



**Introduction**

Christmas, the traditional Christian holiday commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ, is celebrated over two days in the Netherlands, i.e. *Eerste Kerstdag* (First Christmas Day) on December 25 and *Tweede Kerstdag* (Second Christmas Day) on December 26, both of which are public holidays.

While it may seem similar to what you know, Christmas is not about Santa Claus and reindeer in the Netherlands. In fact, the Dutch celebrate *Sinterklaas* (St. Nicholas Day, the tradition that may have seeded the idea for Santa Claus in the first place) on December 5, and it is this day that Dutch children get really excited about. They also receive most of their presents on [*Sinterklaas*.](http://dutchfood.about.com/od/dutchholidayrecipes/a/Sinterklaas.htm)

There are several Christmas dinner traditions in the Netherlands. We choose two kinds of dinner, a more traditional one and the other especially for the younger generations.

***Traditional menu: (4/5 persons)***

***1.1 Vegetable Soup***

***1.2 Hare stew (hare pepper) with mashed potatoes and Brussels sprouts and sweet chestnuts***

***1.3 As a side dish stewed pears***

***1.4 Crepes with warm cherries and ice cream and whipped cream***

**1.1 Vegetable Soup**

***Ingredients:***

2 onions

3 thin leek stalks

2 large carrots

3 stalks celery

Grove chervil

1 liter of broth (beef or vegetables, may both)

parsley

2 cloves of garlic

1 tablespoon butter

1 potato

Salt and pepper to taste

***How to prepare:***

1.Peel and chop the onions

2. The roots cleaned and cut into small cubes

3. The potato peel and cut into cubes

4. Put a pan on the fire with some butter and fry the onions until soft

5. Add the carrot and potato cubes with the crushed garlic cloves, this still leaves a few minutes gently fry

6. Meanwhile, the leeks cleaned and cut into rings

7. Celery, finely chop

8. Celery and leeks also fry gently

9. Now add the broth and bring to a boil

10. Let the soup simmer for 20 minutes

11. Just taste and add salt and pepper to taste (you can also crumble an extra stock cube above the soup)

12. Add chervil and parsley just before serving

**1.2 Hare stew**

***Ingredients:***

1 hare, about 1kg, portioned

1 brown onion, sliced

1 medium carrot, sliced

3 garlic cloves, crushed

1 bay leaf

2 cloves

3 sprigs of thyme

30 ml brandy

600 ml red wine from Arbois or other medium-bodied red wine

2 tbsp vegetable oil

1 tbsp butter

salt and freshly ground black pepper

1½ tbsp plain flour

3 tbsp chopped parsley

***How to prepare:***

Place the hare pieces in a bowl with the onion, carrot, crushed garlic, bay leaf, cloves, thyme, red wine.

Cover the bowl, refrigerate and leave to marinate overnight.

Preheat the oven to 140°C.

Drain the hare pieces on kitchen paper. Strain the liquid into a bowl, reserving the vegetables and herbs.

Heat the oil and butter on medium heat in an ovenproof casserole dish and brown the hare pieces on all sides.

Season with salt and pepper and stir in the vegetables and herbs, cooking for a few minutes. Dust with flour and stir well.

Add the marinade liquid, stir well and bring to a simmer.

Cover with foil and a lid and bake in the preheated oven for about 2–2 ½ hours.

Transfer the cooked hare pieces to a dish.

Strain the rich sauce over the meat, discarding the vegetables and herbs.

Sprinkle the meat with chopped parsley and serve.

**1.3 Side dish** **Stoofpeertjes “Stewed pears”**

Recipes for ‘stewed pears' can be found in many Dutch cookbooks, There are only two types of stewing pears: Gieser Wildeman and St. Remy. Wilder Gieseman is preferred).

***Ingredients:***

2 kgs. stewing pears Gieser Wildeman (or St. Remy pears)

grated lemon

200 grams sugar

A cinnamon stick

150 cc of Red wine

Enough water to cover the pears.

***How to prepare:***

Peel the pears. Cut them in halves. Remove the core.

Bring the water to a boil.

Add the wine, the lemon, the sugar, the cinnamon and the pears.

Bring again to a boil.

Leave it that way for at least one hour.

When the pears are soft and red they are ready.

You can serve them warm or cold.

**1.4 Dutch pancakes (Flensjes or Crêpes) with warm cherries and ice cream and whipped cream**

***Ingredients:***

200 gr of [flour](http://www.holland-at-home.nl/koopmans-pancake-mix-goblin-500-gr.html)

6 dl of milk

2 eggs

Butter

A pinch of salt

(A jar of) cherries (without core)

Vanilla ice-cream

Whipped cream



***How to prepare:***

Sift the [flour](http://www.holland-at-home.nl/koopmans-pancake-mix-goblin-500-gr.html) into a mixing bowl and add a pinch of salt. Pour in a quarter of the milk and beat the mixture until a creamy batter forms. Add the remaining milk and eggs and whisk again thoroughly. Next, heat a knob of butter in a frying pan and coat the bottom of the pan with a thin layer of batter. Quickly fry the crêpe over a high heat until both sides are golden brown. Serve immediately with warm cherries and ice cream and whipped cream

Can also be served with Dutch pancake syrup, maple syrup or sugar and lemon!

**2. Modern Time menu**

Gourmet

Baguette,

Mixed salads

Ready-made sauces (from the supermarket.)

One of the most popular party and holiday dinner traditions in Holland is Gourmetten. This word is derived from the French word “gourmet” – a person who cultivates a discriminating palate for the enjoyment of good food. Gourmetten is the Dutch twist to the Swiss Raclette Table Top Grill dining experience, whereby family and friends get to be their own chef. The original raclette set is about melted cheese, whereby with Gourmetten, the cheese is optional. When I was growing up, this was something special to look forward to; hours of interactive fun with the “do-it-yourself-cooking-around-the-table” Gourmet party set. The other benefit is that the person who does most of the cooking in the house, gets a break. On top of that, it is a budget-friendly way to enjoy a meal with friends and family.

This Gourmet set, or Raclette Grill as they call it outside of the Netherlands, has a non-stick surface grill and a broiler below with little pans. There is another version that has a stone, like a Korean Barbecue. The top plate is used for your favorite seafood, poultry, meat, and vegetables, while your cheese, onions, garlic, mushrooms, and sauces broil to perfection below. Dip your bread in the melted Raclette cheese or the many sauces and condiments. A whole assortment of herbs and spices are also on the table to make other combinations.

With a gourmet party, you can satisfy both carnivores and vegetarians. In Holland, you can just go to the butcher or supermarket where you can find ready-made gourmet trays: chicken filet, steak, hamburgers, pork filet, sausages, and meat balls, all prepared in bite-sized pieces.

***How to prepare:***

When preparing a Raclette Grill Party. have following ingredients available on your table:

- chopped onions

- cloves of garlic

- sliced mushrooms

- strips of bell pepper

- diced potatoes

- eggs

- butter

- olive oil

- cornichons (baby sour gherkins)

- cherry tomatoes

Sauces:

- curry sauce

- mayonnaise

- ketchup

- garlic sauce

- cocktail sauce

- béarnaise sauce

Side dishes:

- cucumber salad

- coleslaw

- tomato salad

- potato salad

Here some examples of other themes:

**Indo gourmet**:

Tofu in cubes, eggs for omelets, fish balls, fried rice, sausage, corned beef, fried rice, cooked egg noodles, strips of beef, chicken and pork. Sambal oelek, ketjap manis, peanut sauce, bean sprouts, green beans, shredded coleslaw, and spinach.

**Mexican gourmet**:

nachos, avocados, taco seasoning mix, ground beef, strips of beef, chicken or pork filet, salsa, bell pepper, jalapeños, black olives, shredded cheese. refried beans, rice, etc.

**Fish gourmet:**

- cod strips, spiced with curry powder, slivered almonds,sautéed spring onions

- salmon strips with dill, mustard, white wine, and a bit of cream

- jumbo shrimps, peeled, and sautéed with finely chopped garlic, bell pepper, and a teaspoon of tomato sauce. Top with sprinkled parsley

- breaded haddock with cold lemon or garlic sauce

- cooked mussels, spiced with garlic, salt and parsley, sautéed with finely chopped onions and topped with cream.

Zeist, NL

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