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Christmas



Advent traditions

Advent is the period beginning on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Eve, historically seen as the preparation of the arrival of Christ.

During the 19th century in particular, this waiting period before Christmas was viewed as a way of teaching children patience before a reward - hence the development of the Advent Calendar, a calendar with 24 little flaps opening onto windows with images within a Christmas scene.

Advent Calendars are very much a part of the Swiss Christmas tradition, as is the Advent Wreath which has four candles, one for each of the Sundays in Advent (on the first Sunday, one candle is burnt, on the second, two are lit, and so on).

Source: www.swissorg.ch

Village Advent windows

Many villages in Switzerland now have Advent windows. What it means is that a group is organising 24 families that all decorate one advent window. Each day one of the families then opens their window (and then they normally stay decorated and illuminated until Xmas). At a set time, i.e. 18.30 the window "opens" and it is usually followed by an offering of a hot drink (i.e. Mulled Wine, see page 13 for recipe).

It's a great way for communities to come together and meet in the lead up to Xmas. And it gets people out of their houses in the cold and blustery December month. Check individual village website for further information - for example Luetzelflueh.

By Adrian Blaser



www.kinderfarm-of.de



www.forums9.ch/dorfplatz/hedingen/adventsfenster04

Advent Calendars and Wreaths

Advent Calendars and Wreaths are lovely ways by which to engage children with the forthcoming Christmas and to introduce a bit of early celebration and peace. By the way: many teenagers like Advent Calendars - it is a time of year when they quite enjoy being reminded of "young and happy times" and temporarily consider abandoning notions of independence. And even adults are not beyond enjoying them, too! Advents Wreaths, too, create special moments, the lit candles being symbolic of peace and contemplation.

Many families create their own calendars and wreaths, and we would love to see what you will do this Christmas: Take a picture of your Advent Calendar or Wreath and send it through to us. We will do our best to show it in next year's Helvetia Christmas issue!



*To all our
 Helvetia Readers:
 Merry Christmas and
 a very happy New Year.
 We look forward to meeting
 you again in 2013.*

*Wouldn't life be worth the living
 Wouldn't dreams be coming true
 If we kept the Christmas spirit
 All the whole year through.*

*Your Helvetia Team and
 Swiss Society Committee*