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Good Food NEWS



It's Holiday Time Around the World

This week marks the turning point of the year--the winter solstice or the point at which the days start getting longer and night shorter. It's also a time for celebrations! Winter festivals are traditionally the most popular festival of the year in many cultures, in part because there was less agricultural work to be done during the winter and more time available to spend with family and friends. Because there are many different historical calendars in use by different cultures, these holidays don't all fall on the same day or in some cases the same month, but they have so much in common that we can easily see the similarities. They all celebrate a time of renewal and confirmation and all of these celebrations involve light.

Hanukkah, also known as the Festival of Lights or Festival of Rededication, is an eight-day Jewish holiday which may fall in December, late November, or, while very rare in occasion, early January. In 2006 it is being celebrated right now, from sunset, December 15 to sunset, December 23. The festival is observed in Jewish homes by the kindling of lights on each of the festival's eight nights, one on the first night, two on the second, and so on.

There's Diwali, also called Deepavali, a major festival in India. Known as the "Festival of Lights," it symbolizes the victory of good over evil, and lamps are lit as a sign of celebration and hope for mankind. It usually occurs in October/November, and was celebrated on October 21 this year.

Kwanzaa (or Kwanzaa) is a week-long Pan-African secular holiday honoring African heritage. It is observed from December 26 to January 1 each year. Kwanzaa consists of seven days of celebration, featuring activities such as candle-lighting and pouring of libations, and culminating in a feast and gift-giving.

Christmas is probably the most well-known and widespread of these winter holiday celebrations. And though it is most closely associated with the Christian religions, it has taken on many other cultural aspects, depending upon where it is being celebrated. Lights on Christmas trees and as house decorations are widespread--and so is the popular Christmas dinner. Let's look at the many different ways that Christmas dinners are celebrated around the world.

Christmas dinners around the world

Australia Due to Christmas falling in the heat of the Southern Hemisphere's summer, meats such as ham and chicken are usually served cold. Prawns (shrimp) are also common, as are barbecued cuts such as steak or chicken wings. Fruits of the season includes mango and cherries.

North America & UK Traditional Christmas dinner similar to that of our colonial ancestor, England, and features roast beef or turkey with stuffing (dressing), mashed potatoes, gravy, cranberry sauce, vegetables and Christmas pudding.

East Europe In the areas of the former Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (e.g. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania), an elaborate and ritualized meal of twelve meatless dishes is served. A traditional Christmas meal in The Czech Republic is fried carp and potato salad.

Germany In Germany common dishes are roast goose, macaroni salad, marzipan, porridge (reisbrei), spice bars (lebkuchen), stollen (several types of bread, including Christstollen, Dresden stollen, etc.), suckling pig, white sausage.

Mexico In Mexico the Christmas dinner is significantly more organic with an emphasis on fruits and vegetables. Common dishes are various fruits (oranges, limes, tropical fruits), salad (composed of several ingredients including jícamas, beets, bananas, and peanuts).

M-J. D

FIELD



TABLE

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recipes

Try these for a different spin on traditional sweet potato holiday recipes

Roasted Sweet Potatoes and Pears

- 2 sweet potatoes, sliced 1 1/2 inches thick
- 3 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 teaspoon dry mustard
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon cayenne
- Coarse salt to taste
- 2 Bartlett pears, cored, quartered, and halved

Preheat oven to 400°. Scrub 2 sweet potatoes. Quarter lengthwise; slice diagonally 1 1/2 inches thick. On a rimmed baking sheet, toss slices with 2 tablespoons olive oil, 1 teaspoon dry mustard, 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger, and 1/4 teaspoon cayenne; season with coarse salt. Roast, tossing occasionally, until crisp-tender, 20 to 25 minutes.

Core and quarter 2 Bartlett pears; halve crosswise. Add to the potatoes; toss all with another tablespoon oil. Continue roasting until potatoes are fork-tender, about 10 minutes more.

Serves 4

Chili-Roasted Sweet Potato Wedges

Serves 4; Prep time: 10 minutes; Total time: 30 minutes

- 1 1/2 pounds (2 to 3 medium) sweet potatoes
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon chili powder
- Coarse salt and ground pepper to taste

Preheat oven to 425°. Cut each potato lengthwise into 8 wedges; halve long wedges crosswise. On a large rimmed baking sheet lined with parchment paper, toss potatoes with oil, sugar, chili powder, 1 teaspoon coarse salt, and 1/4 teaspoon ground pepper, until coated. Arrange wedges, cut sides down. Roast potatoes until browned and tender, 15 to 20 minutes. Season with additional salt, if desired, before serving.

**Happy Holidays to All
from everyone at
FoodShare!**

featured this week: SWEET POTATO

Sweet potatoes (*Ipomoea batatas*) are native to Central America and are one of the oldest vegetables known to man. They have been consumed since prehistoric times as evidenced by sweet potato relics dating back 10,000 years that have been discovered in Peruvian caves.

The young leaves and shoots are sometimes eaten as greens. The sweet potato is only distantly related to the potato (*Solanum tuberosum*). Although sweet potatoes are sometimes called “yams” in the United States, they are even more distantly related to the true yam (*Dioscorea* species). The true yam, which is native to Africa and Asia, can grow up to 2 m (6 ft) in length (sometimes with knuckle-like ends) and has a scaly skin, a pinkish white center, and a thick, almost oily feel to the tongue.

Sweet potatoes are rich in dietary fiber, vitamin A, vitamin C, and vitamin B6. Compared to most other vegetables in fiber content, complex carbohydrates, protein, vitamins A and C, iron, and calcium, the sweet potato ranks highest in nutritional value.

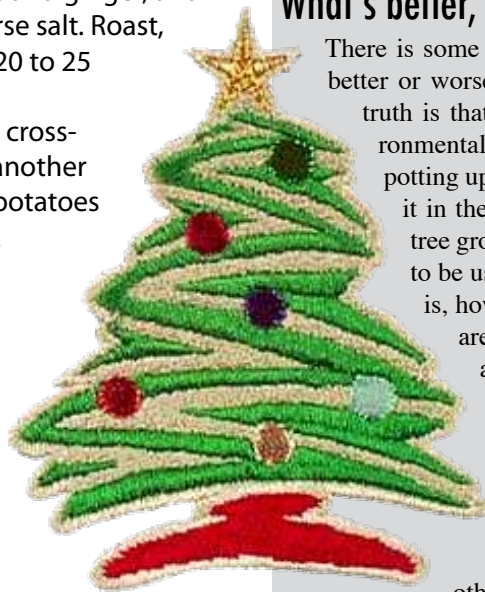
What's better, Real or Fake?

There is some debate about whether fake Christmas trees are better or worse for the environment than artificial trees. The truth is that both options are consumptive and pose environmental risks. Some people get around these risks by potting up a small tree inside for the winter and replanting it in the spring. Here is what the Canadian Christmas tree growers had to say about this issue: Many are said to be using artificial trees to save our forests. The truth is, however, that almost all trees harvested in Canada

are grown on Christmas tree farms. Thanks to the annual demand for Christmas trees, thousands of acres of otherwise unfarmed land is being farmed. Indeed, Christmas tree farms are most often located on land which could not be used to grow other farm products (these farms are on barren slopes or under power lines).

In addition, for each tree harvested, about ten others are being grown on farms to prepare for the next ten harvest seasons. They produce oxygen and rid the air of carbon dioxide, thereby reducing the earth-warming greenhouse effect; they improve soil stability; they serve as wild-life habitat; they are naturally biodegradable.

For their part, artificial trees are manufactured from PVC, plastic and metal - i.e. environmentally damaging and non-renewable resources. Further, upon their disposal, artificial Christmas trees pollute our landfill sites for centuries to come as they are not biodegradable (i.e. cannot be broken down naturally). Considering that the average life span of an artificial tree is only six years, one can imagine the enormous damage to the environment done by artificial Christmas trees.



DELIVERIES

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