

MLI Gazette

Holiday Issue 2025



NOVEMBER / DECEMBER ISSUE

I carry it in my heart

I really love this time of year, especially when it's snowy. One of my favorite colors is white. For me, white symbolizes indescribable beauty and purity. So I love the beauty of a city covered in this purity and illuminated by lights. When I was still living in the Caribbean, I dreamed of my first experience of the holiday season in a snowy setting. Wow.

I already loved the festive time of year in France without even having lived there. I had heard about it and seen a few images on TV, in family photos, and in magazines. But I wanted to experience it myself. To feel that atmosphere.

So I moved to France during that time of year. My first encounter with snow was quite remarkable. In previous years, it had rarely snowed so much in Paris. One evening, I had to walk home from work because so much snow had fallen that the roads were blocked. It took me an hour and ten minutes to get home.

But it felt like a gift from heaven for me. I was so happy. That same evening, I joined my brother and his family and we made our first snowman together. I made the most of it. I visited all the must-see places during this period to see the Christmas decorations. I went to Boulevard Haussmann to see the shop windows decorated for the occasion.

They are decorated with a different theme each year. Figurines, puppets, lights... in short, phenomenal decorations that tell an incredible story about Christmas. The Eiffel Tower, decked out in lights for the occasion, shines brightly. For me, this is the most beautiful time to appreciate the Eiffel Tower. In the evening, dinner on a riverboat on the Seine is just incredible.

Regardless, what I appreciate about this time of year is the festive atmosphere, the Christmas decorations, the warmth of the people around me, and a good meal. This year, my family and I are in a new setting. I can't wait to see what our first family Christmas in Los Angeles will be like.



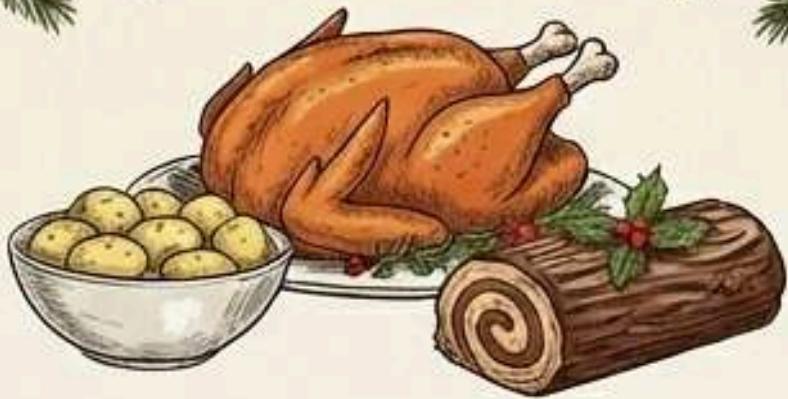
The Magic of Christmas in December

First of all, in December, one of the most important and joyful holidays is Christmas, a celebration known for its traditions, decorations, and time spent with loved ones. Because of this, many people around the world enjoy this holiday, as it brings a warm and festive atmosphere during the cold winter season.

To begin with, Christmas is filled with activities that make the month exciting. People decorate their homes with lights, trees, and ornaments, creating a colorful and cozy environment. In addition, families often exchange gifts and share special meals together. Moreover, music, Christmas markets, and holiday movies help create a magical feeling. For children, the idea of Santa Claus bringing presents adds even more excitement and wonder.

In conclusion, Christmas is a holiday that brings people together and creates lasting memories. Overall, whether it is through traditions, food, or simply spending time with family, this December celebration continues to be meaningful and special for many people every year.

by Nina



Comforting recipes for the holidays

Here we are in December! The cold is setting in and there is nothing better than warmth and comforting flavors of homemade festive dishes.

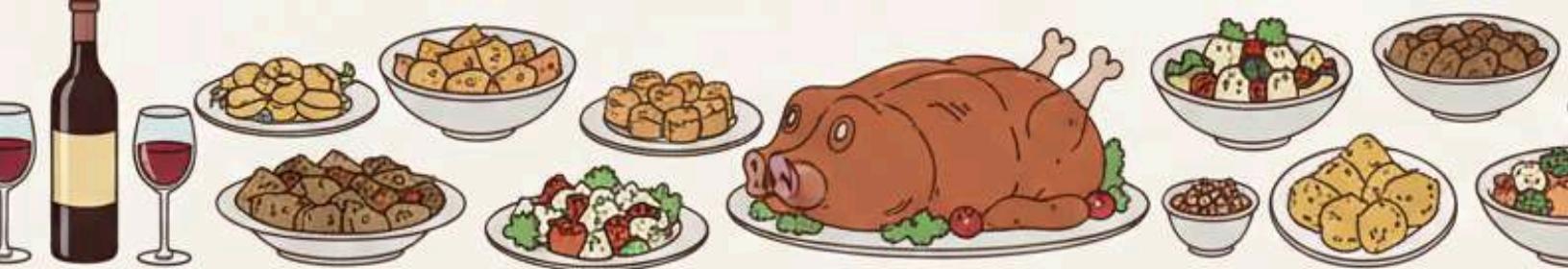
December is the perfect time to dive into the kitchen and prepare recipes that will warm your heart and soul.

For example, roast turkey with traditional stuffing, creamy smashed potato and sour cranberry sauce. For a touch of originality, you can add seasonal spices like cinnamon, nutmeg and cloves to your dishes.

Don't forget dessert !
A yule log, gingerbread cookies or warm apple pie are perfect ways to end a festive meal.

So take and prepare your ingredients, put on your apron and let the magic of the kitchen work to create unforgettable tastes and memories with your loved one during this special time of year.

by Loulou



New Year's in Armenia

By Artyom

In Armenia, people celebrate New Year's on December 31st. New Year's is special for Armenians and everyone loves celebrating it in Armenia. There is an unwritten rule - New Year's takes four days! This is because it is a time for family. One day, you celebrate with relatives. The next day, other people come to your house. This process lasts for four days.

Preparations begin a few days before the actual event. People start grocery shopping, which is the most important thing. There are always huge lines in every store. Families reunite and go to the stores together to get everything done before December 31st. Parents also shop for presents for their kids and themselves. In Armenia, Santa Claus doesn't come during Christmas. Instead, his presents arrive when the clock hits midnight when December 31st turns into January 1st. That's when everyone celebrates and finally opens their gifts.

Families also come together to cook for New Year's. The main foods and drinks are wine, cognac, dolmas, roast pork, a variety of salads, biscuits, and *blinchiks* (thin pancakes wrapped around minced meat and fried onions). In conclusion, New Year's in Armenia is very special and exciting for everyone! We all come together to celebrate the beautiful start of the New Year!



CHINESE HOT POT

By Vera



Hot pot, also known as *Huoguo*, is a traditional Chinese dish that has a history of more than 1000 years. It's not just a dish, but a unique eating experience. It's generally enjoyed as a social event, and is perfect for a get-together.

A classic hot pot includes a metal pot placed in the center of the dining table, filled with a variety of ingredients. People can cook food in the pot according to their own tastes including sliced meats, seafood, vegetables, and tofu. They can also prepare their own dipping sauces. People usually sit around the table, enjoying delicious food and chatting happily with each other.

Eating hot pot is not just about filling your stomach, but also about enjoying the cooking process and the warmth it brings, especially in winter. Therefore hot pot represents an important part of Chinese culture. It is a symbol of harmony, reunion, and sharing!





AIZOME

By Yuki

Aizome is a traditional skill in which cloth is dyed blue with Indigo. The biggest feature of Aizome is that it uses a natural dye from the Japanese indigo plant which contains a lot of indigo pigment. In traditional Japanese indigo dyeing, the leaves of the plant are fermented and made into a dye material called *Sukumo*.

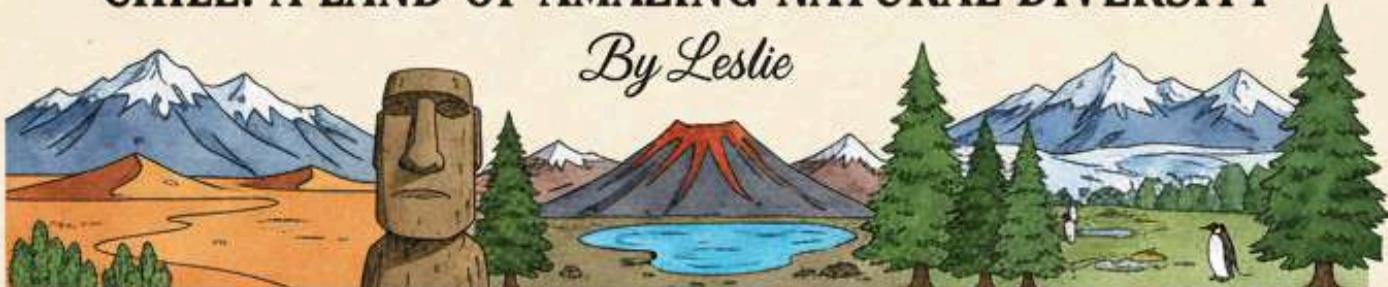
The more dye is used, the nicer it feels. The effects of the dyed cloth include: insect repellent, deodorizing, antibacterial properties, UV ray protection, reduction of fever, detoxification, anti inflammatory effects, and the fabric becomes stronger and more durable when dyed. Due to the durability of the dyed fabric, Samurai warriors would wear indigo underwear before going into battle. The fabric helped to prevent infections if the wearer was injured. Even today, Kendo uniforms, hakama, and other martial arts training clothing are dyed with indigo.

Even though Aizome is a traditional practice, the benefits of this remarkable process are still acknowledged by the Japanese and visitors who learn of the Indigo plant and the magic of *Sukumo*.



CHILE: A LAND OF AMAZING NATURAL DIVERSITY

By Leslie



Chile is a country known for its natural beauty and diversity. Despite being very narrow, Chile has many different climates and landscapes to explore and enjoy. Here, you can find deserts, islands, forests, volcanoes, glaciers, and of course, the Patagonian mountains running down to the Antarctic. Here are some of the features that make Chile one of the most unique countries in the world.

The Atacama Desert (North)

In Northern Chile sits the Atacama, the driest desert on Earth. In addition to sand, you can experience the salt flats, multi-colored valleys, and clear skies perfect for stargazing in the evening. In many places, the landscape resembles an otherworldly scene.

Rapa Nui (Easter Island)

In the Pacific, far from the shore is the mysterious Easter Island, famous for its Moai. These giant stone statues are buried halfway into the soil. The island has a strong Polynesian culture. Unfortunately, in 2022, a catastrophic fire spread over the island. It will take a long time before visitors will be able to visit the island again.



CHILE: A LAND OF AMAZING NATURAL DIVERSITY

By Leslie



Lakes and Volcanoes (South)

Further south, the Lakes and Volcanoes region is full of green forests filled with azure lakes and is home to numerous active and potentially active volcanoes. People come to hike or soak in the many hot springs there.

Patagonia and Antarctica (Extreme South)

In the far south, Patagonia offers amazing views of the Paine Massif mountains. People from all over the world come to the famous Torres Del Paine national park to experience some of the greatest scenery on the planet. For the most adventurous, tours can be arranged to travel to Antarctica, where Chile holds territory to spend time viewing wildlife such as penguins, sea lions, whales, and orcas.

While most people think of Santiago or the agricultural products of Chile, I feel that our incredible landscapes and natural diversity are the real treasure of my country. You should really think about coming to Chile to see firsthand the beauty and sights that will astound you!





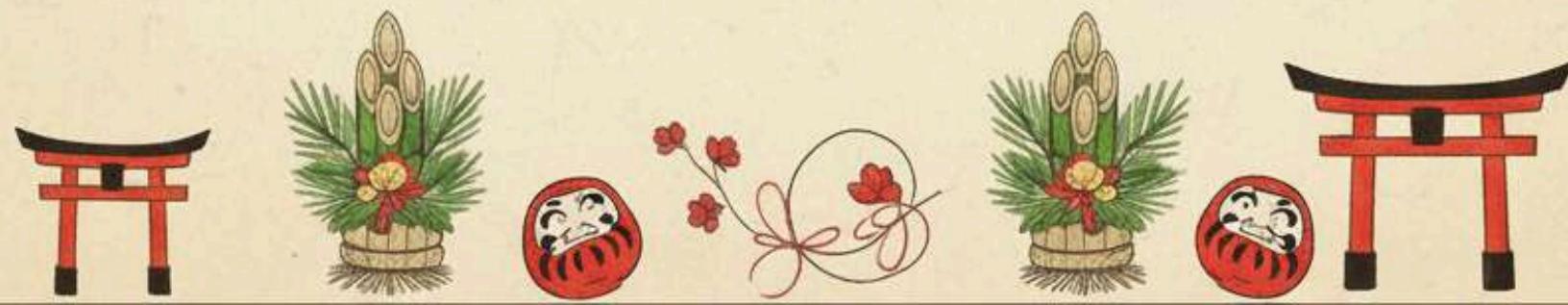
JAPANESE NEW YEAR

By Mikaze

In Japan, people usually spend New Year's with their families. Here are some traditional ways we Japanese celebrate:

- **Toshikoshi Soba:** People eat soba noodles on New Year's Eve to wish for a long and healthy life. Thin, cuttable soba is believed to cut away misfortune from the previous year. Most Toshikoshi soba has a soy based broth.
- **Joya no Kane:** Temples ring bells 108 times at midnight to welcome the new year. The number “108” represents human desires and worries. Ringing the bell is believed to help people let go of them and start the new year afresh.
- **Otoshidama:** Children receive money from parents and relatives as a New Year's gift. It's meant to wish them good luck and happiness in the new year. The amount usually increases as children get older, depending on each family.
- **Osechi Ryori:** Families eat special New Year's dishes. Each dish has a lucky meaning. For example, Sweet Black Soybeans (*Kuromame*) are eaten to wish for good health and hard work in the new year. Kombu rolls (*Kobumaki*) are eaten for happiness and good fortune because “*kobu*” sounds like the word for “joy” in Japanese. Sweet rolled omelette (*Dateaki*) symbolizes knowledge and learning because it looks like a rolled up scroll.
- **Hatsumode:** People visit shrines and temples to pray for good luck in the New Year. Many people also randomly draw “*Omikuji*” (paper fortune from a box). If the fortune indicates good luck in the future, they will keep it in their wallet or bag for good luck. If bad luck is predicted, they will tie the fortune to a special trellis to wish for better luck.

The Japanese New Year is not only a holiday, but also a time to show respect, gratitude, and hope. Even today, many people continue these traditions and they are an important part of Japanese culture.





Little Candles Day in Colombia

Every year on the night of December 7th, Colombians commemorate the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary by lighting millions of candles and colorful lanterns, which is also the sign of the beginning of the Christmas festivities.

During the holidays, the celebration can differ by region. The most common practices are for friends and family to gather to share traditional food, pray, or listen to Christmas music. Many people also light candles to make wishes for the future or to express gratitude for blessings received. These also represent hope, peace, and family union. Some cities such as Villa de Leyva, Quimbaya, and Medellín organize lantern competitions, parades, and musical events - turning the night into a true festival of light!

The *Day of the Little Candles* remains a much anticipated holiday for both adults and children. Its charm lies in the values it promotes, such as family and the hope for a brighter future. Thus, every December, the streets and balconies of Colombian homes are filled with tiny lights that together illuminate the entire country.

By Anyela



How Retail Stores Manage Each Store

I would like to explain how retail stores manage each store.

When I worked as a salesperson at a snack company, I had many business meetings with buyers, and I also visited and analyzed many retail stores. Usually, we just go shopping, but actually, there are many interesting strategies behind how stores operate.

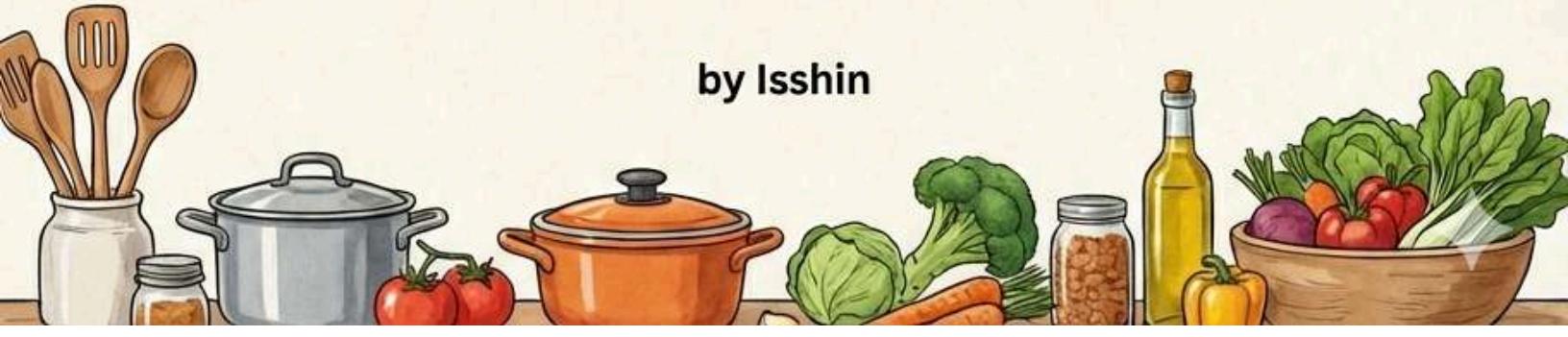
First of all, I would like to explain something that I am dissatisfied with. Customers can sometimes buy products at special prices. It looks like retail stores are making an effort to attract customers by offering discounts. However, the truth is a little different. Retail stores usually do not reduce their own profit margins. Instead, manufacturers compensate for the price reduction.

So, I am not convinced that retail stores actually work as hard as they appear to on the surface. I want you to know that manufacturers really do try hard.

Secondly, manufacturers' salespeople often have to help with display work when stores are renovated, sometimes without being paid for it. In my opinion, this work should be done by the store's employees. Of course, I understand the labor shortage situation, but at least, I want stores to change the mindset that "not participating is bad." Salespeople are already very busy, and they help the stores a lot.

I also want you to know that selling products is not the only job of a salesperson. So far, I have mainly written about complaints, but now I would like to talk about the good strategies of retail stores. You may not notice it, but the layout and product displays are very carefully planned.

by Isshin





How Retail Stores Manage Each Store

In Japanese retail stores, products are carefully arranged by type, price, and category. For example, snacks for children are usually placed on the lower shelves so they are at children's eye level.

In addition, there are other strategies, such as end-cap displays, cross-merchandising, seasonal layouts, and impulse zones. Let me introduce two of them in detail.

When products are placed on end-cap displays, they are positioned along the natural flow of customer traffic. This increases the chance that customers will notice and buy the products. In some cases, sales can be 20 to 30 times higher than on regular shelves. That is why it is very important for salespeople to negotiate with buyers to secure end-cap placement.

Cross-merchandising, which encourages customers to buy related items together, is also very effective. Let's take chewing gum as an example. Normally, gum is sold only in the candy section, but we can create more sales opportunities by placing it in other sections. Many people chew gum to stay awake, so it could also be sold in the automotive section or the stationery section. If we want to promote mouth washes, gum can be placed in the oral care area, or even near foods such as garlic dishes.

In this way, it is interesting and enjoyable to work together with buyers and manufacturers while thinking about customers and sales. I hope you enjoy shopping while thinking about why stores are set up the way they are.

by Isshin



How I Learned to Run a Restaurant

Running a restaurant is something I never really understood before. I used to think it was just about cooking good food and greeting customers nicely. But when I started running Chaikhona Lazzat Grill, a small Central Asian restaurant in Beverly Hills that serves Uzbek cuisine, I realized there are so many unexpected things behind the scenes. Sometimes I feel like everyday I'm learning something new, and these things are probably not something most people would imagine.

At the beginning, I didn't even know where to buy the right ingredients. Uzbek food needs special spices, lamb meat, and vegetables that regular supermarkets don't always have. I had to drive around to many different stores, from Persian shops to Russian markets, and sometimes order from suppliers who are not always reliable or on time. If even one ingredient was missing,

the whole dish might not taste the same, which makes the pressure kind of high. I used to think chefs only cook, but now I realize they also organize everything like half-managers, and sometimes they are even busier than the owner.

Another challenge was dealing with staff shortages. Some workers left suddenly or didn't show up for their shifts, and once we had only one cook and one waiter for the whole evening. I had to run between the kitchen and the front door, trying to keep customers patient. It made me understand how important team work is. Even a small miscommunication could slow everything down, and sometimes create

By Weikun





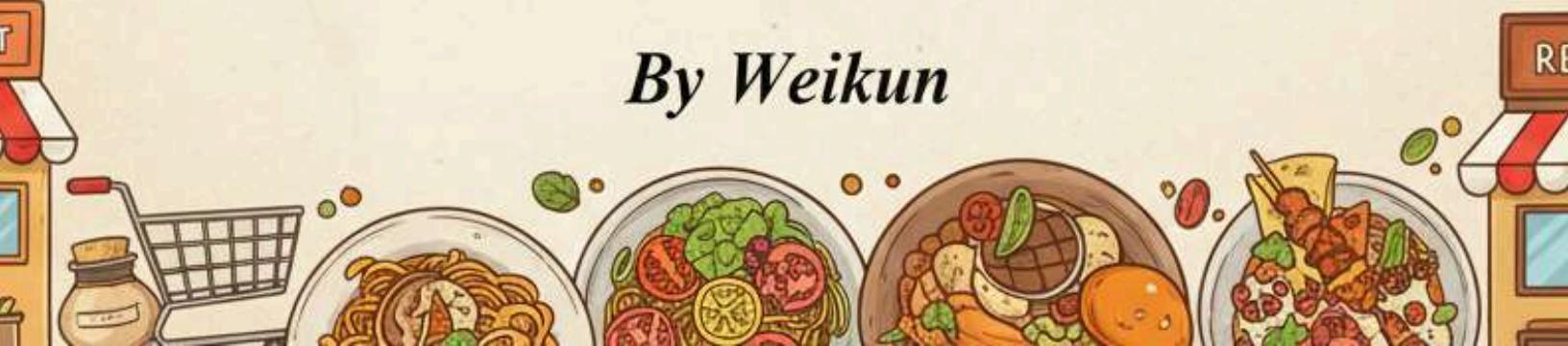
How I Learned to Run a Restaurant

problems that are totally unnecessary.

The restaurant itself also gave us unexpected issues. One day the pipes got clogged and the kitchen sink overflowed everywhere, and we spent three hundred dollars to clean the pipes and the grease trap. Another time, the internet stopped working, so we couldn't run the POS system, and the technician didn't come on time, which made customers wait longer. The gas, water, and electricity bills also created trouble, because sometimes the companies would charge the wrong amount or double bill us for no clear reason.

There were also other small things I never thought about before, like changing light bulbs in the dining room, dealing with the trash company, or figuring out why one of the fridges was making a weird noise for no reason. These things sounds small, but if you don't fix them quick, it can effect the entire day of business.

Through all these experiences, I started to understand that running a restaurant is not just about making plov or kebabs. It's about solving problems, communicating, and staying patient even when everything feels stressful. Now, when I walk into a restaurant, I don't only see the tables and food, I also notice the small details that keep the whole place alive. Even though I'm still learning, I feel more confident than before—even if there are still many things I haven't figured out yet.



By Weikun

The Day Martin Fourcade Became the Most Decorated Winter Olympian



On February 20, 2018, French biathlete Martin Fourcade became the most decorated athlete at the Winter Olympic Games during the Pyeongchang Olympic Games in South Korea. During the event, he won three gold medals, becoming only the second French athlete to reach this mark, 50 years after alpine ski racer Jean-Claude Killy (and surpassing Killy's overall medal count to become France's most decorated Olympian by winning a total of six Olympic gold medals across the 2014 Sochi and 2018 Pyeongchang Winter Games).

A biathlete is a competitor in biathlon, a Nordic skiing event that combines cross-country skiing and rifle shooting. As France's flag bearer, Fourcade carried high expectations. He went on to win the pursuit, the mass start, and mixed relay with Marie Dorin-Habert, Anaïs Bescond and Simon Desthieux. At the end of the relays, he overtook Germany to secure the win and the gold medal. On November 29, the 2025/2026 season kicked off in Sweden. Over nine stages this season, the athletes will battle it out on snow tracks across Europe. In the middle of the season comes the 2026 Winter Olympics in Rasun-Anterselva, Italy, where current world champion Sturla Holm Lægreid will arrive as the favorite.

by *Charles*

The year-end syndrome: How can December transform Hollywood?



At the end of the year, each December, Hollywood becomes busier than ever, with agencies and studios rushing to close their contracts, and celebrities looking for their moment to be seen before next year's Oscars, which will take place on March 15th.

Actors, actresses, singers and all the stars take advantage of this period to boost their fame. They are trying to be on every magazine cover and get invited to every podcast or interview. Some people create drama on purpose. December becomes a strategic showcase for the public — and they all want one thing: attention.

This behavior concerns everybody, not only celebrities. It is called “December syndrome.” When the end of the year approaches, we all feel this need to accomplish something huge, something special, to conclude the year in the best way we can. It’s not just about attention, it’s human.

By Imane

Christmas and New Year's Around the World



The New Year is celebrated all around the world, but people live this moment in very different ways. In big cities like New York, Paris, or Tokyo, thousands of people gather to watch fireworks and celebrate in the streets. In other places, families stay at home and share a special meal together. In many cultures, people eat traditional food for good luck, such as grapes, noodles, or sweet desserts. Whether the celebrations are noisy or quiet, New Year's is always a symbol of hope, change, and new beginnings everywhere.

Christmas is celebrated differently depending on the country and culture. In Europe and North America, it is often a winter holiday with cold weather, decorations, and big family dinners with turkey, vegetables, and desserts. In countries like Australia or Brazil, Christmas happens in the summer, and people may celebrate outside with barbecues and fresh food. In some parts of the world, Christmas is more religious, while in others it is mostly about family and gifts. Across the world, Christmas is a moment of sharing, joy, and being together.

Christmas: The Real Thing



Hi, today we are going to talk about Christmas, the biggest family day of the year, which takes place on December 25th (along with Christmas Eve on the 24th).

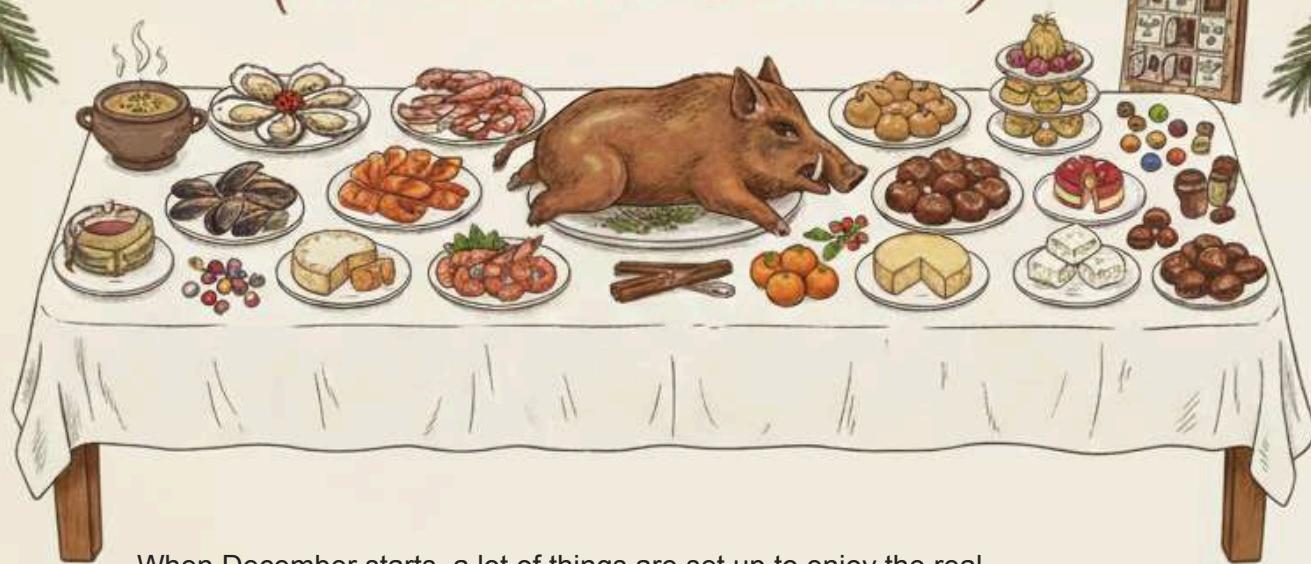
First, Christmas takes place on December 25th, and I'm going to talk about what happens on this day. Before this day, people put decorations on the street but also in their homes, with things like Christmas trees. Children also write letters to Santa Claus.

Santa Claus leaves gifts under the Christmas tree during the night of the 24th to the 25th. On the morning of the 25th, we open the gifts and then eat and spend time with our family. It's a good day because it's one of those that can bring the whole family together.

And the second point is the time we celebrate this day. At first that was because on this day was the birth of Jesus Christ in the Bible (that's why it's CHRISTmas). And that's why before the day, people often prepare a little nativity scene outside their house to show that they are waiting for Jesus, and when the day arrives they put a little statue of Jesus in the crib. And after that they tell the story of Santa Claus, who is a big man in red with a white beard who goes down each chimney to put gifts at the foot of the tree. (Santa Claus wore green at the beginning but he turned to red because of Coca-Cola. True story.)

by Noah

How to Get in the Christmas Vibe (in the French Tradition)

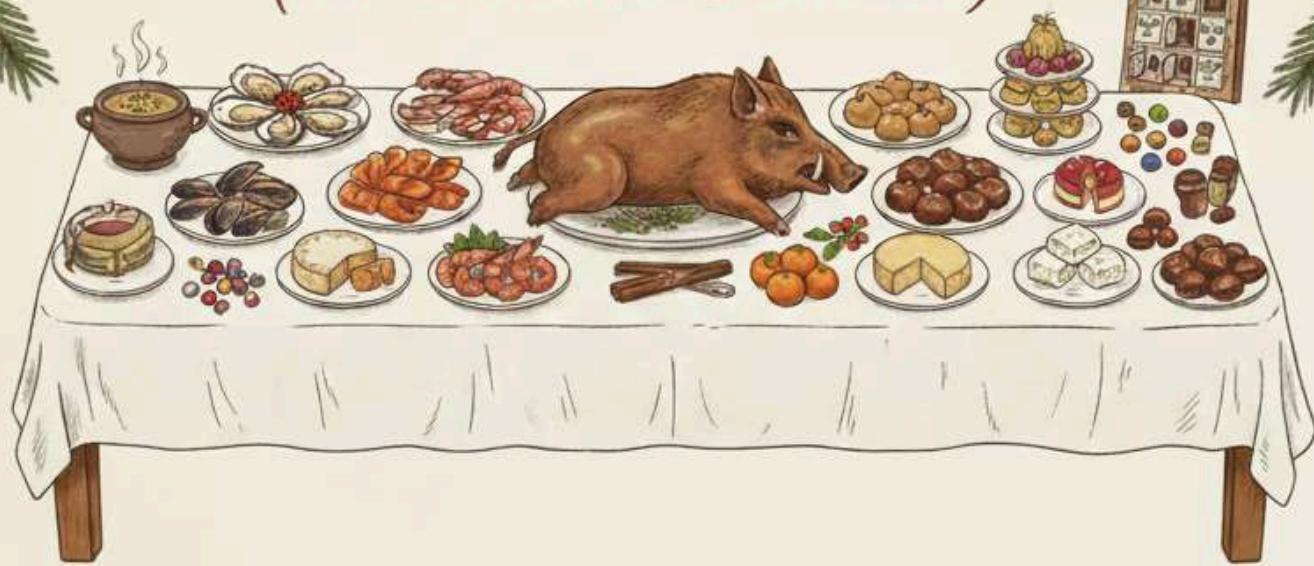


When December starts, a lot of things are set up to enjoy the real winter vibe. When December begins, we are all waiting for Christmas and the moment of the gift. We have the Advent calendar from which you can choose a lot of things such as some chocolate or maybe some skin care products. Most often we eat a chocolate advent calendar. The streets are starting to be lit up and decorated, and you can listen to some Christmas songs and smell a lot of cinnamon. The vibe of Christmas starts and with the cold is a very beautiful moment to share with your family. And when you're in your house, you do the same things. You put on some Christmas songs, prepare your hot chocolate and watch some Christmas movies in big pajamas with a big blanket. You decorate your whole house.

After, when you celebrate Christmas and the new year, you can choose your type of celebration. I'm going to explain how we celebrate Christmas and the new year in France. So we start at midnight and we eat a lot of seafood like oysters, shrimp, smoked salmon, etc. We eat some French cheese and for dessert we have a small buffet with a lots of sweet things like clementines, candy, nougat, candied chestnut, and chocolate. On Christmas Day, we eat a big lunch with shrimp for the appetizer, and after that we eat a wild boar. The dessert is the same as on Christmas Eve, and at night we eat soup, something light for our health. Now Christmas is finished, and you can plan your New Year's with your friends. You get dressed up, join your friends at a party, and party all night. (Sorry, but in France New Year's is a simple party. We just have the countdown at midnight.)

by Dario

How to Get in the Christmas Vibe (in the French Tradition)



by Dario