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A Season of Feasting

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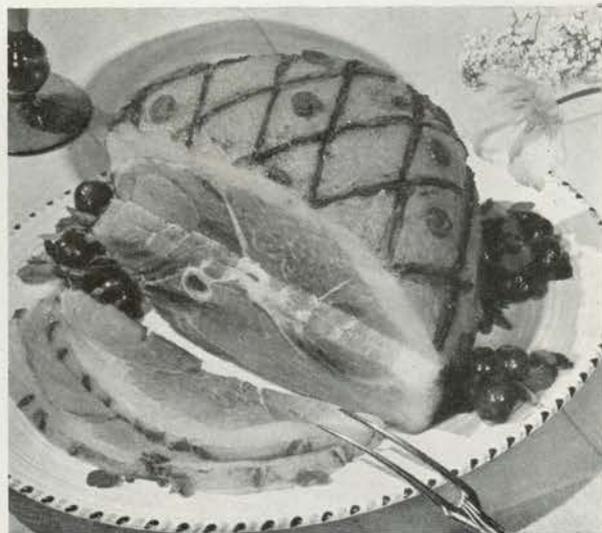
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The holidays in the Philippines are

A Season of Feasting

by Jane Stallings



THE most outstanding characteristic of our Philippine Island Christmas is food. People who are total strangers or whom you haven't seen since last Christmas time—aunts, uncles, cousins, godparents, friends—all come and go, eating some preserved fruit now, a lunch later, but always eating. It's just like one big, long open-house with food for everyone at any time." As we munched "turrón alicantes," a delightful Philippine candy of honey

After church everyone stops in at the little stores on the streets to buy "bibingca," rice cakes that have been cooked all night by the natives. With this strange delicacy, tea, coffee or chocolate is served. "Bibingca" are a holiday specialty—at no other time of year can they be found in the Philippines.

Following mass on Christmas Eve, many homes serve traditional festive buffet suppers. The tables are heavy

dren go with their friends to the homes of relatives, neighbors and strangers, anywhere they may receive "aguinaldo," Filipino for gifts. "Aguinaldo," although they might be especially planned gifts, are usually presents of money.

"Do we have a Santa Claus? Oh, yes! Many modern children of middle class families believe in Santa Claus and hang up their stockings just as you used to do. But the Spanish children celebrate Three Kings' Day instead. They put out their shoes to be filled by the three kings who visited the Christ Child." When asked which custom she observed, Helene laughed and said, "Oh, I believed in both!"

There are two ideas stressed at Christmas time in the Philippine Islands: The religious significance of the holidays, and the importance of family ties. "Everyone must greet the New Year at his home; it is just a tradition. If we are dancing at a club house on New Year's Eve (all the private clubs in Manila have parties during the holidays) and look around just before twelve o'clock, we don't see anybody; everyone has gone home to greet the New Year. In a little while everyone comes back and we dance until four, when we have mass, which corresponds to your midnight mass. The younger Filipinos shoot fireworks and ring bells to welcome in the New Year, much the same as we do in North America."



and cashew nuts, Helene Benites, of Manila, Philippine Islands, described the Christmas season as celebrated in her native land.

Christmas in that American state really starts on the first of December and lasts until January 6, Three Kings' Day. Nearly everyone goes to midnight mass each night. People riding through the country on their way to church see various-shaped colored lanterns in windows representing stars, flowers, boats or some similar design. A few of the more modern homes have Christmas trees, too.

with "whole legs of ham," gallantine chicken (a stuffed, boneless European dish) and meat pastries. Holiday desserts such as preserved fruits, rich custards and fresh fruits are the features of the evening.

Reminiscing, Helene remarked, "We have lots of fruit in the Philippines. There are our native fruits and apples, oranges and pears from California, and fruits such as sweet chestnuts from China. And then there are candies and nuts, especially chestnuts."

Christmas Day is really Children's Day in the Philippines. All the chil-

Have you ever wondered why the grocer keeps cereals on a shelf so high that he has to get the boxes down with a long instrument with a crook on the end?

He keeps them there because they are cheap and bring less profit than many other articles which he keeps in conspicuous places in the store. But now cereals are being attractively wrapped in cellophane, and they are safe from moisture, too. The gay, colored, shiny cellophane is fast shifting cereals from the top shelf to the counter!