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Nostimo News

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CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS IN GREECE

Christmas in Greece goes back to the time of St. Nicholas, who was known as the patron saint of sailors. According to Greek tradition, his clothes were soaked with brine, his beard drenched with saltwater, and his face is covered with perspiration because he had been fighting the storms and waves to reach sinking ships and rescue drowning men from the sea. Even today there is still an old custom where many ships never leave port without a St. Nicholas icon carried in the boat.

In Greece, there are many Christmas customs that are similar, yet slightly different from the West. Such as the custom on Christmas Eve where village children travel from house to house offering good wishes and singing 'kalanda', the equivalent of Christmas carols. The children often accompany the songs using small metal triangles and little clay drums. Afterwards, they are given sweets or coins in appreciation.

On Greek Christmas, the feast itself becomes the main attraction by both adults and children alike. Lamb and pork are roasted in ovens and open spits, and on almost every table you will find loaves of 'christopsomo' ('Christ bread'). This bread is made in large sweet loaves of various shapes and the crusts are engraved and decorated in some way that reflects the family's profession.

In Greek homes, Christmas trees are not commonly used, but recently have become more popular. Traditionally almost every house will have a shallow wooden bowl with a piece of wire suspended across the rim; from that hangs a sprig of basil wrapped around a wooden cross. A small amount of water is kept in the bowl to keep the basil alive and fresh. Once a day, a family member, usually the mother, dips the cross and basil into some holy



Athens, Syntagma Square at Christmas.

water and uses it to sprinkle water in each room of the house. While now seen as blessing, the ritual is based in Greek folklore when people believed this ritual kept the 'Killantzaroi' (bad spirits) away. There are a number of beliefs connected with these spirits, which are supposed to be a species of goblins who appear only during the 12-day period from Christmas to the Epiphany (January 6). These creatures are believed to come from the center of the earth and to slip into people's house through the chimney. More mischievous than actually evil, the Killantzaroi do things like extinguish fires, ride astride people's backs, braid horses' tails, and sour the milk. To further repel the undesirable sprites, the hearth is kept burning day and night throughout the twelve days. A few small gifts are exchanged on St. Basil's Day (January 1); with many homes donating gifts to hospitals and orphanages. On this day the "renewal of waters" also takes place, a ritual in which all water jugs in the house are emptied and refilled with new "St. Basil's Water." The ceremony is often accompanied by offerings to the 'naiads', spirits of springs and fountains. (www.gogreece.com; www.aroundgreece.com)

HOLIDAY FUN ONLINE



Office Max features a page where you can 'Elf' yourself, your family and friends. If you haven't done this yet, give it a whirl, it's absolutely hilarious and fun. Go to www.elfyourself.com and have some fun. In addition, there are a few safe, kid friendly sites that provide holiday themed games and activities: Make your own snowflake at <http://snowflakes.barkleyus.com/>. Billy Bear 4 Kids has several games and

activities at <http://www.billybear4kids.com/holidays/christmas/games.htm>.

HAPPENINGS IN THE NOSTIMO NEIGHBORHOOD

NOSTIMO CATERING



Nostimo Catering is available for the holidays, all parties, special events, seminars and corporate meetings. Call us with your catering needs.

Our catering menu is available both on our website or in the restaurant. Email requests can be sent to

info@cafenostimo.com

DECEMBER PRIZE WINNERS

Prize winners in our December Drawings:

- \$5 gift card - Joyce Sterns, Portsmouth, NH

- \$5 gift card - Jon Landerz, Rye, NH

- \$10.00 gift card - Francine Dupont, Eliot, ME

Congrats to all!! Look for your prizes in the mail!

To be entered in our monthly raffle, and to receive a birthday coupon from Cafe Nostimo, sign up for our monthly newsletter at www.cafenostimo.com.

GIFT CARDS AVAILABLE

Great stocking stuffer idea! Cafe Nostimo gift cards are available in amounts of \$5 or more. Gift cards are available in the restaurant or via phone by calling 603-436-3100. Give something 'Deliciously Greek!' this Holiday Season!

We Need A Little Christmas... Enjoy Some Holiday Magic With Local Theater Performances.

Oh the hustle and the bustle of the season. This year, vow to slow down and start a family tradition of taking in a holiday performance at one of the seacoasts many theaters.

The Music Hall, Portsmouth:

All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914- is New England premiere of an acclaimed new production reminds us of the power of music to make peace even in wartime.

Ballet New England Presents An 1836 Portsmouth Nutcracker - This holiday classic blends ballet, local history, costume, and architecture into one of the most unique Nutcracker presentations in New England. Also don't miss Ballet New England's presentation of "Nutcracker In a Nutshell" an abbreviated performance designed to introduce younger audiences to the magic and beauty of dance, live performance, and the beloved story of the Nutcracker.

Kenneth Kiesler Conducts the Holiday Pops - Enjoy timeless and heartwarming classics performed by a full orchestra and special guests. All your favorites are here, with sing-alongs, merriment and cheer.

Messiah Sing! 2008 - The Music Hall once again hosts the Seacoast's largest Messiah Sing, pulling together best-loved area choruses and conductors. Join your friends and family in a community sing.

Leahy Family Celtic Christmas - Canadian powerhouse band, and Music Hall favorite, comprised of eight siblings, known for their fiddle-driven Celtic/world music and step dancing will transport you and fill you with their infectious Irish spirit in this performance of their favorite Celtic medleys and traditional Christmas carols.

Visit www.musicHall.org for times and ticket information.

Leddy Center Theatre for Performing Arts, Epping: Charles Dickens, A Christmas Carol - must see classic! Showing December 5th through 14th.

Visit www.leddycenter.org for times and ticket information.

Seacoast Repertory Theatre, Portsmouth: Meet Me in St. Louis - This holiday heart warmer is sure to delight everyone with classic songs like *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas* & *The Trolley Song*. Showing November 28th thru December 28th.

Visit www.seacoastrepertorytheater.org for times and ticket information.

Pontine Theatre, Portsmouth: It's a Wonderful Life - A two-person version of "It's A Wonderful Life." Based on a 1940's radio play, this condensed, version of the holiday classic features puppets, masks and holiday music. Egg nog & cookies for all! Visit www.pontinetheatre.org for times and ticket information. Showing December 5 & 7th only.

Players Ring, 105 Marcy St, Portsmouth: A Christmas Carol - A unique spin on a traditional classic. Showing December 5th through 21st. Shows Fri & Sat 8pm, Sunday 7pm. Tickets \$12 (December 5th show is \$24 for fundraiser.) Call 436-8123 for reservations.



Kala Christougena - Merry Christmas

