

## **10 WAYS TO BRITISH UP YOUR CHRISTMAS HOLIDAYS**

Many American Christmas traditions trace back to England, like the main staples of decorating your home, putting up a tree, exchanging presents and having a mid-day dinner. Why not British it up a bit more this year?

### **1. LETTERS**

It is very common for school age children to write letters to Santa Claus. But, the Brits take it a step further and burn the letters in the fireplace so the ashes fly up the chimney and Father Christmas can read the smoke. If, like many, you don't have a fireplace/chimney ... surely you can find alternative means. Just be safe!

### **2. STOCKINGS**

Rather than hanging stockings above the fireplace, British children hang them at the end of their bed hoping they will be filled by Christmas morning. That would be a nice surprise to wake up to. At the same time it might be difficult for "Santa" to fill without waking the wee ones.

### **3. CRACKERS**

The cracker is a paper tube, covered in foil, twisted at both ends. It's shaped like a large sweet with hidden treasures inside. Each person crosses their arms, using their right hand to hold their cracker, and pulling their neighbor's cracker with their left. POP! The cracker will make a bit of a bang with the contents spilling out which usually is a joke to be read at the dinner table, a small trinket and a paper crown.

### **4. CROWN**

Everyone is a king on Christmas! The paper crowns are made of tissue paper and unfold into an actual crown. Adults and children alike don the crown making it a colorful sight. The paper hat was added to the crackers in the early 1900s and the tradition has carried on.

### **5. MID-DAY DINNER**

Christmas dinner is similar to that of the U.S. with a roast turkey, goose or chicken and trimmings. But, there are some specialty items that aren't as common such as parsnips which are a root vegetable similar to a carrot. It's a familiar taste but it's fun to incorporate a new veggie to the table. Brits love their pudding but Yorkshire Pudding isn't pudding-pudding like you would think. It's more like a flakey, deflated biscuit with the center just waiting to hold your gravy. Does a trifle sound familiar? Oh boy, Rachel on *Friends* tried to make a traditional English trifle but the recipe pages stuck together

and she mixed together a trifle with sheperd's pie. It is indeed a layered cake but strictly no beef.

#### 6. **WASSAIL**

Wassa-what? Wassail literally means "good health" or to "be healthy" and in this case is a hot, mulled drink. There are different ways to serve it like a hot cider but it may also be made with a base of wine. It was originally topped with slices of toast as sops (piece of bread to soak up the liquid.) Mmm, wonder why wine drenched bread went out of style? Well, Brits may question Americans' craving for eggnog over the holidays.

#### 7. **ROYAL CHRISTMAS MESSAGE**

The tradition of sending out a Christmas Message to the public began in 1932 with George V. Current day the Queen gives a speech on Christmas Day at 3pm in England. You can gather around the tele with your loved ones and watch it on BBC America ... that's about prime Christmas present opening time on this end with the time difference. BBCA will air it later in the day to allow family time. Check your listings for exact times as the day approaches.

#### 8. **TEA**

Christmas tea usually rolls around 6pm and it is round two of a sit down with family and treats. Pretty much, any proper English event involves tea. Mince pies or sausage rolls might accompany the tea party. Rather than breaking out the Lipton, which would be spat at by any visiting Brit, we suggest PG Tips that originated in the UK in the 1930s. If you can't find them at a local shop you can do a quickie order from Amazon.com.

#### 9. **BOXING DAY**

Boxing Day follows Christmas day and is a nationally recognized holiday in the UK, also called a bank holiday. It was originally the day for servants and tradesman to receive presents from their employers but it's now basically a big shopping day for Brits. It's similar to Black Friday in the U.S. Your boss may wonder why you didn't go into the office as it's not an official holiday in the U.S. Maybe celebrate this one after work and get your shop on?

#### 10. **NEXT YEAR**

Brits say you need to take your tree and decorations down within 12 days of Christmas or you'll have bad luck for the next year. Don't be that house on the street with blinking lights that go on through Valentine's Day! Get that stuff down and get on with the New Year!

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