

What's Boxing Day? The British Un-Christmas!

By SUZANNE KENNEDY

Americans might think Boxing Day has some connection to Muhammad Ali, but they'd be wrong. Celebrated mainly in Canada, the United Kingdom and Ireland, Boxing Day is mainly now a bank holiday. It falls on the day after Christmas, Dec. 26, each year. The traditions and origins of the day, however, are much more interesting.

Why is it called Boxing Day?

Well, first, a Christmas box is the British name for a Christmas present. In Downton Abbey days, servants would get the day after Christmas off and, after receiving a Christmas box from their master, would go home to their families to share gifts with them. In addition, many churches put out small boxes to collect money for the poor

on Christmas Day, and then open them on Boxing Day.

So what do people do on Boxing Day? It's much more casual than Christmas, so many informally meet up with friends and family not seen on Christmas Day and munch on yummy leftovers. They could be watching sports like horse racing, football (soccer), or even fake fox hunting (yes, there is such a thing).

If you're super adventurous, you might try something silly like swimming in ice cold water that could substitute for the English Channel, or participating in a charity fun run or other type of



time, we had Thanksgiving to celebrate, anyway. My waistline can only handle so many holidays.

Feeling British? Here's how you can celebrate with your family.

Be charitable. Box up your unused clothing and household items to donate. Tip the people who provide a service for you (your mail carrier, hair stylist, babysitter, etc.)

Be active. Since soccer is such an important part of Boxing Day, get out of the house and burn off some of those Christmas calories with your family. You might even try to get

the neighborhood out together, depending on the weather.

Visit family and friends. Let's face it, there's not enough time to see everyone on Christmas. If Christmas is all family, plan an easy get-together with friends for the day after. Keep it casual with a potluck, or meet at a local restaurant. Turn on some music or sports and keep the merriment going.

Stay true to Boxing Day roots. Use the after-Christmas sales to shop for the needy. Blankets, warm socks, gloves, and jackets are often on good sales and you'll be able to help more people with a smaller budget.

Don't forget to sing a chorus of "Good King Wenceslas." The feast day of Saint Stephen, referred to in the song, is on Boxing Day!

charitable event. Sadly, or not, depending on how you look at it, it has also become a prime shopping day.

What do people eat on Boxing Day? Think easy. Leftovers, hams, Christmas cake, mince pie with brandy butter ... wait, what? Mince pies have been around as far back as the 16th century. Back then they were made of meat but are now made with sweet mincemeat, a mixture of dried fruits, sugar, spices and brandy. Christmas cake takes a couple of months to make sure there's enough time to "feed" it brandy. If you have time, you can also soak the dried mixed fruits the night before in a little extra brandy and finish it the next day. Wowza — did I mention the brandy?

Boxing Day isn't a tradition in America because, although it extends far back in history, it didn't become official until 1871, long after the Americans won their independence from England. By that

Suzanne Kennedy is a former middle school teacher who lives in Pendleton with her husband and three children.



**MORROW COUNTY
HEALTH DISTRICT**

*Accepting New Patients
at All Clinics*

Serving you at:

Irrigon Medical Clinic

Vicki Kent, ARNP • Matthew Tiemann, PA-C
(541) 922-5880

Pioneer Memorial Clinic

Russ Nichols, MD • Dan Hambleton, MD
Betty Hamill, DNP, APRN, FNPC • Amanda Fabian, PA-C
(541) 676-5504

Ione Community Clinic

Eileen McElligott, FNP • Amanda Fabian, PA-C
(541) 422-7128

www.morrowcountyhealthdistrict.org