



| BEC NEWS

December 2021 LETTER

Unusual Christmas Traditions from Around the World

Spiders and Fake Spider Webs

In the Ukraine, things are done a bit differently during the Christmas season. While we are used to twinkling lights and the soft glow upon the glass ornaments hung from the tree, the Ukrainians prefer a much different approach to decor. Spider webs. There is a legend that speaks of a poor widow who used a pine cone to make a Christmas tree for her children. She could not afford decorations for the makeshift tree, but as they woke on Christmas morning, the 'tree' was covered in spider webs that glowed gold and silver from the morning light. To this day, spiders and cobwebs are common decorations in Ukraine, and the little spider decorations are called 'pavuchky.' Fake spider webs are spread across the branches which is said to be the origin of the sparkly tinsel that is much more widely known. Weird, but not as weird as...

Christmas Traditions



"Merry Christmas ya filthy animal!"
-Kevin McCallister, Home Alone



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RADISH CARVING

Mexico has a few traditions that seem more macabre than our own American ones. Many Mexican traditions resemble horror films or imagery. At Christmas time in the city of Oaxaca, they celebrate 'The Night of the Radishes.' This tradition Each year in the Mexican city of Oaxaca, marks one unique event where the residents carve (of all things) radishes! A large tourist attraction, this veggie carving carnival takes place the week leading up to Christmas where radishes are modified with chemicals and other special growth techniques to produce larger sized mediums for the sculptors. As interesting as this tradition might sound, it is equally short-lived. All the time put in to carve these amazing creations only lasts for a few hours at most, before the spicy veggies begin to wither. If you thought that was weird...



KENTUCKY FRIED CHRISTMAS

Around the other side of the world another Christmas tradition that is somewhat familiar, yet equally odd is practiced. What do you get when you put the Colonel in a Santa suit? A Kentucky Fried Christmas! The Japanese have proven to have superior marketing techniques, but this one takes the cake...er...the drumstick! This is pure marketing genius. The holiday of Christmas is not widely celebrated in Japan, but because KFC had this amazing idea back in the 1970s, a new tradition was formed. On December 25th, this tradition is so popular that all KFC restaurants are reservation only and special package delivery is placed months in advance for everyone to get their fried chicken buckets. Ok, so this one is not so bad, but wait until you read about....



THE POOPER AND THE POOPING LOG

It happens almost daily for most people, so it is a common phenomenon. However, have you heard that there are not one, but TWO, Christmas traditions in Catalonia that feature fecal functions. First, and unbeknown as to why, Catalonians celebrate these traditions that include a peasant (sans pants) that is 'laying cable.' This figure is placed amongst the pieces of a Nativity scene and is called *Caganer* which is loosely translated 'the pooper.' The second, is the 'pooping log' (*caga tió*). This is where it gets really weird...the Pooping Log is a small stick that is kept right where you wanted to be reminded of it the most - on the dinner table. They have cute little feces, erm, *faces*, and are covered with blankets so they don't get cold. That's not even the best part! The people feed their pooping logs sweets and nuts and then eventually they take them outside to beat them with sticks on Christmas Eve, so they will poop out the childrens' presents. I'm sure every child is met with relief once they get their presents. You never knew your daily ritual contained treasures, did you?! Howdy Ho!



-Adapted by Shannon Johnson

History of the Fruitcake

We've all heard the jokes referring to fruitcake's immense density, or its extreme shelf life. Its detractors would have you believe that it's as heavy as a doorstop and made to be passed down through the generations, getting an annual christening of liquor every Christmas before being put away for the following year. And to be honest, there's more than a little truth to it. Fruitcake—that dense amalgam of fruits, nuts and just enough rich cake to hold them together—is one of the heaviest baked goods out there. It's also one of the few baked goods that can benefit from aging...provided it's done right.

But at the end of the day (or, more accurately, the end of the year), enough people love—and eat—fruitcake to make it a \$100 million per year business. And its legendary lasting power is not limited to the cake itself: the history of fruitcake is long, and fruitcake has existed in one form or another since Roman times.



The Origin of Fruitcake: The Original Energy Bar

To sustain their troops in battle, the ancient Romans concocted a sort of energy bar called *satura*, which consisted of pomegranate seeds, pine nuts, raisins, barley mash and honeyed wine. Eventually becoming popular as a dessert for special occasions, it was packed with calories in the form of healthful carbs and beneficial fats, and lasted long enough to fortify a soldier through a long, exhausting campaign. Dried fruits became more readily available to western Europeans during the Middle Ages, and variations on the fruitcake emerged: Italy's *panforte* and *panettone*, Germany's powdered sugar-coated *stollen*, and Britain's plum pudding.

The British form started as "plum porridge"; more liquid than solid, it was not sweet at all. During Shakespearean times it contained meat, wine, sherry, fruit juices, sugar and various preserved fruits. Over the years, the recipe changed to eliminate the meat, add more fruit, and bake it into what became known as "plum pudding" (more a plum cake than what Americans would know as a pudding). It was this form that became famous in the Christmas carol, "We Wish You a Merry Christmas," in which the carolers implore, "Now bring us some figgy pudding." The carol has its roots in the 19th century; it was the practice of English nobles in Victorian England to feed the poor carolers with a slice of this pudding, which is probably how the Christmas fruitcake came to be so intertwined with Christmas.



The tradition was brought to America by the colonists in the years before the Revolution, and by the late 1800s the fruitcake was gifted in decorated tins. Today The Swiss Colony (America's largest hand-decorating baker) produces more than 66,000 fruitcakes—nearly 110,000 pounds—per year in its Monroe, Wisconsin, bakery and ships them nationwide in its own festive tins.

Stirring Fruitcake What Is Christmas Fruitcake? The Christmas fruitcake tradition was brought to America by the colonists in the years before the Revolution, and by the late 1800s the fruitcake was gifted in decorated tins. Today The Swiss Colony (America's largest hand-decorating baker) produces more than 66,000 fruitcakes—nearly 110,000 pounds—per year in its Monroe, Wisconsin, bakery and ships the Christmas cakes nationwide in its own festive tins.



The Care and Feeding of Fruitcake

Wait...what? Is this a cake or a pet? Well, to many people the holiday fruitcake is a living tradition that requires tending, and they order it appropriately in advance to account for the aging process. It may seem strange to age a food product, except for wine and cheese...and, under carefully controlled conditions, beef. OK, so maybe aging food isn't all that bizarre. But baked goods? In this case, yes. All that fruit contains compounds called tannins which, in addition to being good for you, have a slight natural bitterness that softens with age. In fact,

this is why red wines are aged: the tannins found in the grape skins mellow over time. At any rate, most fruitcake fanatics wouldn't dream of serving a fruitcake until it's aged at least a month.

Now, don't feel as though you need to age your fruitcake. Any fruitcake you buy is perfectly delicious to eat right out of the package, and has been quietly ripening in refrigeration for a while before shipping (sealed, of course, to stay moist). But many folks like to moisten it further with one element most manufacturers leave out: alcohol.

Brandy, whiskey or rum has been a time-honored ingredient of traditional fruitcakes for centuries. Out of respect for personal preferences and sensitivities, The Swiss Colony leaves out this step, adding only a bit of rum flavoring for authenticity. But anyone buying a fruitcake can "feed" it easily by following this simple process:



Using a clean wooden skewer, poke holes all over your fruitcake. Be sure to pierce the fruitcake deeply to encourage the liquid to penetrate to the bottom. Slowly drizzle 1–2 tablespoons of rum, brandy or whiskey over the fruitcake. (Feel free to use spiced rum or Grand Marnier for extra spice or orange flavor if you wish.)

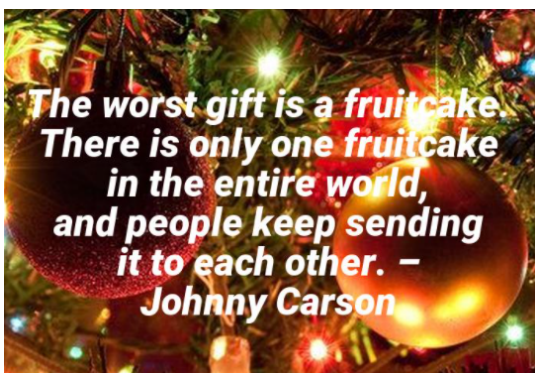
Wrap your fruitcake tightly in baking paper or aluminum foil, place in a sealed container, and store in a cool, dry place.

Repeat this process every two weeks for two or three months. Remember to always use a clean skewer so as not to introduce bacteria.

People who follow this practice say a properly done fruitcake will last months or even years in a cool, dry place, but we recommend enjoying the fruits of your labor during the holidays and buying a new one next year!



www.swisscolony.com/blog/fruitcake





EXCHANGE

BREAKFAST EXCHANGE CLUB OF BILLINGS, MT

THE BREAKFAST
EXCHANGE CLUB OF
BILLINGS, MT
PO Box 2224
Billings, MT

www.breakfastexchangeclub.org

Exchange, America's Service Club, is a group of men and women working together to make our communities better places to live through programs of service in Americanism, Community Service, Youth Activities and its national project, the Prevention of Child Abuse.

We want to see you!

If you are able, come weekly at 7:00 a.m. on Friday to the Metra Cafe and get to know your fellow Exchangites!



December 2021

Committee Happenings

BECON Committee October - Dave Weller
Invocation Committee - Trina White

Volunteer Opportunities

12/2-Festival of Trees
12/4-MMA Fusion Fights
12/18-Chase Hawks Rodeo

****Don't forget to mark yourself either 'request to work' or 'unavailable' so we can schedule those members first who need to get their events for the year.**

New Members

In last month's newsletter, Nicole Croaker was inadvertently left off of our new members list. Please help me welcome Nicole to our club!! It was part of our strategy to grow our Griz supporter list, so she was a perfect candidate! #GoGriz





EXCHANGE

BREAKFAST EXCHANGE CLUB OF BILLINGS, MT

RECOGNITION

It's time to celebrate YOU!! We have so many valuable members in the club and it's high-time that you were recognized for your years of service. So this section of the newsletter has been added this year to do just that!

The following members have been part of the Breakfast Exchange club for 5 years or greater. Please take the time to send an email, give a pat on the back, or give a fist-bump to these loyal members.

| | | |
|------------------|----------|-------------------|
| Jerry Voto | 26 years | Joined 12/18/1995 |
| Bruce Glennie | 10 years | Joined 12/12/2011 |
| Chris Cosine | 08 years | Joined 12/26/2013 |
| Calvin Southwick | 05 years | Joined 12/13/2016 |

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SERVICE TO THE CLUB
AND TO OUR COMMUNITY!**

