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Celebrating the Season

DIVERSITY

Continued from Page 7B

day of the school year. It is actually the celebration of the Jewish new year. The Jewish calender, which is 5,753 years old, is set by the moon cycle.

The Jewish holidays have been a point of contention between Jewish professors and students because "there is a lack of respect on the part of UO," said Waxman, co-director of the Jewish Student Union.

"Would they dare schedule an exam on Christmas, Easter or Good Friday?" Waxman said. "The first day of classes would never be on Christmas."

Contrary to popular belief, Hannukah is not the Jewish version of Christmas. Ezra Bookstein, co-director of JSU, said Hannukah is actually a celebration of military victory. It signifies a rebellion in the times of the Syrian control of Jerusalem. The victory was supposed to take place one month earlier for Sukkot, but instead it ended Dec. 20.

Hannukah is actually a celebration of Sukkot, which is an eight-day harvest festival ending Oct.

For Mexico natives or those of Mexican descent, Christmastime means partytime. The celebration is called posadas. For posadas, groups of people reenact the birth day of Jesus Christ. Two people in the group, who dress as Mary and Joseph, go door to door looking for a place to spend the night.

They are turned down until they come to a prechosen house where they are welcomed inside. Then the entire group enters, and a big party is held with many friends, family members and food.

Many Catholic churches in the United States have posadas and a Spanish mass. The mass is Christmas Eve at midnight.

MEChA member Elizabeth Lopez said her family has people over to the house and prepares a large dinner. At 9 p.m. the children are put to bed, then at midnight they are awoken and they all open their presents.

In Singapore, Christmas is the time to shop. Much like here, Christmas carols begin to be played in the middle of November, and the buildings are lit up from basement to top floor as well as the streets. And lucky for students there, the academic year is finished.

"On Christmas, people go to church, even non-Christians," said Shing. "Then we party all night with a sumptuous dinner. At Christmas we definitely have food and lots of parties."

Once Christmas has passed, it's time to get ready for New Year's preparations to begin. In Singapore both the traditional and Chinese New Year are celebrated. This year the Chinese New Year is in January, though it can also be in February.



Seasonal music is a part of many celebrations, such as this performance by Jefferson Middle School's choir in the EMU last year.

Steve Muraoka, co-director of the Asian/Pacific American Student Union, said all Asians celebrate the New Year in one form or another. The Japanese follow the regular calender and celebrate in a similar manner as the United States.

The Vietnamese have a candle dance, and the the Chinese have a lion dance.

"Asian-Americans take a little bit from each culture," Muraoka said. "We celebrate our heritage but still function as Americans."

Although most people automatically think of New Year's as a time to drink and stay up late, for Jewish people it has a different connotation.

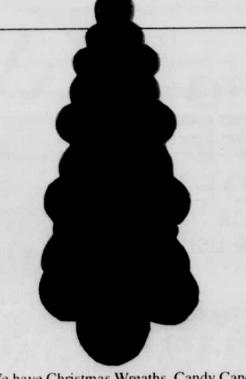
"Historically, the New Year is when Russians killed Jews," Waxman said. "But even in Israel it's a big holiday that has been Americanized."

Waxman said even though people celebrate the holiday, rabbis in Israel don't like it and prefer to call the holiday Sylvester. In the United States that would be like calling it Bob or Tom.

In Germany, New Year's Eve is like our Fourth of July. Cities are lit up by fireworks that can be seen from anywhere in the city, Alsen said. The streets are empty of cars so that people can walk around freely and the fireworks are used to scare away evil ghosts for the New Year.

It seems as if people everywhere have come to have some sort of celebration at this time of year. In some countries, the holidays are an excuse to eat and shop, but in all countries they are a symbol of family and friends.

Carrie Fenelon

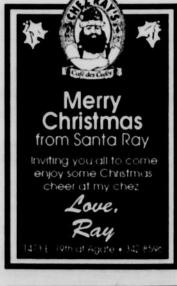


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