Christmas Markets Specialties Reference List

December 6–13, 2026

Regional crafts, seasonal foods and drinks, and traditions unique to the Christmas Markets we'll visit in Trentino and South Tyrol.

SUN 6 & TUE 8 DEC | TRENTO

Trentino's two-square Christmas market: Piazza Fiera and Piazza Mostra.

CRAFTS TO SEEK OUT: Wooden ornaments, regional ceramics, handmade candles and textiles. Look for producers identifying their workshops in Trentino, not just generically "Alpine" merchandise.

FOOD & DRINK: Try canederli (bread dumplings), local cheeses or cured meats; look for apple strudel, roasted chestnuts, and vin brûlé. Ask about Trentino wines such as Teroldego or Trentodoc sparkling wine.

CULTURAL DETAIL: Piazza Fiera sits beside the old city walls; the market combines Italian and Alpine influences. December 8 is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception, a major Italian public holiday, so crowds may be larger.

MON 7 DEC | RIVA DEL GARDA

The Garda Trentino "Gusto in Gusto" / "From Taste to Taste" market celebrates local foods and producers in Piazza Garibaldi and Piazza Cesare Battisti.

CRAFTS TO SEEK OUT: Look for Garda Trentino olive oil, artisan preserves, honey and other products from local makers. This is primarily a food-focused market rather than crafts market.

FOOD & DRINK: Garda Trentino extra-virgin olive oil, lake-region wines (including Nosiola), regional cheeses, honey and local holiday baking are especially relevant.

CULTURAL DETAIL: The northern end of Lake Garda has a distinctly Mediterranean-meets-Alpine food culture.

WED 9 DEC | BOLZANO (BOZEN)

The broadest overview of South Tyrolean crafts; Piazza Walther and the artisan area by the cathedral / Via Isarco.

CRAFTS TO SEEK OUT: Boiled-wool and felt slippers, hats and bags; loden accessories; wood utensils and carved decorations; hand-crafted Nativity pieces. Seek out the artisan stalls separate from the main food chalets.

FOOD & DRINK: Speck and cured meats, apple strudel, Zelten (dense fruit-and-nut Christmas cake), Christmas biscuits, apple juice and mulled wine. Local red-wine names to notice: Lagrein and Santa Maddalena.

CULTURAL DETAIL: This bilingual city is a good place to notice Italian and German place-names and traditions together. Look for the public Nativity scene and locally made Alpine materials.

THU 10 DEC | MERANO (MERAN)

Watch local artisans demonstrate traditional South Tyrolean crafts, along the Kurpromenade, beside the Passer River.

CRAFTS TO SEEK OUT: Find the Handicraft Stube (Hut B). Its program features woodcarving, bobbin lace, felting and hand weaving; see what is being demonstrated during your actual visit. Also look for wool, glass, jewelry and ceramics.

FOOD & DRINK: Warm spiced apple drinks, mulled wine, South Tyrolean pastries, apple strudel and locally produced herbal items. Compare traditional fruit cakes and seasonal biscuits.

CULTURAL DETAIL: Merano has a spa-town atmosphere distinct from Bolzano.

FRI 11 DEC | BRIXEN (BRESSANONE)

Cathedral Square: a compact market with a strong regional craft identity.

CRAFTS TO SEEK OUT: Look for woodcarvings and Nativity figures, straw stars (Strohsterne), painted glass ornaments, felt slippers, leather goods, herbal cosmetics and ***Swiss stone pine (Zirbe) objects. Schatzer is one vendor, which sells Swiss stone pine pillows alongside felt and wool products.

FOOD & DRINK: Try Strauben (spiral-shaped fried pastry), baked apples, barley soup, canederli and warm apple juice. Look for herb teas and mountain-farm products.

CULTURAL DETAIL: The market lies immediately in front of the cathedral. Its Advent wreath and church setting are part of the experience; Friday craft stalls are scheduled 10 a.m.–7 p.m.

SAT 12 DEC | VIPITENO (STERZING)

The small-town Alpine "Bell Christmas" market beneath the Tower of the Twelve.

CRAFTS TO SEEK OUT: Look for carved wooden figurines, Christmas cribs, pine-wood articles, felt slippers, hand-knit socks and naturally scented candles. Ask where an item was made.

FOOD & DRINK: Try Spitzbuben (jam-filled Christmas cookies), Zelten, Stollen, apple strudel, speck, herbal teas and mulled wine.

CULTURAL DETAIL: Bells and the historic tower define this market's identity. The town promotes an Advent-window tradition and seasonal music; verify timing locally.

Summary of Regional Distinctions

South Tyrol: wool felt, loden, carved wood, Nativity figures, Alpine folklore, bilingual traditions. • Trentino: regional mountain foods and crafts with stronger Italian influence. • Garda: olives and lakeside food producers.

How to ask about authenticity

"È fatto a mano?" (Is it handmade?) • "È prodotto qui?" (Is it made here?) • "Ist das in Südtirol hergestellt?" (Was it made in South Tyrol?)

*** **Swiss Stone Pine (Zirbe or Cirmolo):** This slow-growing Alpine pine thrives at high elevations and has been used for centuries in traditional Tyrolean furniture, woodcarving, and household objects. Its pale, knotty wood is prized for its distinctive warm, resinous fragrance, which can persist for years.

In the Christmas markets, look for products labeled **Zirbenholz** (German) or **legno di cirmolo** (Italian), and ask whether they were made locally. Pick up an unfinished wooden object and smell it. The distinctive pine fragrance is often immediately noticeable. Finished or heavily varnished objects may have very little aroma.

If you're purchasing something advertised as locally made, ask whether both the wood and the finished product come from South Tyrol.

Swiss stone pine is also used in regional food and drink traditions, particularly *Zirbenschnaps*, an Alpine liqueur made using the tree's cones. It's more closely associated with the wider Tyrolean and Austrian Alpine region than with Italy generally.



Wooden bowls, boxes and household objects

Small turned bowls, lidded containers, cutting boards and carved decorations reveal the wood's natural grain and characteristic knots. These can be particularly attractive gifts.



Zirbenkissen — Swiss stone pine pillows

Small fabric pillows filled with fragrant pine shavings are a traditional Alpine household product. They're often sold for bedrooms and wardrobes. The fragrance is pleasant, although claims that it improves sleep should be treated as traditional beliefs rather than established medical benefits.



Carved Christmas decorations

Look for pinecones, stars, animals and Nativity figures made from unfinished Zirbe. Small pieces are easy to pack and can retain the wood's fragrance.