

# GLOBAL HOLIDAY TRADITIONS – YEAR B TLDR

**Kiviak** is a traditional fermented winter food from Greenland Inuits. It's small birds (hundreds) called Auks, stuffed, beak feathers and all, into a hallowed out seal carcass. The air is pressed out, and then it's sealed with the fat from said seal to prevent spoiling. Then it's fermented in a rock pile for a few months to over a year. This ferments the Auks so they can be eaten without technically being cooked.

If you find yourself in Wales around Christmas, don't freak out if you see a horse skull attached to a white robe or sheet being carried door to door by people singing. It's just the tradition of Mari Lwyd (Grey Mare). After singing, the group and "horse" are invited inside for ale and cakes.

## Kiviak

- Kiviak is a fermented food eaten in winter by Greenland's Inuits.
- It's made from Auk birds, which are stuffed into hallowed seal carcasses. Air is pressed out of the carcass, which is then sealed with fat to prevent spoiling. The amalgamation is left to ferment in rock piles for any a few months to a year.
- This way, they can be eaten without being cooked.

## Mari Lwyd

- Christmas in Wales comes with a special prop; a horse skull attached to a white sheet, carried by singing residents.
- This is the Grey Mare, or Mari Lwyd. When the procession is finished, the group and horse feast on ale and cake.

## Yalda Night

- Christmas for Iranians includes the important holiday of Yalda night, or Shab-e Chelleh.
- This is the holiday Iranians celebrate in place of Christmas and is considered far more important than Christmas in Iran.
- Yalda means birth.

- Iranians are celebrating the longest and darkest night of the year or winter solstice.
- This night is on 20 to 21 December according to the Georgian calendar. Iran uses a different calendar, the Iranian calendar, on which Yalda night is the last evening of the autumn day or “the night opening the initial forty-day period of the three-month winter”.
- This celebration comes from the time when most Persians were followers of Zoroastrianism.
- Ancient Persians believed that evil forces were dominant on the longest night of the year and that the next day belonged to the Lord of Wisdom, Ahura Mazda.
- This night has been used in many Iranian poems to describe a dark night in which one gets separated from a loved one, creating loneliness and waiting.
- Other countries such as Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan also celebrate this night.

### **How does Iranian celebrate Yalda night?**

In the Zoroastrian era, people were advised to stay awake for most of the night, to prevent any bad luck from happening. People had to gather in the safety of groups of friends and relatives, share the last remaining fruits from the summer, and find ways to pass the long night together in good company.

This same culture still exists. Every Yalda night people are gathering with their loved ones. They would especially go to their grandparents' house. Eat, drink and read poetry(Hafez) during the whole the evening to pass the darkest evening of the year with laughter and joy. Iranians believe those who begin winter by eating summer fruits would not fall ill during the cold season. Honestly this evening is filled with different type of food. Gaining weight is very common in that evening!

The most important fruits of the evening are pomegranate, the jewel of all fruits, and watermelon. Without them, there is no Yalda night. The color of these fruits symbolise the cycle and glow of life. These days you can find everything in the shape and color of these fruit such as cake, cupcakes or even in home accessories.

As I mentioned, during this night people also read Hafez poetry. You probably wonder why Hafez? Iranians believe in Hafez as much as believing in God. People make a wish, open a book of Hafez and the first poem they see is the interpretation of the wish and whether and how it will come true.

So in Yalda night each member of the family makes a wish and randomly opens the book and asks the eldest member of the family to read it aloud.

**In Japan, Christmas isn't really celebrated. However, in 1974, KFC launched a "Kentucky for Christmas" campaign, and now the Japanese eat fried chicken on December 25th. People sometimes order months in advance or wait in line for several hours on Christmas day for their Christmas Chicken.**

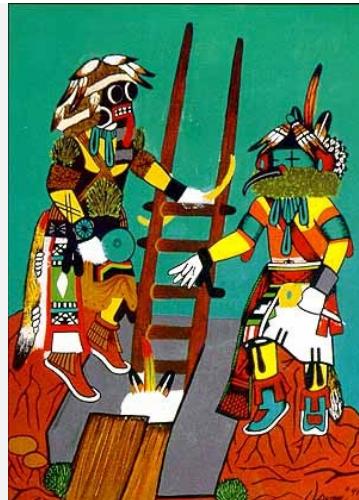


### Soyal Ceremony: Hopi Kachinas Dance at Winter Solstice

**BY JACK EIDT**

[HTTPS://WWW.WILDERUTOPIA.COM/TRADITIONS/SOYAL-CEREMONY-HOPI-KACHINAS-DANCE-AT-WINTER-SOLSTICE/](https://www.wilderutopia.com/traditions/soyal-ceremony-hopi-kachinas-dance-at-winter-solstice/)

*The Hopi Soyal Ceremony begins on the shortest day of the year, and symbolizes the second phase of Creation at the Dawn of Life. Its prayers and rituals implement a plan of life for the coming year, ceremonially turning back the sun toward its summer path.*



Hopi Kachinas on a kiva rooftop. Painting by Valentino Anton.

### ***Kachinas Come Down from the Peaks to Establish Life Anew***

The Hopi People, inhabitants of northern Arizona for over a thousand years, celebrate December as when the Kachinas come down from their home in the San Francisco Peaks to bring the sun back to the world. The Katsinam or Kachinas, spirits that guard over the Hopi, dance at the winter solstice Soyal Ceremony (Soyaluna or Soyalangwul), understood to mean “Establishing Life Anew for All the World.”

“Katsinam are Hopi spirit messengers who send prayers for rain, bountiful harvests and a prosperous, healthy life for humankind. They are our friends and visitors who bring gifts and food, as well as messages to teach appropriate behavior and the consequences of unacceptable behavior. Katsinam, of which there are over two hundred and fifty different types, represent various beings, from animals to clouds.” – Official Hopi Tribal Source

### **The Winter Solstice**

The Soyal Ceremony begins on the shortest day of the year, and symbolizes the second phase of Creation at the Dawn of Life. Its prayers and rituals implement a plan of life for the coming year, ceremonially turning back the sun toward its summer path. The longest ceremony on the ceremonial cycle, lasting up to 16 days, sacred rituals are performed in underground chambers called kivas. Many ceremonies involve dancing and singing; the kachinas may even bring gifts to the children. At Soyal time elders pass down stories to children, teaching pivotal lessons like respecting others. The Hopi, The Peaceful Ones (*Hopitu Shinumu*), believe everything that will occur during the year is arranged at Soyal.



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### **Soyaluna Preparations**

In preparation for the kachinas' arrival, the Hopi make prayer sticks of tied feathers and pinyon needles called Pahos to bless the community, including their homes, animals and plants. Children are given replicas of the kachinas, intricately carved and dressed like the dancers, to help them learn about the hundreds of kachina spirits. Sixteen days before the winter solstice, one of the chief kachinas enters the Pueblo. He appears like a tired, old man who has just awakened from a deep slumber, teetering and on the verge of losing his balance. People follow his every move. He typically staggers over to the dance plaza

where with great exaggeration, he dances and sings in a very low voice a song that is regarded as too sacred for the public to hear.



### **Sun Ceremony Symbolized By the Black Plumed Snake**

The actual Soyal ceremonies are not general public knowledge. One informant describes a particular ceremony starting with a Hopi leader wearing a headdress decorated with images symbolizing rain clouds overseeing the main celebration taking place in the kiva. He will also carry a shield that has a star, antelope, and other symbolic objects. Someone will also carry an effigy of Palulukonuh, also called the Plumed Snake, carved from the woody stalk of an agave plant.

Shield bearers enter the kiva and take turns stomping on the sipapu (a shallow hole covered by a board that symbolizes the entrance to the underworld). Then they arrange themselves into two groups, one on the north side, another in the south. Then they sing as the bearer of the sun shield rushes to one side, then the other. He is driven back by the shield bearers on both sides. The movements symbolize the attack of hostile powers on the sun (drought, fire, darkness, cold) that influence whether it will shine and bless the crops.

On the west all of the kiva, they construct an altar with two or more ears of corn contributed from each family, surrounded by husks and stalks. It also has a large gourd with an effigy of the Plumed Snake's head sticking out, operated like a puppet, rising and made to roar. The shield bearers then throw a meal to the snake effigy, answered by more roaring noises. This persuades him not to swallow the sun, like he does in an eclipse. When the Sun God's footprints appear in the sand, everyone knows he has been persuaded to return.

The entire ceremony ends with a public kachina dance. The Katsinam remain with the people for the first half of the Wheel of the Year until the summer solstice, when they return to their home in the mountains.

## Giant Lantern Festival, Philippines

The Giant Lantern Festival (Ligligan Parul Sampernandu) is held each year on the Saturday before Christmas Eve in the city of **San Fernando** – the “Christmas Capital of the Philippines.” The festival attracts spectators from all over the country and across the globe. **Eleven** barangays (villages) take part in the festival and competition is fierce as everyone pitches in trying to build the most elaborate lantern. Originally, the lanterns were simple creations around half a metre in diameter, made from ‘papel de hapon’ (Japanese origami paper) and lit by candle. Today, the lanterns are made from a variety of materials and have grown to around six metres in size. They are illuminated by electric bulbs that sparkle in a kaleidoscope of patterns.



## Christmas in Russia



In the days of the Soviet Union, Christmas was not celebrated very much. New Year was made into the important time. Following the revolution in 1917, Christmas was banned as a religious holiday in 1929 and Christmas Trees were banned until 1935 when they turned into 'New Year' Trees! If people did want to celebrate Christmas, they had to do it in secret just in their families.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991, people were free to celebrate Christmas again. But it's still a quieter and smaller holiday in Russia after the big New Year celebrations. The New Year is the big time for spending lots of money and eating and drinking lots. Christmas is much more religious and private.

New Year is also when 'Grandfather Frost' (known in Russian as 'Ded Moroz' or Дед Мороз) brings presents to children. He is always accompanied by his Granddaughter (Snegurochka). On New Year's eve children hold hands, make a circle around the Christmas tree and call for Snegurochka or Ded Moroz. When they appear the star and other lights on the Christmas tree light up! Ded Moroz carries a big magic staff. The traditional greeting for Happy New Year is 'S Novym Godom'.

Christmas in Russia is normally celebrated on January 7th (only a few Catholics might celebrate it on the 25th December). The date is different because the Russian Orthodox Church uses the old 'Julian' calendar for religious celebration days. The Orthodox Church also celebrates [Advent](#). But it has fixed dates, starting on 28th November and going to the 6th January, so it's 40 days long.

The official Christmas and New holidays in Russia last from December 31st to January 10th.

In Russian Happy/Merry Christmas is 's rah-zh-dee-st-VOHM' (С рождеством!) or 's-schah-st-lee-vah-vah rah-zh dee-st-vah' (Счастливого рождества!). [Happy/Merry Christmas in lots more languages](#).

Some people fast (don't eat anything) on Christmas Eve, until the first star has appeared in the sky. People then eat 'sochivo' or 'kutia' a porridge made from wheat or rice served with honey, poppy seeds, fruit (especially berries and dried fruit like raisins), chopped walnuts or sometimes even fruit jellies!

Kutia is sometimes eaten from one common bowl, this symbolizes unity. In the past, some families like to throw a spoonful of sochivo up on the ceiling. If it stuck to the ceiling, some people thought it meant they would have good luck and would have a good harvest!

The Russian word for Christmas Eve 'sochelnik', comes from the word 'sochivo'.

Some Orthodox Christian Russians also don't eat any meat or fish during the Christmas Eve meal/feast.

Other popular Christmas Eve foods include, beetroot soup (borsch) or vegan potluck (solyanka) served with individual vegetable pies (often made with cabbage, potato, or mushroom); sauerkraut, porridge dishes such as buckwheat with fried onions and fried mushrooms, salads often made from vegetables like gherkins, mushrooms or tomatoes, and also potato or other root vegetable salads. The meal often consists of 12 dishes, representing the 12 disciples of Jesus.

'Vzvar' (meaning 'boil-up') is often served at the end of the meal. It's a sweet drink made from dried fruit and honey boiled in water. Vzvar is traditionally at the birth of a child, so at Christmas it symbolizes the birth of the baby Jesus.

Following the meal, prayers might be said and people then go to the midnight Church services. They often don't wash the dishes until they get home from Church - sometimes not until 4.00am or 5.00am!

The main meal on Christmas day is often more of a feast with dishes like roast pork & goose, Pirog and Pelmeni (meat dumplings). Dessert is often things like fruit pies, gingerbread and honeybread cookies (called Pryaniki) and fresh and dried fruit and more nuts.

There are Russian Christmas cookies called Kozulya which are made in the shape of a sheep, goat or deer.

In some areas, children will go carol singing round the homes of friends and family and to wish people a happy new year. They are normally rewarded with cookies, sweets and money.

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To people in western Europe and the USA, one of the most famous things about Christmas in Russia is the story of Babushka. Babushka means Grand Mother in Russian. It tells the story of an old woman who met the [Wise men](#) on their way to see Jesus.

However, most people in Russia have NEVER heard of the story as it was probably created by an American poet and writer called Edith Matilda Thomas in 1907!

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## Metis Holidays and Celebrations

By Lawrence Barkwell

Metis celebrations were designed to bring people back to their home communities and your presence in the community was expected.

**All Kings Day:** “*Le zhour dee Rway*,” also known as Three Kings Day, is celebrated on January 6,th, the twelfth day of Christmas. This date, Epiphany, is a Christian festival which celebrates the manifestation of Jesus to the Three Magi. Metis children born on this day are often named “King.” In some areas, this is the date for gift giving, rather than Christmas Day. Some people would even exchange horses. Norman Fleury remembers his Godfather “*Pchi bon homme Flamand*” telling him that on All Kings Day, if they met someone on the road, he would take off his watch and you would take off your watch and exchange them as gifts, right there on the road. In yesteryear, the Metis would start dancing on New Years and continue until All Kings Day.

**Chivaree or Shivaree:** A *chivaree* is a noisy celebration or gathering, what we might now call a social. The Metis held chivarees at New Years, accompanied by the men firing their rifles at midnight New Years Eve. The chivaree or social dance following a Metis wedding typically went for three days after the ceremony. Christmas Eve: On Christmas Eve, after Midnight Mass, a feast was held and gifts would be opened (around 2:00 a.m.). Often the Priest would take this opportunity to visit a number of homes.

**Feu de joie:** A *feu de joie* is a salute of guns fired on ceremonial occasions. In French, this term would literally translate as bonfire.

**Kissing Day:** New Year’s Day is sometimes called “Kissing Day” (*Ochetookeskaw*), or “**Shaking Hands Day**” by the Metis. This derived from the custom of visiting everyone in the community and bringing in the New Year with the shaking of hands and kissing. Every household would serve food and baked goods to their guests. New Years celebrations would last for several days, usually ending on Epiphany (January 6th or 7th). The sound of sleigh bells, or the bells on the tapis of the dogs pulling the sleds, always signaled the arrival of visitors. For festive occasions the Metis always decorated their horse and dog teams with plumes, pom poms, ribbons and bells. As people came up to

**New Year's Eve:** At midnight, it was a Metis custom for the men to take two rifle shells, open the back door of the house and fire a shot to the west to see the old year out, then open the front door and fire a shot to the east to welcome the New Year in. The modern—urban version—is to bang two pots together instead of firing shots.

**New Year's, “La Bonne Anee”:** The New Year was always a time for special celebration in Metis communities. Singing and dancing with associated feasts were the highlights of this celebration. The Michif people at Turtle Mountain, North Dakota give this description:

*The New Year Celebration is one that has been practiced since the era of French influence in the 1800s. Years ago, this event began on New Year's Eve and extended until January 6th, All King's Day. If a baby boy was born on January 6th, King was added to his name. If you stood outside, you could hear the sleigh bells ringing through the cold night air as families gathered at the homes of their elders (parents or grandparents).*

*Traditionally, they would go from house to house to toast the New Year, and enjoy the feast. Upon arrival to someone's home you can hear the expression “La Bonne Anee,” and receive a kiss and a handshake from everyone in the house young and old. The custom of kissing and shaking hands is an expression of good wishes for the coming year... The feast included foods such as Le'boulete (ground beef made into meatballs and rolled in flour and boiled), bangs (fried bread dough), flat galette (a flattened bread), potatoes, pork, confit – berries in sauce, beef, turkey, homemade pies, tourtiere pie (a gound pork meat pie served with cranberries), and pouchin (boiled cake).*

**Reillon:** *Le Reillon* is a Metis celebration that derives from their French heritage. On Christmas Eve it is the custom in Roman Catholic families for the older children and parents to attend midnight Mass. At the end of Mass, the bells are rung to announce Le Reillon (the awakening). When the families arrive home, they enjoy a special Reillon dinner, a multi-course meal that is elaborately prepared. Following the meal, presents are opened. Since it was customary to fast the day before taking Communion, it is fair to say that people were eagerly anticipating this feast.

**St. Joseph's Day:** St. Joseph is the patron Saint of the Metis. The Roman Catholic

## STUDY TOPICS:

Sweden	Ecuador
Japan	Russia
Metis	Presidential Christmas Trees / White House
Latin America	New's Year Traditions (various)
Lunar New Year	Inuit
Yalda Night	Soyal
Philippines Lantern Night	