

# Advent Traditions

Advent is a start of liturgical season of 4 Sundays before Christmas. People happily expect Christmas and the coming of Saviour. Even the word "advent" come from Latin word adventus, which means "coming". It's time of meditation and charity. Earlier it was time of Lenten, when celebrations, dancing and singing were banned. Advent Lenten disallowed eating meat, only fish were allowed. This Lenten ended with shining of first star on Christmas Eve. Today this season is connected with preparations to Christmas, buying gifts, sweets baking, chores and house decorating.

## Czech Advent and Christmas Markets

For many Czechs it's a magical time scented with cinnamon, vanilla and mulled wine. In bigger cities, Christmas markets take place and with their atmosphere they are the longest markets of the year. In many stands you can buy gifts for your closed ones. Handmade scarfs, hats and gloves with colourful motives, homemade soaps, candles, ceramics, wickerworks and wooden toys. There's also presentation of traditional crafts. Right on front of your eyes you can have your text or image engraved on glass and smith can make you a horseshoe for luck. In other stands you can taste roasted almonds, chestnuts, trdelník, potato chips and local specials. People would drink mulled wine, hot mead or punch while watching at Christmas tree.

## Customs and traditions

With advent season there are several traditions and customs in Czech Rep., which survive to this day with small changes.

## **Advent wreath**

Advent wreath is the most common tradition and you can find in every household. People often make them themselves from twigs and decorate it with cones, bows and rowan. Crucial part are 4 candles, which are lighted every Sunday. On first Sunday, the first candle of prophets is ignited. On the second Sunday, the candle of Bethlehem is lighted. On the third Sunday, the candle of shepherd and on last Sunday, the candle of Angels. Advent Sundays are also known as iron, bronze silver and gold.

## **Advent calendar**

Advent calendar is also among old traditions. Originally it was carved art where children found verse form Bible or pictures. Today calendar is filled with chocolate or sweets.

## **St. Barbara**

For single girls it's a popular fest. On St. Barbara day, 4<sup>th</sup> of December, girls gather twigs from cherry-tree and put them in water. If twig blooms on Christmas Eve, girl would get married in a year.

## **St. Lucy**

St. Lucy is a patron of dressmakers and spinsters. This day they would stop all work. If not, Lucy would destroy threads and yarn.