

# Culture – connectedness in diversity

## Part one: How Christmas is celebrated



In Omnibus  
Omnia Est



**1<sup>st</sup> theme: Culture**

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## Swedish Christmas traditions

### Typical ways to celebrate Christmas in Sweden

Like any other thing we all do things differently in different families and social circles. This poster contains information about the more common traditions surrounding Christmas in Sweden.

Before Christianity grew big in Sweden we celebrated Julblot (Yule) during the shortest days of the year. This is a "heathen" tradition from around/after the Viking age, stemming all the way back to before the 13<sup>th</sup> century. As Christianity grew in Sweden around the mid-1100s the pagan and Christian traditions began to mix. Most of the current traditions surrounding Christmas in Sweden is from the 1800s and 1900s.



# 1

## Common Christmas traditions

**A few of the more common Christmas traditions in Sweden is advent, Lucia, lights, decorations, advent calendar and of course all sorts of sweets and delicious foods.**

One of the first tradition to start Christmas off in Sweden is advent, which is the 4 Sundays before Christmas. The first, the second, the third and the fourth Sunday in advent. "Advent" is a Version of the Latin word meaning "coming". Each advent (Sunday) you light another candle. When all 4 candles are lit you know that Christmas (December 24<sup>th</sup>) is almost here!



Adventsljusstake/Advent candlestick

During December, and advent, a lot of Swedes puts an "advent star" in the window. This star is supposed to remind of the Star of Bethlehem/Christmas star. Although today it mostly just represents Christmas and the purpose is to spread Christmas spirit.

The Christmas tree is also a common tradition, like in a lot of other countries. Lights is another common tradition around November/December to brighten up the homes in those dark times during early winter time.

Another common tradition is the advent calendar, which came to Sweden in 1932. Each day of December until Christmas eve you get to open a "window" on the calendar as the days grow closer to Christmas eve.



Adventskalender - Advent calendar

Lucia is celebrated on December 13<sup>th</sup> and is a feast of light. Lucia walks slowly in with a long white robe on December 13<sup>th</sup> with candles in her hair followed by the "lucia train" – others in long white robes/dresses, holding candles. At Lucia we usually eat "lussebullar" and gingerbread cookies.



Lucia

Each Christmas Eve at 3 o'clock in the afternoon over 3 million people in Sweden tune in to watch Donald Duck on TV. The program, featuring several clips and shorts from Disney, started airing on national public TV in 1960 and has become a large part of the Swedish Christmas traditions.





## Christmas foods

All families have different traditions and dishes they make around the holiday, but a few of the more common and traditional foods in Sweden around Christmas is lussebullar (saffron buns) which you eat at Lucia, gingerbread cookies, chocolate, oranges, Christmas ham, potatoes, meatballs, prince-sausages, herring pickled in different sauces, beetroot salad and much more.

Around Christmas it is also very common in Sweden to eat "tomtegröt" (santa porridge) or risgrynsgröt (rice pudding), as it's called. This is eaten with or without milk and usually with sugar and cinnamon on top. After Christmas Eve you can take the leftover porridge and make ris à la malta, which is cold rice pudding/porridge dessert, whipped cream, sugar, vanilla sugar and sometimes pieces of orange.



## Gävlebocken

Or the Gävle Goat is a traditional display of a giant "Yule/Christmas Goat" figure made of straw. Every year it is put up in Gävle city's center at the beginning of advent.

The yule goat has become world famous for burning down almost every year since its first appearance in 1966. As of December 2016 it has been illegally burned and damaged 37 times.



During Christmas it is very common for families to dance around the Christmas tree to traditional songs and dances. You walk/dance around the tree as you sing and do the movements that goes with the song. This is very similar to a tradition surrounding the Swedish holiday Midsommarafton (midsummer's eve) in June, where you dance around the midsummer- or maypole to similar songs.



In some families you write a rhyme on the Christmas gifts. These are relatively short, rhyming verses that you attach to the gifts. The rhyme usually suggests what's inside the gift without directly revealing the contents.

Last but not least; the most important thing around Christmas, above any tradition, is spending time with your family and loved ones.