

Topic: Christmas Traditions Lost

Farewell to Oyster Stew, Fruitcake, and Other Christmas Traditions  
*by Liz Gibbons*

It's that lovely time of the year: the decorations, Christmas trees, Santa, Rudolph, Bing, wassail, sugar cookies, caroling, greeting cards, Salvation Army bell ringers, manger scenes, special church services, the National Christmas tree, and *Its a Wonderful Life*. Even for those who do not follow Christianity, there is a spirit to the season.

As a child I loved Christmas except for Christmas Eve supper. It was a tradition in my mother's family to have oyster stew on Christmas Eve, and she carried on that tradition. It was a quick, easy meal to prepare that included a salad, and recently baked nut bread and cookies which I often had a hand in making. All that food was good, except the oyster stew, which for me made the whole meal distasteful. Those squiggly critters in a milky soup base; no way was I going to eat them. That was a tradition I did not carry on when I married.

We always received a Claxton fruitcake from one of my father's sisters. We ate thin slices of it over the next few weeks. When I moved to Atlanta I learned that the Claxton company is located in Georgia. By that time my childhood liking of fruit cake had diminished, and it was another lost tradition which I did not miss.

When our younger son was about nineteen or twenty he asked, "Do we really have to exchange Christmas gifts every year? I hate to shop." We decided to dispense with the family gift giving and do something special together instead. One year after my husband and I had moved to Atlanta and both of our sons were still living in Colorado, we spent Christmas in Colorado Springs. The four of us plus our younger son's girl friend attended the Ice Capades at the Broadmoor World Arena ice rink. Another year they all visited us in Atlanta, and we took a short trip to Hilton Head, South Carolina.

This year with restrictions imposed upon us we are forbidden or recommended to forego many holiday traditions. Visits to Santa are out. Christmas Eve church services are iffy. Large family gatherings are discouraged. Annual group social gatherings at a restaurant are unlikely. My son in California will not be visiting. I am uncertain how my son, daughter-in-law, and I will spend the holiday. My son is dealing with a lung issue and is very afraid of covid. This is ordinarily a very social time of year for them as they annually have a holiday open house in early December and host a large Christmas dinner with friends usually on the Saturday after Christmas. They have canceled those gatherings which I have enjoyed since I moved to Denver. By Christmas we hope he will be well, and we will be able to be together to celebrate.

