

Nordic Holiday Craft Projects



Danish Gækkebrev

Gækkebreve are made in Denmark right before Easter, when the *vintergækker* (snowdrops) come out. Do not sign your name on your gækkebrev, instead, poke a dot with a pin for each letter of your name. If the person to whom you send your gækkebrev cannot guess who sent the letter before Easter, he is a *gæk*, or fool, and owes you a present. If he does guess, you owe him a present!



snowdrops

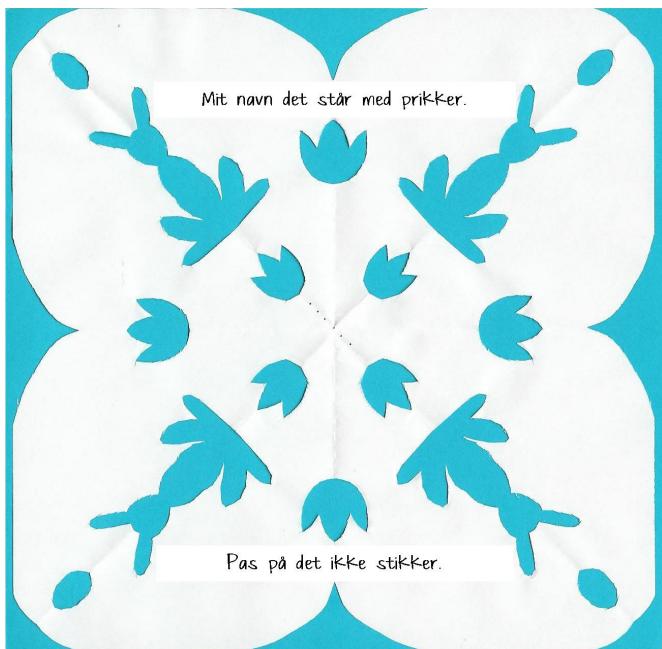
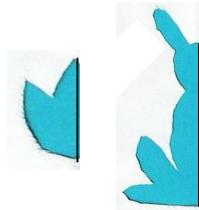
Materials

square piece of white paper
colored piece of paper
scissors
pen/pencil
pin
glue stick

Directions

Making a gækkebrev is similar to making a paper snowflake!

1. Fold the square piece of paper into a triangle two or three times and cut out flowers and other spring-like designs along the folds. See the tulip and rabbit examples to the right.
2. Open your paper and write a short poem on it.
3. Do not sign your name! Use the pin to poke one hole for each letter in your name.
4. Glue your cut out onto the colored piece of paper and deliver.



The gækkebrev to the left says:

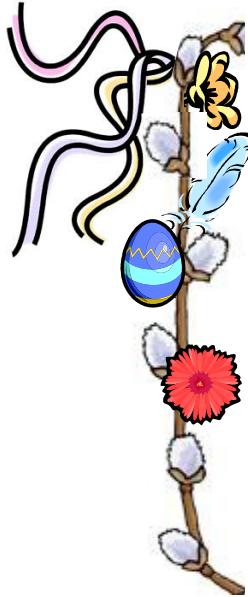
Danish

Mit navn det står med prikker.
Pas på det ikke stikker.

English

My name is spelled with dots.
Beware it doesn't sting.

Finnish *Vitsa*



On *Palmusunnuntai* (Palm Sunday) in Finland, children go out in the morning to gather pussy willow branches to make vitsas. Once the branches are gathered they are decorated with feathers, ribbons, small eggs, and paper flowers. Children dress up as witches and go from house to house with their decorated vitsas, waving them in the air while reciting a poem. In exchange, the children are given treats!

Materials

pussy willow branch
feathers
ribbons
small imitation eggs
paper/fabric flowers
florist tape

Directions

1. Decorate your pussy willow branch with any of the items listed above. You can use florist tape to tie things on as needed.

Here is a verse you can say while waving your vitsa:

Finnish

Virpoi, varpoi, vitsat käyvät.
Tuoreeks, terveeks, tulevaks vuodeks.
Siulle vitsa, miulle palkka.

English

Virpoi, varpoi, pussy willow wands wave.
A fresh start and health for the coming year.
For you the wand, for me the reward.



Icelandic *Bolluvöndur*

In Iceland, *Bolludagur* (Bun Day) is the Monday before Lent starts. On *Bolludagur*, children get up early in the morning to catch their parents still in bed. Then, while shouting “*Bolla! Bolla!*” (“Bun! Bun!”) they beat them out of bed with blows from a *bolluvöndur* (bun wand), which is colorfully decorated with strips of paper and gleaming ribbon. For each blow the children give their parents the reward is one *rómabolla*, or cream bun!

Materials

a branch (or dowel)
crepe paper
ribbons
scissors
tape/glue

Directions

1. Wrap long, thin strips of crepe paper or ribbon in two different colors tightly around the branch. Fasten the end with tape.
2. Cut slightly thicker strips of crepe paper or ribbon in three colors and fasten bunches of the paper to your stick at different levels using glue or tape. (Or a staple gun with an adult’s help.)

For another version, staple two paper plates together at the top of your stick. Before stapling them, fill them with something that rattles. You can draw a face on the plates and attach strips of crepe paper at the top to look like hair.



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Many thanks to icelandreview.com for the instructions on how to make bolluvöndur.

Norwegian Flag Pin

Syttende Mai, Norwegian Constitution Day, is May 17th and everyone in Norway celebrates. One of the main attractions is the *barnetoget*, or children's parade. The largest Syttende Mai parade takes place in Oslo, where some 100,000 people participate in the festivities. The largest Syttende Mai parade outside of Norway takes place in Ballard, right in Seattle!

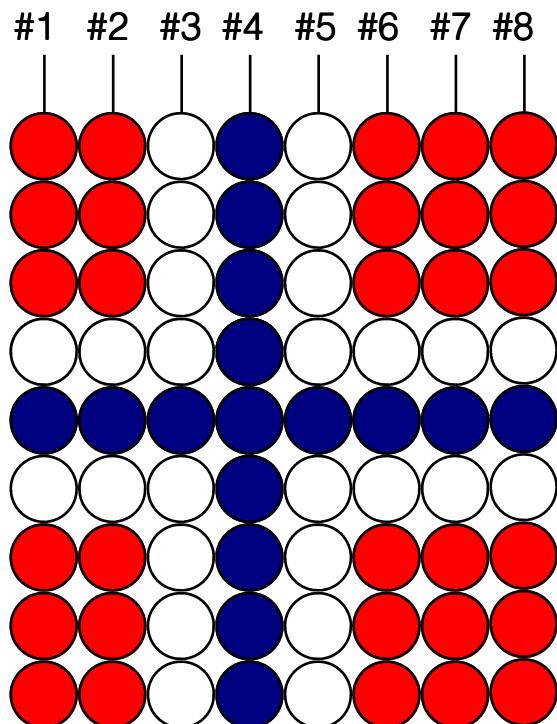
Make your own Norwegian flag pin to celebrate Syttende Mai.

Materials

9 medium safety pins (#1 size)
30 small red seed beads
26 small white seed beads
16 small blue seed beads

Directions

1. On pin #1, place the following beads in this order: 3 red, 1 white, 1 blue, 1 white, 3 red.
2. On pin #2, repeat the same order as pin #1.
3. On pin #3, place the following beads in this order: 4 white, 1 blue, 4 white.
4. Fill pin #4, with 9 blue beads.
5. On pin #5, repeat the same order as pin #3.
6. On pins #6, 7, and 8, place the beads in the same order as pin #1.
7. Place pins #1 through #8 in order from left to right on the remaining safety pin.



Swedish Snapper

Snappers are made by Swedish children and hung on Christmas trees. They're left up until the Christmas tree is taken down on January 13—the 20th day after Christmas and King Knut's name day.

Materials

two pieces of colored tissue paper, 10" x 13"
empty toilet paper roll
pencil
scissors
tape
ribbon
a treat, such as a piece of candy or a small toy
stickers



Directions

1. Place the two sheets of tissue paper together and center the toilet paper roll on the paper.
2. Use the pencil to mark the ends of the tube on the paper. Draw a line from edge to edge—this will be your folding line.
3. Accordion fold both sides (like a fan), folding ends toward the center. Stop at the folding line.
4. Cut through the pleats to the folding line. **You must cut through all the folds.** The closer together you make your cuts, the finer the fringe will be. Do this on both sides.
5. Place the toilet paper roll on the edge of the paper between the cut pleats. Tape on the tissue paper and roll it up. Tape closed.
6. Tie one end with a piece of ribbon. Put your treat inside. Tie the other end with a piece of ribbon. If you plan to hang your snapper on a tree, use one long piece of ribbon to tie both ends, creating a hanger. Decorate with stickers.
7. Hold the tube in your hand so that the ends stick out and shake, shake, shake. The ends will fluff out into two colors of pretty fringe.

