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Traditional Christmas Dishes

Worksheet for classroom use

Level: From B2

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Traditional Christmas dishes

People around the world follow old traditions to celebrate Christmas and there is a wide variety of festive food traditions. We only have to look at the following selection of traditional Christmas dishes and sweets to get an idea of the diversity of food traditions.

1. What food do you associate with Christmas?
2. Match the description of the Christmas dishes with the pictures.
3. Which of these dishes have you tried or would like to try?

a) The **Bûche de Noël** is a French Christmas cake that is shaped like a log. It is based on the tradition of burning a log in the hearth in families' homes on Christmas Eve. This act was thought to be lucky. When the hearths were replaced by stoves, the tradition of eating a log-shaped cake instead of burning a wooden log started.

b) **Christmas biscuits**, a typical German Advent and Christmas treat, were probably first produced in medieval monasteries to commemorate the birth of Jesus. **Stollen** (a sweet yeast bread that contains candied fruit, currants, orange and lemon zest and spices) and recipes for **gingerbread** also originated in monasteries.

c) **Mince pies** are an English Christmas dish with a long tradition that can be traced back to the early Middle Ages. They consist of pastry dough with a sweet filling made of a mixture of dried fruit and spices such as cinnamon, sugar, and nutmeg and meat. The meat was later completely replaced by sweet ingredients.

d) Saffron buns called **lussebullar** or **lussekatter** form part of the St. Lucia celebration that takes place on December 13 in Sweden. One theory is that the buns were created with the aim of warding off the devil because saffron was believed to have magical powers.

e) The tradition of eating **ham** is believed to be rooted in the Germanic pagan ritual of sacrificing a wild boar during harvest festivals in northern and Anglo-Saxon countries.

f) **Turrón** is a Spanish Christmas sweet made from a mixture of honey, eggs, sugar and toasted nuts. It is believed that the origin of turrón dates back to Greek times, when almonds and honey were used to prepare a high-energy snack. It probably became a Christmas treat because the almond harvest takes place at the end of summer so that the finished product is ready for consumption during Christmas time.

g) **Hallaca** is a traditional Venezuelan Christmas dish. It consists of flour dough that is wrapped in a banana leaf, stuffed with a filling of beef, olives, pork and capers and then steamed.

h) There are many legends about the origin of **panettone**, an Italian Christmas cake. It has a long tradition that can be traced back to the 15th or 16th century. The sweet cake has now become a Christmas staple food in Italy.

i) **Plum pudding**, or Christmas pudding, also used to be a meat dish that contained dried fruit. The first records of plum pudding can be found in medieval times. In the late 16th century, plum pudding started to refer to a sweet steamed or boiled pudding.



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4. A typical English Christmas dinner - Have you tried any of the dishes that make up a typical English Christmas dinner?

The following dishes usually form part of an English Christmas dinner:

- roasted turkey
- gravy (made from the drippings of the turkey when it is cooked)
- herb stuffing, for example made of onions and sage, which can be served inside the turkey or as a side dish
- Brussel sprouts
- roasted or mashed potatoes
- Yorkshire pudding (a common British side dish made of a batter of egg, flour, and milk that is baked)
- plum pudding or Christmas pudding (a dessert that is made from dried fruit and is normally served with brandy butter)
- mince pies (pies that are filled with a mixture of dried fruit and spices such as cinnamon, sugar, and nutmeg)

Task 2 – Key

1 b

2 i

3 d

4 c

5 i

6 h

7 e

8 g

9 f