

HOW TO CELEBRATE

UTS MULTICULTURAL WOMEN'S NETWORK

2023

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The UTS Multicultural Women's Network acknowledge the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, the Booroberongal people of the Dharug Nation, the Bidiagal people and the Gamaygal people upon whose ancestral lands the UTS campus stand. We pay respect to Elders past and present, acknowledging them as the traditional custodians of knowledge for these lands and recognising their continuing connection to land, waters, country, and community. We acknowledge the historical oppression of land, language, and culture of First Nations People and commit to the decolonising journey we all share.

WHAT

The Multicultural Women's Network aims to showcase significant cultural events through our e-booklets.

WHY

To acknowledge the cultural diversity of UTS. Using an assets-based approach of amplifying how people celebrate, this project aims to empower people to feel proud of their cultural backgrounds, as well as to celebrate the cultural diversity of our UTS community.

WHO

This is for UTS staff, students and anyone else you think would benefit from learning more about cultural events.



THIS MONTH
WE'RE CELEBRATING



CHRISTMAS

WHAT IS CHRISTMAS?



A Christian festival celebrating the birth of Jesus, it is known as

→ Christmas (*mass on Christ's day*) in English. The origin of this term is fairly recent.

→ The earlier term *yule* may have derived from the Germanic *jōl* or the Anglo-Saxon *geōl*, which referred to the winter solstice. In Finnish, Christmas is called *Joulu*.

For more info, click [here](#)

Other terms for Christmas that signal the nativity (birth of Jesus) include:

→ *Navidad* (Spanish)

→ *Noël* (French)

→ *Natale* (Italian)

→ *Pasko* (Filipino)

Pasko is derived from the Spanish phrase *pascua de navidad* - 'Easter of the nativity').

Sources:

- *Daluyan: Journal ng Wikang Filipino (in Tagalog)*. Vol. 1–2. [Sentro ng Wikang Filipino](#) and the [University of the Philippines](#). 1990. p. 7. Pasku at Paskwa ang hiniram ng mga Pilipino sa Kastilang pascua...
- Hillerbrand, H.J., 2023, *Christmas*, Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Christmas>

ROOTS & ROUTES

One [widespread](#) explanation of the origin of this date is that December 25 was the Christianizing of the *dies solis invicti nati* (“day of the birth of the unconquered sun”)

December 25 was first identified as the date of Jesus’ birth by [Sextus Julius Africanus](#) in 221 and later became the universally accepted date.

The churches of the [Oriental Orthodox](#) communion celebrate Christmas variously. For example, the [Armenian Apostolic Church](#) honours January 6 as Christmas. In Ethiopia, where Christianity has had a home ever since the 4th century, the [Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church](#) celebrates Christmas on January 7.

This was a popular holiday in the [Roman Empire](#) that celebrated the winter solstice as a symbol of the resurgence of the sun, the casting away of winter and the rebirth of spring and summer.

WHAT'S THE DEAL WITH...?

“

...we bring a bit of dead tree into our homes, or unpack a plastic version from storage, and decorate it with bright baubles and lights. Why? (Kylie Klein-Nixon, 2023)



”

Many believe that this practice originated in [Germany](#). It is claimed that in Germany about 723 the English missionary [St. Boniface](#) encountered pagans preparing a sacrifice at an oak tree dedicated to the god [Thor](#) (Donar). Boniface took an ax to the tree, and, when not struck down by their god, he proclaimed to the awed pagans that a nearby evergreen was their “holy tree.” Other sources report that a fir grew on the site of the fallen oak.

[Martin Luther](#) reportedly first hung lighted candles on a tree in the 16th century. By the 19th century, Christmas trees were a firmly established tradition in Germany.

As Germans migrated, they took Christmas trees to other countries, notably England. It was a German-born prince, [Albert](#), and his wife, Britain’s Queen [Victoria](#), who popularised the tradition among the British. The couple made Christmas trees a prominent part of the holiday’s festivities. Christmas trees soon became common in English homes.

SANTA, I KNOW HIM!

For more info on the origins of Santa Claus

<https://bit.ly/3RMflQn>



Did you know about Krampus, the Christmas devil?

<https://bit.ly/471q7vZ>





STORIES FROM THE UTS COMMUNITY

HAPPIEST MOMENTS CELEBRATING

“

Waking up when I was a very little girl and feeling down to the end of my bed for my stocking full of presents. I was still so asleep I couldn't open my eyes properly so just felt all the shapes of the presents and listened to the crinkling sound of the wrapping. Knowing the presents were there, I lay back down and went to sleep...

I had some self control and did not just open the presents all at once, but I was so very excited. And I felt very loved and lucky.

”



The Hon. Verity Firth
Pro Vice-Chancellor
(Social Justice and Inclusion)

HAPPIEST MOMENTS CELEBRATING

“

My daughter, Violet, was chosen to play the role of the Blessed Mary, (Jesus' mother) for her school's Christmas concert. She did a fantastic job of singing, dancing (who knew Mary sung 'Santa Claus is Coming to town?') and looking solemnly at a baby doll, who had the starring role as Jesus. ”

“

My son cheered for his sister with all the energy his four-year-old body could muster (and it was A LOT)..my family and I were super proud of her and the whole school community. My daughter, along with her peers and their amazing teachers spent weeks rehearsing and planning to deliver such a heart-warming event – in the sweltering heat! The heart was definitely not the only thing warmed that night!

”

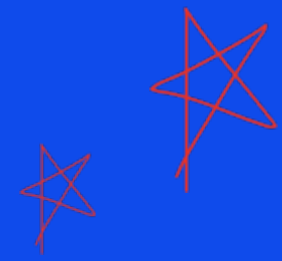
Dr. Elaine Laforteza

Equity and Diversity Project Officer (Cultural Diversity)
Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion

“

Amidst all that's going on in the world, this beautiful Christmas celebration was such a needed reminder of the light, love and kindness we, as human beings, are capable of. My family celebrate Christmas in a more secular way these days, but at the heart of it is still this deep recognition of the miracle of **perseverance, tenacity, courage, and love** – the story of Mary (with Joseph), striving to safely give birth to their child.

”



Violet's drawing (aged 7)



HAPPIEST MOMENTS CELEBRATING

“ Gathering with family and friends to share traditional Greek food including lamb roast, spanakopita, Greek salad and greens (horta) and many - way too many - sweets such as kourabiethes and tsoureki. ”



Prof, Stella Valenzuela
Discipline Leader, School
of Life Sciences

HAPPIEST MOMENTS CELEBRATING

“

Sitting around after lunch singing songs originating from distinct Greek islands and places and listening to stories about life in Greece before and after the war and the major earthquake that destroyed majority of homes and buildings in Kefallonia. This was a main reason for many family members who originally emigrated to Australia from Greece.

Prof. Stella Valenzuela



Afternoon siesta and then the smell of Greek coffee and freshly cut watermelon. A swim at the beach on a hot day would often be the final event as well as swapping of gifts to end a day of celebration and sharing.

”

HAPPIEST MOMENTS CELEBRATING

“ Christmas Day is always a wonderful time with extended family. We usually meet at "lunch" (note, Filipinos generally start their parties a couple hours after the agreed time) and everyone brings a dish, so we have a huge feast. Eating with the family always brings so much joy and laughter, and it's a chance for us to catch up with one another and share gifts.

A highlight is playing BAD SANTA, where everyone brings a gift and we each pick a gift (or steal it from one another). It's a whole lot of fun.

This year (and every year), I generally go to Church on Christmas Eve with my immediate family. Then, at midnight we celebrate Noche Buena (typical celebration for Latinos and Filipinos) and have a small feast, usually with smoked ham and pineapple and other delicious foods.

Despite there being way too much food for the amount of people that are there. I'm always impressed that everyone will do their part in taking home some 'baon' (leftover food to have a lunch/dinner the next day) so there is no food left to waste. ”

Leah Subijano

Senior Engagement and Events Officer,
Centre for Social Justice and Inclusion

HAPPIEST MOMENTS CELEBRATING

Walking up my childhood street during the Christmas season. Balmy night air, gravel under my bare feet as I run up and down admiring the spectacle and glory of the Christmas lights covering almost every house in the street.

The street I grew up in was renowned for its Christmas lights displays, with many Sydneysiders venturing to catch a glimpse during the month of December.

It brought so much magic to my childhood and really helped cement my love for Christmas. I have the most wonderful fond memories of walking up and down the street admiring the bright lights and installations with my family and friends.

Amy Grady

Marketing and Communications
Officer, Centre for social Justice
and Inclusion

MEMORABLE MOMENT

“

The last Christmas I spent with my whole family was when my father was diagnosed with stage 4 cancer. While we were are scared about the recent news and the consequences (he was diagnosed two weeks before Christmas in 2019), we as a family had a chance to spend the holidays together at home, like we have not done in a long time.

It was a bitter-sweet moment for all of us in our family to celebrate Christmas with the recent news about dad's disease. I personally tried my best to recreate a joyful experience for everyone. I cooked and baked all the traditional recipes like my dad used to under his close guidance. Obviously, it was not the same, but at least it helped to forget for a moment about the cancer.

It was a mixture of feelings at each given stage. However, everyone in our family was able to create beautiful Christmas memories despite the situation. For my family, like many others in Italy, Christmas is one of the most important celebrations in the year, and having the opportunity to celebrate it together before my dad passed away in March 2020 was really important.

”

Dr. Carmine Gentile

Senior Lecturer, School of Biomedical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering and IT

FOOD AND FAMILY



Dr. Carmine Gentile

My mum shared this with me the other day of our Christmas sweets: honey, Nutella, nuts and lots of love :-)



FOOD AND FAMILY

The main event for me is the Christmas dinner we have on Christmas Eve. In Finland it is a formal dinner consisting of many different dishes from root vegetable casseroles to a Christmas ham.



I spend the day of Christmas Eve in the kitchen, taking the time to make things just right while listening to Finnish Christmas music. I usually start by making a pot of rice porridge made with white sticky rice, and have this for lunch while I work. Back home, this is served with an almond hidden in the pot, and whoever finds the almond gets to make a special Christmas wish.

Niina Matthews

PhD Candidate, School of Biomedical Engineering, Faculty of Engineering, WiEIT & WXSTEMM

“

When I cook I'm using a lot of warm spices like cinnamon, cardamom, and dark treacle. The oven is on as many of the dishes are baked slowly in its warmth, sending rich aromas through the house. As I cook, my kids usually wander in, checking out what I'm doing next, and I give them little treats for tasting. The table is set nicely with a festive tablecloth and we light candles around the table.



Niina Matthews

Presenting the food from special, precious dishes is an important part of the dinner - we are eating with our eyes as much as with our mouths. When we sit down for the dinner no one is in a hurry, everyone can have as much of their favourite foods as they want. Even the kids who know that Santa comes after sit through the dinner happily.

”

In our family my husband cooks every night, but Christmas is my domain. Since I'm the one in our family who grew up eating and cooking Finnish Christmas foods, I prepare the dinner and other traditional treats during December. As my kids are getting older, I involve them more and pass the traditions and knowledge to them.

My family are the ones who get to enjoy the cooking, for me it's the fulfilment of the whole process when I see and hear them tasting the Christmas foods again. It is very special and my kids and husband look forward to it, apparently it's not Christmas without my cooking.

Niina Matthews' Christmas dinner



MOST IMPORTANT THINGS:

Leah Subijano



“ Despite now not personally identifying as Catholic or Christian (but grew up in a Catholic family), and Christmas being super capitalist (with the rampant gift buying, over consumption, landfill, and other terrible effects on the environment), underneath it all I appreciate Christmas as a time to celebrate Jesus' birth and spend quality time with the family. ”

“ Coming together and spending quality time with family and friends. A time to rest and reflect on the year that was, and what we're grateful for. ”



Amy Grady

The miracle of Jesus' birth

Eating traditional food

Friends

Love

Children's joy

Family

Counting and sharing your blessings

FINAL THOUGHTS

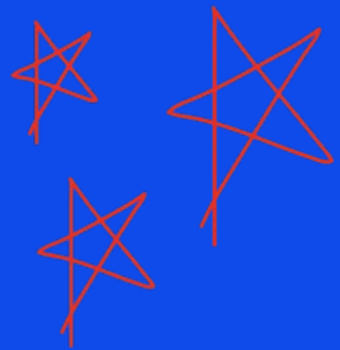
(From Jesus as an adult – he grew up!)

For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat. I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink. I was a stranger and you invited me in. I needed clothes and you clothed me. I was sick and you looked after me. I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink...

From Matthew 25, Bible.

...truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it for me.

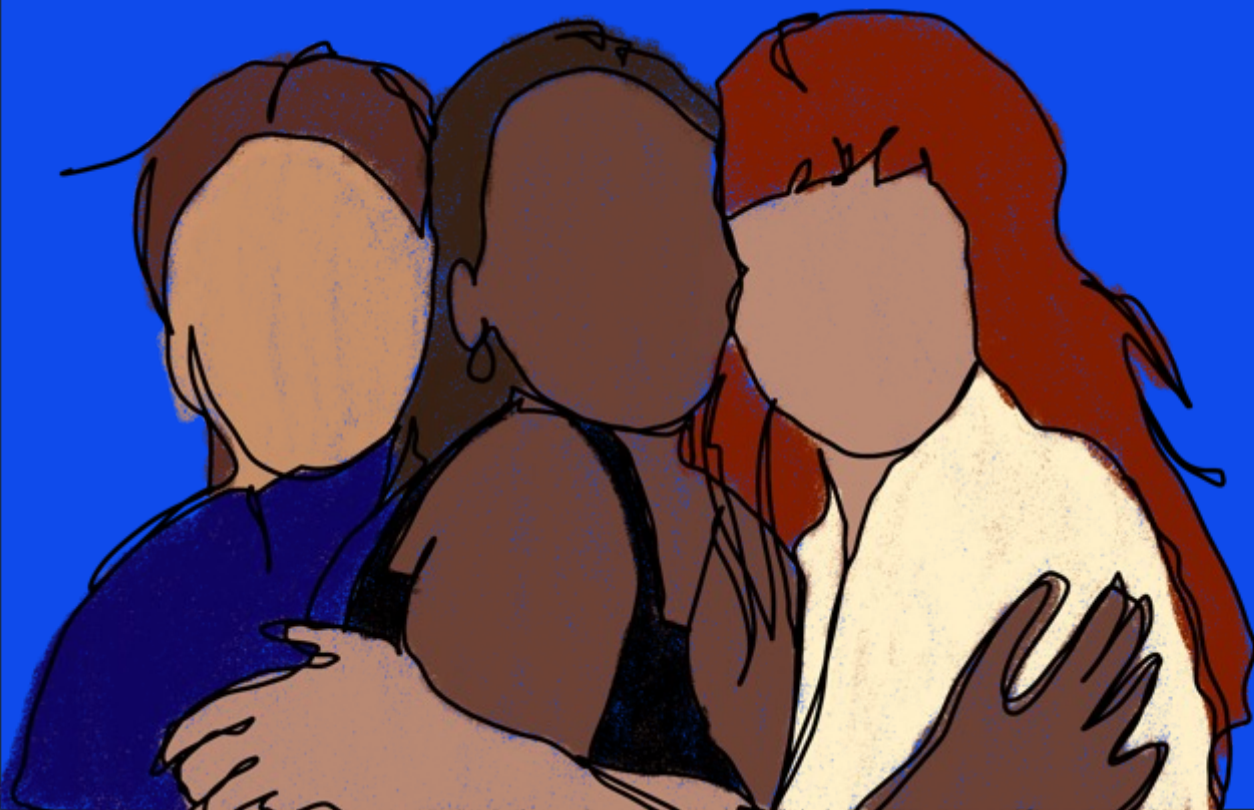
IN WHATEVER WAYS
YOU CELEBRATE



HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

JOIN US !

In supporting women at UTS
to reach their full potential.



For more
information email:



mwn@uts.edu.au

This booklet was created by

→ Dr Elaine Laforteza

and designed by

→ The Fifth Studio

THANKYOU FOR
SHARING YOUR
STORY