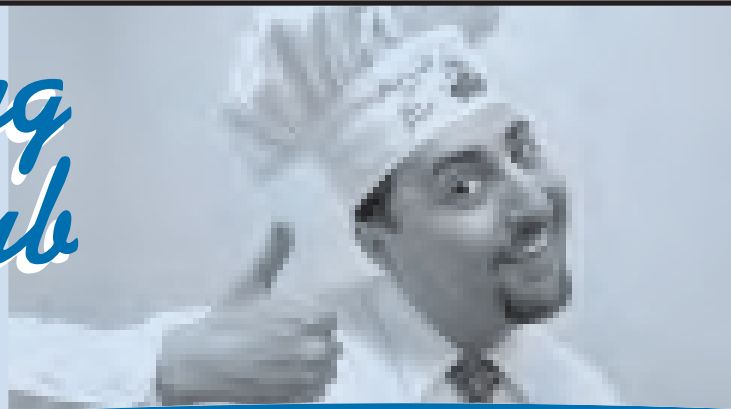


Cooking with the Club

by our own
Robert Larios



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Rudolph Leads a Tour of Global Holiday Traditions, With the Last Stop in America

From now, the human civilization will be known as a civilization that celebrated holidays including Christmas, Hanukkah and other holidays in December with the customary exchange of gifts, the gathering of family and friends, staying awake for St. Nicholas, attending church, and my personal favorite...the delicious food!

Take, for instance, Italy. Here they celebrate Christmas with a traditional seven-course lunch that typically includes pasta, cheese, fruit, cakes including panpepato and chocolates! Yes, that is right...chocolates. For those who are Italian, I know you won't forgive me if I don't mention cotechino, so I will. It's a meal that has the freshest of pork sausage with lentils and is usually made between Christmas and New Year.

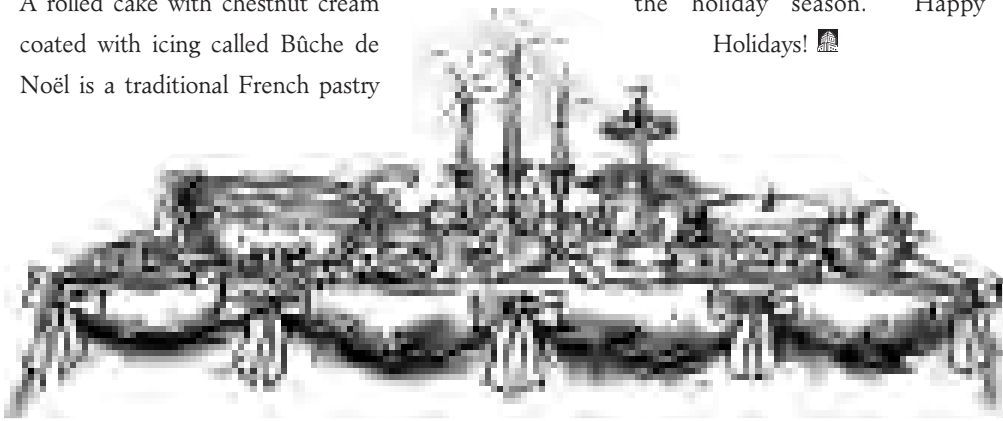
In France, roasted poultry dishes including roasted goose and foie gras are common. A rolled cake with chestnut cream coated with icing called *Bûche de Noël* is a traditional French pastry

dish said to represent the Yule log that was once burned from Christmas until New Year's Day.

In Austria and Germany, goose is normally the dish of choice for Christmas. The Germans serve potatoes, cabbage, pickled vegetables and parsnips with their goose as well as other wild game. Stollen is a classic German cake served during this time. It was first created in the 14th century; stollen is a dense cake with yeast and dried fruit said to have a resemblance to Christ.

By the way, Germany is credited with starting the Christmas tree tradition in the 16th century when devout Christians brought decorated trees into their homes. Some built Christmas pyramids of wood and decorated them with evergreens and candles if wood was scarce.

What sorts of foods are typical in America? Here are just a few of my favorites for the holiday season. Happy Holidays! 🎅



Shrimp Ball Spread

INGREDIENTS

- 1 (8 oz) package cream cheese, softened
- 1 (4 1/4 oz.) can shrimp, drained and chopped
- 6 pimiento-stuffed olives, chopped
- 2 tbsp. finely chopped onion or green onion
- 2 tbsp. mayonnaise or salad dressing
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 1/4 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 1/4 tsp. hot sauce
- 1/8 tsp. garlic powder
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 tbsp. dill weed

DIRECTIONS

Combine all ingredients; refrigerate 30 minutes. Form into ball or log shape. Serve with crackers or rounds of bread. You can garnish with parsley or sliced green or black olives; I often leave out the chopped olives.

I have even used fresh boiled shrimp chopped fine and have added some sharp cheddar cheese chopped or grated fine in with the cream cheese mixture. Just add a little more mayonnaise. I usually put the cream cheese and cheddar in the food processor and chop them fine. I've also used whole green onions in place of the regular onion.



Holiday Dip

INGREDIENTS

- 2 cups shredded cheddar cheese (8 oz)
- 1 package cream cheese, softened (8 oz)
- 1 1/2 cups sour cream
- 1/2 cup chopped cooked ham
- 1/3 cup chopped green chiles
- 1/3 cup chopped green onions
- 1/8 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 (1-lb) round loaf French bread
- Salt and pepper
- 1 teaspoon paprika

DIRECTIONS

Combine first seven ingredients in a medium bowl, stirring well. Set dip aside.

Cut a thin slice from top of bread loaf; set slice aside. Using a gentle sawing motion, cut vertically to, but not through, bottom of the loaf, one-half inch from the edge. Lift out center of loaf; cut into 1-inch cubes, and set aside. Fill hollowed bread loaf with dip; cover with reserved top slice of bread loaf. Wrap reserved loaf with aluminum foil. Bake at 350 degrees for 1 hour. Serve with reserved bread cubes, crackers, or potato chips.

Makes about 4 cups of dip.



The Greatest Potato Leek Soup

From the Chef of the
Hyatt Grand Champions Resort and Spa
Indian Wells, California

YIELD: 3 Quarts

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 oz. olive oil
- 1/2 oz. garlic, chopped
- 1 oz. shallots
- 2 branches leek, minced
- 1/2 lb. Idaho potatoes, diced
- 2 qts. chicken stock
- 1-1/2 oz. heavy cream
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Garnish of leek julienne, deep fried

DIRECTIONS

Sautee all the vegetables (except potatoes) with olive oil. Add the diced potatoes. Add the chicken stock and cook for about 25 minutes. Puree the soup and then add cream. Season and add garnish.



Santa's Beer Meatballs

INGREDIENTS

- 1 can of beer
- 1 6 oz can spicy V-8 juice
- 1 tsp. lemon juice
- 1 tsp. hot sauce (I like Louisiana hot sauce)
- 1/2 cup Italian bread crumbs (toasted bread will work too)
- 1 cup onions
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 1 large bottle ketchup
- 1 tsp. horseradish
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 to 3 lbs. ground beef
- 2 to 3 eggs

DIRECTIONS

Combine ground beef, half-cup onions, Italian bread crumbs, eggs. Make the mixture into small meatballs. Then fry or bake the meat. In saucepan combine remaining ingredients. Simmer for 15 minutes. Put meatballs and sauce into slow cooker/Crock Pot. The sauce should cover the meat. Allow to simmer in slow cooker/Crock Pot for at least 3 hours; the longer you let them simmer, the better they are! 6 to 10 hours on low temperature is great. Stir them occasionally. You may wish to add more ketchup, or V-8 juice — spice them up if you like them hot.

