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# CHRISTMAS TRADITION

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# Christmas in Croatia

## Christmas Eve in Croatia

Christmas Eve is called Badnjak in Croatia.

Straw may be placed underneath the Christmas Tree.

Fish, as a substitute for meat, is served, though a meat dish is usually served as the entree on Christmas Day.

A yule log may be burnt and church may be attended.

On Christmas Eve, the Christmas wheat, which has been sprouting since St. Lucy's Day on the 13th of December, is tied with ribbon in the colors of the Croatian flag - red, white, and blue, called Trobojnica. Sometimes a candle in combination with other symbolic items is placed within the wheat.



## Santa Claus and Gift-Giving in Croatia

Some Croatians open gifts on Christmas Day, but Croatia also recognizes St. Nicholas Day. Gifts are sometimes given on St. Lucy's Day, as well.

The Croatian Santa Claus is sometimes described as Djed Mraz or Djed Božićnjak (Grandfather Christmas), or Baby Jesus.



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## WHEAT AND GIFS ON ST LUCIA'S DAY

Rather than Christmas day itself, the 13th of December was a day when children traditionally received gifts delivered by St Lucia (though today many children get presents on St Lucia's Day, St Nicholas's Day and 25 December!). Wheat is also sown on this day as a symbol of life. Chvala explains the roots of this tradition: "It dates back to times when agriculture was the main economic activity," he says. According to Chvala, the belief is that the taller the wheat grows, the more prosperous the year to come will be. "In some parts of Croatia, people observe the wheat each day until Christmas. It is believed that the weather of each month in the upcoming year will mirror the weather on each of the days in the period from St Lucia to Christmas," he explains.



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## Croatian Christmas Decorations

Besides sprouting wheat, Croatians decorate with wreaths and trees. Licitar hearts - or hand-decorated cookies - often decorate Christmas trees in Croatia. Christmas creches are also used for decoration in Croatia.

Various greenery, including evergreen boughs, is a typical Christmas decoration.

Though families in Croatia have always decorated their homes with greenery, Christmas trees are a relatively recent holiday tradition.

They are ornamented with fruit, nuts and sweets as well as glass figures, colored thread, paper chains, lanterns and candles.

Licitar hearts baked from dough also make up an important part of

many Croatian Christmas trees. Colorful designs, small mirrors, and short sayings are added to the red dough after it is made into a heart shape.



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## Saint Nicholas Day

He is the protector of sailors and fishermen's .In some small places like,Komiža on Island Vis; the Saint Nicholas day celebration has a very special meaning, people every year burn one very old ship near St. Nicholas church, on the top of hill above Komiža. In whole Croatia main tradition is celebrated with gifts given (placed in a red boot) to children on the morning of the 6th of December.



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## Advent wreath

Today we can see advent wreath in all church, very often we can find them on honorary place in every home, in different institutions, kindergartens', hotel receptions. It has become a very popular tradition in Croatia over couple of years.



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## Christmas Eve

At morning people starts to go to church to confess. Whole day is in spirit of Christmas. That day people can't eat meat so tradition is to prepare fish like codfish. People here have tradition to prepare cod on two ways "on bianco" and "brudet". For desert we eat "fritule", at midnights start holly mass and many people go to churches for Christmas celebration.



Fritule

## Christmas day

Christmas Day is spent with family or at church.

The morning starts with opening presents which lies under the Christmas tree, later people goes to church on ceremonial mass and to hear nice Christmas concerts.

Traditional food that day is stuffed quiver or duck with potatoes, both with cancarele (home made preparing of noodle), for desert is a cake like Christmas tree.



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**Silvestre day and New Year day:** There is no special tradition for that day, People prepare different dishes like, roast pork, wild boar or rabbit, sarame (it is meat in field of cabbage with smoky ham), paštica with njoki (gnocchi with beef meat in sweet- acidic sauce with plum).

**Here is one of the recipes:**

### Cod on bianco

Ingredients:

- 1 medium size dried cod
  - 1 kg of potatoes  
(peeled and thickly sliced)
  - 4 cloves of garlic, chopped
  - 1 tablespoon of chopped fresh parsley
  - 1 cup of virgin olive oil
- Add salt and freshly grounded pepper.



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Soak the cod in water for 72 hours, changing the water every 12 hours.

Peel the skin off and flake the fish.

Remove the bones and the brown gut section.

Cook the cod in a large pot for 2-3 hours over a medium heat.

Cook potatoes separately.

Drain both well.



Place both into a large bowl and add parsley, salt, pepper, oil and garlic and mix until the dish is almost a paste containing lumps of potato.



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## ***Holy three kings***

The holiday celebrates the biblical story in which the Three Kings, or Three Wise Men, visit baby Jesus after his birth.

Three Kings' Day is celebrated on the Twelfth Day of Christmas being January 6, and throughout history it has been a day where water is blessed, and homes sprinkled with blessed water to 'ward off evil'.

Three Kings' Day is one of the oldest Catholic holidays and many Croatians will also take part in traditions on the day. Old traditions include the visit of homes by three boys dressed as Kings known as 'Starmen' (Zvezdari). Carrying a bright star in their hands, the 'Starmen' sing church hymns to bring spiritual good to the home they visit.

Another tradition is the taking of a quick swim in a nearby river or sea. Pope Francis will lead a Mass in the Vatican Basilica on Monday.



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