



# Réveillon de Noël Christmas Dinner

by Sue Burgess

*Le réveillon* is a festive meal late in the evening or during the night at Christmas (*Noël*) or New Year (*Nouvel An, Réveillon de la St Sylvestre*).

The Christmas menu (*le menu de Noël*) is often made up of a succession of hot and cold dishes (*plats froids et chauds*). The hot starters (*les entrées chaudes*) are served first: *escargots* (snails), *bisque de homard* (lobster bisque), *noix de St Jacques* (scallops), *boudin blanc aux truffes* (white pudding with truffles). Then cold starters (*l'entrée froide*). *Huîtres* (oysters), *foie gras, saumon fumé* (smoked salmon). This is followed by the traditional turkey and chestnuts (*dinde aux marrons*), cheese and the Yule log cake (*bûche de Noël*).

The different regions of France used to serve different dishes. In the Bordeaux and oyster cultivating areas of Charente Maritime people ate grilled sausages (*saucisses grillées*) as well as oysters. In the Drôme cardoon (sort of artichoke) gratin (*gratin de cardons*) was popular. In Franche-Comté, hot chestnuts and sweet wine (*marrons chauds accompagnés de vin doux*) were served. In Lorraine, black pudding (*boudin noir*) and waffles (*gaufres*) were popular.

In Alsace, families enjoyed roast goose with cabbage (*oie rôtie accompagnée de choux*), or roast carp (*carpe rôtie*). For the dessert people made *bredele*, little biscuits in the shape of Christmas trees, hearts or stars as well as ginger bread (*pain d'épice*).

In Provence thirteen desserts (*treize desserts*) are set out on the table including the *mendiants* (hazelnuts, walnuts, figs, raisins, almonds). The colours represent the colours of the monks' habits from the five orders of mendicants. Other desserts are added; quince and fruit jellies (*pâte de coing, pâte de fruits*), nougat, melon, dates (*dattes*), mandarins, *les calissons* (a sort of candy or sweet). These desserts were ready for when the family returned from midnight mass.

The French DOM TOM islands also have their Christmas specialties: *Jambon rôti à l'ananas* (roast ham with pineapple), *boudin antillais* (spicy black pudding), *punch à l'orange* (orange punch). Not forgetting for dessert, the delicious *blanc-manger au lait de coco* (coconut blancmange).

## The réveillon of yesteryear

When people used to speak of *le réveillon* they meant the meal on Christmas night that they used to share after midnight mass.

This could be a cold meal or luxury picnic made up of foodstuffs brought by each of the guests. The *réveillon* was reserved for the grown-ups. The children received their presents and ate their dinner before midnight mass and so went off to bed. Nowadays midnight mass is often a lot earlier in the evening and so traditions have changed. For those who are not going to mass, the *réveillon* can begin earlier and include the children.  
Bon Appétit !

## VOCABULARY / VOCABULAIRE:

le saumon fumé.....	smoked salmon
Bûche glacée.....	ice-cream roll/yule log
Bûche de Noël aux pommes.....	Yule log with apples
Marrons glacés.....	Candied chestnuts
Foie gras au chutney d'abricots.....	Foie gras with apricot chutney
Les noix.....	walnuts
Les noisettes.....	hazelnuts
Les figues.....	figs
Les dattes.....	dates
Les amandes.....	almonds



**Sue Burgess**  
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Les aïelles.....	cranberries
La pâte de fruits.....	jelly fruit
une poularde.....	fatted chicken
Le chevreuil.....	venison
Le sanglier.....	wild boar
La pintade.....	guinea fowl
Le faisan.....	pheasant
La caille.....	quail
Le chapon.....	capon
La dinde.....	turkey