

Christmas Tradition

Enjoying The Sweets Of A German Christmas

(NAPSA)—Christmas is a time for family, friends, celebration and delicious mouth-watering treats. This year, why not add some variety to your holiday mix with delicious and creative German sweets? After all, German confections are considered among the best tasting in the world, having evolved from age-old traditions.

In Germany, holiday festivities start with Advent, originally a month of Christian preparation for Christmas Day. During Advent, Germans celebrate *Advents Kaffee*, a turn on the classic German coffee klatsch, with families gathering around an *Adventskranz*, a flat wreath with four candles, to light one of the candles (they light an additional candle each Sunday). This Sunday afternoon ceremony features the traditional Christmas *stollen*, a sweet fruit bread sometimes containing nuts and marzipan, which can be purchased in America as well. All sorts of traditional holiday cookies like cinnamon stars (*zimtsterne*) or fruit-and nut-filled treats (*plätzchen*, *printen*), marzipan candies (*mandelhörnchen*, *nussecken*, *dominosteine*) and of course, that delicious German coffee, are available in U.S. stores.

Many Germans enjoy opening the doors of the *Adventskalender* starting on the first day of December. Behind each door lies a piece of chocolate, shaped to resemble ornaments and Christmas characters. The countdown continues until December 24. Fortunately for us, *Adventskalender* are available in stores across the U.S. during the holidays.

And let's not forget the famous Gingerbread house (*hexenhaus*). Christmas time in Germany often includes the construction and decoration of a gingerbread house. In the U.S. authentic German gingerbread houses are available ready made. An assortment of gingerbread cookies (*lebkuchen*) in



Many German festivities form the basis of our traditional Christmas celebrations.

various Christmas shapes with fruity fillings, different kinds of chocolate coverings and sugar glazing are also sold in the U.S.

Germans also share sweets on St. Nikolaus day. St. Nikolaus, a benevolent bishop, rewards the good children by tucking candies and treats into their shoes. Very popular on this day are chocolate Santas and *pfeffernuesse*, a tasty mixture of gingerbread, almonds and nutmeg. For the adults, St. Nikolaus brings a variety of liqueur filled pieces of chocolate, some with cherry or Schnapps fillings.

After the traditional Christmas Eve dinner of roast goose, duck, hare or fish, accompanied by apple and sausage stuffing, red cabbage and potato dumplings, everyone gathers around the Christmas tree and shares delightful treats often hung as decorations. These include chocolate wreaths, candies in glittery holiday wrappings and—of course—more cookies.

Wondering how to incorporate some of these delightful sweets and treats into your own holiday festivities? Log onto www.germanfoods.org for a list of stores and online shops where authentic treats can be bought for your own friends and family. A variety of mouthwatering recipe ideas is also available.