

The New Year Tradition of the Three Kings Cake

When I worked in a French school near Nice in France, January was marked by a constant flow of Three Kings Cakes brought in by the children. Pre-break time lessons were ended early to allow time to share the cakes. The playground was filled with children wearing gold crowns and often circles of children could be seen singing 'Jaime la galette'. The children's enthusiasm for this fun tradition never seemed to cease. If you're looking for an ideal way to kick-start your French lessons this January, why not recreate this tradition in your classroom?

	
<p>Galette des Rois Traditional Three Kings Cake</p>	<p>Gateau des Rois Three Kings Cake from Provence</p>

Originally made to celebrate Epiphany (6th January), the tradition of making a Three Kings Cake exists in several countries. In France two types of Three Kings cake can be found. One is a round cake filled with an almond paste. The second is a ring made from yeast based dough a little like brioche, which seems to have originated in the Provence area of France.

Hidden inside each Three Kings cake is a fève. The original fèves were actually beans but over the years people started using porcelain figures, traditionally a character from the Nativity. More recently fèves representing other aspects of Christmas, such as toys, drummer boys, stars and Christmas trees are used. Each cake comes with one or two gold crowns. In Paris top bakeries compete by providing the most original fèves and crowns. There are even people who collect fèves.

At my school the children insisted on the following routine for sharing a Three Kings Cake brought in by a pupil:

- First the youngest child hides under the table
- As the teacher slices the cake the child under the table calls out the name for whom each slice is destined.

- The child who receives the slice in which the fève is hidden becomes 'king'. They then choose their 'queen'. The two children then wear the crowns for the rest of the day.

In the playground they would often make a circle around the kings and sing the traditional song '*J'aime la galette*'.

For some intercultural understanding and language learning opportunities re-create this tradition in your classroom. Here are some ideas:

- Please see Sparkle Speak's PowerPoint with the recipe for a nut-free Three Kings Cake. The PowerPoint includes photos and soundfiles.
- Use the Three Kings Cake PowerPoint to tell children about the Three Kings Cake tradition. Ask them to identify similar traditions we have in our own cultures around Christmas or other times of the year. For example hiding coins in a Christmas pudding.
- Use the recipe and PowerPoint to make a Gateau des Rois with your pupils. Because most schools are nut-free it is the brioche recipe that we have included here. Once the cake is made, share it following the steps noted above.
- Use the PowerPoint to teach children the names of some of the key ingredients. There are some printable pictures which could be used for memory or matching games.
- Design you own Three Kings Cake crowns.
- Teach children the traditional song '*J'aime la galette*'. This is included on the [Take 10 en Francais DVD](#). The lyrics are included below with a brief description of a circle dance sometimes performed by children.

	<p>Lyrics for '<i>J'aime la galette</i>' <i>J'aime la galette</i> Savez-vous comment? Quand elle est bien faite Avec du beurre dedans Tra la la la la la la lara Tra la la la la la la la !</p>
<p>J'aime La Galette Dance: Make a circle with the King in the centre. Children hold hands and turn first clockwise and then anti-clockwise, changing direction at the end of each line of the song. On the 'la la la' part of the song children stop turning and clap or perform other actions. At the end of the song, the king chooses their queen. Please note: actions and versions of this song vary. The ones here are ones from a school near Nice in the South of France.</p>	<p>Lyrics for '<i>J'aime la galette</i>' I love the Three Kings Cake Do you know how? When it's really well made/ cooked With butter inside.</p>

