

Christmas

Christmas is popular celebration in Finland and especially for children Christmas is important. Children write wish lists to Santa already weeks before Christmas. Christmas is the birthday of Jesus but nowadays the religious role has declined in Finland. In Finland the Santa has a bigger role at Christmas. On Christmas Eve Santa visits homes and brings presents.

Usually at Christmas people go to church on Christmas Eve at five, but in Vaala we have Christmas church at 11 o'clock on Christmas Eve and at 7 o'clock in the morning of Christmas Day. People burn candles at home but they also bring them to the tombs (graves). At Christmas people spend time with their family, eat Christmas food and give gifts to each other. Before Christmas people usually bring a Christmas tree inside and decorate it together.

Traditional Finnish Christmas foods are: baked ham, turkey, salmon, rutabaga casserole, carrot casserole, potato casserole, rosolli (salad from boiled beetroots, carrots, potatoes, apples and pickled cucumber). People also like to eat Christmas porridge, rice porridge with fruit soup. For dessert people eat Christmas pastries baked with plum jam, gingerbread cookies and drink coffee and glögg, spiced blackcurrant juice, sometimes mixed with wine or vodka.



MIDSUMMER IN FINLAND

Midsummer is a main national holiday in Finland. It is celebrated on the third weekend in June. Typically it is spent with friends and family away from the city in a summer cottage, either partying or relaxing. Many people start their summer holidays on Midsummer eve.

Midnight sun is the key element in the northern parts of Finland and nights are white throughout the country. In the olden days bonfires were lit during Midsummer to keep evil spirits away, but nowadays it is just a tradition.

Traditional Finnish Midsummer meal is grilled food. Usually grilled cheese, sausages, vegetables, chicken, pork or something else. Most people like to drink heavily on Midsummer Eve.

In the evening of Midsummer Finns go to sauna. Many people believe that if somebody hurries in Midsummer sauna they are going to have a busy year. There are more beliefs like if a girl picks up seven or nine different flowers and puts them under her pillow, while sleeping she will see the face or the name of her future husband. Or if a girl picks nine flowers from nine different meadows, she will meet her future husband on a Midsummer eve.



The National Finnish Veterans' Day, the 27th April

There was a war between Finland and the government of the Soviet Union during the years 1939-45.

27th April 1945 was also the last battle day. So called Lapin sota (War of Lapland) ended and we got peace. Finnish veterans of that war are remembered every year on that day since 1987.

The National Finnish Veterans' Day is not celebrated as a day of victory. Primarily we remember our ancestors who protected the independence of Finland.

In school we raise the Finnish Flag at least. Sometimes we get a visitor, usually a veteran or a historian, who tells us about the war and especially the importance of peace. We must remember, the gift that the former generations gave us, cost a lot.



INDEPENDENCE DAY

Finland became independent on the 6th December 1917.

It is celebrated on 6th of December.

It has been spent from year 1919.

Tradition is for example raising the flag and many cities and municipalities have an Independence celebration.

The president has an Independence Day Reception at the Presidential Palace. It is broadcasted every year and it is the most watched programme of the year in Finland.

The Independence Day is free from work or school in Finland.

We don't have any special food for that day, but some people want to set the table more nicely than usually.

People often burn two blueandwhite candles in their windows on Independence Day. They light the candles at six o'clock in the evening and turn off all the other lights.



Easter

In Finland families start to get ready for Easter about a week earlier: they paint eggs, plant some easter grass, decorate willow twigs or branches and especially children dress up like witches.

On Palm Sunday little Easter witches go from door to door. They bless people's homes and give decorated willow twigs and wish to get some sweets in return. This Finnish children's tradition mixes two older traditions, one Russian Orthodox ritual and one Swedish and Western Finnish tradition.

On Easter people eat lamb, Finnish Easter pudding, called mämmi, and creamy pudding, pasha. Mämmi is dark brown pudding made of malt and rye flour (ohra- ja ruisjauhoista tehty.) People also eat a lot of chocolate, mostly chocolate eggs and bunnies.

In Finland only Good Friday and the second Easter day are holidays.

Some people visit the church, have their 'Last Supper', on Maundy Thursday, which is still one of the most popular church events of the year.

