

# IT'S THE HOLIDAY SEASON

## THE ORIGIN OF CHRISTMAS

The original meaning of Christmas is a special church service, or mass, to celebrate the birth of Christ. The story of the Nativity, or the events surrounding the birth of Jesus, are particularly important in religious celebrations of Christmas. However, many traditions that are around today have their roots in pre-Christian winter festivals. These include the importance of candles and decorations made from evergreen bushes and tree, symbolizing everlasting light and life.

In Roman times, a mid-winter festival was held. This was a relaxing time with a lot of parties and merry making. It was also common to give other people small gifts, such as dolls for children and candles for adults. This festival culminated with the celebration of the winter solstice, which fell on December 25 in the Roman calendar. In Scandinavia, a festival called Yule and lasting up to twelve days was held in late December and early January. In this time people burnt logs and held parties. These customs have influences how Christmas Day is celebrated today in the United States.

The Bible does not give a precise date for the birth of Jesus. It is also unclear when December 25 became associated with the birth of Jesus, although it may have been around two hundred years after his birth. In the early centuries of Christianity, the anniversary of the birth of Jesus was not a cause for celebrations. The idea of turning this day into a celebration started in the early Middle Ages in Europe.

During Reformation and up until the middle of the 1800s, Christmas was often not celebrated because partying and merry making was seen as unchristian. From about 1840, celebrating Christmas became more widespread. December 25 was declared a federal holiday in the United States in 1870. Since then Christmas Day has become a steadily more important holiday.

### Fun Fact

The red and white striped candy canes were first made around **1900**. The traditional candy cane flavor is peppermint, however, it is also made in a variety of other flavors and colored stripes. Over **1.76 billion** candy canes are made each year



## Christmas Candy Canes

The Christmas Candy Cane originated in Germany about 250 years ago. They started as straight white sugar sticks.



A story says that a choirmaster, in 1670, was worried about the children sitting quietly all through the long Christmas nativity service. So he gave them something to eat to keep them quiet! As he wanted to remind them of Christmas, he made them into a 'J' shape like a shepherd's crook, to remind them of the shepherds that visited the baby Jesus at the first christmas. However, the earliest records of 'candy canes' comes from over 200 years later, so the story, although rather nice, probably isn't true!

Sometime around 1900 the red stripes were added and they were flavored with peppermint or wintergreen.

Around 1920, Bob McCormack, from Georgia, USA, started making canes for his friends and family. They became more and more popular and he started his own business called Bob's Candies. Bob McCormack's brother-in-law, Gregory Harding Keller, who was a Catholic priest, invented the 'Keller Machine' that made turning straight candy sticks into curved candy canes automatically! In 2005, Bob's Candies was bought by Farley and Sathers but they still make candy canes!

### IN THIS EDITION

- What is Christmas
- History of the Candy Cane
- Holiday Cookies
- Fun games for kids

## Chocolate Chip Candy Cane Cookies

- 1/2 cup (1 stick) salted butter, at room temperature
- 2/3 cup packed light brown sugar
- 1/2 cup granulated sugar
- 1 large egg, beaten
- 1 1/2 cups all-purpose flour
- 1/2 teaspoon pumpkin pie spice
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1/4 teaspoon baking soda
- 1/3 cup bittersweet chocolate chips, gently chopped
- 1/4 cup (2 ounces) coarsely crushed red or green candy canes (4 to 5 candy canes)

Line 3 baking sheets with parchment paper. Scoop dough balls the size of golf balls, 1 tablespoon each, and place 3 inches apart on the baking sheet, about 8 cookies per sheet. Bake until the edges are set and the center is cooked through, but still soft, 13 to 15 minutes.

Cool the cookies for 2 to 3 minutes on the sheets. Then, holding the baking sheet over a wire cooling rack, remove the cookies from the sheet by gripping the baking sheet with one hand and the parchment paper on the opposite side with your other hand. Gently slide the parchment paper off the sheet with the cookies still on top, resting the parchment and cookies on the wire rack beneath until cool.

### Directions

Add the chopped chocolate chips and crushed candy canes. Turn the mixer back on low and blend until just combined; this should only take 3 to 4 rotations of the paddle.

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F.

To a stand mixer, add the butter, brown sugar and granulated sugar. Blend on high with the paddle attachment until the sugar granules are less visible and the mixture is light and fluffy, about 4 minutes.

Scrape the sides with a rubber spatula, then add the egg and blend on low until combined, stopping to scrape the sides more to incorporate.

Prepare the dry ingredients. In a separate bowl, add the flour, pumpkin pie spice, baking powder and baking soda. Stir and toss with a spoon or fork.

Scrape the sides of the mixer bowl and, while off, add half of the flour mixture. Turn on low and mix until combined; this should only take 5 to 6 rotations of the paddle. Stop and scrape the sides again, then add the other half of the flour and mix on low the same way. Turn off the mixer.



## FUN FUN FUN

### Christmas Tree Maze

Can you find your way from the base of the Christmas tree all the way to the star?



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## Christmas Word Search

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| G | C | S | S | E | F | Z | Y |
| Y | I | S | L | B | E | V | Y |
| L | S | F | A | E | A | R | L |
| L | V | V | T | N | I | B | T |
| O | L | J | W | S | T | G | Y |
| H | M | I | E | G | G | A | H |

baby  
gifts  
holly  
Santa  
sleigh  
tree



Hint: They all go diagonally