

The spirit of Christmas flows to the world from Iittala Village

Christmas arrives at Iittala Village with the descending snow. Through the windows of the glass factory, you can watch the Finnish forest landscape turn white. The winter gales, however, do not reach the factory, as glass is blown in the glaring heat of the furnaces. The furnaces have, in fact, sometimes been used to roast traditional Finnish Christmas ham.

Further information:

Tuija Aalto-Setälä | Head of PR, Finland HQ
Tel. +358 204 39 5255 | tuija.aalto-setala@fiskars.com

Photo requests:

Kirsi Lauttia, Communicator,
Tel. +358 204 39 6220 | kirsi.lauttia@fiskars.com

Distribution:

www.iittala.com
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Kivi candle holder



The true atmosphere of the Finnish Christmas arises from the calm of the darkening days. The white snow muffles all sounds and calms the mind. People cuddle up in their homes, lighting candles that spread light and warmth. Following old traditions, Christmas is welcomed to Iittala Village with the glass factory's Christmas reception held on 6 December, Finland's Independence Day. This is when the tall, opal glass Christmas lights are lit on the factory's window sills.

The village bustles with activity on the days before Christmas. In the factory, the atmosphere is hectic - very much resembling the workshops of Santa Claus in Korvatunturi. *Kartio* glasses designed by **Kaj Franck** and the jewel-like *Kivi* candle holders by **Heikki Orvola** are made in many colours. Mouth-blown by master glass blowers, the vases of the Alvar Aalto collection receive their iconic shape.



Himmeli mugs

Smaller Christmas gifts can be wrapped beautifully with Iittala's new *Vitriini* and *Piilo* cases. The stylish *Piilo*, by **Giorgio Vigna**, will protect the best-kept secrets of Christmas. The *Vitriini* cases by **Anu Penttinen** will also add a splash of colour to Christmas decorations.

These gifts, manufactured with the craftsmanship arrived at through years and years of experience, will leave Iittala for destinations all over the world, bringing the spirit of Finnish Christmas everywhere they go. Following age-old tradition, the Iittala factory cafeteria hostess serves rice porridge once all the gifts have been made. At the end of the day, the Iittala Glass Museum arranges a ceremony honouring the quiet peace of Christmas, signalling that Christmas has begun in Iittala Village.

Himmeli ornament in Pietari Posti's mug

The traditional straw mobiles hung from ceilings - called *himmelis* - have decorated Finnish homes since times immemorial. *Himmelis* originate in Northern and Middle Europe. The *himmeli* has a lengthy and significant history as the symbol of the Finnish Christmas. For example, they have been regarded as a good luck charm, guaranteeing good crops. When a *himmeli* was hung in a cottage at Christmas-time, its size reflected the size of the crops.

Straw *himmelis* were made in the sauna after bathing, as the moisture and heat made the straws easier to handle. In earlier times, *himmelis* were decorated with things such as egg



Kivi candle holder

shells, pieces of woollen cloth, paper strips, cobs of rye or pieces of a mirror. In Iittala's new Christmas mugs, *himmelis* are accompanied by wintertime birds. Perhaps Finnish illustrator **Pietari Posti** has been inspired by the bullfinches that thrive in Iittala Village?

'With *himmelis*, I wanted to combine traditional Finnish visual Christmas symbols with modern form languages'. 'The *himmeli*, birds and Christmas ball ornaments are something all Finns know, but my intention was to present them in a new and surprising way - a way that encapsulates the look and even the scents of Christmas, no matter what your home country is', Pietari Posti, who is personally based in Barcelona, explains.

'The ornaments of the mugs are nevertheless abstract enough for you to want to use them every day of the year,' he adds.



Vitriini boxes