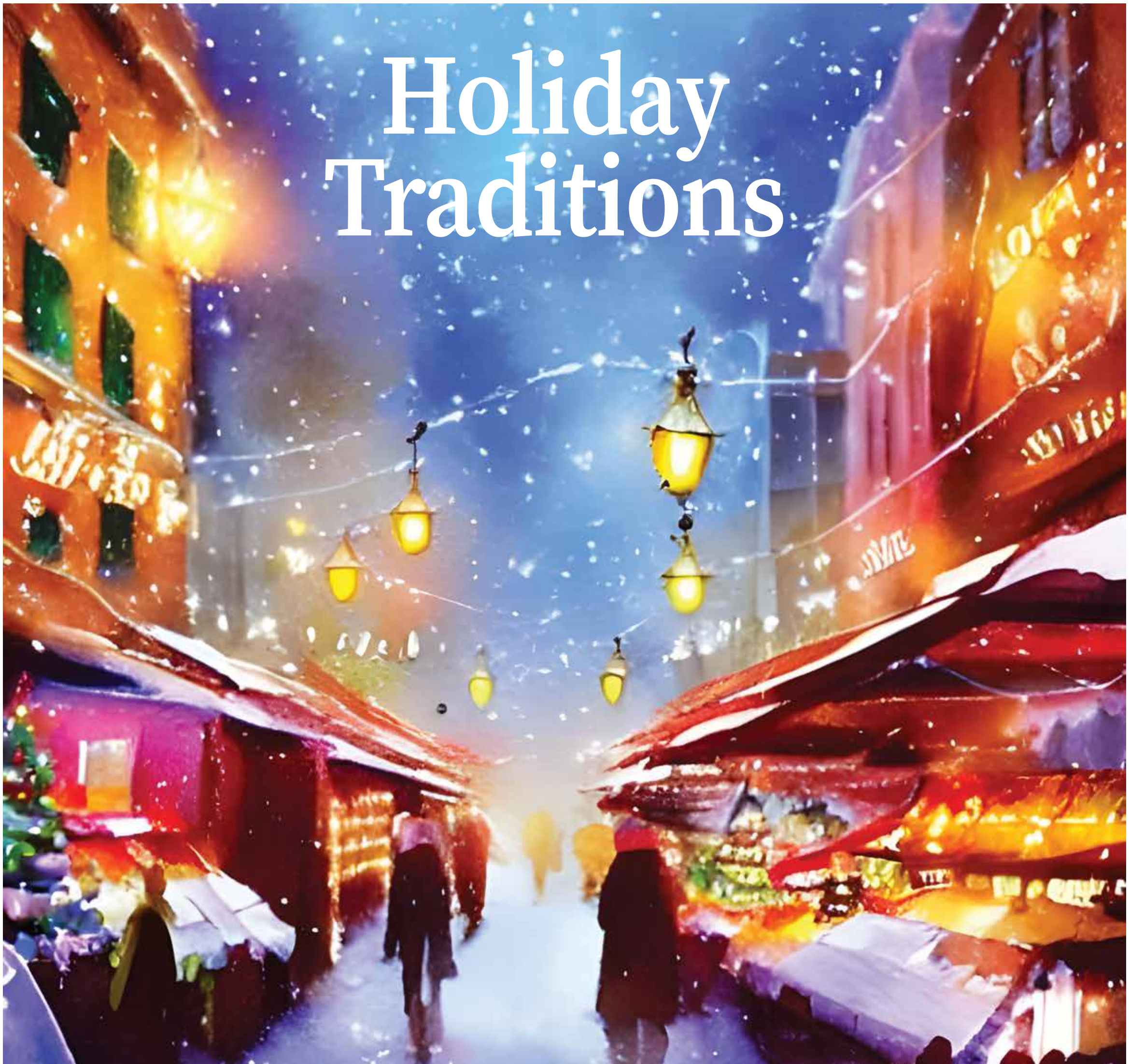


Holiday Traditions



Music Spreads Joy

Christmas carols fill the air during the holidays, spreading joy and carrying out a tradition.

Christmas caroling is a cherished tradition that has endured for centuries, one that brings communities together to celebrate the spirit of Christmas through music.

HISTORY

The roots of Christmas caroling can be traced back to ancient pagan and Christian traditions. In pre-Christian times, people would sing songs and chants during winter solstice celebrations, believing that the melodies would ward off evil spirits and welcome the return of longer days.

With the spread of Christianity, these songs began to incorporate religious themes and were performed during Christmas celebrations.

During the Middle Ages, caroling took on a more organized form, as groups of singers, known as “waits,” would travel from house to house singing hymns and carols. This tradition was particularly popular in England and other European countries. Carolers were often rewarded with food, drink or coins as gestures of gratitude for their musical performances.

Over the years, caroling evolved and became deeply embedded in Christmas festivities. The tradition made its way to America with the arrival of



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European settlers, where it was embraced and adapted to local customs. Caroling became an integral part of community gatherings, church services and holiday events.

CAROLING TODAY

Participating in caroling

brings people of all ages together. Traditionally a group of singers gathers in a central location, such as a neighborhood, church or town square. They choose a repertoire of carols, ranging from beloved classics like “Silent Night” to joyous tunes

like “Jingle Bells.”

Caroling can take various forms. Some groups route through a neighborhood, visiting houses and spreading cheer throughout the neighborhood. Others may perform at local nursing homes, hospitals or charity events,

bringing the spirit of the season to those who may be in need of extra comfort and joy. People often accessorize with festive holiday cheer such as Santa hats or reindeer headbands.

In some communities, large-scale caroling events are organized, inviting the entire town to come together for an evening of festive melodies.

Caroling etiquette involves respect for both the performers and the audience. When carolers approach a house, they sing a selection of carols while standing outside or at the entrance. It is customary for the occupants to listen and show their appreciation by applauding, joining in the singing or offering small tokens of gratitude. Carolers may also collect donations for charitable causes, reinforcing the spirit of giving during the holiday season.

The overstuffed life, when giving advice for organizing a caroling party recommends having small gifts to give to the houses carolers visit, a reverse of the typical tradition. She also recommends handing out sheet music and practicing beforehand.

Caroling has also found its way into virtual spaces. Online platforms allow people to connect and share their musical talents, creating virtual choirs and performances that can be enjoyed worldwide. Social media platforms and video-sharing websites have become a platform for sharing caroling videos.

Technology & Modern Celebrations

In today's digital age, technology is an integral part of our lives.

It has transformed the way we communicate, work and even celebrate holidays. As traditional customs intertwine with technological advancements, new practices emerge, creating a unique blend of tradition and innovation.

VIRTUAL GATHERINGS

One of the most significant changes brought about by technology is the rise of virtual gatherings. Distance is no longer a barrier to spending time with loved ones during the holidays. With video conferencing platforms, families separated by miles or even continents can come together in real time, sharing laughter, stories and holiday cheer.

Virtual gatherings let people connect, especially when physical gatherings are not possible or convenient. They also allow for inclusivity, as individuals who may have otherwise been excluded due to mobility or other limitations can now participate actively in celebrations.

ONLINE GIFT EXCHANGES

Technology has revolutionized the way most of us exchange gifts during the holidays. Online gift exchanges provide convenience, allowing individuals to browse and purchase presents from the com-



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fort of their homes.

Platforms and apps dedicated to gift exchanges simplify the process by pairing participants, facilitating wish lists and organizing surprise exchanges. This digital approach saves time and expands the possibilities by connecting people from different locations. However, some argue that the personal touch and thoughtfulness of selecting and wrapping physical gifts can be lost in the digital realm.

DIGITAL HOLIDAY CARDS

Traditional paper holiday cards have given way to their

digital counterparts for many people. Sending greetings via email, social media or dedicated e-card platforms has become commonplace.

Digital holiday cards offer various benefits, such as instant delivery, cost-effectiveness and environmental friendliness. They allow for greater creativity, incorporating multimedia elements like music, animations and personalized messages.

Nevertheless, for some people, it doesn't replace the tactile experience of receiving and displaying physical cards. Traditional cards add a senti-

mental value that digital versions cannot fully replicate.

SOCIAL MEDIA CELEBRATIONS

Social media platforms have transformed how we share and document holiday moments. From posting festive photos to sharing holiday recipes and traditions, social media allows individuals to connect and engage with a broader audience. It fosters a sense of community and enables us to celebrate together, even when physically apart.

There are concerns about the pressure to curate pic-

ture-perfect moments and the potential for oversharing, which can overshadow the authenticity and genuine connections of traditional holiday experiences.

BENEFITS AND CHALLENGES

Incorporating technology into holiday traditions brings undeniable benefits. It bridges distances, fosters inclusivity and enhances convenience. It lets us connect with loved ones near and far and expands our cultural horizons through online exchanges and global celebrations. Technology offers creative possibilities for self-expression and personalization.

However, there are challenges. It's important to strike a balance between the virtual and physical aspects of celebrations, ensuring that the human connection and cherished traditions are not overshadowed. Over-reliance on technology may lead to feelings of isolation, missed opportunities for meaningful interactions or the loss of traditional practices that hold deep cultural significance.

We have an opportunity to mindfully navigate the digital landscape, preserving the essence of tradition while embracing the possibilities that technology brings. This will let us create modern celebrations that blend the best of both worlds, forging meaningful connections and cherishing the time-honored customs that make the holiday season special.

Embrace Cultural Traditions

The holiday season presents an opportune time to reflect on our ancestral heritage and embrace the richness of cultural traditions.

Beyond the typical festivities and consumerism often associated with the holidays, there is immense value in incorporating customs, recipes, music and attire from one's heritage. By doing so, you can establish a deeper connection to your roots, foster a sense of cultural pride and create meaningful celebrations that resonate with your identity.

One of the most significant aspects of honoring ancestral heritage during the holidays is the opportunity to preserve and pass down traditions to future generations. By incorporating customs that have been passed on for centuries, you can maintain a link to your past and ensure that your cultural heritage continues to thrive. Whether it's lighting the candles for Hanukkah, setting up an altar for Dia de los Muertos, engaging in a drum circle during Kwanzaa or exchanging red envelopes during Chinese New Year, these practices become cherished rituals that connect individuals to their ancestors and create a sense of continuity.



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FOOD AND MUSIC

Food has always played a pivotal role in cultural celebrations, making it an ideal way to embrace one's ancestral heritage during the holidays. Traditional recipes handed down from generation

to generation carry stories, memories and the flavors of a particular culture. By preparing dishes that have been enjoyed by ancestors, individuals savor delectable flavors while paying homage to their culinary legacy. Whether it's

baking Italian panettone, preparing a Mexican tamale feast or simmering a rich Indian curry, these dishes become a living testament to one's heritage.

Another powerful avenue for honoring ancestral heri-

tage is through music and dance. Different cultures have unique musical traditions and festive rhythms that encapsulate the spirit of their heritage. Incorporating traditional music into holiday celebrations can uplift the atmosphere, engage all the senses and create a vibrant cultural experience.

From playing lively Irish jigs during Christmas gatherings to dancing the Hora at a Jewish wedding celebration, music and dance offer a dynamic way to connect with one's roots and foster a sense of unity among family and friends.

SYMBOLISM

The attire worn during holiday celebrations can hold great cultural significance. Traditional garments and accessories often carry deep-rooted symbolism and historical context. By incorporating attire from one's heritage, individuals can showcase their cultural pride and educate others about the rich tapestry of their traditions.

Whether it is donning a colorful African dashiki, a Scottish tartan or a vibrant Indian saree, these garments become visual representations of cultural identity and serve as a bridge between the past and present.

This year as you gather for the holidays, embrace your cultural traditions with pride and create a quilt of celebrations that celebrate diversity, heritage and the beauty of our shared humanity.

The Naughty List

Even though Santa keeps a naughty list, he's still pretty jolly and benevolent. Not so with Krampus.

Originating from Central European folklore—the same region that gave us Grimm's fairy tales—Krampus is the antithesis of Santa Claus, embodying the spirit of punishment for misbehaving children. On Dec. 5, he gets his own holiday, Krampusnacht.

Krampus, whose name derives from the German word “krampen” meaning “claw,” is believed to have originated in pre-Christian Alpine traditions. Krampus traveled with his *perchten*—an army of ill-tempered elves—causing trouble wherever they went. The elves loved to whip lazy folks, unruly children and drunkards. Krampus was rumored to kidnap young miscreants—a tale parents would use to scare misbehaving children.

With the spread of Christianity, Krampus became associated with Saint Nicholas, adopting a role as his companion. Santa would give gifts to the good children and Krampus would punish the bad ones. Today, Krampus still exists as a rebellious symbol, a counterweight to the commercialism of Santa.

Krampusnacht, or Krampus Night, is celebrated on the evening of Dec. 5, preceding Saint Nicholas Day, in various countries including Austria,



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Germany, Hungary and parts of Italy.

CELEBRATIONS

Krampusnacht is marked by festivities that blend folklore, costume parades and a touch of fear. During the celebrations, individuals don intricate Krampus costumes adorned with masks, horns and long, shaggy fur. These parades

often take place in the streets, with participants embodying the mischievous and menacing nature of Krampus.

According to TripSavvy, Salzburg has more than 200 parade clubs that spend months creating costumes, marching formations and party plans.

Krampusnacht celebrations are most prominently

observed in Alpine regions, including Austria, Bavaria, South Tyrol and parts of Slovenia. In Austria, the town of Graz hosts an annual Krampuslauf (Krampus Run), drawing thousands of participants and spectators.

In other areas, smaller communities organize their own parades, ensuring that the Krampusnacht tradition thrives

throughout the region. The popularity of Krampusnacht has even spread beyond Europe, with cities in the United States, Canada and other countries embracing the festivities.

ACTIVITIES

Beyond the parades, Krampusnacht involves a range of activities.

Some communities organize Krampus markets, where crafts, costumes and traditional treats are sold. These markets serve as a hub for enthusiasts to gather, exchange stories and immerse themselves in Krampus folklore.

Other Krampus-themed events include art exhibitions and even Krampus-themed obstacle courses for thrill-seeking participants.

PRESERVING THE TRADITION

Local folklore groups, historians and cultural organizations are dedicated to safeguarding the integrity of Krampusnacht celebrations. They research and document the history, share stories and educate the public about the significance of Krampus within the broader holiday tradition. Through their efforts, the essence and uniqueness of Krampusnacht endure.

Krampusnacht shines a light on the captivating and occasionally darker aspects of holiday traditions. Rooted in centuries-old folklore, this celebration offers a contrast to the merriment associated with Santa Claus.

An Italian Holiday Legend

Italian children can tell you the tale of a magical figure named La Befana.

Known as the kind-hearted witch, she delivers candy and goodies to children on the night before Epiphany (Jan. 6). La Befana's origin stories vary, but they all describe her as a generous woman who loves children.

LEGENDS AND FOLKLORE

According to one legend, La Befana was an ordinary old woman living alone when three magi stopped by her home, seeking directions to the newborn baby Jesus. She didn't know how to get there, but she let them stay the night. She declined their invitation to join their journey, but later had a change of heart. She gathered gifts for the child, embarking on a search for Jesus, armed with her broomstick, either as a mode of transportation or because she knew the child's mother would need a broom. Surely a more practical gift than frankincense and myrrh.

Another tale suggests that La Befana was an ordinary mother who lost her child and, consumed by grief, searched endlessly for him. As she wandered, she came across three magi who asked for her help. Despite her sorrow, she joined their quest and brought gifts for the infant Christ child. He was so delighted that he told



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her she would be mother to all children in Italy.

LA BEFANA'S WORK

On the night of Jan. 5, the eve of the Feast of the Epiphany, La Befana visits every home in Italy. She enters through the chimney, leaving

small gifts and candies for well-behaved children. For those who have been naughty, she fills their stockings with coal or a stick, symbolizing the desire for them to change their ways and find redemption. Sometimes she'll leave them onions or garlic. In some tradi-

tions, all children receive "coal" in the form of black rock candy in addition to other gifts, recognizing that everyone misbehaves at least a little throughout the year.

Because she is a good housekeeper, it is said she'll sweep the floor of every house she visits.

The history of La Befana and the Epiphany holiday dates back centuries. The Feast of the Epiphany, also known as "La Festa dell'Epifania," commemorates the visit of the three magi to the baby Jesus. It marks the end of the Christmas season, as it falls 12 days after Dec. 25.

FESTIVITIES

Today, the celebration of La Befana is cherished by Italians of all ages. Festivities begin on the evening of Jan. 5, with families gathering together to await her arrival. Children hang stockings by the fireplace or at the foot of their bed. It is also traditional to leave her a small glass of wine and a few morsels of food.

It is said that she will thump anyone who sees her with her broom because she doesn't like to be seen, a tale that encourages children to stay in bed.

In many towns across Italy, vibrant parades and processions will take place to honor La Befana. People dress up as the legendary witch, with brooms and shawls, and march through the streets, singing traditional songs and spreading cheer. The aroma of freshly baked sweets fills the air as families prepare traditional delicacies like "panettone" and "torrone" to share during the festivities.

The tradition has spread to other parts of the world as well, with a Befana Choir performing in the streets in Toronto, passing out candy and dusting down willing parade-goers.

Illuminating the Holidays

The tradition of luminarias, also known as farolitos, brings warmth and beauty to the holiday season.

Popular in the southwestern states of New Mexico and Arizona, this cherished Christmas tradition has spread across the country, enveloping neighborhoods and communities with a mesmerizing glow. Small paper bags, filled with sand and adorned with lit candles, line walkways, roofs, and driveways, becoming an integral part of Christmas celebrations.

In Spanish, *luminaria* means “illumination” and *farolito* means “little lantern.”

The tradition of luminarias traces back to the Hispanic influence in the region, originating from early Spanish settlers who sought to illuminate the path to their local churches during Christmas Eve processions. Over time, this symbolic act of lighting the way for the arrival of the Christ child evolved into the cherished tradition of lining streets and homes with luminarias.

The original luminarias were made with small stacks of bark and dry wood creating small bonfires along the roadways. Square-bottomed paper bags weren't patented until 1872.

According to the National



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Park Service, Pueblos picked up luminaria traditions during the Spanish colonization and continue to practice many of the traditions today. The Picuris Pueblo has a torchlight procession and perform traditional dances on Christmas Eve. Acoma Pueblo set out more than 2,000 luminarias along their roads every year.

PREPARATION AND PLACEMENT

The process of preparing

and placing luminarias involves the collective efforts of community members, fostering a sense of unity and shared celebration. Families and neighbors come together to fold and assemble the paper bags, carefully pouring sand into each one to ensure stability.

As nightfall approaches on Christmas Eve, the luminarias are placed along walkways, rooftops and driveways, forming a trail of light that signi-

fies the welcoming of the holiday season.

As darkness blankets the landscape, the magic of the luminarias unfolds. The flickering glow of candles nestled within the paper bags illuminates the surroundings, casting a soft and serene ambiance. It is not uncommon for people to stroll through the streets, reveling in the ethereal beauty that these luminarias bestow upon the neighborhoods.

SYMBOLISM

Beyond the aesthetic appeal, luminarias hold deep symbolic meaning. They represent the light of hope, guiding the way for the spirit of Christmas and embracing the message of peace, joy and love. As families gather together, the warm glow of the luminarias serves as a reminder of the shared values that unite communities and transcend cultural boundaries.

The tradition fosters a spirit of togetherness, encouraging individuals to connect with their neighbors and celebrate the season in harmony.

PRESERVING TRADITIONS

In an ever-changing world, the enduring tradition of luminarias stands as a testament to the cultural heritage and resilience of the Southwest. Local organizations and communities work to preserve this cherished custom, hosting luminaria festivals and events.

The use of luminarias has spread beyond the winter holidays and the Southwest. In 2021, President-elect Joe Biden held a memorial service where 400 luminarias were lit along the Reflecting Pool in Washington D.C. to honor the 400,000 Americans who died during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The American Cancer Society sells memorial luminarias to raise money for cancer research.

Cherished Holiday Rituals

Every family has its own treasured traditions, time-honored rituals holding immense significance, fostering a sense of connection and continuity across generations.

Preserving family traditions ensures that the values, memories and customs we hold dear are passed down to future generations. You can safeguard these rituals by documenting them, sharing them with children and organizing family storytelling sessions. All these things can contribute to the longevity of your precious traditions.

WHY PRESERVE?

Family traditions play a vital role in building strong family bonds and fostering a sense of identity and belonging. They provide a shared framework of values and experiences, creating a sense of continuity and stability in our ever-changing world.

Preserving these traditions reinforces family values, instills a sense of pride in heritage and strengthens the emotional connection between family members.

FAMILY RECIPES

One of the most tangible ways to preserve family tradi-



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tions is through documenting treasured recipes and culinary customs. Family recipes hold a wealth of memories and evoke a sense of nostalgia. Create a recipe journal or digital archive to compile favorite recipes, including the stories and anecdotes behind them.

Encourage family members to contribute their own recipes, ensuring a diverse representation of the family's culinary heritage.

MEMORY BOOKS

Memory books serve as invaluable repositories of family history and traditions.

Create a dedicated holiday memory book that captures photographs, mementos and personal anecdotes from each year's celebrations. Include stories of past traditions, special moments and the significance of particular holiday rituals.

Encourage family members to contribute their own memories and reflections, creating a collective keepsake that can be passed down through the generations.

INVOLVING CHILDREN

Engaging children in holiday preparations is an excel-

lent way to pass down traditions while fostering a sense of responsibility and pride.

Assign age-appropriate tasks such as decorating the tree, setting the table or helping with specific holiday recipes. Encourage them to contribute their ideas and creativity, allowing them to take ownership of their roles in the family traditions.

This active involvement ensures that the customs are not only passed down, but embraced and cherished by the next generation.

Storytelling is a powerful medium for preserving family

traditions and passing down the collective wisdom and memories of previous generations. During the holiday season, create dedicated storytelling sessions where family members gather to share stories, anecdotes and experiences related to holiday traditions.

Encourage older family members to recount tales from their childhood, the origins of specific customs and the values they hold dear. This interactive exchange helps younger family members understand the significance of the traditions and fosters a deeper connection to their roots.

ADAPTING AND EVOLVING

While preserving family traditions is essential, it is also important to recognize that traditions evolve over time. Embrace the opportunity for adaptation, allowing traditions to reflect the changing dynamics of the family.

Involve younger generations in shaping and adding their unique contributions to existing rituals. By adapting traditions, the family ensures their continued relevance and resonance with each new generation.

Embracing the responsibility of passing down our family's cherished traditions instills a sense of pride in our unique heritage. By doing so, we create a legacy of love, warmth and togetherness that will be cherished by future generations.