

CHRISTMAS in Russia



HISTORY

During the days of the Soviet Union, Christmas was not celebrated very much. Instead, the New Year was the important time. Following the Russian Revolution in 1917, Christmas was banned as a religious holiday in 1929. Christmas trees were forbidden until 1935 when they turned into "New Year" Trees. If people wanted to celebrate Christmas, they were required to do so in secrecy. When the Soviet Union collapsed in 1991, people were free to celebrate Christmas again. However, it is quieter and smaller there. The New Year is still the big time to spend money and have parties. Christmas is more religious and private.

GRANDFATHER FROST

On New Year's Grandfather Frost (Ded Moraz in Russian) brings presents to children. He is accompanied by his granddaughter, Snegurochka. Children hold hands on New Year's Eve and make a circle around the Christmas tree and call for Snegurochka or Ded Moroz. When they appear the star and other lights on the tree light up. Ded Moroz carries a magical staff.



CHRISTMAS

Christmas in Russia is usually celebrated on January 7, but a few Catholics may celebrate on December 25. The date is different from other places because the Russian Orthodox Church uses the Old Julian calendar for religious celebrations. The Orthodox Church also celebrates the Advent, the time before Christmas. They have fixed dates though, starting on November 28 and going until January 6. It is a total of 40 days.

CHRISTMAS EVE

Some people fast, or do not eat anything, on Christmas Eve until the first star has appeared in the sky. People eat "sochivo" or "kutia," a porridge made from wheat or rice served with honey, poppy seeds, fruit, chopped walnuts, and sometimes fruit jellies. Kutia is sometimes eaten from a common bowl to symbolize unity. Some families like to throw a spoonful of sochivo up on the ceiling in the past. Some



thought if it stuck it meant they would have good luck and a good harvest. Some Orthodox Christian Russians do not eat any meat or fish during the Christmas Eve meal. "Vzvar," meaning "boil-up" is often served at the end of a meal. It is a sweet drink made from dried fruit and honey boiled in water. Vzvar is traditionally drank at the birth of a child, so at Christmas it symbolizes the birth of baby Jesus. Prayers are often said following the meal and people attend midnight church services. They do not wash the dishes until they return home from church, which can be 4:00 a.m. or 5:00 a.m.

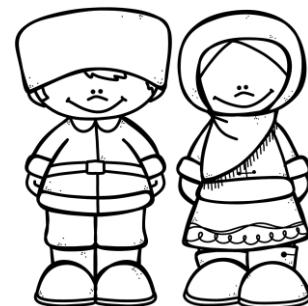


CHRISTMAS DAY

On Christmas Day, the main meal is more like a feast with dishes such as roast pork and goose, Pirog and Pelimi (meat dumplings) Dessert is often things like fruit pies, gingerbread and honeybread cookies (Pryaniki), fresh and dried fruit, and more nuts. Russian Christmas cookies, Kozulya, are made in the shape of sheep, goat, or deer.

CAROLING

Some children carol around to homes of friends and family to wish people a happy new year in Russia. They are given cookies, money, and sweets in return.

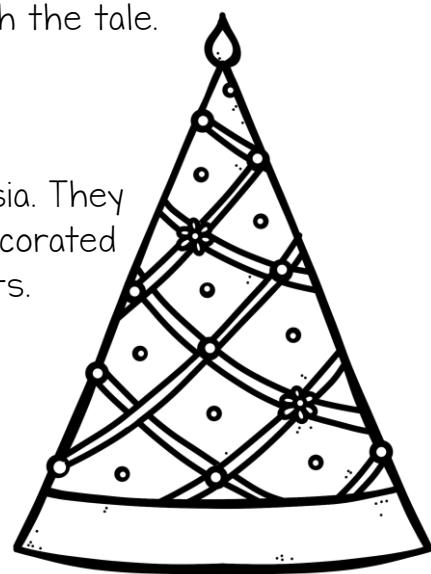


BABUSKA

Babushka means grandmother in Russian. The legend says she was visited by the Three Wise Men on their way to see baby Jesus. She went looking for them afterward with toys for Jesus, but he was already gone. Even though many Americans have heard the story, it seems most Russians are unfamiliar with the tale.

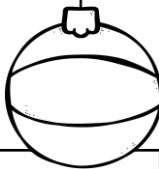
RUSSIAN NESTING DOLLS

Russian Nesting Dolls are popularly associated with Russia. They are made in various shapes, sizes, and numbers and decorated with different themes. They make great gifts.



Name _____

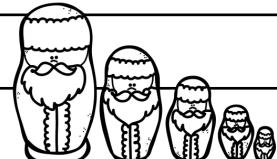
CHRISTMAS IN RUSSIA



IDENTIFY: Use the word bank to identify each term described.

Vzvar	Grandfather Frost	New Year
revolution	Babushka	granddaughter
Christmas trees	January	Nesting dolls
		1. Legend says she was visited by the Three Wise Men
		2. Traditional Russian drink
		3. Holiday that overshadows Christmas in Russia
		4. Banned until 1935 in Russia
		5. Brings presents to children in Russia
		6. Snegurochka's relation to Ded Moraz
		7. Christmas is celebrated in this month in Russia
		8. Christmas was banned in Russia following this
		9. Great gift from Russia

TRUE OR FALSE?: Place a check in the correct column.



STATEMENT	T	F
11. The story of Babushka is well-known in Russia.		
12. Some Russians fast until they see the first star on Christmas Eve.		
13. Christmas in Russia is on December 25 th , like most other nations.		
14. Grandfather Frost brings children presents in Russia.		
15. Most Russians eat turkey as their main course of Christmas Day.		
16. The Russian Orthodox Church uses the Julian calendar for holidays.		
17. Russian cookies are usually made into the shape of stars.		
18. Many Russians attend a midnight church service on Christmas Eve.		
19. Christmas in Russia was banned for a long period of time.		
20. Children carol door to door in Russia in exchange for treats.		

MULTIPLE Choice: Choose the best answer.

21. In which year were Russians free to legally celebrate Christmas?

- A. 1917
- B. 1929
- C. 1935
- D. 1991

22. How do children in Russia get Grandfather Frost and his granddaughter to visit?

- A. They write them letters.
- B. They leave them treats at their homes.
- C. They hold hands around the Christmas tree.
- D. They pray for them to come.

23. Why was sochivo sometimes thrown on the ceiling in the past?

- A. To attract Ded Moraz.
- B. To honor baby Jesus.
- C. To have good luck and a good harvest.
- D. To celebrate the New Year.

24. Why is Vzvar mainly a popular drink at Christmas in Russia?

- A. It is cold in Russia and Vzvar is warm.
- B. It is a traditional drink.
- C. It is consumed in honor of baby Jesus' birth.
- D. It is consumed to honor the New Year.

25. Which statement about the celebration of Christmas in Russia is NOT true?

- A. Christmas is celebrated on January 7 in Russia.
- B. The New Year's celebrations occur before Christmas in Russia.
- C. Christmas is the most popular holiday in Russia.
- D. Christmas is a quiet and religious event in Russia.

26. In which text structure is this article mostly written?

- A. Cause and Effect
- B. Problem and Solution
- C. Compare and Contrast
- D. Description

