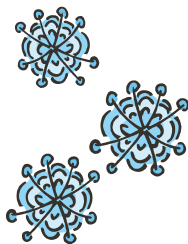


MERRY CHRISTMAS
and
HAPPY NEW YEAR!



Celebrate the happiness that family and friends share,
make every day a special day and show you care!



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Worth
KNOWING
About



...SEASONS GREETINGS!

RAISE A GLASS TO THE MAN IN RED!

CHRISTMAS 2003

The origins of Santa Claus vary with different countries and religious beliefs. One of the most widely accepted versions is the Christian St. Nicholas, a benevolent man born in 260 AD who was kind to children and used his father's fortune to feed the poor.

European communities held an annual winter celebration to celebrate St. Nick's generosity and compassion, and in the Middle Ages, this celebration was linked to Jesus' birthday by Pope Julius. Over the centuries the tradition spread to other parts of the world and the festivities have been filled with religion, ritual and sometimes just plain ol' partying!



Although the notion and characteristics of Santa Claus were already well established, Coca-Cola is generally accredited with widespread promotion of our present day image of the jolly man in red. In an effort to boost soft winter sales of Coca-Cola, they commissioned paintings of a soft drink swilling Santa (actually using a Coca-Cola salesman as a model!) in a 1931 marketing campaign. Prior to this image, Santa was dressed in many different colours and furs. He was sometimes tall and thin, and often portrayed as an elf, though rarely was he depicted as jolly as the Coca-Cola Santa (perhaps that was the effect of the drink!).

In the days when even a black and white television was a rarity, the colour magazine advertisements, billboards, signs and posters across the country were very powerful. The campaign appealed to all age groups and was so well received that the original painter was commissioned to create a new Christmas promotional image each year for more than three decades.

Santa continues to have a revered role in Coca-Cola's Christmas marketing and the campaigns are even considered as American nostalgia... St. Nick should have been handing out drinks! ●

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This Holiday Season is brought to you by...

You can't deny the spirit of Christmas in the air, that happiness and compassion that has strangers smiling and nodding hello. The joyous sense of warmth and appreciation that surges through you when you greet family and friends; don't worry it doesn't last, we weren't made to maintain that kind of euphoria.

However, Christmas is certainly one of the most commercialized holidays we celebrate. Other religious based holidays such as Hanukah and Kwanza have avoided this secularization. The fact that many North Americans equate Christmas with gift buying drives retailers to great promotional lengths; for many companies, their entire year relies upon sales within this four to six week window.

Consumerism and our consumptive society have taken a role model of ongoing goodwill and compassion, and "hyped" it into an event. Christmas comes but once a year and corporations are determined to cash in on it. There is nothing wrong with providing goods and services of value that people want to buy, when they want to buy them—in fact it's a sound principle of business. But Christmas and consumers' strong desire to buy is abused. Santa is the ubiquitous salesman of the month, hawking everything from personal grooming products to cars, to insurance, to computers, to homes, to

advertising, to vacations, to *insert your product here*. Shoppers are dazed by the cacophony of carols, crowds, signage and special offers.



As marketers we understand the need to promote and encourage sales, especially when the market is prone to buy. Many of our clients have some kind of seasonal promotion, but none are disrespectful of the spirit of the season or of their customers. This is not an opinion of any specific company in as much as a reflection on society. Many companies are simply responding to what they believe the market is seeking at this time of year—these promotions have become part of the Christmas landscape just like some garish decorations can be. Is corporate America leading this burgeoning Christmas parade or following the masses, caught up in the excitement of the crowd?

Despite the hype and noise of questionable marketing, there is a discernable chorus of peace and joy. The goodwill message of Christmas and all other religious celebrations still rings clear—you may just have to slow down and listen. •



XMAS BITS & FESTIVE BITES!

The word *Christmas* comes from the words *Cristes maesse*, or "Christ's Mass." The word for Christ in Greek is *Xristos*. By the 1500s, "Xmas" was the popular term and is still commonly used today as a short form.



CHRISTMAS TREE

This German tradition dates back as early as 700 AD. By the 1800s, the practice of decorating a Christmas tree was widespread in Germany and England, even spreading to North America via Pennsylvanian German immigrants.

FRUITCAKE

The Joy of Cooking explains that many people believe these cakes improve with age and when saturated with alcohol—to raise the spirits and keep mold down (we're referring to the cakes, not the people!). Buried in powdered sugar and stored tightly in closed tins, they have been enjoyed even 25 years after being baked (again, the cake, not the people!)

CHRISTMAS STOCKINGS

An old tradition tells of three poor girls who needed money for their dowries. They went to bed leaving their stockings hung by the fire to dry, only to wake up and find that Saint Nicholas had filled them with gold coins!

Thankfully it evolved to filling stockings with small items like fruit, nuts and candy.

The tradition of a lump of coal being left in the stockings of naughty children comes from Italy.

EGGNOG OR EGG FLIP!

Traditionally used to toast one's health, eggnog literally means eggs inside a small cup. *Noggin* is an old English dialect word that was used to describe a kind of wooden cup.

In 17th century England, egg flip was enjoyed only by the upper class—who could of course afford the luxury of milk, eggs & spirits.

Early in the 19th century it became popular in North America; here there were many dairy farms and no shortage of rum!

Another version explains egg nog coming from the words "egg-and-grog." In Colonial America, rum was commonly called "grog," so the shortened or colloquial (or tipsy?) way of asking for more went from egg 'n' grog to eggnog!

SO CHEERS TO ALL & GOOD HEALTH!

