

Holiday Traditions Jamaica



KINGSTON, Jamaica, Dec. 1 - Christmas season in Jamaica is the most festive time of the year, filled with non-stop celebrations, special treats like Jamaican Christmas cake and sorrel drinks, entertainment, parties, festivals and happy gatherings of friends and family. The Christmas season, which runs from mid-December to New Year's Day, is usually the biggest family event of the year. Jamaicans celebrate by going to Church, exchanging gifts with their families and gathering for a large meal.

Christmas Traditions

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=de-orWGUV8I>

Christmas carols in Jamaica are the same popular songs in other nations, including, Oh Holy Night, Silent Night, etc. However, some Christmas carols can also be found in a Reggae version.



Although Jamaica is an island that has never seen snow, and its houses are designed without chimneys, Santa Claus and his gifts are very much a part of Jamaica's tradition.



Christmas dinner is the biggest feast for Jamaicans on Christmas Day. It includes rice and gungo peas, chicken, oxtail, curry goat and roast ham. (Gungo peas usually ripen in December and are a Christmas specialty for Jamaica. Throughout the rest of the year, red peas are cooked with the rice, but gungo peas are substituted during the Christmas season.) Jamaicans also prepare roast beef and/or pork as well. A

Jamaican-style Christmas cake made of fruit soaked in rum, is also a holiday specialty.



The drink of choice for Jamaicans during the Christmas season is sorrel. From early December until January, sorrel is enjoyed across Jamaica. Made from dried sorrel (a meadow plant), cinnamon, cloves, ginger, sugar, orange peel and rum, the beverage is usually served over ice.

Seasonal Activities

Jonkanoo or John Canoe, is a traditional Christmas celebration in which revelers parade through the streets dressed in colorful masquerade. It was the major celebration for the slaves. The parade and festivities probably arrived with African slaves who were brought to Jamaica. Not as popular in the cities as it was 30 years ago, Jonkanoo is still a tradition in rural Jamaica.



Traditionally, the characters are played by men wearing white mesh masks. The Jonkanoo characters include the horned Cow Head, Policeman, Horse Head, Wild Indian, Devil, Belly-Woman, Pitchy-Patchy and sometimes a Bride and House Head, which was an image of a great house carried by the reveler on his head. “()Jonkanoo Dance”:http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GHp_ZMUERzo&feature=related

Although Jamaica is credited with the longest running tradition of Jonkanoo, today these mysterious bands with their gigantic costumes appear more as entertainment at cultural events than at random

The Grand Market



The Grand Market (or Gran' Market) is a community fair characterized by food, street dancing, crafts and music. In the past, the weekend before Christmas and particularly on Christmas Eve, markets all over the island were set up with vendors selling small toys, firecrackers, balloons and sweets of all kinds, including pinda (an African word for peanut) cakes, grater cakes and peppermint sticks.

Traditionally on Christmas Eve, some markets were decorated with streamers, large accordion-style bells, and balloons. People were decked out in fancy clothes, including bright hats purchased upon entering the Grand Market. Everyone came to town for Grand Market, and the celebrations lasted throughout the day and night.



Sorrel Drink

1-pound sorrel / 2-4 ounces ginger/ 2 quarts water /Sugar/Wine (optional)/8-12 pimento grains

*Method: Wash sorrel thoroughly, using the fingers to lift it from the water. Put into stainless steel container. Scrape and wash ginger. Grate and add to the sorrel. Add pimento grains. Boil water and pour over sorrel. Allow to stand 4-6 hours, Strain. Sweeten to taste and add rum to taste. Add optional wine and serve with ice cubes.

Jamaican Christmas Cake



6 ounces or 1.5 cups flour

8 ounces margarine or butter

8 ounces sugar

4 eggs

1-pound raisins

1-teaspoon cinnamon

Half teaspoon mixed spice

Half-teaspoon salt

4 ounces mixed peel

4 ounces cherries

Half-pound prunes (chopped)

1-cup wine/brandy

1-teaspoon baking powder

1-teaspoon vanilla

finely grated rind of 1 lime/lemon

2 tablespoons browning

Method: Cream butter, sugar and browning until soft and fluffy.

Sieve all dry ingredients together. Beat eggs, wine/brandy together. Add egg mixture to creamed butter and sugar. Add fruits.

Add flour and fold in. Do not over-beat when mixing.

Bake at 350 degrees F for 1.5 hours.

Yield: 9-inch round cake.