

# Lifestyle

MONDAY, DECEMBER 25, 2017



People dressed as (from left) Batman, Santa Claus, Iron Man and Superman walk at the presidential palace in Abidjan on December 23, 2017, during a Christmas event organized by the Children of Africa Foundation. The event, organized by Ivory Coast's first lady and president of the Children of Africa Foundation, welcomed 3000 children from Abidjan and Agboville. — AFP

## Mosul celebrates first post-IS Christmas

### Frenchman invents lemony oysters in time for holidays



Jeffrey Dubault, oyster farmer and founder of the company "So'ooH", poses with a box of flavoured oysters in Marenes, southwestern France. — AP photos

A French seafood farmer is proposing lemon-flavored oysters this holiday season, a delicacy he perfected after four years of trial-and-error experiments in his garage. Jeffrey Dubault, 29, also offers oysters flavored with shallots, another perennial accompaniment usually served finely chopped and floating in vinegar. "It was pretty discouraging at first when I had to throw out 90 percent," the lanky oyster farmer says, a baseball cap shielding his blue eyes. "Now I have a 95-percent success rate."



A box of "So'ooH" flavoured oysters in Marenes, southwestern France.

The process, which Dubault has patented, involves plunging the oysters into a tank of sea water laced with lemon extract for between two and 12 hours. The oysters naturally pump the water through sieve-like gills, becoming impregnated with the flavor. The technique may seem simple but "there are 16 steps to the process, and if any one of them isn't done correctly the result is failure," says

Dubault, who farms some 40 tons of the bivalves each year off Marenes, France's oyster capital on the west coast.

#### 'Chocolate? No way!'

Dubault, who says he got the idea from customers at his market stall constantly asking him to throw in a lemon along with their purchase, began marketing the pre-flavored oysters in October and has found buyers from Belgium to Hong Kong. He won recognition for his invention at a seafood trade fair in Brussels last April when he said Chinese visitors congratulated him, saying they had been attempting a similar feat for seven years. The nod in Brussels encouraged Dubault to set up his company, called So'ooH, to market the novelty. Targeting Asian clients, he has created a ginger version, while oysters flavored with muscatel, the sweet fortified wine, are aimed at the Italian palate. Next year he plans to add grapefruit and mirabelle plum to his flavor menu, Dubault says, while truffle and pepper versions will follow for the next end-of-year holidays. "People have asked me to add chocolate, but I say no way!" he exclaims. Of all his customers, the French are the hardest to win over, he says, calling them "purists". But he is hopeful, having recently signed on with a major supermarket chain. "People eat flavored yoghurts and drink flavored water, so why not oysters?" he asks. Then there are his raspberry-flavored oysters, aimed at young people. It is a future-looking strategy, since the average age of oyster lovers "is fairly advanced", he says. — AFP

Hymns filled a church in Iraq's second city Mosul yesterday as worshippers celebrated Christmas for the first time in four years after the end of jihadist rule. Tens of thousands of Christians fled northern Iraqi towns in 2014 as the Islamic State group seized Mosul and swathes of the surrounding Nineveh province. But Iraqi forces expelled the jihadists from the city this year after months of battle, allowing Christians to return to pray at Saint Paul's church.

Yesterday morning, the patriarch of Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Church, Patriarch Louis

Raphael Sako, called on dozens to pray for "peace and stability in Mosul, Iraq and the world". Muslims, as well as local and military officials, stood with Christian worshippers amid the candles and Christmas trees. On the church's walls, white sheets covered up window frames blasted empty in the war. Armored vehicles sat outside the church, where the portrait of a Christian killed under IS rule was displayed as a reminder of the city's grim recent history.

Farqad Malko, a Christian woman in the congregation, said celebrating the mass on Christmas

Eve was "important to relaunch Christian life" in the city. She is one of the few to have returned to the area after Iraqi forces defeated IS in the city in July. She said she was determined "to work and go to church in Mosul". The jihadists' defeat is a massive turnaround for an organization that once ruled over millions of people in a territory as big as Italy encompassing large parts of Syria and nearly a third of Iraq. This month Prime Minister Haider Al-Abadi declared victory in the three-year campaign backed by a US-led coalition to expel IS from Iraq. — AFP



Syrians dressed in Santa Claus outfits roam the streets of the capital Damascus on the back of a decorated vehicle for Christmas eve celebrations. — AFP photos

