

FEASTS and TRADITIONS

1- CHRISTMAS IN VENETO (North-Eastern Italy)



In Veneto Child Jesus or Santa Claus don't bring any gifts but St. Nicholas brings a lot of presents during the night between December 5th and December 6th.

Children put some hay outside the front door of their houses, so that St. Nicholas's little donkey can eat it while the saint gives presents to the children.

On December 5th, in the evening, people walk on a holy procession around their town or village and some people carry St. Nicholas's statue.

The statue wears a red cloak and a red religious crown on its head



CHRISTMAS LUNCH

- RAVIOLI SOUP
- STEWED TURKEY AND CHICKEN WITH "CREN"(a spicy sauce), WITH GREEN VEGETABLE SAUCE AND A TYPE OF SYRUPED FRUIT
- STUFFED DUCK COOKED IN THE OVEN
- ARTICHOKE
- POMEGRANATE SALAD
- CHEESE CAKE WITH BUTTERMILK, WALNUTS AND ALMONDS
- NOUGAT
- SWEET BUNS

2- CHRISTMAS IN CAMPANIA (today and in the past in Naples)

- Children put a Christmas card under their father's dish and their father gives them a tip.
- A lot of children build up a big crib with Child Jesus between an ox and a donkey. Near the hut there are lots of shepherds.



- On Christmas Day in Naples people eat fried fish, stockfish, “strufoli” (sweets covered with honey), “mostaccioli” (other typical sweets) and olive salad.



Strufoli



Mostaccioli

- In the past, about 60 or 70 years ago, children used to go to bed early on Christmas Eve evening and they put chairs and pairs of shoes (as many as the family members were) near the crib. On Christmas Day, in the morning, children got dressed and had breakfast with milk, bread and jam. After that they queued up in a single line in front of the closed door and waited until their grandfather, at the top of the line, went inside the room where the crib was and lit a lot of candles near the crib.

4- CHRISTMAS IN PUGLIA (South-Eastern Italy)

- On Christmas Day a lot of people eat sugared cakes shaped like little rings made with eggs and little coloured sugared almonds.



5- CHRISTMAS IN LOMBARDY **(our region in the North of Italy)**

BERGAMO



Children keep waiting for St. Lucy during the night between December 12th and December 13th. On St. Lucy's Eve, children and their parents go to see two long and big stalls where there are lots of candies and candy-floss, sweets, nuts and smoked chestnuts. Peddlers invite people to buy their inviting products under the big bright marquees of their stalls. They usually speak in Bergamo's dialect.

In that period children keep dreaming of the gifts that St. Lucy is going to bring them. St. Lucy goes to the children's houses on a little donkey's back and she gives presents only to good children. Children put some hay under the fireplace so that the donkey can eat; then children go to bed early.



Somebody says that St. Lucy brings ash to disobedient children. Some children put carrots on the windowsills in order to make the donkey's mouth water on December 12th evening.

In the past, people used to put a wooden bowl with some bran inside for the little donkey and a glass of water for St. Lucy out of the window. Children put a candle to light up the window and to show that in that house children lived. Their parents opened the window in the morning and there were only poor things such as cakes, persimmons, chestnuts and stewed chestnuts, walnuts, hazel nuts, tangerines, dry and crisp figs (home-made with hazel nuts, water and sugar). Then there were little sandals, shoes or sweaters and woollen socks.

The typical baby girl's gift usually was a wooden or a rag doll made by her grandmother. The typical baby boy's present was a wooden toy: a little horse or a model toy train or a gun or a wheel barrow...

Before December 13th there is a tradition to gather up in a basket a lot of letters written by little children to St. Lucy. The basket is located at St. Lucy's feet in the "Madonna dello Spasimo" Church in Bergamo.

Nowadays in the envelope together with their letters a lot of children put some money, too.



Somebody finishes the letter with these words: "...I would like that all children are happy...".

MANTOVA

Grandmothers usually cook a lot of “pumpkin ravioli ” and children welcome warmly St. Lucy during the night between December 12th and December 13th like their “friends” from Bergamo do.



Pumpkin ravioli

PIGRA (a small town near Como, a city not far from Milan)

In the past, in Pigra people didn't make the crib. The Christmas tree was a fir-tree branch decorated with tangerines, sweets, biscuits and cotton flocks. There were Christmas cakes and sweets such as the typical “panettone” and “torrone”(nougat) . There wasn't a lot of gifts: only some clothes and little toys.



Panettone



Torrone (nougat)

6- CHRISTMAS IN CALABRIA (Southern Italy)

On Christmas Day Calabrian people eat a lot of typical sweets such as:

- TURIDDI: sweets made with flour, eggs, wine and honey
- PIGNULATA : a cake made with flour, eggs and honey; it is put on a dish shaped as a pine cone.



- CUDDURIEDDU: a ring-shaped cake made with boiled potatoes, flour, salt and yeast.

7- CHRISTMAS IN UMBRIA (Central Italy)

- PANPEPATO: a typical cake of the green Umbria made with walnuts, pine kernels, almonds, peanuts, cocoa, sugar, chocolate, candies, raisins, coffee, peel of tangerines and lemons, Vermouth (a sweet wine), honey and flour.

