



Feasts

OF THE HOLIDAYS

Special Time for Holidays

If you like holidays, this is the very best time of the year. Starting with late fall, the calendar is full of special days to take you all the way through the dark months of winter. Some holidays are always celebrated on the same day of the year. Others occur on different dates each year because they are tied to the lunar calendar.

Did You Know?

The earliest holidays were connected with the seasons of the year and with religious beliefs. In fact, the word "holiday" comes from Old English words that mean "holy day."

Favorite Holiday Foods

What are your favorite holiday foods? Write them on the lines below. Then create a master list for the class and chart the results. Which were the most popular with the most people? Finish by brainstorming the beginning of a holiday story featuring one food in some way.

Holiday News

Look through today's newspaper and see if you can find a picture of people celebrating. They may be celebrating a birthday, wedding, holiday or a victory. What are the traditions surrounding the celebration? (parties, gifts, cake, high-fives, hugs...)

Next, see how many winter holidays you can list. How does food play a part in each celebration?

Imagine Thanksgiving without the sights and smells of dinner roasting in the oven... Christmas without mouthwatering cookies full of sugar, cinnamon and other fragrant spices... Hanukah without the taste of crispy latkes. Foodless holidays don't sound like very much fun, do they?

For most of us, special foods have become an important part of the holiday tradition. There's no doubt about it — gathering together around a table to share food with family and friends is a big part of many of our best-loved holidays. You and your parents, aunts and uncles, and grandparents feel closer when you share family food traditions.

Eating food together is more than filling your belly, however. It's about celebrating our relationships with each other. It is also about celebrating the heritage and culture of the different people who make up America.

In this supplement, we'll celebrate the feasts of the winter holidays. You'll have fun thinking and talking about some familiar foods from well-known holidays, and you'll also learn about holidays that may not be quite as familiar to you. Chances are, your class includes kids from different backgrounds who would love to share their holiday experiences.

For each holiday, you'll learn some interesting facts and find some fun activities to do with your classmates or on your own. We've included some recipes that you might like to try at home with your family. And you'll get to dream up your very own Winter Solstice celebration — complete with any foods and other traditions that you would like to invent or borrow from other favorite holidays.

The Winter Solstice — which marks the shortest day of the year — was the first winter holiday that people celebrated.





Diwali

Festival of Lights

Holiday News

From earliest times, winter holidays have been celebrated with lights. Bonfires, candles and, now, electric lights brighten homes and communities. Light was important to winter holidays because winter is the darkest time of year. Light also can be a symbol of beliefs or understanding. Look through the news-paper today for five examples of lights being used to celebrate holidays. Pick one and write a short poem or rap about what light adds to the holiday.

The most widely observed festival in the Hindu religion is Diwali, the Festival of Lights. It is a lunar holiday that falls in October or November, at the end of the monsoon rains in India. Diwali (sometimes spelled Divali) is a five-day holiday, as important in the Hindu calendar as Christmas is in the Christian calendar. The fourth day marks the beginning of a new year in the Hindu calendar. This year, the festival began on November 14. Next year it will be November 4.

During Diwali, Hindus hang lights from the edges of roofs and window ledges and in rows along riverbanks. They may use electric lights or candles or tiny clay saucers filled with oil in which cotton wicks are lighted. The holiday honors Laksmi, the goddess of wealth, who is believed to be returning from her country home at this time of year. The holiday also celebrates the victory of the god Rama over the evil demon Ravana.

Many special foods are enjoyed during this holiday, including Karunjies, pastries filled with coconut, sugar and spices, and Jalebis, pretzels made from flour and butter and coated with sugar. (This recipe calls for deep-frying batter in hot oil, so be very careful, and don't attempt this without an adult present.)

A Recipe For

Jalebi

1 1/2 cups flour
cold water for mixing
2 tablespoons yogurt
1 teaspoon
yellow food coloring

2 cups sugar
2 cups water
oil for deep frying
3 cardamom seeds
3 cloves

Mix flour, yogurt, food coloring and enough water to make a batter as thick as heavy cream and then push the mixture through a sieve. Cover and leave in a warm place overnight to ferment.

Next day, boil sugar, water, cardamoms and cloves for about 10 minutes to make a thick syrup. Set aside in a warm place.

Beat the batter again. Fill a deep pan halfway with oil and heat to near boiling.

Put batter in an icing bag, plugging the hole with a finger. Hold bag over hot oil, remove finger and let batter drip into the hot oil in shapes of the figure 8, spirals, double circles etc. Fry until golden brown (about 1 minute), on both sides. Do not let them get too dark.

Remove fried jalebis from oil, drain on paper towels. Set them in the warm syrup, allowing them to soak well, for about 5 minutes, but not so long that they lose their crispness. Remove from syrup, drain well, and serve.

RECIPE MATH: Three ingredients are measured in cups in this recipe. What is the total number of cups of the three?

FUN FOOD FACT



Did you know that yogurt, a popular item in Indian cuisine, is eaten all over the world? One legend about yogurt is that it was first discovered about 750 years ago by a soldier of the fierce warrior Genghis Khan, who was given a gourd full of milk to carry on his trip through the desert. As he bounced up and down on his horse in the hot sun, the milk turned to — you guessed it — yogurt! At least that's how the legend goes