

Topic: Christmas Festivities

Abstract: Christmas is the most important day of the year for our family. Extended family comes together for a three day celebration from December 24th to the 26th. It is sadly the only time we get to see each other. We come together and eat, open presents, and drink. It has become a tradition for the family over the years.

Key Words: Family, Party, Home, Tradition, Christmas,, Mexican, Eve, Drink, Reunion.

Ethnic Designation: *Mexican*

Cultural Practice: Social Practice: Family Tradition

Time of Giving

In our family there is really no other time of the year that we in a way go all out and get the entire extended family together for a three day party like Christmas. It is the biggest event of the year in our home, people come from all over California sometimes even from Mexico. It has become a culture practice and a tradition. It is the only time of the year that I see most of my extended family some coming from the state of Jalisco and Michoacán. There are many little practices like the older generation telling the younger ones to speak in Spanish and also big preparation we must have ready so that the event from December 24 to the 26th goes more or less smoothly being preparing the food and games.

The most important part of most cultural practices around the world and especially in our home is the food. Most Mexican families have the traditional Tamales de Puerco in their Christmas festivities but our family does it a little bit differently. Being that my father is from the

state of Jalisco it is customary that we have Birria in our Christmas party. My aunt from my mother's side who is from the same state as my father is the person who makes it not only for those three days but for most other big family gatherings such as birthdays, baptisms, and first communions. She usually makes about 80 pounds of cow meat that is doused in red sauce and marinated for 24 hours. The entire cooking process takes about two days. As two people help bring the giant drum size barrel in and set it on the floor being that it is taller than some of the children that are attending the party. That is just the time that my mother takes out her famous "*Ensalada de Papa*" and sets it on the table. As the smell of the food and the sound of Pedro Infante fill the house I can't help but to be proud to be Mexican.

My family is a very traditional one being of the social practices that take place over those following three days. As everyone starts getting settled in and ready for a party that starts the 24th around six o'clock and doesn't end until 4am the next morning. The women start going into the kitchen and usually quickly start talking gossip. Just as the men go into the living room and kick out all the kids so they can watch their soccer game or sports commentary shows and start bringing out the crates not cases of beer. For those three days we are border line alcoholics. At this point there are about 30 family members in our home and with that naturally comes all of kids. Being that the parents are going to be drunk for three days it is the job of the teenagers to take care of the kids. As it gets closer to 8pm the women start serving dinner in an order that we all know by heart. First comes the kids, then the men and only after when the women are done serving everyone they eat. After that for a lack of a better term "all hell breaks loose" and the festivities really start. When it gets closer to 10pm on Christmas Eve the tequila starts to come out of the shelf and shot glasses are handed out. And a term that surely I knew way before I knew any nursery rhyme is said: "*Arriba, Abajo, Enmedio, Adentro Cabrones!*" (Up, Down,

Middle, in you go bastards.) As the night carries on the music and the laughing get louder by the minute.

At midnight, Christmas eve after all the kids have been waiting patiently they get to open their presents stacked in about a five foot radius around the lighted Christmas tree decorated with spheres reflecting the mirror image of my family loudly talking to each other around a makeshift table. The children all in the second living room that my sister, brother had to prepare for the arrival of 20 children. Getting the game console set up and the television set to all the kids' channels and even going as far as getting a list of movies they can watch. All in the hopes that it will keep them busy until midnight strikes and they can finally open their presents and go to sleep because if my father sees the kids around the bar and bothering their parents onto when they can open their gifts we will get into trouble. As the night progresses you will hear kids running around and crying because they fell and hit something. As they go to cry to their parents they just turn and basically tell him that they told him so and that he deserves what he got. All of us were raised like that the old fashion way that they take that time to teach the young girls how to cook and that especially the boys don't cry. As the alcohol starts to really take effect they call all the boys in and grill them if they have a girlfriend and if not what they plan to do to fix that. They tell their own stories of how they "swept" their wife and kept them forever because of their good looks and charm as all the women make jokes and roll their eyes at them. Laughing and merry music fill the house well into the early hours of Christmas Day and everyone starts going to bed. Only to wake up the next morning to eat breakfast and clean up the countless beer bottles all over the house. Only to start it all over again.

The holiday season for us is really a time of giving and coming together. The fact that this is the only time I get to see family from Mexico specially my grandparents that for us in our

household are the most important people in the house. They tell us old stories almost legends of our family ties to the Mexican Revolution. If my father gets drunk enough which he usually does, he will say that our family single handedly defeated the Counter Revolutionary forces of Porfirio Diaz. It is a day that I look forward more than my own birthday.