaves mostly like his American version, but there are differences. Joulupukki's workshop is situated, not in the North Pole or Greenland, but in Korvatunturi, Lapland, Finland. Instead of sneaking in through the chimney during the night, he (traditionally played by Father, Granddad or Uncle, today by a hopefully more or less sober Rent-a-Santa) knocks on the front door during the Christmas Eve celebration (Christmas, like all other holidays, start a day early in Finland). When he comes in, his first words are traditionally "Onko täällä kiltejä lapsia?" (Are there (any) nice children here?)

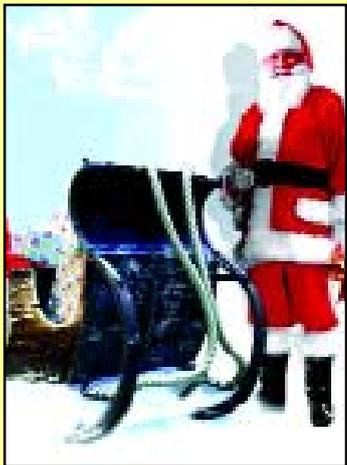


He usually wears warm red clothes, uses a walking stick, and travels in a sleigh driven by a number of reindeer. The popular song "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" in its Finnish translation, Petteri Punakuono, has led to Rudolph's general acceptance in the mythology as Joulupukki's lead reindeer. Joulupukki has a wife, Joulumuori ("Old Lady Christmas"), but tradition has not got much to say of her.

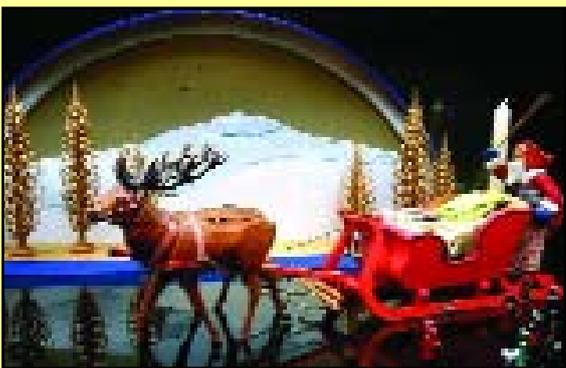
**FRANCE: Le Père Noël ("Father Christmas"); Père Noël is also the common figure in other French-speaking areas**

Père Noël is the French equivalent of the British Father Christmas and the American Santa Claus. In general, France has not adopted the modern garb of Santa Claus in jacket and trousers, but keeps to the older version with a long red hooded robe, edged with white fur. His presents are carried not in a sack, but in a basket or hotte on his back, like those carried by grape harvesters. Children do not put out a stocking, but their shoes. A popular Christmas song for children is "Petit Papa Noël".

The Père Noël is sometime confused with an other character. In Eastern France (Alsace and Lorraine regions) there is a parallel tradition to celebrate Saint Nicolas on December 06. He is followed by le Père Fouettard, who exists also in Germany (Krampus) and Holland (Zwarte Piet). Le Père Fouettard is a sinister figure dressed in black who accompanies Saint Nicolas and whips children who have behaved badly.

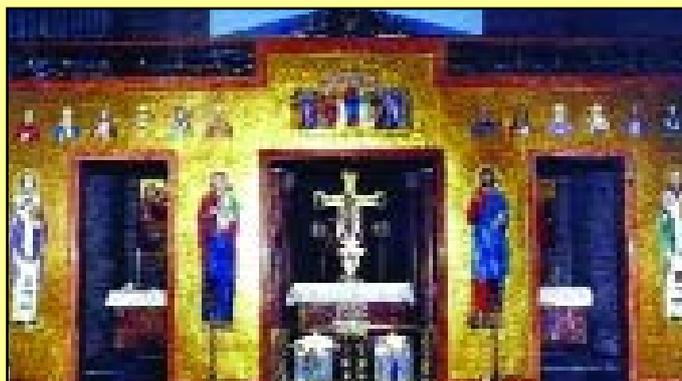
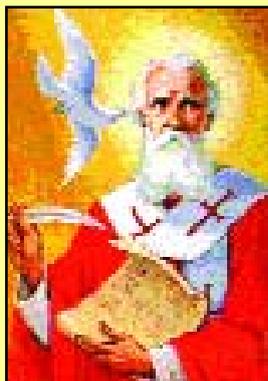


**GERMANY: Weihnachtsmann ("Christmas Man"); Christkind in southern Germany (see AUSTRIA)**



**GREECE:**

Άγιος Βασίλης  
("Saint Basil")

**HUNGARY:**

*Mikulás ("Nicholas"); Jézuska or Kis Jézus ("child Jesus")*

Children in Hungary carefully polish their best boot and put it on the windowsill to be filled by St. Nicholas, Szent Mikulás, on December 06. The good bishop comes with a big sack full of presents and a large record book with children's good and bad deeds. Two helpers, a good angel who helps give out presents and a bad "Krampus" devil who makes mischief. In the morning good children are supposed to find candies, tangerines, walnuts, apples, dates, chocolate Mikulás figures, and small presents.

Bad children find potatoes, stones, switches, or a wooden spoon. Most children get some of each, as no one is all good or all bad.

**IRELAND:**

*Father Christmas*  
(see UNITED KINGDOM)

**ITALY: Babbo Natale ("Father Christmas"); La Befana (similar role as Santa Claus; she rides a broomstick rather than a sleigh, although she is not normally considered a witch)**

Befana or "La Befana" is a friendly character in Italian folklore, similar to Santa Claus. Her name means 'giver of gifts', and she visits all the children in Italy on January 05 to fill their stockings with candy if they are good or a lump of coal if they are bad. The child's family will always leave a plate of broccoli and spice sausage plus a small glass of wine for Befana.

She is usually portrayed as an old lady, riding a broomstick through the air. Unlike a witch though, she is often smiling and she has a bag or a hamper filled with candy and/or gifts.

Legend has it that La Befana was approached by the 3 Magi on the night of Christ's birth. They asked her for directions, to which she was of no help. Later, Befana had a change of heart, and tried to search out for the magi and the Christ child. That night she was not able to find them, so to this day, La Befana is searching for the Christ child. She leaves all the good children toys and candy, while the bad children get coal; for she never knows who might be Jesus!



**NETHERLANDS & FLANDERS: Sinterklaas (not with Christmas but on December 05) and Santa Claus (with Christmas)**

Sinterklaas in the Netherlands and Flanders, which in turn was the inspiration for the myth of Santa Claus. Sinterklaas (a contracted form of Sint Nicolaas) is a major celebration in the Netherlands, when he arrives there from Spain by boat to celebrate his birthday. Among Orthodox Christians, he is remembered with more reverence and less frivolity. Saint Nicholas is revered by many as the patron saint of seamen, merchants, archers, children, prostitutes, pharmacists, lawyers, pawnbrokers, prisoners, the city of Amsterdam and of Russia.

In the Netherlands, Saint Nicholas' eve is the present-giving occasion in the Netherlands, when his birthday is celebrated on December 06. In this case, roles are reversed, though, in that Sinterklaas is the one who gives the presents.

On the evening or during the night of December 05, Sinterklaas brings presents to every child that has been good in the past year (in practice to all children). Before his arrival the kids place shoes - while singing special Saint Nicholas songs - near the heating or fire place. He puts the gifts - often with poems about the children's behaviour while the past year - into their shoes. This day people are celebrating everywhere, drinking hot chocolate drinks and eating "pepernoten" (very small cookies you have to eat some handful of).

Sinterklaas is assisted by many mischievous helpers with black faces and colourful Moorish dresses, dating back two centuries. These helpers are called 'Zwarte Pieten' (black Petes). Pete's face is "black from soot" (as Pete has to climb through chimneys to deliver his gifts) is used. Traditionally Saint Nicholas only had one helper, whose name varied wildly. "Piet(er)" the name in use now can be traced back to a book from 1891. The frame shift to multiple Petes was more or less a direct result of the assistance provided by the Canadian army to the reception of the saint in 1945 Amsterdam.

Sinterklaas has a long white beard, holds a long gold coloured staff with a fancy curled top in his hand and carries a big book with all the children's names in it, and whether they have been good or bad. He wears a red bishop's dress including a red mitre, rides the roofs on a white horse (called Amerigo). In recent years, Christmas (along with Santa Claus) has been pushed by shopkeepers as another present-giving festival, with some success, although, especially for young children, Saint Nicholas' eve is still much more important than Christmas.



**NORTH AMERICA: Santa Claus (also known as Saint Nicholas, Saint Nick, Father Christmas, Kris Kringle, Santy or simply Santa among English speakers); Le Père Noël ("Father Christmas", among French speakers)**

Santa Claus is a folk hero in various cultures who distributes gifts to children, normally on Christmas Eve. Each name is a variation of Saint Nicholas, but refers to Santa Claus.

Father Christmas is a well-loved figure in the United Kingdom, and is now interchangeable with Santa Claus, though the two had quite different origins. The term Santa is as widely used and understood by British children as Father Christmas.

Santa is a variant of a European folk tale based on the historical figure Saint Nicholas, a bishop from present-day Turkey, who supposedly gave presents to the poor. This inspired the mythical figure of Sinterklaas, the subject of a major celebration in the Netherlands (where his alleged birthday is celebrated), which in turn inspired both the myth and the name of Santa Claus.

He forms an important part of the Christmas tradition throughout the Western world as well as in Latin America and Japan and other parts of East Asia.

In many Eastern Orthodox traditions, Santa Claus visits children on New Year's Day and is identified with Saint Basil whose memory is celebrated on that day.

Depictions of Santa Claus also have a close relationship with the Russian character of Ded Moroz ("Grandfather Frost"). He delivers presents to children and has a red coat, fur boots and long white beard. Much of the iconography of Santa Claus could be seen to derive from Russian traditions of Ded Moroz, particularly transmitted into western European culture through his German folklore equivalent, "Väterchen Frost".

Conventionally, Santa Claus is portrayed as a kindly, round-bellied, merry, bespectacled white man in a red coat trimmed with white fur, with a long white beard. On Christmas Eve, he rides in his sleigh pulled by flying reindeer from house to house to give presents to children. To enter the house, Santa Claus comes down the chimney and exits through the fireplace. During the rest of the year he lives together with his wife Mrs. Claus and his elves manufacturing toys. Some modern depictions of Santa (often in advertising and popular entertainment) will show the elves and Santa's workshop as more of a processing and distribution facility, ordering and receiving the toys from various toy manufacturers from across the world. His home is usually given as either the North Pole in the United States (Alaska), northern Canada, Korvatunturi in Finnish Lapland, Dalecarlia in Sweden, or Greenland, depending on the tradition and country. Sometimes Santa's home is in Caesarea when he is identified as Saint Basil.

Since most activities associated with Santa Claus are extraordinary, such as delivering presents to all of the believing children in one night, how he squeezes down chimneys, how he enters homes without chimneys, why he never dies, and how he makes reindeer fly, "magic" is usually used to explain his actions.

Ho ho ho is the convention in English to write the way Santa Claus laughs. "Ho, ho, ho! Merry Christmas!"

The laughter of Santa Claus has long been an important attribute by which the character is identified. The traditional Christmas poem 'A Visit from St. Nicholas' relates that Santa has:

“. . . a little round belly

That shook when he laugh'd, like a bowl full of jelly”

Ho ho ho represents an attempt to write the deep belly-laugh of Santa Claus, as opposed to the conventional, higher-pitched ha ha that represents the laughter of less obese characters, or the snickering, cynical bwa ha ha! associated with the villains of melodrama.

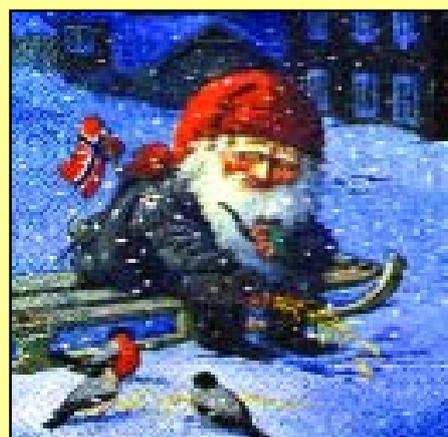
"H0H 0H0" is a postal code used by Canada Post for routing letters sent in Canada to Santa Claus at the North Pole. The alphanumeric sequence falls within a grouping associated with the Montreal, Quebec area.

### **NORWAY: Nisse**

The Norwegian "Nisse" is not like his American relative Santa Claus. The Norwegian "Nisse" differs from both Santa Claus and St. Nicholas. In modern Norway we have really two types of "nisser".

The name "Nisse" probably derives from St. Nicholas. But "nisser" - which are elves (or gnomes) are old figures, which existed long before the birth of Christ. There are several types of "nisser" in Norway. The most known is the "Fjøsnisse" which is a "nisse" who takes care of the animals on the farms. The "Fjøsnisse" is very short and often bearded and lives in a barn or a stable. He wears clothes of wool and often has a red knitted hat. The "Fjøsnisse" often plays tricks on people. Sometimes he will scare people by blowing out the lights in the barn or he will scare the farm dog at night. You can hear the dogs bark! He can become very friendly with the people that live on the farm, but one should never forget to give him a large portion of porridge on Christmas Eve - or else he will play tricks for example move the animals around in the barn, braid the horses' mane and tail, and other tricks like that.

Of course we also have a Christmas nisse (julenissen), which in most homes is more or less identical to Santa Claus. The "Julenisse" brings presents to all the nice children on Christmas Eve. He is not as shy as Santa though, since the "julenisse" delivers the presents himself. He does not come down the chimney in the middle of the night.



**POLAND: *Swiety Mikolaj / Mikolaj ("St. Nicholas"); Gwiazdor in some regions***

St. Nicholas, called Sw. Mikolaj, is a saintly, dignified figure in Poland; he comes as a bishop, carrying a crozier. Descending from Heaven with an angel helper, he travels on foot or in a sleigh pulled by a white horse as he visits homes in the countryside. When he appears, the eager children cry, "He has come! He has come!" St. Nicholas' presence fills the room with his smile, the twinkle in his eye, and his welcoming, booming voice. Children recite their catechism and prayers.



**PORTUGAL: *Pai Natal ("Father Christmas")***  
(see UNITED KINGDOM)



**ROMANIA: *Mos Craciun ("Father Christmas"); Mos iculae ("Father Nicholas"); Sfantul Nicolae ("St. Nicholas")***

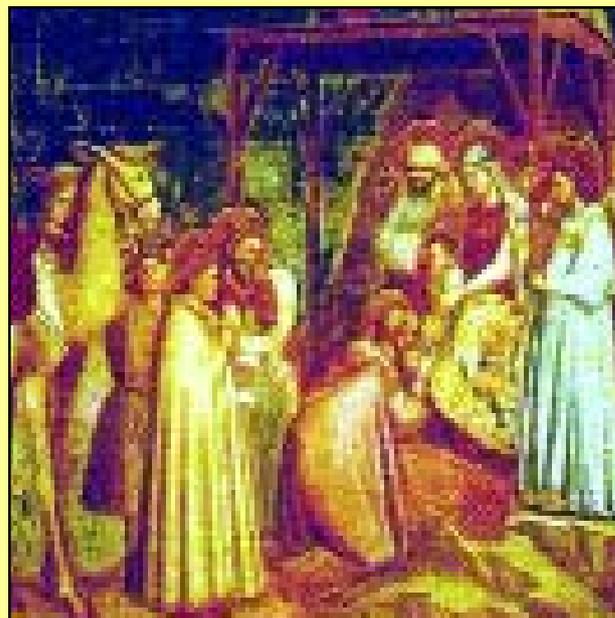
On the night of December 05, boots are carefully polished to be put by the door or on the windowsill to wait for St. Nicholas' (Sfantul Nicolae) visit. He is generous to adults as well as children, putting a little present in each boot. If a rod is found in a shoe, it is a warning that behavior needs to improve. On December 06, gifts are given to friends, children, and those in need.



**SPAIN: *Los Reyes Magos ("The Three Kings"; "Magi")***

In Christian tradition the Magi, also known as the Three Wise Men or Kings from the east, are Zoroastrian magi who according to Matthew 2:1 came "from the east to Jerusalem", to worship the Infant Jesus, him "that is born King of the Jews". Thus the magi that came from the east, from the Persian Empire, were the world's first religious figures to worship him. Among their gifts were cchismatic herbs for anointing him the Christ.

A Magus (plural Magi, from Latin, from Old Persian maguš; Old English: Mage) was a Zoroastrian spiritual-priest from ancient Persia. The best known Magi are the "Wise Men from the East" in the Bible. In English, the term may refer to a shaman, sorcerer, or wizard; it is the origin of the English words magic and magician.



**SWEDEN: Jultomten**

A tomte (or nisse) is a mythical creature of Scandinavian folklore, believed to take care of a farmer's home and barn and protect it from misfortune, in particular at night, when the housefolk were asleep. Tomte is the common Swedish name, derived from his place of residence and area of influence: the house lot or tomt. Nisse is the common name in Norwegian, Danish and the Scanian dialect in southernmost Sweden; it is a nickname for Nils.

The tomte was often imagined as a small, elderly man (exact size varies from a few inches to about half the height of an adult man) with a full beard, gray or white; dressed in ordinary, gray clothing, with the exception of a bright-red knitted cap. As he was thought to be skilled in illusions and able to make himself invisible, one was unlikely to get more than brief glimpses of him, though.

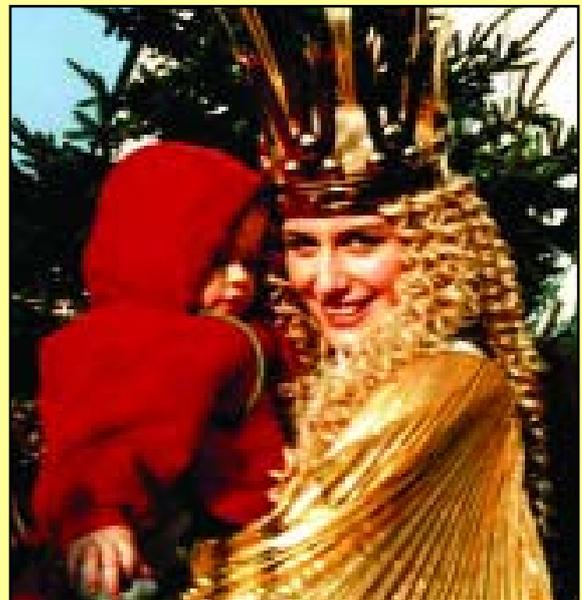
Despite his smallness, the tomte possessed an immense strength, and even though he was protective and caring, he was easy to offend, and his retributions ranged from a stout box on the ears to the killing of livestock. Like many other mythical creatures, one was also required to please him with gifts - but this gift was a bowl of porridge or rice pudding on Christmas night. If he wasn't given his payment, he would leave the farm or house which couldn't survive without his nightly chores, or engage in mischief, such as tying the cows' tails together in the barn, turning objects upside-down, and breaking things.

The tomte liked his porridge with a pat of butter on the top. In an often retold story, a farmer put the butter underneath the porridge. When the tomte of his farmstead found that the butter was missing, he went straight on and killed all the cattle resting in the barn. But, as he thus became hungry, he went back to his porridge and began eating it, and so found the butter at the bottom of the bowl. Full of grief, he then hurried to a far away land with magic cattle, milking much better than the ones he had put to death, and replaced the latter with the former. And so they lived happily ever after.

The tomte shares many aspects with other Scandinavian wights, such as the Swedish vättar or the Norwegian tusser. These beings are social, however, whereas the tomte is always solitary. Some synonyms of tomte include gårdbo (yard-dweller) and gardvor (yard-warden). The tomte could also take a ship for his home, and was then known as a skeppstomte/skibsnisse. In other European folklore, there are many beings similar to the tomte, such as the Scots brownie, the German Wichtelmann or the Russian domovoi. The Finnish word tonttu has been borrowed from Swedish.

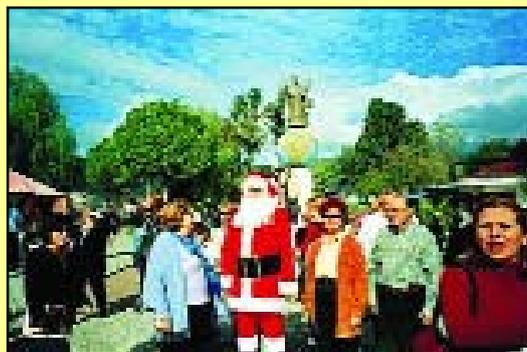


**SWITZERLAND: Christkind (see AUSTRIA)**



**TURKEY: Noel Baba**

Santa Claus, who is called Noel Baba or Father Christmas, is origin from Turkey. Saint Nicholas was born in Greco-Roman Lycia, an area now part of modern-day Turkey. In the early 1950s Turks realized that the Bishop of Myra, Saint Nicholas, was none other than the western world's Santa Claus or Father Christmas. In today's Muslim Turkey have promoted Santa Claus to encourage gift giving at New Year's. So Western Santa, Noel Baba, is sometimes seen in shopping areas, on the streets, or in schools. Saint Nicholas is remembered as a person who cared for all people, especially children. He is appreciated for these caring, humanitarian values, and, also, because he gives a boost to both tourism and the economy.



**UKRAINE: Did Moroz**

Did Moroz is the name of the person who plays the role of Santa Claus for Eastern Slavs. The literal translation of the name would be Grandfather Frost, however English-speakers traditionally translate it as Father Frost. Did Moroz brings presents to kids, however unlike the clandestine ways of Santa Claus, he brings them in person, at the celebrations of the New Year, at New Year parties for kids by the fir tree. Did Moroz is accompanied by Sniguron'ka, his granddaughter.

The traditional appearance of Did Moroz has a close resemblance to that of Santa Claus, with his red coat, boots and long white beard. Specifically, Did Moroz wears a heel-long red fur coat, a semi-round fur hat, and white valenki or high boots, silver or red with silver ornament.



**UNITED KINGDOM: Father Christmas; Santa Claus (see NORTH AMERICA)**

Father Christmas is a name used in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom and several other Commonwealth Countries, as well as Ireland, for the gift bringing figure of Saint Nicholas. Although Father Christmas and Santa Claus (the latter deriving from Sinter Klaas, Saint Nicholas) are now used interchangeably, the origins of Father Christmas are quite different.

Dating back to Norse mythology, Father Christmas has his roots in Paganism. Before Christianity came to British shores it was customary for an elder man from the community to dress in furs and visit each dwelling. At each house, in the guise of "Old Winter" he would be plied with food and drink before moving on to the next. It was thought he carried the spirit of the winter with him, so he being hospitable to Old Winter, the winter would be kind to them. The custom was still alive and well in Medieval England, and after a decline during the Commonwealth, became widespread again during the Restoration period. A book dating from the time of the Commonwealth, "The Vindication of CHRISTMAS or, His Twelve Yeares' Observations upon the Times" involved Father Christmas advocating a merry, alcoholic Christmas and casting aspersions on the charitable motives of the ruling Puritans.

He was neither a gift bringer nor was he associated with children. During the Victorian era when Santa Claus arrived from America he was merged with "Old Winter", "Old Christmas" or "Old Father Christmas" to create Father Christmas, the British Santa which survives today. Father Christmas is a well-loved figure in the United Kingdom, and is now interchangeable with Santa Claus, though the two had quite different origins. The term Santa is as widely used and understood by British children as Father Christmas.



**UNITED STATES: Santa Claus; Kris Kringle; Saint Nicholas or Saint Nick (see NORTH AMERICA)**



# Christmas in Argentina

Most of the Argentine population is descendants from immigrants, mostly Italians and Spaniards, who brought along their traditions.

For Christmas in Argentina we set up a Christmas tree. Like in many parts of the world, the Christmas tree is a symbol of the season and its decoration is very much enjoyed by children. This is done on the 8th December, the day of the virgin. It is also a tradition to set up a nativity scene, depicting the birth scene of Jesus. It is summer in Argentina but since the tradition of the Christmas tree comes from Europe we put some pieces of cotton over the tree to simulate snow found on the trees in the forests of the Northern Hemisphere. The Christmas tree is decorated with colored lights or candlelights, ornaments and a star is placed on top. Additionally, a Christmas Boot is placed at the door.

On the night of the 24th, our "Nochebuena" or Christmas Eve we meet for supper. There are different kinds of meals such as roasted turkey, roasted pork, stuffed tomatoes, mince pies, Christmas's bread and puddings. At 12 o'clock we make toasts with cider or with "clericó" a drink prepared with different kinds of fruit that is cut into pieces, then they are mixed with juice and cider or wine, and we eat "pan dulce", a baked pudding with dry fruits equivalent to the Italian panettone. It is common to find in the Argentine table many specialties such as "turrones" (hard block of almonds/peanuts and honey), chestnuts, almonds and nuts native to countries for which Christmas means snow and cold temperatures.

It is also very common to use fireworks to celebrate Christmas, illuminating the sky.

Sometimes, for the kids, one grown up of the family gets dressed as "Papa Noel", our name for Santa Claus, and he gives presents to all. If not, all the presents are placed under the tree and they are opened at midnight.

In some public places living persons play the Nativity scene.

We also have the tradition that Three Kings bring people presents on the Twelfth Night (January 6th), the day when the Three Wise Men brought gifts for the baby Jesus. For that tradition we place our shoes under the Christmas tree on 5th January at night and also some water and food, so the camels of the Three Kings can have

a meal in their journey to the Christ Child in Bethlehem. The religion traditionally is Catholic; the devout Argentineans attend church services. On Christmas Eve, church bells ring to call families to Mass at midnight for "la Misa de gallo" or the Mass of the rooster which is a long standing and shared family tradition. Christmas is not just a holiday but also a season of celebration that centers first on the faith of Jesus.

"Feliz Navidad"



# Christmas in Belgium

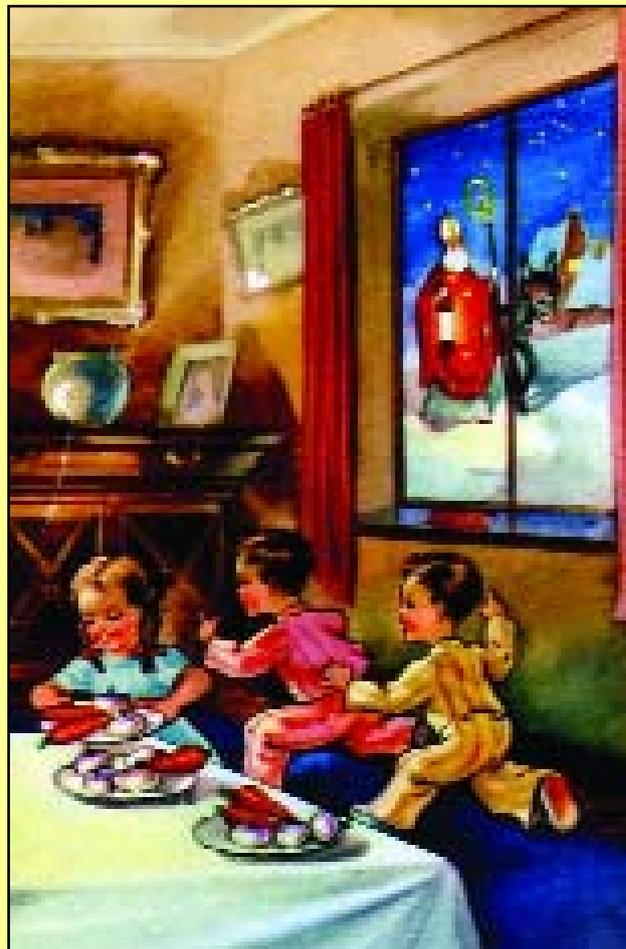
Christmas is a typical family event, where all family members come together to celebrate.

During Christmas, nearly every Belgian home displays a Nativity Scene showing the newborn Christ in the crib, Maria and Joseph, the surroundings in the stable. This is called the "kerststal" in Flemish. Another Christmas tradition, which is also very popular in Belgium, is the Christmas tree where gifts are put underneath on Christmas Eve, December 24.

Most of the restaurants are closed on Christmas Eve, for the reason that most families come together in private homes to have a Christmas supper there. The menu for the meal varies according to regional culinary tradition. After the meal every member of the Family receives gifts from "de Kerstman". Of course these gifts are the ones from under the Christmas tree!

After the food and the presents a lot of families go together to church for the midnight mess to celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ. After the service, in most of our small villages, people get together near a bonfire in front of the church, drinking "Glühwein" (hot red wine) or hot chocolate, and eating warm waffles.

The weeks before the Holidays there are also a lot of Christmas markets in most of the towns.



# Christmas in Canada

Christmas today in Canada is a conglomerate of cultures and traditions from all over the world. As in the United States, our country was populated with people emigrating from other countries searching for a better life. The Christmas tree came from Germany, as well as the Advent Calendars and gingerbread House, the English introduced greeting cards, from Ireland came the custom of decorating our windows with lights, the United States gave us Santa Claus, and the French introduced the creche (Nativity) scene and carols. So really a Canadian Christmas is a mixture of various cultures combined to create the festivities we have come to know.



# Czech Republic Christmas



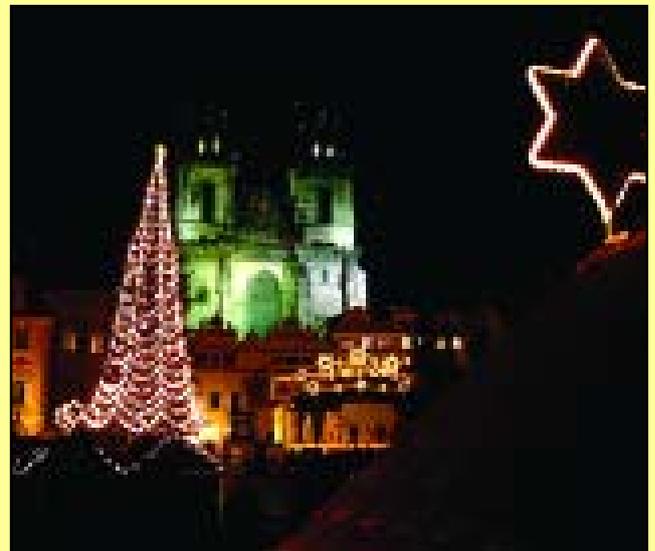
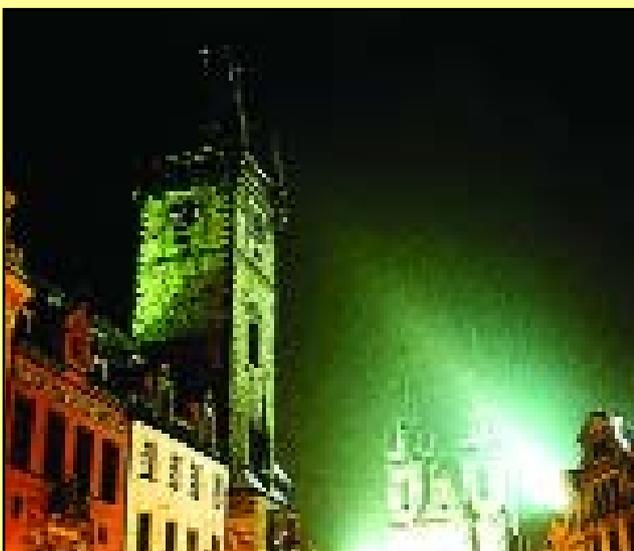
Good King Wenceslaus is an important figure in the Czech Christmas. The winter holidays in the Czech Republic begin with the season of Advent, which is essentially a period of preparation for the Christmas holidays. The climax is Christmas Eve. Advent comes from Latin meaning coming or arrival. Advent lasts for four Sundays; this represents the 4,000 years in which humanity awaited the arrival of Jesus the Redeemer. Thus for Christians, Advent is a time of penance and religious reflection. Christians fast during Advent eating eggs, milk, cheese and fish rather than meat. The fasting and atonement is meant to precede the abundance and joy of the Christmas celebrations. St. Lucille's Day is the last holiday of Advent and at this time the preparations for Christmas celebrations begin. Christmas in the Czech Republic is the most important holiday of the year. No food is more associated with Christmas than the carp. Black Jake is traditionally part of the Christmas Eve dinner in many Czech families. In folklore, it was believed to possess magic powers, especially as regards good crop in the following year. There are numerous variants, the most common being Mushroom Jake, commonly called Black Jake.

December 24-26, CHRISTMAS

Christmas usually begins in the morning of December 24. When children get up they decorate a Christmas tree. Then in the evening people eat traditional Christmas meal-fried carp with potato salad. Then they go under the Christmas tree and get gifts. December 25 and 26 are usually days for family visits.

January 01, (NEW YEAR'S DAY)

In Czech this holiday is called Nový Rok. It is celebrated probably same way as anywhere else.



# Christmas Dinner in France

You cannot talk about anything in France without mentioning food, especially during Christmas time. A typical French meal for Christmas night, just before or after the traditional exchange of gifts, for a starter are some oysters, smoked salmon or/and "foie gras." Next, the main dish is stuffed turkey with vegetables and chestnuts. You cannot miss the "plateau de fromage," plate of cheese, of course.

However, the most interesting, is actually the dessert. Every region has its own tradition but the most famous one is the traditional "bûche de Noël".

La Bûche is a typical dessert served during Christmas in France. "Pâtissière" (rolled cake napé of cream), frozen (with milk and Grand Marnier), or out of chestnut purée with chocolate, it is always presented in a lengthened and circular form. The "Bûche" is often decorated with small objects out of plastic or edible, representing elements of Christmas (Father-Christmas, a saw, a fir tree, a rose, a dwarf of garden, a mushroom or even miniature candles). This final touch gives all the interest to this dessert not very common, exclusively tasted to Christmas.

The origin of this dessert is the log, which people was going to formerly seek in wood, the day before Christmas, and which was placed in the hearth of the chimney. This ritual had a particular significance: the wood fire was intended to "hank" the sun, so vital in winter.

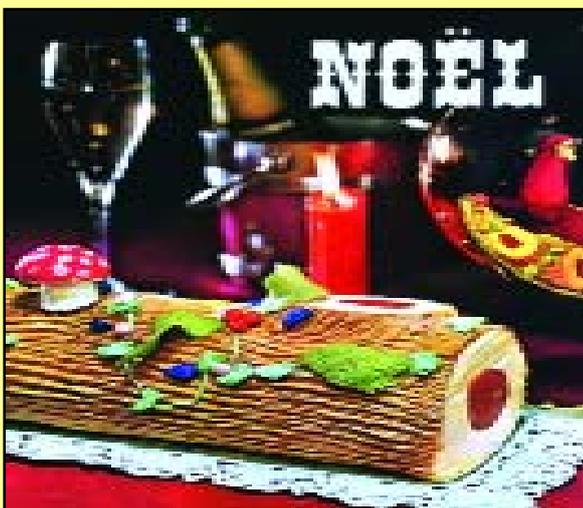
In France, people used to place as many logs in the chimney as people living in the house. They owed consumed all the evening, without fire not dying out, if not, misfortunes would arrive in the year. People were very superstitious at the time!

In Italy, the log was called "ceppo". In England, it was the "Yule Log". The tradition wanted that the log was offered but not sold.

Another dessert tradition is coming from south of France. It's "les 13 desserts".

Rules commonly observed: they are 13 as the number of guests of the Last Supper. Must appear, fresh fruits, all the desserts are been served on the table at the same time and in good quantity. The lists of these 13 desserts differ by Province and from one city to another. Some of the desserts are Hazel nuts or nut, dry figs, almonds, dry grapes, the two nougats (black or white) and the "pump of oil" (also called "le gibassié" or "la fougasse").

However, the most important thing is to have a convivial time with the people you are sharing the meal. Bon appétit et Joyeux Noël.



# Christmas Customs in Hungary

The period of Advent (4 weeks before Xmas) is full of customs related to Xmas. These customs are full of superstitions and prophecies for the next year. They are mostly ancient traditions but in several families many of them are becoming customary lately. Of course some of them are dying - but we think that as long as people (and the youth) know about them, they won't die forever. It's worth knowing about them because they are very interesting.

People make - or buy - Advent's wreath with 4 candles and every Sunday till Xmas they light one more of them. But every year more and more other kinds of decorations are used too in the Advent and Xmas period in Hungary.

The really 1st prophesying day is November 30, the name day of Andrew. Those girls who are able to fast that whole day (eat nothing) will dream about their future husband.

The 2nd prophesying day is December 04 - the name day of Barbara in Hungary. Young not married girls and women cut some branches of fruit-trees and put them into a vase in the flat. If they begin to blossom till Xmas Eve, it means that the girl will surely get married during the next year.

Santa Claus comes to Hungarian children on December 06, in the morning. Basically he looks like your Santa Claus in America. He comes from the North Pole on his sledge dragged by reindeers. There are always 2 little devils (dressed in black with red horns and tail) with him to punish bad children. On December 05, in the evening little children clean their boots and put them on the window for the night as Santa Claus in Hungary puts his presents into boots. Children can hardly sleep that night and always wake up early in the morning. But bad children get not only presents but also birch (a bunch of branches painted gold to swish them with if they were bad - children are so afraid of getting it!). Of course on December 06 you can meet many Santa Clauses in the streets, in the stores - and also in the schools. If children (but also teachers in the schools!) sing him a song or recite a poem about Santa Claus they can get some chocolate.

By the way it's common in Hungary that little children write - or draw - a list of their wishes to Santa Claus and Little Child Jesus a few weeks before December 06 and December 24. They put the letter on the window in the evening and the letter disappears till the morning! It means they can start waiting for their wishes to come true.

Many superstitions and customs are related to December 13 - the day of Lucia. Traditionally it's said to be the night of the bad spirits - as it is the longest night of the year.

In the past men started carving out "Lucia's stool" - a little wooden stool with 3 feet - this day. They had to work on it arranging the work for every day till December 24 (there's also a proverb in Hungarian: "You are preparing it as slowly as the Lucia's stool!"). The man who has made his stool this way, brought it to the Midnight Service on December 24. And when he stepped on his stool he was able to recognize witches in the church among the believers. But as soon as he recognized them he had to take his stool



>>> Page 22 >>>



and run away home as quick as he could because witches were on his trail. This is why the man also took a bag of poppy-seeds or millet with him to the church: after he spread them in the street witches had to stop and collect them before running to catch him. This way man could slip away from witches.

Many customs related to this day are prophesying the future husband for girls. One of them is still popular among young girls. They take 12 pieces of paper and write 11 boys' names on them. One of them has to be left empty - it will mean she won't ever get married. They roll up and put all the papers into a box. Then every evening till December 24, they pull out one piece of

paper - it's prohibited to read what name was written on it - and burn them. They can have a look only at the last one, on December 24, evening - the name on it shows them their future husband's name.

The next custom is about prophesying the next year's weather: Every day between December 13 and December 24 people has to take notes about that day's weather. It will show them what the weather will be like in the next 12 months. It's not difficult to guess that this custom was popular mostly in villages where farmers' living depended on the weather.

Two customs of the same day (December 13) are related to money. If you want to be rich next year don't spend even a penny on this very day! But if you are given some money that day - it means luck for you.

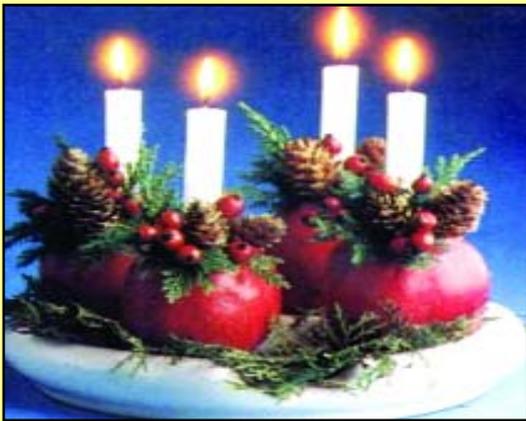
People sow wheat into a cup or plate on December 13. If it grows thick and high till December 24 - it means your next year will be rich. If not - you will be poor. Almost everybody believes in it and sows wheat in Hungary that day.

In the past a week before Xmas carol singers appeared in the streets to announce the approach of the festival. They carried a Christmas crib with them and went from house to house performing the nativity play. It relates to the story of Christ's birth and the appearance of the shepherds and the 3 kings from the Orient bringing presents to the God's Son. Nowadays nativity plays are presented only in churches and schools and they are very popular.

On December 24 only the nearest family circle comes together. They decorate the Xmas tree (it can be only a fir or a pine in Hungary) together. It's said that you should hang on your tree at first some fruit (apples and walnuts) and some honey-cakes to have a good harvest in the next year - and put the green wheat and their own little Xmas crib under the tree. Then light the candles and sing together some Xmas carols before giving each other presents in the afternoon or in the evening. Most little children think that it is the Little Child Jesus who brings them presents (but it's not the Santa Claus who does it in Hungary at Xmas). This day must be very peaceful for the family.

In the past people traditionally fasted (one day only) till the Xmas dinner in the evening to clean their body and soul. However, today this habit is not practiced as often. The dinner begins with a very kind custom. The head of the family takes a beautiful apple and





cuts it into as many pieces as many members of the family are present round the table. He says: "The way this apple belongs together, let God help us to come all together a year later as well." Then everybody gets a piece of garlic, sops it into honey and eats it - it will surely help you if you ever have sore throat during next year. Then everybody chooses a walnut from a basket and cracks it. If your nut is healthy - you will be healthy too next year. If somebody's nut is empty - it means he will die during the year. People eat their slices of apple with nut and honey, then drink a specially made Hungarian Xmas "palinka" (a very strong drink flavored with honey and caraway-seed).

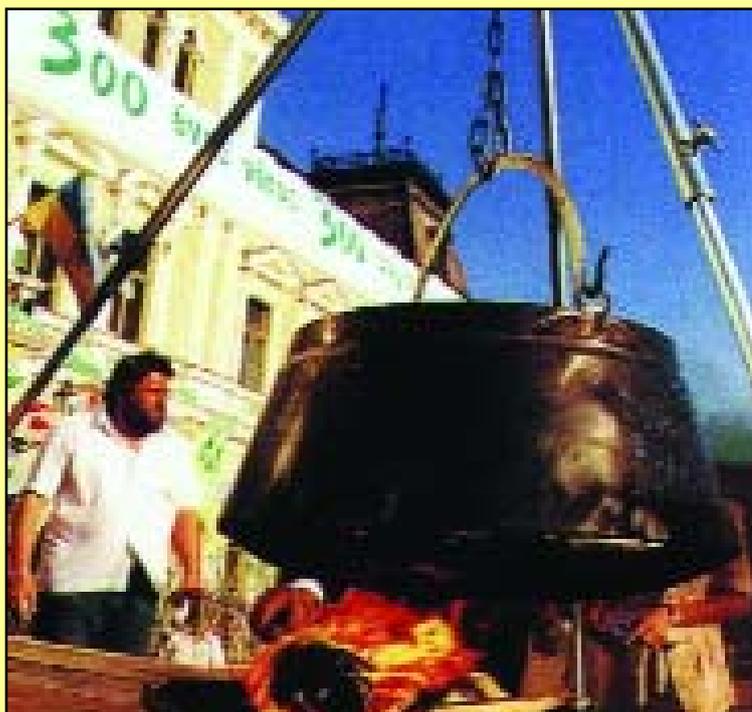
Every part of Hungary has its own traditional set dishes for

the Holy Night. But most families eat fish. In our town it is the world famous "Fishermen's soup". After this a special sweet dish called "guba" in Hungarian follows. This is made of leavened dough similar to bread but we make little balls from it and bake them some days before Xmas-time. In the morning of December 24 we steep them into sweetened milk (they only have to soften but not to become pulpy - it is not so easy!) and put ground poppy-seed mixed with sugar on them. They are very tasty! On December 25 and 26 families and close friends have big meals and invite each other for lunch. Three dishes are essential parts of the Xmas lunches: stuffed-cabbage (made of pickled cabbage with balls of minced pork), turkey stuffed with chestnuts and poppy-seed cake.

Most families go to the Midnight Service in church. There's a superstition related to this: when you leave the house that night you should leave a candle burning inside otherwise bad spirits and witches running away from church (as they dislike the smell of incense but like darkness) will find refuge in the house. On the day of the Holy Innocents (December 27) in the villages young men go from house to house where young girls live and swish them with birches wishing them and the members of the family health and fruitfulness for the next year. The family in return treats them to homemade cakes and some drinks. New Year's Eve is traditionally a very happy evening that most people spend with their friends in a good company. It's an important night: the way that you spend the last day of the year you will spend your whole new year - so you shouldn't be sad or lonely etc. that night. This night is very suitable for prophesying from cards or any other way.

People - at home or in a company - sit up till after midnight to see the New Year in. At midnight they sing the national anthem and drink champagne. In big cities people go to the main streets to see the New Year together with strangers: they shout, bang petards and sound paper-trumpets. (The first kiss that you get in the New Year is very important!) After midnight most of people call their close relatives or friends who are far from them, and wish them Happy New Year by phone. People usually stay up until dawn - they eat, drink, dance or play funny parlor games together, or watch comic shows on TV at home.

You must be careful what you eat on January 01! You shouldn't eat any fish or chicken. Fish swims away with your luck, chicken scratches it back! If you want to be rich, lucky and healthy during the year you have to eat lentil (soup or salad made of lentil is the most popular) and pork - try to get the fried pork's tail during lunch, this is the symbol of personal luck! But before starting to eat put the green wheat sowed before Xmas, a prayer book and your purse on the table that God blessed your New Year!



# Christmas in Italy

Christmas, as it is celebrated in Italy, has two origins: the familiar traditions of Christianity blended with the pagan traditions of the ancient Roman Empire. The great feast of that era was "Saturnalia" (a winter solstice celebration). Now, it coincides with the pre-Christmas celebrations of Advent. Consequently, Christmas Markets, merry-making and torch processions, honor not only the birth of Christ, but also the birth of the "Unconquered Sun." Natale, the Italian word for Christmas, is the translation for "day of birth."

A delightful tradition, now finding renewal in Italy, is the ushering in of the December festivities by the Zampognari (bagpipers). They descend from the mountains in the regions of Abruzzo and Calabria filling the air with anticipation for the joyous celebration to come as they play adaptations of old hill tunes such as Cantata dei Pastori. In Rome they play at various sites including the Christmas market at the historic Piazza Navona, at the Spanish Steps, and at the entrance to St. Peter's Square.

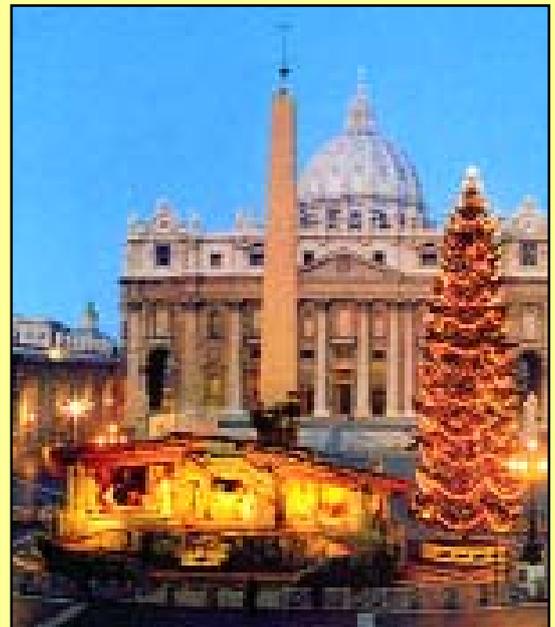
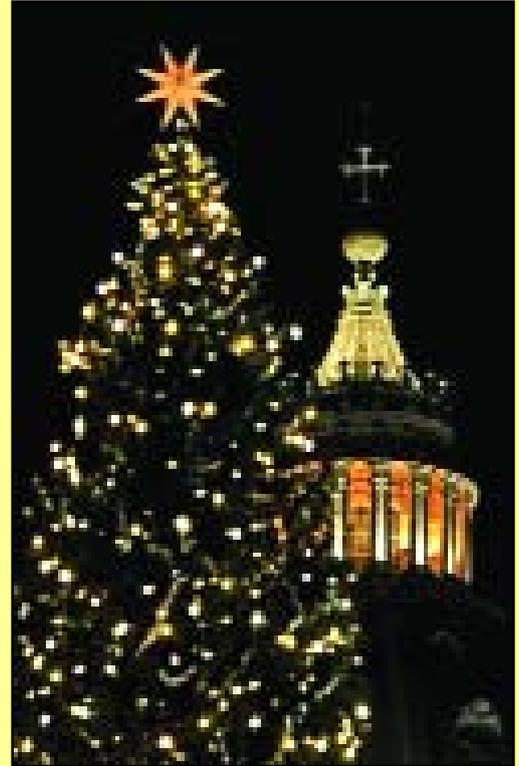
Figures of the Zampognari are very popular in nativity scenes and you can find many representations of them in Spaccanapoli (the most famous crèche shops in Naples). The



most beautiful Presepi (Crib) are set up in churches, especially in Naples. There is often a contest between churches of the same town for the best Presepe (Crib). People go from church to church to view and compare the Nativity scenes. Amidst the general merrymaking and religious observance of December 24th, Christmas candles are lighted and a holiday feast is prepared. In some places, Christmas Eve dinner consists largely of fish. There may be as many as 10 to 20 fish dishes prepared. In Rome, the traditional dish of Christmas Eve is Capitone, a large female eel, roasted, baked or fried. A traditional Italian Christmas Dinner needs a very long time and everybody enjoys, that the whole family is together.

Common throughout Italy are the Christmas sweets: Panettone (cake filled with candied fruit), Pandoro (special soft cake from Verona), Torrone (nougat) and Panforte (gingerbread) made with hazelnuts, honey and almonds.

For many generations, the principal gift-bringer in some areas was a uniquely Italian folk character named La Befana who would distribute toys in honor of Epiphany, January 6th, when the season comes to its official end. In other areas (Venice, Verona and Mantova) St. Lucia distributed gifts and in some regions Gesu' Bambino, or Child Jesus, brought Christmas gifts. Due to modern communications, Santa Claus has made incursions into Italy's traditions, and now he makes his rounds in various regions on Christmas Eve as Babbo Natale, Father Christmas.



# Christmas in Slovakia

Christmas is the holiday that people look forward to in almost every country. It is the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. Among the many Christmas symbols evergreen trees, candles, stars, angels, bells, wreaths, holy and mistletoe are the most known but each country has different customs and traditions.

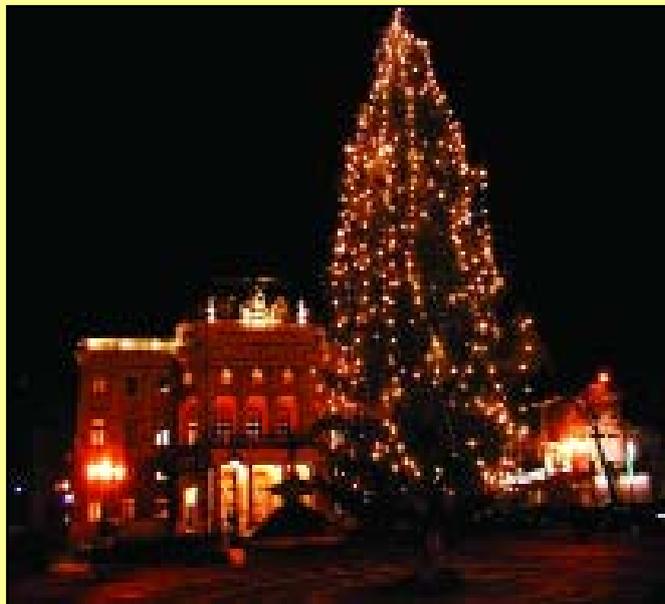
In Slovakia, four weeks before Christmas advent season begins. Everybody is busy shopping for presents, food and Christmas decoration. The houses, gardens or fences are decorated with Advent wreaths and candles. There are candles everywhere: On the table, in the windows, the churches or on the branches of the trees.

It is also traditional to send Christmas cards to friends and relatives, bake some sweets, usually vanilla rolls and Christmas cake.

On Christmas Eve, December 24, people start enjoying Christmas time. In the morning the Christmas tree is decorated with lights, little things made of straw, glass balls and some sweets and put presents under the tree. Especially children like decorating the Christmas tree. Some families don't eat anything all day long, but prepare everything for the big Christmas Dinner, which is very rich. Before eating religious people pray for a while, read some stores from the Bible and have a glass of the alcohol. They tinkle with the glasses and wish Merry Christmas to each other. To start the dinner special Christmas waffles, with milk and curd or honey and nuts are served, then garlic with bread. The traditional Christmas soup is sauerkraut - soup with sausages, mushrooms and potatoes. The last course is fried carp and potato salad. The dinner concludes with nuts and fruits, dried or fresh ones. During dinner some wine or brandy is served. After dinner everybody unwraps the presents that are lying under the Christmas tree and listens to Christmas carols. Everybody is happy and enjoying the gifts and the calm of this festive evening. Then most people watch TV. At midnight the Catholics go to midnight Mass.

On Christmas Day, December 25, people usually stay at home to eat a big lunch. The religious go to church again to worship, because of the special praying this day or visit relatives and friends. Children sing Christmas carols, especially in the villages. They visit many households where they sing these carols and wish a Happy New Year and all best.

The Boxing Day, December 26, is a special day too. Some people also go for skiing to the mountains. There they can celebrate Christmas, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day. The activities done this day are nearly the same as on Christmas Day. Now people begin to prepare for the end of Christmas.



# Christmas in Ukraine

For Ukrainians Christmas is the most important family holiday of the year. It is celebrated solemnly, as well as merrily, according to ancient customs, which are still observed today. Ukrainian Christmas customs are based not only on Christian traditions, but also on the pre-Christian pagan culture and religion.

Christianity was introduced into Ukraine in 988 A.D. The pagan religion and traditions associated with it were too deeply rooted in the people to allow the Church to eliminate them completely. Therefore, the Church adopted a policy of tolerance toward most of the ancient customs and accepted many as part of the Christian holidays. In this way, the ancient pagan Feasts of Winter Solstice became a part of Christian Christmas customs. That is why Ukrainian Christmas customs are quite unique and deeply symbolic.

Ukrainian Christmas festivities begin on Christmas Eve, December 24 according to the Gregorian calendar and on January 6 according to the Julian calendar. The Christmas Eve Supper or Sviata Vecheria, Holy Supper, brings the family together to share the special foods and begin the holiday. The rituals of the Christmas Eve are dedicated to God, to the welfare of the family, and to the commemoration of the forefathers.

The Christmas Eve Supper begins once the children of the family sight the first star in the evening sky, recalling the journey of the wise men towards Bethlehem.

The table is covered with two tablecloths, one for the ancestors of the family, the second for the living members. In pagan times ancestors were considered to be benevolent spirits, who, when properly respected, brought good fortune to the living family members. The table may have one extra place-setting for the deceased family members, whose souls, according to the belief, come on Christmas Eve and partake of the food.

A kolach (Christmas bread) is placed in the center of the table. This bread is braided into a ring, and



three such rings are placed one on top of the other, with a candle in the center of the top one. The three rings symbolize the Trinity and the circular form represents Eternity. A didukh (meaning grandfather) is a sheaf of wheat stalks or made of mixed grain stalks. It is placed under the icons in the house. After the didukh is positioned in the place of honor, the father places a bowl of kutia (boiled wheat mixed with poppy seeds and honey) next to it. Kutia is the most important food of the entire Christmas Eve Supper, and is also called God's Food. A jug of uzvar (stewed fruits, which should contain twelve different fruits) and is called God's Drink, is also served.



After all the preparations have been completed, father offers each member of the family a piece of bread dipped in honey, which had been previously blessed in church. Then he leads the family in prayer. As a prayer is said, father says the traditional Christmas greeting, "Khristos rodyvsya!" (Christ is born!), which is answered by the family with "Slavite Yoho!" (Let Us Glorify Him!). The family sits down to a twelve-course meatless Christmas Eve Supper.

There are twelve courses in the Supper, because according to the Christian tradition each course is dedicated to one of Christ's Apostles. According to the ancient pagan belief, each course was for every full moon during the course of the year. The courses are meatless because there is a period of fasting required by the Church until Christmas Day. However, for the pagans the meatless dishes were a form of bloodless sacrifice to the gods.

The first course is always kutia. Then comes borshch (beet soup). This is followed by a variety of fish - baked, broiled, fried, cold in aspic, fish balls, marinated herring and so on. Then come varenyky (boiled dumplings filled with cabbage, potatoes, buckwheat grains, or prunes). There are also holubtsi (stuffed cabbage), and the supper ends with uzvar.

At the end of Sviata Vechera the family often sings Kolyadky, Ukrainian Christmas Carols. In many communities the old Ukrainian groups of young people and members of organizations and churches calling at homes and collecting donations carry on tradition of carolling.

The traditional Christmas customs of Ukraine add color and significance to the winter festival of Christmas, and Ukrainian Christmas on January 7th is usually a peaceful and quiet event. And whether Christmas is celebrated on December 25th or on January 7th the message is the same: "Peace on Earth! Good will towards men!"



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*Thank you for your support*  
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## Very Merry Christmas and Happy New Year 2006

from the KFOR Chronicle Team to all of you! We wish you, your families and friends happiness, healthiness, peace and prosperity the year(s) to come.

Thank you for your cooperation during this year. Without you and your great articles, fancy ideas, photos and stories we could not have been published the 12 KFOR Chronicles and the KFOR-Calendar 2005 with these outstanding subject matters. I am sure we will continue this professional way next year!

Albanian -	Me Fat Krishtlindjet dhe Gezuar Viti i Ri
Arabic -	عيد ميلاد سعيد سنة سعيدة
Argentine -	Feliz Navidad y Feliz Año Nuevo
Armenian -	Շնորհակալ ենք աստի:
Bohemian -	Veselé Vánoce
Bulgarian -	Vesela Koleda i chestita nova godina!
Czech -	Stastne a vesele vianoce a stastny novy rok!
Danish -	Glaedelig Jul og godt niter
Dutch -	Vrolijk Kerstfeest en een Gelukkig Nieuw Jaar
English -	Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year
Estonian -	Rõõmusaid jõulupühi ja head uut aastat!
Finnish -	Hyvää joulua ja onnellista uutta vuotta!
Flemish -	Zalig Kerstfeest en Gelukkig nieuw jaar
French -	Joyeux Noël et Bonne Année!
Galician -	Bo Nadal
Georgian -	Gilotsavi Krist'es Shobas & Gilosavi akhal ts'els
German -	Frohe Weihnachten und ein glückliches Neues Jahr!
Greek -	Ilronia pulla kai eytyhismenos o kainourios hronos
Modern Greek -	Kala Christougenna kai eytichismenos o kainourios chronos!
Hungarian -	Kellemes karacsonyt uennepeket es holdog ujevet!
Icelandic -	Gledhileg júl og farsíft komandi ár!
Irish Gaelic -	Nollaig Shona duit
Irish Gaelic -	Nollaig Shona
Irish Gaelic -	Nollaig faoi shean agus faoi shonas duit agus bliain nua faoi mhaise dhuif!
Italian -	Buon Natale e Felice Anno Nuovo!
Latvian -	Priecīgas Ziemsvētkus un Laimīgu Jaungadu!
Lithuanian -	Linksmu Kalėdu
Mongolian -	Zul saryn bolon shine ony mend devshuulye
Norwegian -	God Jul Og Godt Nytt Aar
Polish -	Wesołe Boże Narodzenie
Polish -	Wesołych Świąt i Szczęśliwego Nowego Roku
Portuguese -	Boas Festas
Portuguese -	Feliz Natal e um Prospero Ano Novo
Romanian -	Craciun fericit si un an nou fericit
Serbian -	Mir Bozicuju Xristos ce rodi u Srećna Nova godina!
Slovakian -	Sretan Bozic or Vesele vianoce
Slovakian -	Vesele Vianoce i na zdravie v novom roku!
Slovenian -	Vesele bozicne praznike in srecno novo leto
Spanish -	Feliz Navidad y Próspero Año Nuevo
Swedish -	God Jul Och Ett Gott Nytt Ar
Turkish -	Noeliniz kutlu olsun ve yeni yiliniz kutlu olsun!
Turkish -	Noeliniz Ve Yeni Yiliniz Kutlu Olsun
Ukrainian -	З Новим Роком та Різдвом Христовим!
Welsh -	Nadolig Llawn a Blwyddyn Newydd Da!

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