

Christmas in the Philippines

By [MM Del Rosario](#)



"Maligayang Pasko Sa Inyong Lahat" means Merry Christmas to Everyone !!!

The celebration of Christmas in the Philippines begins on the 16th of December and ends on the first Sunday of January which is the Feast of the Epiphany (The Three Kings). It is quite different from the other countries of the world, it is the longest of the Philippine festivities stretching for over 3 weeks. This makes the Filipino Christmas celebration one of the longest Christmas season in the world. A rich tradition which dates back to the Spanish period.

Christmas or "*Pasko*" is the most awaited celebration and happiest event in the Philippines. This is also the time of the year when family get together, especially when family members from overseas come home with lots of gifts. ("*pasalubong*"), exchanging gifts and the family feast highlight the most loved celebration.

What makes the Filipino Christmas unique? Filipinos have a lot of Christmas tradition which makes us different from the other. Here are some of them:



- [Parol - Filipino Christmas Lantern](#)

As early as November, Filipinos houses offices, schools, shoppingmalls and even streets are adorned with these star-shaped multicolored lanterns.

- [Filipino Christmas Tradition - Simbang Gabi](#)

"Simbang Gabi" a Filipino Christmas tradition, it is a series of nine (9) dawn masses, the mass starts as early as 4:00 a.m. It begins on December 16 and ends on the midnight of the 24th of December.

- [Monito Monita - Exchange Gifts](#)

Christmas is the season of gift giving. In keeping with the tradition of giving, Filipinos have their own version of exchanging gifts or Kris Kringle, it is called Monito - Monita

Pasko Na Naman

**Pasko na naman
 O kay tulin ng araw
 Paskong nagdaan
 Tila ba kung kailan lang
 Ngayon ay Pasko
 Dapat pasalamatan
 Ngayon ay Pasko
 Tayo ay mag-awitan**

Refrain:

**Pasko! Pasko!
 Pasko na namang muli!
 Pasko! Pasko!
 Pasko na namang muli!
 Ang pag-ibig naghahari!**

**Repeat first part
 and refrain (2x)**

Pasko Na Naman - means "Its Christmastime Again"

- [Christmas Caroling in the Philippines](#)

Once the "Simbang Gabi" starts, children like to form groups and enjoy hopping from one house to another every night singing Jingle Bells, Silent Night and traditional Filipino Christmas songs.



Christmas Tree

Christmas is not complete without Christmas tree. Since pine trees grows only in a few places in the Philippines, not everybody can afford to have a fresh Christmas tree. Filipinos have created unique and original Christmas tree using different kinds of local materials, from recycled materials to a more exquisite form of art.

Giant, well lighted and decorated trees are a sight to behold in the city street, malls, parks and office building facades. Some big companies put their Christmas display with a different theme every year, and become a very popular attraction during the Christmas season.

Just like anywhere in the world Christmas tree is not complete without the gifts beneath and around the tree with eager children waiting for their gifts to be open on Christmas morning.



Noche Buena

In the Philippines the much-anticipated Noche Buena - a traditional Christmas Eve feast is eaten after the midnight mass, usually Filipinos attend the Midnight Mass and then return home for a family feast called Noche Buena,

Some family who don't go to church for some reasons, dine together around 12 midnight on traditional Noche Buena fare, but this varies from family to family.

Noche Buena is a very special occasion for Filipinos, they used their best china and silver ware and cooked their best recipe. Food that are usually serve depends on the specialty of the family but there is always something special serve. The most popular are morcon, embutido, relyenong bangus, lumpia, pansit, and for those who can afford the "Lechon (roasted pig)

There is always ham on the table but usually not eaten right away, it waits until morning when sliced and fried for breakfast accompanied with Pan de Americano (also known as sliced bread).

Suman sa ibos or sumang Pasko (glutinous rice wrapped in banana leaves or coconut leaves) served with Halayang Ube and leche flan (egg custard) are the most popular desert.

Noche Buena is a statement of the Filipino Family close ties, It is not only about food, it is a family tradition.

Christmas Day

Christmas Day in The Philippines is primarily a family affair. For those who were not able to attend the Midnight mass, there are masses celebrated during the day and usually in the late afternoon.

Most families with young children usually attend this mass. Children wear their new clothes and shoes to go to mass and after the mass, they visit members of the extended family, notably the elders in order to pay their respect.

This custom has been an age-old tradition in the Philippines called "**Pagmamano**" this is done by touching one's forehead to the elder's hand saying "**Mano Po**". The elder then blesses the person who paid respect. "Aguinaldo" can be in the form of a gift or money given after the Pagmamano, most usually to younger children.

Christmas Lunch is usually a reunion of family members. Well-to-do families tend to prepare grand and glorious feasts. Some families choose to cook simple meals, nevertheless still special. Christmas day is a day for children to visit their uncles, aunts, godmothers and godfathers. Usually children are presented with a gift, candy, money or toys. Kids love to count their Aguinaldos as they go to their Christmas round.

In every home that you visit, you will always be offered food to eat because every family has made something especially for this day.

Christmas Eve gathering provides an opportunity for a reunion of immediate and distant family members and good time for a drink of Filipinos' most loved "San Miguel" beer with friends and family.

At the end of the day, Filipino Christmas is about family closeness and everyone wishes good cheer and glad tidings.



- [New Year celebration in the Philippines](#)
New Year's eve celebration in the Philippines is quite different compared to other countries. Filipinos literally start the year with a bang.

Feast of the Three Kings

Christmas officially ends on the Feast of the Three Kings (Tatlong Hari in Tagalog), also known as the Feast of the Epiphany. The Feast of the Three Kings was traditionally commemorated on Jan. 6 but is now celebrated on the first Sunday after the New Year.

Some children leave their shoes out, so that the Three Kings would leave behind gifts like candy or money inside.

After the Feast of the Three Kings that is when all the Christmas decorations are removed.

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