



New York's **FAIRYTALE CHRISTMAS**

New York! The city of dreams! Come December and the snow only fills the city that never sleeps with the warmth of Christmas festivities. The Christmas lights ignite dreams and happiness all around. There is a serene music playing everywhere with the Ho Ho Ho of Santas greeting you at the streets. The beauty of it all just makes you believe in magic.



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The writer is a Culinary Blogger at *Food Without Borders*. Today's world would call her a, 'self-trained chef.' Born and brought up in India, she moved to New York to study Law and that's where her passion for cooking took shape. On her blog, you will find recipes from across the world that are also gluten-free, grain-free and processed-sugar free. She likes to think of herself as a global citizen; fascinated by people of different cultures and the food they eat. She strives every day to learn something new and to recreate healthy globally-inspired recipes.

It's the most wonderful time of the year and by "it" I mean Christmas in the city that never sleeps, New York. Christmas is beautiful across the globe. Towns and cities turn into winter wonderland with gorgeously-adorned Christmas trees and lights. We all know it's a very important celebration for folks of Christian faith. But it would be indelicate to assume that it is only celebrated among Christians. With the world today turning into a global village, Christmas is celebrated with similar enthusiasm in most countries across the world. So how does someone in the fashion and art capital of the world enjoy the festivities? In style for sure! Christmas festivities in the United States begin with Thanksgiving. Holiday season in New York is not just about Christmas, it's also about *Hanukkah*. An auspicious day for Jews, also known as the Festival of Lights and it falls around the same time as Christmas. With a significant Jewish community in New York, it certainly doubles the festivities.

A WALK OF MERRY DIVERSITY

You are probably familiar with the New York City landscape, thanks to Karan Johar. I admit, I am not a huge Johar fan, but his sense of cinematography is commendable. But what he unfortunately misses in his films is the hustle & bustle and of course, the adrenaline rush that the city has to offer, regardless of the time or the occasions. New York City is known for its vibrancy, cultural diversity and its hullabaloo. If you can't hustle around, you can't be in New York. It is so unlike a Johar movie where you prance around the city, singing songs and romancing away. First rule of enjoying the Christmas spirit in New York is to mentally and physically prepare yourself to be around hundreds of people and most importantly, walk for miles. You can



walk through the city for two days and still not experience everything this magnificent city has to offer; from people and food, to art and fashion.

A few things I enjoy doing during the holiday season include shopping. I mean I am living every girl's dream. With all the holiday season sales, saying no and walking away is a sin. But what I like more is walking through the most expensive and the best shopping hub of the world: 5th Avenue in Manhattan. Every year these high fashion stores and elite designers decorate their display windows during Christmas. Walking around, looking through the window displays and decorations is like walking right into an art festival or an open air museum. Not only are you smitten by these artful window displays, you are also astounded by the intricacy and creativity that stands out truly to the delight of the festive season. While walking along 5th Avenue, another thing that I am always mesmerised by is the diversity and all the languages you get to hear. Of course, I don't speak many languages but I sure can differentiate languages from their pitch and tone. Where on earth can you see and hear so much diversity in one place. New York, an island turns into Noah's Ark! Even the most tourist averse New Yorkers will admit it's quite a spectacular sight. There is so much beauty everywhere you go. While walking down residential neighbourhoods, you see the streets lined with pine trees, waiting to be taken to their short-term homes, family and friends in their homes gather to dress them like an Empress; just to make everyone Christmas a little warm and a little more cosy. You will also find kids and dogs dressed up as elves or in little Santa outfits. You can't help but smile.

THE NEW YORKER'S INDULGENCES

There is something to do for everyone of all ages. One of the things that I love watching with my husband and friends is ice skating. New York has some of the prettiest ice skating arenas. The most popular one is at the Rockefeller Centre with a view of the 78-foot, 10 ton Norway Spruce, illuminated in over 45,000 LED lights. It's truly an enchanting sight. The ice skating arena at Bryant Park is attached to the





performances I have enjoyed have been in New York. One of my favourite being the Harlem Gospel Choir. I believe in spirituality more than religion, but boy this choir takes me to a church every year and touched my soul. Radio City Christmas Spectacular is another all-time favourite. In the world of ballet, a must watch is the Nut Cracker by New York City Ballet. It is an ethereal experience to watch them move. As with any celebration, you have parties with themes like Ugly Sweater (wear the ugliest sweater) or Santa Con (dress like Santa), where you plough through the food and drinks until you think you are going to explode or fly...you know how that goes. We all have that someone around us who does that and turns it into a funny Christmas story to share the year after. Parties have ended, sight-seeing and people watching are also finished, now what? Time to go home.



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Christmas bazaar - my favourite. I am not an ice skater and I think breaking bones might put a minor hurdle in the way of enjoying Christmas in New York since walking is pivotal to the enjoyment. I would actually sit there for hours with a cup of coffee, watching kids, families and lovers glide like swans on the bright silvery skating surface. Of course, there were a few glued to the railings, observing the swan-like skaters pass them with a sense of inquisitiveness and awkwardness. I always think that they are there not for themselves but for the team. The winter bazaar was spectacular, little glass stalls with handmade artefacts and ornaments. Something to remind you of a fairytale Christmas.

For people like me, who love music and theatre, this is the city to be in. A few of the most incredible and breathtaking

'ME' TIME

Let's just say, this is the favourite part of my Christmas holiday. When you have walked the entire city, ice skated, pushed and shoved a bunch of people to get out of the crowd and eventually you are dying to get home. You enter your place and the warmth of the lights from the Christmas tree welcomes you. You also see those presents stacked under the Christmas tree and you can't help but wonder what present everyone's got for you. You run into the kitchen, make yourself some hot chocolate, colloquially known as hot cocoa, or an adult beverage like the spiked hot apple cider. Then you get into comfortable clothes, don't forget to put on your festive socks, turn on your TV, where all the best Christmas movies are playing. Christmas Eve is for the Christmas Story and if there is a slight chance (very rare) the top 10 Christmas movies of all times are not playing, I will rent the DVD and watch it or should I just confess I have them all because I don't like a Nightmare Before Christmas. I know what you are thinking; WOW Pooja, every year? Yes, every year because it's Christmas and being a little girl is sometimes just OK! **fnbBUZZ**