

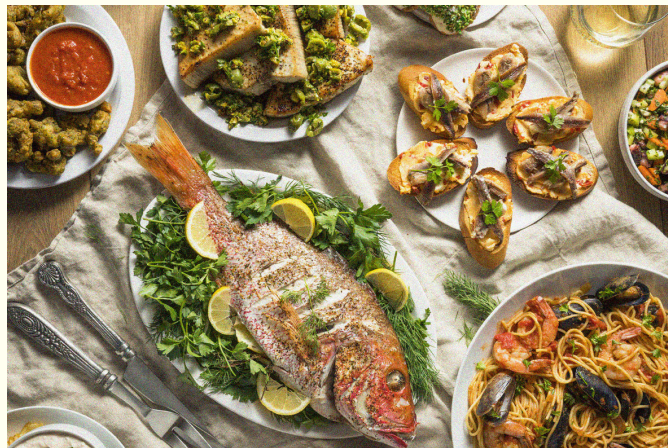


'Tis the season for great
Italian Christmas food...as if
we needed a holiday, right?

There's no Christmas like an Italian Christmas! *Natale* is an exciting time to cook up some best-loved family recipes, to dine with friends and family, and to be merry, of course. The feasting starts on Christmas Eve, continues on Christmas Day, and resumes again on the 26th, Saint Stephen's Day. Let's find out more.....

Christmas Eve

If you're lining up seven or more fish and seafood recipes, you're probably ready to celebrate the Italian Christmas Eve tradition named the Feast of the Seven Fishes. Believe it or not, this holiday feast is actually an Italian-**American**



tradition. It is not widely celebrated in Italy except in the south and Sicily. In Italy, typically *La Vigilia* (Christmas Eve) is celebrated with a lighter meal with no meat and lots of seafood, while the Italian-American meal has evolved into much more of a feast. Bring on the sword fish, tuna, salmon, octopus, eels, smelts, calamari, clams, and the famous Italian classic—

salted cod, known as *baccalà*!

Exactly how the Feast of the Seven Fishes began is unknown, though it most certainly has its roots in Catholicism. Catholics are expected to abstain from eating meat on specific holy days, Christmas Eve being one of them. It's only logical then that the faithful would develop a seafood meal for this special day. But why seven fishes? Many say it's a religious symbol—as in seven sacraments, seven deadly sins, seven days of Creation.

The emphasis in the Christmas Eve dinner is on freshness and variety, both the seafood and the cooking method. Of course, it varies by family tradition and Italian region. One might begin with a *frittura di pesce* (fried fish), which could include calamari, baby octopus or a *paranza* (mixed tiny fish). In the north of Italy, you'll definitely find *baccalà* (salt cod), and further south, *capitone* (eel). Then, of course, there's pasta—linguine with lobster, spaghetti with clams, *paccheri ai frutti di mare* (short pasta with mixed seafood)...you name it. Whole roasted fish with potatoes as a secondo, and then Christmas cookies before the midnight mass. Yum!!!

Christmas Day

In Italy, the most important of the *Natale* meals is the Christmas Day lunch and it can last for hours. Unlike the Christmas Eve meal, Christmas Day is typically meat-based. *Natale* lunch begins with a classic antipasto and the first course is a pasta or a soup that varies by region. In Southern and Central Italy, baked pasta is a must. In Northern Italy, *Lasagne Bolognese*, filled pasta like manicotti and ravioli, or *Tortellini in Brodo* are traditional Christmas fare. Next comes the main event—the meat. Roasted veal, baked chicken, sausages or braised beef are common *Natale* entrées worth celebrating. And finally, there's *il dolce*, the sweet treats to end the meal—biscotti, pandoro, torrone (nougat candy), and almost always a candied loaf of panettone.



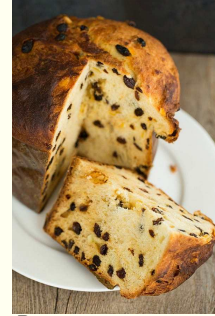
Biscotti



Pandoro



Torrone



Panettone

Discover some of the traditional Christmas Day dishes in each of Italy's 20 regions by [clicking here](#).

Saint Stephen's Day

You'd think that after the marathon of eating on Christmas Day, Italians would use the following day to relax by themselves and have a nice lunch of raw fruit and Tums. Nope. *Il Giorno di Santo Stefano* (Saint Stephen's Day) often involves yet another family lunch, maybe not as big as the previous days', but a serious lunch nonetheless.

On the 26th, many Italians show off their prowess with *avanzi*, the leftovers from the previous day. We're not talking about reheating in a microwave, though. The remaining food from Christmas lunch is reworked, repurposed and re-enriched. Nothing simple for the Italian cooks!



So now you know how Italians feast during the Christmas season. They are known for their celebration of the joys of family and food. Christmas sets the scene for the magic of the family table with all its different foods, but the ties of family take center stage, always strong and always loving. Both young and old hands join together in the kitchen to share in the preparation of the very traditional and special holiday foods. What better Christmas gift than a warm, aromatic kitchen with family, laughter, beautiful food and drink!

[Click here](#) for a Christmas song that celebrates Italian food.

©2020 Lincoln Hills Italian Club | Lincoln Hills Italian Club

[Web Version](#)

[Preferences](#)

[Forward](#)

[Unsubscribe](#)

Powered by
[GoDaddy Email Marketing](#)®