

“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!

To our American friends - we hope you had a Happy Thanksgiving! This weekend marks the start of the holiday season on both sides of the Atlantic; in Germany, families will gather in celebration of the first Advent Sunday (Dec. 1). In many German households, families set their table with an Advent wreath, lighting one additional candle each week until Christmas.

But kids have something special to look forward to long before Christmas Eve: December 6 marks St. Nicholas Day - a European celebration in which Saint Nicholas (Sankt Nikolaus) brings gifts to children who have been good. On the night of December 5, children traditionally place their tallest winter boots outside their front door. As German legend holds, St. Nicholas visits childrens' homes and fills their boots with presents and treats - if they've been good, that is. Children who have misbehaved might wake up to find their boots filled with tree branches instead. Sometimes, St. Nicholas (in costume) comes to children in person, calling out their names and handing them gifts from his sack.

The legend of St. Nicholas differs in each European country in which it is celebrated, but in every case, it is based on the goodwill of a man who lived more than a thousand years ago. During the 4th century, a Greek bishop based in modern-day-Turkey, St. Nicholas of Myra, was well-known for his acts of generosity. St. Nicholas, who was very religious, would often give generous gifts to the poor. During the Middle Ages - long after his passing - children would often receive gifts in honor of St. Nicholas - and these gifts were bestowed upon them on December 6 - Nicholas' name day.

The tradition of receiving gifts on Nicholas' name day continues in Germany today, but during the Reformation, the concept of St. Nicholas evolved into what we now know as "Santa Claus". So while American children receive gifts from Santa, German children often receive gifts from both St. Nicholas and Santa (or, in some regions, from the Christkind - "Christ child")

So if you're looking to bring an old German tradition into your household, tell your kids the story of St.

Nicholas and make sure they leave their boots outside on the eve of December 5!

