Well-Known Polish Christmas Customs

When the Christ Child was born, before sitting down at the table, a lighted candle in the window, or on the table, symbolizes the hope that the Christ Child will be with you in spirit. The Polish people also set an extra place at the table for an unexpected guest. Everyone breaks the traditional wafer, or Oplatek and exchanges good wishes for health, wealth and happiness in the New Year. The Oplatek is a thin, unleavened wafer similar to the altar bread in church. It is stamped with the figures of the Christ Child and family. The Oplatek wafer is known as the bread of love and unity and is often sent by mail to family members and friends in Poland or those living at a distance who are unable to be present for the Christmas Eve Dinner.

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On Saturday, December 11th, the Polish American Cultural Center Museum at 308 Walnut Street in historic Philadelphia will sponsor its annual Christmas Open House. Everyone is invited. Admission is FREE.

The schedule for the Christmas Open House is as follows:

**11 A.M. to 11:45 A.M.** Snacks and refreshments will be served in the 4th floor meeting rooms of the Polish American Cultural Center.

**12 Noon to 12:30 P.M.** Children's Magic Show in the Exhibit Hall on the first floor.

**12:30 P.M. to 1 P.M.** Sw. Mikolaj will visit the Museum and have a treat for every child.

**1 P.M. to 1:30 P.M.** The children will sing Koledy.

Admission is FREE to everyone and Sw. Mikolaj will be available to take pictures with the children, so bring your camera.

Refreshments will be served from 11 A.M. to 2 P.M.

For more information about the Christmas Open House on Saturday, December 11th, call the Museum - Monday through Friday between 9 A.M. and 4 P.M. - Call 215-922-1700.

During the Polish Christmas Open House the Museum Gift Shop will be open from 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.

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Wesolych Swiat! Bozego Narodzenia! That is the way to say “Merry Christmas” in Polish. Among Poles, living all over the world, the most beloved and beautiful of all traditional festivities is that of Christmas Eve as they gather for the Christmas Eve Dinner, known as Wigilia.

The Wigilia table is covered with a white cloth on which a thin layer of hay is placed to remind all gathered of the humble manger setting where the Christ Child was born. Before sitting down at the table, everyone breaks the traditional wafer, or Oplatek and exchanges good wishes for health, wealth and happiness in the New Year. The Oplatek is a thin, unleavened wafer similar to the altar bread in church. It is stamped with the figures of the Christ Child and family. The Oplatek wafer is known as the bread of love and unity and is often sent by mail to family members and friends in Poland or those living at a distance who are unable to be present for the Christmas Eve Dinner.

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