

Our Christmas in Ireland



It is the 10th year John and I have been decorating together for Christmas in Ireland. Well, he is decorating and I get veto rights. He loves Christmas and is always super excited when it is time to get out the decorations. The more colourful the better. I would prefer a more natural, red and green colour scheme. I like the idea of it being based on red apples

hung on an evergreen tree to teach the story of Adam & Eve before people could read.

However John and the kids overrule me every year. So flashy lights and tinsel it is. In the end all that matters is the sparkle in the children's eyes. I gladly have our house looking like a landing strip in return. At least I managed to ban John's 1970's Christmas streamers [when we moved into our house](#). Apart from that we compromise – like in every good marriage and in favour of the festive spirit.



Christmas is where Home is

I have always been traditional when it comes to Christmas. As a child I was very particular of how to celebrate Christmas.

Just with family, no changes. My sister and I used to decorate the tree in the morning of Christmas Eve with Russian fairy tales playing in the background. Hot chocolate in the afternoon after a walk through the winter wonderland forest. My grandparents brought us to Christmas Mass before dinner where I mostly enjoyed standing up for the singing as it was freezing cold on the pews. We would then come home to a cosy Christmas room, followed by dinner and a performance for Santa Claus before receiving our gifts.

Well before I spent my first Christmas in Ireland, our family traditions changed. Some changes were big and inevitable like celebrating Christmas without my grandparents. Others were small like the Christmas tree being in a different corner of the room, or my favourite ornament getting broken. As much as I tried to hold on to the Christmas of my childhood, there was no point in making cookies without granny or replacing my favourite decoration. The magic had somewhat disappeared.

It didn't go down without a dispute when I announced that I wanted to celebrate Christmas in Ireland from now on. I, who had always insisted on celebrating Christmas the same way each year, broke the family tradition after all. But when John and I were about to have children of our own, I felt it was time to establish *our* family traditions.



What Christmas is about

Eight years in we have a good few family traditions ourselves. I took up my granny's job of filling our own advent calendars for the kids which wasn't as popular when I came to celebrate

Christmas in Ireland at first. I still remember the smell of oranges and German lebkuchen in the little bags that sweetened up the waiting time for me and motivated me to get out of bed on cold winter mornings.

It is important to us that our kids what we are waiting for in Advent and why we celebrate Christmas. For many families in Ireland it is about an abundance of gifts, elves and an expensive visit to the Santa Grotto. We are proud of the fact that our children know the Christmas story and enjoy playing with our nativity scene. Our clay Baby Jesus starts his journey to 'Bethlehem' at the beginning of December, all the



way through the house. He usually takes a few tumbles off ledges and shelves en route, but we successfully mend him each time. The youngest member of the family gets to put him into the crib on Christmas Day. For us a more genuine alternative to the Elf on the Shelf.

On 1st Advent we get our tree and the kids have free reign decorating it. We make sure soft and non-breakable stuff goes at the bottom though, and John's ornaments with the original sweets from the 1980's at the top to avoid a trip to the A&E with food poisoning over the holidays.

Christmas in Ireland: Charades & Panto

Of course Christmas is about presents, waking up to a half empty glass of milk, cookie crumbles and a gnawed carrot, too. Unlike in Germany we do gifts on the morning of 25th. This way the children get to play with their toys during the day rather than sitting up all night on Christmas Eve. (The lack of sleep might be the same due to the early rise on Christmas morning though.)

After mass John is getting straight back into food preparations. Every year he is making a feast of turkey, ham and a gorgeous homemade chocolate mousse. We have Christmas crackers with silly toys and jokes, and charades of course! No Christmas in Ireland without charades! Whether you are at your company's Christmas party or at your in-laws, be ready and read up on movie classics and celebrities beforehand!

The Christmas Magic

Obviously we can't predict which part of Christmas will make it into the treasured childhood memories. It could be the tiny toy cars our son still remembers from his very first advent calendar. Or our spontaneous Family Christmas Play we put on during the Corona lockdown. Maybe our annual trip into Dublin City to see the Christmas lights and the very funny, typically Irish [Panto](#).

We won't know until our children try to bring back the Christmas magic for theirs. Having children, and making their eyes sparkle every year, certainly brought back the Christmas magic for me.



