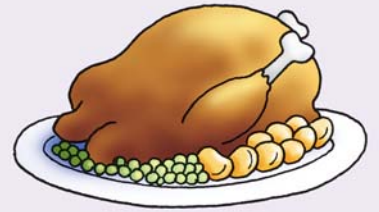


Christmas Dinner BACKGROUND

Joanna Carter



As in many countries, Christmas dinner is very important in England. The main meal is usually eaten at lunchtime or early afternoon on 25th December.

In the past, people ate roast sirloin of beef but nowadays a typical dinner consists of roast turkey or goose, served up with stuffing, bread sauce, cranberry sauce and gravy. Stuffing is put inside the turkey and is made of bread crumbs, sausage meat, onion and herbs and spices. Bread sauce is a white sauce to pour over the turkey with bread crumbs, cloves, nutmeg and cream in it. Gravy is simply the 'juices' that come out of the meat while it's cooking and cranberry sauce is like sour jam made from..... cranberries!

Many vegetables accompany the meat such as peas, carrots, beans, cauliflower, Brussel sprouts, roast potatoes and parsnips. Parsnips are vegetables that look like big yellow carrots but taste more like potatoes.



Some people have Yorkshire pudding with their Christmas dinner. This is also traditionally eaten with roast beef and is a type of savoury cooked batter.

If you are still hungry after all that, Christmas pudding and mince pies follow the main course. Christmas pudding, otherwise known as plum pudding, or figgy pudding dates back hundreds of years in Great Britain. It is a rich mix of dried fruits such as raisins and figs, nuts, flour and brandy and is round and dark brown when cooked.

The pudding is usually made some weeks before the festive period and all the members of the family should stir the mixture with a wooden spoon and make a wish. It is then steamed and served with flaming brandy on Christmas day. Traditionally silver coins were hidden in it. This brought good fortune to whoever was lucky enough to find one in their portion when the pudding was cut.

No dinner table is complete at Christmas without Christmas Crackers. These are brightly coloured paper tubes closed at both ends. There is a banger inside and two people must take either end and pull the cracker open. Inside you can find a funny paper hat, a joke and a very small gift. This custom of pulling crackers came to Britain in the 1860's and is still very popular today.

Find out how to make a Christmas Cracker on page 14. It may be too difficult for the children to find or write jokes in English so ask them to write a forfeit in English instead. For example, 'Count to ten in English', 'Say the English alphabet'. Obviously the crackers won't have a banger in them either, so ask the children to exchange them as gifts in class and carry out the forfeits.



The jokes in crackers are often based on a play on words and are usually terrible!!

Here are some examples:

- How does Father Christmas climb up a chimney?
He uses a ladder in stocking!
- What do vampires put on their turkey at Christmas?
Grave-y!
- What flower can you eat?
A cauli-flower!
- This turkey tastes like an old sofa!
Well, you asked for something with plenty of stuffing!
- Did you hear about the stupid turkey?
It was looking forward to Christmas!
- What's the best thing to put into a Christmas cake?
Your teeth!



Recipe for Yorkshire Pudding (serves 4)

You need:

A roasting tin 28 x 18cms

75g plain flour

1 egg

75ml milk

50ml water

salt/pepper

2 tablespoons beef dripping (dripping is fat so if unavailable could be substituted with oil)

Sift the flour into a bowl. Make a hole in the centre and break the egg into it. Mix into the flour and gradually add the milk, water, salt and pepper. Mix until smooth. Heat the fat/oil in the tin at 220°C. Carefully pour in the batter mix when the fat is sizzling. Cook on the highest shelf of the oven for 25-30 minutes. The pudding should have risen and be crisp and golden. Serve as soon as possible with meat.

