

Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin

CHRISTMAS 2025



COMING EVENTS

December 14; 2-4:00 PM – Lucia
January 24—Somewhere in England,
presented by /Sherry Engstrom

LUCIA PAGEANT-SUNDAY DECEMBER 14—2-4:00
FOX POINT LUTHERAN CHURCH
7510 N Santa Monica Blvd, Fox Point, WI



Santa Lucia will be celebrated again in 2025 at the beautiful Fox Point Lutheran Church. Program Director Stina Lemery reports that the practice of the program is going well which indicates another great performance by Lucia and her Attendants (Tärnor), Star boys (Stjärngossar), Gingerbread men (Pepparkaksgubbar) and little Santas (Tomtenissar).



Lucia – and other Swedish Christmas traditions

The Swedish Christmas lead-up is sprinkled with events and customs. 13 December is a significant date – this is when Swedes celebrate [Saint Lucia Day](#) to mark the winter solstice. Held in schools, workplaces, churches and community halls, the celebration involves a procession of girls and boys – or indeed men and women – wearing white gowns and carrying candles, singing songs to celebrate Saint Lucia, the bearer of light. Piled high on trays are gingerbread cookies and saffron buns

(‘[lussekatter](#)’), the baking of which is a family tradition held dear. They’re typically shaped like an ‘S’ –resembling a curled-up cat, with a raisin pushed into the middle of each ‘swirl’.

Another baking-related tradition promoting togetherness comes in the shape of the gingerbread house (‘pepparkakshus’). Families gather to craft these mini buildings, decorating them lavishly with icing sugar and colourful sweets. The making of festive sweets – such as the toffee-like ‘knäck’ and ‘ischoklad’ chocolates – is another popular way to spend an afternoon with loved ones.



Swedes also love getting together in the outdoors, not least when the ground is covered in snow and glistening ice. Favourite activities include exhilarating downhill sledding, long excursions on ice-skates across frozen lakes or peaceful skiing adventures, replete with Christmas-themed fika breaks.

Christmas Eve – the highlight of the season

Though the entire Christmas season centres on socialising over a treat or two, Christmas Eve is the main event. When hunger sets in, it's time to gather around the buffet-style ‘julbord’ – a Christmas smorgasbord that offers the full medley of [Swedish Christmas food](#), with everything from Christmas ham (‘julskinka’) and Swedish meatballs to pickled herring (‘sill’) and chopped beetroot salad (‘rödbetssallad’). Increasingly, vegetarian and vegan options are on the menu too.

Dessert-wise, expect the delicious classic ‘Ris à la Malta’, a vanilla rice pudding typically served with orange slices. And as for drinks, ‘julöl’ – a dark, seasonal beer – and the soft drink ‘jultmust’ (a bit like root beer) are key, along with traditional snaps.

Around the julbord, “skål” is uttered to mark a toast. And as for other Christmas greetings in Sweden, the most important ones are “God Jul” (Merry Christmas) and “God fortsättning”, meaning “enjoy the rest of the holidays”.

And where does Santa fit in? In Sweden, Santa (‘jultomten’) joins the party, generously handing out presents in person. The in-joke between grown-ups is for someone to announce that they’re “popping out” to get the newspaper, only to return dressed up as Santa. Unsuspecting children have no idea it’s their dad, mum or neighbour hiding behind the bushy beard.



When the clock strikes 3:00 pm it's time for a dyed-in-the-wool Swedish tradition – namely to gather in front of the TV to watch the annual ‘Donald Duck and his friends wish you a Merry Christmas’ show (‘Kalle Anka och hans vänner önskar God Jul’). This medley of Disney classics – including Cinderella, Snow White and Mickey Mouse – features original clips as well as more recent additions. A Swedish Christmas Eve wouldn’t be complete without it.