

FROM DAPHNE'S KITCHEN

# Celebrate Culinary Christmas Traditions From Around The World

BY DAPHNE McWHITE

On Christmas Eve, my mom wanted her children to understand that the real meaning of Christmas was the birth of Jesus. So she prepared a birthday cake, complete with candles and the "Happy Birthday to Jesus" song. We each then opened one or two Christmas presents. This special cake and presents, along with the anticipation of Santa's arrival, made Christmas Eve the highlight of the holiday for me.

We enjoyed typical Southern foods at Christmastime, including fresh coconut cake, ham, fudge and divinity. Through very different from traditional USA fare, the scrumptious recipes offered to you this week come from heartfelt contributors.

Some were born in Peru, others in Germany and some moved here as adults, others as children. Each has shared generously their own traditions and childhood memories of Christmas past in their homeland!

These rich and buttery cookies are popular in England at Christmastime and are often served with tea.

## ELEGANT SHORTBREAD COOKIES

England  
1 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
3 Tbsp. sugar  
1/2 cup butter  
2 dozen pecans (optional)  
Strawberry preserves (optional)

In a large mixing bowl combine flour and sugar. Cut in butter until mixture resembles fine crumbs. (To cut in, use a pastry blender or 2 dinner knives.) Shape dough into 1-inch balls and place 2 inches apart on ungreased cookie sheet. Using your thumb or pecan, press an indentation in center of each cookie. Reshape cookie, if necessary, around indentation. Bake at 325 degrees 18 minutes or until bottom is lightly browned or until edges are lightly golden. Immediately add 1/2 tsp. strawberry preserves to empty indentations.

Yield: 20-24 cookies. Can freeze up to 12 months.

—Mackie Smith

This recipe for a traditional English beverage was found in *Southern Living*, November 1991, created by Cynda S. Spoon

## HOLIDAY WASSAIL

England  
6 cups apple cider  
2 1/2 cups apricot nectar  
2 cups unsweetened pineapple juice  
1 cup orange juice  
1 tsp. whole cloves  
4 whole allspice  
Three 3-inch sticks cinnamon  
Combine all ingredients in a Dutch oven; bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer 15 minutes. Strain and discard spices. Serve hot. Yield: 3 quarts.

This traditional steamy pudding is rich and spicy!

## ABERFOYLE CHRISTMAS PUDDING

Scotland  
3 cups all-purpose flour  
3 tsp. baking powder  
1 tsp. nutmeg  
1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
1 tsp. ginger  
1 1/2 tsp. allspice  
1 cup sugar  
1 medium carrot, grated  
1 medium apple, grated  
1 1/2 cups raisins  
1/2 cup melted butter  
1 cup hot milk

Sift together the flour, baking powder, nutmeg, cinnamon, ginger and allspice. Stir in the sugar. Add carrots, apples and raisins and stir. Add the melted butter and stir again. Next add the hot milk and mix well.

Butter a 2-quart ovenproof baking dish or use a proper 2-quart steamer. Fill it not more than half full, as the pudding will need room to expand.

Cut a circle of aluminum foil 1 inch wider than the top of the bowl. Put it on top and fold it down securely with string. Set a large pan on the stove one-quarter filled with water. Set the pudding dish on a rack in the bottom of the pan. Bring to a boil and keep boiling for four hours. Add boiling water from time to time as it is needed. Serves 12.

Four tablespoons of brandy should be poured over the pudding and set aflame before serving with hard sauce or whipped cream.

Aberfoyle is a village serving as a gateway to "The Trossachs," a very popular stop for touring visitors to Scotland.

—Martha McPartlin

## SLOVAK KUSKIES

Czechoslovakia  
4 cups all-purpose flour  
1 pound butter

4 egg yolks  
2 Tbsp. fresh lemon juice  
12 Tbsp. cold water  
Prune filling by Solo (if supermarket doesn't stock this, they will special order it)  
Additional butter to spread on dough

Combine flour and 1 pound of butter with a pastry blender or two dinner knives. Work with the mixture until resembles small peas. Set aside.

In a small bowl combine yolks, lemon juice and cold water. Add yolk mixture to flour and butter mixture. Working with your hands, form a large round ball. If dough is too sticky, add a handful of flour. Place in refrigerator for 1/2 hour.

Remove from refrigerator and cut into 3 sections. Work with 1 section at a time. Keep other 2 sections in refrigerator until ready to roll out.

Roll the section of dough very thin and cut into 2-inch squares. Spread melted additional butter on rolled and cut dough. Place 1 tsp. of prune filling on each square. Roll each square as you would a jelly roll and place seam side down. Cut 3 slits on the top of each roll. Refrigerate 20 minutes before baking.

Bake 20 minutes at 400 degrees or until edges are slightly browned. Cool and sprinkle with powdered sugar. Repeat with other refrigerated sections of dough. These are melt-in-your-mouth delicious and should not be overbaked. Tops will not be browned!

—Freda Revella

## Weihnachten (Christmas) In Germany

Luise Homer vividly remembers her childhood Christmas in Germany. After Christmas Eve supper, Santa came by to check his list. She remembers watching out the window as Santa left the house and walked through the snow and woods to a neighbor's house. Her parents then led the children into the living room where for the first time they saw their Christmas tree. The living room was kept closed until the decorations were ready on Christmas Eve. The fresh tree reached to the ceiling and was aglow with the warmth of lighted white candles and hand-blown glass balls. The room smelled wonderfully of fresh greens. After prayer and the singing of "Silent Night," gifts were exchanged. Christmas Day dinner included a big fat goose, red cabbage, weiner schnitzel (veal cutlet) and special potatoes called klooese.

## RED CABBAGE

Germany  
2 pounds red cabbage, shredded  
2 tart apples, grated  
1/2 bay leaf  
1 tsp. salt  
4 cloves  
1/2 cup red wine vinegar  
1 Tbsp. shortening  
1 cup water  
1 tsp. sugar  
Salt and pepper

Put cabbage, apples, bay leaf, salt and cloves into bowl and pour vinegar over. Stir. Cover at room temperature overnight. The next day, heat the shortening in a large pot, add the cabbage mixture, 1 cup of water and 1 tsp. of sugar. Cook until tender. Season with salt and pepper.

—Trudy Gore Freeman

When Trudy Gore Freeman was a little girl living in Germany, her family went to church on Christmas morning. Her mother stayed home to prepare a delicious dinner of roast goose or duck, potato dumplings, red cabbage, Boston lettuce and cucumbers, cookies, cake and coffee.

## SPEKULATIJS (Spiced Christmas Cookies)

Germany  
4 cups all-purpose flour  
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
1/2 tsp. allspice  
1/2 tsp. cloves  
1 1/2 tsp. cinnamon  
2 eggs  
2 sticks margarine or butter  
1/2 cup almonds, chopped  
1/2 tsp. almond extract  
1 cup almonds, thinly sliced

Place flour on countertop. Sprin-

kle allspice, cloves, cinnamon and baking powder over it and mix well. Make a well and drop in eggs and extracts. Then sprinkle sugar and 1/2 cup almonds over it. Cut butter into slices and add to this mixture. Combine and knead to a smooth dough. Place in refrigerator for 1/2 hour.

On a floured surface, roll out dough to 1/8-inch thickness. Cut out dough with cookie cutters. Grease a cookie sheet and sprinkle lightly with sliced almonds. Place the cut cookies on top of almonds and bake at 375 degrees 8-10 minutes or until lightly browned. Makes 90 cookies.

—Trudy Gore Freeman

The "tamales" are the favorite plate during the Christmas celebration in Peru. The taste and simple preparation make tamales appealing to everyone!

## SPECIAL PERUVIAN TAMALES

8 ears of fresh corn  
1 pound, pork loin  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. chili powder  
1 tsp. red pepper  
1 hard-boiled egg  
1/2 cup green olives or black dried olives  
1/2 cup peanuts (roasted and without shells)

3 banana leaves, parchment or aluminum foil  
Cut the corn off the cob and soak it in a little water one day before tamale preparation. Then clean and crush corn with a heavy spoon or rock. (A blender can be used, but don't overmix.)

Meanwhile, mix salt, chili and red pepper. Cut the meat into very small pieces and add spice mixture. Bake covered until tender.

Place the crushed corn and cooked meat in a big plate and combine. Place mixture in foil in rectangular shapes. Add eggs, olives and peanuts to the top of each corn and meat rectangle mixture. Finally, cover with the foil tightly, making several small rectangular packets.

Place packets in a big pan of water and salt. Boil at medium heat for 1 hour. Ready to serve! Enjoy!

—Elena Miranda

Puerto Rico  
Maria Fassbender of Calabash spent her childhood in Puerto Rico. She remembers receiving presents on Jan. 6 in celebration of Tres Reyes Magos (Three Wise Men). On the eve of Tres Reyes Magos, children go outside and collect grass for the Wise Men's camels and place the grass in a

box, sleeping with it by their beds. In the morning, presents are beside the bed, brought by the Wise Men. During December, friends serenade outside friends' homes with Christmas songs and instruments. This is done after midnight, and carolers are invited in for food such as sweet rice with ginger, cinnamon and fresh coconut.

This is a great accompaniment to any ethnic dish.

## MARINATED CARROTS

India  
3 large carrots  
1 cup lemon juice  
1 Tbsp. sugar  
1 tsp. salt  
1/2 tsp. dry chili pepper  
Scrape carrots and cut julienne style. Set aside. Combine lemon juice, sugar, salt and chili pepper. Toss carrots with lemon mixture. Marinate overnight.

—Deborah Mawji

## COOKIE PEARS (Ahladakis)

Greece  
1 cup vegetable oil  
1 1/2 cups sugar  
2 eggs  
1 orange, juice and rind

2 tsp. baking powder  
1/2 tsp. baking soda  
4 cups sifted all-purpose flour (approximately)  
Whole cloves  
Beat oil and sugar together until creamy. Add eggs, one at a time, beating constantly. Dissolve baking soda in orange juice and add to creamed mixture. Add baking powder and enough flour to make a soft dough. Take a small piece of dough, about the size of a walnut, and shape into a small ball. Pinch one side to resemble a pear and press a clove into one end of cookie.

Place on greased baking sheet and bake 20-25 min at 350 degrees. Remove from baking sheet and cool. Dip cookies quickly one by one in warm syrup. For syrup, bring 3 cups water and 2 cups sugar to a boil and simmer a little. Add 1 Tbsp. lemon juice and stir. Sprinkle dipped cookies immediately with granulated sugar and cinnamon. Makes 50 cookies.

—Eva Stathos

## Correction

An article in last week's Beacon about holiday food safety contained a typographical error. A sentence should have stated: "Remember to keep hot foods hot (above 140 degrees F.) and cold foods cold (below 40 degrees F.)"

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