

“Bei uns ist immer was los!”

**NIKOLAUSABEND—NICHOLAS EVE  
KRAMPUSNACHT—KRAMPUS NIGHT  
der 5. Dezember**

**Sitten und Bräuche (customs and traditions)**

**Don't forget to leave your boots on the doorstep!**

Each year, something peculiar happens on the eve of December 5: Children across Germany each leave a single boot outside their doorsteps, which is then magically filled overnight with chocolate and sweets.

Many of us at the German Embassy had childhoods that involved placing our tallest winter boots outside of our doorsteps on the eve of December 5. Checking our boots on the morning of the 6th, we would find them filled with edible treats and gifts. Who filled our boots? St. Nicholas, of course!

Nicholas of Myra (known in Germany as "Sankt Nikolaus") was a Greek Christian bishop who lived in the 4th century and was known for making miracles happen and secretly giving gifts to people -

particularly children. He was known for placing coins in shoes that were left out to him, which is how the German custom originated.

In commemoration of St. Nicholas, children leave boots outside their front doors on the eve of December 5. They make sure to polish or clean their boots beforehand, since that's something that good children would do. If they've been good, their boots will be filled with goodies (such as oranges, nuts, candy, apples, coins and other treats) the next morning - St. Nicholas Day.

If they've been bad, their boots may be filled with coal or nothing at all. Sound



familiar? The American Santa Claus was inspired at least partially by St. Nicholas.