

European Languages Faculty and Students Celebrate Cultural Traditions: German St. Nicholas Day and Spain's Grape-Eating New Year Blessings

Campus focus

The Department of European Languages and Cultures held the “2025 Christmas and ‘Grape-Eating’ New Year Celebration” at 6:30 p.m. on December 23 in the lobby of the Foreign Languages Building. The event blended German Christmas traditions, the Spanish New Year custom of eating grapes, and learning outcomes from the Spanish Division’s self-directed microcredit course, Three Aromas Coffee (「三香咖啡」). Dean of the College of Foreign Languages and Literatures Yi-Ti Lin, Department Chair Ching-Kuo Chang, Professors Wan-Bau Wu and Boileau Gilles, Associate Professor Ai-Ling Liou, and a total of 17 faculty members joined students in the celebration. More than 110 participants attended, all dressed in festive red, green, and white with Christmas-themed accessories, creating a lively and joyful atmosphere.

In German culture, Christmas symbolizes hope and light, with Christmas markets and decorated trees renowned worldwide. The grape-eating tradition originates in Spain and represents happiness and good fortune in the coming year. In their remarks, Yi-Ti Lin and Ching-Kuo Chang noted that this event was especially meaningful as it marked the first major year-end celebration held under the new framework of the Department of European Languages following the integration of four departments, and they wished everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

The evening opened with Associate Professor Holger Steidele from the German Division reciting the poem The Wessobrunn Prayer. Students enrolled in the Tourism German course then performed Christmas carols, including Lass uns froh und munter sein (“Let Us Be Happy and Lively”) and Stiefel raus (“Put Your Boots Out”), with the audience clapping along in encouragement. Associate Professor Huei-Ling Yen later invited the Horn Joker French Horn Ensemble to perform the Christmas classic O Tannenbaum (“O Christmas

Tree") and Nuovo Cinema Paradiso, allowing faculty and students to exchange warm wishes in a peaceful holiday atmosphere.

During the intermission, the German Division prepared traditional Christmas treats such as Stollen (German Christmas fruitcake), German sausages, and mulled wine, while the Spanish Section offered seafood paella and "San Xiang Wei Mei" coffee from the Three Aromas Coffee. Faculty and students enjoyed the food together while chatting cheerfully.

In the second half, Spanish Division teaching assistant Wan-Chen Wu introduced the Spanish grape-eating tradition, the rules of Spain's famous "El Gordo" lottery, and the cultural background of the Three Kings Day. Assistant Professor Wen-Chin Li then struck a gong to lead everyone in the grape-eating ritual: in Spain, participants eat 12 grapes within 12 seconds as the clock strikes midnight on New Year's Eve, symbolizing happiness and good luck in the year ahead.

Next, Associate Professors Rachid Lamarti Pastor and Wen-Chin Li, along with fourth-year student Yu-Hua Lee, dressed as the Spanish "Three Kings," scattering candies symbolizing gold, myrrh, and frankincense among the participants to wish them good fortune. The atmosphere reached its peak during the quiz games and the Spanish "El Gordo" lottery, as fourth-year student Wei-Ting Tseng announced the winning numbers in Spanish, immersing everyone in the excitement of a real Spanish lottery draw.

Many students from the department attended the event with enthusiasm. Chia-Yi Wang, a second-year Spanish major, said it was her first time participating in the grape-eating tradition and found the atmosphere warm and lively. She even won a prize during the interactive games. Third-year Spanish major Yen-Yu Yeh shared that although she had participated last year without winning the lottery segment, she was thrilled to hear her number called this year. First-year French major Ping-Chen Ham felt the event was wonderful, as it offered insight into German and Spanish Christmas traditions while enjoying food with friends. Second-year German major Tan-Yen Hsu remarked that tasting traditional German dishes helped her better understand German Christmas food culture, adding that the Christmas carols enhanced the warm and festive mood. "Enjoying the food

while taking part in the activities really felt like being at a German Christmas market," she said.



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