

"Bei uns ist immer was los!"

TANNENBAUM / CHRISTMAS TREE



O Tannenbaum

Christmas tree ornaments have a long history as well. The Christmas Museum in the medieval Bavarian town Rothenburg ob der Tauber exhibits some that are nearly 200 years old, as well the famous hand-made creations of the Erzgebirge region in eastern Germany. Also on display are more than 400 new and antique nutcrackers. The museum is sponsored by the Käthe Wohlfart company, a business that initially capitalized on the popularity of Erzgebirge decorations among U.S. military servicemen and women stationed in Germany.

O Tannenbaum, how true your price is rising

Families in Germany will dig deeper into their pockets for the family Christmas tree this year thanks to rising demand for specialty trees and the loss of many smaller tree farms. In all, about 25 million live Christmas trees will be set up and decorated in German homes in the coming holiday season.

Around 70% of those trees will come from Germany, continuing a longtime trend of Germans buying their trees domestically, and even more often, locally. Most families will decorate them on "Heiligabend," or Christmas Eve, and take them down shortly after Christmas.

The trendiest tree in the forest these days is the Nordman fir (*abies nordmanniana*), called the "Claudia Schiffer of the Christmas trees" by Henning Pein, owner of a forestry school in the northern state of Schleswig-Holstein.

The Norman fir, Pein says, is known for its "great figure," durability, and soft needles.

Yet due to late frosts over the last two years, the sought-after *Tannenbaum* will cost about 30% more than last year, according to the Schutzgemeinschaft Deutscher Wald.

The next most popular are the blue spruce, the silver fir, and the common fir. But regardless of their species, each will be decorated in a custom that originated in Germany.

Since the Middle Ages, German families have brought evergreen clippings into their homes to ward off spirits. Fir, pine, holly, ivy, and juniper have long stood as symbols of strength for their ability to stay green throughout the long, cold winter.

In the 16th century, historians in Bremen documented how an upright evergreen tree was brought inside and decorated with apples, dates, and nuts. Children were then allowed to "plunder" the tree's gifts.

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Another adjective can now be added to "O' Tannenbaum": expensive.