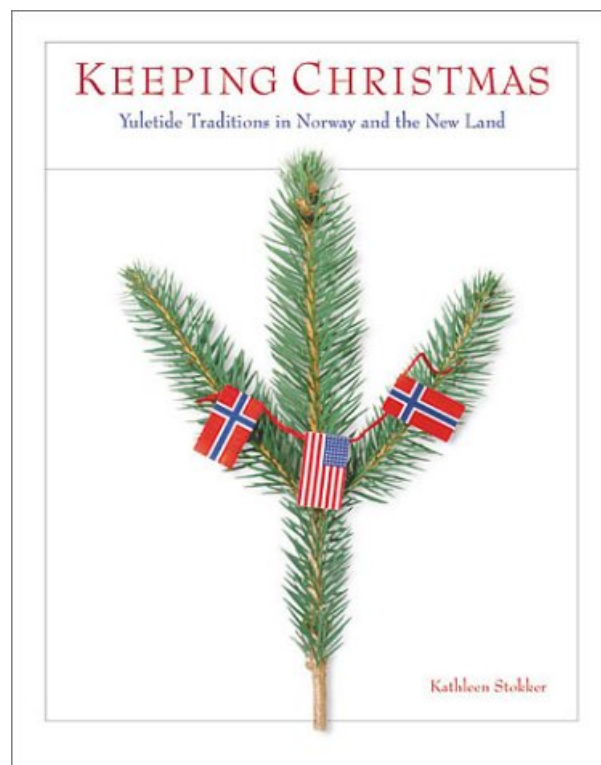
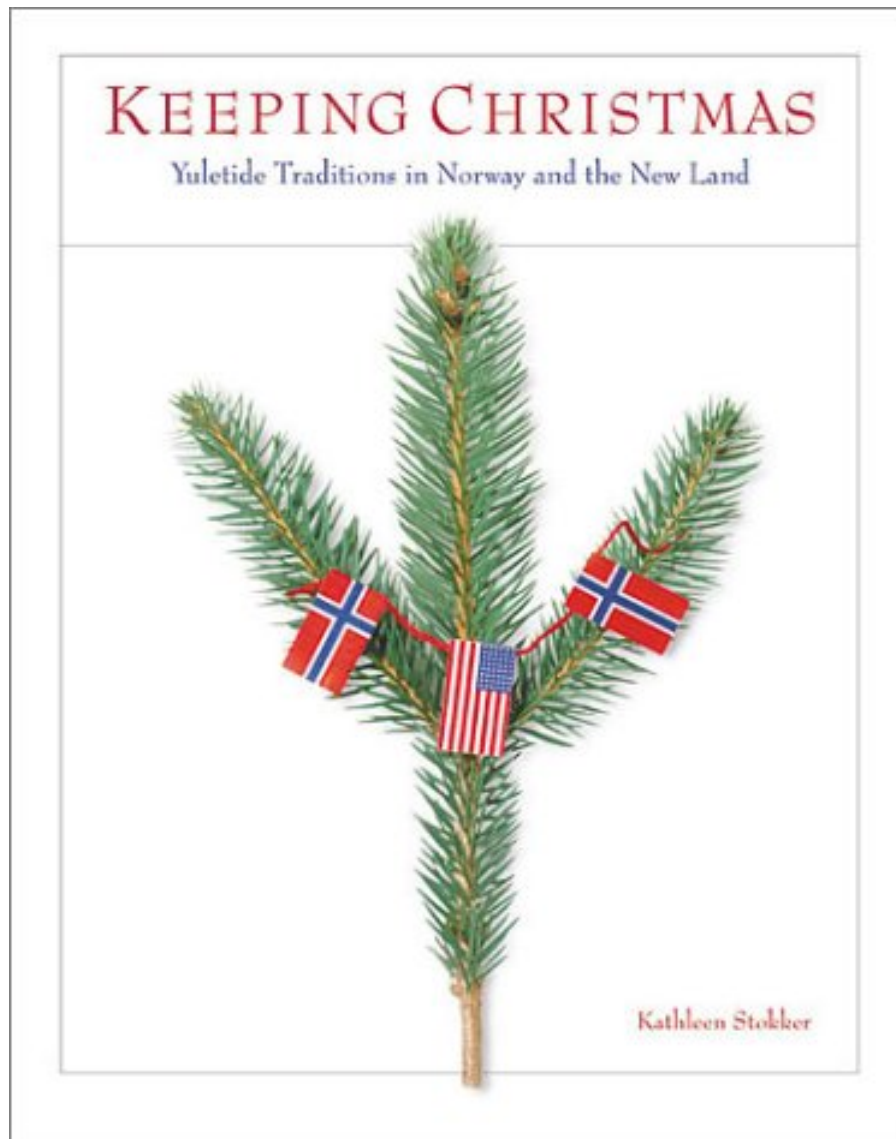


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About the Author

Kathleen Stokker is a professor of Norwegian at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. She is the author of *Folklore Fights the Nazis: Humor in Occupied Norway, 1941-45*.

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The modern Norwegian-American Christmas—celebrated with family feasts of lutefisk, lefse, rømmegröt, rull, and fruit soup, observed in homes where trees are decorated with straw ornaments, flags, and heart-shaped baskets—is a warm and regenerative family holiday for millions of Americans whose ancestors came from Norway. It is the time to carry on customs whose origins have been lost in the past.

Kathleen Stokker's *_Keeping Christmas: Yuletide Traditions in Norway and the New Land_* brings home the stories of Christmas customs in Norway and America. With fascinating details, with scores of accounts of ancient and modern Christmases, with recipes and photographs, this book reminds Norwegians and Norwegian Americans of their connections to each other and explains how their celebrations differ on this most holy of Christian holidays. In telling readers about Norwegian folklore, she illuminates for them the cultural history of both countries.

Stories about the customs:

Lutefisk, the smelly, gelatinous fish loved by some Norwegian Americans and valued by many more, is a reminder of fasting during Advent and of the difficulties overcome by immigrants.

To the surprise of modern Norwegians, julebukking—Christmas mumming—was widely practiced in the midwestern United States, where it is still enjoyed in a few communities.

The marzipan Christmas pig is a reminder that the season of festive consumption began with the fall slaughter, which provided the rare chance to eat fresh meat.

Norwegian flags hanging on a American tree do more than commemorate the Old Land; they were first used on Norwegian trees as the country gained independence.

Well into the nineteenth century, rural Norwegians feared the terrible *oskorei*, spirits who stole horses and kidnapped people who did not have special protection on Christmas Eve.

The *nisse*, the benevolent farm spirit, was given a bowl of porridge at Christmas time to thank him for his protection during preceding year and to ensure its continuation in the year to come.

In medieval times, Norwegian peasants were required to brew beer at Christmas time on pain of a fine or confiscation of property.

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0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Northern European Christmas traditions!

By Emma Groppel Christensen

Great traditions for families who have members who have passed on to get to know cultural traditions that are heart warming and sustainable. So if you are wanting to build family memories that will last and be remembered by all this is a great buy!

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

Not just for Norwegian-Americans

By J.M.

This book is a valuable addition to the collection of anyone who enjoys reading about Christmas traditions.

Stoker traces the Roman and Viking roots to Christmas celebrations in Norway and their evolution among Norwegian-Americans. She emphasizes the importance of preserving ethnic heritage: "Americans find in ethnicity an antidote to the isolation that has grown increasingly acute in the wake of the massive suburbanization that began in the 1940's.... Ethnicity fulfills the particularly American need for origins and belonging..."

Christmas is an ideal time to reconnect with one's cultural roots. As Stokker writes: "Incorporating change while retaining everything that makes it so beloved, Christmas holds within its vast and monumental embrace diverse individuals, families and cultures, allowing each a means of self-expression."

The "authenticity" of ethnic celebrations, however, is open to interpretation. Stokker writes: "When people no longer fear that their ethnicity may threaten their life chances, they can express it more freely. With greater time separating them from the Old Country, they can also feel less constraint about the way they choose to express their attachment to it. As a result, individuals and families increasingly create the content of their ethnicity, picking and choosing the items that they themselves find meaningful...."

This book is a great read and worth the trouble of finding a used copy. (Or buy a brand new copy from Barnes & Noble)

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful.

Amazing resource!

By K. Grasty

This book goes very in-depth into details about Norwegian traditions, and also quite a bit into the myths and creatures surrounding them. There are recipes in there as well and tid-bits about how rural life was and what they ate and even how they prepared it. This book is fascinating and a good resource for anyone interested in

Norwegian myth and traditions in general.

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