

CATEGORY: THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC: NOW

CONCEPTS: HOLIDAYS, food.

ACTIVITY: DESCRIPTION OF CHRISTMAS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC.

The description below of Christmas in the Dominican Republic was written by a student from that country. It shows both the similarities and differences in how this holiday is celebrated.

OBJECTIVES: To introduce students to alternative forms of celebrating a major holiday. How climate, economy, customs and foreign influences all have a role in shaping the way we celebrate will become evident in this reading.

MATERIALS: Copies of the reading "Christmas in the Dominican Republic"

PROCEDURE: Distribute the reading to all students. After it has been read, the following are interesting points to discuss.

1. Describe what is different about the Dominican Christmas. Also describe what is similar or the same.
2. Can you identify which traditions are of Spanish origin and which developed in Santo Domingo itself? What U.S. Christmas traditions come from other places. Where did they come from.
3. Tradition is obviously important at Christmas. What role do you think tradition plays in our lives? When we lose or change traditions, what do you think this means?

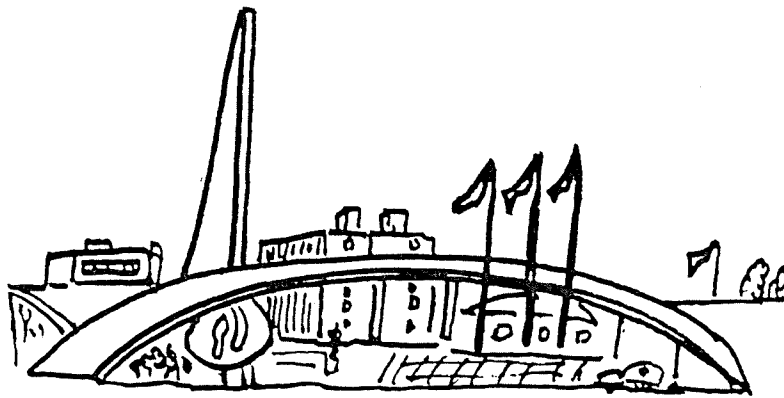
RELATED ACTIVITIES: You can make and serve sancocho for Christmas or another celebration. Here is the recipe from the Dominican Republic.

1 lg. chicken or
2 lbs. of pork from ribs
1 long pork sausage
1 ham bone
4 green plantains
1 turnip
2 lbs. potatoes
3 cobs of fresh corn
parsley
fresh coriander
1 chile pepper
4 garlic cloves
1 onion
1 tbsp. vinager
salt to taste
1 tbsp. vegetable oil

LEVEL: MIDDLE GRADES

Source: Gibbs, Virginia G. *Latin America: Curriculum Materials for the Middle Grades*. Center for Latin America, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. 1985. 1989.

Season and then quickly fry the meat til brown. Boil the remaining ingrediants cut in small pieces in a large pot with approximately 4 pints of water. Once the water has boiled several minutes add the meat and the sauce produced in frying. Slowly boil until all ingredients are cooked through and the soup is tasty. Delicious served with avocado slices.



University Campus in
Santo Domingo

CHRISTMAS IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC
by María Pinzón

The Dominican Republic is located in the Caribbean. It shares the island of La Hispaniola with Haiti. The climate is tropical and, therefore, there aren't any seasonal changes.

There is a great contrast between the two countries that share the island. While Haitians' official language is French, the Dominican Republic speaks Spanish.

Christmas is a very important event in the Dominican Republic, where the population is mostly Catholic. Celebrations start early in December when all the stores stock up with items in every price range.

Every public employee receives a "doble sueldo," a Christmas bonus, amounting to one month's salary. Most businesses also follow the custom of "doble sueldo."

There are two popular shopping areas, namely La Calle del Conde and La Avenida Mella. La Calle del Conde caters to customers from all economic levels while La Avenida Mella caters to the lower income group.

La Calle del Conde is a narrow street with only one lane of cars. The sidewalks are narrow and become even less accessible when street vendors set their merchandise out on them.

You can walk La Calle del Conde, which is approximately ten blocks long, without ever getting tired. While you are trying to get through the crowds you can delight yourself with different music which emerges from the record stores onto the street; you may hear Julio Iglesias on one block and Elvis on the next.

During your walk through La Calle del Conde, street vendors will follow you trying to sell their merchandise which ranges from plastic dolls which jump at the press of a button to real live pets. You can leave the crowd by entering one of the stores where the air conditioner chills you and where the sales people are so courteous that you just don't want to step out again into the crowd and the heat.

By six o'clock on December 24, if you have not finished your purchases you are out of luck, because everything is closed. People have gone home to prepare for supper.

Christmas dinner is comprised of different plates which can range from pork on the grill, ham or sancocho. Sancocho is a popular dish among all income groups; it contains plantains, meat and vegetables all made into a soup. This delicious dinner is shared with the family and close friends.

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While at dinner, you may be surprised to hear in your front yard a group playing "aguinaldos," songs popularly played during the Christmas season. It is customary to tip the music players thus encouraging them to play more before they move to the next house.

Nearing 12 Midnight the party starts to break up, for some will go to "La Misa del Gallo" (Midnight mass) and some will decide to stay talking and drinking until dawn. Mass on Christmas Day is normally held only at 12 noon to allow those who didn't go to La Misa del Gallo to still come to mass.

On Christmas Day some people will exchange some gifts, but it has been the old custom to wait until "El día de Reyes" The Three Kings' Day, on January 6th.

Because of American influence from the frequent travels between the two countries, the old custom has been slowly disappearing, meaning that gifts are often exchanged both times, on December 25 and January the 6th.

On January 5th, at 7 p.m. the Three Kings go on parade. Children from all over are anxiously awaiting to see the Three Kings pass in front of them. You can hear the children scream asking for last-minute items they forgot to include on their list of gifts.

After the Three Kings pass on their camels every child rushes home to bed, but before they put their head on the pillow, they place some water and grass under the Christmas tree for the camels.

The next day, January 6th, every child wakes up happy and spends most of the day playing with his/her new toys. On January 7th, everyone returns to school.