



Jewish-themed events offer celebrations on Dec. 25

By [Peter Crimmins](#)
December 23, 2017

Monday is a national holiday, marking Christmas Day. But not everybody celebrates it.

For years, Jewish organizations in Philadelphia have held alternative events to attract Jews looking for something to do on their days off.

And those events attract more than Jews.

For nine years now, the Gershman Y in Philadelphia has hosted a night of Jewish comedy on Christmas Eve. It takes place at a Chinese restaurant — Ocean Harbor on Race Street in Chinatown — with a full buffet and a lineup of nationally known Jewish comics.



Revelers enjoy dinner and comedy at the Moo Shu Jew Show in 2016. (Mario Manzoni for the Gershman Y)

They call it (what else?) Moo Shu Jew. Every year it attracts some non-Jewish people looking for something to do when everything else is closed.

“We had a table full of Indians last year. And word is getting out,” said co-producer Ken Misrock. “We certainly don’t discriminate — everyone is welcome. It tends to be a lot of Jews, but we have a number of others, too.”

For three decades, the National Museum of American Jewish History in Philadelphia’s Old City has hosted a Christmas Day event with family activities and live bands.

It used to be called Being Jewish at Christmas, but several years ago they changed the name to Being _____ at Christmas, to be more inclusive.

Emily August, who runs the event, said it attracts about 1,000 people, many of them from households that are both Jewish and Christian.

“So families who have blended traditions who want their children to experience both sides of that,” said August. “I had one person who would open Christmas presents in the morning with his family and then come here in the afternoon.”

Many of the scheduled Dec. 25 activities are designed to appeal to people of any faith background, including a workshop to make hamsa, a symbol of a hand that occurs in Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions.

It will also feature a screening of the Marx Brothers film “Horse Feathers,” an absurdist comedy about college football. A short excerpt of the film is also included in the museum’s permanent exhibition, as the Marx Brothers were raised Jewish.