

EIP



EIP Around the World - Madagascar

To mark the festive season, we spoke to our EIP colleagues who has international background or connection and asked how they celebrate the festivity in their home countries.

Christmas in Madagascar by Caroline Foucher, Associate, Patent Scientist

Q. When is your Christmas?

Christmas is a fairly recent tradition in Madagascar as Christianity was only brought by the French in 1883. Nowadays, Christmas is only celebrated by the wealthiest. For most Madagascans, Christmas is just a normal day. For those who celebrate Christmas, families meet on the evening of the 24th of December and all day on the 25th. The presents are usually opened on the 24th, around midnight.

Q. Are there any special Christmas dishes or food people eat ?

The food can be quite different depending if you are near the coast or in the centre of the country. In the capital, Antananarivo, rice, zebu, turkey with pork and "brèdes" soup (a kind of spinach) are typical Christmas food. Near the coast, the Christmas meals usually consists of fish or sea food.

For the most "Westerners", the desert will be a "bûche", the traditional French

Christmas desert. The only difference is that it is made with Madagascan vanilla instead of chocolate or chestnut. However, the "Koba" is the most popular Christmas dessert. It is a cake made of rice, honey, banana and peanuts, wrapped in a banana leaf.

Q. Are there any particular traditions?

Madagascans usually go to church on the 24th, where they should wear new clothes.

Then, the extended family meets for the Christmas dinner. Families are usually extremely large and it is not rare to have Christmas parties with hundreds of people!

The most studious child of the family receives what is considered to be the most honourable gift: he/she has is carried for a few minutes by the oldest person of the family!

Q. Anything else?

Christmas trees and decorations are quite rare. A few brave Madagascans dress up as “Dadabe Noely” (Santa Klaus), but usually not for very long. Wearing a fake beard, boots and a coat is not easy when it's over 30 degrees!