

Diverse Christmas Traditions

Christmas is the celebration of the birth of Jesus, believed by Christians to be the Son of God. The Christmas Season is one celebration that unifies much of the Christian world. Believers, from a range of Christian churches celebrate the Holy Birth with diverse traditions, celebrations and practices that are based on this event. There are also many similarities across cultures with Christmas celebrations across the world making it a truly multicultural festival. Here are some examples of diverse Christmas traditions:

Africa

In Africa, there is not so much the giving of presents, but the giving of presence. Most people do not have the financial resources to buy gifts such as toys. At the local Hotels, Choirs will come in and sing for guests and audiences, churches will be getting ready for Christmas Eve events and everyone will get ready for the Christmas party. Children and parents will receive a new set of clothes and sometimes shoes.

Food is served but it would not be the usual Holiday spread found in the West. In many cases it will be the same foods as usual but more of, and more variety. In Africa Nyama Choma (roast goat meat) is the order of the day. The meat is eaten hot from the charcoal grill and should be finished in one sitting. Among the Kikuyu and Masai tribes, certain parts of the goat are for girls while others are for boys. The poorer families will have chicken at Christmas with chapattis (baked flatbread), ugali (porridge of boiled flour), sukuma wiki (plant leaf) and rice. Other food eaten at Christmas in Africa includes matoke (steamed green bananas), Irish potatoes, posho (bread), groundnut sauce, cassava and yams. One of the traditional dishes is Luwombo, which is meat in *concasse* (French method of roughly chopping soft foods often applied to vegetables) steamed in banana leaves.

Iraq

On Christmas Eve, Iraqi Christian families gather together and one of the children read about the birth of Jesus while other family members hold lighted candles. After the reading, a bonfire of thorn bushes is lit and everyone sings. If the thorns burn to ashes, good luck will be granted for the coming year. When the fire dies, each person jumps over the ashes three times and makes a wish.

On Christmas Day another bonfire is lit in the churchyard. The bishop, carrying a figure of the Baby Jesus leads the service. Afterwards he blesses one person with a touch. That person touches the person next to him or her and the touch is passed around until all present have felt the "touch of peace."

How to say 'Merry Christmas' in other languages:

Iraqi - Idah Saidan Wa Sanah Jadidah

Pashto (Afghanistan) - De Christmas akhtar de bakhtawar au newai kal de mubarak sha.

Arabic - I'D Miilad Said ous Sana Saida

Swahili - Krismas Njema Na Heri Za Mwaka Mpya

Amharic (Ethiopian) - Melkam Yelidet Beaal

Zulu - Sinifesela Ukhisimusi Omuhle Nonyaka Omusha Onempumelelo

Dinka (Sudan) - Miet puou yan dhiedh Banyda tene Yin

Portuguese - Boas Festas e um feliz Ano Novo

If you want to know more Christmas greetings in other languages go to <http://www.flw.com/merry.htm>. This site has ways to say Merry Christmas in 350 languages. It also has detailed descriptions of those 350 languages in pop up screens activated by selecting the language name.

Sources: <http://www.the-north-pole.com/around/>

<http://kabiza.com/OutofAfrica-Too-MonthlyNewsletter-December-2002-Christmas.htm>

<http://www.flw.com/merry.htm>

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