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Hamming it up

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Believe it or not, I am a pretty traditional person. I like traditions; I like to have them, to cherish them, to follow them. I'll even adopt other people's traditions, simply for the sake of tradition. I suppose that's why I can manage here, eating lamb at Christmas. Serving lamb to your average American confuses them most of the year. It would baffle them even more at Christmas when they are expecting a 20-pound stuffed turkey or ham.

Last year was my first year hosting Christmas and I could make whatever I wanted. I decided to follow a Catalan tradition and make cannelloni (Yes, I know, they eat them on the 26th!) because I thought that would be the most original and easiest because I could prepare them ahead of time and would not have to worry about roasting a beast. This year, I decided to go back to my roots and serve a ham (a turkey can be risky). Americans roast their ham for Christmas. My quest for a ham that I can roast here has been anything but agile. Silly me, wanting to roast a ham!

My first step was to check out supermarkets here and across the border in France. Apparently the French don't roast many hams either... Then I did research to see how I could do it myself. When they started talking about soaking in saltpeter for a week, I decided that the ham was not going to be cured by me. I also looked into ordering a ham from Britain, as they are similar. This is possible but ridiculously expensive and the suppliers used the words "at your own risk." This meant that if I got a rotten ham in the mail, too bad! So that was ruled out, too. Tradition was turning out to be a royal pain in the backside.

At Thanksgiving, I tried brining (soaking in a salt water solution) a turkey and that was somewhat successful (turkey is inevitably dry), so I decided I would try it with a fresh ham, a pig's leg. Yesterday I went to the butcher's to order that and he basically told me that they don't even sell that part of the pig but if I perhaps went to a lower-class neighborhood, I might find one. So apparently wanting ham for Christmas makes me low class.

Low class or not, I am determined to have a ham for Christmas, now perhaps not even for the sake of tradition but out of pure bull-headedness. Maybe next year I'll make hamburgers. That's American...

Merry Christmas!

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