

Celebrating Christmas Made Easy for Everyone!

# *Celebrating* **CHRISTMAS**

Christmas 2007

## *95 Party Ideas to Celebrate the Season*

**Scrumptious Recipes  
Stunning Centerpieces  
Stylish Decor Ideas  
Creative Party Games  
Entertaining Activities**

**Homemade Gifts & Crafts + Gift Wrapping Ideas  
Festive Decorating Ideas + Lip-smacking Desserts  
A Victorian Christmas Wedding + Making Fake Snow**



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# Pumpkin & Dried Flowers Thanksgiving Centerpiece

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Dried Flowers

Pumpkin Carving Tools

... and a Little Creativity!



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## Letter from the Editor

Dear Friend,

It's beginning to look like Christmas in my house. My 2 year old daughter has already found her favorite Christmas movie and watches 'Polar Express' everyday - in parts. She also keeps telling me that she will give Santa a gift for Christmas although I keep trying to explain it to her that it works the other way round. Oh, and she says she wants a sleigh bell for Christmas just like Santa gives the boy in 'Polar Express'. I know it is only a year or so for the more pricey demands to start coming in, but for now, it fills my heart with joy at how easily kids slide into the joys of the season without at all being materialistic.

Our fiction story 'The Never Ending Holiday Greeting' is all about this beautiful aspect of Christmas and strives to bring back the simple pleasures and joys of this wonderful season. Grab a cup of coffee and enjoy the story before you head out for your Christmas errands to see the world around you with a different perspective.

As for me, I cannot wait to bring out and gaze forever at my ornament collection and collectibles like every year. Each ornament tells of a different story and my latest addition to it is a lovely Papier-mâché ball bought from an Eco-Friendly store. I cannot wait to display it on my tree this year. For those sharing this passion of mine, and I know there are many, our article 'The Essential Christmas Ornament Collection' is a must read.

Looking forward to the season ahead, celebrating with friends and family is without doubt, the best way to celebrate. We feature some traditional and some unusual ways to party this Christmas. From a casual Gift Wrapping lunch party to a Movies-themed party to delightful Christmas parties for kids, you will find many creative ideas for party themes, easy decorating ideas, party recipes, gifts and crafts. We hope they inspire you to create your own unique memories for this Christmas. And do send us your reviews. We love to hear from you.

Happy Holidays!

Lata Tokhi



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## *Coffee Walnut Torte* *A Winter Soul Warmer*

*Just the sight of this perfectly dressed dessert on your dinner or brunch table will make your guests feel warmer on cold winter days. Soft coffee flavored walnut sponge cakes made softer with syrup and filled and iced with coffee whipped cream and drizzled with chocolate make this cake the perfect Winter comfort food. Just one slice of the moist, rich cake will make you go 'oooh' and 'aaah' and make you want more.*

*Coffee has forever been the favorite companion for winter evenings. Add festive walnuts to come up with this ideal combination for Winter festivities. And if you are planning a party in the evening such as a Caroling party, you know what to serve to keep away the chills.*

This Coffee Walnut Torte is a classic layer cake recipe with the sponge cakes and the whipping cream icing is flavored with coffee granules.

#### Ingredients for the Cake:

- 1 tablespoon instant coffee granules
- 2 tablespoons hot milk
- 175g self raising flour
- 1 ½ teaspoons baking powder
- 175g caster sugar
- 175g softened butter
- 3 large eggs
- 75g walnut halves



#### Ingredients for the syrup:

- 1 tablespoon instant espresso coffee powder
- 50g demerara sugar
- 55ml boiling water

#### Ingredients for the Coffee Whipped Cream Icing

- 1 cup chilled heavy cream
- 1 tablespoon instant espresso
- 3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar

#### Making the Coffee Walnut Sponge Cake Layers

1. Dissolve instant coffee into 2 tablespoons hot milk. Let stand.
2. Pre-heat the oven to 350 °F/ 180 °C/ Gas Mark 4 and toast the walnuts in the pre-heated oven for 5-7 minutes. Reserve 8-10 halves for the icing and finely chop the rest.
3. Mix together flour and baking powder and sieve them together.
4. Beat butter. Add eggs and beat till soft. Add the milk-coffee

mixture and mix well.

5. Add sugar and beat till mixed well.
6. Add the sieved mixture of dry ingredients and beat till mixed well. If the dough is too stiff, add water or milk.
7. Finally, fold in the chopped walnuts.
8. Grease, flour and line with parchment paper, 2 9" x 1-1/2" round cake pans and distribute the prepared cake batter evenly among them.

9. Bake the cakes for about 30 minutes or till done. Prick all over, pour syrup (recipe follows) and let stand on a rack till cool after which you can remove the base parchment paper. While the cakes are done and cool down completely, prepare the icing.

#### Making the Syrup:

1. Dissolve coffee and sugar into boiling water to make the syrup.
2. Spoon over sponge cake layers.

#### Making the Coffee Whipped Cream Icing:

1. Stir together 3 tablespoons of cold heavy cream and the instant coffee until coffee is dissolved.
2. Mix together the remaining cream and confectioner's sugar and beat until cream forms stiff peaks.
3. Add to this the coffee-cream mixture and beat well.
4. Spread half of the icing over the first cake place the other cake carefully on top and spread the other half on top.
5. Garnish with the reserved toasted walnut halves.

#### Optional

\* Drizzle melted chocolate chips over the top and sides with a spoon or from a plastic bag cone. This, although optional, will give this luscious dessert that tempting look that a Christmas dessert almost always has.

\* Adding a pinch or a spoonful of ground cinnamon to the batter is also a wonderful option for cinnamon lovers.



## Festive Ideas

### Left:

For rustic charm, hang an old fashioned oil lamp on your fence and give passers-by a reason to smile and enjoy the season. Some winter greens and a bow will add make things more Christmassy.

### Below Left:

An eBay find, this pretty altered tin box containing four little Christmas cards on a theme made for a pretty little Christmas gift. It can also be used as a stocking stuffer.

### Below Right:

Use a candy cane shaped wreath frame or make your own by twisting together a bunch of florist's wires for a fun variation of the usual round shaped wreaths.



# Festive Ideas

## Right:

Perk up your window against the cold winters outside by lining up old, vintage colored bottles. You are sure to find old-fashioned liniment bottles and other unusual bottles and stoppers in antique shops and flea markets to create this stunning display.

## Below:

Decorate a living Christmas tree this year. Decorate a tabletop or a medium-sized tree with gerberas or any other hardy flowers. The trick to keep them alive is florist's vials. Use florist wire to attach the vials to the tree branches and fill them with water. Place flowers in them and enjoy their beauty. The flowers will last for a week to ten days.



## Easy Napkin Rings

¼ yard candy stripes material  
6 inches elastic  
2 Santa faces (we used the ones from our old stockings)

Cut the candy stripe material into 3 inch wide strips, each 7 inch long. Sew the short ends together. Fold and sew to form a ring keeping a small opening for the elastic. Put in a 3 inch elastic and tie. On the joint sew on a Christmas motif.



*Stress Free  
Holiday Shopping*

*The House is Shiny and you are sweating; the dinner table is laden and cookie jars are filled but you hardly feel like tasting a thing because you are dead tired; and you also need to drive to malls and get the shopping sorted out. Holidays can become stressful but like with everything else, there is hope! Check out some tips for stress-free shopping times.*

### **Timing is Everything**

Those who plan ahead and are always keeping an eye out for great gifts before the holiday shopping season comes say they are less stressed during the holiday season and have more time to enjoy the holiday festivities. But if you aren't that prepared and end up shopping during the holiday season for gifts, it is best to go during times when it is less crowded. Retailers say that they have the fewest customers during the early morning hours and they are the most crowded during weekends and holidays.

### **Make Lists**

Take a cue from Santa and make a list of all those people that you are planning on buying gifts for, and check them off as you get the gifts. Or if you are getting multiple gifts for some (i.e. your kids or spouse) make tally marks so that you can easily see how many gifts you have bought for each person.

### **Take Stock**

Check your gift wrapping supplies and make sure you have what you need to wrap the gifts. If you don't have everything you need, write out a list and pick up the supplies while looking for gifts. This will save you from having to go back to the store just to pick up some tape or more wrapping paper.

### **Consider Shopping online or by Mail**

Many online companies and mail order companies will wrap the gifts, include a card and ship them directly to the receiver. This is an especially great option if you will be getting gifts for family or friends who are far away. Plus you won't even have to leave the house or fight crowds.

### **Avoid Pressure**

If you are in a rush you often feel pressured to make a purchase that you may later regret. Avoid the stress of having to return an unwanted gift later by stepping back and taking a little bit of time to think about the gift. If you need to ask the salesperson to put it on hold and go do something else for a little bit, then come back and if you

#### **Did you know...**

That Black Friday (the day after Thanksgiving) isn't the busiest shopping day of the year? So what day gets that special title? The Saturday before Christmas; you'll definitely want to avoid shopping on that day if you would like to miss the crowds.

### **Kids Coming Along?**

Don't have time to shop for the kids gifts without them with you? Consider asking a family member or even getting a babysitter to go with you. They can distract and keep the kids entertained until you've selected the presents and have them safely hidden in the grocery bags.

still want the item than it is probably a good choice.

### **100% Guarantee**

Make sure to only buy from stores that have a refund or exchange policy. Keep receipts for all gift purchases in an envelope so that you will know where they are if you need to take an item back. Ask for gift receipts for items and include the receipt with the gift especially if it is clothing that might not fit.

### **Avoid Lines**

Most stores have multiple cash registers in different parts of the store and will allow you to ring up any items from the store at these registers. If the lines up front are incredibly long. Swing by the photo counter, electronics counter, jewelry counter or other department counters to have your items rung up. This will often save you a lot of time and stress.

### **Take Breaks**

And lastly, shopping can become a much better experience if you squeeze in little coffee and snack breaks to keep your energy levels high at all times.

# Top 10 Christmas Movies

**A great Christmas tradition is to watch some favorite Christmas movies. Need some help picking one? Check out the top ten movies from our poll:**

10

## ***The Nightmare Before Christmas***

Coming in at number ten with 773 votes is the *Nightmare Before Christmas*. This slightly darker film made in 1993 was nominated for an Academy Award. The movie is about the inhabitants of Halloween Town who decide to take over Christmas.

9

## ***How the Grinch Stole Christmas***

(1966 animated)

This classic animated version follows Dr.



### **Interesting Fact**

Boris Karloff was the voice of the Grinch, but did not do the singing.

Seuss' original story to the letter. It received 809 votes and is always a favorite because in all the stress of the holidays it reminds us that "Maybe Christmas,

doesn't come from a store. Maybe Christmas...perhaps...means a little bit more!" to quote the great lines from Dr. Seuss.

8

## ***Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer***

Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer came in at number eight with 939 votes. This classic tale tells the story of how Rudolph befriends other misfits of the North Pole like Hermey, an elf who wants to be a dentist. They find the Island of Misfit Toys, but are not allowed to stay. Rudolph returns home to find out that his family and a young doe name Clarice went looking for him and were captured by the Abominable Snow-monster (the Bumble). In the end Rudolph saves the day with the help of his misfit friends and Christmas.

7

## ***A Christmas Carol***

The original 1951 version filmed in Britain is the favorite version with 1,085 votes it earned seventh place. The movie follows Charles Dickens's novel very closely, about an old man named Scrooge who gives up family and friends in the pursuit of money. He is given a chance to change when three ghosts visit him.

6

## ***A Christmas Story***

This movie is narrated by the main character (Ralphie) relating the holiday season

when he was nine years old. It is set in the 1940's and all Ralphie wants for Christmas is an official Red Ryder BB gun. Whenever he tells anyone this is what he wants he is told, "You'll shoot your eye out." If you're in the mood for a comedy this one is a must see.

### **Funny Moment**

"Aunt Clara had for years not only perpetually labored under the delusion that I was 4 years old, but also a girl."



5

## ***The Santa Clause***

This comedy received 1299 votes and came in at number five. When Santa Clause accidentally falls off

### **Quotable Quote**

"Little Elf Judy: Seeing isn't believing. Believing is seeing."

**Beauty Has a New Destination**



**Lakx.com**

# Top 10 Christmas Movies

of his roof, Tim Allen's career minded character gets the job.

## 4 **National Lampoon's Christmas Vacation**

Coming in at number four with 1275 votes is this crazy comedy starring Chevy Chase as the head of the Griswold family. It pokes fun at some Christmas traditions and situations that everyone can relate to.



### Funny Moment

*"Ellen: Clark, Audrey's frozen from the waist down.  
Clark: That's all part of the experience honey."*

## 3 **Home Alone**

Home Alone gained the number three spot with 1506 votes. This holiday movie was released in 1990 and tells the story of Kevin a little boy who wishes he could live all alone. When his family accidentally leaves him at home while they go to Paris, Kevin believes he got his wish. For a while he enjoys his solitude, but there are bigger problems a couple of bandits plan to rob the home and Kevin must defend his possessions. He soon learns that maybe having his family around isn't so bad.

## 2 **It's a Wonderful Life**

This classic film is a must see for many people during the holidays and rightfully earned the number two spot with 1554 votes. The movie is about a man named George Bailey who is having a hard time and thinks that everyone would be better off if he had never been born. An angel named Clarence grants him his wish and he sees what his town would be like if he had never existed. The movie teaches that everyone no matter how insignificant they may think they are touches the lives of those around them.



## **Miracle on 34th Street (1947)**

This incredible classic comes in at spot number one with 1626 votes. The plot is centered around the question;

"Is there really a Santa Clause?" A small girl and a lawyer must help prove to everyone even the viewers that yes, there is a Santa Clause.

### Quotable Quote

*"Fred Gailey: Faith is believing when common sense tells you not to. Don't you see? It's not just Kris that's on trial, it's everything he stands for. It's kindness and joy and love and all the*

**Looking for some other holiday movies? Here is a list of honorable mentions:**

- Elf
- Scrooge
- Prancer
- Scrooged
- Santa Claus Is Comin' To Town
- White Christmas (1954)
- Miracle on 34th Street (1994)
- The Family Man
- Christmas With the Kranks
- Jingle All the Way
- Polar Express
- The Grinch Who Stole Christmas
- The Year without a Santa Claus
- A Charlie Brown Christmas
- The Muppet Christmas Carol
- Frosty The Snowman
- A Smoky Mountain Christmas
- Home Alone 2: Lost In New York
- The Santa Clause 2

*Thank you for participating in our poll. For the next magazine's poll, visit our website <http://www.celebrating-christmas.com>.*



# Christmas

A Very Special  
Birthday Celebrated By  
Christians Worldwide

- By Rebecca Lanham

*Christmas trees, mistletoe, tinsel and Santa Claus are all wonderful signs that the holiday season is upon us. However, they are not actually the true symbols of Christmas. The celebration of Christmas has adopted these secular icons for those who want something generic and neutral to celebrate, but Christians worldwide know that Christmas is truly a very special birthday.*

Christmas is a very holy day for Christians, as it marks the birth of the son of God, Jesus. Celebrated every December 25th (with Orthodox Christians celebrating a bit later on January 7th ), the nativity story has been pieced together from various accounts in both the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, found in the New Testament of the Bible.

Although the birth of Jesus was never specifically stated to have taken place on December 25th in any of the Gospels, Pope Julius I set that date as Christmas in the 4th Century AD. Accounts state that this step was taken to Christianize the celebrations that often took place at this time of the year.

Today, this story is re-enacted by children all over the world, who tell the nativity story to all

members of their congregations. Although the costumes differ, the stage, set and props may be simple or extravagant, and new children take the stage, the story of the birth of Jesus remains the same. Having such a long history of celebration, Christians will certainly continue to celebrate Christmas each and every year, without fail. Some highlights of the accounts follow.

***A woman named Mary gave birth to Jesus.***  
Engaged to a carpenter named Joseph, the two Gospels state that Mary was a virgin when conception occurred.

***The two Gospels tell of two separate angels:***

***1. In the Gospel of Luke***, an angel came to Mary and gave her the news that she would be carrying the son of God.

***2. In the Gospel of Matthew***, an angel came to Joseph. Through their interactions and discussion, Joseph made the decision to wed Mary, instead of sending her away and exposing her as pregnant outside of marriage.

***The two Gospels tell of two groups that follow Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem***, where Joseph had to participate in a census:

***1. In the Gospel of Luke***, shepherds follow an angel to the place of Jesus' birth.

***2. In the Gospel of Matthew***, three wise men follow a bright star to the place of Jesus' birth, bringing with them valuable gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

***After their journey from Nazareth to Bethlehem***, Mary and Joseph found the inn was already completely full. The innkeeper allowed the couple to stay in the stable he used for his animals, which was a rock cave below his home.

***Mary gave birth to the Son of God***, wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger.





# 25 Fun Activities to Keep the Guests and Kids Busy

*Keep the Kids and Your Holiday Guests Busy While You Get Your Own Work done or Take a Break and Enjoy Some Time with them!*

## 1. Enjoy story time.

Adults and children will have fun together listening to a wonderful tale. An adult family member or older child can be the reader. There are so many wonderful Christmas stories available, but here are a few suggestions to get you started:

- The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree: an Appalachian Story, By Gloria Houston, pictures by Barbara Cooney
- Christmas on Exeter Street by Diana Hendry pictures by John Lawrence
- Polar Express by Chris Van Allsburg
- Santa Calls by William Joyce
- The Christmas Miracle of Jonathan Toomey, by Susan Wojciechowski, pictures by P.J. Lynch

## 2. Edible Snowmen

This is an easy way to keep young hands busy. Give the kids large marshmallows, white frosting, graham crackers and small candies. Show them how they can make a snowman by using the graham cracker as a base and the marshmallows as

the snowman's body and head. They can then decorate them with the small candies.

## 3. Movie Time

Get comfortable on the couch, break out one of those Christmas tins filled with popcorn and watch a fun Christmas movie (check out the article about the top ten Christmas movies for suggestions – Page 12).

## 4. Memory Game with a Twist

Gather up Christmas stockings and different types of wrapped candy. You will need two of each type of candy. Put one candy in each stocking and lay the stockings on a table or the floor in a grid. Have guests take turns trying to find matches and when someone gets a match, they get to keep the candies. Yum!

## 5. Cookie Decorating

Provide Christmas Shaped Sugar Cookies, colored frosting and small candies and let everyone decorate their own cookies.



## 6. Tree Decorating

Set up the Christmas tree, put out the ornaments and let everyone decorate it. Want to turn it into a contest. Get a few of those smaller trees with the tiny ornaments. They can be found at most craft stores. Divide guests into groups. Give out small prizes for those who decorate it the fastest, prettiest, etc.

## 7. Go Christmas Caroling

Print off a few copies of the words to favorite carols and go out and spread the Christmas cheer. When everyone gets back provide hot chocolate and cookies.

## 8. Group Up

The host calls out a number, usually between two and fifteen. The number shouldn't be more than half of the number of total participants. When the number is called out everyone must try to collect in a group that contains that number of people. To be considered a group the group members have to be latching arms or have their arms

wrapped around each other so that the leader can see who is in the group. Those who do not get in a correct numbered group are out. As the game continues there are fewer participants.

### 9. Christmas Gift Game

For this game you will need a hat, a pair of gloves, a pair of dice, and a gift wrapped in multiple layers of boxes. To play the game have everyone stand in a circle and place the gift, gloves and hat in the middle. The first person is given the dice to roll. If they get a six, one or twelve, then they run to the middle of the circle put the hat and gloves on and try to unwrap the gift. While they are doing this, the dice continue to go around the circle, and the next person to roll a one, six or twelve comes to the center. The previous person must take off the gloves and hat and give the present to the next person to try and unwrap. The game continues until the gift is all the way unwrapped. The person to get it unwrapped gets the prize.

### 10. Letter to Santa

Provide paper, crayons and pencils and have everyone write a wish list letter to Santa.

### 11. Book Exchange

Ask everyone to bring a wrapped Christmas book. You will need to have the story of the Gingerbread Man. Have everyone sit in a circle holding a wrapped book. The host will read the Gingerbread Man story and each time the word "ran" is read everyone passes a book to the person on the

right. When the story is over everyone can open the book they are holding.

### 12. Word Find

Write longer Christmas related word or phrase a put it where everyone can see it. Pass out paper and pencils and tell everyone to figure out how many words they can make out of the word or phrase in three minutes.

### 13. Classic Games

Play Pin The Nose On Frosty or Rudolph

### 14. Siamese Twin gift-wrap

To play this game you will need two boxes, wrapping paper, and tape. You will need four volunteers. Two people will stand side by side with one hand on the other person's waist, so that one person has their left hand free and the other person has their right hand free. The two "Siamese Twins" must then try to wrap the box.

### 15. Play Jeopardy

Get a posterboard and some Sticky-notes. Place the sticky notes on the board in a grid, and then write Christmas related questions on each of them. The questions can be anything from when a certain Christmas carol was written to how Santa gets into houses. Then place sticky notes on top of the questions with dollar values just like jeopardy. Set up the board and let guests divide into two teams and have fun seeing who can win the most "money."

### 16. Christmas Carol

### Charades

Have someone act out the name of a Christmas song while everyone else tries to guess what it is.

### 17. Anagrams - Unscramble these Christmas Carols

Give everyone a copy of these and a pencil and see who can figure them all out.

1. Lets thin gin  
\_\_\_\_\_

2. Jill lens beg  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. Again wean army  
\_\_\_\_\_

4. Flee this torn  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Oilcloth jolly sands  
\_\_\_\_\_

6. Fatter hymns swoon  
\_\_\_\_\_

### 18. Make a Christmas Tree

Give everyone a piece of paper and have them try to teat it in the shape of a Christmas tree. The catch is that they have to do it behind their backs.

### 19. A Picture of Frosty

Give everyone a piece of paper and a marker. Tell them that they must draw a picture of Frosty the Snowman while holding the paper above their head.

### 20. Toss the Goodies

This one is especially great at

parties with lots of children. Spread a sheet on the floor and put lots of wrapped goodies in the middle of the sheet. Have the children hold on to the edge of the sheet and lightly shake it while they sing a Christmas carol. When they get to the end let them give one big toss. The goodies should fly out and they will have fun trying to find them all.

#### 21. What is that?

Have people divide into groups of two and sit back to back. One person is given some small object, like an ornament, and the other is given paper and a pencil. The person with the object must describe to the person how to draw the object, but they can't tell them what the object is. For example they can say draw a square, but they can't

say draw a soldier.

#### 22. Guess the object.

Cut different picture of Christmas items out of magazines, but cut only a small part of it. Paste the pictures to notecards and when guests arrive give them a piece of paper and a pencil and have them try to guess what the objects are.

#### 23. Who am I?

Put name cards on people's backs with different Christmas characters, such as Santa, Rudolph, Frosty the Snowman and so on. The guests must ask yes or no questions to each other to try and figure out who they are.

#### 24. Noah's Ark

Write the names of animals on notecards. Make two

notecards for each animal. Make sure that you have an even number of people participating. Pass out the cards, and then tell everyone that they must act like the animal on the card and find their "mate." They can't yell out the name of their animal, but can make the noises that the animal would make. When a player finds their mate they must sit down as fast as possible.

#### 25. I Have Never

Give everyone the same number of some small object, like paperclips, pennies or small wrapped candies. People go around the circle saying something that they have never done. All the people who have done that thing must give them one of their objects. At the end of the game the person with the smallest objects wins.

## Candy Cane

- Recipes
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# A Candy Cane Christmas

Christmas can be a trying time for a toddler. There are presents that can't be opened, ornaments that can't be touched and multiple shopping trips, but the holiday season can be a time of wonder and joy for your toddler too if you make a few adjustments to involve them in the festivities.

### **Maintain their Schedules**

One thing that often happens during the holidays is parents add extra rules and restraints to their children because there are more things going on. Adding more rules all at once can make a toddler cranky and hard to deal with. Try to maintain your child's normal schedule and avoid bribing them with extra gifts.

### **Decorating**

When decorating consider your child; if you have lots of delicate ornaments, you may want to keep them in their boxes this year and instead decorate the tree with edible ornaments, stuffed toys, or other items that can't be broken by little hands that want to touch them.

Decorate with large stuffed Christmas toys like Santa, snowmen and elves that your toddler would love to make friends with. Use some of your toddler's favorite toys in the décor so that the child feels more relaxed and comfortable among the decorations.

Let your toddler be involved in the decorating too. Play some of their favorite music and let



them hang some of the ornaments. They will enjoy helping.

### **Gifts**

Your child may be old enough that they want to get gifts for others. Most parents want to encourage this spirit of giving, but a trip to the store is often stressful for a toddler. Get a few small gifts that you know other members of the family would enjoy and then allow your toddler to pick out some items and wrap them.

If friends and family come to visit before Christmas and bring gifts, you may want to consider letting the child open them while the visitors are there. This way the toddler will get to enjoy the spirit of Christmas much longer than just Christmas morning and the guests will get to see them open the gift and enjoy it.

### **Party Foods**

Think about your toddler when preparing party foods too. You can include some festive finger foods just for them that

When decorating consider your child.  
Decorate with stuffed toys your child would  
love to make friends with.

جنتی-ای-کھانا



others would enjoy as well; such as carrot sticks, mini sausages and apple slices. Make smaller portions of main course meals and desserts that your little ones can enjoy as well.

### **Movie Theatre**

Christmas Eve can be especially hard for youngsters. Make it a special time by having an at home movie theatre. Let them pick their favorite Christmas movie, darken the room and have everyone enjoy the movie. You could find a Christmas movie featuring their favorite cartoon character or play some of the popular animated ones.

An added bonus is that it will help them calm down and

make it a little easier to go to bed.

### **A Party for Them**

Christmas is the time for parties and fun. Don't let your toddler miss out on the fun. Invite your child's playschool or preschool friends for a small party. The party does not need to be elaborate. Just keep it simple with lots of fun for the kids.

### **Make the Day Special**

Get your child a special dress to wear for Christmas. It could be a Santa or an Elf costume or any other Christmassy dress.

You may also want to keep one small gift hidden during Christmas morning. Then let your child open it at the end of

the day. It gives them something else to look forward to and if you choose a present such as a book or movie it is something they can enjoy just before bed time.

### **Christmas for Toddlers**

Your toddler is now able to understand a lot of things. Explain to them that Christmas is a very special birthday. Use nativity sets to explain them the story of Christmas in as simple words as possible.

Make or buy stockings for them and make them hang it. Stuff them with gifts they will love and tell them about Santa. Teach them about being good all their life to be able to be in Santa's good books.

*The Perfect Christmas Gift  
for Everyone on Your List*





# 'Tis the Season to Party!

*Christmas lights, merry music, fun and festivities, comfort foods and the joy of having friends around...*

*That's the stuff parties are made of!*





*Treat all the naughty little elves to a Christmas party at the North Pole.*

### Invitations

Get red and white wrapped candy sticks (these are often sold near candy canes and look very similar to candy canes except they do not have the curved end). Cut Heavy white cardstock into 4x3 inch rectangles. Hold a rectangle so that the longer sides are at the top and bottom. Punch a hole in the top middle and bottom middle so that it will fit on the candy stick. Write "Welcome to the North Pole" on the rectangles on one side and write the information for the party on the other side. Slide the paper onto the candy sticks so that it looks like a North Pole sign. Hand-deliver the invitations.

### Decorations

#### Santa's House

Make your home feel like it could be the house of Santa Clause. Most of your decorations that you already have up for Christmas will help set the tone like your Christmas tree and garland. You can give them an even more North Pole feel by making the tree look snow covered. This look can be achieved with fake snow that you can find at most craft stores.

#### Decorating the Yard

You can decorate the yard by putting up a sign that says

North Pole and hang decorations on the trees. If you don't have snow you can create a snowman to put next to the North Pole sign by stuffing two white garbage sacks with leaves or paper. Put one bag on top of the other and add a face with a black permanent marker. You can also attach a hat.

#### Elves Decorating the Tree

It is the little elves who decorate the tree at the north pole. Continue the tradition at your party by putting up a step ladder near a tree and perching atop it some stuffed elf toys. Give each elf toy some ribbon or tinsel or garland to make them look



Elves Decorating the  
North Pole Christmas Tree



like they are working on the tree or gifts.

### Santa and His Sack

Set up a large Santa with his sack to welcome guests at the door. The sack can contain the party favors to be given at the end when the kids leave. Make the sack out of red velvet in the form of a large pouch and use later for wrapping large gifts.

### Craft Ideas

Have gingerbread boys and girls cut out and baked. Provide the kids with icing and small candies and let them decorate cookies and eat them. You could also do Christmas crafts like decorating stockings and gifts.

### Mrs. Claus's Class

To make it extra special someone could dress up like

Mrs. Clause (wear a silver wig, a red dress and a white apron) and invite the guests to bake or craft with her. You can also easily hire someone to be Mrs. Clause.

### Activity Ideas

#### Indoor Snowball Fight

Before the party gather tissue paper and wad it into balls. Fill

buckets with the "snowballs" and place them around the party area. If the kids are younger just let them have a free for all. They will throw them at each other until they are tired. If the kids are older you can provide boxes and blankets for them to create forts and have a more organized snowball fight.

### Meet Santa

The highlight of any trip to the North Pole would be meeting Santa. Santa could also bring along a few of his elves to help pass out gifts (small goodie bags for each guest). Make sure to take a picture of each child telling Santa what they would like for Christmas.

### Food Ideas

Hot chocolate with fun items to mix in, like marshmallows, small candies and candy canes would be great refreshments, but if you have very small children attending the party it might not be the best option. Have some baby food for them. Cookies and milk are Santa's favorite treat so be sure to offer those as well. See Recipes on *Page 94*.



Kids will love crafting and baking with Mrs. Claus!

# *Rock 'N' Roll Christmas Party*



*Celebrate the season with friends by inviting them over for a rocking party that's on a roll! A retro-style music-themed party is just the thing to get in the party mood.*



## Invitations

### Do-it-Yourself Ideas

Pick up some old 45 records at a local thrift store. Turn the album cover into an invitation by covering it with paper and putting the party information on it. On the actual record cover the round inner label with paper and write: Rockin' around the Christmas tree, on it.

### What Goes in

On the invitation ask guests to come dressed in 50's outfits. This is easy for most people; the men can wear white t-shirts and jeans that have been rolled up and the women can wear full skirts and button up blouses with saddle shoes.

## Decorations

Your own Christmas decorations will add much to the décor, but you can also add streamers to the ceiling.

Another fun idea is to hang records and music notes from the ceiling. If you can find a cut out of a jukebox that is also another fun touch. Jukebox centerpieces are also available in party stores.

Put red and white checkered table cloths on the food table and make a centerpiece out of records. You can find most decorations at a party supplies store but they will be cheaper if you can get plastic records at a craft store and make your own.

### The Guitar

We used two toy guitars to liven up our decorations. One was placed at the buffet with a snowman perched upon it. The other was placed into the hands of a large stuffed snowman which welcomed the guests at the entrance.

And if you have a talent among your guests, do gather over as they strum a few notes.

## Games and Activities

Blast some 50's rock music (think Elvis, Bill Haley and the Comets, Chuck Berry, Little Richard, Buddy Holly, and Jerry Lee Lewis) and have a dance competition. If your guests aren't into dancing let them mingle and eat. Have a hoola hoop contest and a best costume contest.

## Food and Drink Ideas

The fifties usually bring to



mind fun diner foods like onion rings, root bear, burgers, shakes, French fries and hot dogs. Fruit cakes were also very popular at the time.

A buffet spread will make things easier for you and make space for dancing. It will also create a relaxed atmosphere and guests will be free to roam about with their soda cans.

You could also set out bowls of retro candy like bazooka gum, bottle caps, and wax bottles.

## Party Favors

The Polaroid comes handy here! Keep photo frames ready beforehand.

Take pictures of everyone in their 50s outfits put them in a frame and give them out as take home gifts.

# *Creative Centerpieces*



*A Glass Tea Kettle is transformed into a glowing centerpiece for a Christmas table.*

**How To:** Take a small glass or a tea-light holder. Place a tealight candle in it and place the glass in the center of the kettle. Fill the sides of the kettle around the glass with the tealight inside, with small glass baubles and table décor marbles.

Fill a Christmas print canvas shoe with holiday greenery, pinecones, wooden Christmas decorations and tie jingle bells on the shoe laces.





*All your friends a little stressed out during the holiday season, but you still want to throw a party? Why not throw a party that will help them get some things crossed off their 'to do' list while they also relax over a delicious brunch or lunch?*

### Invitations

Get some small gift bags (often found at craft stores) and put a tag inside with information for the party. Be sure to let your guests know that they should bring gifts they need to wrap for the kids.

Also ask each guest to bring something that they would use to wrap presents such as tape, ribbon, bows, wrapping paper, tissue paper and boxes. Let your guests know that if they don't have presents to wrap yet, they can still come and help out others.

To make it even easier for guests who have little ones to attend you can insert contact

information for some babysitters in the area as well. Also be sure to host the party during daytime for those parents who need to be home to put their kids to bed early.

### Decorations

The decorations don't need to be over the top for this party. Let's face it; you probably have as many things on your plate as everyone else. But we have some ideas up our sleeve that will help you create a style statement without slaving over the décor too hard. You need two different spaces for this party. One your dining table where you will host the brunch or lunch after or during the gift

wrapping process. The second is plenty of space for wrapping presents. You may want to set up a couple of gift wrapping stations on tables for your guests to use.

### The Table and Centerpiece

'Gift Wrapping' is your theme for the decorations. Start by using long length of gift wrap for your table runner. For a stunning centerpiece, stack up large wrapped gift boxes and tie them up with pretty ribbons. Top with a large bow or a bunch of baubles like we have. You can get hardboard boxes or cardboard boxes from a local bakery to wrap. If using baker's boxes, make sure to keep a book inside

# *Christmas Tree Decorating*

*Tree Decorating Ideas  
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them to give them some weight. Determine the size of the stack according to your table so that it is neither too small nor too big to obstruct discussion.



Choose from the same gift wrap to wrap pretty little favors to keep on the place settings.

### **Games and Activities**

The main activity of this party will be getting those holiday gifts wrapped. Almost everyone is looking for creative ideas and tips to wrap gifts. You could do a proper Gift Wrapping session in two different ways. One is to get a professional gift wrapper (yes they exist!) to come in and do a couple of demonstrations and give tips. Or if you have one among you who is more talented than the others when it comes to wrapping gifts creatively, let them take stage and share with others their tips.

The other alternative is to print out photos and projects of different gift wrapping ideas and keep them on the tables for inspiration. We have an article on Page 61 dedicated to gift wrapping in this issue and you will find more ideas in our past issues and many more on our website and other websites. Just print them out or buy a couple of good books on the topic.

You could also exchange the gifts to be wrapped and have your own gifts by someone else in their own unique style. Play holiday music in the background and let guests talk and get those presents ready to go.

If you want to provide another source of entertainment, hold a 'most creative gift wrapping idea' contest and decide the winner by vote. The prize can be a useful gift wrapping tool such as a bow maker or a gift wrapping supplies basket.

### **Food Ideas**

While wrapping gifts, you could put out munchies that won't make your guests fingers sticky or messy. Perhaps white chocolate covered pretzels, hard candies, veggies and dip.

Later, when the gifts are all done or during a break in between, sit down for a light, yet delicious meal on the lovely table you have set. Do not slave too much in the kitchen and mix store-bought with homemade to create make-ahead dishes. It's important to have a lot of make-ahead stuff or else you will not be able to enjoy wrapping your own gifts with your friends.

### **Party Favors**

The pretty little boxes on your place settings may contain a lot of things that relate to your theme. Give gift wrapping essentials that can be used forever. Items like little bows, gift tags, gift cards, gift toppers, ribbon rolls, confetti, stamps etc. will go well with your theme and will be enjoyed by all guests.



# The Golden Age of Cinema Holiday Party



## Movies At Home

*Invite friends for a 'Movies at Home' Christmas Night party and enjoy a relaxed evening watching all-time favorite movies that bring in holiday cheer..*

### Invitations

Create an invitation that looks like an old time movie ticket (these can also sometimes be found at craft or party stores). We have provided an image of an old movie ticket on the next page for you to print out and use in your invitations. If you would like to center the party on a particular movie or star, use those photos instead.

Give the information for the party on the back and do not forget to mention the dress

code if you plan to have any.

### Decorations

#### The Red Carpet

Roll out the red carpet, literally. You can create a "red carpet" leading up to your door and into the party area by cutting red felt or red party tablecloths to size and taping them to the floor. Your own Christmas decorations will already give your home the glitz and glamour look of a celebrity party.

#### Black and White

Create a B/W decorative accent or dress up a table in this color scheme by using black and white balloons, table cloth and black and white movie reel cutouts.

Add a few more movie themed decorations like movie posters, clap boards, award trophies, movie reels etc. and a few well placed

spotlights and you are ready to go.

### Games and Activities

#### Dress-Up

As the guests arrive at the party have them "dress up" in a few items from the golden years of cinema. For the women offer a boa, funky beads and a fun hat. Offer them men a cane and top hat and have them take a picture with a celebrity (a cut out of anyone famous you choose).

Take instant photos so that they can be displayed at the end of the party and given to your guests to take home.

#### Movie Time

When everyone has arrived start a classic Christmas movie like "A Christmas Carol," or "It's a Wonderful Life." Refer to our article on 'Top 10 Christmas Movies' (Pg. 12) to choose

from. Offer popcorn and soft drinks during the movie.

### Intermission

About half way through the movie, have an intermission. Hand out little autograph books and pens and let everyone chat and sign the books. Hand out some Christmas candy.

You can even make a game out of it. Let everyone know that the first person to get everyone's autographs wins a pair of movie tickets or some other related

### Christmas Movie Quiz

Prepare a Christmas movie quiz and make several copies of it for all the guests. Provide guests with pens and give them one minute or a pre-decided time to complete the quiz.

### Playing the Part

All guests take their turn to enact a few lines of their favorite Christmas movie character. After all the performances, decide by vote the awards. Give away movie style trophy awards for



prize.

### Movie Exchange

Another fun idea is to have a movie exchange. On the invitation ask everyone to bring a movie they no longer watch (the key is that it is not one that they have gone out and bought). Make them wrap the movie. Set all of them in the center of the room. Then let someone open one. The next person in line can either take the movie the first person opened or open a new one. This continues until everyone has a movie.

prizes like Best Acting, Best Costume etc. Award trophies are available in party supply stores or you can make your own by spray-painting little statuettes. For added fun, you could give out Santa statuettes as trophies since this is a Christmas movie theme party.

### Food and Drink Ideas

When the movie is over let guests talk and enjoy seeing the funny pictures they took when they came. You can also offer fun finger foods and cocktails to finish off the night.

## Christmas Movie Quiz

*(Check answers below)*

1. Kris Kringle is the Santa at which New York store in Miracle on 34th Street?
2. Bill Nighy plays an aging rocker in Love Actually who tries to resurrect his career with which seasonal reworking of a classic?
3. In the action-packed Die Hard, what present does Bruce Willis's character carry from the plane?
4. Which song do Meg Ryan and her friends sing on Christmas at her store in 'You've Got Mail'?
5. What message is punched in on Billy's ticket in 'Polar Express'?
6. What gift did Betty Haynes give to Bob Wallace at the end of the movie 'White Christmas'?

\*\*\*\*\*

### Answers

1. Macy's
2. Christmas Is All Around
3. A Teddy Bear
4. The Violin Sings
5. Depend On, Rely On, Count On
6. Statuette of a Knight on a White Horse



*Whether or not you live in a cold area, you can enjoy this party at this time of the year. For those by the coast, celebrate Christmas in your own Island style. And for those in the mountains, it may be cold outside, but that doesn't mean you can't throw a tropical themed holiday party.*

*In fact if you are looking for a cheaper party this would be a great idea, because usually by November, party supply stores are trying to get rid of their luau and tropical themed items and will mark them down drastically.*

### **Invitations**

There are many fun invitations you could create for this theme. You could get each person a lei and attach a tag which has the information for the party. Another option is to use cards that are blank inside but have ocean or island scenery on the front. Let everyone know they should wear their loudest

Hawaiian shirt because there will be a contest.

### **Decorations**

Decorate your tree with a tropical/ocean theme. Hang seashells and mini surf boards for ornaments. Find beach balls, blow them up and set them throughout the party area. Get tiki torches to put along the walk to the front door.

### **Table Decorations**

For table decorations get sand pails and fill them with sand or even small pebbles and put fake tropical flowers in them, along with some little

umbrellas. Put out some beach towels and move any plants you have into the party area to give the room a more tropical feel.

### **Snow Mocktail Centerpiece**

A centerpiece combining the look of snow and beach is a lovely addition to the décor. To make this 'Snow Mocktail' centerpiece (see next page for image), fill different sized and shaped glasses with fake snow and add top with small glass baubles. Add a little parasol to each. For the large glass, fill one third of the glass with snow and then add a thick layer of green marbles (available at decorating or



a point. The first team to ten points wins.

### **Food and Drink Ideas**

Put together a tropical fruit salad with pineapple, coconuts and kiwi. Make a tropical punch and serve it with umbrellas and straws. Have beef and vegetable kabobs. Desserts that include coconut or pineapples are also a good idea. If you live in colder areas, be sure to add some warm items like the traditional hot cocoa. Serve it with bright colored straws and umbrellas to carry on the theme.

craft supply stores). Repeat and top with baubles.

### **Games and Activities**

#### **Loudest Hawaiian Shirt Contest**

Have a loudest Hawaiian shirt contest. Put out small pieces of paper and pencils and let everyone vote on who they think has the loudest Hawaiian shirt. Give a themed prize to the winner. Prize ideas might be a basket of tropical fruits, sunglasses and sunscreen or a beach towel.

#### **Play tropical Pictionary**

Before the party write out tropical items on small pieces of paper; some ideas are: volcano, snorkeling, ocean, sand, beach, surfing, waterfall, sun, and pineapple. At the party one person pulls a piece of paper and then must draw to try and get their team members to guess what is written on the paper. They have two minutes to guess. If they can't guess then the other team gets to guess. The team that guesses it right gets





## Gingerbread Party

*Good old-fashioned fun for kids and adults alike!*

The 'Gingerbread Party' promises a fun party night for families. Kids and adults all can be invited to this party and are sure to spend a lovely time.

### Invitations

Create an invitation that looks

like a gingerbread house. It can easily be done with dark brown cardstock. Pick up a few packages of stickers that look like candies from a craft store and decorate your gingerbread house invitations.

Another option is to make gingerbread men out of your

brown cardstock or even real gingerbread and attach a small envelope with the party information to one of their hands. Then the gingerbread man can deliver the invite.

Or you could attach gingerbread house or man shaped cookies to a regular party invite since you are going to be having a lot of gingerbread baking going on anyways.

Ask everyone that you invite to bring candies that can be used to decorate gingerbread houses. You may want to give assignments so that you don't end up with a ton of the same thing.

Here are a few suggestions on items that are great for

decorating gingerbread houses; pretzel sticks, graham crackers, chocolate bars, gum drops, ice cream cones, small candy canes, marshmallows, peppermint candies, chocolate kisses, baking chips, licorice and candy coated chocolate candies.



**Gingerbread Tree Kits  
make a Gorgeous Centerpiece  
for a Gingerbread Party**



## Decorations

Decorate the walk to the door with large plastic candy canes. Inside hang up lots of glittery lights, hang candy ornaments from anything you can find; the banister, ceiling even light fixtures.

For the tables, fill clear vases or bottles with candies and set them out on tables and other places as decorations. You will want to make sure you have plenty of table space for the activity, so set up extra tables if needed. For a festive look put red and green tablecloths on the tables.

## Gingerbread Tree Centerpiece

A Gingerbread Tree centerpiece makes a fitting table decoration for this party. You can make one

using gingerbread star shaped cookies in decreasing sizes to stack your tree and decorate with icing or simply use a pre-baked 'Gingerbread Tree Kit' to save time and have all the fun.

## Planning Ahead

Your main job as the host is to provide pre-baked un-decorated gingerbread houses in different shapes and sizes for the guests to decorate. You need to do this in advance.

Browse through our next article for ideas for different types of gingerbread houses to make the bases. You can also print them out along with others on our website and other websites and keep them as a reference for all guests to get some ideas to decorate their houses.

## Games and Activities

If you have a lot of guests divide them into smaller groups and give each group already baked gingerbread to make houses. You can also make gingerbread boys and girls for people to decorate. Open up the candies everyone brought, turn on some holiday music and have fun creating the gingerbread houses.

When the groups are done, each table will have a number of houses. Sprinkle caster sugar and other decorations between the houses to make the scene look like little gingerbread villages. Now, allow people to mingle and look at the different creations. You can offer prizes for the best decorated houses. Finally, offer hot cocoa, hot cider and sweet breads or cinnamon rolls.

# Southern Pecan Pie with Whipped Cream



Just one of the many  
delicious, festive recipes at  
<http://www.AllHolidayRecipes.com>

# *Gingerbread Houses*

*To Tempt and Inspire*



**Whimsical**



**Storybook  
Charm**







# Rolled Wafer Log Cabin

A No-Bake  
'Gingerbread House'

*Create a charming log-cabin set amidst a breath-taking winter scene to sit atop your Christmas table made with rolled wafers without the use of an oven.*

## You Will Need:

- A base to create your log cabin upon
- A box of rolled chocolate wafers
- Butter and Sugar for the 'cementing' icing and for sprinkling over as 'snow'
- Crackers for trees and door
- Some kneaded dough (any flour) for the snowman

## How To:

1. Start by making the 'cement' icing. You will need a thick buttercream icing for this purpose that holds your 'logs' together.

### Ingredients:

1/2 cup white shortening  
3-1/2 cups powered sugar  
1 teaspoon vanilla (use clear vanilla to avoid discoloring frosting)  
1/4 teaspoon almond or

coconut extract  
3-4 tablespoons milk or hot water

### Directions:

Beat shortening and flavoring for about one minute, then slowly add half of the sugar, mixing in well. Add half of the milk or water and mix well. Gradually beat in the rest of the sugar and just enough milk or water to reach the desired consistency, whether for piping or spreading.

2. Fit a writing nozzle to a pastry bag and fill the bag with the prepared icing. Now are ready for some fun.

3. Choose a base on which you would like to create your log cabin and get started. We chose a rectangular chopping board. You can also choose a large plate, a tray, cardboard etc.

4. Start forming your log cabin. First build a square base as shown. Pipe out icing in a straight horizontal line at the back and place a rolled wafer over it. Place two pieces of wafers for the front wall leaving space in between for the door. Again, 'glue' them to the base with icing. Use a lot of icing. This will ensure the wafers stay in place and will give a 'snowy' look to your creation.



Now pipe out icing on the two edges of the glued wafers for the vertical wafer to be placed over them. Continue on the other side and keep building the cabin till you reach a good height. This will take 6 lines of wafers on each side approximately.

5. When the square base is done, start with the roof. For the roof, glue together a cluster of wafers in the top center of the walled structure that you have created. For this, glue two wafers side by side in the center. Add another two on top of these

and yet another two to finish. See image.



6. Now break some wafers into two halves in a sawing motion. You might damage some wafers in the process but one box of wafers will provide easily for the cabin plus the wastage.

7. Cement the halved wafers in a slanting position from the last wafer on the walls to the roof height you just created, alternating one log on each side – left and right. The logs will criss-cross at the top giving the cottage a pretty look.

8. You will have some space right above the door. Fill it up with smaller wafer pieces from the breakage. Make a fence using a double row of wafers all around the edge of your base.

9. The icing will dry quickly and set all your wafers together. When you are done, pipe out some icing in between the logs (especially where there are spaces between them for some extra cementing and also to give the cabin a snow-covered look.

10. Refrigerate or if you have space, freeze the cabin while you prepare the trees and snowman.

11. For the trees, you will need any square crackers. Cut out pieces as shown. Pipe

out icing on the strip and place the two triangles on it.



12. Prepare a snowman from any left-over dough or marzipan that you have. Give him two 'clove' eyes, a little 'carrot slice' nose and candied cherry mouth.

13. Prepare a door with a rectangular piece of the same crackers. Pipe out icing in a circle to form the wreath and glue chopped candied fruit in green color over it with a small dot of red for the bow.

14. Cement the trees and door to the base and sprinkle lots of powdered sugar over the base, fence, cabin, snowman, trees etc. to cover them in snow.

# Christmas Decorating with Flowers

*With a little creativity, you can dress up for Christmas with fresh flowers and make your home bloom with holiday cheer. Place these floral arrangements in any corner that needs a perk-up.*

## Standing Tall

Our twin Christmassy tins, a bargain find from Wal-Mart, make this simple arrangement of Gerberas and Gladioli striking.

### How To:

Fit blocks of water-soaked floral foam in containers and fix stems of long standing flowers like the ones we have used. These sturdy flowers are available throughout the year and are hence, easily available.

Cover the stems' base with any thick, sturdy palm variety that is flexible. Wrap it around the base and secure at the back with a U-pin or fix ends into the foam.

Use color to its best advantage. Since this is a twin arrangement, we have created a contrast with reds and whites.

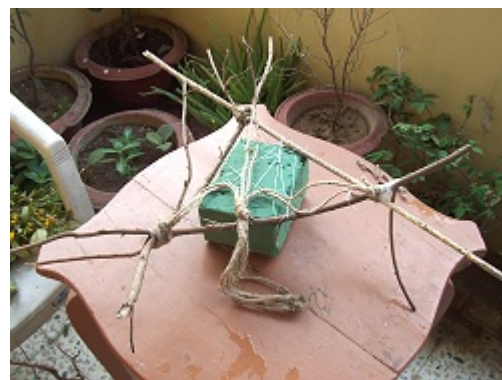




Get real creative and welcome and wow guests with an inverted over-the-head 'chandelier style' flower arrangement for the porch. It is sure to stand out as your best decorating....and we won't let out the secret!

#### **How To:**

1. First, you will need to prepare a base for your arrangement. Place three twigs forming a triangle and fasten their overlapping ends with jute rope making a loop for hanging. Refer to the image on right.



**Twigs over a brick of floral foam fastened with florist wire.**

2. Place the twig triangle over a brick of floral foam and fasten the foam with a lot of florist wire.

3. Turn the base over. This is where you start arranging your flowers as if it were a normal upright standing arrangement.



**Turn the base over to start arranging flowers.**

4. Use flowers with long stems that penetrate the foam and go all the way back and poke out of the foam from between the wire. Start by placing white gerberas in the center and all 4 sides. Add orchids and fill in empty spaces with greens.

5. Pour water over the foam. The foam will shrink and hold on to the flower stems tightly. Turn it upside down and hang your arrangement in the porch, doorway or hallway from the rope loop.

A close-up photograph of a young girl with blonde hair, wearing a red Santa hat with a white fur trim and a red jacket with white fur cuffs. She is hugging a doll that is also wearing a Santa hat. The girl's eyes are closed, and she has a peaceful expression. The background is dark and out of focus.

# *Christmas Stockings*

*Make 'em  
Hang 'em  
Stuff 'em*



# Stock Up On Stockings

*Don't wait for holes to appear. Update your stockings with these fresh and creative designs for making these homespun holiday creations. Just one base stocking can be styled in different ways. We show here five beautiful stockings for you to sew for Christmas.*

*Whether you make a pristine white stocking for Baby's First Christmas or a pieced or basket-weave pattern that shows off your passion for patchwork and crafting, lend your style and personality to the stockings you choose to make.*

## *Making a Basic Stocking*

### **Material Required:**

- *Fabric – by yard or scraps depending upon the stocking you choose to make*
- *Fabric material for batting*
- *Fabric material for lining*

### **Easy Instructions for making a basic stocking:**

1. Take an old stocking to use as a template or use the pattern given in the resources section.
2. Draw the stocking, keeping  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch on all sides for sewing allowance.
3. Draw on main fabric,

batting and lining. Baste the three cutouts together. Make two sets of each for making the two sides.

4. Take a strip of contrasting material and sew to the top edge of the stocking. Now join both the sides, keeping right sides facing each other.

5. Turn inside out and attach a small loop for hanging.



**VARIATIONS:**

***1. Use Christmas Print Material. Leftover scraps from other craft projects or an old or unused piece of fabric is what you need.***

***The loop is made using thin satin ribbon in a contrasting color.***



***2. To give a raggedy look, attach a small piece of material at the heel before joining both sides.***



### *3. Strip Quilted Stocking*

***For strip piecing, lay strips of material on a base material and sew on strip by strip. Make a rectangle piece by joining the strips and then lay the template on it and cut to shape.***



#### *4. Baby's First Christmas Stocking*

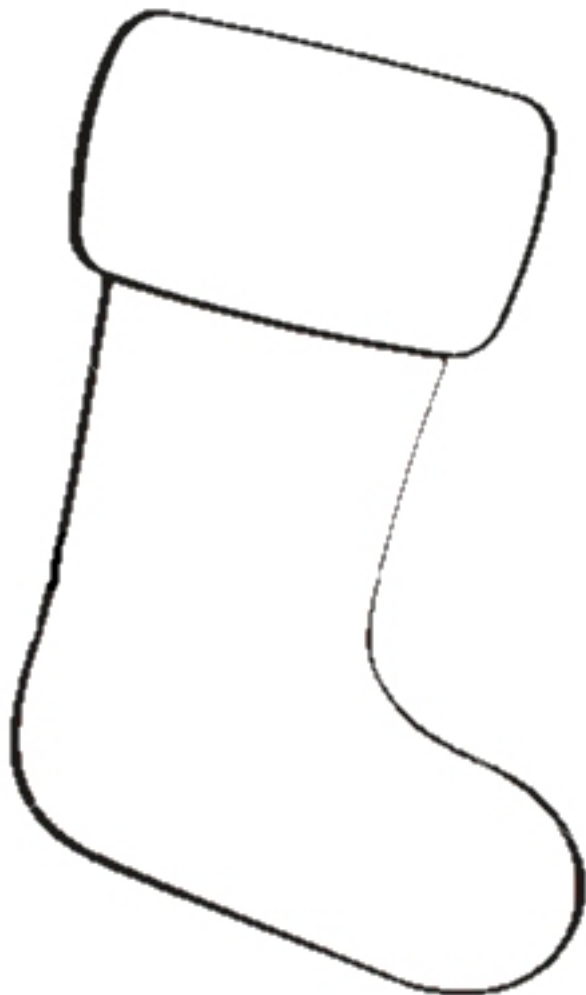
***Using Lace or Indian Chikan material, make the template in a smaller size, and proceed in the same manner as ordinary stockings. Embellish with Flowerets.***



### *5. Basket Weave Stocking*

**Take 4 inch broad strips and fold and sew to form ribbons. Turn inside out and iron. On a rectangular base material, make a basket weave. Stitch along the sides to keep the weave in place. Draw the stocking outline on it and STITCH on the outline, twice. This will help keep the weaves in place. Cut the outline keeping a margin of  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch all around. Now sew on the strip at the mouth of the stocking and proceed as for other stockings. This uses all leftover scraps after sewing.**

## *Stocking Pattern/Template*



***Use a Copier to enlarge or make smaller, the pattern. Depending upon the type of stocking you want to make, change the top fold and heel.***

### *Advertisement*

#### **[Anni Arts for Folksy Printable Crafts](http://www.anniarts.com)**


Professionally designed and illustrated. Folk-inspired Christmas, Kwanzaa, Ethnic Xmas, Country-style Weddings, Thanksgiving, New Year and Fashionable Black-and White. Super value. Freebies to try. New in 2008: Birthdays, Celebrations and Ethnic Weddings. Many designs also on ready-to-buy items.


**<http://www.anniarts.com>**


## Get Creative When Hanging Stockings


***Does hanging stockings pose a problem for you since you don't have a fireplace or a mantel? Or do you simply want to change the look and style of your Christmas decorations and are looking for a way to hang stockings differently this year? We have some creative ideas for you.***





 You can hang your stockings from a medium-sized tree dedicated just for hanging stockings.


 Use raffia or florist's wire to hang stockings from your banister.


 Head outdoors and pick a large sturdy bare branch. Spray white paint for a snow look. Hang stockings on the branches. Makes for a classy Christmas decoration as well.


 Transform a coat hanger into a stocking holder during Christmas time by decorating it some greenery and bows.


 Use command hooks or suction cups on a glass window to hang your stockings from them.

 Hang 'over the door wreath hangers' on the back of a chair and use it to hang stockings.

 Hang a fishing line or ribbon across an empty wall and use curtain hooks to hang stockings on it.

 A bed footboard or a flat headboard, if you have one, can be used in place of a mantel. You can also hang them from bed posts.

 Christmas themed wall plaques with hooks in them and plate hangers can be used to hang stockings.

 Turn your windowsill into a mantel. Place stocking holders on windowsills and hang stockings from them. As it is, Santa does come from the window where there is no chimney!





## Stocking Stuffer Ideas for Grown-ups

**Stuck with fresh ideas for stuffing stockings for grown ups? We have ideas for stocking stuffers for all teens as well as grown ups.**

### For Teenagers

- Chapstick
- Hand Lotion
- Pens
- Cologne
- Sticky notes
- Bath Gel
- Hand Creams
- Lip Gloss/Lipstick
- Hair Brushes/Combs
- Hairsprays/ Hair Gel
- Make-up Brushes
- Bath Sponges
- Mirrors
- Watches
- Earrings
- Key Rings/Key Chains
- Gift Cards

- Nail Files
- Nail Polish



### For Men

- Razors
- Pens
- Stain Removing Pen
- Little Kleenex Boxes
- Socks
- Cologne
- Sticky Notes

- Office supplies (on sale in August)
- Flashlights
- Shaving Cream
- Gift Cards
- Watches
- Batteries Repair kits with little screwdriver
- Small First Aid Kits (for the glove box of their car)

### For Women

- Christmas Soaps
- Small Candles
- Stain Removing Pen
- Seasonings
- Cosmetics
- Nativity Set Pieces
- A New Ornament
- Gift Cards
- Compress
- Watches
- Recipe cards
- Seeds
- Salt and Pepper Set



### For All Ages

- Toothbrush/Toothpaste
- Socks
- Nuts
- Chocolate Bars
- Small Fruits or Berries
- Cotton Balls to Stuff the Stockings



*Snow and Christmas always seem to go together but for those who do not live in colder areas where it snows, there are some great ways to make your own snow for crafts and decorations!*

*There are many options for making your own fake snow. It really just depends on how you would like to use it.*

**If you want to make certain smaller objects look snow covered, try this recipe:**

½ cup sugar  
½ cup talcum powder  
White glue

Mix the powder and sugar together.

Spread glue on the surface that you would like to add snow to and then sprinkle the sugar and powder mixture over the glue. Allow the glue to dry and it gives a soft, glittery snow look.

Crafters can use this for adding snow to their craft projects and giving handmade holiday decorations and gifts a 'snow-covered' look.

**If you want to make larger objects, such as your Christmas tree or a Christmas display, look like they are sprinkled with snow try this recipe:**

2 cups soap flakes  
Blue food coloring  
Glitter  
2/3 cups liquid starch  
3 tablespoons water

Combine the liquid starch and soap flakes in a mixing bowl. Slowly add the water and mix it with a beater. The mixture

will get thick as you mix it. Add a couple of drops of blue food coloring and add glitter if desired. Paint the mixture onto the tree branches or other items for a newly fallen snow look.

**If you want a soft squishy snow then try this recipe:**

Mix 1 part white glue with 2 parts shaving cream. This is a perfect medium for children's art crafts or to just allow them to play as if they had real snow.

**If you want to make it look as if it is snowing, mashed potato flakes are a great option:**

Buy ready made potato flakes to cover areas with fresh snow.

# *I Love to Craft*

## *Do You?*



**Visit [www.iLovetoCraft.com](http://www.iLovetoCraft.com) for**

**Free Craft Patterns | Craft Recipes | Craft Projects  
Holiday Crafts | Seasonal Crafts | Wedding Crafts  
Kids Crafts | Tips and Ideas | Crafts Shopping Directory**

Many kids' gifts are bulky and sometimes hard to wrap. Wrapping paper especially for children can often get expensive too. So here are a few gift wrapping ideas that can help you wrap any gift.

- Make a few fabric gift bags. It is as simple as making a pillow case (in fact you could even use pillow cases if you wanted to) and they can be used for years. You can also make a bag as big as you need it, for covering large gifts like bikes. We have re-used the velvet red bag used as Santa's Sack in our 'North Pole Christmas Party' theme to gift a large soft toy.



- Another great way to wrap kid's gifts is to let them create artwork. You can get large sheets of butcher paper or newspaper from most craft or party stores. Let your kids color, paint or stamp the paper. You'll have one of a kind wrapping paper and the kids will love seeing their artwork wrapped around their gifts. Just encourage the kids to use bright colors.

- Lunch bags work great for smaller gifts. They can be decorated with stickers and then you can just fold down the top, punch a couple of holes and tie it closed with a ribbon.



- Christmas Bag: Take a piece of material 12 inches in length and 24 inches in width. Sew on a strip in a contrasting color at the mouth. Fold and sew to form a bag.



Sew on satin ribbons to make a handle. Tie on a Christmas ornament or toy to use as a Christmas gift bag.

- Instead of putting all of their candy in their stocking, use some of it as decoration on presents.

- Wrap the gift in white tissue paper, then cut pictures from magazines of some of the child's favorite things. Glue them to the paper.

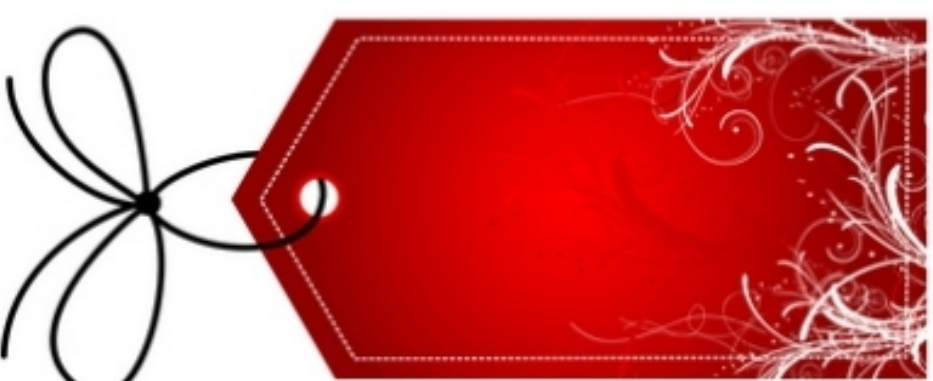
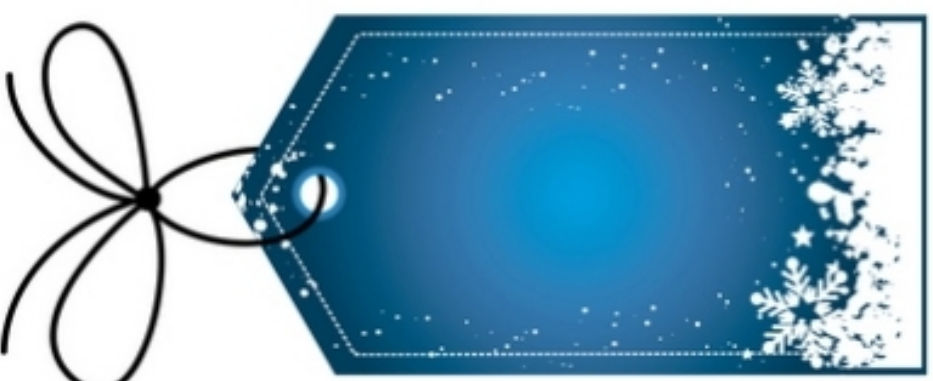
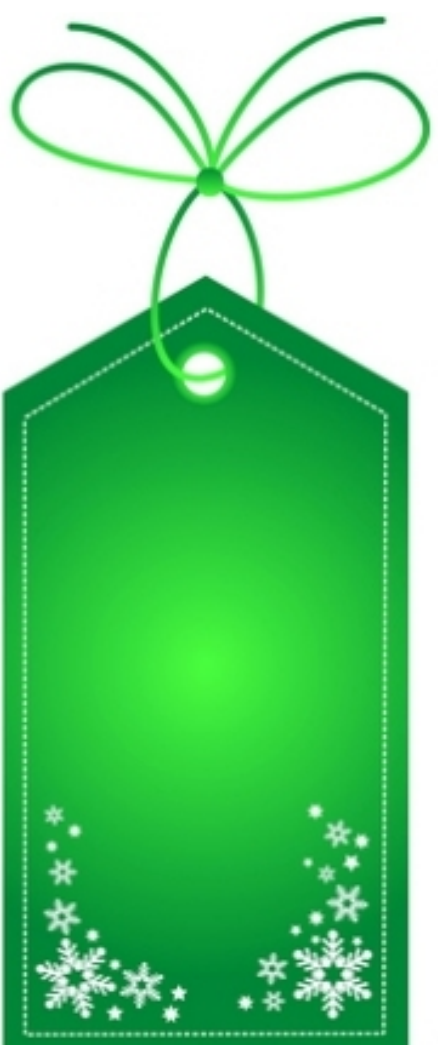


- Keep those tablecloths from your kid's themed birthday party, and use them to wrap gifts. It saves you money and the kids will love the fact that the wrapping paper is something that they really love.

# FREE GIFT TAGS - PRINTABLE



# FREE GIFT TAGS - PRINTABLE





*The definition of a beautifully decorated house always includes how the house looks from the outside when viewed from a distance. Do the windows look well decorated and in symmetry?*

And since Christmas is the time when most people decorate their homes to look their best, outdoor decorations need to be well-placed. Have you wondered how those immaculately decorated colonial houses that you see in pictures, actually put wreaths on all their windows? We share some secrets and tips to make it easier for you to hang wreaths on all your windows this Christmas.

#### **Using Ribbons, Florist Wire Or Fishing Line to Hang Wreaths on Windows**

Put a piece of ribbon, florist wire or fishing line through the top of the wreath forming a loop and tie a knot at the end. The length of the ribbon will depend on your windows and at what length you want the wreaths to hang.

Now lower the top window sash enough to slip your wreath out. A nail or a screw cup if you want a nail, in the top edge of your interior window casing will hold your ribbon or wire loop. You could also loop the ribbon around your window latch and then shut it close. The ribbon or wire gets hidden from inside by curtains and wire and fishing line do not show outside.

#### **Using Hooks**

Command Hooks or nails on the top of your windows are an easy option to hang wreaths from. In fact, nails driven into walls once, will make hanging wreaths a breeze every year. Paint the nails the color of your walls to hide them. Then, hang the wreaths using fishing line or wire.

Suction cups are the key to success for glass windows! Always use suction cups to help support the wreath. One suction cup per wreath is usually enough but depending upon the quality you get, up to four suction cups will help divide the weight of the wreath and also prevent the wreath from getting blown away or banging your windows at night.

# *Christmas Gifts* *that Everyone will remember!*

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*Not going to the family home for the holidays? Then it is a great time to plan a romantic Christmas for two.*

**Really the most romantic ideas are those that are based on special moments from your relationship or on certain hobbies or interests of your significant other, so sit down and think about what would truly make the other person happy. To get you started here are a few ideas:**

♥ Spend some quality time together putting up the decorations. Keep it simple, play some favorite holiday music and enjoy some favorite treat together when you are done. However if decorating is something you know will cause tension or is something one of you doesn't particularly like it may be a good idea to skip this idea.

♥ Make a special ornament together. Many different types of ornament kits are available at craft stores from intricate to simple. You could also decorate stockings together while sitting in front of a cozy fire.



## *A Romantic Christmas for Two*



♥ Have a special dinner together. Set the table for two and be sure to keep the centerpiece short so that you can see each other. Something as simple as some beautiful ornaments in a glass bowl would be perfect.

♥ Light some candles, get your favorite candies and snuggle up together on the couch with some romantic holiday movies. A few good movies are "The Family Man," "While You Were Sleeping," and "It's A Wonderful Life."

♥ The holiday season is a great time for rides. Book a limousine ride, sleigh ride or carriage ride for you and your special someone. Be sure to bring blankets to keep warm.

Many cities also have light displays that you can drive

through. Gather some romantic holiday music hop in the car and spend some time together.

♥ Attend a seasonal concert or see the Nutcracker.

♥ Spend an evening together making a Gingerbread house.

♥ Of course no romantic Christmas would be complete without a gift. The best gifts are ones that took time and show your love. So why not write a love letter or poem? You could also surprise them with breakfast in bed or candles and a soak in the tub. Another idea is to give them a small gift for the 12 days of Christmas. Surprise them by sending the gift to their office or hiding it someplace they would find it during the day.



# Celebrate Kwanzaa with

Recipes

Crafts

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Party Themes

Gift Ideas

Decorating Ideas

[www.Celebrating-Kwanzaa.com](http://www.Celebrating-Kwanzaa.com)



## Dinner Table Games

**Make dinner more exciting by organizing these simple, yet fun games before or after the meal.**

### Guess How Many

Put wrapped candy in a jar and leave some pencils and small slips of paper in the center of the table. Let people guess how many candies they think are in the jar.

### Christmas Memory Game

The first player says, "In my Christmas stocking there is an ..." and says something that starts with an "A" like apple. The second person then repeats what the first person said and adds something that begins with "B." This continues. When someone can't remember an item they drop out of the game.

The last player who can remember all the items wins.

### Draw It!

A white board or paper and markers and a timer is needed to play this game. Put Christmas related words or phrases on slips of paper and put them in a bowl. Divide the group into two teams. A phrase is drawn from the bowl and one person from each team must draw until their team guesses what it is.

### Reindeer Droppings

To play this game you will need different types of chocolate candy bars. Crush the candy bars and form them into clumps. Put a different reindeer name on each plate. Players are given a piece of paper and pencil and must try and figure out what type of candy

bar is on each plate. The person who gets the most right answers wins a prize.

### Spell it Out

Find alphabet pasta and divide it into 2 bowls. Each team has a scribe who marks down how many words the team comes up with. The teams are given five minutes to come up with as many Christmas related words as possible.

### Q&A

This game is great to play especially with all the family sitting around the table.

Everyone gets 2 pieces of paper and pencil and is asked to write down a general question, such as "what is your favorite color?" or "if you were a cartoon character who would you be?" Everybody then puts the questions into a bowl.

Each person is then assigned a number that can be found on a die. The first player rolls the die and picks a question. They then read the question aloud and everyone writes down the answer they think the person whose number was rolled would answer. For example, if Grandpa is assigned the number two and his number is rolled and the question is "what is your favorite color" everyone would write down what they think Grandpa's favorite color is. Grandpa gets to write down his answer.

Then all the players pass the answers to the person who rolled the dice and reads the answers. It is fun to see who gets the question right or if everyone was wrong. Sometimes the answers can be very surprising.

*The  
Essential  
Christmas  
Ornament  
Collection*

*Your guide to starting  
your own ornament collection*

***Trying to decide what ornaments you need for the tree? Check out this guide to the essential Christmas ornament collection for a great starting point for your collection.***

Christmas Ornaments aren't just decorations that you put up on the Christmas tree. They are the pride of every family; heirlooms passed from generation to generation; a reflection of your personality and beautiful sparkling things that bring your family closer during the magical Christmas time.

Ornaments have come a long way since their origin. The Christmas tree originated in Germany and there are numerous legends about how it came about. No one knows which is true, if any of them are true, but we do know that those first Christmas trees were decorated with red apples, candles, white candy canes, cookies, dolls and small toys.

For a long time everything used to decorate a tree was made by the family. The first

commercial ornaments also originated in Germany in the 1860s. They first made garlands of glass beads inspired by the paper chains families had been making for their trees. They also made some tin figures. Glass ornaments soon followed. Most were shaped like nuts and fruits and all were silver. Soon glass ball ornaments were made and different colors emerged.

Today, ornaments are available in more shapes, sizes and materials than you can count. New homemakers almost always look forward to starting their own collections by adding purchased classic and modern ornaments to heirlooms. With a perfect blend of some classic brands, religious, festive and seasonal symbols, special handmade gifts and inexpensive, yet pretty 'filler' ornaments, you will soon have a lovely collection of your own to use every year and pass on to the next generation. Just keep in mind that there is no hurry to own a complete collection right away. In fact, there isn't such a thing as a 'complete

collection'. Always be on a lookout and gradually add to your collection. Special ornaments may be found in antique shops, on your travels or might be gifted to you.



### **Essential Collectible Ornaments Brands**

#### **Hallmark's Keepsake Ornaments**

Hallmark's keepsake ornaments are so special because you can find ornaments that will reflect the year or person. For many families adding a Hallmark keepsake ornament to their tree each year has become a tradition. Other families give them as gifts each year too. In my own family my parents have given an ornament to each child every year. The ornament always represents something from that year of the child's life. For example one year, my sister and I were recruited to participate in a production of the Nutcracker. We were thrilled. We spent months at rehearsals and were obsessed with everything to do with the Nutcracker. Our parents got us ballerina ornaments that year. Each year when the ornaments come out our family enjoys seeing the ornaments and remembering special moments from our lives.



### Thomas Kinkadee

For many people the picturesque Christmas scenes created by Thomas Kinkadee are perfect ornaments for their trees. Thomas Kinkadee is one of the most collected living artists and it is easy to see why so many people love his ornaments.

### Christopher Radko

These ornaments are reminiscent of ornaments of the past. They are hand crafted glass ornaments, many of which use molds the early 1900's. For anyone who remembers heirloom ornaments on a grandparents tree or just loves the look of handmade glass ornaments Radko ornaments are must-haves.

### Other Essential Collectible Ornaments

Other essential collectible ornaments would include family heirloom ornaments, and ornaments that go along with your decorating theme. And of course, you will have your own reasons for buying so many others. Your kids might want to have their



*Filler ornaments in classic shapes such as balls, icicles, stars etc. are must-haves.*

*There was quite a bit of symbolism associated with the ornaments that were placed on trees. Apples were common because it was tradition to do a play based on the story of Adam and Eve on December 24th.*

*Birds represented God's love and were also a symbol of good fortune. Pickles represented luck. Stars represent the Star of Bethlehem, Reflector ornaments, also referred to as witches eyes, (geometric ornaments with concave indentations, popular during the Victorian era) were put on the tree to ward off evil spirits.*

favorite cartoon characters on the tree or a special keepsake of their favorite movie.

### Essential Filler Ornaments

Filler ornaments include items such as solid color balls, icicle and snowflake ornaments or solid colored ornaments in different shapes like stars, bells, doves and angels. Filler ornaments can vary widely depending upon personal tastes, but the main purpose of filler ornaments is to unify the look of the tree. Collectible ornaments can differ widely in color and style, so the filler ornaments tie them all together. It is generally agreed that you will need about 20 filler ornaments for every 2 feet of tree.

Include these items as well as candy canes, white lights, garland, tinsel and candy shaped ornaments and you will have the essential ornaments needed to decorate your Christmas tree just as it was decorated throughout history.



# The writing is on the wall

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Home & Lifestyle portal**





*Nearly everyone spends more waking hours at work than they do at home, so it is nice to be able to bring the Christmas spirit into your workspace with some decorations. However, you should check to make sure that this is okay to do before you begin decorating. Here are a few simple steps and ideas for decorating your work desk:*


1. Choose a time other than normal working hours to do the decorating. This way you won't upset anyone by looking like you are "playing" rather than working.
2. Clean up your desk. Dust things off and get them


organized. It is hard to decorate a messy space and if you add more things to a messy space (like decorations) it can make it hard to work.


3. If you are going to be adding any lights or other decorations that use electricity, be sure to also bring a surge protector, especially if you have a computer. Usually power surges are attributed to thunderstorms, but during December most power surges are caused by decorations.


4. Now you're ready to get started. Keep in mind that space is limited at your desk so try to keep the decorations on a


smaller scale. Here are a few ideas to help you think of fun ways to decorate:


 Put a Christmas screensaver on your computer


 Wrap your office door with wrapping paper and a big bow to make it look like a present


 Bring in a poinsettia to put on your desk


 Bring in a jar filled with Christmas candies


 Get one of those mini Christmas trees from a craft store (the kind that are meant to be used as a table decoration) and hang small ornaments on it


 Hang a wreath on the front or side of your desk


 Hang a lightweight garland

 Tie festive bows on drawer handles or around plants

 Create a display of holiday cards by hanging the cards over a ribbon strung across the front of your desk

 Hang ornaments over the side and front edges of your desk (be sure they aren't easily broken because they will most likely get bumped often)

 Hang a festive sign near your calendar

 Enlist the help of your kids and make paper snowflakes to hang from the ceiling above your desk



## *Purchasing Pre-Packaged Crafts For The Holidays - Save Time, Save Money!*

When it comes to helping children stay happy and active during the holiday seasons, including holidays like Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, Valentine's Day, and Easter, it can be difficult to keep up with the demands and pace they set. Going from one activity to another in a matter of minutes can make anyone feel overwhelmed.

This is why purchasing pre-packaged craft kits may be a step in the right direction. No more wasting hours cutting foam or paper pieces, no more searching craft stores for just what is needed, and no more arguments over who is getting "more stickers" or "more glitter". All of the pieces for each and every craft are there, ready for assembly.

These craft kits are easily found locally, in many different dollar stores and craft outlets. Even discount stores often carry seasonal craft kits for purchase in their

arts and crafts areas. When something is needed immediately, this is the only option available, no matter what the cost may be. However, if planning ahead is something attainable, ordering online and getting steep discounts may save a lot of money!

Here are some online distributors that have holiday craft kits at very reasonable prices:

### **S & S Worldwide**

Found online at [www.ssw.com](http://www.ssw.com), the S & S Company has a wide range of seasonal craft kits to choose from. Even when there are no specific holidays in the near future, there are many craft kits available that will be fun for children year round. Each kit comes with everything needed to make the craft described, including easy to follow instructions. Whether one craft is needed or one

hundred, they can be found at S & S Worldwide. Shipping is free when enough products are purchased, too. (Check out the overstock craft kits area of the site for the best deals!)

### **Oriental Trading Company**

Found online at [www.orientaltrading.com](http://www.orientaltrading.com), the Oriental Trading Company has some of the simplest and least expensive craft kits available. With a huge assortment of holiday and everyday craft kits to choose from, anyone looking for something to do with children can find a lot on this website. Shipping is free when enough products are purchased, too. (Check out the web specials area of the site for the best deals!)

### **Discount School Supply**

Found online at [www.discountschoolsupply.com](http://www.discountschoolsupply.com), the Discount School Supply Company has a lot to offer, whether what is required are craft supplies or craft kits. Although this company does not have specific "holiday" themed craft kits, many of the kits available can be adapted for use during the holiday seasons. The prices here are comparable to all the other websites and shipping is free when enough products are purchased. (Check out the clearance area of the site for the best deals!)

These are only a select few of the craft distributors which do business online. Doing a simple keyword search for "Craft Kits" or "Kids Craft Kits" may bring results that will serve just as well. When forward thinking and pre-planning is done, keeping kids occupied and entertained through the holiday seasons with craft kits is as simple as filling out an online order form!

# Homemade Gift Ideas for the *Chef* on your list



Have someone on your Christmas list who loves to cook? You can create great homemade gifts for them. Here are a few ideas:

## **Make recipe cards for them.**

If you aren't too crafty, there are many websites that offer recipe card templates that you can print out on some thick cardstock and cut down to the appropriate size. You could also include a few recipes of your own on some of the cards. Download and print out some festive recipe cards on the next page.

## **Put together a spice blend kit for them.**

Get some small glass bottles with lids (these can often be found at craft stores) and fill them with the spice blends listed below. Be sure to include some recipe cards

with the spice combinations so that your chef can recreate them when they run out.

### **Cajun Spice Blend**

Perfect as a dry rub for meats.

- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 tablespoon paprika
- 2 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 teaspoons black pepper
- 2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon dried oregano
- 1 teaspoon dried thyme

### **Chili Powder**

- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- 1 tablespoon ground cumin
- 1 teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder

### **Taco Seasoning**

- 6 teaspoons chili powder
- 5 teaspoons paprika
- 4 1/2 teaspoons ground cumin
- 3 teaspoons onion powder
- 2 1/2 teaspoons garlic powder
- 1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper

Pumpkin Pie Spice (makes enough for 1 pie)

- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1/4 teaspoon ground nutmeg
- 1/4 teaspoon ground mace
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

**Flavored sugars** are also a great homemade gift for any chef. They are simple to make, last a long time and often add just the right touch to a sweet dish. The most common flavored sugars use citrus fruits. Mix together lemon zest from 3 lemons with 1 cup sugar in a food processor and pulse until the zest is ground well. Add another 2 cups of sugar and spread the mixture onto a baking pan and let it sit at room temperature for about an hour. This allows the lemon zest to dry out. You can then store it in an airtight container. You can substitute lemon zest with orange, lime or even grapefruit.

*Have a gardener on your Christmas list that you would like to make a homemade gift for? Try some of these ideas.*

### **Bird House**

You can make birdhouses out of any number of items. If you are good with tools you can make a traditional wood birdhouse, but if you aren't there are other types you could make. Birdhouses can be made out of cardboard milk cartons, boxes, even large hollowed and dried out gourds. Be sure to decorate them too.

### **Seed Starters**

Put together a seed starter gift basket. Collect some smaller pots, seeds, bags of soil and a small watering can. With this gift your gardener can start some seedlings on the windowsill before spring.

### **Decorative Pots**

You can find many different sizes of ceramic pots at craft stores. Get a few and decorate them with paint. They will be a bright addition to any garden.

### **Garden Stakes and Markers**

Create some garden stakes and markers. This is an easy project for kids. Get some paint stir sticks. Let the kids decorate some 5x5 inch squares of heavy cardstock with different fruits and vegetables that would be found in a garden. Have them laminated and then attach them to the paint sticks with a heavy duty staple gun. You



## **Homemade Gift Ideas for the *Gardener* on your list**

can also paint the paint sticks if you want to cover up any writing that may be on them.

### **The Gift of Time**

Put together a coupon book. Include things like helping with weeding, or watering while they are on vacation or even babysitting so that your gardener can have some time to garden.

### **Handmade Birdfeeders**

There are numerous types of birdfeeders you could make. You can make simple ones by putting peanut butter on pinecones then rolling them in birdseed. You can also make birdfeeder shelves that can

be nailed to a tree. Be sure to remember a bag of birdseed too.

### **Garden-themed Ornaments**

An avid gardener would love to display his or her passion for gardening on the Christmas tree. You can gift some handmade tree ornaments that go with the garden theme. You can decorate miniature birdhouses with fake snow, glitter and holiday greenery or tie a red bow and a string to artificial birds. You can also tie up bundles of artificial holiday greens, small pinecones, berries and cinnamon and tie strings for hanging and gift them as ornaments.

# *A Bavarian Christmas in USA*



## LEAVENWORTH, WA

*It's not the army fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA we are talking about. It's the relatively lesser known undiscovered beauty of the Bavarian-style alpine village of Leavenworth in the Washington state of United States that we are mesmerized with and vote as the ultimate Holiday destination for 2007.*

The picture-perfect town of Leavenworth is located in the Chelan county of Washington about a 100 miles east of Seattle. The city which was once a small timber community, was

transformed by LIFE (Leavenworth Improvement For Everyone) Committee into a mock Bavarian village to revitalize its economy and now boasts of pretty European style shops and an Oktoberfest fair that is claimed to be one of the most attended in the world outside Munich, Germany. But it is the Christmas lights and festivities and loads of sparkling snow that charmed us into making this place our favorite Christmas destination for the year.

### **What to See and Do:**

#### **Christmas Gala**

Christmas transforms Leavenworth into a bustling city of lights and fun. Lots of lighting, open-air markets and bazaars, carriage rides, music concerts, lantern parades, live enactment of nativity and so much more for the entire family.

Get a detailed list of events from their official website at <http://www.leavenworth.org>

### Nutcracker Museum

See about 5000 nutcrackers for a nominal fee some as old as dating back to 6000 years. The museum is on the main street, 735 Front Street, P. O. Box 129.

### Lake Wenatchee State Park

The state park provides a great Place for playing in the snow with your family. It is located at tubing hill 21588 State 207 and you can get more information from [www.parks.wa.gov](http://www.parks.wa.gov).

### Winter Sports

Enjoy skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, and sledding while you are there. Steven's Pass has great skiing trails but you will find many great trails right across the town. The tubing at Ski Hill and Steven's Pass both offer sledding areas. Blackbird island in the downtown area is great for snowshoeing. You can also go sightseeing in one of the relaxing horse drawn sleigh rides and get cozy with a hot chocolate later.

### Snow Train and Santa Express Tours

Alki Tours operate an Amtrak train tour called the Snow Train tour for great views and an entertaining day aboard the train. For smaller kids, they have a Santa Express tours. Get more info and book your rides at <http://www.alkitours.us/>

### A Bavarian Walk

A must-do in your itinerary should be to spend a leisurely morning or evening walking

around the town and looking at the pretty homes with murals. This beautiful mountain town might have been turned into a Bavarian village for economic reasons, but they have certainly done a good job and make you feel like you are in a different world altogether.

### Shopping

If you love Christmas and enjoy shopping, you will fall in love with Leavenworth. The European style markets have everything from Christmas gifts, handmade nativity sets, souvenirs, candy and chocolates, toys, antiques, music boxes, cuckoo clocks, cheese and wine. Visit the pretty shops to find treasures you never imagined you would find. Some shop recommendations are:

*The Cheesemonger's Shop for Exquisite Cheese*

<http://www.cheesemongersshop.com/>

*Kris Kringl for Christmas Collectibles and German Christmas Decorations*

<http://www.kkringl.com/>

*Alpine Coffee Roasters*

<http://www.alpinecoffee.roasters.com/>

*Leavenworth Chocolates for Belgian Chocolates and Fudge*

<http://www.leavenworthchocolates.com/>

*Bavarian Soaps and Candles*

<http://www.bavariansoap.com>

### Getting There and Getting Around

**By Flight:** Pangborn Memorial Airport in East Wenatchee is the main airport serving the city but Seattle-Tacoma (Sea-Tac) International provides much better connectivity with international destinations.

**By Rail or Road:** If you are in America, you can come to Leavenworth by an Amtrak train or a Greyhound bus as well. The bus will be cheapest option if you can spare the travel time it takes.

**Driving There:** Driving into Leavenworth is easily possible from Seattle, USA (120 miles) or Vancouver, Canada (215 miles).

**Getting Around:** Hertz and Budget Rent-a-Car are the main car rental companies which provide with the best means of getting around. The Link Transit bus service and SkiLink during winters are the public transportation systems. Get more info on them from <http://www.linktransit.com/>

*Gingerbread Factory for unassembled and pre-assembled, ready-to-decorate gingerbread houses, cookie cutters, cookie jars, ornaments etc.*

<http://www.gingerbreadfactory.com/>

*Music Box Shop for charming German style music boxes*

<http://www.musicboxshop.com/>

## Where to Eat

Leavenworth has lots of options for food-lovers. Although Bavarian-styled, the restaurants here cater to all tastes. Even McDonald's is Bavarian styled here! You will find German, American,

European, Mexican, Italian, Chinese and Fast Food here. You will also find quaint bakeries smelling very Christmassy. Some places for good chow are:

*Andreas Keller Restaurant for authentic German food*

<http://www.andreaskellerrestaurant.com/>

*Kristall's Restaurant & Lounge for American Food*

<http://www.kristallsrestaurant.com/>

*Gustav's for Beer, Fast Food and Kid-Friendly Menus*

<http://www.gustavsleavenworth.com/>

*Kodiak Haus for Great Pizza and other stuff*

<http://www.kodiakhaus.com/>

*Happy Valley Chinese Restaurant for MSG free homemade Chinese food delivered to your hotel room*

<http://www.happyvalleychineserestaurant.com/>

## Where to Stay

You will accommodations to suit all tastes and budgets at Leavenworth. It is recommended that you make bookings in advance, but if you don't try hard and you will find some kind of lodging when you show up. There are also a number of RV parks in the area as well as pet friendly accommodations if you want to bring your furry friends.

There are lots and lots to choose from. We give you a select few recommendations. You can get information on many more from the official Leavenworth website.

### **Some of the good budget lodgings include:**

*Autumn Pond Bed and Breakfast* -  
<http://www.autumnpond.com/>

*Mrs. Anderson's Lodging House (for Quilting Getaways)* -  
<http://www.quiltersheaven.com>

*Leavenworth Village Inn* -  
<http://www.leavenworthvillageinn.com/>

*Linderhof Motor Inn* -  
<http://www.linderhof.com/>

### **Some of the good mid-priced hotels include:**

*Mountain Home Lodge* -  
<http://www.mthome.com/>

*Abendblume Bed & Breakfast* -  
<http://www.abendblume.com>

*Bavarian Lodge* -  
<http://www.bavarianlodge.com/>

*Hotel Pension Anna* -  
<http://www.pensionanna.com/>

### **Some of the good luxury accommodations:**

*Run of the River Bed & Breakfast* -  
<http://www.runoftheriver.com/>

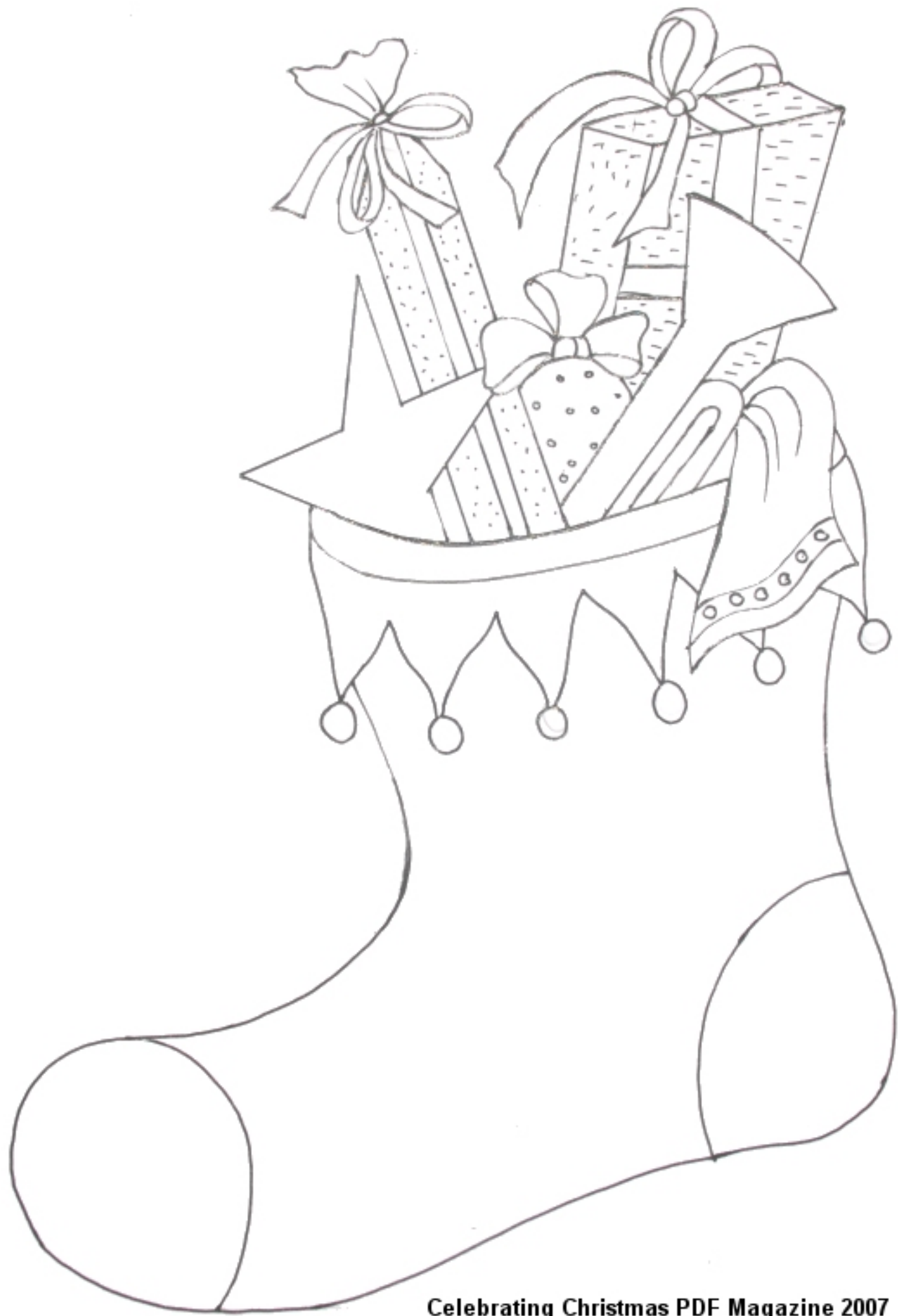
*Aspen Suites at The Icicle Village Resort* -  
<http://www.iciclevillage.com/>

*Pine River Ranch Bed and Breakfast* -  
<http://www.prranch.com/>

*Enchanted River Inn* -  
<http://www.enchantedriverinn.com/>



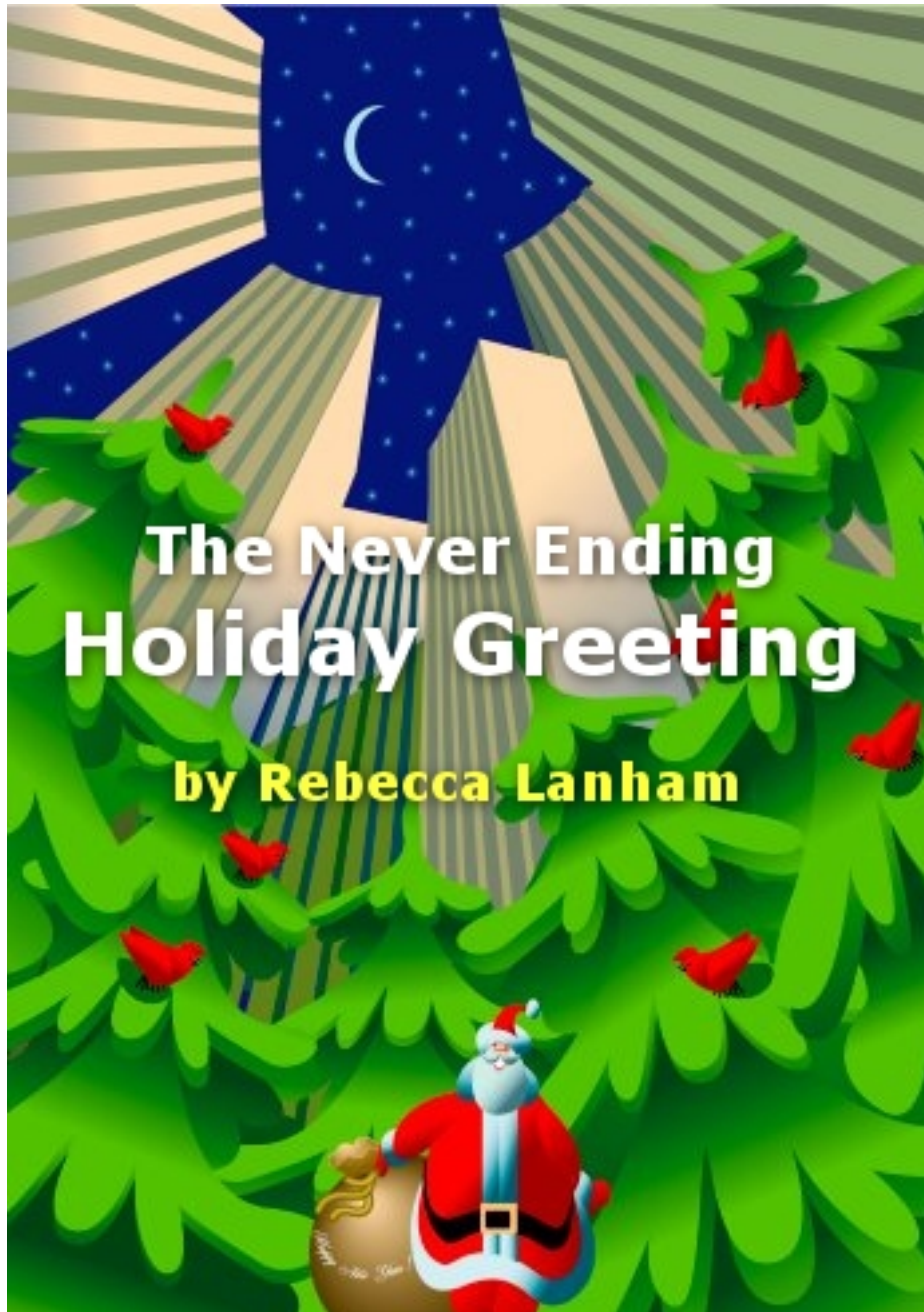








**Celebrating Christmas**  
**PDF Magazine 2007**



**\*It was just an ordinary Tuesday\***

Jessica was sitting at her desk at the beginning of another long work day. With the company going to be closed for the holiday break in just a couple weeks, her work

load had gotten quite heavy and she had stacks and stacks of paperwork to move off her desk by the end of the day. It was a daunting task and she hadn't even had her first cup of coffee yet this morning.

"Happy Holidays!"

Jessica looked up to see her co-worker, Jake. They had been "cubicle-mates" for the past 8 months and got along quite well. In Jake's hand were two, huge cups of steaming coffee that he picked up from the coffee shop two doors down from the office.

"I figured you'd be here early, getting a jump start on all this stuff we have to do. So, I took it upon myself to get you some coffee this morning. I even remembered you like powdered creamer instead of the liquid stuff!" Jake placed one of the coffee cups down on the desk, a huge grin on his face.

"Thank you!" Jessica said and the smile she returned was genuine.

### **\*One hour later\***

Audrey was having a really hard time keeping up with everything. She was the receptionist and phone operator for the office, but she had other duties to tend to, as well. But the phone kept ringing off the hook

! "How can I help you? I'll get you that extension right away. Good morning. How may I direct your call? Let me connect you." The person from the mail room and two delivery persons had been to her desk already that morning, but Audrey had no way to get away from the desk to get the packages where they belonged.

"Happy Holidays!"

Audrey looked up to see one of the associates in the office, Jessica. They had spoken on occasion and gone to lunch together a couple of times. In Jessica's hand was a bottle of water and on her face was a smile.

"I was just over at the copy machine and saw the pile of

mail here. My paperwork won't be done copying for about 15 minutes. How about I get these where they belong instead of just standing there?" Handing Audrey the bottle of water, Jessica collected the packages and headed down the first isle of cubicles.

"Thank you!" Audrey called after her, and then breathed a sigh of relief.

### **\*Later That Morning\***

Being an office manager was not as simple as people made it out to be. Michael was having a particularly hard time today keeping up with the phone calls asking for the status of current orders and the reports due before the



Winter 2007-2008



Holiday Fashion 2007

**Ramp To Store**  
*On the Fashion Trail*

holiday vacation. While picking up another file folder to look through the contents, he accidentally knocked the huge organizer off of his desk and pencils, pens, a few clips, a sticky notes cube, plus a lot of outgoing mail, was scattered all over the floor.

Before Michael was able to stoop over to start cleaning up the mess, he heard a pleasant voice from the doorway say, "Happy Holidays!"

Audrey, the receptionist, walked into the office with a huge smile. In her hand was a mug full of steaming coffee. Handing the mug to Michael, Audrey stooped over and began gathering the contents of the organizer.

"When I went on break, you looked a little frazzled, Mike. I figured you could use this coffee." In just a few minutes, Audrey had all of the office supplies back in the holder and the outgoing mail was in her hands. "I'll get this mail sent for you, okay?" With another huge smile, she started for the door.

"Thank you!" Michael said and sat back in his office chair, still grasping the steaming mug of coffee.

#### **\*Early Afternoon\***

The restaurant was extremely busy today and Beverly was dead on her feet. She normally liked her shift of 6 AM to 2 PM, but today she just wanted to take a nap. At least she was off in just under an hour and could go home. She watched all of the

businessmen in their fancy suits and the shopping women, storing several bags under their tables, with just a touch of envy, as she knew the holidays would be a little lean at her house this year.

Walking up to one of her half dozen tables, she asked the gentleman sitting finishing his lunch, "Would you like anything else?"

"Yes," Michael said, looking at the tired appearance of his server. "Could I get one piece of strawberry pie and one whole pumpkin pie to go, please?"

"Of course, I'll be right back with the pies and your check."

It did not take Beverly long to box up the pies and get the patron's check prepared for him to take to the counter. Setting the two boxes on his table, she handed him the receipt. "Thank you so much and I hope you come again soon," Beverly said.

When the man had picked up the boxes and walked to the counter, Beverly began cleaning up the table and picked up the generous \$20 tip the man left in the center. She was surprised when she heard a voice behind her say,

"Happy Holidays!"

Michael had returned and extended the boxed whole pie to the waitress. "I think you deserve a treat that you don't have to prepare tonight! Thank you for the great service."

"Thank you!" said Beverly as

the man walked away.

Looking down at the box, she smiled a large smile, as pumpkin pie was her and her husband's favorite.

#### **\*Later That Evening\***

What a long, hard day it had been. Jake was extremely tired, but he was feeling good about the progress he and Jessica had made on their assignments. The commute from work had been long, so he was debating on whether to order Chinese or Pizza for himself and his wife tonight when he walked through the door.

\*Happy Holidays!"

Beverly had taken a nap when she had gotten home and decided to surprise her husband with his favorite dinner when she woke. In the center of the table was the fancy pumpkin pie the customer at the restaurant had given her. It was surrounded by a small ham, sweet potatoes, rolls and a fruit salad.

"I knew you'd be exhausted when you came home today, honey. Dinner is on me," Beverly said with a gentle smile.

"Wow! Thank you, Bev." Jake returned the grin and joined his wife at the table, knowing his evening would be wonderful.

**Happiness is catching, so spread some joy this holiday season. Never be afraid to say "Happy Holidays!" It may just make someone's whole day brighter.**

# Make Your Valentine Feel Special!



**Romantic Recipes**

**Great Gift Ideas**

**Handmade Gifts  
of Love**

**Decorating for  
Your Special One**

**Theme Parties for  
All Those in Love**

**Romantic Poems  
& Letters**

**[www.Celebrating-ValentinesDay.com](http://www.Celebrating-ValentinesDay.com)**



## *A Victorian Christmas Wedding*

*Something old, Something new, Something borrowed, Something blue,  
And a Silver Sixpence in your Shoe  
With Christmas Joy and Winter Fun, Bringing all the Romance for you*

*Say 'I Do' with old-fashioned charm during the romantic winter time with a Victorian themed Christmas wedding. Winter and Victorian - nothing says 'Romantic' like the coming together of these two words. Add to it the joys of the merry Christmas time and all those who are romantics at heart, will find that there is no better way to celebrate the union of two hearts becoming one.*

*Plan a memorable wedding that has all the elegance of the bygone Victorian era and the magic of a white Christmas. Beautiful ideas for a Victorian Christmas Wedding float over the next few pages like winter snowflakes and are sure to inspire you.*



## Venues

Victorian churches, parks, heritage houses and castles provide the elegance and grandeur this theme needs. Most destinations offer wedding packages that are a good deal. You can also easily convert any venue to match your theme with our decorating ideas.

## Decorating Your Venue

Victorian Christmases bring to one's mind pictures of abundant greens, red bows and fresh fruits. And Victorian Weddings remind of luxurious and elegant velvets and gold and burgundy ribbons. Combine these ideas for decorating your ceremony or reception venue:

1. Use pine boughs to decorate the doors, walls,

staircases and tables. Add color with poinsettias, red and gold ornaments, fresh winter fruits and red or plaid bows.

2. Entwine pearl strands in the green pine boughs for a luxurious look. Or you can intersperse wide, metallic, holiday ribbons with the green boughs.

3. Add Victorian elements to the greenery and tree decor by adding feathered fake white birds and doves to the garlands and swags.

4. Light Up the whole venue. While candles and oil lamps are indispensable for Victorian style decorations, lots of white lights everywhere will also bring out the charm and magic of the season.

5. Victorian garden statues can be used for periodic decorations. Decorate their bases with fresh greens and red and white flowers.

6. Tabletop Christmas trees were popular during the Victorian times. Set up mini table top trees and decorate them with lots of Victorian style ornaments and red bows. Wrapping them with ribbons makes the trees look very stylish.

7. The best Victorian style centerpieces to have are topiaries. Although people in the Victorian era created elaborate topiaries in fabulous shapes, regular Christmassy topiaries will look wonderful and carry forward your theme.

8. Victorian style lace wedding wreaths look lovely on the walls and doors. Make them more Christmassy with the addition of small glass ornaments or red bows or some greens and red flowers.

## Attire

The dresses of the Bride and the Groom and those of the Wedding Party are the best way to set a theme. Brides have beautiful choices for Victorian style wedding dresses. Full skirts, corsets, gathered lace, ball gown styles, puffed sleeves, belted waists, full sleeves, hats, gloves, Lace Fans and lace up boots are some of the options you can consider. For outdoor weddings, a Victorian style reversible velvet coat will keep you warm. Pretty Victorian style jewelry in the form of rings, necklaces, chokers and bangles will add to your attire. A dainty purse with a charming old-fashion handkerchief will set off your dress and serve as a keepsake after the wedding.

White was not compulsory for the Wedding dress in Victorian times prior to Queen Victoria's wedding. You can also opt for different colors that suit your wedding color scheme.



The groom will look handsome in a tuxedo with tails and a top hat. The bridesmaids and groomsmen also have a lot of options in keeping with the theme. For more ideas and resources for



Tips & Ideas for Planning  
*Your Dream Wedding*

[www.KnotForLife.com](http://www.KnotForLife.com)





Victorian Wedding Dresses, visit <http://www.KnotForLife.com/>

### Wedding Flowers

Brides in the Victorian era wore white flowers in their hair or on their dresses. Hats, tiaras and veils are a great way to do this. During winter, you can also opt for dried flowers. Large open roses and peonies in burgundy or red and white make breathtaking bridal bouquets for this theme although an all-white

bouquet looks charming too, and was considered a tradition post Queen Victoria's wedding. The addition of lace, rhinestones and little fans adds to the beauty of the traditional ball and cascading bouquets. White Rose, Carnations and Callas make good choices for Corsages and Boutonnieres.

### Cake and Food

Traditional Victorian cakes were multi-tiered and used a lot of fresh flowers. Fortunately, this is

in fashion even now and you will not have a problem getting the cake you wish. Mix both Victorian and Christmassy elements into your Wedding Cake. See our Victorian Christmas Dinner Menu for ideas for your menu. You can also choose to host an elegant high tea in true Victorian style.

### Gifts and Favors

1. Show your affection and appreciation for your bridesmaids by gifting them Victorian style Jewelry Boxes.

2. Some great Wedding Favor Ideas for a Victorian Christmas Wedding include:

- Old-Fashioned Stockings Stuffed with Little Gifts
- Victorian Style Bottle Openers
- Victorian Style Photo Ornaments
- Potpourri Sachets in Lace
- Victorian Christmas Ornaments

### Special Touches

1. Victorian style horse drawn carriages lend the perfect touch for a Victorian style wedding. The couple can choose to drive away or to your reception venue or church in a carriage that is decked with floral decorations similar to those at your ceremony and/or reception.

2. Classical music at your Wedding will set the mood for a Victorian style ball. You can even host a proper 'ball' as a post-wedding party.

3. A Victorian Wedding Certificate will serve as a lovely keepsake of your unforgettable wedding. The Bride can keep a Victorian Bride Doll as her own keepsake.

# Cookies for Christmas



Looking for some fresh ideas for Christmas cookies?  
Try Cherry Dot Cornflake Cookies and Red Snow Sugar Cookies that  
look as yummy as they taste and are sure to be a hit with your kids!

## Cherry Dot Cornflake Cookies

*The cherries on each will tempt kids and the cornflakes make sure they get some nutrition from their holiday food.*

### Ingredients:

2 1/4 cups all-purpose flour  
2 teaspoons baking powder  
1/2 teaspoon salt  
3/4 cup butter, softened  
1 cup sugar  
2 eggs

2 tablespoons fat-free milk  
1 teaspoon vanilla  
1/3 cup finely chopped  
maraschino cherries  
1 1/2 cups Corn Flakes  
15 maraschino cherries

### Directions:

1. In mixing bowl, stir together flour, baking powder and salt. Set aside.

2. In large electric mixer bowl, beat margarine and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs. Beat well. Stir in milk and vanilla. Add flour mixture, combining thoroughly. Stir in

the 1/3 cup cherries.

3. Portion dough using level tablespoon. Shape into balls. Roll in crushed corn flakes. Place about 2-inches apart on baking sheets coated with cooking spray. Top each cookie with a cherry pushed in slightly.

4. Bake at 350° F about 10 minutes or until lightly browned. Remove immediately from baking sheets and cool on wire racks. Store in airtight container.

*Yields about 5 dozen cookies*



## Red Snow Sugar Cookies

*Make colored sugar to sprinkle on the cookies to make 'Red Snow' for your little elves.*

### Ingredients:

1 1/2 c. sifted powdered sugar  
1 c. butter  
1 egg  
1 tsp. vanilla extract  
1/2 tsp. almond extract  
2 1/2 c. all purpose flour  
1 tsp. soda  
1 tsp. cream of tartar  
Red colored sugar (recipe follows)

### Directions:

1. Mix sugar and butter. Add egg and flavorings and mix thoroughly.

2. Measure flour and sift with dry ingredients and blend into butter mixture, mixing well.

3. Refrigerate the dough for 2-3 hours. When ready to bake, divide dough in half and roll out to 3/16 inch thick on lightly floured pastry cloth.

4. Cut out cookies with floured round cookie cutter.

5. Place on a lightly greased baking sheet and sprinkle cookies with powdered colored red sugar.

5. Bake in preheated 375 degree oven for about 10-15 minutes or till done. Let cool on a rack.

### Make Your Own Colored Sugar

You can use store-brought

sugar to sprinkle on the cookies but it is also very easy and inexpensive to make your own. And you can keep in stored in jars for months.

### Ingredients:

1 cup powdered sugar  
2 drops red (or any color) liquid food color

### Directions:

Put regular sugar into a blender to make powdered sugar.

Place powdered sugar into a jar with a tight fitting lid. Drip the food coloring onto the sugar, close the lid, and shake vigorously for about 1 minute.

Adjust color with additional food coloring and repeat if the color is too light.

# *Happy Holidays, Let's Eat!*



*Food is the high point of every  
party. Whether you host a seated  
brunch or lunch, or a casual evening  
buffet, we've got you covered with  
our delectable party recipes.*



## *Strawberry Mousse Cake with Mirror Glaze*

**Brighten your Christmas dinner table with this creamy creation** that can be made as light or as rich as you like. Making a mousse cake with a glaze that has a mirror-like glossy shine does not require you to be a bakery chef. With some tricks of the trade, you can make this beautiful dessert and please your guests during Christmas. And if you think strawberries were only for summer, just wait till you see the reaction to this dessert. And of course, you can always choose to

make it richer to suit your tastes and the occasion.

The recipe can easily be classified into three parts. The first is making the sponge cake layer. This is where you can choose to make your cake light or rich. You can choose a chocolate flavored cake and make the cake as dense or light as you like. The second part is the light, airy and creamy mousse that tastes like ice-cream. Fresh strawberries make a very tasty mousse but you can also

use store-brought puree. The final part of this dessert is the glaze which is not as difficult as it looks and you will soon find that out and there are many ways to make your glaze.

Fresh or frozen strawberries both work well for this recipe. Depending upon your choice, you may also add red food coloring to the glaze or mousse. We omitted it in both places. For garnishing, you may choose to drizzle white chocolate or use fruits.

### Ingredients Required:

- 22 cm/9inch Sponge Cake Layer about 1.5 cm in depth

### For Mousse

- 350g strawberry puree
- 4 tbsp icing sugar
- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp kirsch
- 17g gelatin powder dissolved in 3 tbsp boiling water
- 300ml whipping cream + 3 - 4 tbsp icing sugar



### For the Mirror Glaze:

- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 tbsp kirsch
- 1 tbsp water
- 1 tbsp unflavored gelatin
- Few drops of red food coloring
- 1 ½ pints of strawberries(18 oz)
- ¾ cup sugar
- ¾ cup water

### Special Equipment:

- 9" Cake Ring

### Making the Mousse

1. Dissolve gelatin in 3 tbsp of boiling water.
2. Boil puree with icing sugar in a saucepan. Cool.
3. Stir warm gelatin solution into strawberry puree. Stir in lemon juice and kirsch.
4. Whip cream with icing sugar till it resembles the texture of mousse.
5. Stir cooled strawberry puree

aside until spongy and soft.

3. Measure 1 ½ cups Strawberry juice into a small saucepan and bring to a simmer; pour over gelatin mixture and stir to dissolve gelatin. If required, tint to desired color with red food coloring. Place bowl over bowl of ice water and stir occasionally until the mixture is syrupy and just begins to thicken (do not let jell); remove from ice water.

4. When mixture is syrupy, pour a 1/16-inch layer over the top of cake. Refrigerate until set.

### Assembling the Mousse Cake

1. Place the cake ring on the plate you would like to serve your dessert on and trim the sponge cake layer to fit right in.

2. Soak the cake with leftover strawberry juice or syrup to make it moist.

3. Spoon mousse over the cake and flatten with a spatula. If you do not get a perfectly even finish, freeze the cake for 20 minutes and then spread some more mousse over the frozen layer to get an even finish.

4. Freeze the cake for 30 minutes before adding the glaze. When the mousse is completely set, pour the warm syrupy glaze over the cake. Refrigerate until the glaze is set.

### Garnish

Let the mood and theme of your party decide the garnish. You could go in for a soft white chocolate drizzle or if you are opting for a chocolate sponge base, you can garnish with chocolate shavings and shapes and even chocolate dipped strawberries.

into whipped cream till well mixed.

### Making the Glaze:

1. Make Strawberry Juice: Place chopped strawberries in saucepan and crush them to start juices flowing. Place over low heat, add sugar and water and simmer slowly for 10 minutes. Pour juice and pulp through damp jelly bag or cheesecloth-lined colander and drain into a bowl.

2. Place lemon juice, kirsch, and water in a small bowl. Sprinkle gelatin over this mixture; set



## Creamy Sweet Potato Pudding

*Give the traditional Sweet Potato pudding a twist by cooking and serving it differently this Christmas.*

**For this recipe, sweet potatoes are first cooked, mashed, then baked and again mashed before finally serving. Baking the already cooked potatoes gives the pudding its warm taste and also helps infuse the aroma of cinnamon in it.**

*Tip: When baking, ensure that you do not bake it too much so that the pudding sets and loses its creamy texture.*

### Ingredients:

- 3 pounds sweet potato (white or yellow)
- 12 ounces sweetened condensed milk + some more for drizzling
- 1/2 cup butter – melted
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon

### Directions:

1. Cook sweet potatoes by boiling them. Allow to cool completely and then peel off the skin.
2. Add condensed milk, butter and cinnamon and mix well.

3. Bake this mixture for 15 minutes till the pudding is slightly golden.

4. Remove from oven. Let cool slightly and mash the pudding again with the back of a spoon.

5. To serve, spoon pudding into a bowl and press down slightly to flatten.

6. Reserve some pudding and place it in a pastry bag fitted with a star or any other decorative nozzle. Pipe out florets onto the flattened top of the pudding.

7. Finally, drizzle some more condensed milk over the pudding.



## *Spinach & Cheese Pie*

*Some things only get better with time. Remember the hearty Christmas breakfast pie? Well, you can cook it up the old-fashioned way (made easy, of course) and dish it to your party guests at any time.*

It will provide a relief from the other sweet and spicy stuff and bring back the familiar Christmas time to everyone!

### **Ingredients:**

2 pounds spinach, washed and chopped  
1 onion, chopped  
1/2 pound mushrooms, sliced  
3 tablespoons vegetable oil  
2 cups ricotta  
2 tablespoons dried basil  
2 eggs  
1 cup feta cheese  
3/4 cup butter, melted  
1 lb filo pastry dough

### **Directions:**

1. Steam the spinach until soft. Sauté the onions and mushrooms. Stir together with the spinach.
2. In a medium bowl beat the eggs well. Stir in the ricotta,

feta, and basil.

5. Butter a deep dish pie pan. Place a sheet of filo on the bottom of the pan, and brush melted butter over the sheet. Repeat until there are 5 or 6 sheets in the pan. Spread the ricotta mixture over the filo. Layer 5 or 6 more sheets of filo brushed with butter on top of the cheese. Spread spinach mixture over the filo. Top the pie with 5 or 6 more sheets of filo brushed with butter. Trim dough to the edge of the pie dish.

5. Bake at 375 degrees F (175 degrees C) for about 1 hour, or until pie is golden brown.

***Makes 1 deep dish pie***



## Garlic, Herb and Cheese Bread

*Winter calls for home-baked bread and holidays call for elaborate recipes. How about one that only looks like it is elaborate and is sure to please crowds during Christmas time? The cheese topped loaves of fresh garlic; herb and cheese bread will whet all appetites.*

### Ingredients:

1 1/8 cups warm water  
3 cups bread flour  
2 tablespoons dry milk powder  
2 tablespoons white sugar  
1 1/2 teaspoons salt  
2 tablespoons margarine  
2 teaspoons active dry yeast  
2 teaspoons garlic powder  
3 tablespoons dried minced onion

1-1/2 cup shredded or crumbed Cheddar cheese

### Directions:

1. Add water, flour, powdered milk, sugar, salt, butter or margarine and yeast into bread machine in the order suggested by your manufacturer. Set for basic

cycle with the light crust.

2. When indicated by your manufacturer, add the garlic powder, onion flakes and 1 cup of the shredded cheese.

3. When the loaves are done, sprinkle the remaining cheese over the loaf and bake for another 7-10 minutes.



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*Christmas Tree  
Cupcakes*

**Turn to Next Page for How-to**

# Christmas Tree Cupcakes

*Charm everyone with these pretty little cupcakes with little Christmas trees sitting atop them. You will be surprised at how easy it is to make them and how fast you can whip up batches to feed a crowd! Whipped cream and one single icing tip is all you need to make these.*

## What You Will Need:

- Cupcakes, any flavor
- Sweetened Whipped Cream
- Green Food Coloring
- Chopped candied fruit, red

## Equipment Need:

- Icing Bag
- Open Star Icing Tip

## How To:

1. Whip whipping cream till stiff peaks form.
2. Reserve some plain white icing for the floret border and add a tiny drop of green food color to the rest.
3. Mix the color into the cream very lightly to get a marbled effect.
4. Spread this icing on each cupcake with an icing knife or spatula.

## Making the Trees

1. Mix in green food coloring to the remaining icing to make the trees.
2. Fit an icing bag with an open star tip (No. 17 or 18) and fill the bag with the green whipped cream.
3. To start making the trees, pipe out cream in center of the cupcake and bring outwards. For the first few lines, bulge out the icing in the center and then bring out. This will give the base of the tree some height for the other 'branches' to stand.

## Floret Border:

With the same icing tip and plain white whipping cream, make little florets all around the edge of the cupcake.

Pipe out cream and press slightly on the same place to form a little floret. Make florets close to each other all around the rim.

## Decorations:

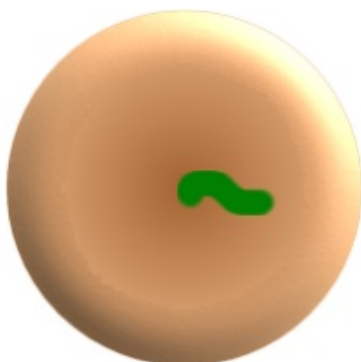
1. Sort out red colored candied fruit from a mixed pack or use dried red berries.
2. Chop them up and puck into the trees to make tree decorations.

## Tips:

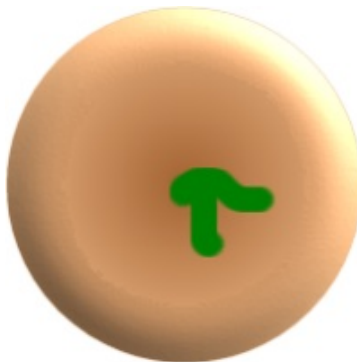
Whether preparing for your family or for a party, assembly line is the best way to get these done quick and well. Spread cream icing on all cupcakes first and then make trees on all of them.

Try making the trees and florets on a plate first. Once you get the hang of it, start making them on the cupcakes.

Step 1



Step 2



Step 3





*Celebrate Christmas with the Elegance of Bygone Eras. Host a Victorian Dinner Party for friends and family. Decorate with Victorian Elegance, prepare a ten-course meal (the easy way) and enjoy old-fashioned parlor games. The ten-course meal provides a great way to invite guests with special dietary requirements. There is something for everyone!*

## Decorations

The dinner table was actually one of the main decorations for a Victorian dinner party. Place a pretty floral centerpiece in the center of the table. On either side of the of the floral arrangement it was customary to place stands filled with fresh seasonal fruits, then beside the fruit stands, a dish filled with small assorted cakes.

Small dishes of celery, olives, or radishes arranged nicely filled the rest of the space on the table. Each person's setting should be a small work of art and most Victorian dinner parties included name cards. Since its Christmas, use regular traditional Christmas decorations.

## Food and Dinner

Victorian dinner parties were no small affair. There were usually between seven and nine courses, and the table was lavishly decorated. The Victorian dinner party menu presented here is a pared down version of a Victorian dinner menu created in 1886, by the founder of a cooking school.

There should be ample time between each course for all in attendance to finish and enjoy the course.

### First Course

#### Cream of Asparagus Soup

Recipe

2 c. asparagus, chopped  
3 tbsp. onions, chopped  
1 recipe Cream of Chicken Soup

Directions:

Steam asparagus and onion; puree in blender. Heat cream of chicken soup gradually over low heat; add asparagus and onion. Serve warm.

### Second Course

#### Lettuce Salad With Cheese Fingers

Chop up your favorite greens and toss with a light vinaigrette. Serve with these delicious appetizers:

#### Cheese Fingers

Recipe

2 slices of toast  
1 tablespoon cream  
2 tablespoons grated Parmesan  
2 ounces sweet almonds  
1 tablespoon chopped parsley  
Pepper and salt to taste

Directions:

Blanch the almonds, and cut them in four, fry in the butter till a golden brown, and drain well. Mix together the cream and cheese, pepper, salt and chopped parsley, and spread the mixture on the toast; cut into lengths about one and one-half inches wide, sprinkle the almonds on top; serve hot.

### Third Course

#### Roast Chicken with Potato Balls

Save yourself some time and hassle and pick up a couple of roast chickens from your favorite grocery store. You're already doing enough cooking there is no need to make roast chicken too.

### Potato Balls

Recipe

1 c. mashed potatoes  
1 egg yolk  
1 egg white  
3 tbsp. Flour

Directions:

Mix all together. Beat egg white until stiff and fold into mixture. Drop by tablespoons into deep, hot fat until browned. Makes about 25 small puffy balls.

### Fourth Course

#### Ham Timbales

Recipe

½ Tablespoon granulated gelatin  
1 ½ tablespoons cold water  
¾ Cup chicken stock  
1 Cup chopped cooked ham  
1 Cup cream (beaten until thick)  
1 Tablespoon sherry wine  
Lettuce Leaves

Directions:

Soak granulated gelatin in water add to chicken stock. Add ham and stir till mixture thickens. Add cream and wine and stir. Mould, chill and serve on lettuce leaves.

### Fifth Course

#### Green Pea Au Gratin

Recipe

2 packages frozen peas (10 ounces each)  
2 cans (5 ounces each) water chestnuts, drained  
1 can cream of mushroom soup, undiluted  
1 1/2 cups grated Cheddar cheese

Directions:

Combine peas with sliced water chestnuts; mix in soup and cheese. Bake at 350° for 20 to 30 minutes.

### **Sixth Course**

#### **Mousse Au Chocolat**

Recipe

4 egg whites  
pinch of salt  
8 oz bittersweet chocolate,  
chopped  
1 orange (if using Grand  
Marnier)  
2 Tablespoons sugar  
6 Tablespoons heavy cream  
2 Tablespoons Grand Marnier,  
Kahlua or Crème de Menthe

Directions:

Put the egg whites into a mixer with a pinch of salt. Beat until stiff. Melt the chocolate in top of a double boiler. With a vegetable peeler, peel a strip from the orange and finely grate the rest of the orange. When the eggs are stiff, add the sugar and whisk until glossy and they form a light meringue. Pour the cream into a small pan, bring to a boil then pour over chocolate. Let stand 15 seconds then stir. Remove from water bath and stir in the liqueur and orange zest. Add the chocolate to egg whites, fold gently until mixed. To Serve: Pour into mousse pots, ramekins or stemmed glasses. Cover and chill for 2 hours. Decorate with a bit of the orange peel and serve well chilled.

### **Seventh Course**

#### **Pastries**

After all the work done on the

other courses just buy a package of pastries from a local bakery.

### **Eighth Course**

#### **Lemon Sherbet**

### **Ninth Course**

#### **Ice Cream**

### **Tenth Course**

#### **Coffee**

To end the meal, finger bowls with a sliver of lemon in water should be given to each person. The water should be slightly warm in small dainty bowls. Make sure to also provide each person with a towel.

## **Parlor Games**

After dinner it was customary for Victorians to play parlor games. There were many games that were played. Some have been lost and we don't know how they were played but many are still remembered, and some have even become favorite games played mostly by children. Here are a few games that you can try at your Victorian dinner party.

#### **Lookabout**

A person shows everyone a little knick-knack in the room. All the guests are to leave while the person hides it. When they return, everyone is to look for the item until they spot it. They are to sit down when they find the item. The

last one to find it loses (or has to be "it"). The game is more difficult if those who are playing don't sit down immediately when they find the item and instead wander a bit before sitting.

#### **You're Never Fully Dressed without a Smile**

One person is selected to be "it." That person is the only one in the group who is allowed to smile. He or she can do anything they want to try and get someone to smile. If someone smiles, he or she becomes it. The person who never smiles is declared the winner.

#### **Blindman's Bluff**

One person is blindfolded, and all other guests scatter around the room. When the blindfolded person catches someone, they have to try and guess who they have captured or the prisoner is then freed and the blindman must continue his/her pursuit until he/she can identify the person caught. The blindfold then changes hands.

#### **Change Seats!**

This is a variation on a Victorian game, but a warning to those attempting this one, clear the room of precious little decorations, it can get a little wild! All but one person sits in a chair. The person in the middle asks someone in the circle "Do you love your neighbor?" The person selected then has to state either "No." at which point the people in the chairs on each

side of him/her have to change seats QUICKLY. If they aren't quick enough, the person in the middle may slip into one of the vacated seats, making the unseated neighbor it. The chosen person may also answer, "Yes, I love my neighbor, except those who (fill in the blank....are wearing blue, or have brown hair, or play tennis, etc) Everyone who fits the description (ie is wearing blue for example) has to jump up and change seats, while the person in the middle tries to steal one. The person left standing has to ask another person if he/she loves his/her neighbor, beginning a new round.

### Charades

Is a classic Victorian game that most people know how to play.

### The Name Game

Each is given 10 small pieces of paper, and a pen or pencil and asked to write down the names of 10 famous people, leaders, movie stars, authors, sports figures, politicians, artists, inventors, scientists, etc. Fold the papers, and put them into a bowl. Everyone should be seated in a large circle. Each round is limited to 30 seconds, so have a watch with a second hand available. Player One pulls out a name, and tries to get the person beside him/her to guess the name by giving clues, but never actually saying the name or what it starts with. Gestures are also no allowed. After the name is guessed, the clue giver can continue pulling names out of the hat until their time is up. The guesser gets to keep their pieces of paper, and the clue giver gets credit also. When

thirty second are up, the bowl is passed to the next person and the clue giver now becomes the guesser and there is a new clue giver. The bowl proceeds around the circle until everyone has guessed and everyone has given clues. The one with the most correct guesses wins.

### Dictionary

Each person is given paper and a pen or pencil. Provide a dictionary. Each person uses the dictionary in turn to look up a word and writes down the real definition (in simplified form) and then makes up three other definitions. The word and the definitions are read to the rest of the players and each has to guess which definition they believe is the correct one. The player gets points for each person he/she fools.

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# *Mantle Décor for Christmas*

## **Traditional Decor**

Lots of winter greens, pine cones and white lights cheer up this fireplace. A mantel runner, wreath and a swag all fashioned from greens decorate this mantle.



*The rich color of the wood is set out beautifully by the golden decorations and greenery. Golden cones of varying heights are placed on either side of the gold framed mirror on the mantle.*

*The decorated Christmas tree continues the same color scheme providing added warmth to the décor.*

## *More Mantle Decorating Ideas*

**Icicle City:** Purchase icicles in varying sizes from craft stores and arrange in the form of a cityscape. Add fake snow or snowflake confetti or even some greens to complete your snow city.

*This rustic stone fireplace is made cheerful by the addition of winter greens and white candles placed on candle stands of varying heights. A simple wreath decorated with white lights adds to the charm.*

*The green and white color scheme can be continued throughout the room from the Christmas tree to flower arrangements.*



## *More Mantle Decorating Ideas*

**Candlescapes:** Make your mantle and your entire room glow with candlelight. Place pillar candles of varying heights and thickness in different colors or a favorite color scheme to create a candlecape on your mantel. Place some votives or round candles on stands and add some decorative marbles on the mantel floor.



### Simple and Festive

Tall flower arrangements using seasonal amaryllis, gerberas or carnations in red pots, spaced apart and a festive red poinsettia garland mantle runner.

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