

POST CHRISTMAS SEASON / NACHWEIHNACHTZEIT

New Year's Eve: Silvesterabend (der 31. Dezember)

New Years Eve custom: Silvesterabendsitte

chimney sweep: der Schornsteinfeger, die Schornsteinfeger

Germany's Lucky Chimney Sweeps



Chim chimney Chim chimney Chim chim cher-ee, a sweep is as lucky as lucky can be, Bert the chimney sweep sang as he and his fellow sweeps danced across London roof tops in Mary Poppins. Not much dancing over roof tops happens in Germany, but from medieval times a Schornsteinfeger or a Schlotfeger, literally a stone chimney brush and funnel brush or a smokestack brush, and in fact a Chimney Sweep, has been believed to be a lucky charm.

Just starting the day by seeing one of Germany's 25,000 chimney sweeps in the age old working outfit, a black suit with double breasted gold buttoned jacket, white

kerchief and black top hat, or better still being able to touch one of those buttons, is believed to guarantee good fortune. On New Years Day it is especially symbolic as that should bring good luck for the entire year and of course seeing one on a wedding day is a traditional good luck omen in many countries, not only Germany.

Not surprisingly a typical gift to celebrate the New Year, or Sylvester as it is called in Germany, hopefully to bring 'good luck' throughout the year, is a small black clad chimney sweep made from pipe cleaners, silver foil covered chocolate, colored marzipan. Often clutching a four leaf clover to-

gether with the toxic but pretty 'gluckpilz', the 'lucky' red mushroom with white spots and attached to flowers, chocolates, sparkling wine or a pot filled with 'alive and growing' four leaf clover.

The arrival of winter in Germany brings with it the smell of wood smoke drifting through the air from the welcoming and warming open fires and wood burning heat storing stoves its countrymen are so fond of and which, thanks to the chimney sweeps, will burn safely and uneventfully through the cold weather months, because by law each year every one of those fires, and all types of central heating systems, must be inspected by a Schornsteinfeger to make