



CHRISTMAS CHEER

Making it look like Christmas

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ISTANBUL - Hürriyet Daily News

Christmas is catching on in Istanbul. Taksim is currently tricked out with strands and globes of flashing white lights. A trip to Kanyon or Cevahir mall reveals similar displays rising to the rafters.

Christmas trees, decked in lights and gold ornaments decorate the posh hotels and restaurants along the pedestrian streets of Taksimhane. In the maze of streets around the Spice Bazaar, shops sell artificial Christmas trees, wreaths, lights and even giant Santa dolls. As a New Yorker, I recall the massive and elaborate displays of light and color around Rockefeller Center that greet each Christmas season – capped off by the 20-meter tree erected each November. I was not, however, expecting such a response to the holiday here.

In the United States there are a few necessary articles for any decent Christmas display. The centerpiece is undoubtedly the tree. In America there are whole farms devoted to the cultivation of small pines for Christmas trees. They are sold in parking lots and at department stores by the hundreds. You're far less likely, however, to

encounter live tree sales in Istanbul. For a decent artificial tree and wreath, you can find modest ones at the stalls of Eminonu.

Another necessity for your Istanbul Christmas is a healthy array of colored lights. Due to the difference in voltage between North America and Europe, one should avoid bringing lights or having them sent from America. Hardware stores like Koçtaş sell 10- to 20-meter strands of colored and white Christmas lights. Koçtaş also sells plain plastic ornaments of gold and silver. They are good to hang around an apartment from wall sconces and chandeliers. You can also place such cheap ornaments into decorative bowls for a similar effect.

A more perishable form of décor comes in the form of food and candy. Christmas candies have the notable advantage of, like bayram holiday sweets, coming in colorful wrappers and packaging. A dish of chocolates, covered in gold foil, makes a festive site. At Macrocenter in Kurucemesme and Nişantaşı, one can find a healthy variety of imported European chocolates. Mozart candies, filled with marzipan, are one of the most delicious, although pricey, delicacies to be found anywhere in Europe. They can be found

at Macrocenter and other gourmet Şarkuteriyes, and come in containers shaped like violins.

Of course, every Christmas display needs a personal touch. For my wife and I, there are a few decorations that are especially important to us. We have two stockings, which we brought with us from home. My wife's stocking was actually handmade by her mother and depicts her childhood home in felt. We also have Christmas ornaments that we have begun to collect during our travels. One in particular is a green, red and gold pepper of Venetian glass that we bought last Christmas from the glassmakers of the lagoon. We also have beautifully decorated eggs that we purchased, along with imported candies at last month's IWI Christmas Bazaar.

Beyond importing Christmas decorations, another option is making some of your own. One of the easiest and most surprisingly attractive Christmas trimmings is a simple popcorn garland. It is very easy to make. Pop a kettle of corn, thread a needle and carefully thread the popcorn one piece at a time. If you feel particularly homesick and need some holiday cheer, you can also snip some



Preparing Christmas decorations is among the most popular holiday traditions.
AP photos

paper snowflakes. The method is a bit complicated but involves folding and snipping some A4 paper. You can find decorations from any number of do-it-yourself Web sites.

Enjoying the holidays of your native land will always be markedly

different from the same experience back home. However, with some informed shopping and creativity, you can bring the Christmas spirit into your home. Just make sure that when you are decorating, you put on a play list of classic Christmas songs to really get into the spirit.

It's the outside that matters

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Choosing holiday gifts can turn into one of the most stressful tasks of the whole year. And as much as the gift itself is relevant, the wrapping can also contribute to the overall image of the present. Box-it prepared a series of unique holiday boxes that can help make the special gift even more exceptional.

Apart from the stands located

in Akmerkez shopping mall, this year Box-it has additional stands located in Capitol, which will be open during a holiday event that has been organized for five years called the Happy Bazaar on the Anatolian side of Istanbul. Assistants at the stands help customers make the right choices as well as pack the present if needed. The products are available in various sizes. For details and designs go to www.boxit.com.tr.

Spreading ideas from ear to ear

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Nine young artists who want to disturb the silence have gathered together under the name of Kulaktan Kulaga Grubu (From Ear to Ear Group) to make their artistic ideas come true. They are going to present their newest project in an exhibition titled "Action - Reaction" in KargART on the Anatolian side of Istanbul, starting Dec. 18.

The group examines people's emotional and rational reactions to wanted and unwanted influences

from the surrounding world. "Action - Reaction" combines different forms of artistic expression ranging from sculpture through video to paintings giving space for simple but mature examination of human behaviors. The group invites those who don't hear their screams and whistles to explore the concept in the exhibition.

The exhibit opens Dec. 18 at 8 p.m. at KargART in Kadiköy and can be viewed daily from 1 p.m. to 8 p.m. Closed Mondays.

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