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SPECIAL
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FULL OF MAGIC

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My Christmas in Spain

When I was a child

As a child, I could never wait for Christmas to arrive. In the previous days, my brother, my mother, and I would set up the “Belén” at home and decorate the house with traditional ornaments. At school, we performed Christmas plays, dressed up in costumes, and sang carols for our families. I would also go out with my friends to sing carols around the village, a tradition known as asking for the “aguinaldo”, where we went door to door and people would give us small amounts of money or sweets in return. Those moments, filled with music, friendship defined the magic of the Christmas for me.

Christmas Traditions

As I was saying, one of the most traditional and distinctive Christmas

activities in Spain is setting up the Nativity scene, or Belén. Every place displays its own elaborate version for everyone to enjoy, and most households have a smaller one of their own. In fact, having a Nativity scene at home is even more common than having a Christmas tree, although this trend has been changing in recent years. A Nativity scene is made up primarily of the stable, where the figures of baby Jesus, Mary, and Joseph are placed, along with their animals. Other notable figures often include the Three Wise Men and various townspeople—shepherds, potters, and others—depicted carrying out their daily trades. In Spain, it is also common to find the figure of the caganer, a small character hidden somewhere in the scene, shown relieving himself, a humorous and uniquely local tradition.



Typical Christmas Food

In Spain, it is typical to eat a lot of seafood for dinner on Christmas Eve (December 24th) and New Year's Eve (December 31st). Some of the most popular dishes include "pulpo a la gallega", which is boiled octopus seasoned with paprika, olive oil, and salt; prawns and other shellfish; and steamed mussels. These dishes are usually followed by sweet desserts and polvorones, along with cava, champagne, or cider to celebrate the New Year.

"Los Reyes Magos"

In Spain, the tradition of the Three Wise Men carries much more weight than Santa Claus. Although children receive a small gift on Christmas Day, the more important presents are usually given on January 6th.

This celebration is also when people enjoy the most popular Christmas sweet in Spain: the "roscón de reyes". It is a ring-shaped cake filled with whipped cream, chocolate, or other variations, and topped with candied fruit. Its particular charm lies in the hidden figurine of one of the Wise Men baked inside. According to tradition, the person who finds the figurine is responsible for buying the roscón the following year... though this is taken more as a joke than a real rule. "La cabalgata de los reyes magos" (Three Kings parade) is also very popular, in which local people dress up as the kings and parade through towns or cities, handing out sweets and other treats to the children who come to see them.

On the night when the Three Kings arrive at your home to deliver the gifts, you must place three sweets under the fireplace, one for each of the kings, and three glasses of water or milk for the camels. I remember that as a child I always found it very hard to sleep that night, and sometimes I would wake up during the night to check if they had already arrived.

Christmas Through the Heart of Prekmurje

Traditions From the Northeast of Slovenia

Christmas in Prekmurje is a season woven from old rural customs, family warmth, and a deep sense of community. The festive spirit begins long before Christmas Eve, when homes are filled with the smell of baking and the sound of preparations. Families gather to make traditional pastries, especially the famous Potica and the beloved prekmurska gibanica, whose rich layers symbolize abundance and good fortune. The making of these sweets often becomes a social event, with several generations working together, sharing stories, and passing down skills that are treated almost like family treasures.

In many villages, people still deco-

rate their homes with simple natural ornaments, often crafted by hand from straw, pine branches, or dried fruits. These decorations reflect the region's strong connection to nature and the old belief that Christmas is a time when the household should shine with purity and harmony. Although modern lights and store-bought ornaments have become common, many families still keep at least a few handmade decorations as a reminder of their roots.

Christmas Eve in Prekmurje is traditionally peaceful and reflective. Before the festive meal, many families attend evening mass, which holds a special place in local culture. The meal itself is shaped by cus-

toms that once emphasized modesty and fasting. Fish dishes, bean soups, or cabbage stews were common in the past, and although traditions have evolved, many households still serve at least one simple dish to honor their ancestors. After the meal, families gather around the Christmas tree, exchange small gifts, and enjoy the quiet magic of the night, often accompanied by folk Christmas songs that have been sung in the region for generations.

Christmas Day is much livelier, marked by visits from relatives and friends, long lunches, and a generous table. This is when the heartier Prekmurje dishes come out, from roasted meats to festive pastries. Hospitality is an essential part of the regional identity, and no guest leaves without tasting something homemade. For many, the holiday also includes a walk through the village or countryside, a chance to greet neighbors and share warm wishes for the season.

Throughout the holidays, people in Prekmurje cherish a sense of belonging to family, to tradition, and to the land. Even as customs gradually change with time, the essence remains the same: Christmas is a celebration of togetherness, gratitude, and the small rituals that bring joy and meaning to everyday life.



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CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS IN SLOVENIA



In Slovenia, Christmas is one of the most magical and family-focused times of the year. The festive season starts long before December 25, with decorations, Advent wreaths, and excitement in the air as people prepare for cosy days with loved ones. We kids don't just wait for Christmas Day — we also look forward to Saint Nicholas (Miklavž) on the night of December 5–6. We put out a shoe or a bowl, and in the morning we often find it filled with mandarins, nuts, dried fruit, and little treats if we've been good. Miklavž sometimes comes with

playful “parkeljini” devils, making the tradition exciting and unique.

During the festive season, we decorate Christmas trees and nativity scenes (jaslice) at home, and religious families put up Advent wreaths with candles that they light each Sunday in December.

December 24 (Christmas Eve) and December 25 (Christmas Day) are the main days of celebration. On Christmas Eve, we often gather for a special dinner — traditionally including dishes like potica (a rolled walnut cake) and richly decorated božičnik or “poprtnik,” a festive bread with symbolic designs. We spend Christmas Eve enjoying a warm meal with family, singing songs, sharing stories, and sometimes attending mid-

night mass. On Christmas morning, we open presents together and have a festive breakfast or lunch. Presents are usually exchanged among close family members, especially children.

Food is a big part of our Christmas. Apart from potica and festive bread, we often enjoy regional dishes — from sausages and rich roasts to sweet biscuits and desserts.



THE TOP 5

CHRISTMAS SONGS STREAMED ON



ALL TIME GLOBALLY



1. "All I Want for Christmas Is You"
by Mariah Carey



2. "Last Christmas" by Wham!



3. "Santa Tell Me" by Ariana Grande



4. "It's Beginning to Look a Lot like Christmas"
by Michael Bublé



5. "Rockin' Around The Christmas Tree"
by Brenda Lee

Aletria



SASTOJCI

- 250 g aletria rezanaca
- 1 l mlijeka ili vode
- 200–250 g šećera (po ukusu)
- 1 štapić cimeta
- korica 1 limuna (u trakama, ne ribana)
- 2 jušne žlice maslaca
- 3–4 žumanjka
- cimet u prahu (za posipavanje)



OKUS:



VRIJEME PRIPREME:



TEŽINA PRIPREME:



Aletria je tradicionalni portugalski desert s tankim rezancima kuhanima u mlijeku ili vodi, šećeru i aromama poput cimeta i limuna. Najčešće se priprema za Božić. Evo i savršenog recepta kojeg možeš isprobati već ovaj Božić.

PRIPREMA:

Tradicionalno se rezanci aletrije razbiju rukama na vrlo male komadiće (2–3 cm). U loncu zagrij mlijeko/vodu sa štapićem cimeta i koricom limuna. Kad mlijeko/voda proključa, smanji vatru. Dodaj rezance u vruće mlijeko/vodu. Kuhaj 3–5 minuta, dok ne omekšaju, ali ostanu čvrsti. Miješaj redovno da se ne zalijepe. Umiješaj šećer i maslac pa kuhaj još nekoliko minuta dok se lagano ne zgusne. Žumanjke umuti u maloj zdjelici i dodaj nekoliko žlica vruće smjese da ih temperiraš. Zatim ih postepeno ulij u lonac sa rezancima uz konstantno miješanje. Kuhaj još 1 minutu, ali na vrlo laganoj vatri kako se žumanjci nebi prekuhali. Ukloni štapić cimeta i koru limuna te zatim prelij u plitku posudu ili zdjelice. Kada se malo ohladi, posipaj cimetom u prahu — obično se rade i dekorativne mrežaste šare. Poslužuje se toplo ili hladno.



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Christmas in Germany

Christmas in Germany is a very special time of the year. Many cities and towns have their own traditional Christmas market where people drink „Glühwein“ hot mulled wine, eat snacks and buy handmade gifts. During Advent, families use an Advent wreath with four candles and light one candle every Sunday before Christmas. Many people also enjoy an Advent calendar, opening one door each day in December until Christmas.

On December 6th, St. Nicholas Day (Nikolaus) is celebrated, and many people receive small gifts or sweets. Christmas Eve (December 24th) is the most important day, when families come together and exchange presents. December 25th and 26th are also public holidays and are spent with family and friends.



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Aveiro-Águeda-Ilhavo

Blagdanska čarolija u Portugalu



Prošli prosinac svoje sam blagdane provela u Portugalu, a doživljaj božićnog razdoblja tamo gotovo je nenadmašiv. Od najvećeg Djeda Božićnjaka na svijetu, preko svečanog otvaranja adventa uz magičan show na kanalima grada Aveiro, pa sve do ukusne hrane koja ispunjava blagdanske dane mirisom cimeta — Portugal tijekom prosinca pretvara se u pravi mali čarobni svijet.

Najveći Djed Božićnjak na svijetu

Portugalski gradić Águeda mjesto je gdje gotovo nikada ne pada snijeg, no ipak je dom najvećem Djeda Božićnjaku na svijetu. Ovaj golem lik izrađen je od više od 250 tisuća LED lampica i visok čak 21 metar. Predivna Águeda poznata je po detaljima koji stvaraju upravo onu

blagdansku atmosferu kakvu biste očekivali ako je planirate posjetiti. Tijekom godine Águeda je poznata kao grad kišobrana: glavna pješačka ulica pretvara se u šareno mjesto ukrašeno visećim kišobranama koji stvaraju poseban vizualni doživljaj. Zimi, ti kišobrani dobivaju svoje svjetleće prijatelje — tisuće lampica — i jednog nimalo malenog dječicu. Djed Božićnjak u Águedi postao je omiljena atrakcija mnogih turista, ali i Portugalaca koji ga, čim padne noć, dolaze vidjeti obasjanog blještavim svjetlima. Ono što mnogi posjetitelji ne znaju jest da Águeda skriva i najmanjeg Djeda Božićnjaka na svijetu. Riječ je o nano-skulpturi britanskog umjetnika Willarda Wigana, toliko sitnoj da ju je moguće vidjeti jedino pod mikroskopom — smještena je upravo u ušici igle.

Tijekom mog posjeta Águedi nisam uspjela pronaći onog najmanjeg, ali me zato potpuno osvojio najveći Djed Božićnjak. Najzanimljivije je to što se prizori koje smo navikli gledati u zimskim kaputima,



u Portugalu mogu istraživati u — kratkim rukavima! Da, u prosincu temperature u Águedi nisu niske, a ako je posjetite početkom mjeseca, vrlo je moguće da ćete u jednom danu iskusiti sva četiri godišnja doba. Možda ćete Djeda Božićnjaka promatrati u kratkim rukavima... sve dok ne zapuše oceanski povjetarac, kada ipak dobro dođe lagani kaputić.

„Boas Festas“ u Portugalskoj Veneciji — Aveiru

Portugalski grad Aveiro prošle je godine (2024.) bio prijestolnica kulture u Portugalu. Što to znači? Tijekom cijele godine grad nudi dvostruko bogatiji kulturni program: od kina, kazališta i koncerata do raznih izložbi i javnih događanja. Zbog toga je i otvorenje „Boas Festas“, što bi u prijevodu značilo „ugodni blagdani“, a po značenju odgovara našem adventu, bilo još spektakularnije nego inače — a ja sam imala sreću dobiti ulaznicu za prvi red.

Svečano otvaranje održalo se 1. prosinca, kada grad tradicionalno pali svoje blagdanske lampice i pokreće cijeli prosinački program. U toj prigodi moliceiros — šareni tradicionalni čamci — postaju prave male pokretne pozornice koje plove kanalima. Na njima se okupljaju lokalne udruge, kulturne skupine i razne organizacije koje sudjeluju u svečanom programu na vodi.



Dok su moliceiros plovili prema središnjem okretištu, okupljene je s prozora stare tvornice pozdravio Djed Božićnjak, što je označilo početak jednosatnog magičnog programa. Nebo iznad Aveira uskoro je obasjao šareni vatromet, a veliki božićni bor zasjao je u trenutku kada ga je simbolično „dotaknula“ svjetlosna zvijezda repatica. Djeca iz lokalnih škola, odjevena u svjetleće kostime anđela, pjevala su iz nekoliko brodića dok su im se ljudi pridružili pjevanjem sa šetnica i mostova.

Ja sam bila u jednom od moliceira, predstavljajući lokalnu udrugu za koju sam radila. S božićnom kapićom na glavi, okružena dvadesetak drugih sudionika, osjećala sam se kao dio malog, plutajućeg kazališta. Plovidba natrag kanalima nakon paljenja lampica bila je još ocharavajuća. Moglo se uživati u svjetlima, mirisu cimeta koji se širio ulicama, gomilama ljudi koji su se pridružili pjesmi i melodičnim božićnim pje-

smicama koje su dopirale s gotovo svakog moliceira. Aveiro se u prosincu doista pretvara u mali čarobni svijet — a „Boas Festas“ je jedan od najljepših načina da ga doživite.

São Gonçalinho i kolačići koji donose sreću

Aveiro je poznat i po jednoj vrlo posebnoj tradiciji — proslavi „Festa de São Gonçalinho“. Svake godine, početkom siječnja, stanovnici četvrti Beira-Mar okupljaju se kod male kapelice posvećene ovom svecu, a najpoznatiji dio slavlja je bacanje malih, tvrdih kolačića zvanih „cava-cas“ s vrha kapelice.

Ljudi se okupljaju ispod kapelice i pokušavaju uhvatiti kolačiće u zrak, u kape ili čak u kišobrane okrenute naopačke. Prema lokalnom vjerovanju, uhvaćena cavaca donosi sreću i zaštitu za cijelu godinu. Ovaj veseli običaj pun je smijeha, radosti i zajedništva — tipičnog za duh Aveira. Iako ja osobno nisam prisustvo-

vala proslavi São Gonçalinha, ova tradicija savršeno oslikava koliko je život u Aveiru živopisan i pun toplih običaja koji spajaju zajednicu.

Blagdanski okusi Sjevernog Portugala — Aveiro i Ilhavo

Božić u Portugalu ne bi bio potpun bez slasnih tradicionalnih slastica koje se tijekom prosinca i blagdanskih dana redovito poslužuju uz obiteljski stol. U Sjevernom Portugalu i duž obale oko Aveira i Ilhava možete uživati u pravim zimskim slatkišima koji mame osmijeh i tople uspomene.

Aletria je jedan od omiljenih portugalskih blagdanih deserata — slatki „pu-ding“ od vrlo tankih rezanaca kuhanih u mlijeku, šećeru i aromama poput limuna



i cimeta. Svojom kremastom, blago začinjenom teksturom odiše toplinom obiteljskih blagdana i idealna je završnica teške blagdanske gozbe.

Jedna od slastica koju sam osobno probala zahvaljujući portugalskoj baki bila je slatki bučin popečak - Filhós de abobora. Iako se u različitim krajevima zove različito radi se o prženim popečcima od bundeve, koji se nakon prženja uvaljaju u mješavinu šećera i cimeta. Ovi zlatno-narančasti zalogaji slatkoće mame osmijeh s prvim zalogajem i često su dio domaćih božićnih stolova u obiteljima diljem sjevernog Portugala.



Bolo Rei je, kako mu kaže i ime (reiport. kralj), kralj među božićnim kolačima u Portugalu. To je bogato dizano tijesto u obliku kruga prepunjeno suhim i kandiranim voćem te orašastim plodovima poput oraha i badema, često uz dodatak aromatičnih citrusnih korica — sve to daje kolaču raskošan, slojevit okus i miris pravih božićnih dana.

Još jedna blagdanska poslastica je rabanadas — portugalska verzija francuskog tosta, odnosno našeg po-hanog kruha. Debeli komadi kruha natapaju se u bogatoj mješavini mlijeka, jaja, šećera i cimeta, ponekad i u dodatku Porto vina, pa se prže do zlatno-hrskave savršenosti. Na kraju se posipaju šećerom i cimetom. Uz

rabanadas ponekad ćete naići i na kremu „Ovos moles“, desert tipičan za Aveiro, a napravljen od žumanjaka i šećera.

Božić u Portugalu je iskustvo koje spaja spektakularne vizuale, tradiciju, mirise i okuse. Od veličanstvenog Djeda Božićnjaka u Águedi, preko čarobnog otvaranja adventa u Aveiru, do slatkih okusa aletrije, rabanadasa i Bolo Reija, svaki detalj podsjeća na radost, zajedništvo i toplinu blagdana. Posjet Portugalu u prosincu znači uroniti u pravu blagdansku čaroliju — i ponijeti sa sobom sjećanja koja dugo ostaju u srcu.

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Rosa Maria Vital

Moj Božić

Božić je meni i mojoj obitelji jedan od najljepših i najtoplijih blagdana u godini. U našoj obitelji doček Božića počinje pripremama čak i do dvatjedna ranije. Obzirom da se mama bavi dekoraterskim poslovima, voli da sve tematski bude ukrašeno, od glavnog ulaza u kuću, stepeništa i svih prostora unutar kuće. Bor ukrašavamo svake godine drugim ukrasima, a kućom se širi miris kolača i cimeta koje najčešće pečemo moja seka Nina i ja. Svako od nas ima svoj zadatak: jedni rade božićne kolače, drugi ukrašavaju bor i ostale prostorije, treći rade francusku salatu i pripremaju večeru za badnjak. Badnjak je kod nas posebno radostan. Navečer se okupljamo na večeri, a nakon toga zajedno gledamo božićni film ili slušamo pjesme. U ponoć nam je običaj ići polnoću, što nam daje osjećaj zahvalnosti i zajedništva.

Nakon polnočke kad se vratimo doma uz smijeh i prigodne pjesme otvaramo poklone. Obično tada bude puno smijeha i zabave, obzirom da prije nego otvorimo poklone moramo pogoditi što je zapakirano pod borom. Na sam Božić ujutro oko 10 sati svi zajedno doručujemo. Veselje i smijeh ispunjavaju naš dom. Oko 14 sati slijedi ručak. Mama se uvijek potrudi i stol bude posebno ukrašen. Na stolu se uvijek nalaze tradicionalna jela, a razgovor i druženje traju satima — a najčešće oko priprema za proslavu Nove godine. Ja se baš ne mogu pohvaliti da prilikom ručka blagujem tradicionalna jela obzirom da sam veganka, pa uglavnom moram smišljati što skuhati a da bude nesvakidašnje. Za mene i moju obitelj Božić je više od darova i blještavila. Vrijeme ljubavi, topline, zajedništva i nemo-

jmo se varati vrijeme zimskih praznika :). Najljepše je biti okružen ljudima koje volimo i osjećati mir koji Božić donosi. Zato ga svake godine dočekujem s radošću i zahvalnošću.

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Svi moji Božići...

fotografije gradova tijekom adventa



Ljubljana

ANA SVEČAK



Krapina

MARIJA GEBERT



Varaždin

MARIO MUÑOZ



Zagreb

MARIO MUÑOZ



Split

LEA KRŠNIK



Ljubljana

TENA ŠUMSKI



Zabok

MARIJA GEBERT



Christmas market in Trutnov



Christmas in Czech republic

Christmas is seen as mostly family holiday, so you usually just spend the day with them, hanging out, going out for a walk or watching Christmas fairytales in the TV.

Christmas in the Czech Republic is mostly about Christmas Eve, not the following days. Usually you try to start the day early in the morning. These years, snow on Christmas is a matter of luck, so outside is usually just grey and cold, and the streets are noticeably quieter because almost everything closes by midday.

During the day, we don't really eat much. Some people still follow the tradition of fasting, others just snack lightly. This is especially for children as there is a tradition that if you don't eat the whole day, you'll be able to see a golden pig.

The day is mostly spent finishing practical things like cleaning, preparing for the dinner, setting the table, and preparing carp or schnitzel. Carp is the most traditional Christ-

mas food, but nowadays many people exchange it for different fish or meats.

Christmas is seen as mostly family holiday, so you usually just spend the day with them, hanging out, going out for a walk or watching Christmas fairytales in the TV. Television often runs the same fairy tales every year and everyone has their "traditional one".

Dinner is early, around six. It tends to be fairly formal. Everyone sits down together, candles on the table, you should dress nice and be presentable. Because dinner is the center of Christmas, it tends to take long, taking time for each course and conversation. The people gathering can be just the closest family or wider relatives. After eating, some families keep small traditions like cutting

apples or pouring lead to predict the future for the next year.

Presents come right after dinner. In Czech tradition they're brought by Ježíšek (baby Jesus), who remains conveniently invisible. The gifts appear under the tree, and we open them one by one.

The rest of the evening is uneventful in a good way. More TV, tea or wine, maybe a phone call to relatives. No parties, no going out, no big social obligations. New Years is the more lively, social holiday, so Christmas really tends to stay pretty chill. It's a short break in the year, a quiet evening with family at home, and then the everyone moves on.

Sretni blagdan!

