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Family first at Christmas

[STEPHEN NG](#)

For ex-beauty queen Nancie Foo and family, now born-again Christians, celebrating Christmas has become more meaningful — it's a time for fellowship with the extended family and friends, writes STEPHEN NG.

THE festive season generally conjures a good feeling in most people but for TV producer, actress and former Miss Malaysia, Nancie Foo and her family, yuletide really became more meaningful since she became a born-again Christian three years ago.

Foo, her husband and daughters (Ai-Dee, Ai-Vee and Ai-Lee), regard Christmas as more of an occasion for a reunion for their extended family members.

"My husband and I used to go clubbing on Christmas Eve until the wee hours of the morning," recalls Foo, bemused. "Now, since we became born-again Christians, we see the holidays as an opportunity for us to get our in-laws and other family members together, where we have a great time together celebrating the birth of our Saviour. It is fellowship time for both our extended families and our children with their cousins."

As family members enjoy having a lunch together, savouring Foo's culinary delights in the condominium in Ampang, Kuala Lumpur where the family resides in, the atmosphere will resonate with Christmas carols.

Each daughter has a different favourite Christmas carol. Five-year-old Ai-Lee's favourite is Jingle Bells because she simply loves the sounds of Christmas bells while 11-year-old Ai Vee smiles brighter when Rudolf the Red Nose Reindeer is played. Ai Dee, 13, loves Santa Claus is Coming to Town.

IT'S CHRISTMAS: Nancie and (from left) Ai-Vee, Ai-Dee and Ai Lee want to share the meaning of 'Peace on Earth to all Mankind'

Foo enjoys all carols without exception, including the re-mixed versions. She gets sentimental at times, she says. "The familiar and often lovely, haunting tunes make you feel that way."

"Christmas is also a great occasion to make up for lost time. Sometimes, the whole year through, we are so busy that we neglect members of the extended

family. But each one of them is God's greatest gift to us."

The producer of the popular TV series, Kisah Benar tells the story of her own conversion. "A close friend of mine and former Miss Malaysia, Sister Maggie Loo, graduated from a seminar called Deeper Life. She invited me and a few other friends to her graduation dinner, where we had the chance to see miracle healing taking place.

"Some people were being prayed over. My girlfriend and I were skeptical, and we made fun of almost everything we saw especially with regards to those who were on the receiving end of the praying session.

"But, like all real stories, the things that you least expected to happen, happened to me. For the first time, I decided that I was going to experience God's power. I found meaning in life, and since then, I have viewed Christmas in a different light," she says with a contented smile.

There was a gap of five months before Foo's husband, Wong Kang Yeow, also followed her along to church. "The true meaning of Christmas," adds Wong, "is all about the finest moments in the history of mankind, when Jesus Christ was born in a humble manger in the town of Bethlehem.

"Christmas isn't Christmas until it happens in your heart. Some people call him Teacher, while others call him a prophet but for Nancie and I, we call him our Lord and Saviour."

For the rest of the week until New Year's Day, the family would spend time with their friends and renew old friendships. "We believe in spreading the joy of Christmas in a muhibbah spirit, with our friends from all walks of life and races. This is the time we invite them to visit our home."

"As Malaysian Christians, it is our way of showing the meaning of the Christmas theme, 'Peace on Earth to All Mankind', says Foo.

A keen reader, the latest book she is reading is *The Heavenly Man*, one given by Loo. Her hobbies include golfing with her favourite golf partner, former radio host, Yasmin Yusuff and sister-in-law Chin Yen, and her two girls. "It's a family affair," she says.

"I also like trying out all sorts of new recipes in the kitchen. I love to try every kind of recipe, although I mostly cook Western food," she says. "My family always looks forward to Mom's cooking, especially lamb and rosemary chicken, marinated with rosemary, black sauce and garlic."

Her husband lovingly interrupted, "But we have been eating out practically every night for the whole week. It's time for Mom's cooking again!"

Currently, Foo's weekdays are packed as she is producing two series for RTM2. "We are coming out with a 13-episode half-hour entertainment programme, *Sepetang Bersama...* featuring celebrities spending an afternoon with their fans. This is already into its second season," she says. "Through this series, we hope to inculcate some good values among our young people."

The second programme is a 13-episode reality programme which focuses on health. *Diet Down Cheer Up!* is a competition show that will feature overweight Malaysians learning to battle their weight problem. "It will hopefully come on air in April or May next year," she discloses. "In this programme, we have a gym instructor and slimming consultant who will train the participants to tone up their muscles while they go on a special diet to shed their 'excess baggage'."

Already in the pipeline are two Chinese New Year programmes, which are both one-hour long. The first one will be aired over RTM2 on the eve of Chinese New Year, featuring two celebrity hosts, namely top model Amber Chia and actress Angeline Phua.

On the first day of Chinese New Year, we would see the second programme which is a Chinese New Year Game show featuring Malaysian guest stars, Ah Niu, HVD actor Chee Keong, Chia and up-and-coming actress and model Chelsea Ng.

"Some time in the future, I hope to produce a local segment for the Yuletide season as well, especially since Christmas is celebrated quite differently here as opposed to in the West, with its snowman and Santa's sleigh. We want to showcase Asian values in the way we celebrate the birth of Christ in this part of the world."

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