

# A WWII Christmas

Just because there are shortages and rationing doesn't mean that people didn't enjoy Christmas. You can see what it was like to 'make do' for Christmas.

## Tree decorations

There were no Christmas trees, since all large trees were cut for wood. Instead, people cut pieces of holly, shrubs or any available greenery (such as holly) and decorated them with pinecones or whitewash, for snow. Small branches could also be dipped in washing soda or Epsom salts mixed with water. When they dried, white crystals would cover the branches. People also used decorations they already had from previous years. There were no lights or candles for the branches or the house.

## Table decorations

To make the table look festive, people used colourful vegetables instead of fruit and sweets. Carrots, beetroots, cabbage and parsley were placed in bowls and vases.

## Gifts

People made gifts, such as brooches made from scraps of wool, felt and plastic; bookmarks and calendars. People who could knit made slippers and gloves, sometimes unravelling old jumpers for wool. There was no wrapping paper or ribbon, so people used newspapers or plain paper that they decorated with pens or paint.

## Food

Few people could get turkey or goose for their Christmas dinner. Some people raised chickens in their gardens and used these, or formed sausage into a turkey shape. There was no pudding. Instead, people made 'mock' foods like the ones below.

## Mock apple pie

Pastry for 9-inch pie  
36 Ritz Crackers, coarsely broken (about 1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups crumbs)  
1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups water  
2 cups sugar  
2 teaspoons cream of tartar  
2 tablespoons lemon juice  
Grated peel of one lemon  
1  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups margarine or butter  
1  $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon ground cinnamon

### Method

1. Roll out half the pastry and line a 9-inch pie plate. Place cracker crumbs in prepared crust; set aside.
2. Heat water, sugar and cream of tartar to a boil in saucepan over high heat; simmer for 15 minutes. Add lemon juice and peel; cool.
3. Pour syrup over cracker crumbs. Dot with margarine or butter; sprinkle with cinnamon. Roll out remaining pastry; place over pie. Trim, seal and flute edges. Slit top crust to allow steam to escape.
4. Bake at 220°C for 30–35 minutes.

## Mock marzipan

1  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup melted margarine  
1  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup semolina  
1  $\frac{1}{3}$  cup castor sugar,  
1 egg, spot of almond essence.  
Beat egg in last to bind.

## Mock cream

1  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup margarine  
1  $\frac{1}{8}$  cup sugar  
1 tablespoon of dried milk  
1 tablespoon of milk

### Method

1. Cream the margarine and sugar.
2. Beat in the milk powder and liquid milk.

# Teacher's sheet

Based on **pages 42 and 43** of *Children in the Second World War*

## A WWII Christmas

### Age range

- Years 3/4 (SP4/5).
- Years 5/6 (SP6/7).

### Resources

Copies of the worksheet. Greenery, such as branches or pinecones; whitewash or white paint; Epsom salts or washing soda; brightly-coloured vegetables; paper, card and pens for making gifts and decorations; samples of mock foods.

### Using the worksheet

You may like to use this activity during your work on WWII. Alternatively you may like to use it as part of a WWII day, when the students are in costume, and have the students prepare a Christmas during WWII exhibit. Students could take the worksheet home and prepare some Christmas decorations, gifts and foods to bring in. In planning your Christmas exhibit and foods make sure all your school policies are followed.

Alternatively, students could prepare a Christmas during WWII exhibit for use in their coursework. Each student or group of students could make decorations, foods, letters to loved ones and gifts to use in the exhibit. They could set up a table as if for Christmas dinner, with foods and decorations that would have been available.

Students could choose a year and describe how they would celebrate Christmas and what sort of gifts and foods they would have. Then they could make decorations appropriate for that year.

### Younger and older students

Younger students may need help making a Christmas exhibit.

### Outcomes

The students can:

- Appreciate that people had to make do with whatever they could find, even for holidays.
- Understand that people still enjoyed Christmas, even if there were no luxuries.