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Letter from the Editor

Dear Friend,

Whether you remember the first half-baked Chocolate Chip Cookie you gifted to your Grandma or the road trip with your family in a borrowed Chevy to celebrate Christmas with your parents or the paper snowflake garland that you helped your grandchildren make, Christmas memories last for a lifetime. This 3rd issue of Celebrating Christmas magazine brings glad tidings of another festive season which is sure to add to those sweet memories.

We all agree to the fact that it is our friends and family that render Christmas so special for us. The mirth and the cheer on a family dinner table or at a friends' pre-Christmas party is infectious. This year, you can lead the way by throwing a party for all your friends. A Caroling party for elders and kids alike or a 'Tree Trimming Party' especially for young girls or a 'Santa' themed party can each set the right mood for Christmas. Welcome your friends to the festive warmth of your abode by decorating in and out. Let the Christmassy air flow right through your front door, the stairway and the dinner table to the guest rooms.

Looking for ideas to make this Christmas special for your kids? Bring them in the mood with Christmas crafts and coloring pages and then, give them a 'Magical Christmas!' They are also sure to love the idea of a 'Candy Cane Christmas'. And you are bound to be surrounded by very eager little elves when you start baking the delicacies we have in store or when you sit down to create beautiful homemade gifts for all those on your gift list.

As for your own self, our short story 'My Special Christmas Window' will inspire you to cherish every little bit of Christmas!

Happy Holidays!

Lata Tokhi



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ON OUR COVER

Dress up your front door to welcome Christmas guests. See all our beautiful ideas on Page no. 34.



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Traditional Nut Roll

A Slovenian Temptation

The traditional Slovenian festive treat, Potica or the Traditional Nut Roll as we know it, is known everywhere from Croatia and Poland to America, but there is something about it that makes you think about Slovenia every time you set your eyes upon it. Maybe it is the little details like cutting off the edges of the rolled bread to make buns or using a bundt pan to give it the traditional look that reminds us of Christmas being celebrated in a Slovenian household.

Potica (pronounced po-teet-sah) or Povitica is a yeasty cake filled with a delicious nut stuffing. While we are mostly familiar with poppy seed, walnut and coffee fillings, the Nut Roll Cake can be made using a number of other fillings including tarragon, vanilla, cottage cheese, cream cheese, chocolate chips, honey, hazelnuts, cinnamon etc.

Although originally the dough of the Potica was so thin and wide that a newspaper could be read through it, the popular version today has thicker dough although a thin sheet-like dough produces excellent results and a different texture.

We give you here our best recipe for making this delightful treat for your family this Christmas along with hints and tips for many variations you can choose to suit your tastes.

Ingredients for the Dough:

- 1 cup whole milk
- 1/3 cup honey
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/4 cup (1/2 stick) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1/4 cup warm water
- 2 packages dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 2 large eggs
- 5 cups all-purpose flour
- Unsalted butter to brush on the crust

beat the mixture with an electric or handheld beater for 2 minutes. Gradually, add the second half of the flour so as to knead without sticking. Knead till the dough comes together to form a ball. Continue kneading on a well-floured surface till the dough is smooth.

Grease your hands with some cooking oil and pat the dough with it. Grease a bowl and place the dough in it. The greasing process will prevent forming of a skin over the surface of the dough while it is kept aside.

Cover the dough and keep it in a warm place; let rise until double in bulk (approximately 2 hours). Meanwhile make the nut filling. (choose from the options below). Knead dough slightly to get out puffiness and let stand for another 10 minutes. Roll out the dough in the shape of a rectangle, approximately 20 by 30 inches.

Spread the Nut Filling Mixture evenly on the surface. Sprinkle raisins, cinnamon or any other addition that you might like to make. Roll the bread tightly towards yourself and from the wider ends just like you would do for a jelly roll. Moisten the seams and seal them together at the ends.

Cut off the ends of the roll to make individual buns. Place the roll in prepared baking pans and let rise for 1 hour. Brush rolls with melted butter to retain softness. Brush the roll with egg wash if you want the crust to turn out dark brown. Bake in 350 Degrees over for 40-60 minutes. Take out of oven and brush again with melted butter. Cool for 5 minutes on wire racks before turning out of the pans.

Makes: 4-5 rolls, 8x4 inch.



Tightly rolled dough will give you the perfect 'Swirl' design when the roll is baked and cut up.

The mildly sweetened dough is rolled flat, covered with filling and then tightly rolled up so that the roll of bread has a swirl design on it. The roll can be baked in bread loaf pans or as we choose to do, in a bundt pan which is a special shaped fluted pan with a tube in the middle. The roll can also be cut up and baked as individual buns.

Making the Dough

Add honey, butter and salt to hot milk and mix well. Allow milk to cool down to lukewarm. Dissolve yeast in 1/4th cup water along with sugar and leave for 5 minutes. Add the milk mixture to the yeast mixture. Beat eggs slightly and add to mix. Now add half of flour to this mixture and

Nut Roll Fillings

There are at least 50 different Potica nut fillings and there can be many more once you start getting creative. Mix and match your favorite ingredients for a nut filling as unique as every household. Nuts can be ground in a meat grinder or pulsed to a meal in the food processor.

Walnut Filling

70 g butter
3 egg yolks
200-250 g sugar
some cloves, cinnamon and lemon rind
500 g walnuts
2 beaten egg whites
Instant Coffee

Mix all ingredients and spread on the dough.

Poppy Seed Filling

300 g poppy seed
0.5 litre cream or milk
3 egg yolks
200-250 g vanilla flavored sugar
1 tablespoon breadcrumbs
3 tablespoons fresh cream
70 g fresh butter
3 beaten egg whites

Cook poppy seed in milk or cream and leave to boil for an hour. Cool and then add the other ingredients, folding in beaten egg whites at the end.

Tarragon Filling

1 tablespoon butter
5 tablespoons breadcrumbs
1 litre cream
3 tablespoons sugar
2 egg yolks
2 tablespoons ground tarragon (also peppermint)

Fry breadcrumbs in butter, add other ingredients.

Vanilla Filling

5 egg yolks
230 g sugar
one vanilla stick
5 tablespoons cream
3 beaten egg whites

Mix all ingredients.

Cottage Cheese Filling

500 g cottage cheese
125 ml cream
100 g butter
2 egg yolks
100 g sugar
lemon rind
2 beaten egg whites

Mix all ingredients.

Honey & Walnut Filling

250 g honey
300-400 g walnuts
2 tablespoons rum
250 g raisins
3 tablespoons cream

Mix the ingredients. Add some milk if the filling is too thick.

Walnut and Raisin Filling

3 cups finely ground walnuts
1 cup crushed raisins
1 cup brown sugar
1 Tbsp. dry bread crumbs
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1/2 cup honey
1/2 cup thick cream
1/2 cup butter
2 egg whites, beaten stiff

Mix walnuts and raisins, and grind them together to keep raisins from clumping. Combine all dry ingredients.

Warm the cream and honey, and melt the butter in this mixture. Add cream mixture to dry ingredients and mix completely. Fold in beaten egg whites last. Let filling cool as you roll out dough.

Serving Suggestions

Nut Rolls make great accompaniments to Ham, Sausage, Bacon and Fruit. You can top your nut rolls with chocolate or caramel sauce, whipped cream and chopped fruit, ice cream, custard pudding or sauce etc. Or you could top your baked nut roll with the likes of cream cheese, cheese, butter, honey and cinnamon and then heat before serving.

Freezing Nut Rolls

Nut Rolls may be frozen for upto 6 months after being baked when wrapped properly. Thaw them to room temperature when you need to serve and follow our 'Serving Suggestions' above.

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Above:

Turn ordinary glasses into works of art for décor or gift giving by using glass paints available in craft stores. Use bright holiday colors like red and green to give the glasses a shaded effect.

Festive Ideas

Below:

Turn a fruit bowl into a quick, easy and festive centerpiece. Tuck roses or any other seasonal flowers between green or red apples for a bountiful and pretty Christmas dinner table centerpiece.



Using any flat brush, paint half the glass with red paint and then complete with green. For the mosaic effect, use the black glass paint liner to create a mosaic design and then fill in the mosaic blocks.



Right:

Use old, cracked teacups as candle holders for dripless tapers. Fill the cups with colored marbles to hold your candles upright. Gather together a few such taper holders along with other Christmas candles and décor for an easy uplift for any corner of your home or use individually on your dinner table.

Bottom Right:

A pretty way to hang multiple stockings is to use alphabetic brass stocking hangers that spell out a Christmasy word such as Noel, Joy, Santa, Peace etc.

Below:

Extend touches of greenery upwards. Dress up your chandelier for the season by adding little boughs of evergreens and festive red ribbon between the glowing lights for a cheery Christmas touch that will liven up the room.





There are so many possibilities for this simple little curve of hard candy. Use this sweet treat all around your home and office and have “A Candy Cane Christmas”!

It is not unusual for a person to buy a box of candy canes around the holiday. They are decorative on the tree and a sweet treat the kids can enjoy on occasion. However, one box never seems like enough. A second box is purchased and maybe a third. After that, the children see some brightly colored candy canes, instead of the traditional red and white striped confections. They just have to have them.

Thus begins the large accumulation of candy canes that won't all fit on the tree. In the end, you have no idea where to put them all! Why not make them the theme this holiday season? Have "A Candy Cane Christmas"!

There are so many possibilities for this simple little curve of hard candy. Below are some ways you can use the candy cane this year which you may have never thought of before:



Decorate the tree

I'm not talking about a candy cane here or a candy cane there – Decorate your entire tree with this sweet treat this year. Leave the ornaments



safely tucked away and go wild with candy canes instead! With white lights, decorating with only red and white striped candy canes will create a simple, gorgeous Christmas tree you will be proud to show off. With colored lights, use any flavor of candy cane all over your tree! With colors like blue, red, orange, white, green, and white with colored stripes, your tree will take on a festive look no one could resist. *You may need to keep extra canes on hand, as "sticky fingers" might take one or two during the holiday season.* Here are two suggestions:

a. This is an easy way to decorate your office tree, as well. Finding decorations in damp, musty back rooms can be a real nightmare. Simply use candy canes this year on your tree at work and watch it shine! If you have children coming in often, they can pick a candy cane off the tree each visit, too!

b. Candy canes are a safe decoration! If you have small children in your home or at work, you can hang these with

confidence and not worry about broken glass ornaments.

Hang them on the walls

Most people decorate with garland and wreaths during the holidays. Add a little pizzazz to these solid green decorations by hanging candy canes on them. Imagine a room hung with garland around the top of the wall. Now, imagine that same room with garland and candy canes!

Use them as a center piece or decorative addition anywhere in your home

All you need is an empty Christmas tin or vase of some sort to make a pretty candy cane centerpiece. With a large handful of candy canes placed inside, this tin or vase can be put anywhere around the home or office to spruce it up. Not only will this decoration be the hit of your home or office, but when you use a plastic container to hold the candy canes it will be a safe decoration.

You can also fill a flat tray or plate with fake snow and create Candy Cane shapes. Shapes for symbols like hearts, hope and peace are very simple to make and bring a festive touch to any side table.

Decorate your car

There is no reason you cannot replace that hanging air freshener this holiday season with a candy cane! By tying a pretty red ribbon in it, you will liven up your car with this festive decoration.

Place a candy cane on all your presents

Instead of a bow, add this tasty treat to the top of your gifts. For outside family members and friends, be sure to find out their favorite color (or flavor) and add it to their gift bag or the top of their gift box.

Cook with candy canes

In Christmas recipe books and online, you can find dozens of recipes for these red and white

chocolate chips until melted and smooth.

Heat bark until melted and smooth (we use the microwave to melt chocolate but it can be done easily doing a double boiler).

Stir crushed candy into almond bark. Pour bark into pan. Drizzle with melted chocolate chips.

Gently zigzag a narrow metal spatula through the chocolate and peppermint layers to create a swirled effect.

Let stand for several hours until firm or chill 30 minutes. Carefully break candy into pieces. Store tightly covered.

Another eternal favorite is to use candy canes as cocoa stirrers. Or you can take create a personalized stirrer for giving as gifts to friends and family by dipping plastic spoons in melted chocolate and rolling the chocolate-covered spoon in crushed candy cane. These 'chocolate spoons', once set, can be wrapped with cellophane and ribbon.

What is so nice about making your holiday a "Candy Cane Christmas"? For one thing, it is really inexpensive! Candy canes won't break your holiday budget this year, so you will have more money to spend on important things – like presents! Candy canes are often found in bulk at discount stores and dollar stores, so you can get dozens of these for decorating at a fraction of the price of other ornamental pieces.

No matter how you use your candy canes, making this year a "Candy Cane Christmas" will make everyone's holiday jolly and bright!



Create simple shapes from Candy Canes in a tray or plate and surround with fake snow. Kids will especially love doing this.

Craft ideas

There are even crafts you can make with candy canes, like reindeer and hearts, which will be perfect for both your Christmas tree and your car decorations. Gluing together the shapes created above is also a fun activity for kids.

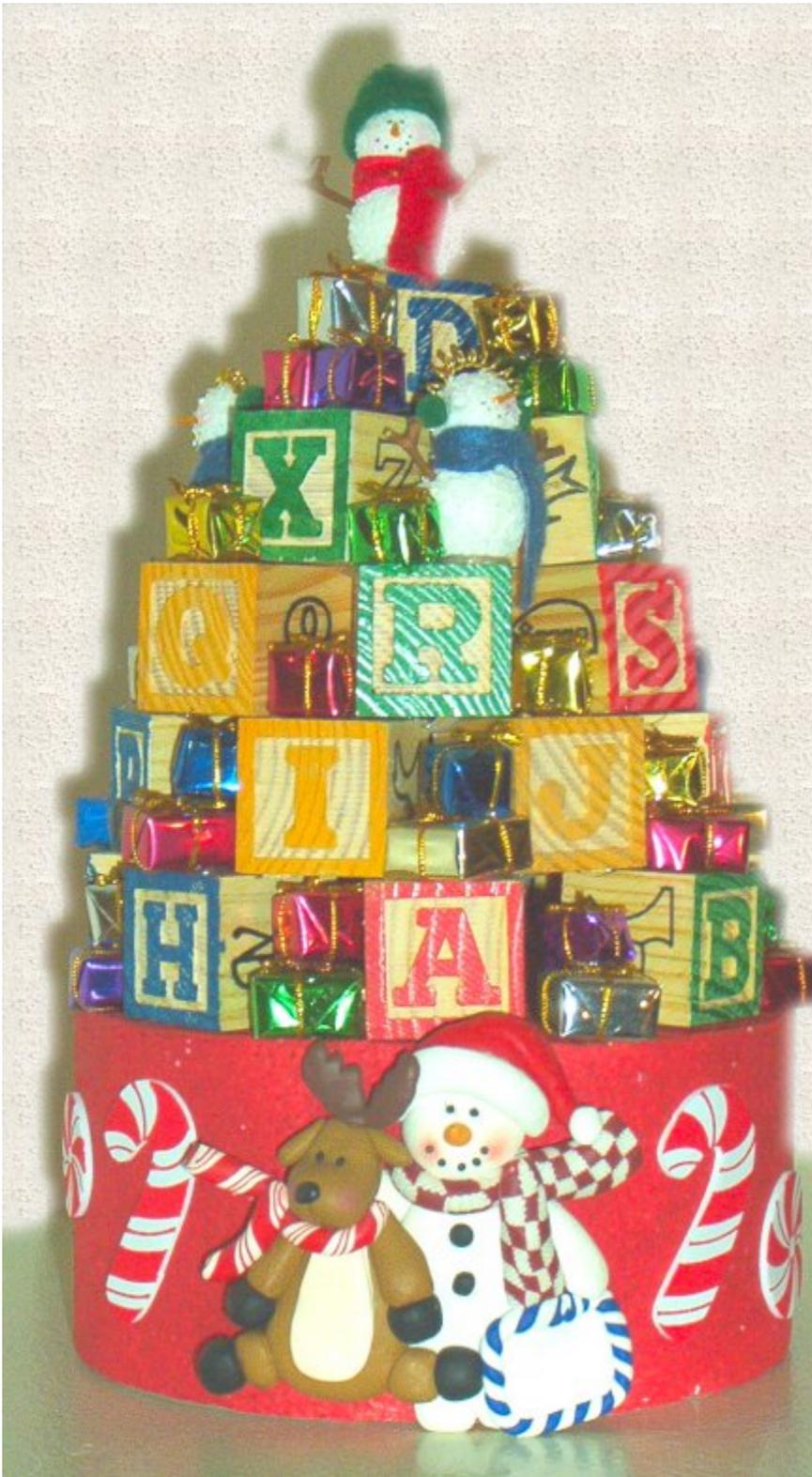
**See Candy Cane Crafts for detailed instructions.*

striped delights. If you have children in the house, they can have fun crushing the canes for cookies or candy recipes! Here is one of our favorite recipe:

Mint Bark Candy

- 1/3 c. chocolate chips
- 1 lb. vanilla almond bark
- 3/4 c. finely crushed candy cane

Line cookie sheet with foil. Heat



Whether you are decorating for your Baby's first Christmas or decorating a nursery or simply want to use baby blocks which your kids have outgrown, this pretty alphabet tree is the answer to all of them!

MATERIALS:

1 Styrofoam disc – 6" diameter, 3" high
Christmas red craft paint
1 Dough ornament (I used Reindeer with Snowman) 3" high
4 x 2" foam candy canes
6 x 1" foam candies
24 Wooden Alphabet blocks
3 boxes of miniature gift wrapped presents
3 Miniature snowman 1 ½" high
Glue Gun

HOW TO:

Paint Styrofoam disc with red craft paint. Let dry

Glue 7 blocks around outside edge of the Styrofoam disc leaving approx. 1" between each.

Glue 7 blocks in a circle on top of first row approx. ¼ inch in to form a slightly smaller circle.

Glue 6 blocks in a circle on top of the second row approx. ¼ inch in to form a slightly smaller circle.

Glue 3 blocks in a tight circle on top of the third row.

Glue 1 block in the center of the fourth row.

Glue 1 snowman on top of the top block.

Glue the other 2 snowmen on top of 2 blocks of third row.

Randomly glue miniature presents between blocks from bottom row to top row to fill in all spaces. Glue the ornament onto the base, front and center. Glue candy canes and candies around the base as shown in picture.

Alphabet Christmas Tree

- Sandy Kay



The Christmas season is a time to decorate your home with festive holiday finery. While you're probably accustomed to decorating the rooms of your home, there is one area that's often neglected. It's the stairwell -- and it deserves to be dressed for the holidays as well!

Check out the following fun ideas for making your stairwell area festive and beautiful:

Gorgeous Green Garlands

This idea is traditional yet always a great way to make your stairs more festive. There are various ways to attach evergreen garlands to your railings. If there's space between the rails, you can weave the garland in. For trickier areas, try attaching the garland with heavy-duty staples.

Sophisticated Swags

Head to your local fabric shop to find material for stairway swags. Good choices include tulle, netting, or even silk. Go for shimmering jewel tones like emerald or ruby. Or, choose sparkling shades like gold and silver. You can add evergreen boughs to your swags attached with wire or even hot glue.

Wonderful Wreaths

Wreaths aren't just for doors anymore! Hang them down the length of your stairs, evenly spaced. You can use any size wreath that you desire. The wreaths you choose can be identical, or different. It's up to you!

Lovely Lights

A simple way to spruce up your stairs is by weaving white, red, or green lights

through the railings. You could even go for multicolored lights for a fun, whimsical look.

More Tips for Holiday Stairs:

When thinking of ways to decorate your stairs, choose items that reflect the colors and items of the Christmas season. Stairs that are extra-wide can be adorned with cute faux topiaries in bright red pots. The red and green combination is perfect for adding some holiday beauty. If there is a wall beside your stairs (as there usually is,) take advantage of it! Hang Christmas-themed art or holiday wreaths to jazz up the plain space in festive tones.

Most importantly, be creative, and have fun. Christmas comes but once a year, so make the most of it all over your home!



Selecting the *Perfect Tree* for Your Holiday Décor

by Rebecca Lanham

There is no other Christmas icon like the beloved Christmas tree. With its festive decorations, glittering lights, sparkling tinsel, and fresh aroma, this gorgeous decoration can really make (or break) your holiday. Since it is such an important part of the season, you should know how to buy a correct tree for your home.

Your Christmas is what brings character to your Christmas celebrations and decorations. So let's get the basics right and choose the perfect tree.

You can purchase your Christmas tree in two types of places:

1. Retail Lots
2. Christmas Tree Farms

The retail lots of Christmas trees pop up everywhere almost immediately after the Thanksgiving holiday is through. Christmas tree farms are becoming more popular and you may be able to find one in your town or a neighboring county. The process of buying your tree from these locations differs slightly.

Buying from a retail lot:

1. Measure the area you will be putting your tree before you start traveling to the retail lot. Many times you won't have the needed tools to trim or cut-down when you get home, so the tree has to fit in at the start.
2. There are many types of Christmas trees you can buy: various fir trees, spruce trees and pine trees. Do some research and find out which type you would like to hang your holiday ornaments on. Look for a type that is grown and shipped right from your area, as long travel from out of state can damage the tree.
3. The trees at the retail lot should be stored in a shaded location, but the actual lot should be well-lit for viewing.
4. Ask the retail lot employee or owner about tree shipments. A

tree purchased soon after it has arrived is normally newly cut, so quite fresh.

5. You can look for tree freshness by testing the tree's needles. On most Christmas tree varieties, the needles will snap in half if you bend them quickly. Some say it feels and looks similar to a fresh carrot snapping. However, with pines, the needles should not break in half at all! They only snap in half when excessively dry.



6. Always look for clues which will tell you if the tree is dry and dying. You will see things like a great deal of needles around the tree on the ground, brown or faded green foliage, a musty odor, and bark that may be wrinkled. Don't pick a tree if you have any doubts about its freshness. If all the trees on a particular lot have these characteristics, it will be to your benefit to seek another retail lot.
7. There are some types of trees that do better in certain climates. Trees in their optimal climate will be fresher and last longer. When researching the type of tree you

would like, make sure the one you choose does well in your area.

Buying from a Christmas tree farm:

You will never be able to find a tree that is fresher than one you cut down yourself. If you have both Christmas tree farms and retail lots in your area, going to the farm is generally a much better choice.

1. Measure the area you will be putting your tree before you start traveling to the tree farm. Although you will have tools on-hand once you get home to cut down, if necessary, it is best not to purchase a tree overly big. (And a tree can look small when it is under the sky, as opposed to under a tent.)
2. If anyone in your home suffers from pine sap allergies, you may need to consider buying a different type of tree. A Leyland Cypress tree is one option you could consider.
3. Believe it or not, if you have heavy ornaments you will need one of several specific varieties of trees! Make sure you buy a type that will hold your intended decorations, as some Christmas tree types have weak branches.
4. Most tree farms will provide you with a saw. Call before heading out to see what the policy is at the farm you plan to purchase from.
5. A tree farm is normally like "the country". Don't plan on going after church on Sunday with a skirt and high heels or a heavy wool suit. Make the tree farm a day trip - dress comfortably, bring a raincoat and umbrella, and remember to take some gloves.

6. Stay safe throughout the process of cutting down the tree. You wouldn't want to fall on a saw or trip over a tree stump and get hurt when you are looking for a Christmas tree.

7. Don't worry about some fallen pine needles. All pines lose some needles in the fall in preparation for winter.

8. Look for a tree that fits your measurement from earlier. Other things you need to look for are a long enough trunk and a minimally crooked trunk. (No truck will be absolutely straight, but look for one that is as straight as possible.)

9. Purchasing from a tree farm normally requires two people. One will cut the tree while the other holds the bottom branches up. Having an extra set of hands is helpful when getting your live Christmas tree. Some types of trees require a chain saw! When this is the case, it is customary for an attendant at the farm to cut the tree down for you.

10. Once the tree is chosen and cut, you take it to be processed, which includes cleaning and netting.

11. Some tree farms charge you based on the height of the tree, while others price each individual one. Make sure you know how the tree farm you

plan to buy from operates.

And now you have your tree!

Whether you go to the retail lots or the farms, make sure to get the whole family involved in the event. This will be their tree, too. They can help choose it and you can probably do some other fun activities all day long!

Disposing the Tree

As important as the purchase of your tree is tree disposal. Instead of just sending it to the landfill, ask about Christmas tree recycling. Most farm owners and retailers will know about a tree recycling program near you.

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Taking Care of Your Special Christmas Tree

Once you carry your Christmas tree through the door to your home, it is going to take some time and effort to keep the tree fresh. However, if you take care of your tree properly, you will find that it will stay nice for a much longer stretch of time. The purpose of this article is to give you some general knowledge about live Christmas trees and what you can do to maintain their quality, while also staying safe during the holidays.

Water, Water, Water

Much of the tree care you will find deals with water. Here is a little piece of trivia for you: a cut Christmas tree's weight is over half water! What does this mean to you? Well, if you display your live tree in something that holds water and keep the water level high, your tree will keep its freshness and needle loss will be kept down to a minimum. This, of course, will ultimately keep your tree looking its best and keeping its nice fragrance (if you get a tree with a scent) throughout the season.

When you get your tree home, it is critical to get it in water as soon as you can. Many tree varieties will still "drink" water six to eight hours after the trunk has been cut. If you don't display the live tree right away, you need to store it in a cool area in a container that provides ample water. When you don't have the tree in a stand, it should be supported somehow in order to keep it from toppling over and damaging the tree and anything around it.

Since most people display their Christmas trees indoors, it is important to have a stand that holds a sufficient amount of water for the size tree you purchase. The general rule on water amount: One quart of water for every inch of the stem's diameter. Some stand devices actually do this automatically, maintaining the water level with little to no effort on your part. If you do not have one of these devices, check the stand on a daily basis! Add water often. There are many stands that will still be holding water, but the level will be below the bottom of the tree. The water you add to the stand can be any temperature, as having a particular temperature will not change how much your tree will "drink".

Don't bother adding anything to the water to keep your tree fresh. Adding preservatives for floral items and commercial trees, sodas, sugars, honey, aspirin, bleach and other items really does nothing beneficial for your Christmas tree when you add them to the water. The same can be said for water-holding gels made for your tree stand. They primarily take up space, limiting the water amount that will ultimately be available to your Christmas tree.

Extra Add Ons

Flame retardants available for application to your tree can actually damage it! In many cases, it increases the speed that the tree dries out. For a flame resistant tree, the best course of

action is to display it in a sufficient amount of water, so that it keeps its high percentage of moisture.

Anti-transpirants that form a film on the tree when you apply them do not benefit the tree significantly, either. It has been shown they have little, if any, effect on the rate of evaporation of water that occurs on the foliage surface.

Care When Selecting And Cutting Your Tree

Before you choose a particular tree, make sure it has a sufficient handle. Too short of a handle may make your Christmas tree unable to be displayed in your tree stand. Cutting off branches at the bottom to create a longer handle may make the tree less attractive.

When caring for the cut surface on the bottom, avoid getting it dirty or bruising it. Damage to this area can hurt the tree's ability to maintain its freshness. It is also unnecessary to drill a hole or holes in the base of the trunk. This will not help the tree's water uptake.

Cut off about a quarter inch to a full inch of the trunk base before placing it in your Christmas tree stand. Avoid making angled or v-shaped cuts, as they are less effective cuts that limit the amount of water your tree is in contact with. The best cut is a perpendicular one in relation to the stem axis.

Don't remove outer layers of the trunk to get your tree to fit an available stand. These layers are the most efficient at "drinking". Make sure that the tree you choose will fit your stand – or purchase the tree first and buy the stand to fit!

Heat And Lights

Keep your tree away from significant sources of heat. This can mean heaters, fireplaces, heating vents and even sunlight. Displaying your tree in an area away from these things and keeping the temperature in the room cool will minimize the amount of drying your tree will experience.

Use mini-lights! These produce less heat, reducing the amount of drying to your tree.

Don't use old, worn out lights, as this can be dangerous on

any live tree. Inspect the entire length of the lights carefully and replace burnt out bulbs. If the entire string is worn out, don't try to revive it somehow – replace it. Make sure you only put as many electrical lights and gadgets on a particular circuit that it can handle. Overloading a circuit is a hazard.

Not at home or going to bed – turn off your tree lights and other decorations!

Miscellaneous Information

Don't keep displaying a dried out tree. Once you see that a

tree you have on display is no longer fresh, take it out of your house and avoid the hazards of a lighted, dry tree.

Look for Christmas tree recycling programs near you. This will put your old tree to good use, instead of having it go into a landfill.

Following this article once you get your tree displayed will help you to maintain its freshness and beauty well into 2007!

Happy Holidays!

- Rebecca Lanham



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At Christmastime, there are many who enjoy warmth, family, and tons of gifts under the tree. However, there are a lot of other families who are not so fortunate. They may have hit a hard time in their lives and are unable to provide those little extras during the holiday.

As a family, you have a wonderful opportunity to teach your children sharing at this time by adopting a family in need this season. Here are some simple ideas that can get you started on making the holiday bright for others:

Purchase the other family a tree. You can make it a simple 4 foot to a massive 8 foot tree – that will be up to you and

Gift Giving To Those In Need

the space available. Remember to purchase the decorations if the family in need doesn't have a supply tucked away already.

Approximate cost - \$40 per tree; \$30 for decorations.

Allow your kids to pick out a toy for a needy child. Make sure they realize that this is a toy for someone who is in need this Christmas. You can also give your children a budget of a certain amount, like \$10 or \$20. They can then go through a store of their choice to buy the gifts for your adopted family. You will be surprised how thrifty and resourceful they will become! If you haven't adopted an

entire family, you can still do this and have your kids donate the toys to a worthy cause, like Toys For Tots.

Approximate cost – one toy \$5-\$10.

Purchase the family a grocery or gas card, or both. Necessities such as these are more important than anything else you could provide. The average family of four can easily spend \$100 or more each week in groceries and gas! Give them one week they don't have to worry about and it can go a long way.

Approximate cost - \$100.

Take the family a Christmas

Eve or Christmas Day dinner. Turkey or ham, stuffing, corn, potatoes, cranberry sauce and dessert can take an entire week's grocery budget for some families! Even if you make it a less traditional meal, like fried chicken or roast beef, the sentiment will be appreciated by those who may have been stuck eating something much less appetizing.

Approximate cost - \$50+

Purchase each member of your adopted family a pair of shoes. This may seem rather dull and boring, but a good pair of shoes can be quite pricey! If you wish to complete their shoe wardrobe, you can plan on getting each person a pair of tennis shoes and dress shoes. If the quality of the shoes is high, your adopted family won't have to worry about shoe shopping for quite some time (or until the kids feet grow).

Approximate cost - \$40 per family member

Purchase each member of your adopted family one nice outfit. Just like the shoes, this may seem like a drab gift, but clothes are not cheap. Make the outfit complete, all the way down to the undergarments and socks.

Approximate cost - \$50 per family member.

If the family you adopt has a new baby or young child, get some necessities for the little one. One package of diapers or a container of formula can cost almost \$20 each! As with the nice meal, a week's worth of diapers and formula can

almost completely eat up a grocery budget. Buying one package of diapers, wipes, formula, bath needs (like Baby Magic soap and shampoo), and Infant Tylenol will be an immense help to a family with an infant or baby under two years old.

Approximate cost - \$100.

For any other needs the family might have, you may want to provide them with a gift card from a local discount store. Almost all stores provide gift cards in a wide range of values, with some allowing you to determine the amount of value on the card. Make sure there is a store near the family you adopt, as they may have limited transportation opportunities.

Approximate cost – you determine the amount.

For little things you would like to provide to the family, you would be surprised what you can find in a dollar store near you! You can fill an entire stocking full of goodies for everyone in your adopted family for very little expense.

For a family of four, you could make stockings for about \$40.

This is far from everything you can do for a family in need this holiday season. The amount of what you can do is limited only by your own personal finances and your imagination. However, doing what you can will make you, your spouse and your children feel great the whole year through.

- Rebecca Lanham

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Plan a Christmas Caroling Party

Christmas is a time of joy and cheer, and one way to spread these warm feelings to others is with a Christmas caroling party. Read on to find out more about planning a great caroling party that your guests will love!

Planning and Invitations

You'll probably want to plan

Spread Christmas Cheer with a Caroling Party!

your caroling party for the week prior to Christmas. The first thing you'll need to do is invite your guests. If possible, try to send out invitations around a month in advance.

People are often busy during the holiday season and might require some notice in order to attend. *Be sure to request an RSVP so you'll know how many people are coming.* For

close friends and family, you could even extend an invitation via email or telephone.

Deciding Upon the Time and Location

It's a good idea to decide exactly where you're going to carol ahead of time. You might even want to drop a note by the homes letting



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them know when you're going to be caroling and to contact you if they don't want you to come. Nursing homes are popular places for caroling also, but be sure to obtain permission first.

You could also go in for a town square and have fun singing carols around the fire! Take all safety precautions if you choose to do this especially if there are kids in the party.

Choosing the Time

You can choose the time – day or night – by taking into consideration each one of the party. Although it is wonderful to do it the traditional way at Night, a daytime caroling party is also great fun.

Food is a must for any successful party, and a caroling party is no exception! Serve appetizers for guests to nibble on when they arrive. Good choices include crudités and chips with dip, cheese balls, shrimp cocktail and Christmas cookies, of course!

Make Use of the Slow Cooker

You might also want to have a slow-cooker meal like a hearty stew for everyone to enjoy after caroling. You can fix the dishes before you leave and find the food ready when you arrive!

Provide disposable cups with lids and a choice of hot beverages like cocoa and cider for everyone to carry with them while caroling. If you choose to go Caroling at night, for safety, provide all

your carolers with inexpensive glow sticks or have a few adults carry lanterns.

Managing the Caroling Party

Designate one or two adults as leaders to keep everyone organized. If there are children in your group, let them take turns ringing doorbells. When it comes to what you're going to sing, have your songs planned out in advance.

Note: It's advisable to provide everyone with a list of songs that are going to be performed, as well as sheet music in case anyone forgets the words or doesn't know them.

Choosing the Music

The music is of course, the most important part of a caroling party! You can head to a local music store in your area to see if they offer sheet music. However, obtaining your music online is probably the fastest and easiest way to get the lyrics you need.

Go Online

At some sites like <http://www.noelnoel.com>, you can print out lyrics to popular songs for free! Or, head on over to <http://www.nelidovarecords.com> to order any sheet music you can possibly imagine!

Popular Favorites

When it comes to what songs to sing, choose a variety of both slow songs and up-

tempo songs. Good choices include Silent Night, Jingle Bells, Away In a Manger, O Come All Ye Faithful, O Christmas Tree, Deck the Halls, Good King Wenceslas, and the First Noel. There are so many beloved carols from which you can choose you'll have no trouble developing a great lineup!

Saying Goodbyes

After caroling, head back home and enjoy the slow-cooker meal you prepared with your guests. And before they leave, present each guest with a small favor. Miniature snowglobes, candy wrapped in festive tulle, or scented votive candles are all great choices.

With a little planning and preparation, your caroling party is sure to be a huge hit!

Photo Credit, [Latent Mosaic Birmingham, USA](#)

Did You Know?

A popular urban legend was that they were named after a little girl named Carol Poles who disappeared in 1888 in the Whitechapel district of London.

According to the legend, the little girl was reported missing around Christmas and many people went searching for her at night. Due to fears concerning Jack the Ripper, the group would sing Christmas carols upon knocking in order to declare their good intentions.



DIY Christmas Decorating

by Sandy Kay

Skating on the Pond

Materials:

1 Oval or round basket
 5 Resin Figures
 1 Merry Christmas sign
 1 package of sheet "snow"
 6 sprigs of leafy silver filler
 Hot glue gun

How To:

1. Fill the bottom of the basket with snow.
2. Glue sprigs of silver filler

across back of the basket.

3. Place figurines as shown the picture.

4. Glue the Merry Christmas sign across the front of the basket as shown.

Option 1: Lay out a set of 20 indoor miniature Christmas tree lights under the snow and poke the bulbs through the snow. The lights pick up the glitter and it looks beautiful.

Option 2: Use Christmas village ornaments such as a Miniature Christmas tree, small houses, resin carolers and Santa with sleigh.

You are only limited by your

imagination. Any miniature Winter or Christmas scene would look wonderful.

Poinsettia Sleigh

Materials:

1 Sleigh 16" x 11 1/2" x 6"
 1 Evergreen Garland
 1 Poinsettia Garland
 8 Bunches Holly Berries
 2 8" Plastic Candy Canes

How To:

1. Fill the interior of the sleigh



with the evergreen garland. Fluff the branches to give fullness.

2. Weave the poinsettia garland throughout the evergreen garland as shown in the picture.

3. Insert holly berries evenly between the poinsettias.

4. Attach the candy canes to each other in the form of an X with the hooked ends at the top and place into the arrangement at centre top.

5. Place beside the fireplace or in the window.

OPTIONAL: Weave a set of clear indoor Christmas tree lights throughout the arrangement for a beautiful festive glow.

Candy Cane Swag

Materials:

1 Evergreen swag
2 large pine cones (gold)
2 sprays of gold leaves
2 sprays of eucalyptus stems
6 sprays of red berries
3 yards 2" Satin Candy Cane ribbon
3 yards 2" Sheer Candy Cane ribbon
Glue Gun

HOW TO:

1. Make a six loop bow with the satin ribbon

2. Make an eight loop bow with the sheer ribbon

3. Attach the 2 bow together with thin gauge florist wire

4. Arrange loops as shown in the picture

5. Attach the bow to the centre of the swag with florist wire.

6. Glue each large gold pinecone to the swag on either side of the bow.

7. Insert the eucalyptus stem under the pinecones on either side of the swag. Glue to hold in place.

8. Insert 3 red berry sprays on either side of the swag to complete the decorating of the swag as shown in the picture.



Christmas Reindeer

Materials:

1 Gold sitting reindeer.
6 Poinsettia's – 6"
4 bunches red/gold holly berries
2 yds 1 ½" red wired ribbon
Gold dried filler sprigs
Glue Gun

HOW TO:

1. Make an 8-loop bow with 3" tails.
2. Glue to right side of the neck of the reindeer.
3. Glue the six poinsettias around the neck of the reindeer as shown in picture.
4. Glue the holly berries

between and tucked under the poinsettias as shown in the picture.

5. Tuck in some gold filler sprigs to finish off the arrangement.





'Charming' Christmas Creations

Create gorgeous hand crafted charms for giving as Christmas gifts. Go from casual to even dressy and elegant; it all depends on the choice of beads used. The possibilities are endless.

Handbag/Purse Charm Drop

Here is a great way to create a gorgeous decorative hand crafted charm for your handbag, purse or even key ring.

Materials:

Chain (cut to about 2 1/2" inches or longer if desired)
Needle nosed pliers
Wire Cutters
1 Lobster Clasp
1 Jump Ring

Head Pins 1 1/2" inches
Variety of Beads (whichever you would like to go onto the charm drop)

We used: (Frosted Czech Beads, Swarovski crystals, Flower Bells as well as Silver Beads)

Directions:

Step One:

This step designs each charm. So start with arranging all the beads and string them

onto each headpin. Once a desired arrangement has been created It's time to move on to step two.

Step Two:

This step attaches each charm onto the chain. This is where it gets a little tricky! If at first you don't do so well don't give up practice makes perfect! Feed the headpin through a link on the chain.

This step involves hand wrapping the charm onto the

chain. Repeat this step for every link on the chain and even on the other side. Leave one link at the top empty, that is where the jump ring and lobster clasp will go, other than that every link left and right side should have a charm dangle!

Hand Wrapping:

Step One:

Using the round nose pliers bend the pin to a right angle. Then turning your wrist roll the pliers back toward the stem of the headpin.

Step Two:

Holding the loop with the pliers use your other hand and wrap the wire around the stem of the headpin two or three times. Using your wire cutters you can now trim off the excess wire!

Step Three

This step finishes off the charm drop. Attach the jump ring to the top of the charm drop. Then pry open (a little way) the jump ring and attach the lobster clasps onto the jump ring.

Sparkling Charm Bracelet

Materials:

Chain (cut to fit desired length)

Needle nosed plier's

Wire Cutters

Toggle Clasp, or (any other kind of clasp)

2 Jump Rings

Head Pins 1 1/2 "

Variety of Beads (whichever you like)

We used: (Frosted Czech

Beads, Swarovski Pearls and crystals, Flower Bells, Bali Beads, as well as Stardust Beads)

Step One:

This step makes each charm. So start with arranging all the beads and string them onto each headpin. And arrange them in the order you would like on the bracelet.



Step Two:

This step attaches each charm onto the chain. This is where it gets a little tricky! If at first you don't do so well don't give up practice makes perfect! Feed the headpin through a link on the chain. This step involves hand wrapping the charm onto the chain.

Hand Wrapping:

Step One:

Using the round nose pliers bend the pin to a right angle. Then turning your wrist roll the pliers back toward the stem of the headpin.

Step Two:

Holding the loop with the pliers use your other hand and wrap the wire around the stem of the headpin two or three times. Using your wire cutters you can now trim off the excess wire!

Step Three

This step finishes off the bracelet. Attach your jump rings onto the ends of the bracelet. Then pry open (a little way) the jump ring and attach each clasps onto each jump ring.

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Christmas is a wonderful time when friends and family gather to celebrate the joy of the season. If you're going to be welcoming Christmas houseguests this year, there are some ways you can make things fun and memorable for everyone. While anyone can offer up a plain old guestroom, a good hostess goes the extra mile. Give your houseguests a stay to remember this holiday season with our tips:

Start Planning Early

By giving yourself plenty of time to plan, you'll save a lot of aggravation and hassle. If you're inviting guests to stay in your home during the holidays, be sure to do so several months in advance. This will give you plenty of time to plan every aspect of their stay.

In late November or early December, you can start

decorating your home -- including the room where your guests will stay.

Give the Guest Room Some Special Touches

There are many ways you can make your guest bedroom festive and comfortable. Try hanging Christmas or winter-themed artwork on the walls. For the bed, there are a variety of Christmas themed bedding sets that you can find most anywhere during the holiday season. If you want solid colors for the bedding, choose shades like red and green.

Add a few holiday figurines around the room, and place a cute candy jar filled with peppermint candies or candy canes for your guests to enjoy. Stock the guest room with anything you think your guests may need or enjoy. Fluffy terry cloth robes, a journal by the bedside, some

books or magazines to read, and a variety of miniature toiletries are all nice ideas.

Host a Welcome and Farewell Dinner

In addition to Christmas dinner, you might want to host two other special meals. A special dinner is a great way to welcome your guests to your home. Serve some holiday favorites like baked ham, macaroni and cheese, green beans, and of course, Christmas cookies! Have your guests favorite wine or cocktail on hand to enjoy before or after the meal. You can cook the meal yourself, or take the easy route and have it catered.

This is an ideal time for your guests to fill you in on what they've been up to since you've seen them last! A farewell dinner, on the day before your guests depart, is a special way to thank your

guests for coming and bid them a festive goodbye.

Present Your Guests With a Little Gift

A small, yet special gift presented to your guests when they arrive is a great way to let them know you're thankful for their presence. It also gives them something to take home that will remind them of their special time at your home. Your gift can be anything from a scented candle to a holiday snowglobe. You could give your guests a disposable camera so they can capture memories that will last a lifetime!

Let Them Help Out

Many guests feel uncomfortable lounging around while their hostess does all the work. If this sounds like your houseguests, then let them help out! If your guests offer to help with housekeeping, cooking, dishes or errands, say yes. They'll feel more comfortable and take some of the load off of you!

Create a Fun, Safe Space for Youngsters

If children are going to be staying in your home, create a fun play area for them to use. An unused den or extra bedroom is an ideal place. Childproof the room to make sure it's safe for little ones, then fill it with things to keep kids busy and entertained. Books, toys, games, videos and art supplies are all great ideas. Children get bored easily, so it's always good to have lots of things for them to do and explore.

Have Fun!

Don't forget, the purpose of having guests come to your home is to enjoy your time together! Stay calm and keep your sense of humor, and you're sure to have a holiday season to remember!

Southern Pecan Pie with Whipped Cream



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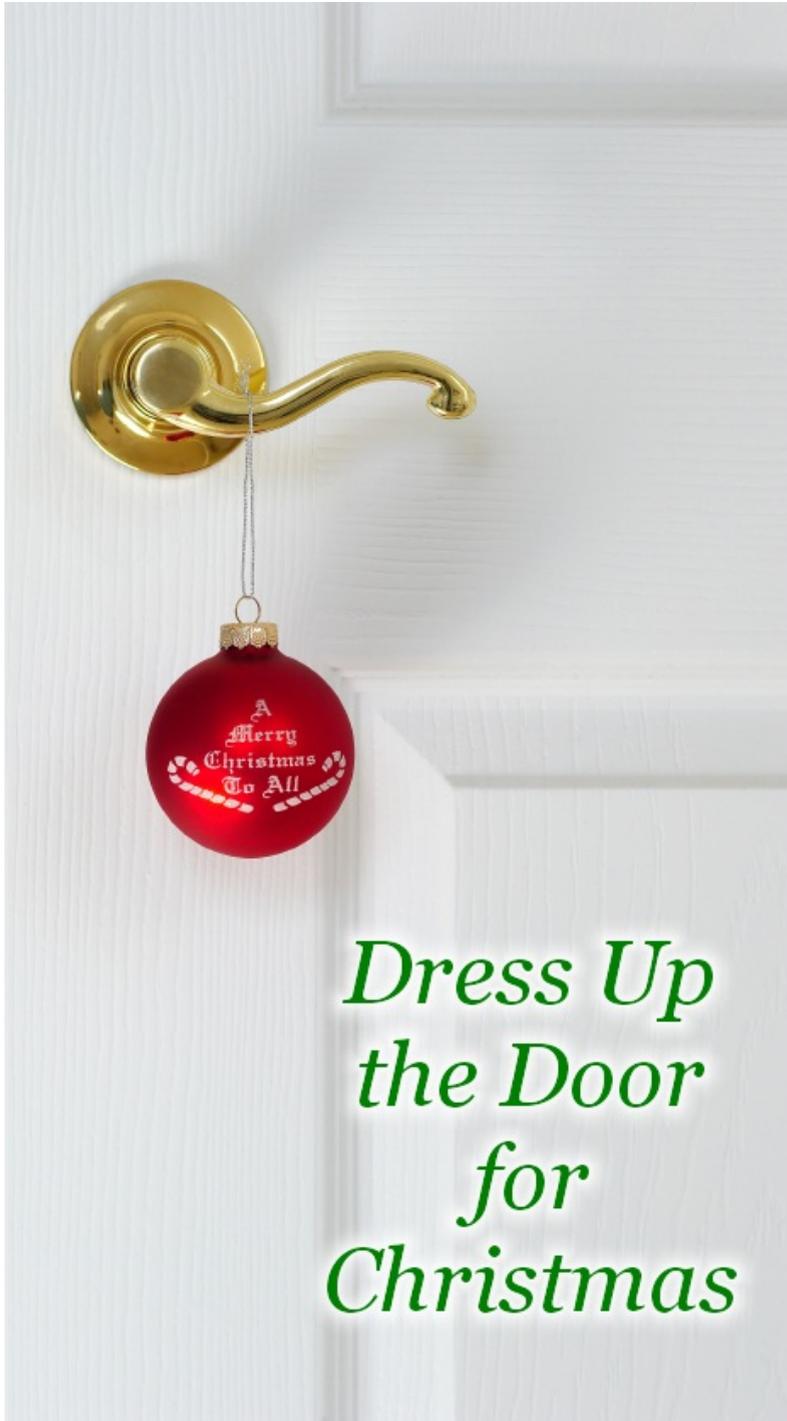
Decorating Your Front Door

The front door -- it's the first thing your guests see when they arrive at your home.

When you decorate your front door and the area around it for Christmas, you add that special something extra. It's sure to make everyone that comes to your home smile! Try some of our ideas to make your door festive and ready for the holiday season.

Give your door knobs a festive touch in an instant by stringing Christmas baubles through them. You can add some more details by adding some greenery or a tag along with the bauble.

Any other Christmas Tree ornament that goes well with your chosen theme can also be used. E.g. Angels, Fairies, Stars, Snowflakes etc.





Wreaths are probably the most popular ways to decorate the front door. There are many different types of wreaths available for purchase during the holiday season. If you're crafty and like to make your own wreaths, check out these classy ideas

Above: Just as you would make any other wreath, use berry-laden branches to make this simply stunning wreath especially if you have a white painted door. The sparkling red color of the berries wouldn't show well on a wooden backdrop.

Right: Dress up any wreath to accentuate your front door. Here, we have used red clay dough ornaments and silver-white tinsel to decorate a homemade pine wreath to go on our red painted door.

There are many other ways you can spruce up a plain wreath for the holidays. Try hot-gluing a variety of medium-sized glass ornaments to your wreath for a colorful look. Or, wrap your wreath in red velvet ribbon, add a matching bow, and adorn with some holly. Use your imagination and be creative!



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Don't forget about the area around the front door. A few faux poinsettia plants are perfect for adorning the space around your door. Or, try some tall topiaries strung with white lights for a sophisticated, sparkling look.

(Left) For the daytime, tie bright red bows on topiary shaped plants for a festive touch. Your main door wreath can be flanked by other wreaths on the front wall. In this picture, you see two more wreaths hung on lantern hangers adding to the holiday look.

The Old-Fashioned Way

Right: Cover the frame of your front door with evergreen swags and large bows.

Below: An old-fashioned door bell is dressed up for Christmas with a bright red bow and jingles.



Extend your door decorations from just the front door to the railing and the nearby lamp post and spread Christmas cheer to the passers by



Right: Night time brings out the magical glow of Christmas. Use luminaries and white lights to recreate the magic of Christmas eve. Flank the walkway with luminaries made by weighing down brown paper bags with sand and then lighting candles inside them.

Some other ways to make your front door look great for the holidays are covering your door with bright red or green foil for a bright, festive look. You can even use patterned wrapping paper to cover the door.

Another idea is to purchase a holiday doorbell. You can find doorbells that play a Christmas carol when pushed!



Ideas to Spruce up plain wreaths for the Holidays



Candy Wreath: Wrap your plain wreath with ribbon in the color of your choice. Red and white is perfect for this type of wreath and matches the color of candy canes. Using hot glue, adorn the wreath with either real or faux candies like candy canes, peppermints and colorful hard candies in shades like red and green.

Fruit Wreath: When choosing ribbon to adorn this wreath, shades of emerald and eggplant purple are always nice. Using hot glue, attach faux pieces of candied fruit to the wreath. And that's all there is to it!

More Ideas: There are many other ways you can spruce up a plain wreath for the holidays. Try hot-gluing a variety of medium-sized glass ornaments to your wreath for a colorful look. Or, wrap your wreath in red velvet ribbon, add a matching bow, and adorn with some holly. Use your imagination and be creative!



If you're a procrastinator, you're not alone. There are many reasons why people do things at the last minute. Maybe you've been busy, or maybe it's just a habit of yours to put things off. If you're expecting guests this Christmas season and your home is still undecorated a week before they arrive, check out our ideas for making your home festive in a flash!

1. Try some Christmas-themed bedding in the guest room. Stores like Wal-Mart, K-Mart, JCPenney and the like are sure to have some cute Christmas themed bedding sets for sale.

2. Grab some colored candles. Red and green are always ideal choices, but you also can never go wrong with classic ivory.

3. Floating candles are also great for the holidays. Fill a glass bowl with water (add green food coloring for a festive effect)

then simply float these special candles right on top!

4. Or, try electric candles. If kids or pets are a concern, electric candles provide a festive glow that's safer than the real thing.

5. Festoon your stairwell with evergreen garland or even white lights for a pulled-together look.

Large bows of plaid ribbon never fail to impress.

6. Hang a wreath on the door. You might not have time to make your own, but with a quick shopping trip you can find some gorgeous choices.

7. Try a festive holiday runner on your mantle, on top your entertainment center or across



the length of your table for easy glamour.

8. A holiday-themed welcome mat is a cute way to welcome guests to your home!



9. For a quick and easy way to decorate your tree, string white lights around it then hang cellophane wrapped candy canes from the branches.

10. Fragrance can add to the holiday feel. Try burning potpourri oil in a scent like evergreen or cinnamon.

11. Grab some knickknacks from your local discount store. Figurines and snowglobes are always cute when placed on shelves and mantles.

12. Pick up a set of Christmas dishes. Dining has never been more festive or fun!

13. Try a red, green, or holiday patterned tablecloth to add a Christmas-y look to the table.

14. If your tablecloth is a solid color, try some cute patterned placemats. If the tablecloth is patterned, then go for solid placemats.

15. A few strands of white lights on your porch or around shrubbery in the front yard is an easy way to make your landscape more festive.

16. Try some silk poinsettia plants placed in areas around your home for child and pet-friendly beauty.

17. Hang some mistletoe in the doorways, as tradition dictates!

18. Deck out your bathroom with a red or green area rug, a few figurines, and some festive hand towels.

19. Place glass bowls or jars filled with candies around your home for a cute look and something for your guests to enjoy.

20. If you haven't wrapped gifts yet, check your local dollar store for cheap yet chic



gift wrap.

21. Make a quick table centerpiece with a chunky, tall candle wrapped with evergreen garland at the base.

22. Lights aren't just for trees. Try hanging a string across your mantle or up the stairway for some extra sparkle.

23. If you've received Christmas cards, display them on a shelf or even hang them on the wall as artwork.

24. If you've got pets, why not try a bright red or green collar for some holiday flair?

25. Don't forget to pick up some Christmas music to play softly in the background during dinner or parties.



Ahhh... Almonds, Apples, Cranberries – all things Christmassy combine to create this rich, flavorful and festive tart.

Combined with pumpkin bars, brownie squares and a punch, it could well be the 'main dish' for your dessert party or the grand finale to your Christmas dinner. Be sure to include this winner in one of your Christmas menus this year.

Ingredients:

- 1 c Sugar
- ¼ c All-purpose flour
- 3 tbsp melted Butter or margarine
- ½ tps Ground nutmeg
- ⅛ tsp Salt
- 6 med Apple -- thinly sliced
- 1 c Cranberries -- fresh or Frozen
- 1 ea 9 inch tart shell

Topping

- ½ c Packed brown sugar
- ⅓ c All-purpose flour
- ½ tsp Ground cinnamon
- 3 tbsp Butter or margarine
- ⅓ c Almonds -- toasted

Directions:

In a bowl, combine sugar, flour, butter, nutmeg and salt; mix well.

Add apples and cranberries; stir gently. Reserve some for topping. Pour into pie shell.



Almond Apple Cranberry Tart

In a small bowl, mix the brown sugar, flour and cinnamon; cut in butter until crumbly.

Stir in almonds; sprinkle over filling. Arrange reserved apple

slices and cranberries.

Bake at 350 deg for 1 hr. or until apples are tender.

Serves 6 to 8



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Making the Mincemeat

Apple Mincemeat

In a large bowl mix together the sugar currants raisins suet apple

and candied peel. Mix them well. Place an ovenproof plate on top and put in the simmering oven for 3 hours.

Remove stir well and leave until completely cold stirring occasionally.

Ingredients for Mincemeat:

- 450g soft brown sugar
- 450g currants
- 450g raisins
- 450g suet grated or shredded
- 450g cooking apples peeled cored and grated
- 225g candied peel chopped
- brandy or brandy and sherry mixed

When cold add enough brandy to make the mincemeat moist about 10 to 15 tablespoons. Stir well and pack into clean sterile jars.

Storing Tip: Stores well for two to three weeks.

Makes about 450g

Apricot Mincemeat

Ingredients for Mince Pies:

- 225g no soak dried apricots roughly chopped finely grated rind of 1 orange
- 3 tbsp orange juice
- 900g mixed currants sultanas and raisins 4 tbsp orange marmalade
- 450g demerara sugar .
- 1 1/2 tsp ground mixed spice
- 1/4 ground nutmeg
- 300ml brandy

Mix all of the ingredients together in a large bowl. Cover and leave in a cool place for 48 hours stirring occasionally.

Pot in sterilized jars cover and store in a cool place for up to 2 months.

Making the Mince Pies

Ingredients for Mince Pies:

- 125g butter
- 1 egg white lightly beaten
- 275g plain white flour c
- caster sugar for dusting
- 225g mincemeat

Rub the butter into the flour and bind to form a firm dough with about 4 tbsp water. Knead lightly until just smooth.

Roll out the pastry thinly and using a 55mm round cutter cut out about 48 rounds re rolling as necessary.

Place half the rounds on baking sheets and spoon mincemeat onto the centre of each. Moisten the pastry edges.

Cover with the remaining pastry rounds sealing the edges well flute if wished. Make a tiny hole in the top to allow the air to escape.

Bake on the grid shelf on the floor of the roasting oven for 10 to 15 minutes until just set but not browned.

Take the pies out of the oven and brush with lightly beaten egg white and dust with caster sugar. Return to the oven for a further 5 to 7 minutes or until well browned.

Serve the mince pies warm with cream.

Makes 24

More Mincemeat Recipes

Use leftover mincemeat to make more delicious treats.

Mincemeat Fruit Cake

Ingredients:

- 2 eggs
- 28 oz. mincemeat
- 16 oz. mixed candied fruit
- 1 (14 oz.) can sweetened condensed
- milk
- 1 c. pecans, coarsely chopped
- 2 1/2 c. all-purpose flour
- 1 tsp. baking soda

Heat oven to 300 degrees. Generously grease and flour 12 cup Bundt cake pan or tube pan 10 x 4 inches.

Beat eggs slightly in large bowl. Stir in mincemeat, candied fruit, sweetened condensed milk and pecans. Stir in flour and soda.

Pour batter into pan. Bake until wooden pick inserted in center comes out clean, about 1 hour and 50 minutes. Cool 15 minutes; remove from pan. Cool completely.

Diabetic Orange Mince Cake

Beat eggs, melt butter and add to Mincemeat and Fruit Sweet. Sift dry ingredients, add to mincemeat mix and blend. Spoon and smooth batter into oiled and floured 8" baking pan. Bake at 350 degrees for approximately 25 minutes.

Ingredients for Diabetic Orange Mince Cake:

- 2 eggs, well beaten
- 1/3 c. Fruit Sweet
- 1 1/2 c. flour
- 1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
- 1/4 c. butter
- 1 c. Fruit Mincemeat
- 1 tsp. baking soda

Cream Cheese Topping

- 6 oz. cream cheese
- 2 tbsp. Fruit Sweet
- 2 tbsp. concentrated orange juice

Top with Orange Cream Cheese Topping. To make, Blend all ingredients together.

* * * * *





Does the idea of purchasing and sending out dozens of factory-made greeting cards and gift-toppers spoil your dreams of a one-of-a-kind Christmas? You are not alone. There are many of us out there who would love to pour out their creativity in making handmade Christmas greeting cards as much as they would in decorating their house for the Holidays.

Judy Headrick, the owner of www.handcraftedgreetings.com shows us five pretty ways to express Christmas wishes to loved ones using different card-making techniques such as teabag folding, string art, patchwork etc.

Christmas Gift Card

Materials:

5" x 7" card blank
Patterned paper (approximately 5 x 7 ½")
Gold paper (I used gold foil giftwrap – you will need approximately 8" x 8")
White paper (approximately 2" x 3")
"Season's Greetings" stamp
Red stamp pad
Paper cutter or scissors
Glue

Instructions:

Cut one 4 3/4" x 6 3/4" rectangle from the patterned paper

Cut one 4 3/4" x 1/4" strip from the patterned paper

Cut one 6 3/4" x 1/4" strip from the patterned paper

Cut eight 2" x 2" squares from the gold paper

Cut one 4 3/4" x 3/4" strip from the gold paper

Cut one 6 3/4" x 3/4" strip from the gold paper

Cut one large tag from the gold paper

Cut one small tag from the white paper (Tag patterns at Page 98)

Using the eight gold squares, follow the tea bag folding instructions for making a pinwheel motif. (Page 99)

Center and glue the small white tag onto the large gold tag.

Stamp "Season's Greetings" on the white tag.

Glue the patterned paper rectangle to the front of the card.

Glue the gold strips to the patterned paper as shown.



Glue the patterned strips of paper to the gold strips as shown.

Glue the tag and the pinwheel motif to the card.



Write a personal greeting inside and send it to someone special!



Christmas Wreath Greeting Card

Materials:

Wreath pattern (Page 100)
 Craft knife
 Cutting Mat
 5" x 7" card blank and envelope
 4" square light/dark green duo paper (light green on one side, dark green on the other)
 4 3/4" x 6 3/4" rectangle dark green paper
 4 1/2" x 6 1/2" rectangle decorative

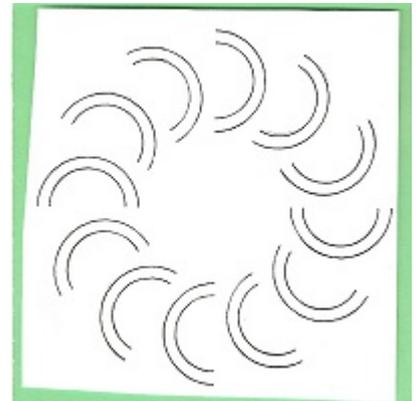
handmade paper (Mine came from the Paper Passport Golds & Silvers collage pad)
 Red Ribbon or Red paper and Coluzzle ribbon template
 Circle cutter
 Glue

Optional:

Elmer's Tack Tabs (or Blu-Tack)
 Gold gel pen
 Red gel Pen
 Dark green gel pen
 Green glitter gel pen
 Corner Punch

Instructions:

Using Tack Tabs or low-tack tape, attach the wreath pattern to the 4" x 4" square of duo paper making sure not to put any Tack Tabs or tape behind the solid lines.



Place the paper with the pattern attached to it on the cutting mat and use the craft knife to cut along the solid lines.

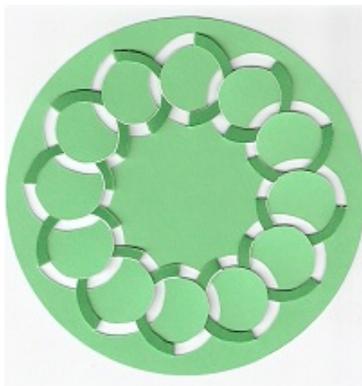
When you have cut all of the lines, remove the pattern from the paper.



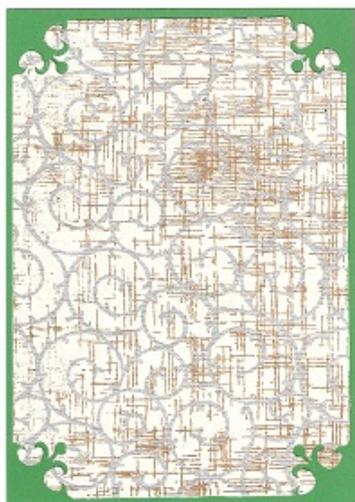
Score the top and bottom of each "C" shape. This will make them easier to fold. Fold each of the "C" shapes back, tucking the edge under the next solid half circle as you work your way around the wreath.



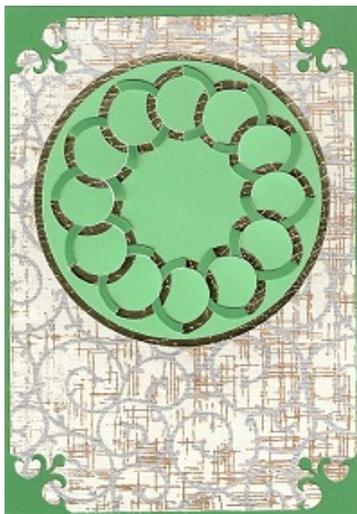
When you have finished folding, use a circle cutter to cut around the wreath leaving 1/4" to 1/8" margin.



Cut a circle from the gold foil 1/4" larger than the green circle. Mount the 6 3/4" x 4 3/4" green rectangle on the front of the card blank. Use a corner punch to decorate the corners of the 4 1/2" x 6 1/2" piece of decorative paper, then mount it on the green rectangle.



Next, attach the gold circle, then the green wreath.



Attach a pre-made bow, or use the Coluzzle bow template and make a bow.



Write or stamp "Merry Christmas" in the center of the wreath. Draw leaves and berries under your greeting.



Patchwork Stocking Card Topper

Materials:

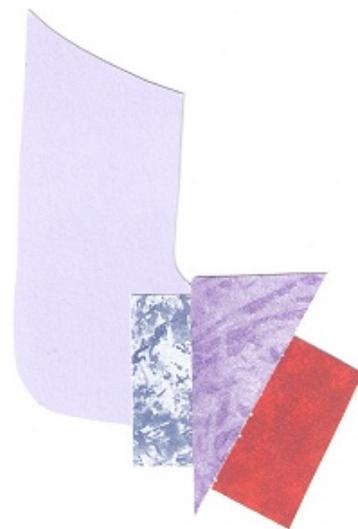
- Stocking Pattern (Page 100)
- Glue Stick
- Scraps of decorative paper
- Scrap of white cardstock
- Paper cutter
- Scissors
- Fine tipped pen (I used Sakura Micron .02)

This cute patchwork stocking can be used for a gift tag, scrapbook embellishment or card topper. It is quick to make and is a great way to use up scraps.

Steps:

Using the stocking pattern, cut a stocking from heavy weight paper or medium cardstock.

Start covering the stocking with the paper scraps. It's easiest if you make sure your scraps all have straight edges.



When you have finished gluing the scraps to the stocking, flip it over so you can see the original shape and trim the edges from the scraps.



Cut the stocking trim from a scrap of white card stock and glue it to the top of the stocking:



Draw stitches around each of the pieces of decorative paper as shown. The following example shows three different stitches that can be drawn on.

If you are using the stocking for a gift tag, the recipient's name can be written on the white trim or one of the larger rectangles on the stocking.

String Art Ornament

Materials:

Metallic red cardstock
Metallic green cardstock -
Small scrap of metallic gold
ribbed cardstock or a piece of



gold ribbon.
2 1/2" scalloped circle punch
(by Marvy)
6 1/2 yards metallic gold
embroidery floss
3 yards green rayon
embroidery floss
Tape
Glue or double-sided tape
Ornament Pattern (Page 98)

This shiny ornament can be used as an embellishment for a scrapbook page, a Christmas card, or glue two of them back to back and use as a decoration for your tree.

Instructions:

Size the ornament pattern so that it is 2 3/4" wide and 3 1/4" high. Cut one ornament from the metallic green card stock.

Punch a scalloped circle from the metallic red cardstock. Cut the top of the ornament from gold ribbon or ribbed paper.

Note: You may want to cut the embroidery floss in 1 to 1 1/2 yard lengths for easier handling.

Metallic floss in particular can be difficult to work with in longer lengths.

First Layer: Gold Floss

Tape one end of the metallic gold floss to the back of the scalloped circle. To make the string art, you simply wrap the floss around the ornament as follows. Bring floss up through one of the notches, count.

I Love to Craft

Do You?



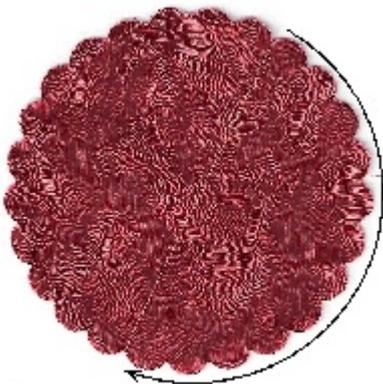
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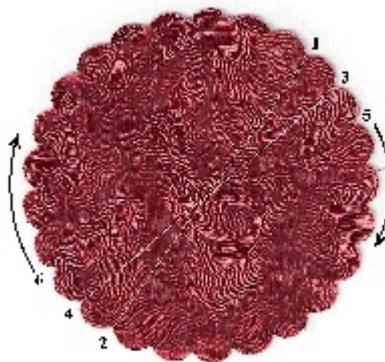


forward 12 notches and wrap the thread around to the back

clockwise from the second notch used. Continue as shown.

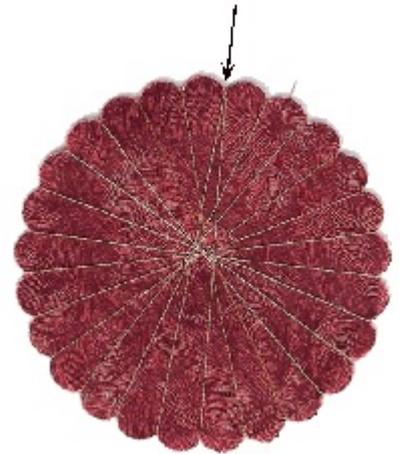


Bring the floss to the front of the card one notch clockwise from the first notch used. Bring the floss across the front of the circle and wrap to the back one notch

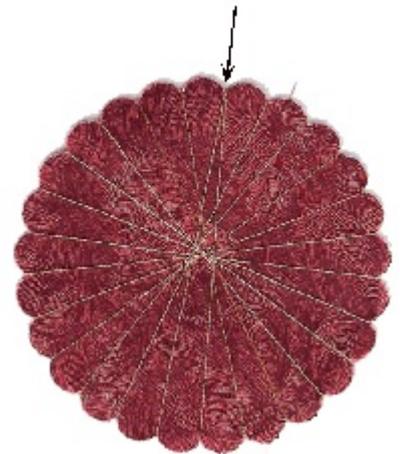


As you work your way around the circle, the floss will start to overlap as shown.

If you run out of floss, tape the ends to the back of the circle and continue.



Continue wrapping until every notch has two strings in it. When you are done, tape the end of the floss to the back of the circle.

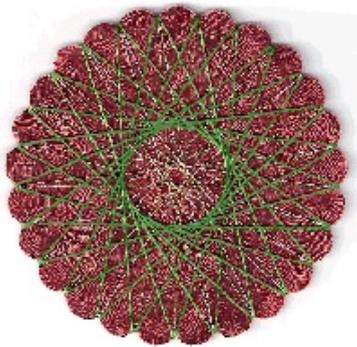


Second Layer: Green Floss

Tape one end of the green floss to the back of the circle. Pass the floss through one of the notches, bringing it to the front of the circle.

Count forward 10 notches and pass the floss to the back of the circle. Continue wrapping, moving one notch clockwise from the previous wrap until each notch has two strands through it.

When you are done, tape the end of the floss to the back of the circle.



Third Layer: Gold Floss

Tape one end of the gold floss to the back of the circle. Pass the floss through one of the notches, bringing it to the front of the circle. Count forward 8 notches and pass the floss to the back of the circle. Continue wrapping, moving one notch clockwise from the previous wrap until each notch has two strands through it. When you are done, tape the end of the floss to the back of the circle.

Assembling the Ornament

Using double-stick tape, mount the string art to the front of the ornament as shown. Cut the ornament top from the gold cardstock (or ribbon) and glue or tape it to the top of the ornament as shown.

Beaded Christmas Tree Card

Materials List:

Approximately 2 dozen small (3mm – 5mm) beads
 Zig-zag scissors (or pinking shears)
 Green card stock
 Ivory card stock
 5" x 7" red checked paper
 5" x 7" Card blank
 Gold thread



Bead needle
 Christmas greeting stamp
 Green stamp pad
 Glue

Instructions:

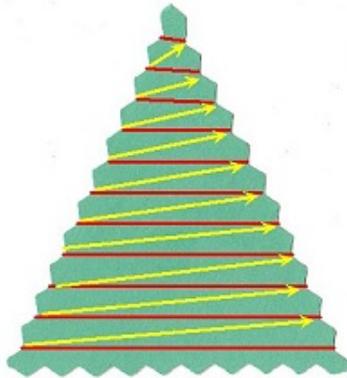
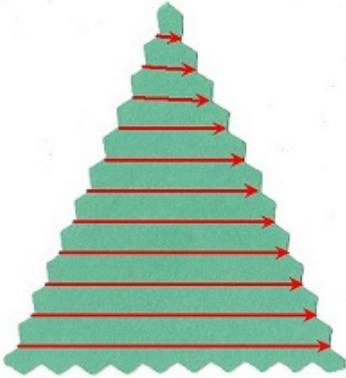
Cut a tree from green card stock using zig-zag scissors. The sides should be about 3 1/2" long. The bottom of the one shown here is 3" wide.

The width of the tree bottom does not really matter. You can make your tree fat or skinny; just make sure that the sides are of equal length.



Cut 1 yard of gold thread. Tape one end of the thread to the back of the tree, near the top. String the beads onto the thread.

Wrap the thread around the tree from top to bottom as indicated, leaving one bead on each new row.



Don't worry about the placement of the beads, you can move them later.

When you get to the bottom of the tree, wrap it again from bottom to top, but this time make the line go diagonal. For the first few rows at the bottom of the tree, leave more beads, depending on the width of your tree.

If you run out of thread before you get to the top of the tree, trim the end of the thread and tape it to the back of the tree. Tape a new thread to the back of the tree next to the end of the previous thread and keep wrapping until you get to the top.

Cut a trunk for the tree. Glue the trunk and the tree to a piece of ivory card stock and cut out around it with the zig-zag scissors leaving a narrow border.



Stamp a greeting on ivory cardstock and cut out around it with the zig-zag scissors. Mount the greeting on green card stock and cut out around it leaving a narrow border.



Cut around the red plaid paper with the zig-zag scissors. Mount the red paper to the card blank and then add the tree and greeting as shown in the example.





This Christmas, why not delight friends and family with the gift of homemade soaps? You can whip up a batch of melt and pour soap in no time at all, with supplies right from your local craft store. You can make guest soap from fancy Christmas-themed molds, or add a personal touch and create unique bars that can't be found anywhere else. Let your imagination loose!

Christmas Guest Soap

What you'll need:

- White or transparent soap base (generally sold in two-pound blocks at the craft store)
- Soap dye in your choice of color
- Cosmetic-grade fragrance (also found at the craft store, or use your own perfume)

Soap molds – small size, with a Christmas motif like snowflakes or stars
Double boiler, metal spoons, glass measuring cup with handle, large kitchen knife or grater

Procedure:

1. Fill bottom of double boiler with water and bring it to a gentle boil. Reduce heat to simmer. Meanwhile, grate or finely chop your soap base. You'll need enough to fill the cavities of your chosen molds.
2. Place grated soap base in the top half of the double boiler and place it over the simmering water. Allow the soap to melt slowly, stirring

occasionally, until almost completely melted. Remove from heat.

3. Stir a few times to get the soap completely melted. Add your color a few drops at a time, stirring just enough to blend after each addition, until you get your desired color. Note that white soap tends to fade slightly when cooled.
4. Add your scent. For one pound of soap base you'll need anywhere from a teaspoon to a tablespoon of scent, depending on the brand you've chosen. Make sure the melted soap has cooled slightly before adding your scent, because very hot soap base will burn off your fragrance.
5. When the melted soap just

begins to form a skin on the top, pour into your molds. You do not need to prepare your molds except to clean them. Set aside your molds until the soap has set – at least two hours, but it doesn't hurt to leave them longer, even overnight.

6. When your soap is completely set, turn your molds over and pop out your finished soap! If there are rough edges, you can smooth them by running a metal spoon under very hot water, then use the back of the hot spoon to run around the edges of the soap. You can also use a vegetable peeler on larger edges, but do so carefully as the peeler will easily cut into your soap.

7. Wrap each little soap individually in plastic wrap to keep them dry – you want to keep them away from any sort of moisture until they are ready to be used.

To store your finished and wrapped soaps, put them in zip lock baggies, and only store soap with identical scents in the same bag. Even with the plastic wrap, scents can mix and mingle if stored together.

Christmas Bar Soap – Two Variations

You can make festive bar soaps too, and it doesn't take much more effort than tiny guest soaps do.

Use your imagination and be creative with these!

To Make Winter Ice Soap:

What You'll Need:

White and transparent soap base – 3/4 pound of each
Soap dye – royal blue
Cosmetic grade fragrance, your choice of scents (see recommendations below)
Soap mold – one clean and dry Pringles container
Rubbing alcohol in a spray bottle
Double boiler, metal spoons, glass measuring cup with handle, large kitchen knife or grater

1. Follow instructions for Christmas Guest Soaps to prepare about 3/4 of a pound of clear soap base and melt it. While the soap is melting, chop about 3/4 of a pound of white soap base into randomly shaped chunks, about half an inch square.

Drop half of the soap chunks into the Pringles container, letting them rest where they fall. Spritz the chunks with rubbing alcohol.

2. When your clear soap has melted, remove it from the heat and add your royal blue coloring. You want the final shade to be a deep blue to contrast with the white soap chunks. Add your favorite scent – I usually use a blend of berry-based fragrances and call this one "Winter Berry", but feel free to use what you like.

3. Pour the melted soap base into the Pringles container to cover the white soap chunks that are in there. Let it sit for a couple of minutes, then add

the rest of the melted base. Spritz the remaining white soap chunks with rubbing alcohol and dump them in with the melted base in the container.

4. You'll want to leave this to dry overnight. When the soap has completely set, cut a small snippet out of the top of the Pringles container and peel it away. Then take your soap log and slice it into bars, about an inch thick. Smooth the edges with the back of a hot spoon or with a vegetable peeler.

5. Wrap your soaps as you did for the guest soaps, and store them the same way.

These look gorgeous when they're finished, and everyone will wonder how you made them!

To Make Two-Toned Festive Soap:

What You'll Need:

* White soap base – about 1/2 pound
* Transparent soap base – about 1 pound
* Soap dye – red or green
* Cosmetic grade fragrance, your choice of scents (see recommendations below)
* Soap mold – rectangular bars, or domed bars (or you can use circles, stars, hearts – whatever you fancy as long as they're larger than guest soaps)
* Rubbing alcohol in a spray bottle
* Double boiler, metal spoons, glass measuring cup with handle, large kitchen knife or grater

1. Melt about a pound of clear soap following the directions above. When melted, add red or green color to get a deep shade, followed by your fragrance. For the red soap I use cranberry scent, and for the green ones I use a combination of mint and pine.

Substitute as you wish, however! Just a note about red color – your finished soap will have a deep pink look to it, as it is very difficult to make a pure red soap.

2. Fill your soap molds about $\frac{3}{4}$ full. Set aside.

3. Clean and dry the top portion of your double boiler

and melt the white soap base. Follow the same instructions as in step one to color and scent the base. Set this aside for a moment while you lightly spray the tops of the setting clear soap in the molds with rubbing alcohol. Pour the slightly cooled opaque soap base over the clear base, and set aside to harden completely.

4. When set, turn your molds over and pop the soap out, wrapping them in plastic wrap and storing them as you did for the other types. It is not uncommon for layered soap like the two-toned bars to split between layers. The rubbing alcohol helps to hold them together. Make sure that your

first layer has only set enough that there is a skin on top, and that your second layer is still warm enough to adhere. If your soap does split apart, it's easy enough to melt the layers again (clear layers together, opaque layers together) and pour them once more.

Using Christmas scents and colors, as well as winter themes, you can create beautiful and original gifts – or display them in a basket in your bathroom for guests to see. You're sure to get compliments on your creativity!

- *Carrie Grosvenor*

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faux stained glass

Christmas Candle

Easy as 1-2-3-4!

This is a great project for the holidays that can be used as a get together project in November to display through the holiday season, or to give as a gift. A

project supply list and the pattern can be found on Page 97 & 98. This project is created as a modular element, which means it is painted on a temporary surface,

peeled off the temporary surface and applied to a project surface.

Step 1. Place the pattern (Page 07) under the Leading Blank, tape down. Follow along the lines of the pattern using Liquid Lead. This is much like piping a name on a cake. Do not touch the surface with the tip of the leading bottle, allow the leading to flow smoothly and drape out onto the surface. Allow to dry at least 8 hours.



Step 2. Applying paint. Use the tip of the bottle and follow along the inside perimeter of the leaded section. Each section has a paint color number listed. Much like a "paint by number" painting. Make sure to put enough paint in each section to allow the paint to



be smoothed to fill in all of the section completely. Making sure to smooth the paint onto the edges of the leading. This will help hold the paint to the leading for the final step. If you find you have too much paint, use a cotton swab to remove the excess.



Tip: It is easier to add a little more paint that to remove the excess. Combing and smoothing the paint in each section is accomplished by using the metal combing tool in the kit. Hold the pointed end of the metal tool on the surface of the leading blank and move it back and forth through the wet paint to distribute and smooth the paint go from side to side of the leading.

Allow the paint to dry for 8 - 12 hours until transparent and all cloudiness of the paint is clear.



Step 3. Carefully peel the edges of the candle up from the leading blank. Work carefully around the edges until the painted design has been lifted completely from the leading blank. Handle the back side of the "modular element" as little as possible to prevent oil and fingerprints.

Step 4. Place the candle on a candy jar to give as a gift or on a mirror or door to decorate for the season. This also makes a great teachers gift by placing it on a large clear ornament and writing the year on the opposite side with a paint pen or add to a surface like the plate shown. (for decorative use only).

Step 4. Place the candle on a candy jar to give as a gift or on a mirror or door to decorate for the season. This also makes a great teachers gift by placing it on a large clear ornament and writing the year on the opposite side with a paint pen or add to a surface like the plate shown. (for decorative use only).

- By Jan Easters Cumber

Jan Cumber is a Georgia based freelance designer/artist with a background in Architecture

and is the author of several published "how to" books on painted stained glass techniques and projects. In her words, "I have played in the world of crafts all my life, my love and passion is for Gallery Glass Window Color, a paint medium used to create faux stained glass."



Jan has developed wonderful techniques over the years and now shares them with others through her Artistic Glass Design Education Program. You can find more information on this program and other great projects at www.dbjec.com.





Paper Plate Holiday Wreaths



By Rebecca Lanham

If children were asked to make a list of the top ten things they like, you can bet that they would have “make things” (i.e. crafts) and Christmas on that list. There is just something about creating something from scratch that is your very own! Christmas time goes without saying, as it offers children a festive celebration complete with presents, decorations, cookies and togetherness.

That is what makes Christmas crafts so much fun for children – it offers two of their favorite things in one activity!

The younger the child, the more simple the craft needs to be. The following paper plate holiday craft can be done in a way a two year old will be able to participate, while it can also be very detailed and challenging for a middle school aged child.

Version to use with children between 2 and 4 years old:

What you will need:

- Large paper plates with the center cut out
- Green washable markers
- Leaf cut-outs
- Berry cut-outs
- Candle cut-outs
- Flame cut-outs
- Glue sticks



* When dealing with such a young age group, it is important to have everything prepared ahead of time. Children this age are not as skilled at cutting, so having the parts of the craft pre-cut can help make the activity go smoothly.



Instructions:

Step one: Have the children completely color the paper plate with the green markers. This will be the main "wreath" of the craft.

Step two: With the glue stick, have the children stick the green leaves and berries to the wreath.

Step three: With the glue stick, have the children stick the candle so that it can be seen in the center of the wreath.

Step four: With the glue stick, have the children stick the flame onto the top of the candle.

The children now have a holiday wreath they can hang on the front door, the refrigerator, or even the bulletin board at mommy or daddy's workplace.

Version to use with children between 5 and 7 years old:

What you will need:

- Large paper plates with the center cut out
- Green washable paints
- Paint brushes
- Paint shirts
- Disposable cups with water
- Leaf cut-outs
- Berry cut-outs
- Candle cut-outs
- Flame cut-outs
- Glue sticks

* Although much better at crafts, this age group can still have difficulty cutting the various pieces of the wreath. Plan to pre-cut the leaves, berries, candles, flames and the center out of the paper plate before beginning the craft.

Instructions:

Step one: Have the children completely cover the paper plate with green paint. Offer a

variety of green colored paints. This way the children can be creative and make a wreath with various green hues.

Step two: Allow the wreath to dry.

Step three: Follow steps #2 to #4 above.

Doing this version of the craft is great when you have a short time each day you need to fill with an activity. You can have the children do this craft for two days in a row, having them paint the first day and glue the second.

Version to use with children between 8 and 12 years old:

What you will need:

- Large paper plates
- Green washable paints
- Paint brushes
- Paint shirts
- Disposable cups with water
- Red construction paper



- Green construction paper
- White construction paper
- Yellow construction paper
- Orange construction paper
- Scissors
- Glue Sticks

* When the children get to be 8 years old, they are quite capable of doing entire crafts from start to finish with minimal help. Give them all the above materials and see what wonderful wreathes appear!

Instructions:

Step one: Have the children cut out the inner part of the paper plate, leaving a "wreath".

Step two: Using the green

paints, have the children complete cover the paper plate with various hues of green. Set aside to dry.

Step three: While the wreath is drying, the children can cut out leaf shapes from the green construction paper, berries from the red construction paper, candles from either red or white construction paper, and flames from the yellow and orange construction paper. (Other decorations can be cut out of other colored paper.)

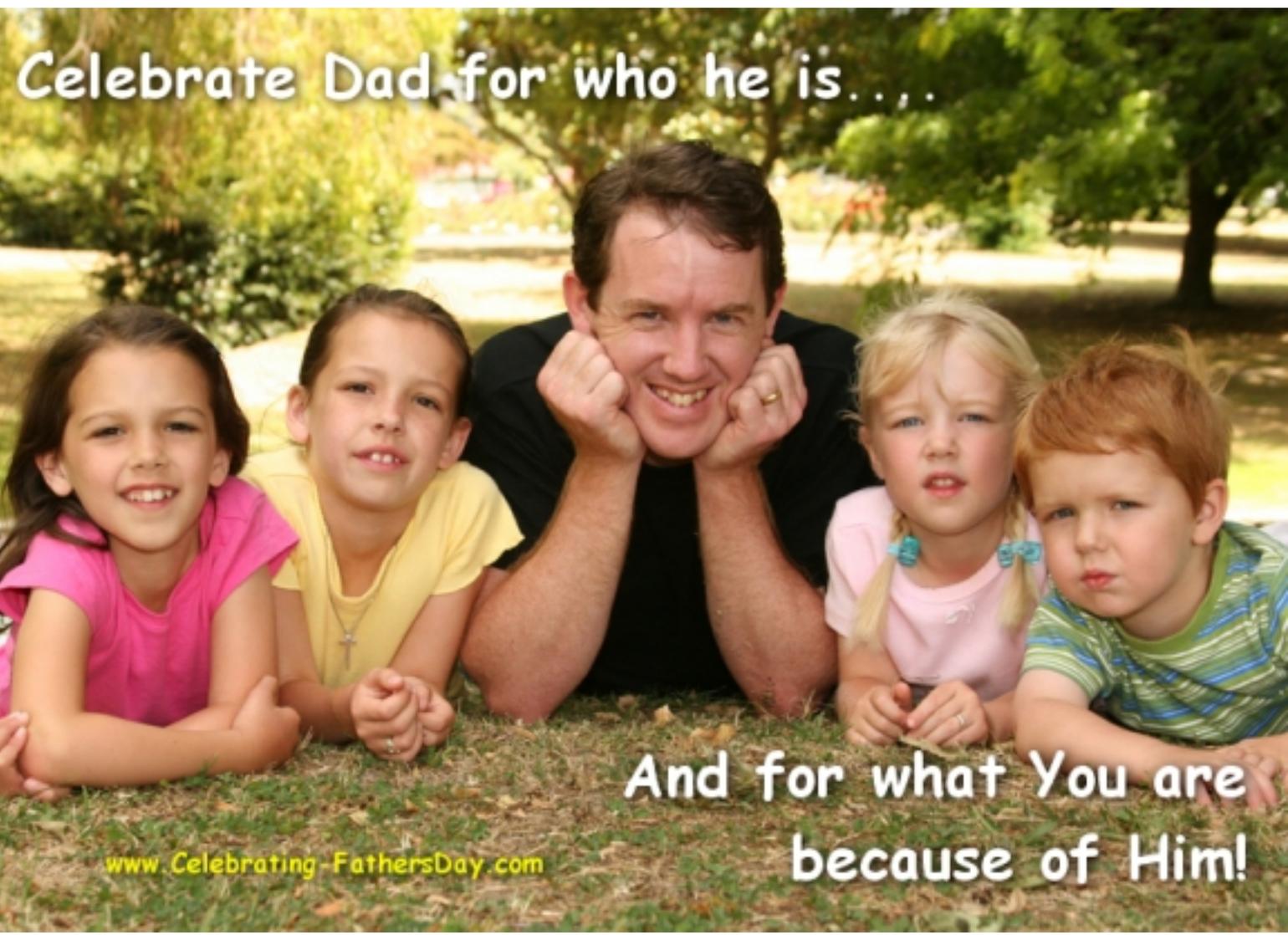
Step four: Once the wreath is dry, all the decorations can be glued onto the plate as described in steps #2 through #4 above.

Extras can be given for

wreathes made with this age group. Pine needles, pine cones, small circular stickers for ornaments, small bows for decorations, and construction paper tree light shapes can be glued on just as the leaves and berries are.

No matter the age of the child, making this paper plate wreath craft will be a lot of fun!

Note: The pictures provided were created using the instructions for 5 to 7 year olds. One was created by a 4 year old, one by a 5 year old. So, depending on the group, you can mix and match the materials and instructions based on how many children and how many adult "helpers" you have.



Celebrate Dad for who he is...

And for what You are because of Him!



When purchasing gifts for new parents, people normally go out and buy beautiful, frilly outfits for baby girls or a football and pennant for a baby boy. Although these are nice, and will genuinely be appreciated, there are more important items that new parents will surely need for their new infant. Here are some tips on what to buy new parents for the holidays this year.

1. Diapers – this is something that new parents will need a lot of. A package of diapers for a newborn can be gone in less than 3 days. At between \$15 and \$20 for each package, that expense really adds up! When you make a gift of diapers, you will be saving the new parents a great deal.

2. Formula – make sure to ask the new parents if formula is necessary before you buy it. Some mothers opt to breastfeed, making formula something that will sit on a shelf, unused. However, if the baby is formula fed, buying several cans as a gift this Christmas will be a wonderful sight under the tree. At close to \$20 per can, a grocery budget for the entire family can get a big bite taken out of

it with the purchase of formula.

3. Infant Tylenol – this may seem like a silly thing to get for a Christmas gift, but it will be greatly appreciated. With so many shots during the first year of life, fever and pain is not something that passes the new little one by. With Infant Tylenol coming in such small containers and costing around \$10 per bottle, giving this item at Christmastime as a gift will be welcome indeed. You can also be assured that it will not go to waste before its expiration date, as it gets used often.

Baby Food – this item is not that expensive, normally costing around \$.50 per jar. So, you can provide the new parents with a lot of it as their

Christmas gift. With various cereals, fruits, vegetables, teething cookies, juices, and other items available, you can make a gorgeous “baby food basket” to give as your gift. (If you want to throw in a cute, little teddy bear, go ahead!) If you buy enough baby food, you may get the parents through several weeks of feeding without having to restock!

5. Basic Clothing Items – include onesies, footed pajamas, and one or two one-piece or separates outfits. These items get used everyday...sometimes more than one, since baby may spit up on an outfit or have another accident of some kind...so will surely be put to good use. Leave the frilly, seasonal outfits on the rack.

They are over-priced and will probably only get worn once or twice before they are grown out of. A few basic clothing necessities will cost around \$50.

6. Basic Bathroom Items – give the new parents some baby bath and baby shampoo for Christmas. It is constantly being used, so will inevitably run out. Unless you know the new parents' diapering and bathing routine, don't bother with lotions or powders, as many parents don't use them at all. A few basic bathroom items will cost you around \$25.

7. Grocery Cards – grocery trips are frequent with a new baby, so give a gift certificate or gift card from the local

Leave the frilly, seasonal outfits on the rack. They are over-priced and will probably only get worn once or twice before they are grown out of.

market. The amount you give is up to you!

8. Gas Cards – showing off the new baby to family and friends takes a lot of vehicle fuel. Give a gift card to a local gas station. The amount you give is up to you!

9. Restaurant Gift Card – new parents need time away. A new baby is stressful and takes a lot of effort on the part of the parents. So, give them a gift card to their favorite restaurant. If you do give a gift like this, be sure to offer babysitting services as part of the deal! The amount you give

is up to you!

Big items, like high chairs, strollers, and cribs make wonderful gifts, but many times they have been acquired already through baby showers and gifts at the time of birth. If you know the new parents well, you can usually guess what is needed based on observation and the new parents' comments.

The best tip for what to purchase new parents at Christmastime will come from the parents themselves. They truly know what they need and will surely tell you, if you ask.



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Christmas Memories - Scrapbooking Layout

Preserve Christmas memories in a beautiful and festive Christmas scrapbook page.

You will need:

- Green Stripe Background Paper
- Red Stripe Background Paper
- Red Patterned Background Paper
- Black Card
- Silver Card
- Christmas Greeting Stamp

- Copper Ink Pad
- Silver Pen
- Silver Holly Peel-offs
- Silver Snowflake Embellishments
- Red/Black Buttons
- Scissors, Double Sided Tape
- Computer with Printing Facilities

To make the Christmas Scrapbooking page:

1. Tear a strip of the red stripe

background paper roughly one-third the height of the green.

2. Tear a triangle of the red patterned background paper for the bottom right hand corner. Secure both with double sided tape.

Continued on Page 68

The Christmas tree is where it is every year, in the corner by the large glass windows. All decorated with tinsel, lights and colorful bulbs, it is beautiful. This tree has always been the most gorgeous tree I've ever seen.

Garlands and wreaths decorate the walls, giving a distinctive holiday feeling. My favorite Christmas train, which has been in the family for over 50 years, is running silently on the table, surrounded by artificial snow and figures of a quaint village in winter. Hanging over the fire, the hand knit stockings look like they are about to burst, with candy canes and sweets filling them to their rims.

On the stereo, Christmas Carols are being played quietly by an orchestra. In the oven, a turkey is already roasting for the midday meal. A delicious looking display of pastries, fruit and juices is ready for breakfast.

Jocelyn and Cameron are sitting in the kitchen, drinking coffee and gazing at the tree. Jocelyn is a dear angel, with bobbed blonde hair that flips out on the ends. Her slim body looks festive in her red flannel pajamas. Taking a small sip from her cup, she glances at Cameron with her beautiful, deep blue eyes. So much love can be seen in that one look, I have to blink back tears.

Cameron is a very handsome man, tall with graying hair. He is dressed in the Christmas pajamas he received as a gift last year. With one hand around his steaming mug, he

reaches out the other to stroke Jocelyn's cheek.

Gazing at his wife of 13 years, his green eyes tell of his deep adoration for this woman at his side. Soon four little rugrats will invade their solitude and privacy to attack the mound of presents underneath the tree. It amazes me how every year the pile just gets bigger and bigger, but luckily we are part of a family that can find a way to make each Christmas



mean more than just receiving 'stuff'.

Suddenly, one of the many doors up the stairs slams. Kyla, who is the oldest child at 12, is ready to get to the business of Christmas morning. Although she cannot be seen, you can tell she is waking her younger siblings by the additional slamming doors and sounds of laughter coming from the upper floor.

A stampede of footsteps begins descending the stairs

about 5 minutes after the initial slam. Kyla leads the way, taking two steps at a time. Carissa, who is 10, follows close behind. The twins, Joseph and Jacob, are only 6, but they too hurry down as fast as their little legs can carry them.

It amazes me how much the kids have grown this past year. The boys have gotten so much taller. Their mopish blonde hair is a bit longer than I would have kept it were they my boys, but they liked it that way. They are talking so well now, compared to last year when they had just started kindergarten.

I'm a bit surprised at their age they let Jocelyn put them in footie pajamas, but they always did have a soft spot for their mom. Joseph seems to have taken on the role of leader with his twin, while Jacob is quite laid back and calm. I can tell by the sparkle in their bright blue eyes they are raring to go at the gifts waiting under the tree, but they do an amazing job at keeping themselves in check.

Carissa is the shiest one of the siblings, so quiet and serene. Her thin body looks swallowed up in the old-fashioned, holly-patterned nightgown. She finally must have gotten her braces off, as her smile is so big and gorgeous.

I cannot help but smile back when her face lights up. Her dark brown hair has gotten so long it nearly touches her thighs. The glint in her deep green eyes tells me she, too, wants to dive into the presents, but she first goes to

Jocelyn and Cameron and gives them gentle hugs and kisses good morning.

Kyla is the little mother of the family, making sure her siblings go to the kitchen for at least a small bite before making their way to the tree.

Also in a holiday nightgown, her long, wavy blonde hair is up in a thick braid that reaches halfway down her back. Her hazel eyes are full of wonder and excitement, as I have a feeling she has been waiting for Christmas morning since the day after Thanksgiving.

A bit on the klutzy side, poor Kyla almost spills her parents' coffee when she goes to give them hugs!

The tradition of a bite to eat before opening presents has always been a fun time. In a flurry of activity, the kids' favorite donuts are devoured first. Then orange juice is poured and gulped as quickly as it can be. Laughter and merriment echo through the house as the whole family joins together in a rousing rendition of "We Wish You a Merry Christmas" along with the orchestra on the stereo. Finally, after several verses and giggles, Jocelyn and Cameron share a special glance.

"Okay, I think you can open presents now!" Cameron says cheerfully, watching the faces of the kids light up with glee.

The time I have is growing short, but I do get to see the first several presents opened with extreme excitement. I'm glad to see the twins are sharing this year, and not grabbing packages out of the other's hands. Things like

stuffed toys, radio controlled automobiles, and video games seem to be the biggest hits.

My sight is starting to grow dark. The kids' laughter is starting to sound like it is far away, down a tunnel full of echoes. It's wonderful to have seen such a joyous celebration, though, even for such a short time.

My name is Amanda. I'm Jocelyn's great-grandmother. I died many years ago on Christmas Eve, and just before I gave in to the cancer that invaded my body, I made one desperate wish. "Please, wherever I go now, I just want to see all my kids enjoy Christmas morning!"

The next morning, I was saddened by how little joy there was on Christmas, but I understood they were mourning my passing. Where I went between that morning and the next Christmas morning, I cannot say, but one year later, I was back, seeing a few more smiles and a few less tears than the previous year.

That one last wish has brought me so much happiness, as I have seen my children grow, and my children's children, and now their children. Whoever has granted this wish, I thank with all my soul. They have given me my special Christmas window for all time.

* * * * *

Story by **Rebecca Lanham**
Naples, Florida

**Christmas Memories
Scrapbooking Layout
Continued from Page 66**



3. Print Christmas onto the black paper – For this page, I have used a free font called "Black Chancery". Colour in the printed text with a silver pen and stick across the red stripe paper as shown in the image. Cut a background for the top image from the red patterned paper. Stick the photo to the paper and then the whole item to the backing paper using double sided tape.

4. Stamp the greeting onto the black card using the copper ink pad. Tear into a roughly rectangular shape. Tear a slightly larger rectangular shape out of the silver paper and secure the printed greeting to the top. Stick it to the page.



5. Add a handful of holly peel-offs to the corners of the photographs and greeting. Finish off by adding a few snowflakes to the bottom left of the page and buttons to the top right.



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Personalized Gift Ideas For **Your Spouse** This Christmas



Your Spouse – The one person who puts all the meaning into your Christmas celebrations. Buying a gift for that special person made easy!

If there is one person in your family that you always buy for at the last minute, it is your spouse. With the overcrowded stores and the high prices, it isn't uncommon to run in and purchase for children and relatives and say to yourself, "I'll find out what my spouse wants later." However, they rarely inform you of what they would like for the holidays! Each year you want to make the gift to your spouse a special token of your love and devotion. Here are some simple, relatively inexpensive ideas for personalized gifts this year.

1. Movie & Munchies Gift Package

Many video rental companies have come up with gift packages. Inside you can find a gift card for video rentals, popcorn and a box of candy. However, buying these gift packages can get pricey! Why not create one of your very own for a fraction of the cost? Things you can include are:

a. Movie tickets or video rental cards – including movie tickets to the local theater is the better choice when you want to give your spouse a chance to get out and away from the house. However, if you are planning a quiet night in, video rental cards make a great gift. (Approximate cost - \$20 for tickets; \$15 for gift cards.)

b. Microwave popcorn, bag of M&Ms, taffy or other goodies – adding these items to the package are decorative and make the package well rounded. Choose your spouse's favorites to make it a thoughtful gift. (Approximate cost - \$10 to \$20.)

c. Babysitting coupon – if you have children and are planning to accompany your spouse to the movie, make sure you include this in your gift package. Talk to your normal babysitters and make the arrangements when the time comes to go out, or make the arrangements to take the kids to a babysitter if you plan to stay in! (Approximate cost - \$40 to \$50.)

2. The Cliché Gift Package

Flowers, candy and a card. When given individually, they make a nice addition to a gift. Given all together, they are a welcome gift package! Things you can include are:

a. Flowers – make this a special part of your gift package! You can include the type of flowers from your wedding or a bouquet of your spouse's favorite variety. (Approximate cost - \$10 to \$50.)

b. Candy – chocolates, mints, caramels...any type of candy can be included in your gift package. You know your spouse better than anyone, so can probably choose the perfect variety for this holiday surprise. (Approximate cost - \$10 to \$75, depending on "brand name".)

c. Card – this can be made extremely personal if you happen to have a card creating program on your computer. A store bought card can have a wonderful message for your spouse, as well. Take your time and find a card which has the sentiment you want your whole gift package to represent. (Approximate cost - \$1 to \$5.)

3. The Local Getaway Gift Package

You don't have to travel a great distance to have a getaway. Look at local hotels and spas for a deal and give it in a gift package to your spouse this holiday. Things you can include are:

a. Hotel reservations – surprise your spouse with a one or two-night reservation at a local 5-star hotel or resort. In the "off-season" for your area, you can find some excellent deals. (Approximate cost - \$100 to \$200 or less.)

b. Dinner gift card or certificate – everyone has that favorite restaurant they visit again and again. During your local getaway, take your spouse out to dinner at theirs!

(Approximate cost - \$50 to \$75 or less.)

c. Travel size personal needs items – in a nice travel bag, include items like shampoo, conditioner, toothpaste, toothbrush, razor, and anything else your spouse might need. (Approximate cost - \$10 to \$25.)

d. Babysitting coupon – this is a critical item if you happen to have children. Going away for a weekend can be a big expense if you need to hire child care. See if you can find someone who you trust to watch any children for a flat fee for the time you are away.

When you are just looking for some individual gift ideas, think about what your spouse likes to do. If your spouse enjoys going to the theatre, get him or her tickets to the traveling musical at the large venue in your area. If a particular sport or sports team is a daily part of your spouse's routine, get him or her some sporting equipment or tickets to the game at a nearby arena. If cooking is your spouse's hobby, feel free to buy him or her some pots, pans, cooking mitts, hot pads, or a gift card to a specialized kitchen supply outlet store. Use your personal knowledge of your spouse to get a gift that is thoughtful as well as enjoyable.

If you are just looking for that stocking stuffer item that has been on your "to do" list for weeks, getting a gift card or gift certificate is a good choice. You can choose the store or restaurant, plus you can choose the amount. You will save your spouse the time and effort of taking back an unwanted gift by allowing them to pick out the gift themselves.



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A Magical **CHRISTMAS**

Adding Light And The Fantastic To Your Holiday This Year

The traditional holiday finds the same decorations in our homes year after year: A Christmas tree, tinsel, some poinsettias, mistletoe, and maybe a wreath or two. Although gorgeous, even these decorations can get bland and have that "same old, same old" feel after a while. So, why not do something new this year? Why not make your home really shine? Decorating with lights and fantastical creatures can do just that!

Using Lights to Create Magic

Some of the most popular items used for décor during the holidays are lights. Whether they are a strand of colored or white lights, they really do give a nice touch to any room. You can do more

with lights than just put them on your tree, though. Find strands that "twinkle" and hang them around your windows, along your mantel, along the tops of your walls, around your door frames, and outside the house and in the trees. Add an angel or pixie figurine or ornament every so often, and you can say all of the twinkle lights are holiday fairies!

Candles add Mystique

Other decorative items that give a touch of mystique, while also adding beauty, are candles. It doesn't matter what kind of candle or whether it has a fragrance or not. Lit candles in the dark always add a touch of fantasy, mystery and romance to a room that will be enjoyed by everyone visiting your home this holiday. If you wish, you can find candles in the shapes of fantastical creatures, like dragons, fairies, and unicorns in the normal holiday reds, greens and whites.

You can also purchase luminaries with pixies, sprites, fairies and other creatures on the outer portion of the smoked glass. When lit, these candles will surely make your home shine.





Christmas Village Displays

Part of the normal décor at Christmastime is a lit holiday village and this will actually fit in perfectly with the look we want to achieve this year. The lighted buildings can be placed in one area together, or spaced around to give the whole room that village feel. When you place them as one unit, be sure to add some unique touches, like a unicorn pulling this year's sleigh

ride and a small, hidden piece of dry ice for a foggy, winter effect.

If Santa's reindeer are part of the village in some way, show them with a twist this year by having Pegasus leading the way!

The Christmas Tree

Although "A Christmas Tree" can look the same every year, you can spice it up when you plan a magical Christmas. Adding the

twinkle lights will be one improvement you can make, but you can also change the way you decorate it! Add a unicorn (or something that resembles a unicorn horn) as your tree topper this year. Spray on some "spray snow" to give it a wintertime feel.

Now decorate it with snow fairies ornaments, snowflakes, white unicorns and Pegasus, and even snow baby ornaments. For the most part, your entire tree will be white and a true conversation piece at this year's holiday party!

Artificial white trees strung with white lights and pastel colored decorations are another great way to add a whimsical touch to your decorations.

Santa's Elves

You can plan to focus on Santa's elves this year if you want to add a touch of mythical and fantastical, too! Who can resist the little people in green with their pointy ears and shoes? Have elf figurines all over the house – on the tree, in the lit holiday village, decorating your packages, and manning the traditional holiday model train.

More Ideas:

Little touches can be added around your home and outside to give it an aura of fantasy, too. Some ideas include:

1. You can add wall hangings of snow fairies and pixies – along with snow white angels. These can brighten up the darkest room.
2. You can easily find candle holders to add to the wall, as well.
3. Figurines of unicorns, sprites and angels can be added to table



7. Create warmth and magic by placing a strand of white lights in a glass bowl and then placing a layer of fluffy cotton on it. Finally, add some baubles on the cotton. The bowl will look filled with baubles resting in snow with a glow at the bottom.

8. Use sheer material like white net or tulle to cover walls or columns and light stands of white lights behind them. The light will strain through the fabric giving a glowing effect all over.

9. Plan your decorations on your kids' favorite magical storybook character and give him a magical Christmas to cherish for life.

These are far from all the ideas you could implement around your home to make it magical and fantastical. There are limitless possibilities when it comes to mythical, magical creatures and lights. Use your imagination and see what beautiful décor you can create for your home this holiday season!

tops, mantle tops and be made into a table centerpiece.

4. Instead of the lighted reindeer outside, modify them a bit to look like a unicorn.

5. Add a unicorn to your outdoor display of Santa's Sleigh.

6. During your holiday party, rent a fog machine for outside. Hide it somewhere around Santa's Sleigh display, so he looks like he is flying among the clouds.





Celebrate with Santa!

A Party Plan for Family and Friends

Everyone knows that the holidays are a time of huge gatherings. At these get-togethers, friends and family come to a particular place and enjoy the Christmas season as one, if even for just a few hours. Since these celebrations only happen once a year, why not make them a

huge blow-out? Make them enjoyable for the younger and older generations alike by creating a thematic party!

What better theme is there than "Santa"?

Santa Claus and his elves truly made the season joyous for

many. No matter your age, the jolly man in the red, satin suit brings a smile to your face. Here are some ideas for creating a family celebration centered around Santa that will be enjoyed by everyone:

Activity Ideas:

Hire a "Santa Claus" – most local talent agencies have tons of Santas through the Christmas season. Most of the time, the talent agency will even allow you to interview the person to make sure they will be able to fulfill your party expectations. This is an expensive activity for a party, but one that will be appreciated (since this way a family member will not have to miss the fun by being "Santa").

Play some favorite holiday movies that are all about Santa – there are classics that both adults and children appreciate. From the animated/claymation children's specials by Rand and Bass to the Chevy Chase hit *Christmas Vacation*, everyone can find something they will like! You will more than likely see a lot of smiles and hear a great deal of laughter, too.

3. Have a craft for kids and adults – kids are not the only ones who enjoy making things! Have a craft prepared for the younger guests in one area and another for the adults in a separate area. Simple paper crafts and coloring pages work best for the younger party goers, while you can get intricate with the adults. Some ideas are:

a. Make a candy cane reindeer with the kids – all you need are regular size candy canes, googly eyes, a black pom-pom nose, and brown pipe cleaners for the antlers. Have a red pom-pom nose on one to create Santa's entire team!

b. Make a gingerbread house with the adults – kits are available or you can make them from scratch. After the house is made, you can get the younger party guests involved by having them do the decorating. You can call this “Santa’s Workshop”!

c. Make a red and green Christmas chain – everyone has made one of these before. With strips of red and green construction paper, use glue to create a ring. Add another ring connected to the first and so on. Once long enough, put it on your tree as a decoration.

4. Decorate a tree – even if it is simply a small 3 or 4 foot tree, kids and adults alike will have a great deal of fun decorating it.

5. Decorate Santa Claus cookies – this is a great activity for both kids and their parents to do together. Red and white icings, mini chocolate candies, raisins, and sprinkles on sugar cookies shaped like Santa Claus will not only keep little fingers busy, but the cookies can then be used as a snack!

6. Santa Games – for the kids, have a “Pin the Hat on Santa” game prepared. For the adults, why not play some Christmas charades?

Decoration Ideas:

1. Make red and white the colors of the party – have red and white plates, cups, napkins, tablecloths, and silverware. Don’t forget to send invitations with the man in red on the front, too!

2. Create an inexpensive display of “Santa’s Sack” –

you can always use a big, black garbage bag. You could also go and get some red material and create a huge sack out of it. Then take a dozen or so empty boxes and wrap them. Adding loose stuffed animals, dolls, and puzzles can be fun “take-home” favors for the children attending the party.

3. Anything Santa – there are huge, electric run Santa’s which blow up and come out of a chimney. You can find very inexpensive clings to place on all your windows. Stockings with Santa on them are easy to find, as are Santa Claus hats.

4. The beautiful ‘Santa Tree’ on the previous page was decorated by Elias Nunez of Geneva, Ohio. In her own words, “One of the best trees that I have ever put together with a collection of 11 years and going - My Santa Tree!”

5. Decorate your mantel on a ‘Santa theme’. Display collected Santas and add a ‘Mrs. Claus’ and some little elves.

6. If you display a Christmas village, go in for a ‘North Pole’ village this year. Department 56 has an entire line of lighted houses devoted to ‘North Pole’ where you will find whimsical shops and houses for elves and reindeers. You can also mix and match some collectibles from their ‘North Pole’ segment along with other snowy, whimsical collectibles available in local shops to create your own ‘Santa’s Village’.

Food Ideas:

1. Have “Santa Punch” for the main beverage at the party –

Adding vanilla ice cream to cherry soda or a white sherbet to a clear variety of soda and fruit punch will make a “Santa Punch” everyone will love.

2. “Christmas Tree Salad” – not actually a salad, but more of a dessert. Using pears halves pre-colored green (available around the holidays), place the pear flat side down on leaves of romaine lettuce or spinach. Cover with stripes of softened cream cheese and then “decorate” the tree with candy ornaments. (Icing can be used instead of cream cheese.)

3. Other Holiday Favorites – have ham or turkey, sweet or mashed potatoes, pumpkin pie, fruit cake, popcorn balls and other holiday favorites prepared if your get-together is around dinnertime. Ham and turkey cold-cut sandwiches are quite acceptable, especially if you have a lot of guests attending.

These are just some of the many ideas you can use for a thematic “Santa” party. Anything dealing with the man in red will work wonderfully!

The only thing to remember about a thematic party is that advance preparation is required. You cannot “throw together” a Santa party in a day or so unless you truly want a stressful event. Anytime you purchase supplies over the internet, leave plenty of time for delivery! Begin looking for party supplies, decorations, and your hired Santa at least a month in advance, have your activities planned and created at least two weeks in advance, and buy your food the day before or have it delivered the day of the party.

Make Your Own Scented Potpourri For The Holidays



It is really not at all difficult to prepare your own potpourri. Having your family creating potpourri as gifts or for your own use makes a great activity that everyone can enjoy. Although you can make this fragrant décor for any time of the year, we will be focusing on those scents which work best during the Christmas season.

How To Start

To begin, you must start during the spring and summertime. Collect all sorts

of flowers, leaves, pine cones, mint blossoms, tree barks, branches, twigs and even pine needles. Once you have gathered all the necessary ingredients, you need to dry them for future use.

The Drying Process

Place all your blooms, leaves and other gathered material on some sort of screen. If no screen is available, simply put some paper towels on a large serving tray. Now put them in a warm area that is airy, but make sure it is not humid or drying cannot occur.

Attics and garages are normally too warm, while

basements can be damp.

Look for an area in the main part of your home which stays warm, but dry, for this process. When you are drying blooms on paper towels, be sure to turn every day or so. When they are on a screen, the air can surround the blossoms and leaves, so turning is not necessary.

Once all the materials are completely dried through, place them in an air tight container away from light (Completely dried = slightly brittle). Each kind of material you dry should be stored in a separate bowl or jar. You will know if you allowed a long enough drying time based on

the storage container – if it stays dry, you dried the materials long enough. If it gathers moisture at the top, you need to lay the materials out for additional drying time. Make sure you don't over-dry your potpourri, as the flower petals and other items may lose too many of their essential oils and break apart too easily.

Some of the leaves and grasses may have dried in a way that is unappealing, so just discard those and use what you like. The look of the dried materials is all important for potpourri, since you are not at all concerned about the scent. You will be adding the scent later.

If you keep drying materials throughout the spring and summer, the holiday gifts you offer to family and friends can be wonderfully scented potpourri.

Before Making The Potpourri

You are almost there. You have your dried materials all ready to go! Even if some of your dried flowers and leaves have a bit of a scent, that is okay.

There is a science to creating the potpourri you will enjoy for the holidays. If you are creative, you can take many of the scented oils available to create a scent all your own. Or, you can just take one particular type of oil and have a focused scent.

Holiday scents that are available:

- Cinnamon
- Pine
- Peppermint
- Holiday Spice
- Christmas Berries
- Christmas Tree
- Gingerbread

Before you begin with the dried materials, do not forget to add a fixative to the potpourri! If you don't know what a fixative is, here is a good description: A fixative is a material that allows fragrance to last longer. A fixative will absorb the scented oil(s) you choose, which makes the long lasting scent of potpourri possible. Some common natural fixatives are:

- oakmoss
- calamus root
- orris root
- whole spices
- cellulose
- sandalwood
- frankincense
- myrrh

You can buy commercially available fixatives, as well, although they are not natural.

Before creating the potpourri, you need to mix the fixative and the

fragrance or essential oils you will be using. This should occur two, maybe three, days before you add it to your dried materials. Place the fixative in a jar, drop the oils on top, and then store in a cool, dark area.

Making The Potpourri

Now you have your scent all prepared, you have mixed the oils with the fixative, and you are ready to begin.

In a large jar, mix two tablespoons of the scented fixative to a quart of your dried materials. For holiday potpourri, go for a seasonal look by using small cones, pine needles, barks, and dried leaves that are greens, reds or browns. Stir everything and make sure the fixative is mixed thoroughly into the dried materials. Put the lid on top of the jar and let it sit for several weeks, shaking occasionally.





Girl's Tree Trimming Party

Give your little 'grown-up' girl and her friends a chance to do what they love to do most – Pretend to be Mommy and decorate the tree for Christmas!

From 7-8 year olds to 12-14 year old, all girls would love going to a Christmas party, dressing up, trimming the tree and gorging on yummy finger foods. Plan a special party for your daughter and her friends and let them have a blast.

Send out invitations at least 2 weeks in advance so you are assured that the little invitees won't be engaged elsewhere with their parents.

The Invite

Be creative with the invites. Whether you choose to print them off your printer or make handmade cards with your daughter, make sure that it stays within the theme of the party. You can either use the 'Christmas Tree' or 'Christmas Ornament' motif on the card or simply shape the entire invite in the shape of a tree or ornament. You can also have a 'Dress Code'.

Preparing for the Party

First, decide on the place where the party will be held. Will it be one of your living rooms or the drawing or the kids play or bed room. Then, comes the main attraction of the party – The Tree!

You can choose to have a smaller live tree or an artificial one. Keep the height of all the guests invited when choosing the tree. Once the tree is decided upon, choose the decorations that will go well on the shorter tree. Porcelain ornaments may be too heavy for the little tree and you also wouldn't want any breakage with your prized ornaments. It will be most safe to use shiny baubles made of unbreakable plastic and painted metal or plastic or beaded garlands.

Two hours before the party, cover the floor near the tree with old sheets and lay out boxes of ornaments and garlands. Make the girls feel special by taking some extra effort to decorate the room in

Festive tones. Use Christmas themed table cloth and rugs, add some candles, a vase of poinsettia, cute little Christmas pillows etc.

The Menu

Keep the menu simple and kid friendly. A number of finger foods with some dips will be liked by all your guests. And since Christmas is never Christmas without desserts, you should definitely have some sweets. Here are some suggested recipes for a memorable Girls' Tree Trimming Party:

Cheese Pine Cones

Yield: 3 Pinecones

16 oz Shredded Swiss cheese
 1 c Butter or margarine; softened
 10 tbsp Milk
 4 tbsp Dry milk
 1/2 tsp Ground red pepper
 2 c Blanched almonds; finely chopped
 1-1/2 c Sliced unblanched almonds
 1 c Whole unblanched almonds
 Fresh rosemary sprigs

Beat cheese, butter, milk, sherry and red pepper in medium bowl until mixture is smooth; stir in chopped almonds.

Divide mixture into 3 equal portions; shape each into tapered ovals to resemble pine cones. Insert slivered, sliced and whole almonds into cones. Cover; refrigerate 2 to 3 hours or until firm.

Garnish tops with rosemary.

Girl's Tree Trimming Party

Mini Pizzas

1 can of flaky biscuits
 1/4 lb sharp cheese
 4 T. tomato sauce
 Garlic salt
 Oregano
 Grated parmesan cheese
 pepperoni

Pre-heat oven to 350 degrees
 Use one can of flaky biscuit (pull apart to make 24 rounds) arrange on cookie sheet, cut 1/4 lb sharp cheese (24 cubes). Press cubes in center round. Top each with one tsp. tomato sauce. Sprinkle each with garlic salt, oregano and parmesan cheese.

Bake in over pre-heated to 350 until bottom of pizza's are brown. (about 7 to 10 minutes.

Chocolate Dessert Ball

11 ounces cream cheese, softened
 3/4 cup chocolate chips, melted
 1/4 cup creme de menthe
 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
 1 1/2 cups coarsely chopped pecans

In a large bowl, combine softened cream cheese, melted chocolate chips, liqueur, and cinnamon. Blend until smooth. Chill at least 2 hours. Form into ball and roll in chopped nuts. Serve with chocolate wafer cookies.

Fake Butterfingers

Take Ritz crackers and

spread with peanut butter then top with 2nd cracker.

Melt chocolate almond bark then dip cracker sandwiches, put on wax paper and let harden.

Sparkling Berry Punch

2 cans (250 ml ea) Raspberry Juice Concentrate
 1 can (341 ml) Cranberry Cocktail Concentrate
 1 can (355 ml) Lemonade Concentrate
 1/4 c lemon juice
 1 (750 ml) bottle gingerale
 2 (750 ml ea) bottles club soda
 2 cup vodka (opt)

Thaw and combine juice concentrates. At serving time add carbonated beverages. Serve with ice (or cold)

Makes 16 cups.

Party Activities

From our experience, the girls were simply not interested in any party games. They couldn't wait to get started decorating the tree.. The only suggested party activity is a party craft where the girls can make a simple ornament from paper or gingerbread or ribbons and greens and take home as favors. Just open the boxes and let the girls decorate the tree together. Oh, and don't forget to leave them alone while they do this and not let anyone peek in before they are done!

Traditional Turkey Dinner



Christmas mornings remind you of the familiar cooking smells coming from the kitchen and making your stomach grumble. Mom woke up early and got busy preparing for dinner. And although it would seem that the long process would never end, the dinner was somehow always ready in time. And although it feels great to be innovative and non-traditional at times, you would love your children to associate Christmas morning with similar smells, wouldn't you. Let's go back to the basics and derive sheer Christmas cooking pleasure by making the 'Traditional Turkey Dinner'.

Roast Turkey

Ingredients:

12 lb (5.4 kg) turkey, thawed if frozen
Stuffing of your choice
1-1/2 pt (825 ml) turkey or chicken stock
3 tbsp. oil
salt and pepper

Method:

1. Wash turkey inside and out; dry with kitchen paper.
2. Put stuffing in neck: lay prepared bird on its back, draw back neck flap and spoon stuffing into cavity, pressing in firmly. Replace flap and secure with wing tips, or sew with coarse thread to keep in place.
3. Place turkey on a trivet in a large roasting tin. Pour stock around.
4. Brush turkey with oil, season with herbs. Basil, Marjoram, Sage, Summer Savory, Tarragon, Thyme etc. are excellent seasonings for turkey. Wrap foil around each leg, then cover turkey loosely with greased foil.
5. Roast on 350 deg. F or 180 deg. C) for about 3 hours.
6. Remove foil, baste well with pan juice. Continue cooking another 4/3 hour basting

occasionally.

7. Test to see if bird is cooked. Place a skewer deep in its thigh and if the juices run out clear, the bird is ready. If pinkish-red, the bird is undercooked. Cook a little longer and then test again.

8. To Serve, remove turkey from roasting tin to warmed platter. Cover with foil, rest 10 minutes in a warm place before carving. Garnish with watercress.

Notes:

Pan Juices can be used to make gravy.

Leftover roast turkey can be sliced and frozen. Pack the slices together in a sealed polybag to prevent drying out. Use within 1 month. When using frozen turkey, thaw 4 hours in fridge.

Serves 6



How to proceed:

When bird is done, remove surplus fat from roasting tin. Pour stock into a pan. Blend 2 tsp. cornflour with 1 tbsp. water, add to pan with 2 tbsp. sherry or red wine. Bring to boil, cook for 2 minutes to thicken gravy. Season well. Serve in a gravy boat.

Candied Yams

6 to 8 yams
1 and ½ sticks of butter
1 cup of brown sugar
1 tsp vanilla flavor
½ tsp of salt
1 tsp of cinnamon or allspice

Boil yams until tender and drain water. Peel and cut potatoes lengthwise in 4 to six pieces. Place in buttered baking dish. Melt 1 stick of butter and sugar in skillet, stirring occasionally. Add spices, vanilla, and salt. Add ½ cup of water to heated mixture. Pour the butter-sugar mixture over yams. (Should be fully covered with syrup.) Dot potatoes with additional butter. Sprinkle small amount of granulated sugar on top. Bake in 350 degree oven for 45 minutes. Serves 8 to 10.

Turkey Giblet Gravy

Making the Stock:

Heat washed turkey giblets in a pan with 1-1/2 pt. (825 ml) cold water, 1 tsp. salt, freshly ground black pepper, and a bouquet garni. Bring to boil, simmer for an hour. Strain, make up to 825 ml with water.

Use this stock for cooking turkey. Pour into pan, under trivet.



Mashed Potatoes are as Christmassy as Christmas Pudding itself. For most families, they are a part of the family tradition and there is never a Christmas dinner without everyone's favorite – Mashed Potatoes. If you have vegetarian guests, you can be assured that they will love this creamy side dish. Here are two of our favorite recipes for Mashed Potatoes for you to try and serve your family and friends this Christmas. One of them is a make-ahead recipe to help you save time and enjoy your Christmas dinner.



Mashed Potatoes

The Perfect Side Dish for Your Holiday Meal

Garlic Mashed Potatoes

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 1/2 to 1 cup vegetable stock
- 1 bay leaf
- 3/4 t salt
- About 2 ounces garlic, broken into cloves and peeled
- 1 1/2 pounds thin-skinned potatoes, scrubbed and cut into 1/2-inch dice
- Freshly ground pepper to taste (optional)
- 1 to 2 tablespoons minced fresh parsley

Directions:

Bring the stock, bay leaf, and salt to the boil in the cooker. Add the garlic and potatoes.

Lock the lid in place. Over high heat, bring to high pressure. Lower the heat just enough to maintain high

pressure and cook for 3 minutes. Reduce the pressure with a quick release method.

Remove the bay leaf. Drain off all but about 1/2 liquid (reserve for stock for other cooking purposes). Mash potatoes and garlic coarsely with a fork or ricer and stir in pepper and parsley.

Make-Ahead Mashed Potatoes

Serves 4

Ingredients:

- 4 Medium sized potatoes
- 1/2 cup Sour cream
- 4 oz Cream cheese, softened
- 2 Tbsp Butter
- 1-1/2 Tbsp Chives, chopped
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Additional butter
- Paprika

Directions:

Boil peeled potatoes until tender. Beat sour cream and cream cheese together.

Add hot potatoes and beat until smooth. Add butter, chives, salt and pepper to taste.

Place in greased two quart casserole. Dot with butter and sprinkle paprika on top.

Bake at 350 degrees for 25 minutes.

Make-Ahead Tip:

You can make this the day before dinner and refrigerate in a slow cooker. On Christmas day, turn on crock-pot at low setting and cook the prepared potatoes for about 2-3 hours, so they are ready in time for dinner.

Cranberry Sauce

100g caster sugar
150ml water
finely grated rind of 1 orange
225g fresh cranberries

Wash and pick over the cranberries removing any stalks grit and shrivelled fruits. In a saucepan place the sugar and water. Stand the pan over a gentle heat and stir to dissolve the sugar. Add the orange rind and cranberries.

This is quick and easy to make and much nicer than anything from a jar.

Serves 8

Favorite Turkey Stuffings

Apple and Celery Stuffing

25g butter
2 onions skinned and chopped
2 sticks celery chopped
4 medium cooking apples peeled

The fruit and celery make a good combination and can be used to stuff a turkey or go round a joint of roast pork.

Basic Bread and Onion Stuffing

Most inherited stuffing recipes have these two basic ingredients: Bread and Onions. Here is the recipe for a simple stuffing followed by a list of additional ingredients you can add to it depending upon the tastes of your family members.

28g butter
1 onion peeled and finely chopped
112g fresh white or brown bread crumbs
salt and pepper

Method

Heat butter and fry onions and other vegetables if required.

Add breadcrumbs seasoning and remaining ingredients.

Use as required.

Suggested Additions

56g mushrooms; finely chopped and 1tbsp parsley; finely chopped

2tsp fresh thyme; chopped and 2tbsp fresh parsley; finely chopped

224g chestnut puree and 168g pork sausage meat

1 onion (additional); peeled and finely chopped and 2tsp dried sage

1 stick celery; chopped and 2 medium sized cooking apples; peeled cored and sliced.



Cover with a lid and cook over a low heat until the cranberries are cooked you can usually hear them bursting. This takes 8-10 minutes.

Stir well and serve warm or refrigerate until needed.

The colour of cranberry sauce is attractive on the christmas table. It is even delicious served with cold meats. This sauce will not keep for long so if you want to make the most of cranberries in the shops you will need to freeze any extra fruit.

cored and finely chopped
75g fresh white breadcrumbs
1 tbsp chopped parsley salt and pepper

Melt the butter in a frying pan add the celery and onion and cook until softening but not brown. Remove with a slotted spoon and put in a mixing bowl. Add the apple and cook until softening.

Add to the onion and celery mixture stir in the breadcrumbs parsley salt and pepper. Press together if making stuffing balls or stuff the neck end of a turkey.



Festive Table Settings for Christmas

The Christmas dinner table is always the focal point of Christmas evening. Your theme and our ideas will guide you to lay a beautiful and festive table this Christmas.

When setting a Christmas table with a white base such as white-blue, white-red, white-gold or white-green, start with a white lace or other tablecloth. Use white china or glassware. Flatware should be silver or stainless steel.

Now start adding touches of the color you want to mix in. Use the color in placemats, napkins, centerpiece accents etc.

Above:

Icy-blue tones on a white backdrop set the mood for this festive table. Blue is used in placemats, centerpiece candles, ornaments and tinsel and even the tabletop trees are dusted with gold and blue powders.

Below:

Elegant gold touches on solid white give this table a classy, yet festive look. A few more touches of gold may be added to the centerpiece by adding gold-dusted fruit or flowers intermixed with seasonal greens.





Show off your polished wooden tabletop by skipping the table cloth. White table mats and napkins, shining silver and a centerpiece made of red candles, roses and evergreens bring a festive look.



Hanukkah Recipes
Driedel Crafts
Decorating for Hanukkah
DIY Projects
Gift Ideas
Party Planning
Traditional Dinner Menus



Log on to:

www.Celebrating-Hanukkah.com



For the white and red table setting on the previous page, start with a lace tablecloth. Each place setting starts with a gold charge plate topped with a glass dinner plate, white napkin, glass napkin ring decorated with holly and berries.

Above:

A Red and Gold tablecloth adds character to this table. A 'Red and Green' theme is carried through the other elements such as the napkins, favors and the centerpiece.

Below:

Simple and beautiful. Another white and red table set with a base of solid white cloth and pure white china. The pretty red details add Christmas spirit to the table.



Easy Christmas Centerpieces



Some beautiful centerpieces do not require as much hard work to put together as they seem to. Our ideas for two easy, yet breathtaking table centerpieces are sure to inspire you.

Red & Gold Sparkle Centerpiece

In this stunning centerpiece, Sandy Kay has used three graduated votive candle holders. The bowls are partially filled with gold rocks and a red votive is placed in the center of each bowl. Candle rings of faux poinsettias are placed around the bottom of the candle sticks. Christmas confetti around the centerpiece adds color and gives the table a festive look. Tall glass candle sticks with tall gold candles

have been placed on either side of the centerpiece to add light.

Silver Beads and Baubles

Group together silver beads

and shiny baubles in unused white china plates. Use baubles of different shades and texture to break monotony. Add white tea lights to give the centerpiece a warm glow.





desired, and pepper; cook for 1 minute. Add broth and bouillon cube; simmer uncovered for 15 minutes. Stir in pumpkin and half and half; cook 5 minutes, stirring occasionally to blend. Top with chopped onion. Serve warm.

Makes 6 cups.

French Onion Soup

2 lg. or 3 med. onions, sliced
1/4 c. butter or margarine
1 qt. (4 c.) water
6 cubes or 6 tsp. beef bouillon
1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
Dash of pepper
4 to 6 slices French bread, toasted
Grated Parmesan cheese

In large saucepan, cook onions in butter until tender. Add water, bouillon, Worcestershire sauce and pepper. Cover and simmer for 20 to 25 minutes to blend flavors. To serve, top each serving with a slice of toasted French bread and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Place under broiler until cheese melts and browns at the edges.

Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Hot Soups for Cold Christmas Evenings

Creamy Pumpkin Soup

1/4 c. butter or margarine
1 c. chopped onion
1/2 c. chopped celery
1 garlic clove, crushed
1/2 tsp. salt (opt.)
1/4 tsp. ground pepper
3 c. chicken broth
1 bouillon cube
1 3/4 c. (16 oz. can) solid pack pumpkin
1 c. half & half
Chopped chives or green onion tops

In a large saucepan, melt butter; sauté onion, celery and garlic until soft. Add salt, if



Christmas shouldn't mean any less to those with Diabetes. Our diabetic recipes will make sure your loved one will have a wonderful Christmas season to look forward to.

Diabetic Date Dainties

2 eggs
1 1/2 tsp. liquid sweetener
1 1/2 tsp. baking powder
1/3 c. dates, chopped
1/4 c. flour
1/2 c. nuts
1 1/2 c. bread crumbs

Beat eggs, sweetener and baking powder. Add dates, flour and nuts. Stir in bread crumbs. Chill, then measure by teaspoon on a greased cookie sheet. Bake at 375 degrees for 12 minutes.

Sugar-free Cranberry Relish

2 c. cranberries
2 apples
1 c. orange juice

Grind together the cranberries and apples, using a sweet apple. (May also use blender). Add orange juice, chopped nuts and sweetener to taste. Refrigerate several hours before using.

Sugarless Fruit Cake

1 c. dates, chopped
1 c. prunes, chopped
1 c. raisins
1 c. cold water
1 stick margarine, melted
2 eggs
1 tsp. baking soda
1/4 tsp. salt
1 c. plain flour
1 c. nuts, chopped
1/4 tsp. cinnamon
1/4 tsp. nutmeg
1 tsp. vanilla

Christmas Recipes for Diabetics

Boil dates and prunes in the one cup of water for 3 minutes; add margarine and raisins and let cool. Mix flour, soda, salt, eggs, nuts, spices and vanilla. Add to fruit mixture. Stir to blend. Pour into baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees for 25 to 30 minutes.

Fruit Dip

1 c. plain yogurt
8 oz. light cream
8 packets Equal sugar
1 tsp. vanilla.

Mix all ingredients.

Frozen Apricot Mousse

1 c. apricot apple butter
1/2 c. whipping cream
2 egg whites
2 tbsp. Fruit Sweet

Beat egg whites until stiff but not dry. Fold into the apricot apple butter. Whip the cream until stiff, adding the Fruit Sweet. Fold the whipped cream into the apricot mixture. Freeze.

Peanut Butter Cookies

1/2 c. peanut butter
1 tbsp. low calorie oleo
2 1/2 tsp. liquid sweetener
2 eggs
1 c. flour
1/4 tsp. soda
1/2 c. skimmed milk

Beat first 4 ingredients well. Add eggs and beat again, then add milk and flour. Blend well. Drop by spoon on

cookie sheet that is greased well. Bake at 375 degrees for 12 minutes.

Turkey and Potato Salad

4 oz. cooked turkey or chicken, bite size pieces
1 (3 oz.) boiled potato, chopped
1 tbsp. mayonnaise
1 tsp. chopped pimento
1/2 tsp. dehydrated parsley flakes
1/2 tsp. nutmeg
1/2 tsp. sage
1/4 tsp. salt
Dash of pepper
Lettuce leaves

Combine all ingredients except lettuce; mix well. Chill. Serve on lettuce leaves.

Makes 1 serving.

Coconut Surprise Cookies

3 oz. cream cheese
3/4 tsp. liquid artificial sweetener
1/4 tsp. grated orange rind
1/4 tsp. grated lemon rind
1 tsp. walnuts, chopped
1/4 c. unsweetened moist shredded coconut

Work cream cheese with spoon until light and fluffy. Thoroughly mix in sweetener along with grated fruit rinds and walnuts. Form into 12 balls about 1 inch in diameter. Roll in coconut and refrigerate.

Makes 12 cookies.



Creative Ideas for Displaying Christmas Villages

The miniature Christmas village is a tradition that many people enjoy year after year. There are many different kinds of villages you can make or purchase. Choose from rustic country villages, Victorian villages, modern villages, Whimsical villages, Kid-themed storybook type villages and more. Some villages can even be lit up to add realism and interest. Villages can include buildings, trees, street lamps, and even little people and animals. Accessories like lights, fake snow, fences, lamp posts, benches, furniture, cars, roads etc. are also available. It is a wonderful idea to add 2-3 collectibles every year to your village collection till you have a beautiful village to display every Christmas or even throughout the year. Over the following pages, you will see different ideas that you can use to display your villages creatively.



Below:

If you've already got all the buildings, accessories and people for your Christmas village, you'll need to find an artistic way to display it all.

Got a large shelf, mantle or entertainment center? Then try nestling your Christmas village in piles of fake snow for a cute, realistic holiday look.

Above:

You could try elevating certain aspects of your village to give it a tiered effect. Or, place small villages in different areas of your home rather than bunching the whole set of buildings together. This gives different areas of your home a little something special!





Christmas villages can be as simple or as ornate as you desire. There are villages out there that look like miniature towns, complete with a neighborhood of homes, shops, a post office, and much more.

Make the most of the accessories available. Add ponds, bridges and roads to enhance the look of your village. You need not purchase all accessories. Get creative and make your own roads with leftover leather pieces from your past Home-Improvement project and use glass or mirror to make frozen lakes and ponds. Cut out figures from vintage postcards and use as 'people' in a quaint village.

If your village is modern, you may want to feature a realistic street and a few cars.

For an old-time village, try horse-drawn carriages complete with driver and passengers!





There are Christmas villages that come ready to display, and those that need to be painted. Painting all those little buildings, people and animals can be a fun craft for you and your family to do together! And each year, you can add to your village, making it larger and more spectacular.

Your guests will love marveling at your miniature world and will look forward to seeing what you've done with it each year. I have a friend who gives each of her friends and family some paint and an unpainted building and puts them to work, so each special person in her life has their very own special building in the village.

A Christmas village is a creative way to bring wonder and magic to your home. No matter what theme or decor you feature in your home, you'll find an appropriate village that fits right in!

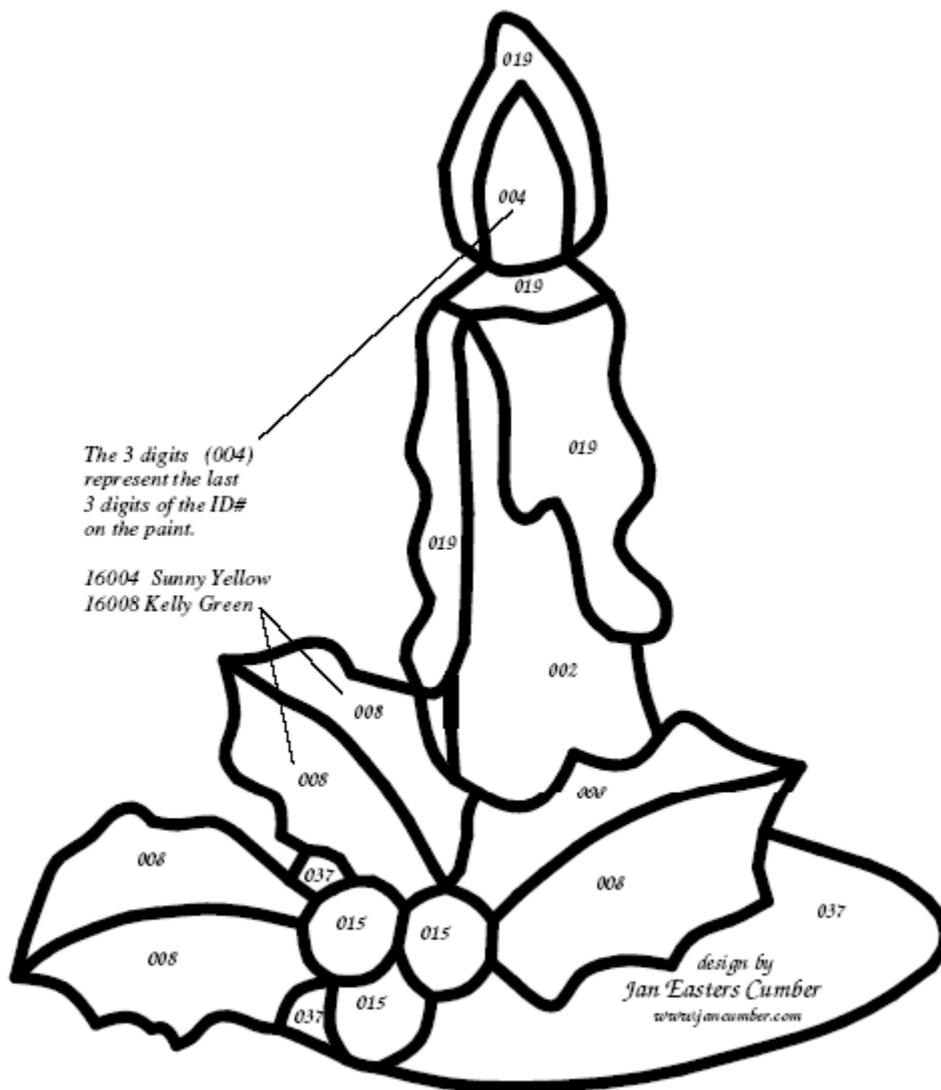


Patterns and Resources

Patterns, tools and resources for craft projects and decorating ideas are listed in this section. All patterns are printed at 100% size. You can use copiers to decrease the sizes.

Faux Stained Glass Christmas Candle – Page 58

Pattern:



Faux Stained Glass Christmas Candle – Page 58

Supplies List:

Pattern of the Candle and Holly (Previous Page)

16051 Gallery Glass Leading Blank (temporary surface)
16076 Gallery Glass Liquid Leading (lead the lines of the design)

Gallery Glass Window Color

16002 Snow White 16004 Sunny Yellow
16008 Kelly Green 16015 Ruby Red
16019 Gold Sparkle 16037 Sapphire

16225 Gallery Glass Tool Set
Additional supplies

paper towels - scotch tape - cotton swabs - project surface

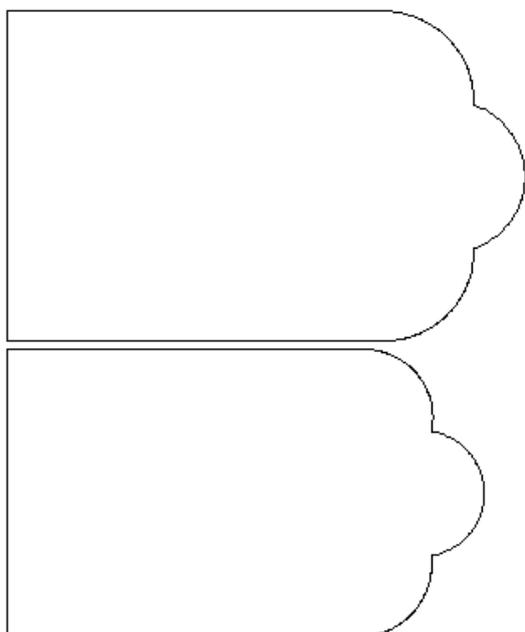
Supplies listed (*with the exception of the pattern*) can be found in most craft supply stores.

All supplies may also be purchased from www.jancumber.com

Jan Cumber's project books are also available from her website as well as local craft and supply shops.

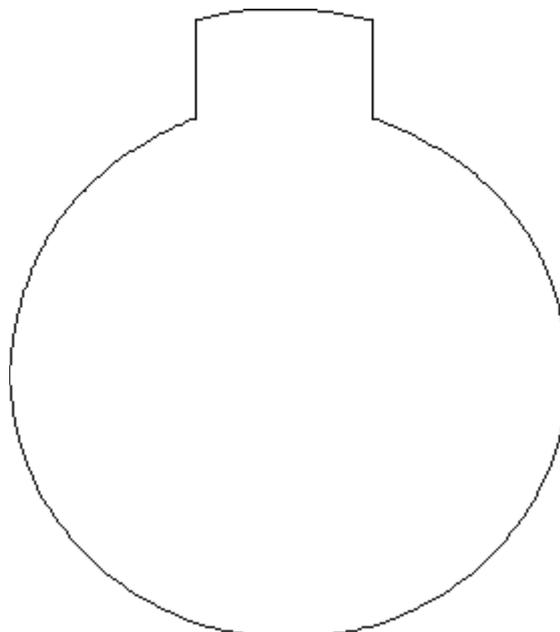
Christmas Gift Card – Page 46

Gift Tag Pattern



String Art Ornament – Page 50

Ornament Pattern



Christmas Gift Card – Page 46

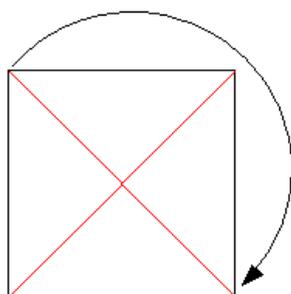
Teabag Folding Instructions: Pinwheel

Pinwheel

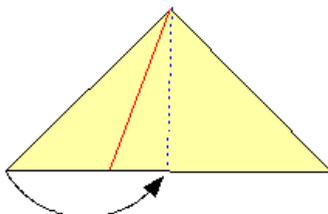
Key:

Red lines = valley folds
Blue lines = mountain folds
dotted lines = creases from prior folds

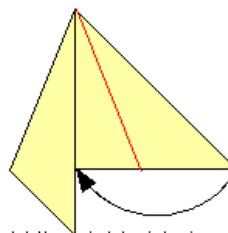
White is the plain side of the paper
Yellow is the printed side of the paper
Bright yellow is the second layer of the
printed side of the paper.



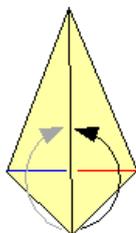
Fold in half diagonally
in both directions.



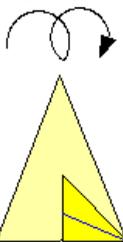
Fold the left side in so that
the left edge aligns with the
center as shown



Fold the right side in so that
the right edge aligns with the
center.



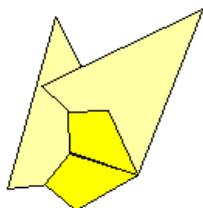
Fold the lower left point
back and the lower right
point forward.



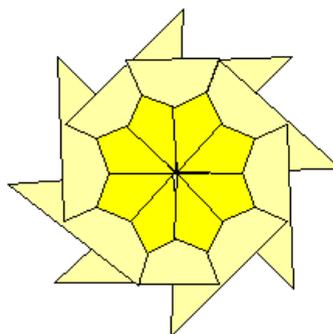
Turn it over



Open and flatten the
right point as shown

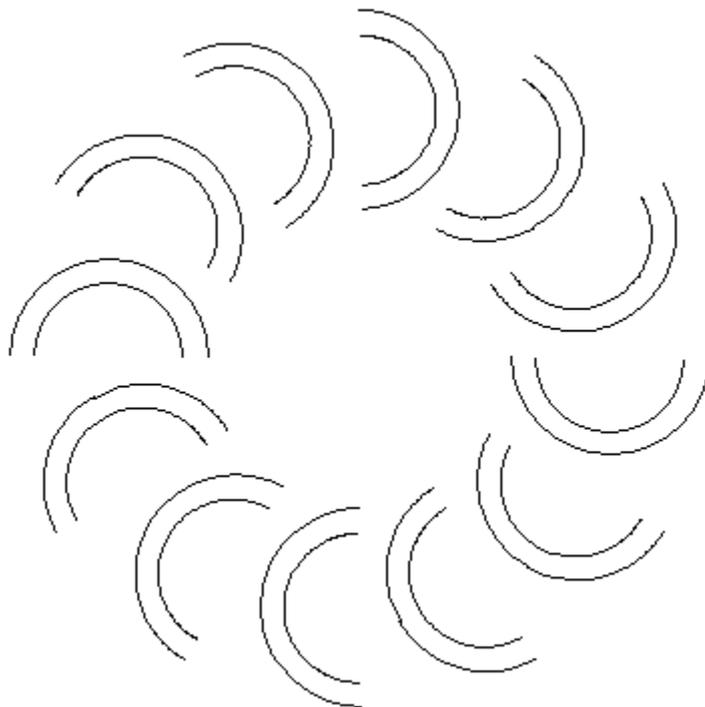


You will need eight tiles to complete
one motif. Align and glue the folded
tiles as shown.



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www.cardsandcrafts.freesevers.com
www.handcraftedgreetings.com

Christmas Wreath Card – Page 48 Wreath Pattern



Patchwork Stocking Card 49 Stocking Pattern



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