



Monk's Christmas traditions offer invitation to step back and remember birth of Christ during Christmas Seasons

Picture pulled from kansasmonks.org

Jack Figge
The Circuit

As soon as the 12:15 p.m. Christmas Eve Mass concludes, the monks set into motion decorating the Abbey for the upcoming Christmas vigil liturgy. So begins the monks Christmas season, a season that looks vastly different from the secular Christmas season of gifts and Santa Clause that the world offers.

Centered around receiving presents, commercialization, and pointless decorations, the notion of Christmas has become overly secularized. Often it becomes difficult for one to tune out the noise of the Holiday season to focus on the reason why Christians celebrate Christmas: the birth and arrival of Christ, the Messiah.

Sophomore Leo Loomis vividly recalls a day when he was walking through a mall at Christmas and feeling overwhelmed by the aggressive Christmas displays and the jarring advertisements that seemingly inhabited every free surface. The mall became the perfect representation of what the secular Christmas season has become.

"I was at the mall once and I just feel overwhelmed by the secular nature of Christmas. It is all the same after a while," Loomis said. "Everyone is always looking forward to the

Christmas season, but it has become so secularized that it has become the same thing. Instead of asking how we are going to serve our family this year, now we are asking what are we going to get this year."

Contrast the over the top decorations and commercial nature of the Christmas season to the Christmas celebration hosted by the monks every year. For Fr. Marion Charboneau, Christmas at the monastery provides a chance for the monks to relax and celebrate the birth of the savior.

"For us, because of the liturgical nature, Christmas begins Christmas Eve, not in the days leading up to it like in the secular world," Charboneau said.

Christmas celebration at the abbey centers around two pillars: the liturgies and community. These two are held in high esteem and are sought to

be the center of the Christmas celebrations through ensuring that Christmas liturgies reflect an immense sense of reverence and beauty and inviting guests to celebrate Christmas with the monks after Mass.

"For a monk, what you will be doing is that we have to decorate that Church between noon on Christmas Eve and Christmas liturgy of the Hours and vigil," Charboneau said. "We have the wonderful Christmas Mass and then afterward host people with the usual festivities of Christmas cookies and punch and all that sort of stuff to celebrate."

This celebration of Christmas reflects the simple yet beautiful lifestyle that the monks strive to live by. For Brother Joe Ryan O.S.B., Christmas Eve serves as a beautiful opportunity for the monks to come together with

each other and the wider community.

"We don't decorate the church until Christmas Eve day, so we all get together and put the Church together. It is just that fun tradition of everybody getting together and decorating. Then that night we invite everybody to come over and celebrate with us and that is a great time."

In a society that complicates and obstructs the vision of Christmas, people often find that they lose sight of the true meaning of Christmas: Jesus. For Benedictine students like sophomore Tatiana Tawney, they make sure to put their family and faith first when celebrating Christmas to limit worldly distractions.

"My family always goes to the midnight Mass and afterward we come back to our

house and have what we call a feast and it is so much fun," Tawney said. "We come back from Mass at 2 am, everybody is all dressed up and we are sitting around in our living room and we set up this Charcuterie board with all this fun stuff and we talk and hang out for another hour."

Christmas provides an opportunity to deepen one's spirituality and communal bonds with others. To do so, one must seek opportunities to prepare for Christmas, and deepen their understanding of what Christmas truly means in the context of the Catholic faith.

Advent serves as an opportunity where Catholics can prepare their hearts for the coming Christmas season and find refuge from the secular Christmas message that the world propagates. The message Christ offers, however, is one of redemption: that He came to save the world from sin and death.

"One of the things you can never separate Christmas from is the notion of redemption," Charboneau said. "That we needed to be bought back from our slavery to sin, brought back from a state that's just not acceptable to God. Christmas isn't going to be much and Christ is not going to have much significance to you if you do not recognize this need to be saved."

"ONE OF THE THINGS YOU CAN NEVER SEPARATE CHRISTMAS FROM IS THE NOTION OF REDEMPTION," "THAT WE NEEDED TO BE BOUGHT BACK FROM OUR SLAVERY TO SIN, CHRISTMAS ISN'T GOING TO BE MUCH AND CHRIST IS NOT GOING TO HAVE MUCH SIGNIFICANCE TO YOU IF YOU DO NOT RECOGNIZE THIS NEED TO BE SAVED."

-FR. MARION CHARBONEAU O.S.B

BENEDICTINE COMMUNITY SHARES CHRISTMAS MEMORIES

(OPEN PAGE TO PAGE 3 FOR MORE)

President Stephen Minnis

"In the morning all the kids, all the grandkids, all the cousins would go and play basketball and goof off in the morning time," said Minnis. Afterwards there was a soup lunch, 4 pm mass at St. Francis Xavier in St. Joseph, and then birthday cake for Jesus followed by a massive dinner party. On Christmas day, in keeping with their German heritage, the family would line up the chairs of each child, youngest to oldest, in a long semi-circle and Santa would place unwrapped presents on the chair of each child and an orange and an apple in the shoes underneath. On the morning of December 25th, the children, after being signaled by a rung bell that it was okay to come down, would line up on the stairs youngest to oldest to see what they got."



Fr. Ryan Richardson

"Each Christmas my family and I would drive across the 24 mile Causeway Bridge in New Orleans to visit extended family. There is a \$3 toll to cross the bridge. We would pay \$6 and tell the cashier to tell the car behind us "Merry Christmas." We then sped off quickly with a big smile on our faces."



Picture pulled from bedictinephotos.com

Community

CHRISTMAS TRADITIONS AROUND THE WORLD

Joseph McCubbin
The Circuit

Christmas is a cheerful time to celebrate community festive events for family and friends. There are a wide variety of joyful Christmas traditions celebrated worldwide in Germany, Mexico and Japan.

Germany

Germany has many unique Christmas traditions they celebrate. Christmas Eve celebration starts on December 24th and Christmas Day begins on December 25th. Family traditions such as get-togethers or celebrations start these days along with Christians who attend mass.

The German festive season starts at the end of November or early December with the Advent celebrations. During the festive season, many cities and towns hold Christmas markets which open usually from the beginning of December until Christ-

mas eve. The town hosts events such as Christmas markets in Frankfurt. They also have a Christmas tree at Brandenburg Gate at night. To celebrate Glass baubles and Christmas decorations are displayed at Nuremberg Christmas Market.

Germany celebrates typical advent traditions. The festive season is started with the Advent celebrations in preparation for the arrival of baby Jesus on Christmas day. Advent in Germany always begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day.

Typically, families decorate an Advent wreath with four red candles. On every Advent Sunday, one more candle is lit until all candles are alight to announce the imminent birth of Christ.

The German Advent calendar has 24 doors. It is filled with sweets or chocolates which are popular with children and are now a tradition all over the world. The first door is opened on the 1st of December until

the last and the often-biggest door is opened on the 24th of December.

The 6 of December is St. Nicholas' Day.

On the 6th of December, families celebrate Nikolaus tag, Saint Nicholas Day. Often a 'real' Saint Nicholas, dressed in a red coat and hat and wearing a white beard to disguise the father of a family friend and sometimes even his fearsome helper 'Knecht Ruprecht', who is dressed in black, comes to the homes with young children.

The German Christmas tree in the living room is put up usually only on the morning of Christmas Eve. Germans also mainly use real, freshly cut fir or pine trees, which are sold in all sizes at most shops during the last days before Christmas.

Mexico

In Mexico, Christmas is celebrated from December 12th to January 6th. There are candlelit processions,

elaborate nativity scenes, Spanish Christmas carols, dancing, and fireworks. While traditions like Christmas trees and Santa Claus have found a place in Mexican festivities, the holiday celebrations are firmly rooted in Spanish and indigenous culture.

From December 16th to Christmas Eve, children often perform the 'Posada' processions or Posadas. Posada is Spanish for Inn or Lodging. There are nine Posadas. These celebrate the part of the Christmas story where Joseph and Mary looked for somewhere to stay.

The largest-ever Angel Ornament was made in Mexico. It was made in January 2001 by Sergio Rodriguez in the town of Zozaya in the state of Nuevo León. The angel was 18' 3" high and had a wingspan of 11' 9".

Japan

In Japan, Christmas is known as more of a time to spread happiness

rather than a religious celebration. Christmas Eve is often celebrated more than Christmas Day.

Christmas Eve is thought of as a romantic day, in which couples spend time together and exchange presents.

The traditional Japanese Christmas food is Christmas cake, but it's not a rich fruit cake, but is usually a sponge cake decorated with strawberries and whipped cream.

Another popular activity during the Christmas season in Japan, especially in Tokyo, is visiting Tokyo Disneyland which opened in 1983, and seeing all the decorations and the parades. The Christmas season at Tokyo Disneyland is from the 2nd week in November until Christmas Day.

Fried chicken is often eaten on Christmas Eve/Christmas Day. It is the busiest time of year for restaurants such as KFC and people can place orders at their local fast-food restaurant in advance!



Traditional German Christmas Tree.
Photo pulled from germanculture.com.au



Mexican City decorated for Christmas.
Photo pulled from saltandwind.com



Young Japanese boy eating KFC on Christmas.
Photo pulled from arigatojapan.co.jp

TIPS FOR SAFE TRAVELS THIS WINTER

Sydney Wilkinson
Managing Editor

As everyone travels away from the campus for the winter holidays, whether it be by car, plane, or the few who still travel by train, it is important to stay safe.

For those driving home through the possible winter storms on their way home, here are seven tips on how to stay safe:

1. Stick to main roads and highways.
2. Avoid driving at night.
3. Pack blankets, food, and water in your car in case you become stranded.
4. Let family members or friends know what your travel route is and when you should be there.
5. If a storm causes you to stop, pull off to the side and turn on your hazards.

If you are stranded for a long period of time, run your engine for ten minutes every hour and slightly open a window for ventilation. It's also important to remove any snow that builds up on the car's exhaust pipe.

If by any possible bad luck you have to spend the night in your car, turn on the interior overhead light.

For those flying home on commercial flights through possible winter storms, here are eight tips on how to fly safe:

1. Fly nonstop whenever possible to eliminate your chances of getting stuck midway through your travels.
2. Book the earliest flight possible to limit the chance of having your flight affected by winter weather.
3. Check the weather days before your flight so there are no surprises.
4. Look up the airline and airports on social media to be alerted about what is happening with the airline.
5. If you made hotel reservations, make sure they are ones you can cancel. Also if you suspect that your flight might get affected by bad weather, make a backup hotel reservation you can cancel if you don't have to use it.
6. Keep your phone charged and your charger nearby. It would also be good to invest in a power bank in case you need to charge your phone and there are no outlets.

7. Like with any flight, pack wisely and keep a carry-on with you.

- 8/ Buy travel insurance.

For those going home by train, here are five tips on how to travel safely:

1. Since ice tends to form more quickly on train platforms, watch out for icy conditions.
2. Always, without a doubt, use handrails. The stairs are going to be slippery and you don't want to fall on them.
3. Even after boarding the train, be careful of slippery conditions.
4. Avoid moving between train cars. The areas between cars will have icy conditions.
5. When driving to and from the station, be careful.

Whether you've heard all these tips before or not, hopefully they help you to stay safe through holiday travels.

These tips were found at weather.com, covertrip.com, and darienite.com.

Cozy for Christmas at college

Christina Schieman
Managing Editor

Decorating for the holidays can be so much fun. I have always found decorating for Christmas to be one of the best times of the year. There is just something so different about bringing down ornaments from the attic, picking out a tree, and making your living space feel way cozier and more festive. Here are some tips on how to do just that!

Christmas Lights

Whether you like warm lights, white lights, blue lights or multi-colored lights, find the Christmas lights that fit your style and incorporate them into your space. This can be done by wrapping them around the railing of a staircase, around an artificial tree, stringing them up on your room ceiling or laying them around other decorative pieces.

Garland/Winter Decor

Next, add in some winter garlands, whether that be evergreen branches or shimmering tinsel and

place these around your space similarly. This will elevate your space and make it look more wintry. I like to make my space look "woody," so I like to add pine cone branches.

Cultural Decor

I am German, so I like to incorporate cultural pieces into my Christmas decor. I like to decorate with Advent calendars, German chocolates, wood carvings and "gluckspilz" or "lucky mushroom" toadstool decorations. Adding items that remind you of your heritage adds a personalized cozy touch to any living space.

Religious Elements

It's always a good idea to remember the reason for the season! Set up a nativity set in a space where you will see it often. You can also add items that have religious words on them such as "Joy to the World," "Silent Night," "Adore Him," etc. I have a placemat that reads "Noel" that I repurposed as a table runner for the nightstand in my room.

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SCAN ME

Traditions

STUDENTS AND FACULTY SHARE CHRISTMAS MEMORIES



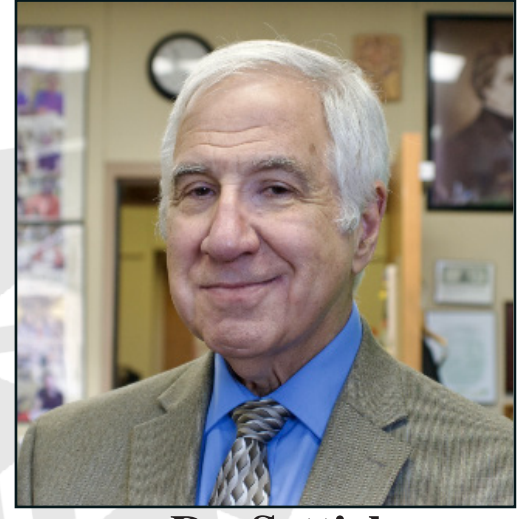
Emilia Ward - junior

My favorite Christmas tradition is a caroling party at our family friends' house, where the halls are decked with literally over 100 nativity sets. The place fills up with carolers from age newborn to over 50, making for a happy, festive chaos. We end our Christmas feast with everyone singing The 12 Days of Christmas in parts (which usually the dads make a meme out of). This is usually the last Sunday of Advent, the perfect time to revamp the hype for the coming holy day.



John Galindo - senior

My family's biggest tradition for Christmas is going to midnight mass. When I was little, it was just fun to be able to stay up late. Any excuse to stay up late is a good excuse. After Mass we would get to open one present under the tree. As my older brother and I got older, our family didn't do it as much because it just seemed like a silly tradition. However, once he started his own family, we actually started doing the tradition again. So, it has meant more to me over the last few years, having a nephew. It's nice being able to start those kinds of traditions with my nephew and it gives me something to look forward to when I have a family.



Dr. Settich

One of the central traditions in our family is a culinary respect for cultural tradition. My mother was Polish (Anna Siudowski) and her mother taught my brother and I how to make pierogi. Both my brother and I regularly produce them as a treat to accompany Christmas dinner. We prefer the classic mashed potato with sharp cheddar cheese filling. And, of course, they are finished with browning and frying with lots of butter and onions. The Croatian side uses home-made apple strudel with the wistfully thin phyllo dough. My sister-in-law (Croatian on both sides) has that skill, and she never disappoints. These are "memories served on a plate."



Jack Strom - sophomore

So, our Christmas tradition is just every Christmas eve, my immediate family gets together, and we have dinner. Every Christmas morning, my dad will tell us that we didn't get anything for Christmas. Then we'll go downstairs, and we'll realize that we actually did get something for Christmas. Later that night, my whole mom's side of the family comes over and we have a big family dinner and then we play white elephant. Since I'm the youngest on my mom's side of the family they always try to make sure I get the worst gift. For example, last year I got balsamic vinegar, the year before I got soap, and the year before that I got makeup. Also, on December 23rd, we go to this Chinese restaurant, and we get Chinese food. There's like eighteen of us. It's a lot of fun.



Meghan Kuckelman - junior

It has always been a thing in my family to make our stockings every year. We paint them with our names and things that interest us or have happened to us throughout the year. When I came to Benedictine, I drew a B for mine and stuff like that. That's when we get the little presents and candy. We are presents in the morning family. For my sisters, who sleep in the basement, they have to sleep upstairs so they can't catch Santa. We all sleep in the same room and then normally my youngest sister Ashley will wake us all up insanely early. After that, we all stand at the top of the stairs and wait for our parents to wake up. Then they go downstairs to set up a camera. It used to be an old cam recorder, but now it's just on their phones. They record us all running down the stairs to see what we got.



Anna Zacharis - freshman

Our Christmas family tradition is every morning we wake up and we open our presents. Then, with our pajamas still on, we go to Quik Trip, and we all get a donut or like a piece of candy and a drink. Just to celebrate Christmas and walk in with our pajamas on. Our pajamas usually match, which is so fun. Everyone gives us little looks but it's a good tradition we do every year. The reason we go to Quik Trip is because my family just loves Quik Trip. We're just big Quik Trip fans in my family. It's an occurrence that we go to weekly. Since it's a tradition all year round, we got to make it a tradition on Christmas, too.



Dr. Susan Traffas

My favorite memory from childhood, well I was the oldest so I alone got to go to midnight mass so that was fun, because it was a privilege to get to go and my father at that time was not Catholic so it would just be me a mom. But the other fun thing, was that I got to help with Santa Claus, because I knew where all the stuff was. Since I got to stay up later I got to help mom put it together.



Dr. Mariele Courtois

Baking Mexican Wedding Cookies with my grandmother brings back memories of early Christmases at her bed-and-breakfast, called Casa Milagro, in Santa Fe, New Mexico. As we dusted the cookies with powdered sugar, we would look out the kitchen window at the rabbit and coyote tracks in the crisp December snow.



Dr. Christopher Shingledecker

My favorite Christmas tradition is one my wife and I typically do every Christmas Eve after mass. Once we come home, we'll begin cooking for the meal the following day. Our custom is that I'll peel fruits and vegetables, mash potatoes, and most importantly, make my signature cranberry sauce. I always look forward to it because it's a quiet moment we can enjoy together before the excitement of Christmas morning.



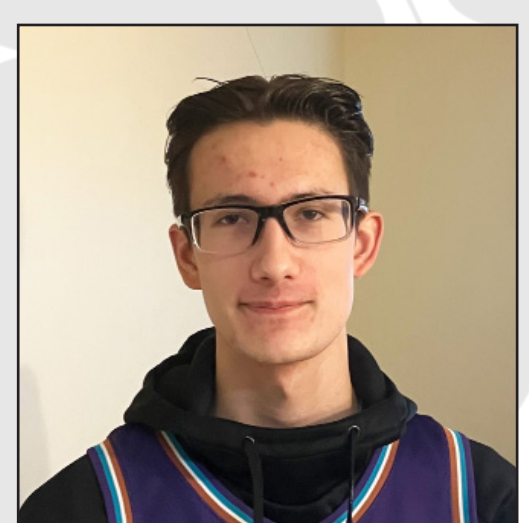
Joe Boever - junior

One of my favorite Christmas traditions is what my family does on Christmas Eve. First we go to vigil mass and then come back for soup in bread bowls. When I was young we used to do fondue instead but then one year the oil fondue exploded and some kid almost got blinded. After the late dinner the kids give each other present and then all sleep in one room.



Clare Hanson - Staff

My favorite Christmas Tradition is preparing the Christmas dinner with my mom and sisters. We usually have great music playing in the kitchen or from our acoustic guitars. The menu usually changes year to year, but we like to experiment on Christmas Eve, usually trying something new and more "gourmet." Christmas Day is your typical Ham, potatoes, rolls etc. We generally have lots of Christmas cookies also. Nothing beats a Chocolate chip, but we also enjoy candy cane cookies with some almond and peppermint extract.



Andrew Selness - junior

I'm a Christmas purist, so I only participate in the most a time-honored Christmas traditions. My family listens to Bach while decorating the tree, has a Christmas Eve feast and goes to mass Christmas morning. And then I watch NBA basketball all day.

Tradition stories compiled by James Lieblang, Emma Lundholm, Dominic Susanka

'Tis the Season



What character
are you?
Christmas edition:



Delaney Greim
Managing Editor

1. Whats your favorite thing about Christmas?

- A) Seeing my family and friends.
B) The treats.
C) The gifts.

2. What is your favorite Christmas treat?

- A) The candy!
B) Christmas cookies.
C) I'm not a big treat guy/gal

3. How often do you donate to charity?

- A) On some occasions.
B) Every chance I get.
C) Nope. Never.

4. How late do you stay up on Christmas?

- A) Right before Santa comes.
B) I'm staying up all night
C) I'm snoozing right after dinner.

4. How many presents are you buying this year?

- A) For everyone I love.
B) It feels like millions!
C) None. I'd rather get the gifts.

5. How do you play in the snow?

- A) I love snowball fights.
B) Go sledding.
C) I don't like the snow.

6. Where will you spend the Holidays?

- A) In the city.
B) I'll be traveling.
C) At home.

7. Whats your Christmas outfit?

- A) Something festive.
B) Something comfortable.
C) I'm still working on it.

8. Whats your least favorite part of Christmas?

- A) When people don't spread Christmas cheer.
B) Traffic.
C) The noise.



If you answered mostly A's you are Buddy the Elf.
If you answered mostly B's you are Santa.
If you answered mostly C's you are the Grinch of Christmas.

Answer Key:

CINNABUN POPCORN

Mary Kate Roche
The Circuit

If you are in the mood for a sweet popcorn treat that tastes like a cinnamon roll this recipe is the one for you! This makes for a great Christmas party finger food and a wonderful addition to a recipe book.

Ingredients:

16 cups popped popcorn (½+ cup unpopped kernels)

1 ⅓ cup brown sugar

1 ¼ teaspoon cinnamon

¾ cup real butter (1-½ sticks)

⅓ cup karo syrup

¾ teaspoon baking soda

2 teaspoons vanilla

1 cup halved pecans

2 squares almond bark or ½ cup white chocolate

Directions:

1. Remove all unpopped kernels from the popped corn.

2. Stir together brown sugar and cinnamon in a 2 qt microwaveable dish. Cut in butter. Top with karo syrup.

Microwave for 1 minute. Stir with a large, rubber spatula. Microwave for another 2 minutes. You want it to be hot and bubbly; be careful to avoid overcooking this or it can turn into a hard clump that won't

drizzle nicely over your popcorn.

3. Next, stir in vanilla and baking soda. It should start foaming a bit. (I add another ¼ tsp soda if it doesn't foam at first.)

4. Sprinkle the nuts on top of the popcorn (don't mix in) and quickly pour the caramel mixture on top of the nuts and popcorn. Stir it all together and pour onto a parchment-lined sheet pan.

5. Bake at 250 degrees for 20-25 minutes, stirring once after 15 minutes. When it's done, stir it again, then remove the parchment from the pan onto the counter to cool. Try to break apart any larger clumps before it cools. Use another sheet of parchment if needed to spread it out more to cool.

6. Melt 2 or 3 squares of almond bark or ½ cup white chocolate. Using a fork, flick the white chocolate onto the cooling popcorn. (You can place it in the fridge if you need the chocolate to set quickly.)

These make nice little gifts.

GLENACE'S GLAZED PECANS

Mary Kate Roche
The Circuit

Glazed pecans have been my family's favorite grab-and-go sweet during Advent and Christmas. Our neighbor, Mrs. Glence, has given us a little tin of these every year for the past 21 years, and one day we decided we had to ask her for her recipe.

We had tried to recreate these using other recipes, but they never seemed to be as perfect as hers. We have shared this sweet southern treat with our family across the country and they have become a Christmas staple in our home. These sweet little morsels can be eaten on their own, but they are also a great addition to salad if you want a little extra crunch!

Ingredients:

16 oz. (1 pound) pecan halves
1 large egg white
1 TBSP water
Zip-lock bag, gallon sized
1/2 cup sugar
1/4 tsp. salt
1/2 tsp. cinnamon

Directions:

Preheat oven to 225 degrees. Pour the sugar, salt, and cinnamon into the Zip-lock bag and toss around to mix. Beat egg white and water until just frothy--NOT stiff peaks or you'll get a thick, sugary crust on the nuts that you don't want. Fold in the pecans until all nuts are well-coated. Pour the nuts into the Zip-lock bag--you may want a second pair of hands for this, or place bag in a small mixing bowl to stabilize. Zip bag closed securely and toss nuts around to coat evenly, using your hands to separate the nut halves as needed. Pour the nuts onto a parchment-lined large jelly roll pan. Bake 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool in pan. (If there are any nuts stuck together, separate them before completely cooled.) Store in an air-tight container to keep crisp.

Enjoy this southern favorite and share them with your friends and family this Christmas season!

What is the best Christmas movie of all time?

Will Prosocki
The Circuit

What is the best Christmas movie ever made? I think that there are two things that a movie must do in order to earn that title, and both of those things are in the phrase itself: Be a good movie about Christmas, and be a good movie.

A litmus test for whether or not someone is cool is asking them if they think Die Hard is a Christmas movie (it is), and I think that subgenre is a good place to start. Gremlins, Batman Returns, and yes, Die Hard, are great movies that also just happen to be Christmas movies. I would say that the most iconic Christmas movie ever, It's a Wonderful Life, is a part of this category. Many say It's a Wonderful Life is the best Christmas movie of all time, and I'm honestly not inclined to disagree. It is a phenomenal, timeless, wonderful movie that holds up very well nearly 80 years later, but when you watch the movie, you'll notice that it being Christmas is incidental to the plot, only playing a direct role in the final moments of the film. While the emotions it brings out of viewers embodies that Christmas feeling, I think It's a Wonderful Life almost transcends being a Christmas movie, so let's talk about movies that are a bit more Christmas-centric.

Everyone loves movies like Elf,

Christmas Vacation, A Christmas Story and Home Alone, so I'm probably going to have to tread lightly when I talk about them, as well as add a disclaimer that yes, I like them a lot too. While many Christmas comedies have iconic moments that have become synonymous with the season, I would argue that most movies like this function solely as Christmas movies, and not just as movies. Since that is mostly the intention of the movies, the subjective quality of the movies will strongly hinge on whether or not you personally find them funny. A contender for my favorite Christmas movie is Christmas Vacation, but if someone doesn't find it funny, I can see it falling completely flat because there is not as much in terms of directing or story there as there is in something like It's a Wonderful Life, and I think the same can be said for most Christmas comedies. Where I think they make up for that however, is having the Christmas spirit radiate from every frame of the movie, like Clark Griswold's house that is so bright it can be seen from outer space.

Claymation TV movies such as Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer are staples of the season. For many, simply seeing a still image from one of these movies is enough to bring a wave of warm, nostalgic Christmas feelings. Maybe it's the fact that every character kind of looks like an ornament, or the classic songs, or

the often-quiet animation, but these movies radiate Christmas from every frame, and that leads directly into my pick for best Christmas movie. In my opinion, The Nightmare Before Christmas checks off all the boxes for what it means to be a great Christmas movie, as well as a great movie, making it the best Christmas movie of all time. While it blurs the line between being a Christmas movie and a Halloween movie, the energy and sense of wonderment that it radiates firmly places it in the Christmas movie category for me.

The Nightmare Before Christmas is one of those movies where it's hard to talk about without just saying absolutely everything about it is perfect, but I'll try my best. It has everything that classic Christmas movies work with absolutely none of the shortcomings. With a 76-minute runtime, not a single moment is wasted, the story comes in like a train barreling at a hundred miles an hour. In less than 80 minutes, it is able to pack a story and character arc just as fulfilling as George from It's a Wonderful Life, humor just as funny as Christmas Vacation, and songs that blow Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer out of the water. Every single song in this movie is incredible, coming out swinging with "This is Halloween" and delivering memorable song after memorable song until the movie comes to a triumphant conclusion. The animation

is stunning, often feeling like the animators are flexing their stop-motion animation skills, creating an elaborate, imaginative and fully immersive world that feels just as real as live-action. The character designs are just as well thought out and distinct as their character traits.

Jack Skellington is the heart of why I think this movie works so well for Christmas. Despite his spooky exterior, Jack is a delightful, cheerful character who looks at the world with the wonderment and curiosity of a child, learning what Christmas is and learns more about himself as a person as he goes along. Not only does he as character embody what it feels like to experience Christmas for the very first time, falling in love with it and obsessing over it. That is why I think it is the best Christmas movie. Not only is the presentation of the animation a perfect extension of a style that is synonymous with Christmas for me, but Jack's entire reaction to Christmas symbolizes what I think is so special about Christmas for so many people. The traditions of the holiday have the ability to bring out childlike wonder and excitement in everyone. Even though Jack ultimately learns that he should not be the king of Christmas Town, that just enforces Christmas as that special time of year everyone looks forward to, because if it was year-round, it would not be as special.



Pictures pulled from imbd.com