

CULTURAL COMPETENCY CORNER

A MONTHLY PUBLICATION FOR THE EMPLOYEES OF
RISE SERVICES, INC.

Dear Rise Employee:

In this edition of the Cultural Competency Corner, we will discuss Christmas and other seasonal celebrations. This time of year encourages reflection, thanksgiving, and an appreciation of all humanity. As we consider different holiday traditions, we hope it will increase our understanding of each other and raise the spirit of goodwill that exists at RISE. We have appreciated you being on this cultural competency journey during 2021. We are excited to see how much growth we will experience during 2022!



**Steven Hunter,
Diversity Officer**

Steven Hunter, Diversity Officer
Rise Services, Inc.
Email: steveh@riservicesinc.org
Phone: 480.799.6765

This newsletter is designed with you in mind. If you have content ideas, cultural events, or cultural celebrations to share, please forward them to Steven Hunter for consideration.

RISE CORPORATE VALUES



FIVE COMMON CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS

1. CHRISTIAN FAMILIES RECOUNT THE BIBLICAL VERSION OF THE CHRISTMAS STORY. THE ACCOUNT IS OFTEN ILLUSTRATED WITH A NATIVITY SCENE. THIS IS THE ORIGIN OF ALL CHRISTIAN CELEBRATIONS.
2. TRIMMING THE CHRISTMAS TREE IS A TRADITION MANY FAMILIES SHARE TOGETHER.
3. IN THE UNITED STATES CHILDREN LEAVE SANTA MILK AND COOKIES. IN THE UK AND AUSTRALIA, FAMILIES LEAVE MINCE PIE AND SHERRY.
4. PEOPLE THE WORLD OVER DRINK EGGNOG WHICH IS TRADITIONALLY MADE WITH EGGS, CREAM, MILK, SUGAR, AND OFTEN WHISKEY OR RUM.
5. KISSING UNDER THE MISTLETOE IS UNIVERSAL. THE ORIGIN STORY IS MURKY AT BEST. NONETHELESS, IT IS A POPULAR TRADITION.

Lesser-known Christmas Tradition

Oh, Pickle!

Somewhere in the Christmas tree, is a pickle for you to see. If you find it quick, you are sure to have a year full of luck from Saint Nick!



IT'S CHRISTMAS

For Christians all over the world, December 25 is the day that is celebrated as Jesus' birth. Both Christians and non-believers acknowledge that during this time of year, the spirit of Christmas ushers in a time of peace, joy, goodwill, and giving. There are some Christmas traditions that are universally shared. We buy Christmas trees, exchange Christmas cards, decorate with green and red, and snack on candy canes. But do you know where these traditions originate?

Origins of Christmas Traditions

Let's start with the universally accepted **Christmas colors which are gold, red, and green**. These Christmas colors have religious roots. Red honors the blood of Christ. Gold represents one of the gifts from the Three Kings (or Three Wise Men). And green is a symbol of everlasting life.

The **Christmas Tree** was adopted by Christian and pagan people who have used the fir tree to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years.

Using a Christmas tree became popular in the UK when Queen Victoria's husband, Prince Albert, brought one over from Germany in 1841. The family posed in front of the tree for a newspaper article and people all over the country began to imitate them. Today Christmas trees adorn homes, hospitals, churches, statehouses, and anywhere people congregate.

The **Christmas Wreath** was adopted by Christians in the Middle Ages to represent the beginning of Christmas. The Christmas Wreath is a symbol of honor and victory.

Giving **Christmas Cards** is a tradition of greeting that is shared despite religious persuasions. Sir Henry Cole (a Victorian Entrepreneur) commissioned the first Christmas card in the UK in 1843. Sir Cole did not have time to write individual greetings to his friends and needed a way to send simple salutations.

The **Candy Cane** was made 350 years ago. The candy cane has become a symbol and tradition during the Christmas holiday. The candy is often used as a decoration for Christmas trees. The first candy cane was not made in the shape of a cane. It was white, completely straight, and flavored with sugar. In the 1920's Bob McCormack, from Atlanta, GA was the first to mass-produce the red and white candy cane for Christmas.

How Other Religions Celebrate

Christmas

The Jewish Festival of Lights

Chanukah, or Hanukkah, lasts for eight days and begins on December 25th. It celebrates the victory of Judah the Maccabee over the Syrian tyrant Antiochus 2100 years ago.

Each night of the festival, the family gathers around the menorah which is a special candelabrum that holds eight candles. The head of the family uses a helper candle - called a Shamos - to light one candle on the first night. On the second night, two candles are lit, and so on, until all eight candles are lit on the eighth night. Each night, the family will exchange gifts. In some families, children play games with a small four-sided wooden top called a dreidel. On each side of the top is one letter of NGHS, or Nes Godol Hoyoh Shom, which means "A great miracle happened there." Hanukkah means "dedication."

Islam

Muslims all over the world celebrate Ramadan, which marks the month the prophet Mohammed had their holy book, the Koran, revealed to him by God. The celebration starts at the first sighting of the moon in Ramadan.

Muslims cannot eat and drink at all in the daytime during this period. Muslims may break their fast only when the sun sets and again before the sun rises. They share Ramadan treats, like Konafa (an Egyptian dessert made of shredded wheat and syrup), and Katayef (sweets stuffed with nuts). Muslims may also eat dates (iftar). Islamic teachings indicate dates were eaten by Mohammed at the end of each day of the fasting month. During Ramadan, the days are spent in prayer and reflection.

The fast ends with the celebration of Eid al-Fitr, the festival of the breaking of the fast. Muslim governments may grant amnesties to political and other prisoners on this day.

IN GRATITUDE

Each month I have tried to share information about other cultures to increase our awareness and appreciation of each other. I hope, like me, you have grown in understanding as we journey toward cultural competency.

Thank you for your willingness to view the world through the "lens of another".