

Waiting for Christmas

- What would be Christmas without snow?
- Snow brings light to our dark and cold winter, the first snow gives us Christmas atmosphere .
- Christmas opening in Huittinen is at the end of November. We gather at the market place. There we sing Christmas songs and watch an elf parade. Christmas lights are lit on many trees and windows all over the city .



Pre-Christmas parties

- Parties are arranged for example by companies, organisations or schools.
- In parties we eat, drink, dance, sing and just join together.

Delicacies

- But what would Christmas be without Christmas delicacies?
- Eating is one of the most important activities at Finnish Christmas.
- We like to prepare almost all the delicacies by ourselves and many people start to bake some cakes and desserts long before Christmas.

What to eat?

- Traditional food on the Christmas table are rice porridge, swede casserole, potato casserole, carrot casserole and rosolli. Rosolli consists of beetroots, pickles, apples, potatoes and carrots. Whipped cream is placed on top of it.
- Different kind of salads are important on the Christmas table as well as fish like herring and salmon.
- The most important food at Christmas dinner is Christmas ham.

Why ham?

- Finns say that “ Ham is the King of the Christmas table”. We usually roast it at the night before Christmas Eve. Father or mother of the family stays awake and watches it roasting.



Sweets and beverages

- Christmas desserts are different kind of spice cakes, sweets, chocolate, plumfool, mince pies and gingerbread.
- Gingerbread House is very popular among children.
- In many families home-brewed beer belongs to Christmas.
- Also a glass of mulled wine flavored with almonds and raisins definitely belongs to Finnish Christmas.

What is the result of eating at Christmas?

- At Christmas time we often eat more than we should and on Boxing Day we go to traditional Boxing Day dances which are also called “ham digesting dances”.

Santa Claus



Santa Claus lives with Mrs Claus and elves in Korvatunturi in Finnish Lapland. Christmas elves help Santa make gifts in Santa's workshop. Santa Claus has a big stomach and he is a large laughing man with white beard, "kuuraparta" and he wears a red robe. He is very old, at least three hundred years.

Sometimes he may be using a wooden walking stick.

How does he know what children want?

- In many families the children write letters to Santa Claus including lists of gifts they hope.
- The letters are often given to parents for delivery.
- Santa Claus has elves to help him. A Christmas elf is usually a small bearded man, but some female characters have also been seen.
- The elves are spies who watch through the window what children are doing. They report Santa whether or not the children are well-behaved.
- Or that is what children believe.... In reality parents often get headache when they try to fulfill children's wishes.

When does he come?

- Santa Claus comes to homes on Christmas Eve night and he talks and sings Christmas songs together with children.
- When entering, Santa usually says "Ho, Ho, are there any good children here?".
- Santa travels on his reindeer sleigh. In Finland Santa Claus does not come in through the chimney but through the door.

Christmas Eve

- In the morning the whole family makes Christmas preparations. For example, we decorate the Christmas tree and prepare the food.
- Children watch cartoons on TV. They can even phone Santa Claus on live TV.
- At twelve o'clock we watch the Declaration of Christmas Peace on TV.
- <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z2j9cDPhfMw&feature=related>
- Then we eat Christmas porridge and the one who gets the almond gets a lot of good luck for next year.



Church

In the afternoon we go to church. There we calm down and listen carols and sing. The priest tells us the story of the birth of Jesus Christ. Then we visit graves of close relatives and light up candles. In the dark evening the cemetery looks like a sea of candles, it's very beautiful.

At the end of Christmas Eve

- The whole family goes to sauna. After that we feel very relaxed and warm.
- At last we gather together around the table and enjoy a big and delicious meal.
- All day long children are very nervous, because they wait for Santa. Often he comes after the dinner.
- At the end of the day we spend time together and maybe play with the new games we got for presents or just enjoy the peaceful time and the candlelight.