How do you think Puerto Rican families residing in the United States spend the holiday season? They might celebrate Christmas and Thanksgiving, but what they are really waiting for is “El Día de los Reyes” or “Three Kings Day.” Many customs surround this event. There is food to be made, presents to wrap, and music to enjoy. It sounds like Christmas, but it’s surprising how different it really is. To learn more, I spent time and interviewed a Puerto Rican woman, Norma Reverterán, about how her family spends the holidays.

Norma Reverterán was born in San Juan, Puerto Rico. At the age of seven, she moved to the United States with relatives. Her religious background is Catholic. Her education was received on the mainland. She is now married. Her husband is from one of the more rural parts of Puerto Rico. Norma is 33 years old and has two sons. Together the family frequently visits the island. Norma misses the island most in winter because she is not used to being indoors during the holidays.

I began by asking Norma about Thanksgiving. She responded, “Thanksgiving is not a major holiday for us, but we do it because everybody else does.” A similar statement was made about Christmas. “I didn’t even know what Christmas and Santa were until I got here [Lancaster]. We don’t have chimneys in Puerto Rico,” she said.

The most important holiday, according to Norma, is “El Día de los Reyes” (Three Kings Day). El Día de los Reyes is a religious holiday celebrating when the three kings traveled to Bethlehem to give the baby Jesus gifts. There are also traditional woodcarvings made of the three kings called santos (The Three). The celebration takes place on January 6 in Puerto Rico. Some Puerto Rican families living in the United States celebrate Christmas and El Día de los Reyes together on the same date. Norma’s family celebrates Christmas on December 25 and El Día de los Reyes on January 6.

In the United States, there are several parties between the two holidays. In Puerto Rico they start celebrating in mid-December and don’t stop until about a week after January 6. “[In Puerto Rico] People are always awake, and there are always parties to go to. It’s too quiet here,” says Norma. “There are still a lot of parties here, but over there they’ll have pig roasts from December on.”

Children are not disappointed on El Día de los Reyes; the celebration includes presents for the children of the household.

However, the receiving of gifts and the story to go with it is different from that of Christmas. The night before El Día de los Reyes, children put a box with grass in it under

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