



Christmas in Poland: traditions and customs





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Christmas Eve Dinner –
kolacja wigilijna – is the
most important
Christmas celebration in
Poland.
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When we celebrate?

Christmas Eve Dinner starts in the late afternoon or in the evening on 24th of December. The tradition requires that the dinner can start only after the first star is visible in the sky.



What is the Polish Christmas wafer?

Dinner starts with sharing the Christmas wafer (oplatek – baked from wheat flour and water, usually rectangular). Each guest receives a piece of a wafer and then people share it with one another eating a piece of a wafer and making wishes.



Did you know?

Under the tablecloth, Polish people put some hay to remind guests that Jesus was born in a manger.



Hospitality

One of the greatest traditions is to prepare an extra seat at the table that is intended for an unannounced and unexpected guest.

Christmas dishes

The tradition requires that the Christmas Eve dinner includes twelve vegetarian courses. Typically, the dinner includes carp fish (karp), beetroot soup (barszcz czerwony), mushroom soup (zupa grzybowa) or fish soup (zupa rybna), dumplings with mushroom or cabbage filling (pierogi), cooked cabbage with mushrooms (kapusta z grzybami), herring salad (sałatka śledziowa), cooked vegetable salad with mayonnaise dressing (sałatka jarzynowa).



Gifts

Once the dinner is finished, it's time to unwrap the gifts. Gifts are either under the Christmas tree or there is a Santa Claus (Mikołaj) home visit.

Christmas carols

On Christmas Eve and during the next days of Christmas season, people sing carols (kolędy).



Midnight mass

After dinner, people attend a special midnight mass (pasterka) which ends the period of fasting and celebrates the birth of Jesus.

It's just the beginning of celebration....

Christmas Eve is a day first of fasting, then of feasting.

Christmas Day (Boże Narodzenie) and the Second Day of Christmas, December 25-26 are bank holidays.

People visit family and friends to celebrate together, they go to church, sing carols (kolędy), spend long hours at the table.





Dawid

Marzena

Karolina

Adrian

We wish you lots of smiles
and laughter this season
and ever after.

Wishing you and your
family health, happiness,
peace and prosperity
this Christmas and in the
coming New Year.



Ewa



Jacek

We wish you hope and
faith in the coming of
brighter days.



Department of Internationalisation