MAEBASHI CITY HALL
CULTURAL AND INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
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MAEBASHI FOCUS

Coordinator for International Relations (CIR) Newsletter

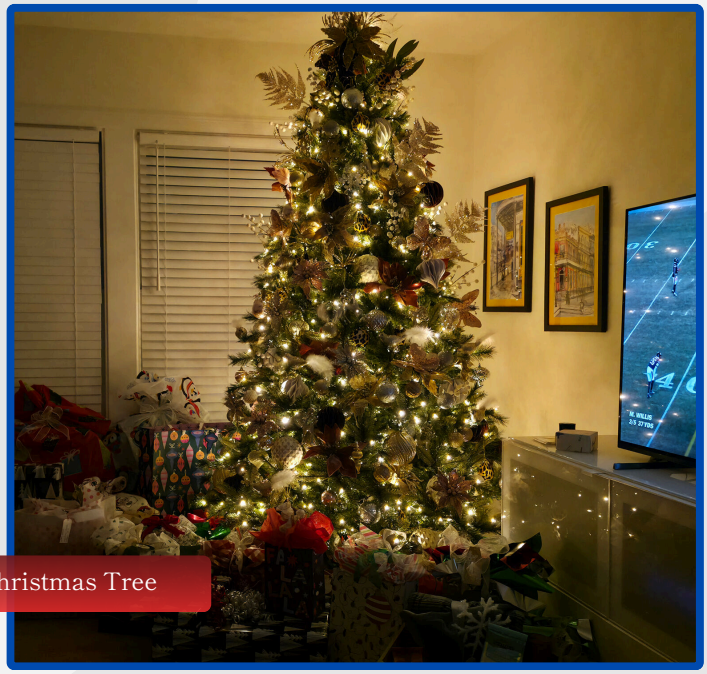
Howdy, everyone! Seeing as the holiday season has come to a close—along with my first year in Maebashi—I'd like to take a short break from my usual newsletters to talk about Texas, and more specifically, how my family celebrates the holidays there. This feels especially fitting after the cooking class I led earlier in December, where I had the opportunity to teach elementary and middle school students how to make some classic Texas dishes while also introducing them to the state itself.

First, I should make it clear just how different Christmas and New Year's are in Texas compared to Japan. In Texas, Christmas is firmly a family-centered holiday rather than a romantic one. For my family, that means relatives traveling from across the state to gather at our house for a feast fit for a king. While this is true for many American families, Christmas is the holiday in my household—so much so that I'll be flying home for a few weeks specifically to celebrate it.

Charcuterie Board

Much like in Japan, the Christmas season in the U.S. seems to begin in late October rather than December. In Texas, that means Christmas decorations appear while temperatures are still hovering around 30°C or higher. It can be surprisingly hot even on Christmas Day, so while we might want to wear heavy coats and scarves, it's far more common to see people celebrating in jeans and a light sweater.

When it comes to food, many people in Japan might imagine a traditional Christmas spread as a large turkey (or KFC chicken, if Big Chicken has convinced you), along with Christmas cake and similar staples.



Christmas Tree

Pumpkin and Apple Pie

In Texas, however, we tend to take a more… indulgent approach. Last year, for example, alongside a charcuterie board roughly the size of two children, my family enjoyed deviled eggs, gumbo, lasagna, chocolate Hershey cake, and pumpkin and apple pies. The year before that, our Christmas meal was Texas barbecue from a local BBQ joint.

While enjoying all this food, we usually spend the evening playing games, catching up with relatives we haven't seen all year, or watching movies together. On Christmas Eve, we end the night with a game of White Elephant. Everyone brings a wrapped gift—some meant as jokes, others genuinely desirable—and no one knows what's inside. Players draw lots to determine the order, then either choose a new gift or "steal" one that someone else has already opened.

On Christmas morning, everyone gathers to open presents while enjoying a leisurely breakfast. Ever since I was a child, this has been the most exciting day of the year for me—a feeling I know I'm far from alone in. After presents, the rest of the day is spent quietly with close family. For me, that usually means cooking with my dad or watching a movie together. While some people head out for activities or events, we prefer to keep things low-key and simply enjoy being together.

That will be it from me for this month. I'm excited to see what the coming year will bring here in Maebashi, and I hope y'all will continue reading about my activities in the year ahead.

I hope everyone had a Merry Christmas, and here's to a Happy New Year!