



**Master Gardener
Series
December 2008
Le Réveillon**

Traditionally, le Réveillon, or 'the awakening,' was the morning feast following midnight Mass on Christmas Eve.

Popular with Creole families in the mid-1800s, it is now much a part of the New Orleans tradition.

In the early days, most Catholics recognized Christmas Eve as a day of fasting and abstinence. Following midnight Mass, everyone was hungry and ready to celebrate with a Réveillon feast. Typical menu highlights are roasted duck and other game birds, as well as beef, soups, meat pies, and many unusual desserts including a traditional Buche Noël.

The Réveillon is still very popular in France, although few people now attend the midnight mass. The traditional meal is largely determined by local French customs. For instance, in Alsace, a goose is usually the main course.

PERE NOEL - Before going to bed, children put their shoes by the fireside for a gift from le père de Noël or le petit Jésus. Le père Noël is supposed to

award children who had a good behaviour during the past year. He travels with his companion called Père Fouettard, his negative counterpart, who spans naughty children.

Formerly, peasants' wooden shoes, called sabots, were often used at Christmas time, but today shoes of any kind are set before the fireplace or around the tree to contain gifts. However, the sabots are not forgotten - chocolate wooden shoes are made by pastry shops and filled with candies.



In the North of France Père Noël brings small gifts on St. Nicholas Eve (December 6) and visits again on Christmas.

GREENERY & DECORATIONS – Most Christmas decorations have roots in paganism. In fact, Christmas celebrations were outlawed by the Puritans as being too pagan during the 16th century. They stated that the Bible didn't specifically state that Jesus was born on December 25. The Quakers didn't outlaw Christmas, but they too felt it shouldn't be celebrated. Whether or not to celebrate Christmas

publicly is still a controversy today. Generally, as long as decorations are pagan, they are acceptable for public places.



Réveillon Dinner at Brennan's in New Orleans. Dinner is \$100.00 per plate.

DINNER - Most Reveillon Dinners at home last until Christmas morning.

In Quebec Canada, a meat pie will be served, called a tourtiere, it is the single most common food served in Canada at Christmas. On the menu will be a cheese tray, a fruit platter, baked beans, ham, Buche Noël, crudités, venison meatballs, honey glazed ham, pate, breads and crackers, pecan pie, fudge, wine and apple cider. The meal is not consumed all at once, but eaten slowly, one course at a time, while visiting with family and friends and

waiting for the Pere Noel to show up to fill the children's shoes.

BUCHE NOEL

FROM WWW.ALLRECIPES.COM

2 cups heavy cream
1/2 cup confectioners' sugar
1/2 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 teaspoon vanilla extract
6 egg yolks
1/2 cup white sugar
1/3 cup unsweetened cocoa powder
1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla extract
1/8 teaspoon salt
6 egg whites
1/4 cup white sugar
confectioners' sugar for dusting

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 375 degrees F (190 degrees C). Line a 10x15 inch jellyroll pan with parchment paper. In a large bowl, whip cream, 1/2 cup confectioners' sugar, 1/2 cup cocoa, and 1 teaspoon vanilla until thick and stiff. Refrigerate.

In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat egg yolks with 1/2 cup sugar until thick and pale. Blend in 1/3 cup cocoa, 1 1/2 teaspoons vanilla, and salt. In large glass bowl, using clean beaters, whip egg whites to soft peaks. Gradually add 1/4 cup sugar, and beat until whites form stiff peaks. Immediately fold the yolk mixture into the whites. Spread the batter evenly into the prepared pan.

Bake for 12 to 15 minutes in the preheated oven, or until the cake springs back when lightly touched. Dust a clean dishtowel with confectioners' sugar. Run a knife around the edge of the pan, and turn the warm cake out onto the towel. Remove and discard parchment paper. Starting at the short edge of the cake, roll the cake up with the towel. Cool for 30 minutes. Unroll the cake, and spread the filling to within 1 inch of the edge. Roll the cake up with the filling inside. Place seam side down onto a serving plate, and refrigerate until serving. Dust with confectioners' sugar before serving.

HOW TO MAKE AN EVERGREEN WREATH

From [www.ehow.com](http://WWW.EHOW.COM)

1. Select the fir tree from which you want to collect boughs. If you do not live near pine forests, visit a garden shop or nursery.
2. Clip boughs for your Christmas wreath. Bring sturdy shears and a large enough basket or other carrier in which to collect boughs. Only clip branches back to about a foot and a half so you do not harm the tree. Use your judgment to determine how many branches you need for the size of wreath you have in mind. Don't take more than you need, but take enough.
3. Use thin wire and wreath hoops, purchased at any hobby shop. Wrap branches around the hoop, twisting as you go. Once you have covered the entire hoop, turn it over. Weave the wire over and under the branches, wrapping the wire around the

hoop. Make your way around the hoop, allowing the needles to camouflage the wire and the hoop. When finished, twist the wire and wrap the end so that it is behind the hoop.



4. Decorate with ribbon and ornaments or whatever engages your imagination. Be sure that ornaments are anchored and are appropriate sizes.

5. Fashion a way to hang the wreath. One way to hang your wreath is to hang it by the hoop on a sturdy nail or picture hanger. However, use a heavy staple to secure the bottom of the wreath so that it does not fly off the top hanging mechanism. Another option is to use moderately heavy wire, twist it into a loop and attach it to the top of the wreath. Decorate the hoop with more fir by braiding small branches and ribbon around the wire loop. Hang the loop on a nail or hanger.

Special thanks to Trena Trusty for teaching the Morgan County Master Gardeners how to identify plants, shrubs, and trees for wreath making; how to prune limbs to improve the growth habit; and how to make the wreaths.

Trena provides the Morgan County, Indiana libraries with wreaths at Christmas, as well as beautiful gardens every spring and summer.

