

Christmas in Armenia

The Armenian Apostolic Church celebrates Christmas on January 6th. On this day it also celebrates the Epiphany (which means the revelation that Jesus was God's son). Epiphany is now mainly the time Churches remember the Visit of the of Wise Men to Jesus; but some Churches, like the Armenian Apostolic Church, also celebrate the Baptism of Jesus (when he started his adult ministry) on Epiphany.

Some Armenians fast (don't eat anything) during the week before Christmas. The Christmas Eve meal is called "khetum." It often includes dishes such as rice, fish, "nevik" (green chard and chick peas) and yogurt/wheat soup called "tanabur." Desserts include dried fruits and nuts, "rojik" (whole shelled walnuts threaded on a string and encased in grape jelly), "bastukh" (a paper-like dessert made of grape jelly, cornstarch and flour). This lighter menu is designed to ease the stomach off the weeklong fast and prepare it for the larger Christmas Day dinner. Children take presents of fruits, nuts, and other candies to older relatives.

Gaghant Baba / Kaghand Papa traditionally comes on New Year's Eve (December 31st) because Christmas Day itself is thought of as more of a religious holiday in Armenia.

In Armenian Happy/Merry Christmas is "Shnorhavor Amanor yev Surb Tznund," (which means 'Congratulations for the Holy Birth').

At the beginning of December a big tree (Tonatsar) is put up in Republic Square in Yerevan, the capital of Armenia.

Favorite and traditional Holiday foods in Armenia include "Anooshaboor" (Armenian Christmas Pudding), "Khozee bood" (glazed ham) and dried fruits. Every house is ready with lots of sweets because anyone might knock on the door and come in for a party!