

Le Bafana- The Italian Christmas Witch

The Feast of the Epiphany is celebrated in January with an Italian national holiday. For Italians, La Festa dell'Epifania in January is as significant a holiday as Christmas Day especially for Italian children!

According to the Italian legend, La Befana, a witch-like woman riding on a broom, refused to join the Wise Men on their journey to see the baby Jesus. When she regrets her decision, she sets out to bring gifts to the Child but never finds him. Instead



she leaves gifts for other children. Italian children leave out their shoes or put up stockings for the Befana to fill on Epiphany Eve.

The legend continues that every Epiphany Eve, the old, tattered and soot-covered Befana flies around the world on a broomstick and comes down chimneys to deliver candy and presents to children who have been good during the year. For those who have fallen a bit short of model behavior, la Befana will leave lumps of coal. Knowing that all kids can't be perfect year-round, some shops in Italy sell carbone or black rock candy that actually looks like pieces of coal... so even those not quite perfect can still enjoy a sweet treat.

