



# THE ART OF TRADITION

# DIA DE LOS MUERTOS



Halloween, one of the world’s oldest holidays, is still celebrated today in a number of countries around the globe. In Mexico and other Latin American countries, Día de los Muertos—the Day of the Dead—honors deceased loved ones and ancestors. In countries such as Ireland, Canada and the United States, adults and children alike revel in the popular Halloween holiday, which derived from ancient festivals and religious rituals. Traditions include costume parties, trick-or-treating, pranks and games.

In Mexico, Latin America and Spain, All Souls’ Day, which takes place on November 2, is commemorated with a three-day celebration that begins on the evening of October 31. The celebration is designed to honor the dead who, it is believed, return to their earthly homes on Halloween. Many families construct an altar to the dead in their homes to honor deceased relatives and decorate it with candy, flowers, photographs, samples of the deceased’s favorite foods and drinks, and fresh water. Often, a wash basin and towel are left out so that the spirit can wash before indulging in the feast.

**‘THE CELEBRATION IS DESIGNED TO HONOR THE DEAD WHO, IT IS BELIEVED, RETURN TO THEIR EARTHLY HOMES ON HALLOWEEN.’**

Candles and incense are burned to help the deceased find the way home. Relatives also tidy the gravesites of their departed family members. This can include snipping weeds, making repairs, and painting. The grave is then

decorated with flowers, wreaths, or paper streamers. On November 2, relatives gather at the gravesite to picnic and reminisce. Some gatherings even include tequila and a mariachi band.

## Guy Fawkes Day

On the evening of November 5, bonfires are lit throughout England. Effigies are burned and fireworks are set off. Although it falls around the same time and has some similar traditions, this celebration has little to do with Halloween or the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain. The English, for the most part, stopped celebrating Halloween as Martin Luther’s Protestant Reformation began to spread. As followers of the new religion did not believe in saints, they had no reason to celebrate the eve of All Saints’ Day. Guy Fawkes Day festivities were designed to commemorate the execution of a notorious English traitor, Guy Fawkes.

On November 5, 1606, Fawkes was executed after being convicted of attempting to blow up England’s parliament building. Fawkes was a member of a Catholic group who wanted to remove the Protestant King James from power. The original Guy Fawkes Day was celebrated right after his execution. The first bonfires, which were called “bone fires,” were set up to burn effigies and symbolic “bones” of the Catholic pope. It was not until two centuries later that effigies of the pope were replaced with those of Guy Fawkes. In addition to making effigies to be burned in the fires, children in some parts of England also walk the streets carrying an effigy or “guy” and ask for “a penny for the guy,” although they keep the money for themselves. This is as close to the American practice of “trick-or-treating” as can be found in England today. Guy Fawkes Day was even celebrated by the pilgrims at the first settlement at Plymouth. However, as the young nation began to develop its own history, Guy Fawkes was celebrated less frequently and eventually died out.

## HALLOWEEN: WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

In Ireland, where Halloween originated, the day is still celebrated much as it is in the United States. In rural areas, bonfires are lit as they were in the days of the Celts, and all over the country, children get dressed up in costumes and spend the evening “trick-or-treating” in their neighborhoods. After trick-or-treating, most people attend parties with neighbors and friends. At the parties, many games are played, including “snap-apple,” a game in which an apple on a string is tied to a doorframe or tree and players attempt to bite the hanging apple. In addition to bobbing for apples, parents often arrange treasure hunts, with candy or pastries as the “treasure.” The Irish also play a card game where cards are laid face down on a table with candy or coins underneath them. When a child chooses a card, he receives whatever prize is found below it.

**‘CHILDREN GET DRESSED UP IN COSTUMES AND SPEND THE EVENING “TRICK-OR-TREATING” IN THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS.’**

A traditional food eaten on Halloween is barnbrack, a kind of fruitcake that can be bought in stores or baked at home. A muslin-wrapped treat is baked inside the cake that, it is said, can foretell the eater’s future. If a ring is found, it means that the person will soon be wed; a piece of straw means that a prosperous year is on its way. Children are also known to play tricks on their neighbors, such as “knock-a-dolly,” a prank in which children knock on the doors of their neighbors, but run away before the door is opened.



# THE LEGEND OF ‘STINGY JACK’

Every October, carved pumpkins peer out from porches and doorsteps in the United States and other parts of the world. Gourd-like orange fruits inscribed with ghoulish faces and illuminated by candles are a sure sign of the Halloween season. The practice of decorating “jack-o’-lanterns”—the name comes from an Irish folktale about a man named Stingy Jack—originated in Ireland, where large turnips and potatoes served as an early canvas. Irish immigrants brought the tradition to America, home of the pumpkin, and it became an integral part of Halloween festivities.

## ‘JACK-O-LANTERNS—THE NAME COMES FROM AN IRISH FOLKTALE ABOUT A MAN NAMED STINGY JACK’

People have been making jack-o’-lanterns at Halloween for centuries. The practice originated from an Irish myth about a man nicknamed “Stingy Jack.” According to the story, Stingy Jack invited the Devil to have a drink with him. True to his name, Stingy Jack didn’t want to pay for his drink, so he convinced the Devil to turn himself into a coin that Jack could use to buy their drinks. Once the Devil did so, Jack decided to keep the money and put it into his pocket next to a silver cross, which prevented the Devil from changing back into his original form. Jack eventually freed the Devil, under the condition that he would not bother Jack for one year and that, should Jack die, he would not claim his soul. The next year, Jack again tricked the Devil into climbing into a tree to pick a piece of fruit. While he was up in the tree, Jack carved a sign of the cross into the tree’s bark so that the Devil could not come down until the Devil promised Jack not to bother him for ten more years.

Soon after, Jack died. As the legend goes, God would not allow such an unsavory figure into heaven. The Devil, upset by the trick Jack had played on him and keeping his word not to claim his soul, would not allow Jack into hell. He sent Jack off into the dark night with only a burning coal to light his way. Jack put the coal into a carved-out turnip and has been roaming the Earth with ever since. The Irish began to refer to this ghostly figure as “Jack of the Lantern,” and then, simply “Jack O’Lantern.”

In Ireland and Scotland, people began to make their own versions of Jack’s lanterns by carving scary faces into turnips or potatoes and placing them into windows or near doors to frighten away Stingy Jack and other wandering evil spirits. In England, large beets are used. Immigrants from these countries brought the jack o’lantern tradition with them when they came to the United States. They soon found that pumpkins, a fruit native to America, make perfect jack-o’-lanterns.

In the United States, pumpkins go hand in hand with the fall holidays of Halloween and Thanksgiving. An orange fruit harvested in October, this nutritious and versatile plant features flowers, seeds and flesh that are edible and rich in vitamins. Pumpkin is used to make soups, desserts and breads, and many Americans include pumpkin pie in their Thanksgiving meals. Carving pumpkins into jack-o’-lanterns is a popular Halloween tradition that originated hundreds of years ago in Ireland. Back then, however, jack-o’-lanterns were made out of turnips or potatoes; it wasn’t until Irish immigrants arrived in America and discovered the pumpkin that a new Halloween ritual was born.

### PUMPKIN FACTS

Pumpkins are a member of the gourd family, which includes cucumbers, honeydew melons, cantaloupe, watermelons and zucchini. These

plants are native to Central America and Mexico, but now grow on six continents.

Pumpkins are low in calories, fat, and sodium and high in fiber. They are good sources of Vitamin A, Vitamin B, potassium, protein, and iron.

The largest pumpkin pie ever baked was in 2005 and weighed 2,020 pounds.

Pumpkins have been grown in North America for five thousand years. They are indigenous to the western hemisphere.

In 1584, after French explorer Jacques Cartier explored the St. Lawrence region of North America, he reported finding “gros melons.” The name was translated into English as “pompions,” which has since evolved into the modern “pumpkin.”

## ‘PUMPKINS ARE LOW IN CALORIES, FAT, AND SODIUM AND HIGH IN FIBER. THEY ARE GOOD SOURCES OF VITAMIN A, VITAMIN B, POTASSIUM, PROTEIN, AND IRON.’

The heaviest pumpkin weighed 1,810 lb 8 oz and was presented by Chris Stevens at the Stillwater Harvest Fest in Stillwater, Minnesota, in October 2010.

Pumpkin seeds should be planted between the last week of May and the middle of June. They take between 90 and 120 days to grow and are picked in October when they are bright orange in color. Their seeds can be saved to grow new pumpkins the next year.

# THE FANTASY AND FOLKLORE

Halloween had its beginnings in an ancient, pre-Christian Celtic festival of the dead. The Celtic peoples, who were once found all over Europe, divided the year by four major holidays. According to their calendar, the year began on a day corresponding to November 1st on our present calendar. The date marked the beginning of winter. Since they were pastoral people, it was a time when cattle and sheep had to be moved to closer pastures and all livestock had to be secured for the winter months. Crops were harvested and stored. The date marked both an ending and a beginning in an eternal cycle.

The festival observed at this time was called Samhain (pronounced Sah-ween). It was the biggest and most significant holiday of the Celtic year. The Celts believed that at the time of Samhain, more so than any other time of the year, the ghosts of the dead were able to mingle with the living, because at Samhain the souls of those who had died during the year traveled into the otherworld. People gathered to sacrifice animals, fruits, and vegetables. They also lit bonfires in honor of the dead, to aid them on their journey, and to keep them away from the living. On that day all manner of beings were abroad: ghosts, fairies, and demons--all part of the dark and dread.

Samhain became the Halloween we are familiar with when Christian missionaries attempted to change the religious practices of the Celtic people. In the early centuries of the first millennium A.D., before missionaries such as St. Patrick and St. Columcille converted them to Christianity, the Celts practiced an elaborate religion through their priestly caste, the Druids, who were priests, poets, scientists and scholars all at once. As religious leaders, ritual specialists, and bearers of learning, the Druids were not unlike the very missionaries and monks who were to Christianize their people and brand them evil devil worshippers.

As a result of their efforts to wipe out “pagan” holidays, such as Samhain, the Christians succeeded in effecting

major transformations in it. In 601 A.D. Pope Gregory the First issued a now famous edict to his missionaries concerning the native beliefs and customs of the peoples he hoped to convert. Rather than try to obliterate native peoples’ customs and beliefs, the pope instructed his missionaries to use them: if a group of people worshipped a tree, rather than cut it down, he advised them to consecrate it to Christ and allow its continued worship.

In terms of spreading Christianity, this was a brilliant concept and it became a basic approach used in Catholic missionary work. Church holy days were purposely set to coincide with native holy days. Christmas, for instance, was assigned the arbitrary date of December 25th because it corresponded with the mid-winter celebration of many peoples. Likewise, St. John’s Day was set on the summer solstice.

## ‘CHURCH HOLY DAYS WERE PURPOSELY SET TO COINCIDE WITH NATIVE HOLY DAYS.’

Samhain, with its emphasis on the supernatural, was decidedly pagan. While missionaries identified their holy days with those observed by the Celts, they branded the earlier religion’s supernatural deities as evil, and associated them with the devil. As representatives of the rival religion, Druids were considered evil worshippers of devilish or demonic gods and spirits. The Celtic underworld inevitably became identified with the Christian Hell.

The effects of this policy were to diminish but not totally eradicate the beliefs in the traditional gods. Celtic

belief in supernatural creatures persisted, while the church made deliberate attempts to define them as being not merely dangerous, but malicious. Followers of the old religion went into hiding and were branded as witches.

The Christian feast of All Saints was assigned to November 1st. The day honored every Christian saint, especially those that did not otherwise have a special day devoted to them. This feast day was meant to substitute for Samhain, to draw the devotion of the Celtic peoples, and, finally, to replace it forever. That did not happen, but the traditional Celtic deities diminished in status, becoming fairies or leprechauns of more recent traditions.

Recognizing that something that would subsume the original energy of Samhain was necessary, the church tried again to supplant it with a Christian feast day in the 9th century. This time it established November 2nd as All Souls Day--a day when the living prayed for the souls of all the dead. But, once again, the practice of retaining traditional customs while attempting to redefine them had a sustaining effect: the traditional beliefs and customs lived on, in new guises.

All Saints Day, otherwise known as All Hallows (hallowed means sanctified or holy), continued the ancient Celtic traditions. The evening prior to the day was the time of the most intense activity, both human and supernatural. People continued to celebrate All Hallows Eve as a time of the wandering dead, but the supernatural beings were now thought to be evil. The folk continued to propitiate those spirits (and their masked impersonators) by setting out gifts of food and drink. Subsequently, All Hallows Eve became Hallow Evening, which became Hallowe’en--an ancient Celtic, pre-Christian New Year’s Day in contemporary dress.

**JACK SANTINO**







# OUR CHANGING TRADITIONS: HALLOWEEN SALES OVERTAKE VALENTINE'S DAY



Halloween, with its hordes of American-style 'trick or treat' revellers, has now overtaken Valentine's Day in terms of High Street sales.

Sales of sweets, themed foods, such as pumpkins and devilish costumes have provided a bonanza for supermarkets and others.

In terms of commercial value, the ghouls and ghosts are proving a much richer vein than the romance of Valentine's Day or Bonfire Night.

Research by Tesco shows it has also eclipsed Mother's Day.

Carolyn Bradley, Tesco's UK marketing director, said: 'Halloween has become one of the main seasonal events during the last ten years, with sales almost trebling since 2005.

'It has overtaken Valentine's Day so that today only Christmas and Easter are bigger.

'It's even on a par with our combined sales of Mothers' Day and Fathers' Day, so families really are putting horror and haunting festivities ahead of love and romance.'

Tesco is expecting its Halloween sales to be worth around £55million.

The chain expects to sell 1.4 million pumpkins and two million toffee apples, together with bucketloads of Halloween

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themed sweets and chocolates from bat and pumpkin gummies to chocolate skeletons.

The shelves will be loaded with 1.5 million fancy dress costumes for adults as well as children. The outfits range from vampires and witches to gruesome doctors.

Miss Bradley said: 'As with Christmas and Easter, many customers are buying for Halloween weeks ahead of the actual event.

'This year, with Halloween falling on a Sunday, customers will be looking to celebrate at the weekend.'

'People are spending much more on Halloween and fall decorations than they used to,' says Unity President Pam Danzinger. 'The manufacturers are responding by translating what they do with Christmas into the Halloween themes. So you have the animated decorations with sound and

even lights.' This year's big sellers: table-top figurines, cauldron-stirring witches and inflatable lawn pumpkins.

But don't forget all those real pumpkins: According to the NRF survey, more than 40 percent said they were going to carve pumpkins for Halloween this year. In 2006, U.S. farmers harvested nearly 43,000 acres of pumpkins, according to the United States Department of Agriculture; the total weight was 10.2 million cwt (about 1 billion pounds).

Even dogs are getting in on the Halloween action. 'Halloween costumes for pets have been catching on over the last couple of years,' says Krugman. 'You will see very generous offerings in terms of pet costumes, and owners and their pets dressing in some sort of theme.'

The most popular pet costumes are devils, pumpkins, witches, and of course, hot dogs. Petco's Grooming Salons even offer a Halloween treat for your pup with Halloween party collars, glow-in-the-dark nail polish and pumpkin-spice shampoo.

There will be plenty of human howling, too. Almost 30 percent of people surveyed by the NRF said they were going to throw or attend a Halloween party this year. When it comes to partying, Halloween draws the third-highest crowds, behind New Year's Eve and Superbowl Sunday.



# TRADITIONS CHANGE OVER TIME

Can you think of any ethnic traditions in your family? Perhaps you can't think of any right now. If you can't, you're not alone. Traditions do not remain the same. They very often change.

Why would traditions change? How do they change? Who changes them? To answer these questions you can look at your own neighborhood, and talk to your family and friends.

## NEW HOMES

When immigrants came to the United States (and Iowa) they often tried to settle with people from their own country. Some towns in Iowa were settled by ethnic groups like Pella, settled by Dutch immigrants; Elk Horn, settled by Danish people, and Schleswig settled by Germans. Living together helped them to continue their traditions from the old country. In Davenport, a German family could read *Der Demokrat*, a German-language newspaper, and belong to the Turnverein Society, a social club. An Irish couple might attend St. Mary's Catholic Church. In Des Moines Italian children might eat bread purchased from an Italian bakery.

However, as they became more familiar with their new homes, they began to assimilate [take part in or absorb] into the larger community. Immigrants no longer belonged to ethnic organizations. A family might have shopped at a larger

grocer more often than at the nearby bakery. Churches served people from many ethnic groups instead of just one. People ate at restaurants or with friends instead of eating traditional food at home.

## SPRING ROLLS FOR DINNER

Most Iowans are exposed to traditions from other ethnic groups. What ethnic restaurants have you eaten at? What ethnic holidays or celebrations do you take part in? This influence reflects the diverse cultures in Iowa. These traditions can be borrowed, and therefore often become part of our own family traditions. Do you decorate a Christmas tree? This idea comes from Germany. Do you like to eat egg or spring rolls for dinner? This tradition comes from China.

## CHANGING TO FIT IN

Sometimes traditions change because they are difficult to maintain in a new country or as the new society changes. Recipes are adapted because some ingredients are not available. A German grandmother may have made her own saurkraut, but today it takes too much time to make it from scratch. It is much easier to buy it at a grocery store. Ethnic clothing is put away. "American" clothing is worn so people can feel like they "fit in" with the crowd.

People may also lose interest in their ethnic background. A German child in Davenport did not like to eat plum dumplings, a traditional recipe. So she does not make these for her own children. Some people do not feel that their ethnic roots have importance in their lives so they don't continue ethnic traditions.

## 'WHY WOULD TRADITIONS CHANGE?'

Finally, some people wished to begin their new lives in the United States by leaving behind old traditions. What is your last name? Is it the same name that your ancestors brought from their country? Changing names is one way people leave behind tradition. Koch might be changed to Cook. Smith might have been Schmidt. First names are also changed. A father might be named Josef, but the son could be named Joseph.

## DISCOVER OLD TRADITIONS

Take some time to investigate your own changing family traditions. Talk to older family members to learn about traditions that the family no longer celebrates. Why were they stopped? What new traditions took the place of old ones? You may even find some traditions that you wish to start again!



# CHANGING THE FAMILY TRADITIONS

Mary Devitt’s family counted on certain traditions each Christmas. Her mother cooked the entire meal and served it on the good china, carefully arrayed on a tablecloth she’d applied with holly sprigs. The centerpiece was always the same, a Royal Doulton figurine of a little boy with a Christmas tree. Her father sliced the turkey, using the carving set reserved for special occasions.

But eight years ago Ms. Devitt’s parents moved into a retirement home in Ottawa. Her father died three years later. Her mother, Helen Peart, the chief holiday planner, is now 89 and has dementia. So the onus to carry on the family traditions has fallen to their children.

Even when both parents were alive, Christmas had become “bittersweet and kind of melancholy,” Ms. Devitt said. “It was lovely they could come and we could still carry on the traditions, but it was bitter in that they weren’t the focus of the traditions anymore.”

The holidays are a time when family traditions take on greater relevance, said Denise Burnette, a professor of social work at Columbia University who specializes in older adults and their families. But at this time of year, adult children often must wrestle with unsettling questions. Should they hold on to cherished family traditions as long as possible? When and how must these rituals change to accommodate aging family members?

For a while, Ms. Devitt’s family celebrated Thanksgiving and Easter at the retirement home, so that her parents could still serve as hosts, but in a more supportive environment. While the family lost out on the comforts of home, at least they were together.

## ‘THE HOLIDAYS ARE A TIME WHEN FAMILY TRADITIONS TAKE ON GREATER RELEVANCE’

“At the holidays you want to create a feeling, an emotion, an atmosphere,” said Linda George, associate director of the Center for Study of Aging and Human Development at Duke University. “But it doesn’t mean you have to do things exactly the way they’ve been done in the past. It’s the feelings that are important, not the details that elicit those feelings.”

Reclaiming those feelings can be difficult when children are scattered across the country, when an aging parent is living with dementia or simply unable to muster the stamina for a day’s celebration. So Dr. George suggests that families focus on what she describes as the most important goal: showing aging relatives they’re not forgotten.

On Christmas Eve day, Jere Armen, whose own parents died four years ago, plans to travel from Branford, Conn., to visit her mother-in-law and father-in-law, 93 and 94 respectively, at their retirement home in nearby Stamford for a pre-Christmas celebration with food and presents. Other family members will arrive at the retirement home throughout the holidays.

This past Thanksgiving, at a family event in Massachusetts that Ms. Armen’s in-laws were too sick to attend, the entire clan raised a toast to recognize their absence.

“What matters, and it’s the bottom line about the holidays, is that we all feel we belong to our family, that people remember us and there’s a connection,” said Barbara Moscovitz, chief geriatric social worker at Massachusetts General Hospital.

## “‘AT THE HOLIDAYS YOU WANT TO CREATE A FEELING, AN EMOTION, AN ATMOSPHERE,”

Often that means adapting to a family’s changing needs and downplaying the importance of specific practices or objects. “Rituals change,” Dr. Burnett said.

# MIXING TRADITIONS FOR A MERRY BICULTURAL CHRISTMAS

Fifteen years ago I married Carlos, a Salvadoran immigrant who spoke little English. Because we were young, pregnant, and poor at the time—instead of moving to our own place—I moved Carlos into my parents’ house where I was still living. From the outside it didn’t seem like the most ideal situation, but living with my English-speaking Anglo parents turned out to be a unique opportunity for Carlos to get a crash course in English and American culture.

Of course, living in such a situation made our diverse backgrounds that much more apparent—especially during holidays, and especially during Christmas.

## OUR FIRST CHRISTMAS

Although wowed by my parents’ large, fresh pine tree covered in tiny white lights and ornaments, Carlos soon found that everything else about Christmas in the United States—at least in his opinion—wasn’t as good as it was in El Salvador. Baked ham instead of tamales; a quiet Christmas Day instead of the party atmosphere of Noche Buena; sitting in front of a fireplace or watching snow fall instead of posadas and dancing; Silent Night instead of cumbia music; intimate family get-togethers instead of massive fiestas with dozens of cousins... Everything was just so different and the more differences he discovered, the more nostalgic he felt for the Christmas he was missing back in El Salvador.

## BLENDING CULTURES

Over the years, out of my own passion for Latino culture, a need for our boys to know their roots, and a desire to make Carlos happy, I have slowly incorporated Salvadoran traditions into our holiday.

The Christmas season at Casa López is most certainly bicultural, and each year I learn something new or Carlos remembers something he misses, and we add it into the mix.

Read Related: Help Your Kids Embrace Their Mixed Heritage

## HOW TO HAVE A BICULTURAL CHRISTMAS

Do you have a bicultural family? Here’s how you can make sure your children are staying in touch with their roots from both sides of the family and that everyone is happy this holiday season.

# MAKE A LIST OF TRADITIONS.

Sit down with your spouse and each of you create individual lists of favorite holiday traditions—everything from activities you like to do, foods you like to eat, events you like to attend, songs you like to sing, decorations that symbolize the festivities to you, types of religious services that are important to you, etc. Close your eyes and think back to your favorite Christmas memories. What does it smell like? What do you hear? Is it

the scent of fresh pine needles and the sound of bells jingling? Or is it tamales steaming and the crackling of fireworks going off in the street?

## TIME TO TALK IT OUT!

Talk to your spouse about what you’ve written down. Share the happy memories! Hopefully he’ll be excited and curious about your traditions and you will feel the same about his.

# GET A CALENDAR.

Time to make a plan for how you’ll celebrate and on which days. You have the entire month of December and into January to enjoy the season—in other words, plenty of time to celebrate in every way that is special to you. If there are any direct conflicts (such as which religious service to attend), agree to alternate years and flip a coin to see who goes first. In most cases it won’t come down to this. If you want Chinese food on New Year’s Eve and he wants turkey roasted in salsa, what does it hurt to do both? Worst case scenario, you’ll just have a lot of leftovers in the fridge for the next day. Compromise, compromise, compromise—it’s what marriages, especially bicultural marriages, are made of.



# THE MEANING AND MODERNISATION OF THE CHRISTMAS PUD

Everybody knows that the magic of Christmas holds a wealth of religious and historic significance, but did you know that the Christmas pudding has an astonishing variety of myths and traditions all of its own?

It is the true ‘star’ of the table and Mrs Peek’s broad range of simple-to-cook puddings, from the Jacob’s Bakery, for every age means that everybody can savour the true mystique of the occasion.

There are various ways and means of cooking and making an authentic Christmas pudding. With the major task of preparing the big festive meal and entertaining the family on December 25, there are not many people who would be prepared to spend hours slaving over a hot pud. But did you know that the most famous pudding-maker of all time, Mrs Beeton, advised boiling the Christmas pudding for six to eight hours and for another two on Christmas Day to achieve perfect results?

Fortunately, such effort is no longer needed, when consumers can find delicious, quick-cook brands in their local shop for steaming in a pressure cooker or microwaving in minutes.

It is usually the children who turn their noses up at the rich, flaming, dome-shaped delight. For this reason, Mrs Peek’s has just launched the Father Christmas Shaped Christmas Pudding (priced at £2.49 for 454g) to appeal to the younger eye.

It combines offering kids the fun and excitement of modern Christmas, as well as enabling them to enjoy the season’s tradition and to join the rest of the family in tucking into the pud.

**‘THERE ARE VARIOUS WAYS AND MEANS OF COOKING AND MAKING AN AUTHENTIC CHRISTMAS PUDDING.’**

Adults tend to be inspired by the more alcohol-loaded pudding - whether it is saturated or covered with spirits. Keith Floyd’s Tipsy Pudding (£2.99 for 454g) will appeal to such adventurous tastes.

Laden with fortified wine, port, rum, brandy and cider, it is probably the most alcoholic pudding around. However, the use of brandy has more serious connotations. Traditionally, it is poured and lit to form a halo of flames which represents Christ’s passion and the sprig of holly stuck on the top represents the crown of thorns, as well as symbolising the protection against evil.

**‘EVERYBODY CAN SAVOUR THE TRUE MYSTIQUE OF THE OCCASION.’**

Silver charm additions to the pudding is something which is hardly seen these days - being more likely to predict toothy traumas than fabulous fortune. Traditionally, the pudding chef would hide a threepenny piece to symbolise wealth and a ring for marriage within a year. Unlucky diners would discover a thimble for spinsterhood and a button for bachelorhood.

But the secret of a good pudding is in its basic recipe and preparation. The legend is that every member of the household should have a turn at stirring the pudding mix from East to West in honour of the Three Kings and with a wooden spoon, which represents the manger.

**‘IT IS THE TRUE ‘STAR’ OF THE TABLE...’**

However, a no-hassle, ready-prepared combination of sultanas, currants, mixed fruit and spices, cherries and fine spirits tells the oldest story of Christmas tradition and Mrs Peek’s Fruitiest Recipe pudding (£2.69 for 454g) will please those who select a compote closest to a fruit feast. Britain’s top-selling pudding brand is Mrs Peek’s Rum and Brandy Christmas Pudding (£1.99 for 454g). A generous composition of fruit and spirits, it also comes in a pack of four mini-puddings (£2.25 for 4x100g) for those who prefer bite-size portions.





## ARTICLES FOUND:

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