

Traditional Christmas Yule

Although Christmas and its customs were in disfavor for only a short time in England (during the reign of Cromwell), Scotland ignored the holiday far longer. Bear in mind that "Christmas" is "Christ's Mass" and mass was banned in Scotland. There are records of charges being brought against people for keeping "Yule" as it was called in Scotland. Amazingly, this dour, joy-crushing attitude lasted for 400 years. It has only been in recent years that the Scots observed December 25 as a special day at all. So if there is a specifically "Scottish" aspect to Christmas it is that it was not celebrated!

Christmas in Scotland is now a time for going to church, food, presents, parties, holidays and all sorts of other good things. It's a time for celebration because it's the birthday of Jesus.

Planning for Christmas starts weeks before the events. Children are busy writing their Christmas lists for Santa Claus, parents are busy buying presents, cleaning the house and organizing food for the great day.

Houses are decorated with tinsel, holly wreaths candles and decorations. Mistletoe is hung to catch a kiss from anyone who stands under it. The Christmas tree, decorated with baubles, takes pride of place in any household.

On Christmas Eve, children prepare for Santa Claus by hanging up their stockings in anticipation of their being filled with presents while they sleep. They leave out a small glass of whisky or milk for Santa along with a mince pie. They also leave out carrots for the reindeer - particularly Rudolph - the red nosed reindeer that guides his sleigh through the dark skies. Then the children are ready to go to bed. In all the excitement children find it difficult to get to sleep. Some waken up VERY early in the morning.

Christmas day finally arrives and is marked by screams of delight at the surprises Santa has left. Once the presents are opened, many people get ready to go to church. Christmas carols are sung during the hour long service.

On return, parents prepare the Christmas lunch while children play with their toys. Christmas dinner is a time when families get together - grannies, grandpas, aunts, uncles, cousins. Once it is finished and the clearing up done, there is generally a party. People sing songs, dance or play games. All the preparation has been worth it. People go to bed happy yet exhausted. Christmas is over for another year!

A traditional Christmas lunch will include - Starter: Scotch Broth or Smoked Salmon. Main course - Roast Turkey, Sage & Onion Stuffing, Chippolata Sausages, Roast Potatoes, Carrots, Brussel Sprouts. Dessert - Christmas Pudding and Brandy custard.

A traditional children's Yule song:

I'm gaun to hing a stockin up,
I'll borrow my big brither's,
It's bigger nor my sister's ane
And strang-er nor my mither's.

I'll be in bed on Yule E'en
When Faither Christmas comes.
I ken he'll wale oor chimley oot
Amang the ither lums.

On Yule richt early I'll be up
Afore the screich o day
To see what ferlies Santa Claus
Has brocht me for my play.

I hope he'll mind a cuddly bear,
And cups for dolly's tea
Wi lots o ither bonnie toys
For a guid wee lass like me.