

Holidays can bring together families, friends, surprises

By MONICA PEREZ
Copley News Service

Holidays are a time for families and friends. They can also be a melting pot in which old traditions and new surprises come together.

This mixing and matching of old and new often begins with borrowing the most-loved customs from another family or foreign land.

Every country celebrates the holidays by serving its own specialty. Many of these international recipes can be easily translated to prepare in American kitchens and become a "new" tradition in your home.

France: For the French, holiday celebrations center around their beloved passion for good food. Families linger for hours, sharing dishes at a magnificent feast called Reveillon, or midnight meal.

The grande finale, however, is the presentation of the handsome and impressive "Buche de Noel," meaning "Yule log." This traditional dessert is made of the most tender genoise (sponge cake) and filled with fruit preserves, such as Bonne Maman from France.

The Buche de Noel is easy to make. The fun is in decorating the "log" with woody chocolate trimmings. Best of all, the taste is magnifique.

Switzerland: Caroling in Switzerland is an everlasting tradition, when the street lights of Zurich are dimmed and carolers carry candles through the streets.

Afterwards, friends and family gather to decorate the tree, exchange gifts and enjoy warm chocolate desserts such as hot bread pudding.

Chocolate is part of the proud Swiss heritage. In fact, Lindt Chocolate of Switzerland is known to have created, in 1845, the world's first chocolate bar - the Lindt Surfin bar as we know

it today.

The Swiss also consider their fine chocolate to be one of the most appropriate holiday gifts to share with someone special.

Germany: Many of the dishes enjoyed around Christmastime are of German influence. According to Mary Ellen Griffin, a noted food expert representing Julius Kayser German Wines in the United States, a typical German Christmas meal includes a roast goose with chestnut dressing, plum pudding with brandy sauce, pfeffernuses and a sweet, fruit-studded bread called stollen. A medium dry wine, like Julius Kayser Piesporter Michelsberg, or a lighter wine like Julius Kayser Zeller Schwarze Katz, are two ideal accompaniments.

Griffin says cooks should use a good wine when making the goose recipe below; in many cases, the same wine will be served with the meal.

"If you are using all prime food ingredients for your dish, it deserves a premium wine as well," she says.

Incorporate these recipes into your own family traditions.

BUCHE DE NOEL

- Genoise (spongecake):
3 T. unsalted butter, melted
1 c. sifted all-purpose flour
½ t. baking powder
4 eggs
2 egg yolks
¾ c. sugar
½ t. vanilla extract
1 jar raspberry preserves

MOCHA BUTTER CREAM FROSTING:

- ½ stick unsalted butter, softened
1 t. vanilla extract
2 oz. bittersweet chocolate, melted
2 c. confectioner's sugar



Holiday foods

Holidays bring together not only families, friends and surprises but also a lot of tradition. Foods play an important role in holiday traditions.

- 1½ t. instant coffee (dissolved in vanilla)
2 to 4 T. heavy cream

Line greased jelly roll pan (15½ by 10½ inches) with wax paper. Grease and dust with flour lightly. Set aside. In large bowl put eggs, yolks, sugar and vanilla. Beat at high speed for eight minutes. The mixture will triple in volume and be creamy. Fold in sifted flour and baking powder gently with slotted spoon lifting to aerate. Fold in melted butter. Do not overfold.


Pour batter into prepared pan. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 to 25 minutes. Remove from oven.

While cake is still in pan, cut off crisp edges. Invert pan on towel dusted with confectioner's sugar. Remove wax paper at once. Roll both the cake and towel together. Cool on rack seam down. Unroll carefully and fill with preserves. Roll again. Frost.

FROSTING:

Blend butter, 1 cup confectioner's sugar. Add coffee that was dissolved in vanilla. Add chocolate and heavy cream. Add the remaining sugar until desired consistency.

Serves eight.



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