

CHRISTMAS IN ECUADOR

Because Ecuador is largely a Catholic nation, Christmas is still more about the birth of Christ than other traditions (like Santa Claus).

NATIVITIES (PESEBRES) AND CHRISTMAS TREES



Throughout Ecuador you will see a **Nativity** in public places as well as in homes. Often next to a Christmas tree.

Most cities have **parades** in December that include people dressed up like Mary and Joseph and baby

Jesus. In fact they are the most notable part of the parade. (Whereas here in the USA Santa has taken that prominence.)

In Ecuador, in both public and private nativity scenes, often the baby Jesus is not put into the manger until Christmas Eve.



NOVENAS

A common custom in Latin American countries is “Novena.” Novena comes from the Latin word “nine.” In Ecuador it refers to the 9 days (representing 9 months of pregnancy) of preparation for the birth of Christ. Usually starting December 15 families, neighbors, or groups of friends gather each night (sometimes at a different house each night) to pray, read from the Bible, sing carols and eat together.

CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER (CENA DE NOCHE BUENA)

Many families have a big dinner at midnight on Christmas eve. The meal is much like our Thanksgiving feast here in the USA. They commonly serve roast turkey or chicken (in rural areas it might be guinea pig), rice or potatoes, salads, and raisins or grapes. The leftovers are eaten on Christmas day. See next page for a recipe for Ecuadorian Christmas Rice.



CHRISTMAS BASKETS (CANASTA NAVIDEÑAS)

Because Ecuador has a high level of poverty, shopping and gift giving is not a tradition for most families. However, small food gifts are common. Children receive bags of sweets (Fundas de Caramelos) and families get Christmas baskets of food and sweets (Canasta Navideñas).



Recipe from Ecuador - Arroz Navideño



Christmas Rice, or Arroz Navideño (ah-RROHS nah-bee-DEH-nyoh) is popular throughout Latin America. Each country has its own style, and each family has its own variation. This recipe from Ecuador has an unexpected ingredient: cola!

Yield: 6 servings

Prep time: 15 minutes

Cook time: 25 minutes

Total time: 40 minutes

Ingredients

- 1 tbsp. unsalted butter
- 4 tbsp. canola oil
- 1 white onion, chopped
- 1 each of red, yellow and green bell pepper, chopped
- 3 cups extra-long-grain rice
- 1½ cups cola
- 2½ cups water
- salt to taste
- ½ cup raisins
- ½ cup walnuts, chopped
- ½ cup ham, diced

Directions

1. On medium heat, melt butter in large pot. Add canola oil. Sauté onion and half of the chopped peppers for 2-3 minutes.
2. Add rice, and sauté for another 1-2 minutes.
3. Add cola and water. Add salt to taste. Raise heat to high and bring to boil.
4. Cover pot and reduce heat to medium low. Simmer for another 10-15 minutes. When rice is cooked, remove from heat.
5. Mix in walnuts, raisins and ham. Garnish with remaining chopped peppers.