



## Celebrating Saint Catherine's Day

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An English girl discovering a French tradition. [By Dominique Larzul]

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### Descriptif :

Kirstin, the English assistant becomes Jean Rostand's Catherinette !  
Haute Couture celebrating Catherinette's tradition

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**A Catherinette, at Jean Rostand vocational high school, in Angoulême.**

From **Kirstin Dilley**, English language assistant with a Scottish origin.



"I had never heard of **the Catherinettes tradition**, and so I did not know that just by **being 25, female, and unmarried**, I fit the description of those who are traditionally **celebrated on the 25 November**. Besides, nowadays that is quite a normal situation to be in !

After reading all about it, I was very happy to get involved and be presented with **an extravagant hat** skillfully made by the students.



My job as a language assistant is to bring some British culture to the classroom. That does not, however, mean I do not get the opportunity to **immerse myself in French culture**, and what better way of **understanding a tradition** than this ! What's more, the hat will make **an excellent souvenir** of my time in Jean Rostand."



○ Learning more about "**the Catherinettes**" :

The term **Midinette** first appeared during **the Belle Époque era**, and it referred to the **young women who worked in the luxury fashion houses in Paris**.

The Midinettes were mostly from Montmartre and Belleville, the working-class areas of Paris.

**The Midinettes took St. Catherine as their patron saint**, and she is **still celebrated in Haute Couture Maison's and ateliers on November 25**. **Single women who are 25 years old** are **given a hat decorated with green and yellow by their colleagues** and are **sometimes gifts from their supervisors in the hopes of a prompt marriage**.

**20,000 Midinettes** took to the streets of Paris, **marching from the Champs-Élysées along the Grand Boulevard** in 1917. Forced to work a half day on Saturdays, they were protesting for a 5-day week following the English model. It was promptly granted by the Sewing Trade Union, thus leading to our modern weekend.



- Stephen Jones on the magic of **St. Catherine's Day**  
<https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=825630254895835>
- Haute Couture celebrating **Catherinette's tradition**  
<https://www.dailymotion.com/video/xfyzb7>

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