

# Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

## How Chocolate Shapes Canadian Holidays and Traditions

Our Friends · Saturday, February 8th, 2025

Chocolate isn't just a dessert in Canada – it's part of how people celebrate. From Christmas stockings to Easter egg hunts, it's woven into traditions that bring families together.

For generations, chocolate has been central to holiday moments, making its way into gift exchanges, festive desserts, and cultural celebrations. Chocolate is a big part of Canadian traditions, whether it's enjoying Nanaimo bars at Christmas, sharing treats for New Year's, or hunting for foil-wrapped bunnies at Easter.

### Canada's History With Chocolate – How It All Started

Chocolate came to Canada when European settlers brought cocoa as a special treat. Over time, it became a common part of holiday events across the country.

During the World Wars, Canadian forces had chocolate in their food supplies, which made it an important part of their culture. After the wars, brands like Purdys Chocolatier and Laura Secord made chocolate easier to find and included it in Canadian customs.

Indigenous communities usually didn't use cacao but liked the sweet taste of maple and berries. These flavors were then blended into Canadian chocolate snacks. Today, chocolate is more than just a special treat; it's something that many people enjoy regularly and has been loved for a long time.

### Chocolate in Canada's Biggest Holidays – A Festive Staple

#### Christmas and the Joy of Gifting Chocolate

Christmas isn't complete for many Canadians without chocolate advent calendars, stocking stuffers, and holiday treats. Kids countdown the days with bite-sized chocolates while gift boxes of truffles are exchanged between family and friends.

A popular holiday sweet is the Nanaimo bar, a chocolate treat with layers you can find at almost every Christmas party. Barley candy, Ganong Chicken Bones, and cinnamon candies with a chocolate middle are popular in Atlantic Canada during certain seasons.

#### Easter: A Celebration of Chocolate Bunnies and Eggs

Easter is a super popular chocolate holiday in Canada, all about those cute [Easter bunnies](#) and

colorful eggs. Families set up Easter egg hunts where kids look for chocolate eggs and Easter bunnies hidden in parks, gardens, or at home.

Many Canadian chocolate makers create handmade chocolate bunnies with maple flavor and chocolate eggs made from ethically sourced chocolate, giving a special local twist to the ritual. Kids love collecting treats, and adults enjoy fancy Easter candy, making it a holiday everyone can enjoy.

## **Hanukkah and the Sweet Symbolism of Chocolate Gelt**

In Canada, Jewish groups use chocolate during **Hanukkah** by giving chocolate gelt, which are gold-wrapped coins that represent wealth. Kids get chocolate gelt while playing Dreidel, continuing a practice that has lasted for hundreds of years.

Today, some chocolate makers create high-quality, handmade chocolate coins, giving a gourmet twist to the traditional gelt while keeping its special meaning.

## **Regional Chocolate Specialties – What Makes Canadian Chocolate Unique?**

### **Quebec’s French-Inspired Chocolate Delights**

Quebec’s French heritage means rich, chocolate-filled desserts are a holiday staple. Bûche de Noël (Yule log cake), a rolled sponge cake with chocolate buttercream, is a Christmas favorite. Chocolatiers also craft truffles and pralines, often using local maple syrup for a Canadian touch.

### **The Maritimes’ Nostalgic Chocolate Treats**

In Atlantic Canada, **Ganong Chicken Bones** and Barley Candy are holiday classics. These old-fashioned chocolates have been around for over a hundred years, bringing back memories during Christmas parties.

### **West Coast’s Sustainable Chocolate Scene**

Vancouver has chocolatiers who care about the environment and make chocolate using ethically found ingredients in small amounts. Holiday favorites now include bean-to-bar chocolates that taste like wild berries and ice wine, giving a fancy touch to traditional treats.

## **Chocolate Is Evolving – And Canadians Are Embracing the Change**

### **Fair Trade and Ethically Sourced Chocolate**

More Canadians choose Fair Trade and direct-trade chocolates, ensuring their holiday treats support sustainable farming and fair wages. Cocoa Camino and ChocoSol Traders are leading the way in sustainable chocolate production, creating premium chocolates with a focus on ethical sourcing.

### **The Rise of Dairy-Free and Vegan Chocolate**

More people are choosing plant-based diets, so chocolatiers are making new chocolates using oat, almond, and coconut milk instead of regular milk. This allows more people to enjoy holiday treats.

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## Luxury Chocolate Is Becoming the Go-To Gift

People are choosing homemade, high-quality chocolates as their favorite holiday gifts instead of regular chocolates. Canadians are choosing gourmet truffles, whiskey-infused chocolates, and handcrafted pralines to enhance their holiday celebrations.

## Chocolate Brings Canadians Together – And That’s Not Changing Anytime Soon

Chocolate is a cherished part of Canadian holiday traditions, whether in Christmas stockings, Easter egg hunts, or Hanukkah gifts. As Canadians enjoy sustainable, plant-based, and handmade candies, their celebrations will keep changing.

At its heart, chocolate is not just a sweet snack; it’s something we enjoy together, a sign of happiness, and a way to make memorable moments, especially during the holidays.

*Photo by Lisa Fotios via Pexels*

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