

Monthly Gazette

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Celebrating December

Learn a Foreign Language Month

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

Cookie Cutter Week

December 1 - 7

Hanukkah

December 5 - 12

St. Nicholas Day

December 6

Poinsettia Day

December 12

First day of winter

December 22

World Peace Day

December 22

Christmas Day

December 25

Boxing Day

December 26

Kwanzaa

December 26 – January 1

First Night/New Year's Eve

December 31

Cutting Up with Cookie Cutters

Any child who has gotten into trouble for making a castle out of his mashed potatoes or lining up his peas like an army regiment may be heartened to know that playing with one's food – turning it into other objects – has a long tradition. Ceramic molds for creating foods in decorative shapes or with decorative patterns preceded Jell-O by 3,000 years or more, according to archeological digs in Egypt and Mesopotamia. Centuries later, people began to create wooden molds to use for imprinting designs in dough, and in the mid-17th century, cookie cutters began to appear. They became popular as tinsmiths found them a saleable use for their scrap metal. Take a narrow leftover scrap and shape it into a star, a heart, or an animal and housewives were delighted!

Early cookie cutters often had religious themes – Adam and Eve beside the apple tree, for example. For the last 100 years or so, cookie cutters have often been sold in sets with holiday themes. Aluminum versions were a popular catalog item in the 1920s, and by the 1940s, plastic versions began to be made. Many holiday shapes originated in Germany and were brought to North America in various immigration waves.

People still pull out their cookie cutters at holiday time to make sugar cookies that can then be frosted, sprinkled, and overloaded with toppings according to a child's artistic fancy. However, few people use cookie cutters year round. In fact, cookie cutters have become a collector's item. They are used more often for decorations – on shelves, as ornaments, as a mobile – than for baking. And now that you can buy anything you can imagine on eBay, you can order your very own customized, one-of-a-kind cookie cutter – for a price, of course. How would you like to eat a cookie in the shape of a bat, alligator, armadillo, or buffalo? Give me a simple snowman!



Not Your Ordinary Candle Wax

One of the more extraordinary career women of the 1700s was Marie Tussaud, born Marie Grosholtz on December 7, 1761. Marie's widowed mother went to work as a housekeeper for Dr. Philippe Curtius, who was skilled in making wax models, which he used to illustrate anatomy. In 1765, Curtius moved to Paris and began doing wax portraits. Within two years, Marie and her mother joined him.



Curtius had his first exhibition in 1770, and it attracted major interest. He began to teach his art to Marie, who created her first figure – of Jean Rousseau – when she was just 16. She soon followed with models of Voltaire and Ben Franklin.

Before long, Marie had met many of the leaders of both the French Revolution and French royalty. She lived for a time at Versailles and served as art teacher to the sister of Louis XVI. Not surprisingly, this led to her arrest as a royalist sympathizer. Her head had already been shaven for execution by guillotine when she was rescued so that she could make death masks of others who were executed, including Marie Antoinette and Robespierre.

In 1795, Marie married Francois Tussaud and continued making wax figures, which she added to the collection that had been left to her by Curtius upon his death. In 1802, she made a trip to London to exhibit this unusual art. She was unable to return to France as intended because of the Franco-English War, so she traveled throughout England and Ireland with her exhibit and eventually settled permanently in London, where she died in 1850.

More than 200 years after her first models were made, and thousands of wax figures later, Madame Tussaud's Wax Museum has now grown to become one of the major tourist attractions in London, with branches in Amsterdam, Hong Kong, Las Vegas, Copenhagen, and New York City.

Learn a Foreign Language

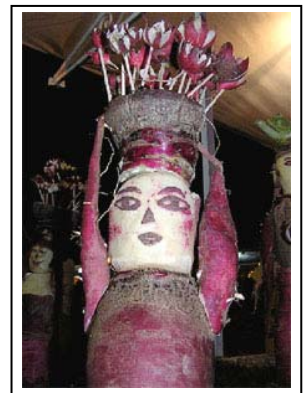
What better time than World Peace Day (December 22) to celebrate Learn a Foreign Language Month and learn to say peace in other languages? Here are a few to try:

- Arabic – Salam
- Chinese – HePing
- Danish – Fred
- Hebrew – Shalom
- Hindi – Shanti
- Japanese – Heiwa
- Kurdish – Asti
- Latvian – Miers
- Maori – Rongo
- Portuguese – Paz
- Swahili – Salama
- Tagalog – Kapayapaan
- Welsh – Tangnefedd

And how about “Happy New Year!” in Hawaiian for good measure? “Hauoli makahiki hou!”

The Radish Festival

The Mexican Radish Festival is held each year on December 23. It originated in Oaxaca, Mexico, when merchants at a vegetable market decided to decorate their radishes on the day before the eve of the nativity. Residents were



delighted with the creations, and they purchased them to decorate their tables. In 1897, the first official radish exhibition was held on the main plaza. Since then, it has become an annual tradition, with the addition of flowers and cornhusk figures. The displays feature human and animal figures, religious scenes, popular events, and even scenes from movies. It's safe to say, it's a rare treat.

A 50th Musical Anniversary

It's probably fair to say that when most of us consider December music, the first tune that pops into our heads is *not* "Seventy-Six Trombones." Nevertheless, for those people who heard the song at the Broadway premiere of *The Music Man* on December 19, 1957, it will always be associated with winter holidays.



It's also fair to say that regardless of the weather, Meredith Willson was sweating on that opening night. Audiences in Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. had been enthusiastic, but he was not sure the New

York audiences would warm to the folksy story of a Midwestern con man in 1912, which was based on Willson's own experiences as a child in Mason City, Iowa. As they sat down in the Majestic Theatre, Willson and his wife chose two seats near the exit in case they needed to beat a hasty retreat.

Willson was no stranger to professional music roles. He started as a flutist in the orchestra pits of New York boroughs in the 1920s. Later, he took a position touring with John Phillip Sousa's band. Eventually, he scored movies and directed orchestras on radio shows, but a Broadway play was another matter.

Still, he needn't have worried. The show ran for nearly three years, spawned a movie, and enjoyed many revivals with thousands of performances by other theatre troupes. The show won multiple awards, rejuvenated the popularity of barbershop quartets, and created millions of fans who find it impossible to refrain from singing along to songs like:

- "The Wells Fargo Wagon"
- "Gary, Indiana"
- "Ya Got Trouble"
- "Goodnight, My Someone"
- "Lida Rose"
- "Till There Was You"

Gingerbread Husbands?

Gingerbread houses seem to be a direct result of the popularity of the Grimm fairy tale, "Hansel and Gretel." However, few people today associate witches with this holiday delight.

Gingerbread has been baked in Europe since the 11th century. The early delicacies were almost always cut into shapes or stamped with a mold and decorated. They were so popular at English fairs that many became known as "gingerbread fairs." In addition to flower, bird, and animal shapes, "gingerbread men" were always available. In fact, at some English fairs, maidens were encouraged to eat a "gingerbread husband" in order to increase their luck in finding a real one.

Pumpkin Gingerbread

Ingredients

2-1/4 cups all-purpose flour
 1/2 cup sugar
 2/3 cup butter
 3/4 cup chopped pecans
 3/4 cup buttermilk
 1/2 cup molasses
 1/2 cup canned pumpkin
 1 egg
 1-1/2 teaspoons ground ginger
 1 teaspoon baking soda
 1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
 1/2 teaspoon ground cloves
 1/4 teaspoon salt



Directions

In a large bowl, combine flour and sugar. Cut in butter until mixture resembles coarse crumbs. Stir in pecans. Press 1-1/4 cups of crumb mixture into bottom of an ungreased 2-quart square baking dish. To remaining crumb mixture, add the liquid/moist ingredients first and then all of the dry ingredients. Mix well. Pour over crumb mixture in baking dish. Bake in a 350°F oven about 50 minutes or until center tests done. Serve warm with ice cream.

Try Your Hand at Haiku

December 22 is Haiku Poetry Day, and a lovely time to take a deep breath and think thoughts of beauty. In Japan, there are many rules that govern haiku, but other countries follow only this simple rule: Create a succinct thought in three non-rhyming lines – the first with 5 syllables, the second with 7 syllables, and the last with 5 syllables again. At one time, the poems were supposed to be about nature in a particular season (cherry blossoms meant spring; mosquitoes, summer). Now the topic is up to you:



First autumn morning:
The mirror I stare into
Shows my father's face.
~ Kijo Murakami (1865-1938)

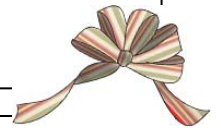
The web site you seek
Cannot be located, but
Countless more exist.
~ Uncredited email

December Birthdays

People born in December tend to be enthusiastic, optimistic, and intelligent, always with an eye on the future. They value both their friendships and time alone. Their curiosity and easy adjustment to new environments make them good travelers. Some famous folks with December birthdays include:

- Richard Pryor December 1, 1940
- Maria Callas December 2, 1923
- Willa Cather December 7, 1873
- Dina Merrill December 9, 1925
- Connie Francis December 12, 1938
- Lee Remick December 14, 1935
- William Safire December 17, 1929
- Frank Zappa December 21, 1940
- Cab Calloway December 25, 1907
- Bert Parks December 30, 1914

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



Special Events:

- December 4 - Entertainment with The Big Band
- December 11 – Christmas Carols with the Brownies
- December 13 - Sending out Christmas Cards to Families with Music
- December 19 – Christmas Carols with the Boy Scouts
- December 20 - Photos with Santa / Holiday Gathering in the Lobby
- December 21 - Resident Christmas Party and Entertainment with Linda Jean
- December 28 - Birthday Social and Entertainment with Bob Quiry
- December 31 - New Years Eve Party

Lanessa Wishes Everyone a Healthy and Happy New Year!!