

Christmas Customs Around the World

Santa Claus' Reindeer

When we see pictures of the reindeer, we are likely to think of the big, prancing animals that pull the sleigh of Kris Kringle as he dashes through the snow on Christmas Eve, visiting the homes of good children, who, expecting his coming, hang up their stockings near the chimney-place where the kind old gentleman may find them easily and fill them with goodies from his bulging pack.

However, wholly apart from this well-loved story, the reindeer are among the most useful animals on earth, furnishing man with food, clothing, transportation and even milk.

In 1889, the United States Government, to help the starving Alaskan Indians, whose walrus industry had been destroyed, imported about 1,000 reindeer from Siberia. These, roaming through a stretch of country some 4,000 miles wide and 1,500 miles long, threw and so multiplied that today they number more than a million, over half of which are owned by the Eskimo members of the Indian family.

The typical home of the reindeer is in Lapland, which comprises part of Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. Since they must live in such cold northern countries with no kind of indoor shelter, Nature has thoughtfully provided them with heavy hair about the neck which keeps them warm through the coldest days.

Perhaps you might wonder how the natives manage about transportation in this land of great distances, where trains, busses, and other means of modern travel cannot enter. Their best friend is the nimble reindeer that willingly pulls their sleighs for them across the frozen snow, sometimes for as many as a hundred miles a day without needing rest. Reindeer can run more swiftly than dogs or even horses, and since they, like the camel, can subsist on their own fat, they are more sought after than huskies, Alaskan dogs, that must have food found for them along the way.

The pleasant sounding name reindeer comes from the Lapp language and signifies "reino" or "pasturage" which means what the name implies — an animal that pastures. In summertime, when these are plentiful, reindeer graze on moss, lichens, mushrooms and stunted vegetation while in winter, when the Arctic winds are blowing and there is nothing left for them to graze on above ground, they live on coral moss which they can get by pawing away the frozen snow with their sharp little hooves.

Mrs. Reindeer usually has but one child a year, and this is called a fawn. Both males and females have flat horns which they shed in the spring, but mother Reindeer keeps hers longer than does her mate, no doubt to protect the feeding places for her young.



(Location of Finland Photo)

Make Garlands Of Greenery

Thick garlands of evergreen are wonderful Christmas decoration, and so much easier to make than you think. For the makings, give your own trees a neat trim or ask for broken branches where Christmas trees are sold. Use branch ends from 4 to 6 inches long. Buy a big spool of pliable wire. Wrap the end of the wire closely around the main stem of the first branch. Follow the branch with the wire straight to a twig that may jut out too far and wire the twig more closely to the main stem. Continue the wire straight along the branch, then wire the next branch to the first, tightly around and around. That's all there is to it — follow main stems with straight wire, bind twigs toward the centre, add a new branch. Leave the garlands plain or finish them off here and there with Christmas tree ornaments, bells or ribbon bows.

On warm days, like city people, reindeer like to visit the seashore to escape the swarms of mosquitoes that are farther inland, and, also, so that they may lap up the flaky specks of salt from the ocean.

So, on Christmas Eve, when you see St. Nicholas and his eight tiny reindeer coming down from the sky, remember that these steeds not only serve Santa in his yearly trip to earth, but also are a boon to mankind every day of the year.

The "Santons" of Christmas

A Parisian custom already hoary with age is the transforming of the large store windows into strange and wonderful scenes at Christmas in which the "automat" is king.

These windows are not like those one sees in Canada and the United States, or even in London. The scenes are not necessarily Christmas in character, although they are usually flanked on either side by windows filled with walking and talking dolls, tin soldiers, trumpets, wagons and electric trains just as they are the world over.

But the special windows which first attract the crowds are strange, animated scenes which might represent the interior of a railway station, a visit to the Zoo, the circus or a scene in a fashionable "sports school". In the station, for instance, would be a Scottish gentleman in kilts arguing about a tip; an American actress followed by a dozen porters loaded with luggage; an Englishman in lacy pinstripes; or a couple of elderly spinsters; while all around would roar the life of stations, with weird and ludicrous situations. Parisians flock to these windows for a good laugh.

This year some of the artists have had the happy idea of animating the "santons". Santons are tiny terra cotta figurines, or little carved wooden figures of the Holy Family and all the other characters which figure in the Nativity scene.

The origin of the Santons is lost in the mists of history. But today in almost every home in Italy, Spain and France one finds these little figures on display at Christmas time. Even the poorest family will have at least the three central characters of the Christmas story while others will be complete with shepherds, sheep, a cow and a donkey, angels and the three wise men. These are placed in the center of the table if small enough (some of the figurines are less than an inch high sometimes), or arranged on the mantelpiece or on a special table in a corner. Something of the same kind is seen in Canada in the "creche" arranged in Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, and even in some homes.

In some villages fancy and imagination has carried the local artists further. Very often the little figurines represent not only the principal characters of the Christmas story but also there are little statuettes of all the various trades in the village: a baker will be carrying a loaf of bread; a blacksmith will have his hammer; the mower will carry a scythe; a shepherd will carry a lamb, and so on. Even some feminine figures are there: the pastry-maker, the dressmaker, and so on.

The first Santons to appear in France were those of St. Francis of Assisi. It is thought that they may have been of Italian origin, but as his mother came from Provence, in France, she may have taken them south to Italy with her. Provence is known as the home of the Santon.

In the earliest records the Santons are known to represent the Holy Family, the Pope, bishops and other characters such as Samson, Goliath and David; saints, Adam and Eve and some very fierce looking devils. At that time the idea of representing the ordinary people never occurred to the artisans who made them.

The custom died out in some parts of the country only to be revived again in Provence at the beginning of the 19th century. It was the work of these Provencal artists which finally fixed the typical French Santons of today.

At Marseilles a famous artist, Simon, created one of the first creches. In addition to the traditional figures he added repentant figures kneeling at the feet of the Christ Child, their heads bowed. There were also monks and nuns in their robes and cowls. Another artist created a set so small that they had to be placed under a magnifying glass dome to be seen in detail. These are so perfect that they are now museum pieces.

Father Martel, in Provence, created some new characters. He chose as his models some street characters, hawkers, street urchins, cripples and gnomes, while another re-created a whole village with the houses grouped around the historic stables with its manger. Some 10,000 little figurines represent every single citizen in the town and the surrounding country.

Today the tradition of "Santons" at Christmas has travelled far beyond the borders of France. Even in Montreal and New York the little figures may be bought.

So this year the animation of the Santons in Parisian store windows will bring the story of the birth of Christ Child to thousands of Parisian children, and grown-ups, in a new and interesting way.

THE CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS

Christmas—or "Noel" as it is known in France—is particularly a day for the children. It is rare that grown persons exchange gifts at that time. They usually wait for the New Year, when their own fete is held.

In France the Christmas tree custom is growing but it is nothing like as universal as it is in Canada. The custom has been practiced for a very long time in Alsace-Lorraine, but until the people of Strasbourg were moved into the center of France for safety in 1939 and carried their custom with them, this wonderful Christmas idea was not practiced in other parts of the country to any extent.

Instead, the French child expected the Pere Noel to put his presents in his shoe. At one time it was a wooden shoe, but today it looks exactly like the shoes worn by boys and girls in other countries. Hanging stockings is not practiced, this being rather an Angle Saxon custom.

Usually, in French families that can afford it, the family has a supper on Christmas Eve. By family

Continued on page 5

Old English Christmas Recipes and Customs

by Victoria Chappelle

A glance at the cookery books used by our ancestors induces a sense of reluctant admiration for their extraordinary capacity. To do justice to a round of beef, mutton pasties, goose liver, game and ducklings, with various side dishes and a few assorted rich cakes, of which one 18th century Christmas dinner for four people consisted, surely needed carefully trained appetites.

But in those days cooks were proud of their work; they kept recipe books which were treated as heirlooms, and many of these are still to be found all over Britain. A recent request by a famous woman's organization to members to send in their proven ancestral family recipes resulted in a book which is a treasure to every woman who loves experimenting in her kitchen, for many of the Christmas recipes can be used again today.

When relatives drop in on Christmas Eve here is a good recipe for "Oast Cakes". The writer had a racy style of her own and her instructions ran:

"Rub a tidy dollop of lard into a pound of flour with a pinch of salt and a teaspoonful of baking powder. Put in currants according to what you have. Mix up stiff with a nice drop of parsnip wine and water. Fry in hot fat, when they come up lovely and brown. Don't hang about, but sit down and eat them. Hot's Hot."

But the relatives may insist on staying for supper. For that event here is a savory dish called:

Cotswold Dumplings

2 eggs
4 oz. grated cheese
2 oz. butter
Bread crumbs
Pinch of salt
Dash of pepper.
Cream together butter and cheese. Add beaten eggs seasoned with salt and pepper, and enough white bread crumbs to form a stiff mixture. Form into dumplings or balls, roll in bread crumbs and brown in hot fat. Can be served with tomato puree.

A cook in the household of a former Duke of Beaufort created a sauce of which the family was so proud that it was called after the Duke's famous house.

Badminton House Sauce

1/2 bottle port wine
2 finely minced shallots
1 pinch cayenne pepper
1 tsp. mango chutney
Finely grated rind of 3 oranges and 3 lemons.
1 tablespoon Worcester sauce
1 dessertspoon scraped horseradish
1 lb. red currant jelly.
Beat all ingredients together thoroughly and allow to stand a few days.

Then there is always the cold dish ready for unexpected guests, and here is one for which the recipe seems first to have been recorded in 1800, although it is much older. It was always eaten at Christmas time and is called:

Chicken Pie

Stream a young cockerel and one pound of tender streaky pork. When half done remove rind from pork and simmer in the liquor for an hour longer. Meanwhile, prepare a good flaky pastry. When the meat is tender, cut the bird into small joints and the pork into cubes. Have ready sausage meat, hard-boiled eggs, thin slices of ham and stuffing. Line a baking dish with the pastry, reserving enough for the top crust. Arrange the cooled chicken and pork in the dish, then pile on balls of sausage meat and dressing, topping with sliced hard-boiled eggs and thin curls of ham. Season with salt and pepper.

Shrovebury Cakes

"Take one pound of flour, one pound of sugar, one pound butter, half an ounce of caraway seed, some nutmeg, rub it well together; then take three eggs, beat them well, then put to them three spoonfuls of sack and as much rose water. Mix this with your paste then roll it out and cut it into what shapes you please; bake them upon tin plates, prick them with a pin, let your oven be not too hot." (The book referred to in this article is: TRADITIONAL FARE OF ENGLAND AND WALES published by the National Federation of Women's Institutes, London.)



THE CHRISTMAS FEAST: Bringing in the Boar's Head at the Queen's College, Oxford, in 1846. During the sixteenth century the boar's head was gradually superseded by the turkey as principal Christmas dish, but at the Queen's College it is still served in the traditional manner. This ceremonial dish is first mentioned at a royal banquet in 1170. The boar's head was garnished with bay and rosemary, with an orange in its mouth, and the snout gilded. The dish had a ritual significance derived from Norse mythology; Freyr, the god of light and fertility, rode on a boar with golden bristles, symbolising the rays of the sun, and the boar's head, with its gilded snout, celebrated the renewal of light and growth at the winter solstice. At the Christmas feast the boar's head was brought in to the singing of a special carol, which appears in the first printed collection made by Wynkyn de Worde in 1521. The three verses of this carol symbolise the Holy Trinity, and the boar's head becomes Satan defeated and borne in triumph.

(Courtesy U. K. Information Office.)

Then pour over the cooled gravy to half fill the dish. Put on top crust, making sure of "steam holes". These can be concealed with pastry "leaves". Bake in slow oven for 1 1/2 hours, then cool slowly.

For a crowd of hungry youngsters, why not try "Salmazundie"? It dates back to 1750 and is believed to have come from a West Indian household. Here is the original recipe:

Salmazundie

"Take the white part of a roasted chicken with the white and yolks of 4 boiled eggs, 2 pickled herrings and a handful of parsley. Chop all these ingredients exceeding small, take the same quantity of lean boiled ham, scraped fine, turn a china basin upside down in the dish, mould 4 ounces of butter in the shape of a pineapple and set it on the basin bottom, lay round our basin a ring of shred parsley, then a ring of yolks of eggs, then whites, then ham, then thicken, then herd, ring till you have covered your basin and used all the ingredients, lay the bones of the pickled herrings upon it with the tails up to the butter and the heads laying on to the edge of the dish, lay a few capers and three or four pickled oysters round your dish and send it up."

And now for a royal recipe. One Christmas, King Henry VIII of England saw a pretty maid of honour eating a cake. Her name was Anne Boleyn and she later became his wife. The cakes of which she was so fond were eventually known as Maids of Honour, and here is the 16th century recipe:

Maids of Honour

"Warm a pint of fresh milk to blood heat, add a teaspoonful of rennet and a pinch of salt. When the curds have set drain through fine muslin all night, then rub them with four ounces of butter through a sieve. Heat the yolks of two eggs to froth with a dessertspoonful of brandy and add to the curds. Blanch and chop half an ounce of sweet almonds, add them with a little sugar and powdered cinnamon and last of all the grated rind and juice of half a lemon. Line patty pans with puff pastry, fill them with the mixture and sprinkle some with currants. Bake in a hot oven."

And here is a final Christmas recipe for:

From Santa's Own Store

A FEW GIFT SUGGESTIONS

Christmas NYLONS!

Yes, everyone can use extra Nylons! See our collection in costume colors.

—THE GLORIA—

Wearable GIFTS FOR HER

Values galore in our Gift collection of lovely Scarfs. Come in and see them today.

—THE GLORIA—

For Xmas, Lovely Lingerie

Lingerie luxury unlimited in our new beauties — a Gift that she'll love you for!

—THE GLORIA—

Gloves

Fingers really stay warm in our angora, wool and leather Gloves. — A handsome gift.

—THE GLORIA—

THE GLORIA

"Where Smarter Women Shop"

Phone 614 179 Grafton Street

Devil's Knoll Tolls Every Christmas Eve, Is Legend of Dewsbury, Yorkshire Village

Strange superstitions, relics of the remote days when Britain's people were pagans, still linger in many parts of the country and are remembered at Christmas time. Here are some of them!

DEVIL'S KNOLL

For the last seven hundred years the "Devil's Knoll", a village on Christmas Eve in the village of Dewsbury, Yorkshire, in the north of England. Local legend says that the custom was begun by a bacchanal, who gave the bell to the parish church as a penance for killing his servant, and ordered that it should be rung every Christmas Eve to remind him of his crime. By tolling the bell once for every year since the birth of Christ, the final stroke being timed to ring at the hour of midnight, local people believe that the devil would be kept from the parish for the next twelve months.

LEGEND OF ST. FILLIAN'S STONES

At Killin, Perthshire, Scotland, the villagers still rush each Christmas to a nearby stream to make a resting place for a number of stones taken from the gables of an ancient corn-mill. They are not ordinary stones, for the villagers believe that they were used centuries ago by their patron

saint, St. Fillian, to cure agues, sprains, and other ailments and injuries.

BOAR'S HEAD FEAST

Queen's College, Oxford University has a Boar's Head Feast on Christmas Day, which originated in the story of a wild boar some five hundred years ago while studying Aristotle during a walk. He killed his formidable enemy by thrusting the volcano down the animal's throat. Today a papier mache head replaces the 90-pound specimen under the weight of which two attendants used to stagger in bygone days, but the spirit of the ceremony remains unchanged. As the choir sings the last notes of a traditional carol, the head is placed on the table of the Provost, the Principal of the College. The Provost then presents the ornaments and embellishments one by one to the choir boys and visitors, the solo singer receiving the orange.

CHARMING THE ORCHARDS

Old Christmas Day or Twelfth Night, has its own celebrations. In Devonshire in the south of England, famous for its apple orchards, the custom of "Charming the Orchards" was handed down almost within living memory. Local farmers and their men went to their orchards after dark on Twelfth Night, carrying guns and a great jar of cider, with a large piece of toast or cake floating in it. No gun was considered to be too old, if it was able to hold the priming, and the more noise it made, the better. When the party had reached one of the largest apple trees, the farmer addressed it while the guns were discharged. The cider was then handed round, and the sop of cake eaten, but care was taken to see that a good piece was left in a fork of the tree for the robins, for if this was left undone the charm would have no effect. Finally the men returned to the farmhouse to tell tales around the fire until morning. Like many old superstitions, this custom was founded on a practical belief; the shot was supposed to tear the bark of the tree and to quicken the fruiting in a similar manner to the action of beating a walnut tree.

HOLY NIGHT

In Westmorland in the north of England, Old Christmas Night is known as "Holy Night," or "Holling," from an annual procession which took place in the town of Brough. Here as ash or holy tree, lit with the tops of the branches to which

Continued on page 5