
[Christmas Eve in Denmark \[1\]](#)

In Denmark, Christmas is celebrated on Christmas Eve (24 December). It's a day full of busy present-buying, dinner preparations and anticipation! Presents are exchanged and Danish families come together to eat, drink and be merry.

Old Christmas beliefs

In the old days, it was common to give the animals a special treat on Christmas Eve. It was believed that all animals could talk on this special night, and nobody wanted the animals speaking ill of them! Today some families continue that tradition. They go for a walk in the garden, in the park or forest and bring along small goodies for Denmark's furry friends.

Christmas mass in Denmark

Many people attend an early Christmas mass in church before Christmas dinner. This is not just because of religious beliefs; many enjoy sharing in the tradition of coming together in church and singing Danish Christmas carols, as people have done for centuries.

The Christmas Tree

Traditionally the Danish Christmas tree is the Norwegian spruce. Nowadays many buy a Normann spruce whose needles last a little longer. People living near woods are lucky enough to have the opportunity to pick and cut down their own tree. Most Danes pick them up from sellers around the country.

Decorating the Christmas tree

The Christmas tree is decorated with a silver or gold star on the top (never an angel), festoons of national flags and lots of small Danish decorations. The entire tree is often given the final touch of white fairy hairs or scattered strips of tin foil, reflecting the light from the glowing candles. Georg Jensen is a Danish company renowned for its Danish design and especially for its elegant Christmas decorations.

Danish Christmas dinner

Dinner is served quite early. Most people eat roast duck on Christmas Eve, but roast goose or pork with crackling is also common. The duck or goose is stuffed with apples and prunes and served with boiled and sweet potatoes, red cabbage, beets and cranberry jam. The dessert consists of 'ris à l'amande' (rice pudding with whipped cream, vanilla and almonds) with hot cherry sauce or 'risengrød' (hot rice pudding). A peeled almond is hidden in the dessert bowl and the lucky finder of the almond gets a present.

Lighting of the Christmas tree

The lighting of the Christmas tree is considered one of the highlights of Christmas Eve and it happens after dinner. Many feel that real candles, as opposed to electric lights, are the only way to ignite a proper Christmas atmosphere.

Dancing around the tree

After dinner, everyone joins hands and dances around the tree. Traditional Danish Christmas hymns and carols are sung. Then it's finally time for the unwrapping of gifts. Normally, one of the children is chosen to select the wrapped presents under the tree and hand them over one at the time, so

everyone can watch each present being unwrapped. After the last present, it is time for fresh fruit, cookies, candy and coffee. On Christmas Day, children get up early to enjoy their presents from the night before.

Further reading

Return to our [Christmas in Denmark page](#) [2].

Read our [Yuletide in Denmark booklet](#) [3].