

Celebrating French Traditions | « Épiphanie » & « Chandeleur »

January 31st 2019 | French Residence | 6:30PM

L'Épiphanie (Epiphany Day) | La Galette des Rois (Tart for kings)

La galette des rois is a cake to celebrate the Epiphany, a Christian feast day for the coming and incarnation of Jesus Christ. Traditionally celebrated on January 6th, but because it is not a public holiday, the feast day now occurs on the first Sunday of January, unless it falls on January 1st.

Since the 14th century, people in France eat the *galette des rois* once a year. According to the tradition, the cake must be divided so that each guest gets a slice, plus an extra one called the part du *Bon Dieu* or *Pauvre* (for the Good Lord or for the Poor) which is reserved for any unexpected stranger. The cake is typically bought in a boulangerie and is made of puff pastry and frangipane, filling made from or flavored like almonds. A *fève* (charm) in a shape of a figurine is hidden in the cake.

When kids are present, the youngest must go under the table and directs whoever is serving to whom each slice should be given. The lucky one who gets the figurine becomes the king or the queen of the day, and he/she is given a golden or silver *couronne* (crown).

La Chandeleur (Candlemas Day) | Crêpes and Cidre

La Chandeleur is a Holy Day in the Catholic Church, is celebrated each February 2nd. On this day, the Baby Jesus was presented in the temple 40 days after his birth as was the custom. It also celebrates the purification of his mother, Mary. When Joseph and Mary arrived at the temple, Saint Simeon welcomed them and proclaimed that the baby was the “Light of the World”. The name, *Chandeleur*, comes from the Latin *candelorum festum*, which means festival of candles. Since the 7th century, the day has been celebrated by a procession of the faithful holding lit tapers. The candles are blessed and lit at the church and the participants carry the candle home without the flame dying. This will ensure a good harvest and prosperity for the rest of the year.

It is the custom to prepare and eat crêpes on February 2nd and all through the *Mardi Gras* season. Why this particular day? It's a bit shrouded in mystery, but many sources mention Pope Gélase I, who helped establish *Chandeleur* and whose custom it was to feed crêpes to the pilgrims who visited his church. The form and color of the crêpe also calls to mind the sun, which is returning after its winter sleep.

But it's not enough to just eat crêpes; there are a few things you must do while cooking the crêpes to ensure your health, wealth and happiness for the coming year. While cooking the crêpes, hold a coin in one hand, with the other, flip the crêpe . . . and catch it while making your wish for the New Year. If you catch it, your wish will be answered; if not, *dommage!* Another way to ensure good luck is to toss the first crêpe on an armoire and hope that it sticks. If it does stick, you must keep it there all year and your harvest will be successful.