

## **CHRISTMAS AROUND THE WORLD**

Every country has its own customs for celebrating Christmas. The following are some of the customs used in Czechoslovakia and Mexico.

### **CZECHOSLOVAKIA**

In Czechoslovakia, Christmas is celebrated on two occasions. December 6<sup>th</sup> is called the Day of Saint Nicholas, or Den Svateho Mikulase. Children's stockings are filled with gifts from Saint Nicholas on this day. Then, on December 24<sup>th</sup>, Christmas Eve, a great evening meal is presented after the family has fasted all day long. After dinner, presents are given out and often fortunes are told. One popular activity for young girls is floating nutshells in water. Candles are placed in the nutshells and the girls whose candle burns the longest is thought to receive the best husband and the longest life. Then the girl goes into the backyard and shakes the bushes. This arouses the neighborhood dogs, which begin barking loudly. The girl listens for the first dog's bark and it's from this direction that her husband will come.

### **MEXICO**

In Mexico, the children love to hit the Piñata on Christmas. But the religious nature of the Mexican people is shown in the custom of Posada Plays. The word "posada" means inn. For nine nights beginning on December 16<sup>th</sup>, groups of people travel from house to house carrying a replica of the holy family. They beg for entrance, just as Joseph and Mary did in Bethlehem. Finally, they are admitted to the house chosen for that evening. They sing songs and offer prayers before a makeshift altar. Then, all of a sudden, a happy Piñata song is heard. This is the signal to let in the rest of the guests and soon a lively party is underway. A Piñata is broken and the children scurry for its contents. The last posada play is held on Christmas Eve. On Christmas Eve luminaries or lanterns are placed along the road to light the way for the Child.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

### Questions about Christmas Around the World

1. How does a Czechoslovakian girl know from what directions her husband will come?
2. What does the word “fast” mean as it is used to describe the Czech Christmas Customs?
3. What is December 6<sup>th</sup> called in Czechoslovakia?
4. What does the word “posada” mean in Spanish?
5. What does the group of Mexican people carry from house to house during the posada plays?
6. What do children love to break open during Christmas celebrations in Mexico?
7. How many nights do the posada plays continue?
8. When is the last posada play performed?
9. What do they do in Mexico so that people can see along the road on Christmas Eve?
10. What do the Piñata’s contain?

## **Holiday Recipes**

### **Gingerbread**

**The easiest thing to do is purchase a Betty Crocker or other brand Gingerbread cake and cookie mix and make it according to the directions on the back of the box.**

### **Hot Lemon Sauce (one recipe for each Gingerbread Cake)**

**1/2 cup sugar**

**1 tablespoon cornstarch**

**1/4 teaspoon salt**

**1/4 cup cold water**

**3/4 cup boiling water**

**3 tablespoons lemon juice**

**1 teaspoon grated lemon rind**

**1/2 teaspoon vanilla extract**

**2 tablespoons butter**

**Combine sugar, cornstarch, and salt. Gradually stir in cold water. Gradually stir in boiling water and cook for 3 minutes, or until smooth, clear and thickened slightly. Stir in remaining ingredients. Makes 1 1/2 cups.**

### **Wassail (Serve hot or cold)**

**Any spiced fruit punch will do.**