Chinese food is new tradition

Traditions create memories and bridge generations. One of our family traditions is to enjoy Christmas dinner at a Chinese restaurant.

Chinese restaurants first opened in the United States during the construction of the Transcontinental Railroad. They catered to miners and railroad workers.

At the end of the 19th century, on the Lower East Side of New York City, Jewish and Chinese immigrants lived in close proximity. The Chinese, who did not celebrate Christmas, kept their restaurants open on Christmastime. Jews do not celebrate Christmas, but they do patronize Chinese restaurants.

The tradition has diversified over the years. The Washington Post article notes, "The tradition has been something of a national ritual, and it’s born not only in families, but also some data. Interest in Chinese food spikes considerably each year on Christmas, as evidenced by Google search trends. No other day during the year compares, or even comes close.

My husband and I did not grow up eating Chinese food on Christmas. In fact, it has been our tradition for the last 30 years. People assume the idea came from the popularity of the movie "A Christmas Story." The dog eats the food on Christmas but if you've seen the movie you already know that.

However, I am going to bake a Thai green curry with a rice noodles dish and try to strike a balance with the flavors from the movie.

When we were celebrating our holiday New Year, after a movie is played, we usually end up eating at a Chinese restaurant. We decided to go out to dinner the night before the movie's release. I wanted to see the movie on Christmas Day, as the movie opened in the United States.

In 1999, my mother's parents came to America from Lithuania. We baked Lithuanian Christmas cookies. My favorite was prune jam on top and a tiny scoop of apricot or prune jam went on top, then rolled out nice and thin and two corners were brought together making a bundle. This cookie is popular in the Hill Country.

TASTES OF THE TOWN

Lyndan Saylor

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TASTE