

# Christmas Traditions from Around the World

## Excerpts from *Our Favorite Recipes*

By Mary Lyle, Director of Education

Since 2008, the Western Heritage Museum and Lea County Cowboy Hall of Fame has presented ***Christmas Traditions from Around the World*** one of our most popular events, which featured the sights, sounds, and tastes of the season. The sights included over 45 decorated Christmas trees, Bonnie Moran's colossal Christmas Village, luminarias, and Mr. and Mrs. Santa Claus. The sounds of strolling Victorian Costumed Christmas Carolers and featured performers like *Irish Christmas in America* and the *Flying J Wranglers* provided the perfect holiday entertainment. And visitors tasted traditional foods from countries as far away as the Philippines, India, Poland, Germany and Italy, just to name a few. To many people in Lea County, *Christmas Traditions from Around the World* was the kick-off to the Christmas season.

Although COVID 19 has forced us to cancel this year's event, we can still share some of our favorite Christmas traditions. In 2010 and 2012 the Museum published *Our Favorite Recipes*, which included recipes from and information about over 16 different countries. I have chosen a few excerpts from the cookbook to share.

We hope that you are able to enjoy the holidays with your friends and family.



## United States – Gingerbread Cookies – Jean Glans



Gingerbread is popular throughout Europe and each country has its own version. Gingerbread can be a cake or a cookie. To be considered gingerbread, the recipe must feature ginger as a dominant flavor and use molasses to add sweetness. It is said the Queen Elizabeth I invented the “Gingerbread Man” in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a special treat for visiting dignitaries.

This recipe was supplied by Jean Glans, a wonderful friend of the Museum. Jean and her family loved Christmas Traditions from Around the World. They represented several different cultures over the years: England, New England, Norway, and France. Her recipe for Gingerbread Cookies was featured at her New England table.

### Gingerbread Cookies – Jean Glans

#### Ingredients

1 cup sugar	2 tsp. ginger
1 tsp. nutmeg	1 tsp. cinnamon
1 ½ tsp. baking soda	½ tsp. salt
1 cup melted butter	½ cup evaporated milk
1 cup unsulfured molasses	¼ tsp. vanilla extract
¼ tsp. lemon extract	4 cups unbleached flour, un-sifted

#### Directions

1. Preheat oven 375 degrees
2. Combine the sugar, ginger, nutmeg, cinnamon, salt, and baking soda. Mix well.
3. Add the melted butter, evaporated and molasses
4. Add the vanilla and lemon extracts and mix well.
5. Add flour a little at a time, tiring constantly. The dough should be stiff enough to handle with sticky fingers.
6. Knead the dough for a smoother texture. Add up to ½ cup additional flour if necessary to prevent sticking. When the dough is smooth, roll it out ¼ inch thick on a floured surface and cut into cookies.
7. Bake on greased cookie sheets in a preheated 375 degrees oven for 10-12 minutes. The gingerbread cookies are done when they spring back when touched.

## Mexico – Mexican Hot Chocolate – Lupe Johnston



Mexico has been our most popular table. Several different people have participated over the years. Lupe Johnston created our very first Mexican traditions table featuring her special Hot Chocolate recipe (featured here).

Marsha Ontiveros volunteered to represent Mexico and she stepped up the tasting fare to include tamales, tortillas and buñuelos.

Amy Solano and friends then took over. Horchata, carnitas, tortillas and salsa were some of the delicious menu items her team provided at the Mexican table.

### Tia Luisa's Mexican Hot Chocolate – Lupe Johnston

#### Ingredients

1 ½ gallon water	10 large cinnamon sticks
2 large cans evaporated milk	10 cups sugar
¾ cup cocoa powder	½ cup flour
2 cups cold water	(Sugar and cocoa may be adjusted to taste)

#### Directions

1. Bring water with cinnamon sticks to a rolling boil. Turn off the burner and let the water cool for about an hour.
2. Blend cocoa, flour, and cold water in a separate bowl until smooth.
3. Remove the cinnamon sticks from the water (strain if there are small pieces).
4. Place the water on the burner and heat. When it begins to boil, turn the heat down and add sugar. Stir the sugar until it dissolves.
5. Add the evaporated milk.
6. Slowly stir in the cocoa mixture to prevent lumps. Simmer for another 10 minutes.