

Wine, Food, More Wine Make French Yules Gay

PARIS (UPI) — In France, they call him "Le Pere Noel." But he's pretty much the same as Santa Claus all over the world.

He flies around with a big sack of toys and manages to squeeze down the chimney, look around to make sure the shoes by the fireplace or under the Christmas tree are polished and then leaves the presents.

For the children and the parents Christmas is a family affair that really starts when Papa comes home from work on Christmas Eve.

For him the work of Christmas has just begun. He decorates the Christmas tree while Mama busies herself in the kitchen. Grandpa and Grandma and maybe some other relatives arrive during the evening.

In families with younger children Christmas dinner is often served on Christmas Eve. Some families are adopting the idea of dinner on Christmas Day but the real French tradition aims at midnight mass then a feast that might last for hours in the early morning.

Christmas In Other Lands

After the requisite number of aperitifs—it might be as pastis, or a wine cocktail, but Scotch whisky is now the "in" drink—dinner begins with oysters and a dry Alsatian white wine. Then there's foie gras (liver paste) or traditional boudin blanc — a white sausage — served with another

white wine.

The main dish is chestnut-stuffed turkey, or goose or maybe a roast of meat, served with the rich red Burgundy or Bordeaux wine. Then salad, cheese, and the long-awaited "buche de Noel," a cream-iced sponge cake so-called because it is made in the baker's shop in the form of a yule log.

With the buche, generally accompanied by candied chestnuts, comes the champagne, probably brought by Grandpa who, you understand, is an expert on these things.

Then there is coffee and brandy, or some of the strong white fruit-flavored liquors that abound in France.

God And Gambling Stir Spanish Spirits

MADRID (UPI) — In addition to being a deeply religious pageant, Christmas brings out the gambling spirit in most Spaniards.

It gives them a chance to indulge in one of the nation's greatest pastimes — the lottery.

No sooner does winter descend on the Iberian peninsula than Spaniards begin talking excitedly about the famed annual Christmas lottery, the nation's largest.

This year more than 3,038,000,000 (b) pesetas (more than \$60 million) will be given away following a national drawing Dec. 22.

Christmas lottery tickets are on sale not only in official government establishments but in hotels, clubs, and from man-in-the-street itinerant ticket sellers.

There are almost a million tickets numbers, but each ticket is subdivided into decimals selling for 500 pesetas (\$8.33) each. The subdivided tickets are in turn further subdivided into series.

Traffic in lottery tickets has become more important to Spanish Christmas than the exchange of traditional holiday greeting cards.

Almost every store, factory and business in the nation has taken up offering shares in a winning number to clients and friends as a public relations gimmick with a Spanish twist.

The Christmas lottery has increasingly gained international fame as a sort of Iberian "Irish Sweepstakes." There are even reports of requests for tickets coming from the Soviet Union.

The drawing of the winning numbers has become a national ritual: televised live and broadcast nationwide.

An ultra-modern electric system, operated by a group of children from the Saint Ildefonso Boys School, picks the winners. The numbers are whirled around by the machine in a large globe from nine in the morning until the afternoon drawing. As the machine selects a number the children sing it out.

Even before the drawing Spanish newspapers mobilize their forces to fan through the nation to find the "gordo" — literally fat one — which is the title given the person holding the most tickets with the winning number.

The winning ticket this year will pay 525 million pesetas (almost \$9 million).

Though the excitement naturally centers on the big winner, even what they call here a "pinch" of the gordo can make it a rich, as well as merry, Christmas for many a Spaniard.



HO, HO, HO—Nearly everybody you run into on Franklin Street these days is smiling. This twinkling-eyed little Santa in the display window of one of the local merchants seems to know why. In case you haven't heard, Christmas is less than two weeks away.

—Photo by Rudolph, the red-nosed photographer

Unexpected Bargains

LONDON (UPI) — Ladies at a recent neighborhood rummage sale here never had it so good. A deliveryman mixed up his addresses and brought to the sale an order of new dresses valued at \$53 each and intended for a nearby shop. Before the mistake was discovered several of the dresses had been snapped up for \$11 each.

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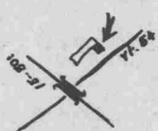
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