



Cultural Holiday Meals

Hanukkah by Debby J. Raabel R.H.N.

When asked to write an article on Traditional Holiday Foods for Hanukkah, I immediately thought of my dear friend, Chef Robyn Goorevitch, owner of [Dining In Chez Vous](#) (serving Toronto and surrounding areas).

Robyn and I were roommates for over 6 years while living the "good life" in the Cayman Islands, so I can personally attest to her exquisite culinary skills and knowledge!

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Ukrainian Christmas by Debby J. Raabel R.H.N.

As a young child, I recall my father celebrating Romanian Christmas, which is very similar to Ukrainian Christmas. Now, at 86 years young, his foremost memories of the Christmas Eve meal are: fasting until sunset and the twelve dishes—one for each apostle. The dishes

that came to mind were Christmas bread, wheat with honey and poppy seeds, borscht, cabbage rolls and fish (most likely pickerel) prepared many different ways.

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French Canadian by Genevieve Blanchet R.H.N.



In the past, winter in Quebec was a time for festivities. Quebecers would celebrate the winter equinox with family and friends right up until the first day of spring and a unique culinary tradition composed of hearty dishes was served to cope with the hardships of the climate and of everyday life.

While most of these dishes no longer appear on a Quebecers' daily menu, many are still

served on special occasions, such as family celebrations, at Christmas, and at 'sugar shack' meals (a cabin or reception hall that offers a menu of dishes complemented with maple syrup). Even today, families gather in their kitchens to prepare a sumptuous Christmas feast of foods that have deeply-rooted family traditions.

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Chinese New Year by Eleanor Healy R.H.N.

In 2012, Chinese New Year will fall on January 23rd (this holiday follows the lunar calendar). Chinese New Year symbolizes family reunion and being together to celebrate in harmony; the family sits at a round table, which symbolizes eternity and togetherness.

Registered Holistic Nutritionist, Helen Cheung, explains that for the celebration her mother will cook several special dishes (Helen helps too) which will be eaten on January 22nd, New Year's Eve.

Preparation, Helen says, includes cleaning the house thoroughly a few days before the event. From mopping and washing windows to de-cluttering, the idea is that from top to bottom, everything is new. She recalls that in the past this would be a time to purchase new items for the year including clothing, blankets, and pyjamas, so that everything around you has a new beginning for the New Year.

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Yugoslavian Holiday by Karen Stoyles R.H.N.

Today, Yugoslavia is not found on the map. It was a country demolished by war, and though it no longer exists, its survivors do.

Yugoslavians maintain their rich culture and traditions, regardless of where they currently reside. Holiday meals include roast pig, duck and goose, sarma (cabbage rolls) with smoked meat, perogies and desserts made with ground nuts. They make strukli (cheese

puff pastry) and kifle (jam or nut filled pastry). On Christmas day they eat bread with a coin baked inside. The head of the household distributes slices of the bread, and the person lucky enough to receive the slice containing the hidden coin is said to be blessed with good fortune in the coming year.

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Are you looking to trim your waist line after the holidays?

See a [Holistic Nutritionist!](#)





Hanukkah by Debby J. Raabel R.H.N.

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Chef Robyn explains: Hanukkah is the celebration of light. Although the Jews had enough oil to burn the menorah for only one day, the oil lasted for eight days—that is the miracle of Hanukkah.

Within the Jewish religion there are many branches. The orthodox is the most religious. Orthodox Jews eat kosher foods and avoid mixing dairy with meat. Regardless of the 'classification',

all follow the same Hanukkah traditions:

Fried Foods: Potato pancakes ("latkas" in Yiddish and "livivot" in Hebrew) and doughnuts ("sufganiyot" in Hebrew) are traditional Hanukkah treats. They are fried in oil to remind us of the miracle of the holiday. Some Ashkenazi communities call latkes "fasputshes" or "pontshkes", and they're served with either sour cream or apple sauce. Fried jelly dough-

nuts are a traditional Hanukkah fried treat as well.

Dairy Foods: Dairy foods did not become popular on Hanukkah until the Middle Ages. The custom of eating foods such as **cheese,**



cheesecake and **blintzes** emerged from the story of Judith who, according to legend, was a great beauty who saved her village from the Babylonians. The Babylonian army was besieging her village, when Judith charmed her way into the enemy camp with a basket of cheese and wine.

She brought the food to the enemy general, Holofernes, who consumed increasing amounts of wine along with the cheese. (According to the story, the cheese was very salty, hence making Holofernes very thirsty.) Holofernes eventually became drunk and passed out, and Judith beheaded him with his own sword, bringing his head back to the village in her basket.

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Ukrainian Christmas by Debby J. Raabel R.H.N.

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The Julian calendar used by Orthodox Ukrainians is thirteen days behind the Gregorian calendar, so Christmas Eve begins on January 6th. Christianity was introduced in the Ukraine in 988 A.D.

The people were very loyal to their ancient pagan rituals of celebrating Winter Solstice and Feasts of Fertility; consequently, the rituals associated with these feasts were incorporated into the Christmas tradition.

There is rich symbolism in every aspect of this meal: hay is placed on or under the dining table, representing the manger of the baby Jesus. Three rings of braided Christmas Bread or *kolach* are placed in the center of the table representing the Holy Trinity and eternity. A candle is placed in the center of the bread to symbolize Christ, the light of the world.

The meal begins once the children of the family see the first star in the evening sky, symbolizing the star of Bethlehem and the beginning of the wise men's journey to see the Christ child. (If it's too cloudy to see stars, the meal begins at sunset instead.) A prayer is

offered, followed by the traditional Christmas greeting "*Khrystos rodyvsya!*" (Christ is born), to which all respond "*Slavite yoho!*" (Let us praise Him.) The menu for the "holy supper," or *sviata vechera*, of Christmas Eve does not contain any meat or dairy products. Rather, the meal is a feast of grains, fish, vegetables and fruits. Twelve dishes are served, representing the twelve Apostles as well as each full moon during the year. Wheat, traditionally the heart and symbol of Ukraine, is the component of the first course: *Kutia* (God's Bread) - boiled kernels of wheat sweetened with honey and flavoured with poppy seeds or nuts. The family eats the *kutia* while drinking God's Drink *uzvar*, which is made of twelve stewed fruits. Traditionally the twelve courses are:

(1) *kutia*, the main dish (2) *borscht* (beet soup) (3) *vushka* - boiled dumplings filled with chopped mushrooms and onions. The *vushka* is followed by a variety of fish:(4) baked fish (5) broiled fish (6) fried fish (7) cold fish in aspic(8) fish balls, and (9) marinated herring.

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Traditional Hanukkah Latkas - Potato Pancakes (Parve)

Chef Robyn, [Dining In Chez Vous](#)

This is Chef Robyn's mother's recipe. Some people grate the potatoes so they are more like rosti, but her family prepared them in a blender until they were smooth.

Ingredients:

5 potatoes - russet potatoes work best
2 onions
3 eggs
1 tsp. salt
1/4 tsp. pepper
between 1/4 to 3/4 cup all-purpose flour or matzo meal

oil for frying (canola is recommended)

Preparation:

1. Peel potatoes. Place in a bowl of cold water so they won't turn brown.
2. When ready to prepare the latkas, drain the potatoes. Chop potatoes. Place potatoes and onions in a blender. Blend until smooth. Drain mixture well.
3. Pour potato mixture into a large bowl. Add beaten eggs. Add salt and pepper. Add enough flour or matzo meal so that the mixture holds together.
4. Pour 1 inch of oil into a large, deep frying pan. Heat the oil over medium-high heat.
5. Carefully drop 1/4 cup of the potato mixture into the hot oil.
6. Flatten the pancake slightly so the center will cook.
7. Fry for several minutes on each side until golden brown and cooked through.
8. Drain on paper towels.

Serving Suggestion:
Serve the latkes with applesauce

Yields: approximately 20 pancakes



Eco-Holiday Ideas by Eleanor Healy R.H.N.

Whether you're preparing and enjoying a large meal together, or just spending quality time connecting with one another, holidays are intended to be a time spent with family, friends and loved ones. Sharing gifts is part of most holiday traditions, but some would argue that they have attained too much significance, overshadowing their true purpose of showing our love and appreciation. The gift giving ideas listed here don't involve fighting your way through the malls, but still convey the same message of caring in an ethical, environmentally friendly manner:



Decorations: Discover great ideas for [holiday decorating](#) that will result in less of an impact on the environment "[Light up your holidays](#)" with these ideas

Celebrating: Having a dinner party? Find [bio-degradable dishes, cutlery, and even gift wrap](#); Clean your home with these [non-toxic cleaners](#)

Gifts: Discover [eco-friendly gift-giving ideas](#). These 'green' retailers carry ethically - produced and environmentally-friendly products for gift giving: [Greenontario](#); [Grassroots Environmental Products](#); [Mountain Equipment Co-op](#); [Ecoshop.ca](#) (Canada); [Natural Life](#) (Canada; products, books, articles, maga-

zine); [Fair Trade Handicrafts](#) (North America) [Eco Books](#)

This year, consider these unconventional gift giving ideas:

Kris Kringle: draw names – have each person buy for one family member only

Gift certificates for local services or local, green, ethical retailers

Give a gift certificate or ticket for an event, outing, film, workshop or course

Give a gift certificate for *your own* skills or services (e.g. massage, tutoring, cleaning, repairing, baby sitting...

whatever)

Write a letter/poem/song or create a gift

Write letters to the people you value in your life and tell them why you appreciate them

Pool money for a shared meal, outing or other purchase

Plan activities instead of giving gifts: games, an evening out together, share personal stories, interview older family members, visit a mutual friend, hold a [listening circle](#), etc.

Make a donation to a local environmental group or charity in a gift-recipient's name

Hold a family activity or volunteering activity.

Find some fun and interactive suggestions at [Planet Friendly](#).

French Canadian by Genevieve Blanchet R.H.N.

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In Quebec, Christmas Eve is typically spent at home before going to Midnight Mass. Following the service, a special meal called Le Réveillon is enjoyed and the celebration continues until dawn.

Traditional Quebec cuisine has its origins in the fur trade period. The dishes – a combination of French and Irish cuisine, with strong influences from local aboriginal cuisine – were high in fat and lard to help the citizens cope with the harshness of winter.

Classic Québec dishes include: Country style pea soup - yellow peas enriched with pork;

Tourtière - ground meat and pork pie with cinnamon, nutmeg and clove; Six-pates - a layered thick pie made with wild meat such as deer, quail, hare, duck or goose cooked on a thick pastry base in a cast iron pot; Ragout de boulettes - pork meat ball ragout; Fèves au lard - baked white beans with fried onions, molasses and lard; Cretons - pork spread; and for dessert, Tarte à la farlouche - a pie made with cream and brown sugar.

These traditions have not been lost. Quebec's traditional cuisine is being rediscovered and is as rich and diverse as Quebec itself.

Yugoslavian Holiday by Karen Stoyles R.H.N.

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Yugoslavia was a Mediterranean country and the Mediterranean diet has been well established as one of the healthiest approaches to diet in the world. It is based largely on fresh, local fruits and vegetables, whole grains and legumes. It includes fish, nuts, avocado and olive oil, all natural sources of omega-3 fatty acids. The health benefits of omega-3 fatty

acids are endless. They are crucial to the development and maintenance of the nervous system, reduce cholesterol and inflammation in the body, and are beneficial for balancing hormones. They also prevent blood clotting and high blood pressure.

Overall, the traditional Yugoslavian diet is a healthy eating style to emulate, not just during the holiday season, but all year long.

Christmas Tree:
Plant a tree as a gift or why not rent one?

[Myowntree](#)
[Treesontario](#)
[TheStar](#)
[Homemakers](#)
[GiftofGreen](#)



Walnut Kifle

Dough:

1/2 cup organic butter, softened

1/2 cup ground almonds

1/2 cup Kamut flour

1 1/4 cup Spelt flour

1 tbsp water

1 tsp chia seeds

3/4 cup organic plain yogurt

1 free range egg yolk

Mix all ingredients to make dough. Cool in refrigerator for one

hour.

Filling:

2 cups ground walnuts

1/2 cup almond milk, unsweetened

1/4 cup honey

1 egg

Divide the dough in half. Roll out dough into circles and cut into pie like pieces.

Spread the filling onto the pieces and roll them up from the widest end. Bake on a floured baking sheet at 175 C (350 F) for 30 minutes or until golden brown.

Makes approximately 20





Chinese New Year by Eleanor Healy R.H.N.

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As a youth, on New Year's Day, Helen would visit relatives and receive a red envelope containing money and candy. Married couples and the elderly would give money-filled envelopes to children, and single family members. In other words, the more prosperous would give to those family members with less.

For the New Year's Eve feast, Helen's mother prepares the following dishes for her family: (Each dish has a symbolic and significant name.)

Fei Choy Ho Se: Black seaweed (that looks like hair) symbolizes money. It's cooked with dried oysters, which symbolizes 'good things'.

Hung Jo Chicken Soup: The soup is prepared with red yeast rice. The red colour symbolizes happiness.

Hung Jo Fish: This dish is also cooked with red yeast rice and symbolizes an abundance of 'good things' in every year.

Wan Choy Zhou Shou: Pork feet (which symbolizes that it's easy to get through circumstances) and pig tongue (which symbolizes "everything going smoothly"). The direct translation of this dish means, "when you gamble, you can win." It's marinated with soy sauce and is cooked for 2-3 hours until the meat is tender.

Siu Ha Ha: This term symbolizes 'happy all the time' and consists of deep fried shrimp, cut in half and lightly coated in flour and seasoned

with salt and pepper. The shrimp roll turns into a ball when it's cooked.

Vegetarian dishes such as napa cabbage, bamboo shoots, mushrooms, black seaweed, soya sauce and broth add variety and balance to the feast.

Dessert, served on the 15th day of the New Year is called **Tong Yuen**. The high-calorie



dessert dish consists of round balls of sticky rice filled with a paste. Their round shape denotes perfection, and as Registered Holistic Nutritionist, Christy Cheng, points out, they are not intended for daily use, but as a special treat. Both Helen and Christy agree that the sticky rice balls are

very filling and sweet!

Tong Yuen is served a number of ways depending on the region. The most traditional ingredient is the black sesame paste in the balls' center, which is said to keep the black pigment in one's hair (not to mention that it provides a healthy dose of calcium and omega-6 fatty acids). You may find the sticky balls covered with shreds of coconut or ground peanuts or they may be served as a main dish (without the paste) in a big pot of chicken and pork, seafood, dried mushrooms and vegetable soup. Thus, Tong Yuen becomes a staple dish rather than a dessert. Regardless of the exact ingredients, dessert is always a highly anticipated part of the New Year celebration! **Kung Hei Fat Choi!**

[Please Click Here for a Tong Yuen Recipe!](#)

Hanukkah by Debby J. Raabel R.H.N.

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When the Babylonians discovered that their leader had been slain, they fled. Judith saved her people and eventually eating dairy foods in honor of her bravery became tradition. It might be interesting to note that tradition dictates that Jews don't eat meat

and dairy in the same meal; hence, a traditional Jewish meal that includes dairy would not include any meat. Fish is permitted (except for bottom feeders), but no chicken, beef or lamb. Conversely, a meal that included meat would not contain any dairy products.

Ukrainian Christmas by Debby J. Raabel R.H.N.

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This is followed by (10) boiled dumplings filled with cabbage, potatoes, buckwheat grains, or prunes, called *varenyky*. (11) *Holubtsi* or stuffed cabbage, and lastly (12) more *uzvar!* However, many variations of dishes exist today.

This sacred and festive meal can go on for hours, and celebrations continue long into the early hours of Christmas Day. If you are lucky enough to be invited to a Christmas Eve meal, remember that all you savor connects centuries of proud tradition and history.

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