

Christmas in Sweden



Christmas is probably the most celebrated holiday in Sweden. Even if people celebrate in slightly different ways, there are a lot of things they have in common. Most people celebrate with their families, so for those who don't have a family nearby, it is a very lonely holiday. But churches, for instance, organize meetings for people who don't have someone to spend Christmas with.

Four Sundays before the actual Christmas days we start celebrating by lighting the first candle in our candlestick consisting of four candles. Then you light another candle the next Sunday and so on. This time is called Advent, but since many people nowadays start to celebrate in November already, there is a new word – novent!



From the first Sunday of Advent people put up a lot of lightings, both indoors and outdoors. There are a lot of Christmas trees in gardens and in market squares. In the windows there are certain Advent electric lights or stars. Earlier there were seven candles, but now you can see five as well.



In Sweden Christmas Eve is the most important day – not Christmas Day! That day a buffet called julbord (Christmas table) is served. There you find e g ham, herring, potatoes, spare ribs, meat balls, sausages, Janssons frestelse (Jansson's Temptation*), eggs and salad. There is a special drink – julmust – a kind of soft drink. Then there are specialities in different areas e g in Västergötland you eat brown beans, in Halland you eat kale and in the east part of Småland a kind of potatoe dumpling. Later you also eat rice pudding (porridge) with milk and cinnamon.

* Jansson's Temptation. You mix sliced onions, potatoes cut as strips with anchovis and cream and put in a pan. Sprinkled bread crumbs and pats of butter on top. Then bake in the oven for about 45 – 60 minutes in 225°C.



For dessert there is often a dish called Ris à la Malta. It is made of cold rice pudding (porridge) mixed with cream and sugar.



There are also special kinds of sweet during Christmas. Knäck and ischoklad are the most common. Knäck is a kind of toffee with almonds and ischoklad is chocolate and coconut fat melted and mixed.



In the afternoon at 3 o'clock there are different parts from Disney films on TV, starting with a very old one in Santa's workshop and ending with a part of a new Disney film. It is a tradition to watch the programme and a lot of people do so.

In Sweden we actually see Santa Claus. Usually he comes knocking on our door in the late afternoon/early evening. He has a sack full of presents and always asks "Are there any kind children here? And of course everyone says "Yes".



Questions

1. Who do people spend Christmas with?
2. During the four Sundays before Christmas something is done in most homes. What?
3. Can you explain the word novent?
4. What can you see in windows during Advent and Christmas?
5. Which is the most important day during Christmas?
6. If you live in Västergötland what food do you eat?
7. Explain what knäck is?
8. Explain what ischoklad is?
9. What do you know about Santa Claus in Sweden?