

Christmas Cuisine

It's a few days before Christmas. Jack is visiting his sister, Mary, who is in the kitchen making meat pies. In Canada, it's a tradition for families to gather together and eat meat pies on Christmas Eve, after the midnight church service.

- Jack: Mmm... something smells delicious. What are you making?
- Mary: I'm making meat pies, for us to eat after our midnight church service on Christmas Eve.
- Jack: Great! I love your famous meat pies!
- Mary: It takes a whole day to make meat pies, so I'm glad to know you appreciate them!
- Jack: So what exactly do you put in your meat pies that makes them taste so good anyways?
- Mary: Well, first I start with a regular pie shell. Then I add ground beef, pork and chicken. Next, I add spices, as well as salt and pepper. Then I bake them in the oven.
- Jack: Mmm... they smell so good... could I just have a small piece right now?
- Mary: No way! These are for our Christmas Eve celebration. If you're hungry, I'll make you a sandwich.
- Jack: Oh... ok...

Discussion Questions...

1. When do Canadians eat meat pies?
2. How does Mary make her famous meat pies?
3. Do you think Jack will be satisfied with a sandwich, instead of a piece of meat pie?
4. What traditional foods do you eat during the New Year holiday in Japan?
5. Who usually prepares the osechi-ryori in your family? How long does it take to prepare all the food?

Christmas Shopping

It's December 23rd – just two days before Christmas. Debi is at the department store buying wrapping paper for her gifts. She runs into her brother George, who looks stressed.

- Debi: Hi George! How's your Christmas shopping coming along?
- George: Terrible! I've left it all to the last minute, as usual. How about you?
- Debi: Oh, I finished my shopping a couple of weeks ago. I like to get an early start on my Christmas shopping, to avoid the last minute rush. I'm just out picking up some wrapping paper.
- George: You're smart. Every year, I say I'm not going to leave my shopping to the last minute... but here it is two days before Christmas, and I still have so many gifts to buy! The problem is, the selection is very poor now - everything is picked over.
- Debi: Oh George... Don't worry. I'm sure you'll find something for everyone on your list!
- George: I sure hope so. Well, I should get going.
- Debi: OK. Well, have a merry Christmas!
- George: I will, thank. And merry Christmas to you too, Debi!
- Debi: Thanks! Bye!

Discussion Questions...

1. Why is George stressed?
2. How is Debi's Christmas shopping coming along?
3. Do you buy Christmas or New Year gifts for your family and friends?
 - a. If so, what kinds of gifts are you buying this year?
 - b. If not, when do you buy gifts for other people?
4. What gift-giving traditions do you have in Japan?

Christmas Office Party

Ryan and Sean are engineers for a large software development company. It's December 23rd, and the office is having a late afternoon Christmas party. Everyone is standing around laughing and singing Christmas carols. The atmosphere is very festive!

Ryan: Hey, Sean! Great party, eh?

Sean: Yeah, I'm having a blast!

Ryan: And this eggnog is delicious!

Sean: It's the rum that makes it taste so good!

Ryan: So what are your plans for the holidays?

Sean: Not much. I'm just planning to take it easy. How about you?

Ryan: Oh, I won't be taking it easy, that's for sure. Between family gatherings and get-togethers with my friends, I'll be busy all week.

Sean: That sounds like fun!

Ryan: It always is. Hey, is that Santa over there?

Sean: I think so! I'd better go over and tell him I want a salary increase for Christmas.

Ryan: Haha... good idea! I'm with you!

Discussion Questions...

1. How will Sean and Ryan spend the Christmas holidays?
2. How do you usually spend the Christmas and/or New Year holidays?
3. Have you ever been to an office Christmas party or bon-enkai?
 - a. If so, please tell me about it.
 - b. If not, what do you think it would be like?
4. What would you like Santa to bring you this year?



New Year's Eve

It's almost midnight on New Years Eve. Frank and Wayne are at a party, and they are just about to start the countdown to the beginning of a new year.

Everyone: 10-9-8-7-6-5-4-3-2-1 HAPPY NEW YEAR!!!
George: Happy New Year everyone! I'd like to propose a toast.
Landon: That's a great idea!
George: To a happy, healthy and successful year ahead!
Landon: To 2006!
Everyone: Cheers!

Discussion Questions...

1. In English, when we raise our glasses and take a drink in honour of a special event, we say "Cheers!" – this is called a "toast". What do you say in Japanese when you toast something or someone?
2. When was the last time you toasted someone or something? Tell me about it.
3. What do you usually do on New Year's Eve?

New Year's Resolutions

It's New Year's Day. Frank and his brother Wayne are now relaxing after a delicious dinner at their sister's house. They are talking about New Year's resolutions, which are promises people make to themselves at the beginning of a new year.

Frank: Wayne, have you made any New Year's resolutions this year?

Wayne: Yes. I'm going to go on a diet and lose weight. My New Year's resolution is to get into shape this year. What about you, Frank?

Frank: Well, I just got a new computer, so my New Year's resolution is to learn how to use the Internet.

Wayne: Hey, that's a great idea! There's so much information on the Internet. Once you learn how to use it, you'll be hooked.

Frank: I know, I can't wait!

Wayne: Mmm... are those Patricia's homemade cookies I smell?

Frank: Yeah... I think she just took a fresh batch out of the oven.

Wayne: They smell delicious! I'm going to get some!

Frank: Hey! What about your New Year's resolution to go on a diet and lose weight?

Wayne: Ah... well... I guess I'll start my New Year's resolution tomorrow. Those cookies smell too good to refuse!

Discussion Questions...

1. What is Wayne's New Year's resolution?
2. What is Frank's New Year's resolution?
3. Do you think Wayne will keep his New Year's resolution? Why or why not?
4. Have you ever made a New Year's resolution?
 - a. If so, what was it? Did you keep it all year, or did you break it?
 - b. What would be a good New Year's resolution for you, for 2006?
5. What do you usually do on New Year's Day?