Christmas holidays in Italy

Christmas is one of the most important festivals celebrated all over the world. There is a large amount of traditions related to it in many countries. In Italy where they call it "Natale", they consider it as a family holiday, a time to stay at home and celebrate. Although there are lots of customs about it, here are the most common and popular ones around the Italian cities.

Firstly, Italians kick off the Christmas season and start decorating, their houses and streets, on December 8. They set up huge trees, filled with colourful ornaments, in front of important buildings and sights which put everyone in the holiday spirit.

Along with the lights, the ribbons and the wreaths, loads of nativity scenes called "presepi", are displayed in most of the churches and squares. They are usually crafted by hand in the most detailed way possible. In cities like Naples, people can find a whole street full of markets side by side in which local residents make and sell them.

When the Christmas Eve finally arrives, people host large dinners with their families. To prepare and purify their bodies for the next day, this tradition instructs them to not eat meat in any kind of way. Usually they serve many courses of sea food and vegetables.

Christmas day is when the big present opening takes place. Family members exchange gifts under the Christmas tree and then continue to celebrate by having lunch all together for hours. Their most common dishes are pasta, meat, sides and desserts. "Pandoro" and "Panettone" are the most popular sweets and are being sold in many countries that time of the year.

After 6 days, in New Year's Eve Italians host another big dinner. They eat different kinds of food, like lentils (they are considered lucky), fish and risotto. When everyone has stopped eating, many start playing games. One that is familiar to most families there is called "Tombola", the Italian Bingo, where everyone assigns a money prize in each round and plays until 1am. At midnight, when the year changes, they sometimes go to their balconies or roofs together and watch the fireworks.

Lastly, on Epiphany Eve, the night of January 5, in a similar way to Santa Claus, kids get a sock full of candies and little gifts from an old woman named Befana. She is portrayed as a witch riding a broomstick through the air, wearing a black shawl and is covered in soot because the legend says she enters in the houses through the chimney. All the celebrations typically the day after, on January 6.





Paola Kalligeri,

UK Christmas traditions

Christmas is celebrated in many countries all over the world. And every country has its own traditions. Lots of those differ from family to family.

My family in particular has been engaging in some of these traditions for decades and have been passed down by generations.

A lot of people in the Uk and more specifically British people on Christmas Eve may attend a church service often called a midnight mass.

As for preparation Brits usually decorate their houses and their churches, send out cards and go to carol services.

The Uk also has a lot of traditional food that is usually eaten on Christmas for example stuffing, cranberry sauce, yorkshire pudding, mince pies and more

It's also quite common to attend pantomimes which are theatrical entertainments usually directed toward children which involve music, topical jokes and slapstick and is based on fairy tales or nursery stories.

A personal favourite is Christmas pudding which is a mix of around 13 ingredients such as raisins ,currants, brown sugar, orange and lemon peels , brandy and more.

There are a lot of similarities in traditions from all around the world and one of the most common ones is Christmas carols also known in Greek as $K\dot{\alpha}\lambda\alpha VT\alpha$ where kids usually go around spreading the Christmas spirit by singing carols.

British people also, instead of leaving cookies and milk for Santa as we see in the movies, they leave a glass of sherry and a slice of mince pie.

Lastly, Christmas crackers. They are traditionally pulled during Christmas dinner or Christmas parties. Almost every household has at least one box of them at Christmas. There are a lot of versions of the cracker ritual but one of the versions is that the person who ends up with the larger end of the cracker gets to keep the contents of the cardboard tube.

