



ISSUE #2  
DECEMBER 2023

# NEWS GIFTS

EVERYTHING **CHRISTMAS,**  
ALL IN ONE PLACE.

# FILMS FOOD



ISSUE 2

# EDITOR'S LETTER

It's that time of year again - Christmas! It is the season of giving, and the Orator has a lot to give. Flip through this issue to find everything from movie recommendations (p.7) and traditional recipes (p.23), to places to visit (p.3). Look a little further and you can find more on opportunities to give back (p.31), and how to shop wisely this Christmas(p.17). Whatever you're looking for, we've got it!

So sit back, relax, and get into the spirit of the season with us!

On behalf of the Orator team, we would like to wish you a very merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Happy reading!



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# 8 Magical Places to Visit in Ontario during the Christmas Season

By: Kaitlyn D'Andrea

**Toronto Christmas Market:** Held in the Distillery Historic District, the Toronto Christmas Market takes place each year from November to December. This market features live entertainment, red-brick buildings, cobblestone walkways, canopies of festive lights, as well as a fully decorated, fifty-foot Christmas tree. Visitors can purchase a variety of items including handcrafted jewelry, home-baked goods, stocking stuffers, candles, ceramics, spices, apparel, postcards, and festive ornaments.

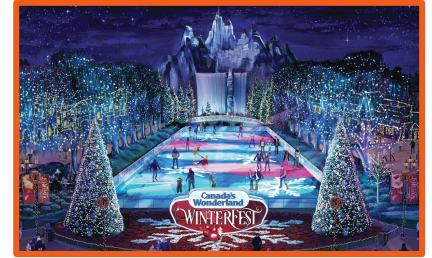


**Nathan Phillips Square:** Did you know that the water fountain by the Toronto sign at Nathan Phillips Square transforms into a free-access public skating rink each winter? While most individuals bring their own skates, rentals are still an option. Each year, shortly before Christmas, Nathan Phillips Square undergoes a full seasonal makeover alongside the skating rink, perfectly adorned with a sixty-foot-tall Christmas tree and more than 525,000 festive lights to illuminate your



**WinterFest at Canada's Wonderland:** Each year, Canada's Wonderland magically transforms into a wintertime paradise open for all ages. Although you will not see every ride up and running, there are still attractions available for your enjoyment.

There will be bright lights and detailed decor, as well as mesmerizing performances, a skating rink, a nightly tree lighting ceremony, and many more themed activities that will be sure to provide a captivating winter wonderland for all who attend.



**Casa Loma:** Casa Loma and its gardens are also transformed into a wintry paradise each year. The eye-catching lights and decorations appear even more amazing when everything is blanketed in a layer of snow. In addition, you may take a tour of the castle and view displays that have been kept intact for nearly a century.







**Niagara on the Lake:** Wander by shimmering window doors decked with wreaths as the charming Main Street of Niagara Falls is adorned in garland and Christmas décor for the season. Discover their "authentic Christmas village" and enjoy festivities including high tea, an outdoor skating rink, a "Candlelight Stroll", and their joyful Christmas parade.

**Blue Mountain Village:** A snow-covered town, an illuminated trail, and even more holiday magic can be found yearly at Blue Mountain during the holiday season. Visitors can shop at the many stores, toboggan through sparkling woodlands, and indulge in a variety of delectable sweets. Experience the sight of over one million lights, magnificent displays, and amazing interactive installations along The one-kilometer "Holiday Light Trail".



**Niemi's Christmas Land:** Located in East Gwillimbury, this festive event showcases a market overflowing with treats. Sellers share a variety of festive articles ranging from cards and handcrafted soaps, to Christmas trees and wreaths. You can board the "Polar Express" and take in the Christmas Story while travelling through their version of a sparkling winter wonderland. In addition, glowing trails, bonfires, and more holiday fun is available to further complete the holiday experience.



**Friday Harbour Christmas Market:** The promenade at the Friday Harbour located in Innisfil, Ontario is being transformed into a holiday market packed with decorations, vendors, and numerous other features. Visitors can enjoy live entertainment, go shopping for stocking stuffers, and take their Christmas pictures by the beautiful 40-foot Christmas tree as their local lounges serve delicious food and festive drinks to fully encapsulate the winter wonderland and all it has to offer.





# Obscure Christmas Movie Recommendations

By: Isabella Vignando

Are the holidays *really* the holidays if you don't get to sit down with your loved ones and watch cheesy, heartwarming holiday films? I personally find myself indulging in the same lineup of movies year after year. That means watching both *Home Alone* 1 and 2, the always hilarious Will Ferrell in *Elf*, Roemer's *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, and the classic of all classics to tie it all up, *It's A Wonderful Life*.

While I won't dispute that classics are classics for a reason, I've always wondered what christmas movies I was missing out on while I had my favourites on a constant loop. If you're anything like me you love to broaden your watching horizons, so for all of you looking to expand your watch list this holiday season, here are 3 obscure holiday films that will fill your hearts with holiday cheer.

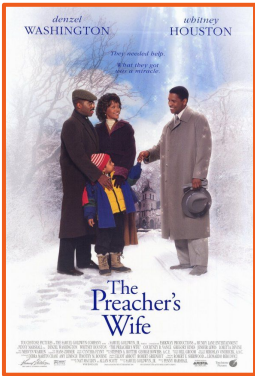
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## The Preacher's Wife (1996, United States) - 7.8/10

A Reverend (Courtney B. Vance) and his wife (Whitney Houston) feel the aches and pains of their struggling communities as it seeps into their marriage. Together they learn what it is to truly have faith when God sends an angel down to answer their prayers.

**Cinematography → 8/10** Nothing risky, nothing that steals the show from the main focus of the drama of the story at hand.

**Acting → 8/10** The acting can never be said to have been overdone, only leaving the risk of feeling flat at times, but when this cast gets it right they really bring it all. No words need to be said about the lively performance of Denzel Washington as the angel Dudley, and Whitney Houston as Jill carries a graceful air which is only just overshadowed by her sensational voice, the two stars really bringing the wow factor to the whole movie. An incredibly talented, comedic, supporting cast.



**Writing → 7/10** Easily encompassing drama, uplifting prose and a sprinkling of a comedic all compose this unique twist on the *It's a Wonderful Life* story. The perspective and stories of children bring that sweetly nostalgic feeling that everyone loves in a Christmas movie, perfectly highlighting the pure joy and innocence of the holiday spirit. I will say, however, that the heavier aspects of the plot seem to overshadow the warm christmas spirit at times, but only in favour of illuminating the deeper themes. The subtle commentary on the many socio-political and economic struggles of a lower-middle class black suburban communities of the time through the Reverend's fervent desire to uplift and aid his community add a riveting, albeit solemn, backdrop to the world of the story, leaving one just as emotionally invested in the community as the Reverend is.

**Pacing → 7/10** A well paced story, despite its overlapping and heavy sub-plots, each story is fully conclusive and relevant to the plot. While characters do evolve, the depth of their reasoning just wasn't there for me and oftentimes left the feeling that something was missing from their journey. Regardless, the end was satisfying.

**Theme → 9/10** Reverend Henry spreads himself thin trying to be there for everyone. While he reaches out to person after person and takes heavy hit after heavy hit to each of his efforts, the film explores the aftermath of what happens when he begins to lose sight of his own faith as he feels himself falling short to save everybody around him. A beautiful message of hope and faith and love that really drills home what Christmas is all about. A beautiful underlying message of giving thanks to God for all that we have and what it means to truly have faith, just barely lost to the sheer density of the plot.

## The Shop Around the Corner (1940, United States) - 8.6/10

Alfred Kralik (James Stewart) and Klara Novak (Margret Sullivan) find themselves falling in love over letters exchanged of literature and language and the world at large. Without knowing the other's identity outside of their written correspondence, the two find themselves working at the same job. The two of them are stubborn, headstrong, persistent and take no nonsense, demanding the respect they deserve, and they can't stand each other. Could it still be love after first sight gets in the way? Having inspired films like *You've Got Mail*, this truly is the blueprint for the miscommunication romcom trope that everyone should see this Christmas.

**Cinematography → 8/10** As good as can be expected from the time, nothing too adventurous and therefore nothing to be excited nor disappointed by.

**Acting → 9/10** The emotional range of James Stewart is showcased in full with the aid of well written speeches of great importance to the plot's progression. The work of Margret Sullivan can't go unrecognised as she plays the whitty and stubborn counterpart with a charismatic grace and delivers her comedic lines with the most natural air. Most of the supporting cast has something that gives the world surrounding the story a little more meat, making for a fully enrapturing experience.

**Writing → 10/10** An all around classic romcom, this film has poignant drama and humour to boot. The dialogue can feel predictable, but in a charming way that can still be passed off as natural, rarely so put upon as to pull you completely out of the story. The use of dramatic irony brings a comedic element that one can't help but find endearing at the very least. Both leads are well written to compliment each other without making either one of them a static character, dependent on the other. An ingenious blueprint for the genre of meet-cute-rivals-to-lovers plotline we all know and love.

**Pacing → 7/10** All seems mostly well with the film's progression overtime. There are implicit time jumps as the movie spans from the summer to the next christmas in just around an hour and thirty minutes, though this hardly makes for a confusing watch for the most part.



**Theme → 9/10** Putting a hilariously dramatic spin on the Shakespearean ideal that "love is blind", debunking the essential question: would the clouded lens of love at first sight deter someone from seeing the beauty within? Between Alfred and Klara, there's enough pride and preconceived notions to go around, keeping them tantalisingly close yet so far away.

## Your Christmas or Mine? (2022, United Kingdom) - 9/10

Young couple Hayley (Cora Kirk) and James (Asa Butterfield) are going their separate ways for Christmas, but the two of them make the same split second decision to surprise the other by switching trains and surprise each other. When they both still manage to end up in different places over the holidays, they get to know the other's family and learn a lot more about each other than they might have been willing to let on.

**Cinematography → 8/10** Not much to note other than the well used head on shots when Haley and James are separated. Though they are shot separately, the back-and-forth of their brief conversations highlight not only the distance between them, but also the effort that they are going through to bring themselves back together.

**Acting → 10/10** An incredibly funny cast with such obvious incredible chemistry means *everything* in a Christmas movie that is all about the love of your born and chosen families. With such a consistently funny script, I'd say it takes real skill to be able to hold that light-hearted tone so well that it carries the audience through even the less cheerful (but nonetheless alluring) moments. Leading duo Cora and Asa keep the audience captivated by their compelling performance and skill in this respect. I cannot stress enough, however, that the incredibly talented supporting cast truly make this movie a great one and I think anyone who's looking for a family crazier than theirs to spend their holidays with can finally stop their search.

**Writing → 10/10** With such a uniquely funny plot and a script so condensed with wit, there is never a moment in this film that leaves you feeling unentertained. The ups and downs of the holiday season are highlighted with such skill that it really immerses you into the world of the movie. I won't give too much away, but each time you think the plot has taken its final twist it just takes you for another spin.

**Pacing → 9/10** Unlike most romcoms, there is no cute situational get-together scene as the entire movie takes place after Haley and James have been together for months. While this might make you feel as though you're missing out on their entire backstory at first, the gradual build of the movie slowly but surely lets you in on the little tidbits of each of their lives as they discover it for themselves. The short timeline of the movie doesn't even take you out of the magic of every moment and the film leaves you with a sense that these two will never want to stop discovering more about each other.

**Theme → 8/10** There's a sickeningly sweet undertone that carries even though the lowest parts of the movie, a tone accentuated by the love shared between people who care for each other. The true meaning of Christmas that this movie seeks to share is that the spirit of the holidays can always be found in those you love and those who love you.



## The Impact of Inflation on Christmas Shopping

By: Hannah Thompson



In a recent survey conducted in the school, **86% of students** found that inflation has made a significant impact on their ability to purchase gifts for friends and family for Christmas. Many students expressed a displeasure in the current inflation rates claiming that they are “absurd” and “ridiculous”. Students have said they spend an average of \$100 on gifts for family and friends and the inflation rates are making it very difficult to shop for gifts this holiday season.





## 8 Most Wanted Christmas Gifts on Amazon 2023

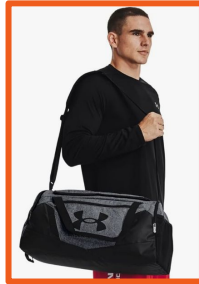
By: Aline Brennan



**Stanley Quencher:** YOUR DREAM TUMBLER: The H2.0 FlowState tumbler keeps you refreshed throughout the day with minimal refills. Vacuum insulation featuring double walls keeping drinks hot, cold, or iced for several hours.



**Under Armour Duffle Bag:** This is your go-to bag for daily use considering it is lightweight and made of materials that are highly sturdy. UA Storm technology provides a very water-repellent finish that battles the elements.



**Apple Watch SE (2nd Gen):** Everything you need to stay safe, stay connected, stay motivated, and track your health. It connects with your Apple products and services without a hitch. The Apple Watch is something loved by many and a bestseller on Amazon.



**Fujifilm Instax Mini Link 2 Smartphone Printer:** With your friends and family, the INSTAX MINI LINK 2 Smartphone Printer encourages creativity and memorable moments. You can now print Polaroid photos from images that are already on your camera roll with this printer!



**Mini Projector:** A pocket or bag can hold this small, lightweight mini video projector. No matter where you are you may enjoy movies, videos, and games. It is simple to connect to a variety of media devices that support HDMI for playing games, exchanging images, watching TV shows, and playing videos.



**Revlon Hair Dryer Brush:** The purpose of the Revlon ionic root booster is to dry, strengthen roots, and produce bold looks. A 1.5-inch round brush is included, which adds extra body and creates beautiful curls and flips. It has ionic technology, which promotes lustrous hair with fewer static and frizz.



**Mobile Gaming Controller PlayStation Edition:** Play Call of Duty, Roblox, Genshin Impact, Xbox, PlayStation, and More on your iPhone when you turn it into a Gaming Console. You can effortlessly play your PlayStation games anywhere by pairing it with the PS Remote Play App

**Custom Neon Signs 8-50 Inch LED Light Up:** For every line of text, more than 20 fonts and more than 10 LED colors are available as options. Select a sign length that corresponds to the quantity of letters you want.



# How to Shop Stress-Free This Christmas

By: Cecilia Vong

Christmas shopping can be stressful, especially if done last minute. Don't fret just yet, we're here to help! Continue reading for some tips and tricks to implement into your shopping this holiday season.

- Make lists and batch shop. Make a list of gifts you need to buy and include information about which shop you need to buy them from. Make it easy on yourself and try to purchase multiple gifts from the same shop so you can effectively batch shop.
- Shop during off-peak hours to avoid busy crowds. Weekday mornings are often less busy than evenings and weekends.
- Use online gift guides to reduce stressful decision-making. These will have general gift ideas for everyone and more niche ideas for specific types of people/scenarios, like white elephant, the person who has everything, coworkers, and so many more.



- Take advantage of gift-wrapping services that are available in-person and when shopping online to save time and effort. Or, instead of using wrapping paper, use a gift bag and tissue paper.
- Buy gift cards from favourite shops or buy a mall gift card for more options. Buy online gift cards to make it even more convenient.
- Buy gifts online and get them shipped right to your front door.





# Christmas: An Environmental Catastrophe

By: Bentley Huang

The Christmas season is a time for family and friends to gather together and celebrate the past year while looking forward to the new year to come. However, whether we are tearing open our gifts, lighting up our Christmas trees, or digging into our food, most of us probably aren't thinking about the environmental impacts this holiday has on the earth.



Christmas is the time of overindulgence, where mass spending and eating elaborate feasts are not just encouraged, but are set to stone as yearly traditions. But, when you stop to think and learn about what Christmas has done to our planet, you might think twice about these festivities.

One major part of Christmas is the massive feasts and meals that come with it. From turkey, to mashed potatoes, to pies, and to bread, copious amounts of food are consumed during this holiday season. But, even though appetites are big doesn't mean all this food is being consumed. In fact, families, on average, waste 25% more food waste in the holidays compared to other times of the year, leading to tonnes of food being wasted over the course of just a few weeks! If you thought that was surprising, here is another one: Each year, in the UK, families eat around 370 million mince pies, drink 250 million pints of lager and beer, and munch on 10 million turkeys! This is not healthy for the planet especially since a lot of these go to waste.

Wrapping gifts is also causing major problems. Since gift-giving and receiving are yearly traditions, wrapping and packaging the gifts are too. Zero Waste Canada, a Vancouver-based advocacy group, estimates that each Canadian tosses around 50 kg of garbage over the holidays, with 540,000 tonnes of wrapping paper and gift bags being thrown out each year. However, things like gift bags, tape and ribbon can't be recycled so they are left in landfills, waiting to decompose. During Christmas, around 540,000 tonnes of wrapping paper is thrown away each year, which is equivalent to about 100,000 elephants!

Now how about Christmas lights? Well, they also harm Mother Earth! Christmas lights produce a lot of light pollution as they stay lit for an excessive amount of time. This disrupts ecosystems and nocturnal wildlife, altering their lifestyles and biological processes. In fact, holiday lights are so big and bright that NASA has even explained that from space stations, parts of the Earth are up to 50% brighter between the weeks from the U.S Thanksgiving to New Year's Day! This is not healthy for the planet. In relation to the increase in Christmas lights, there has been a sharp increase in the deaths of migratory birds in December and January. Furthermore, the atmosphere is also suffering because of these bright lights. Almost 2 million tons of carbon dioxide is released into the atmosphere during the holiday season due to extra light usage, which is enough to power 15 500 hot air balloons! These gases would then rise to the lower-atmosphere, trapping energy in the air, making the earth even warmer by the minute.

Well, Christmas sure does have a HUGE environmental impact! Does that mean that we shouldn't celebrate it and just abolish it forever? No! There are many ways to help make your Christmas more eco-friendly. Here are some suggestions:

### Presents

**Less Packaging:** Try to reduce waste caused by wrapping gifts by buying gifts that have little or no packaging. However, if you need to use packaging, use recyclable materials to lower its environmental impacts. Lastly, avoid plastics when possible, they are very bad for the environment!

**Wrapping:** Try finding cards and wrapping paper made from recycled paper. When finding the proper wrapping paper, avoid plastic ribbon and tape. Furthermore, try tape-free wrapping techniques, like furoshiki, which makes for beautiful and reusable packaging.



### Food

**Cut Down Food Waste:** Cut down food waste over the holidays by planning ahead. You can do this by thinking about how much food you need and use up leftovers. Use Tupperware and foil to keep leftovers nice and fresh!

**Be Herbivores:** Instead of eating meat, add more fruits and veggies to your Christmas meals! They give you plenty of nutrients while also protecting the planet. Raising livestock contributes to about 11.1% of all man-made greenhouse gas emissions. It pollutes the earth while using lots of space, water, and resources. Try some greens instead!

**Eat Seasonally:** Buying seasonal and local produce can help reduce your carbon footprint! By doing so, you are not buying food that needs to be transported, which helps reduce carbon emissions.

### Decorations

**Lighting:** Switch to LED lights or turn off Christmas lights during a certain time to reduce the amount of energy we use!

**Christmas Tree:** Buy a plastic tree if you will reuse it for many years to come. Otherwise, consider buying a living tree!



# Christmas Recipes From Around the World

By: Rebecca Varghese

Without a doubt, Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year. When most people think of Christmas, they think of a festive holiday, with piles of fluffy snow, red and green decorations, vibrant Christmas trees and joyous jubilee all around. However the most predominant part of Christmas is the food and the cultures it brings together.

Food is special, and a language spoken by every person regardless of race, gender or age. Christmas is celebrated by many people, regardless of religion or ethnicity. Therefore it's no surprise that these two factors go hand-in-hand and coagulate to create memories and delicious food. In honor of the Christmas spirit (and the delicious dishes everyone has to share), here are some of the most renowned recipes from around the world!

## ASIA

### Allahabadi Cake: India & Pakistan



Allahabadi cake or Indian fruit cake is a fruit cake named after the city of Allahabad in Uttar Pradesh, India. It's very similar to a traditional fruitcake using dried fruits and nuts, spices, and an Indian rum to soak the fruits in. This cake is usually prepared by the Anglo-Indian or Christian community in India and parts of Pakistan. For most Christians in South Asia, this fruitcake is a sweet and hearty cake in the midst of the warm, humid Christmas they celebrate together.

## NORTH AMERICA

### Christmas Ham: United States of America & Canada



A smoky, savory, yet sweet and decadent dish, the Christmas ham is a centerpiece in many American and Canadian households on Christmas. It's made with smoked ham, glazed with a sweet sauce and aromatics. It was originally a British dish most often served on Christmas, that was brought to North America through homesick pilgrims. Today, it remains as a hearty, and nostalgic dish for North Americans all over the world.

## EUROPE

### Mince Pie: England, Wales and Scotland



Mince pies are a traditional British dish consisting of minced meat (typically made of beef or lamb, dried fruits, nuts, spices and suet (a beef, lamb or other meat fat)). This filling is placed inside a flaky, buttery pie crust, making a delicious Christmas pie. The dish remains quite similar throughout the places in England, Scotland and Wales, however they do have certain variations according to local produce and preferences.



## AFRICA

### **Jollof Rice: Nigeria, Ghana, Senegal, Sierra Leone**



Jollof Rice is a West-African rice dish often served at celebrations, events, and especially favored at Christmas. While the dish varies from region to region, the base is made of long-grain rice cooked in a rich tomato sauce consisting of tomatoes, chillies, onions, spices, and vegetables. For many West-Africans, this rice serves as a reminder of their childhood and eating something you love is the true spirit of Christmas food.

## OCEANIA

### **Pavlova: Australia & New Zealand**



Pavlova is a light, airy, crispy meringue-like dessert consisting of baked egg whites, sugar, cornstarch and lemon juice. Pavlova is often thought to have been derived from the French dessert of Meringue-despite the two desserts having distinct differences. It is a seasonal and year-round dessert in Australia and New Zealand especially around the Christmas season.

## SOUTH AMERICA

### **Farofa de Natal: Brazil**



Brazil boasts some of South America's finest cuisine and this dish is no exception. Made with roasted tapioca flour, deli meats, carrots, olives, onions and other aromatics, Farofa de Natal is a beloved, Brazilian side dish often served with a Christmas turkey. This dish was derived from Indigenous groups such as the Tupi-Guarani Indians, who ate this on a more frequent basis. Farofa de Natal reminds many Brazilians of their family's Christmas home cooking.

## ANTARCTICA

### **The Antarctic Christmas Feast**



The Antarctic Christmas Feast is a feast that represents the realistic celebration of Christmas in Antarctica. The main course is made of pemmican, slices of horse meat flavored with onion and curry powder, and thickened with biscuits. The desert consists of several parts. The first is a cocoa pudding made with arrowroot, cocoa and a biscuit hoosh, sweetened. Then, a plum pudding with cocoa and raisins. Finally, there's a dessert of caramel chocolates and ginger.

# Taste of the Philippines: Holiday Recipes from Across the Island

By: Isabella Vignando

The Christmas season always brings about the promise of Christmas parties which means one of two things; a big guest list and an even bigger buffet table. Great times and great food have always been a constant in my household. This not only brings us together as a family but also connects us to our heritage.

Many traditional dishes have a rich and intricate history. A typical meal prepared for any gathering will consist of the same dishes. Lumpia, for example, is a staple of Filipino cuisine. The Filipino lumpia is said to be a variation on Chinese dishes of earlier origin, but is now a part of both cuisines, each adding their own special twist to the dish. In the Philippines, lumpia is typically made with a thin flower wrapper often filled with meats (often ground pork or beef), vegetables like carrots or bean sprouts and various spices or seasonings, depending on the region. Regardless of how it's made, Lumpia is integral to Filipino cuisine, a very versatile dish that can be served on any occasion.



Another integral dish is Pancit. You'll never go without this iconic party food at any Filipino feast. The name literally means "something conveniently cooked" or fast food and is more or less believed to have originated in China. During the Spanish occupation, the dish was served conveniently from panciteros (literally, people who sold pancit) from roadside eateries, making finding meals easy even for those who had less and less time to cook. Pancit goes by many names depending on the region or even the way it's cooked, but it is typically made with rice noodles, seasoned with things like garlic and soy sauce and topped up with a variety of protein (ie. meat or eggs) or vegetable cuttings.



A slightly more grand main dish that can be found on special occasions at a Filipino feast is Lechon. It is actually the national dish of the Philippines, featuring a whole charcoal-roasted pig. This dish takes a lot of time, ingredients and materials that are definitely not easy to come by or stumble upon in the pantry, hence why it might be considered a more "luxurious" main course compared to a dish like pancit. Throughout the country, Lechon symbolises the bond and importance of the joyfulness that is brought by the coming together of a community feast. Ask anyone who has eaten lechon and they'll tell you that the dish does indeed bring joy to all that have had the pleasure of tasting it.

When it comes to dessert, the Philippines goes all out. As you can probably tell by now, many Filipino dishes have come out of a mix of cultural influences that have come upon the island's shores over the years. Halo-halo is a dish that has been firmly established as the Filipino ice dessert in spite of all the cultural influences from both the occupations of Spain and Japan in the Philippines. Due to the particularly tropical climate of the island, most of the population were unaware of the existence of ice when the Spanish brought the "ice business" to the country and furthermore when "shaved ice" found its way to them from Japan.





## MOM'S PANCIT

### Ingredients

- 1 medium sized onion (sliced)
- 3 cloves crushed garlic
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 - ½ kilo of meat (or meat alternative) of choice (seasoned with salt and pepper)
- 2 spiced chinese sausage (sliced)
- 4 fish balls (sliced)
- 1 medium sized carrot (sliced)
- ½ red bell pepper (sliced)
- 1 cup green beans (sliced)
- 1 stick celery (sliced)
- 1 bag pre-cooked yellow noodles
- 1 cup chicken broth
- 1 tbsp soy sauce
- 1 tbsp oyster sauce



### Steps

1. Saute onions and garlic in olive oil until fragrant (about 5 minutes)
2. Add the meat to pan and cook for 10 minutes at medium heat. Then, add in sausage and fish balls to pan and cook for another 5 minutes
3. Add sliced carrots, red pepper, green beans and celery. Season with salt and pepper to taste.
4. Add noodles to pan. Add chicken broth and bring to a slow boil for 5 - 7 minutes until al dente.
5. Flavour with soy sauce and oyster sauce. Let simmer for 3 minutes.
6. Plate and serve!

## LUMPIANG SHANGHAI (LUMPIA)



### Ingredients

- 1 kilo ground pork (or other meat of choice)
- 1 small onion (diced)
- 1 medium carrot
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Lumpia wrapper (made of flour, cornstarch and water)

### Steps

1. Mix ground pork (or alternative meat) with onion, carrot, salt and pepper.
2. Place meat close to the bottom, leaving a little room. Fold up from the bottom and in on the sides
3. Roll from the bottom upwards until all the wrapper has been used (if there is too much excess, cut the wrapper in half)

This year, bring the flavours of the Philippines home for the holidays.  
*Maligayang Pasko* and happy holidays to all!



# Giving Back This Christmas

By: Stephanie Delios and Isabella Vignando

The holiday season is all about appreciating what we have, like being with family and friends or getting to receive presents on Christmas morning. The unfortunate reality is that this isn't always the case for many. As a part of the community, it is crucial we help those in need who may not be as fortunate as we are. So, here are some ways to give back to your community this Christmas.

This time of year, charities are in full preparation mode for Christmas. This means drives for food, clothing, toys, and so much more. A great example is Toy Mountain, run by the Salvation Army. If you're looking to support locally, the Salvation Army is always looking for helping hands around the holidays. Many opportunities to donate are available, such as donating to sponsor a family through their Christmas Assistance Program. The [Salvation Army website](#) allows you to easily access information about nearby locations and volunteer opportunities if you are looking to give more personally. There are numerous drop off locations where you can bring unwanted toys or even toys you purchased for the cause. This ensures that less fortunate kids get the chance to open presents on Christmas morning, a tradition no one should be deprived of. Look out for drives around school or even in your area. Donating your unwanted non-perishable food items, unopened toiletries, or old clothes makes a big difference in the lives of others.



For those looking to give support to children and families in need this Christmas, visit [chalice.ca](#)'s Christmas catalogue and give the gift of joy and hope. You can donate to Chalice itself or donate a gift "personally". You can give the gift of support that will provide families access to necessities like urgent medical care, food, animals and animal feed, educational funding and much more. See the [Chalice gift catalogue](#) for more information.

Looking to specifically give support to families and children locally? Holiday Helpers is committed to providing specialised Christmas packages to single parent families, newly immigrated families and other families in need of poverty relief in order to make a positive change in their children's lives. To learn more about their story, the goals of their organization and how you can become involved, visit them at [holidayhelpers.org](#).



A full list of charities that are in need of support this holiday season can be found at [canadahelps.org](#). You can find other charities sorted by demographic or search for your own. At the risk of inviting selfish motives, those looking for volunteer hours might want to do further research to see if and where hours might be made available.



# The Origins of our Christmas Traditions

By: Wilhelmina Harker

Christmas is the Christian celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ. However, over the years the holiday has evolved to be much more than that. A variety of cultures and communities celebrate Christmas in their own way but there are some common themes and traditions. Although they don't all originate from Christianity, they have grown to define this holiday as we know it.

While some consider Christmas a holiday, it can also be seen as an entire season as sometimes the celebration leading up to the holiday can be more festive than the day itself. One of the common traditions to get into the spirit is advent calendars. A tradition where you open a little gift such as a chocolate or a candy every day of advent. This tradition actually originated in Germany in the early 1900s. Gerard Land, the inventor of the advent calendar, published a concept where children opened a little wooden door with a bible passage to read every day of advent.

Christmas obviously has many traditions that together, capture the festive seasons. From ugly Christmas sweaters to Saint Nick, we as a community have brought these traditions, making Christmas the most iconic holiday.

Another thing common to see at Christmas parties are Christmas trees. Originating in Germany all the way in the Middle Ages. However, they didn't become popular until the 19th century when a woodsman from New York decided to make the first ever Christmas tree lot. The trend grew rapidly as the Christmas tree became a symbol for the holiday season. It's estimated that 77% of US homes have Christmas trees today.



But really, Christmas trees aren't what we think of when we think of Christmas. Obviously the real mascot of the holiday is Santa Claus. While a lot of people argue that Santa distracts from the religious importance of Christmas, he was actually inspired by a religious figure, Saint Nicholas. There's not much known about him other than the fact he was a bishop in the 4th century who had a reputation of generosity and kindness, creating legends of miracles and stories inspired by him. This eventually led to the creation of Santa Claus.

Here in Canada, sweater season never seems to end. That's why the concept of Christmas sweaters actually came from Vancouver. It became a popular trend in the 1980s to wear the ugliest tackiest sweaters possible to various Christmas parties and events.

Even if you don't have any physical items to donate, donating your time is just as valuable. You can check in with your local food bank, such as the Markham Food Bank, to volunteer your time. There are also homeless shelters and soup kitchens that can always use a helping hand, especially around this time of year.

There are also some other creative ways to help those in need. An example is Operation Christmas child, run by an organization called Samaritan's purse. You can create a box filled with toys, toiletries, and anything else you can think of that a child would need, and they send it to a child in a developing country who can really use it. Some more examples are sponsoring a family for Christmas, volunteering at a hospital like SickKids, or donating to a charity you feel most connected to.

Giving back to the community also invites the opportunity to be truly thankful for what we have and gives us the perspective to be willing to care for others before ourselves. 2 Corinthians 9:7 says "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver," calling us to be selfless with what we give. This year, find it in your hearts to give the simple gift of joy and hope in the name of spreading Christmas cheer.



# The True Meaning of Christmas: An Interview With Our Religious Educators

By: Saqqara & Islay Chidiac

## What comes to mind when you think of Christmas?

**Ms. Fickel** - "I think about what can we do to reflect, change, and improve ourselves. Our lives are so busy that much of the time we focus on the gifts and the events, rather than why Christmas even exists. It's to celebrate Jesus being born."

**Ms. Lombardi** - "From a secular perspective, all of the pomp and circumstance that comes along with the thought of Santa Claus. From a religious perspective, you think of the birth of Jesus and how the celebration of that is breaking bread with family and loved ones. I think that there is, especially in today's society, a duality to what Christmas really is. We try to take the secular out of it, but unfortunately it is a big part of who we are in society. We try to bring back the Christian perspective as much as possible, but it is hard to get away from the secular."

**Mr. Moore** - "I think about the true message of Christmas. It's about [how] out of the darkness comes light."

**Ms. Pinto** - "Christ-Mass. The season celebrated primarily by Advent as the start and all the milestones that we go through as a family, beginning with our time at Mass."

## From a Biblical perspective, what is the meaning of Christmas, why is it significant, and what message is God sending us, as Catholics?

**Ms. Fickel** - "I personally think it is a reminder of all the grace and generosity that we have been given, as Catholics, and the joy that exists in the world. Especially when we are living in a challenging time where it is easier to be sad and angry. It's forcing us to be happier, even though it is not always easy."

**Ms. Lombardi** - "From a biblical perspective, Jesus was born on the twenty-fourth at midnight into the twenty-fifth and it is the celebration of the Messiah that has come. I think that the message that is brought within is this concept of the beginning of the salvation narrative. Remembering that Jesus ends up dying for our sins at Easter and creating that salvation narrative for us. At the same time, had He not been born on December twenty-fifth, we wouldn't have Christmas. So, I think it starts the salvation narrative from a Christian perspective, but it's important that we also enjoy each other's company in celebrating Him."

**Mr. Moore** - "The true meaning of Christmas is to be there for others that are alone. It's not buying presents, it's being present. Relationships are what last. Presents get discarded over a while. It's significant because it is what we are called to do. We're called to be good and when you find goodness, you find God and that's what you seek out."

**Ms. Pinto** - "I love this story because it is a story of refugees. They're not welcome, they're thrown out based on their ethnicity, they're hunted, they're trying to save their child's life and everyone says 'no.' It makes me think of the plight of Mexican immigrants and people who are entering borders from other countries while nobody wants them. We are turning them away as we prepare for Christmas. What's the Christmas story? It is the story of a poor person with another poor person, seeking refuge, desperate to have a child, and the whole world says 'no.' Then you get one person who says 'yes,' but look at the conditions they have to live in: a barn with animals, putting their new child in a feeding trough. You have poverty and refugee stories, and you have people who are well to-do, who just don't care. What does that mean to the world? The Christmas story is the story of humanity. The child is born and it is calling us to the light of God. Our King is not a king in a palace. Our King is poor and homeless, a refugee. It says so much about how our religion is not for the great, it is for those of us who are trying to help."







### Why is it crucial to preserve this religious perspective?

**Ms. Fickel** - "I think when we let go of our religious views and perspectives, we let go of a lot of the big things that unite us as people. Even though we might not share exactly the same values or ideas, with our religion, we can come together - as people - and find similarities, so even if there are disagreements we can find common ground."

**Ms. Lombardi** - "I think it is important to preserve because it is a part of our Christian roots. Everyone has this question of 'where do I come from?' and 'what are my roots?' From a Catholic perspective we want to know what that entails and where that comes from. Being able to continue celebrating Christmas as the birth of Jesus; that kickoff salvation. I think it is important that we continue to tell the youth of today this very important story that it's not just about presents and it's not just about celebrating a big jolly man coming down the chimney, but more so an important part of where our salvation begins."

**Mr. Moore** - "It's important because people gravitate towards brokenness. It's just a part of the human condition. Everything decays over time and even the morality in relationships is not protected from that."

**Ms. Pinto** - "I don't know if there has been a time when we need peace as desperately as we need it now. How many wars do we have? How many genocides do we have? How many refugees do we have now? Canada has been accepting refugees and we're having a debate in our three-garage-door homes about whether to welcome them in. This is the story we need right now."

### Do you think people's perception of Christmas has been altered by consumerism and secularism?

**Ms. Fickel** - "Absolutely. Without a doubt, one hundred percent. In terms of decorating our classroom, it was very difficult to find things that weren't Santa-based or Rudolph or gifts, but instead looking for Jesus and stars and what I think is the true meaning of Christmas. It was really hidden or was not there at all in a lot of stores these days. So, that was sad and frustrating to me, but also kind of gave me a challenge to do a little bit better and a little bit more."

**Ms. Lombardi** - "That's very evident, even when you look at some of the pollings that they give you every year on how much is spent over the Christmas season. I think that is definitely an indication that we have moved away from the religious perspective of what Christmas is and we want to enjoy all of the gifts, food, and the family. I think that there is something to be said about trying to mend the two. I also encourage gift giving because I think that it is important. The way I, kind of, change it a little bit is that I'm starting to instill in my young children the gift of giving back to those in need. It's not just a present that's underneath your tree but more so giving back to our community that needs our help so badly. I think that there are elements that you can still incorporate while still keeping the season true to what it's supposed to be."

**Mr. Moore** - "Yes and by their own egos. This is usually a product of misguidance and energy and effort."

**Ms. Pinto** - "One hundred percent. It is Christ out of Christmas now. It is all gift-giving and secularized; it's still a lot of fun and from a multifaith perspective you have to have an element where other people can engage. At the same time, when you remove the reason for the season, it's just another opportunity to spend money, which is hollow."

## **Have you noticed within the student body a lack of knowledge of the true meaning of Christmas?**

**Ms. Fickel** - "I think it reinforces that my job is to bring Christ to life in the classroom every day. For sure, it might be easier, sillier, more fun to rely on leaving Santa cookies, but learning the lessons of when the actual twelve days of Christmas are and what they actually represent has nothing to do with gifts or weird birds or anything like that. It's all about being grateful that Jesus has been born. There is definitely a change in students, but I think it is more of a call to action as religious educators to do more and to do better."

**Ms. Lombardi** - "I'm not going to say that there is a lack of knowledge. When I ask the questions to students, their first initial thing to say is the celebration with gifts and family and friends, which I think is an important part of the celebration. I don't think it's necessarily that they don't know the story of Jesus and its importance, but more so that we're so clouded in today's world with the here and the now that we forget about what our roots are and what our past is. The first thing students want to say is 'Christmas is about presents.' or 'Christmas is about Santa,' but when we start diving a little deeper in, they do know the Christmas story, they do know about the narrative, but just in different terms and sometimes it takes a little jogging."

**Mr. Moore** - "Some students look at the importance of being present for others, they understand that. The problem is there are other people in the school - and elsewhere - that if they bothered to spend a little time or a little bit of effort in a certain direction, it would be easier for them and easier for those around them."

**Ms. Pinto** - "No. I would not say that it is true. I would say a lot of students understand the Christmas story and even students from other faith traditions have such a respect for our traditions, they have their own feasts and festivals that mirror it. Diwali just happened, Hanukkah is happening, you have different students celebrating light in the darkness, just like we are celebrating a light in the darkness. I have not actually felt a disrespect for the season."

## **How can students involve themselves and carry out God's message?**

**Ms. Fickel** - "I think that every family is in a different situation and so if the student feels called to do volunteer work - and if their family will allow during the Christmas holidays - I think it is a wonderful time to do it because many people are in need and the weather is much more challenging. I think it's a good time to focus on the giving, especially since you have it as a requirement for graduation. It is a great way to get that done and do it in a way that is meaningful to you as an individual and as a Catholic."

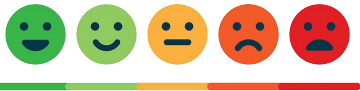
**Ms. Lombardi** - "I think we are in a time where it is difficult for our students and families to give back, in terms of monetary or donations. Everybody is struggling so much with everything that has gone on because of COVID and so I think that the way we give back is to bring back that Christmas cheer to those who need it. I know that in the past the religion department has done some very cool initiatives with some of the grade nines [such as] creating cards or nice art pieces that can then be delivered to some of the local old-age homes. For them, they spend time alone and sometimes don't have friends or family to join them for that time, it's a special way in which they can be included; it's a sign that they are remembered. I think giving a little bit of our time, a little bit of our effort, and our goodwill is more important than giving money or toys or anything like that."

**Mr. Moore** - "You have to put your faith into action. You have to do things. You can say all you want, but if you're not doing it then it's nothing. Even though some people might not always recognize it, you have to look past that."

**Ms. Pinto** - "It's Christ in Christmas. If you take that out, then it can be all about you. But when you remember that Christ is the reason for the season, I think that Christ's message was never for him, it was to serve the poor, serve the homeless, and serve those who are sick. So if we do that now, there is such a heavy symbolism on it and it makes the season that much better, so I would ask people to reflect on the story of Christmas."

# What are People Watching?

By: Christian Ramos



It has been nearly a century since the first TV show was broadcast, and since then, TV and its watchers have evolved. Since its creation, TV has been enjoyed by millions and has affected millions. Its effects can vary and stretch from making its watchers laugh and cry, to helping them discover themselves.



Because of its easy access and numerous streaming services, TV has grown in popularity among nearly everyone in the world. Whether enjoyed amongst friends, family or even alone, TV leaves a lasting impression on its viewers, explicitly or implicitly. Something as simple as your favourite TV show can help us reminisce on memories and induce emotions. When shows have amazing acting, directing and captivating storylines, it wouldn't be a surprise if people were touched by a television program. When watching series, we feel as if we mature and grow with the characters and as we get older, we begin to resonate with different characters and understand their perspectives.



According to a survey taken in the school, people's favourite shows differed, and after researching, were quite interesting. People enjoyed **hilarious and heartwarming comedies** like Brooklyn Nine-Nine Modern Family, Sex Education, The Office, Friends and How I Met Your Mother.

F.R.I.E.N.D.S

Others enjoyed **captivating dramas** like Prison Break, Game of Thrones, Breaking Bad, Grey's Anatomy, The Walking Dead and The Boys.



Finally, others opted to stay true to their **favourite cartoons**, that being SpongeBob, Adventure Time, Lego Ninjago, Regular Show,





To summarise, the journey through nearly a century of television has been an extraordinary evolution, shaping and influencing the lives of millions worldwide. Whether shared with friends and family or embraced in solitude, the impact of television is undeniable. From laughter-inducing comedies to gripping dramas and timeless cartoons, the variety of shows mirrors the diversity of viewers' preferences. As we continue our journey through television, it not only entertains us, but it changes our perceptions and forges connections with the ever-changing world around us.



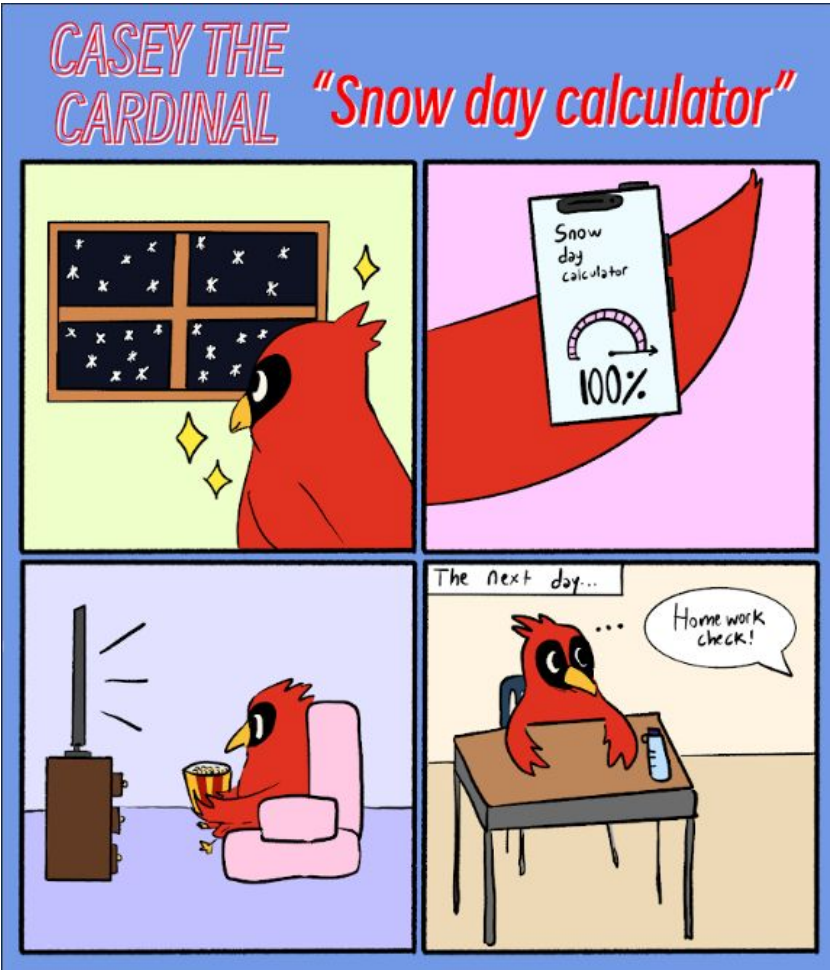
The most popular show in the school was  
**Breaking Bad**



Gilmore girls



THE  
**WALKING DEAD**



# Photography Corner



**Feeder School Concert Tour: December 20-21, 2023**



**Identities night: December 12th 2023**



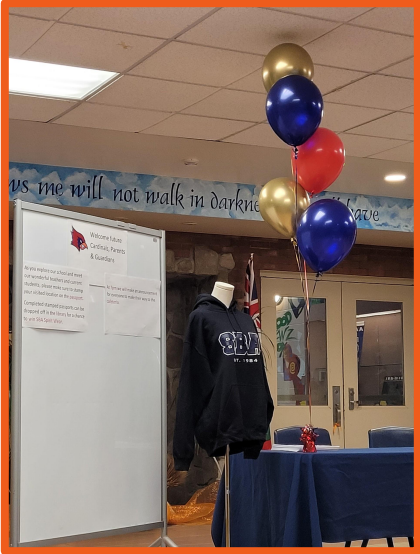
**Identities night: December 12th 2023**







# St. Brother André Open House: November 23th 2023





**"My beauty's from within" -  
Grade 11 SBA student**



FIN.

